

# Creative economy, authenticity and peripheral memories: the favela souvenirs in Rio de Janeiro

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## Abstract

*The aim is to examine the economic and cultural roles of the favela souvenirs for Rio de Janeiro's slums, with the focus on the work of a male artist from Santa Teresa (an old neighbourhood, on the top of a hill in the central region of the city, with great tourist appeal and strong contrast between mansions and one of the poorest and most violent communities of Rio). The main argument indicates that favela souvenirs generate income and jobs not only for craft workers, but indirectly for tourist guides, food services and other creative sectors connected to the favela tourism. When these souvenirs are original and truth-telling, they may stimulate a better perception of the favelas in tourists and consolidate them as tourist destinations, despite the aggravation of violence in many slums in Rio de Janeiro. Favela souvenirs also carry the memories of the city's periphery, which is sometimes seen as secondary in Rio de Janeiro's long-established tourist images and "generic souvenirs". They offer greater visibility to the cultural production of marginalized social groups, which fuels potentially transformative views about the favelas and bring about the discussion on the lives of those who live in these areas. In the case of the work of the considered artist, it is possible to say that his paintings have elements of the "objective authenticity" of souvenirs, which contrast with a preconceived idea of an "imaginary favela" in his treatment of Santa Teresa's poorest communities. However, there are some aspects of standardization in his pictorial production and simulation in the process of elaboration of the artist's work during tourists' visits to his studio.*

**Keywords:** Favela; Favela Souvenirs; Rio de Janeiro; Authenticity; Memory.

## 1. Introduction

Rio de Janeiro has sought to position itself, at national and international dimensions, as a "creative city", a space in which social and artistic activities, creative sectors and the government articulate to promote a cultural effervescence that attracts talents, strengthens the potential of companies and institutions and stimulates social diversity (Jesus & Kamlot, 2016). Creative economy was understood by many municipal governments and companies in the city as a set of activities, goods and services based on creativity, talent or individual ability, which can bring new possibilities of development with the productive mobilization of local cultural and creative specificities and urban regeneration projects (Reis, 2011).

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Tourism is one of the most important creative industries in Rio de Janeiro, but, for many years, the city's tourist image was connected to its natural landscapes – such as the Sugar Loaf and the beaches – or some specific tourist attractions, such as the Christ the Redeemer statue. Now it is possible to see that, against the stereotypical perspective of Rio de Janeiro as a “pornotropical” city (McClintock, 1995), the favelas (slums) become gradually important as tourist destinations, which, according to some specialists, can bring a more precise perspective of the living experience in the city (Moraes, 2010). Many critics say the “tourist favela” does not resemble the real lives of many residents who suffer from the state abandonment and the disputes among police forces, drug dealers and militias (Grilo & Neri, 2013). Despite the differences among specialists on what kind of favela is really incorporated as a tourist destination, these communities in Rio de Janeiro are very active culturally and produce creative expressions in many sectors, such as music – carioca funk is a good example –, dance and crafts.

In a creative city, the valorization of collective memories should not be understood in the context of a nostalgic return to the past, but rather a contemporary need to improve life in the urban space. It motivates actions of decisive political importance when re-appropriating, restoring and rehabilitating the present and aiming at a future of more just social relations (Tomaz, 2010). At this perspective, souvenirs have an important role, because they can possibly bring social and cultural meanings for a group of local people to preserve their past, generate income from their cultural expressions, preserve the local memory alive and extend the knowledge and recognition of their culture worldwide (Cavalcanti & Fonseca, 2008). These souvenirs are tangible artifacts that satisfy the intangible images of the experience remembered by the tourist. For the tourist, the purchase of a souvenir serves as a tangible way of capturing an intangible experience (Swanson, 2004); in this case, the tourist's visit to the favela or even Rio de Janeiro.

The commercialization of souvenirs is important in the promotion of the favelas as tourist destinations. Souvenirs and other memory objects are not only gifts, signs or remainders, but they also create moments of interaction among artisans, artists and tourists, with face-to-face interactions and conversations (Freire-Medeiros, 2013). They may have deeper effects at the communities in which they are produced and sold.

The aim of the article is to examine the economic and cultural roles of the favela souvenirs for Rio de Janeiro's slums, with the focus on the work of a male artist from Santa Teresa (an old neighbourhood, on the top of a hill in the central region of the city, with great tourist appeal and strong contrast between mansions and one of the poorest and most violent communities of Rio). The main argument indicates that favela souvenirs generate income and jobs not only for craft workers, but indirectly for tourist guides, food services and other creative sectors connected to the favela tourism. When these souvenirs are original and truth-telling, they may stimulate a better perception of the favelas in tourists and consolidate them as tourist destinations, despite the aggravation of violence in many slums in Rio de Janeiro. In the case of the work of the considered artist, it is possible to say that his paintings have elements of the “objective authenticity” of souvenirs (Wang, 2009), which contrast with a preconceived idea of an “imaginary favela” in his treatment of Santa Teresa's poorest communities. However, there are some aspects of standardization in his pictorial production and simulation in the process of elaboration of the artist's work during tourists' visits to his studio.

Even though we agree with Wang (2009) that the object-related authenticity of the souvenir and the

activity-related authenticity may not necessarily be related, the search for the tourists' authentic selves may be supported by authentic souvenirs. The authentic experiences connected to authentic souvenirs may replace storytelling for truth-telling and bring entertainment, learning and a more real aesthetic fruition. Favela souvenirs also carry the memories of the city's periphery, which is sometimes seen as secondary in Rio de Janeiro's long-established tourist images and "generic souvenirs", characterized by a stereotyped perception of Rio de Janeiro connected to its traditional tourist destinations and experiences. Favela souvenirs offer greater visibility to the cultural production of marginalized social groups, which fuels potentially transformative views about the favelas and bring about the discussion on the lives of those who live in these areas.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### ***2.1. Souvenirs and creative economy***

The creative economy presents a broad sectorial aspect by bringing together to the new media and technologies elements of the solidarity economy, which are related to craft and traditional knowledge. As a development strategy, creative economy recognizes the importance of human capital to foster the integration of sociocultural and economic objectives and brings opportunities for creative entrepreneurship, the formalization of small companies and the generation of income and employment. The intangibility of creativity can add value by incorporating inimitable cultural characteristics to products and services and creating synergies between the local lifestyle and the environment in which it takes place (Reis, 2008).

Creative sectors such as craft have not only an economically productive perspective, but also a political perspective of social inclusion and resistance to oppression. As these sectors are living cultural heritages, they promote the relationship between local residents of many communities with their families and social groups – which stimulate conviviality, dialogue and learning that integrate different generations – and the consumers of their products, such as tourists that buy favela souvenirs. The commercialization of these products makes contact and encounter possible and brings the experience of dialogue (Ribeiro, 2014).

It is possible to say that creative sectors are not merely understood as forms of wealth accumulation or gains in competitiveness, which characterizes Western capitalism in the deterritorialization of symbolic goods. Actually, they seek to value the socioeconomic, political and cultural roles of local creative production for the population of the poorest communities, in a perspective that surpasses a utilitarian or functionalist understanding and moves toward the incorporation of a broader and more robust view of development, understood as a set of individual and collective freedoms (Sen, 2000). Instead of aligning itself with a reductionist conception of the supposed commodification under given and immutable conditions of the capitalist society, creative production in areas such as favelas transcends the immediate field of market economy and incorporates the potential for reflections on the cultural aspect of underdevelopment and dependence, following the critical view proposed by Furtado (1984). Creative economy is thus not limited to reproducing a linear and evolutionary conception of economic development of industrial capitalism. It introduces a new perception of human development in a context of valuing individual and collective potentials in the production of symbolic and intangible goods as forms of social inclusion and the recognition of the wealth of multiple cultural expressions, in a resistance to homogenizing

attempts to de-merit local cultural practices by mass culture (Furtado, 1984).

In the light of this conception of development, culture is not merely provided with economic value by contributing to national and international flows of goods and services, but is constituted as a set of intangible and tangible goods that allow the transmission of ideas and values and a more egalitarian exchange of human experiences (DaMatta, 1991). Creative local products such as souvenirs can provide consumers with distinct experiences that not only entertain but develop the collective imagery and the historical and affective memories through the permanent and incessant construction of feelings of belonging and identity that anchor the memory of the society. Personal and collective memories may arise or be reactivated by these products, which, by building or bringing back specific moments, can produce emotional and affective relationships and preserve elements of peripheral cultures, often conceived as subaltern by the mainstream creative industries. The culture of marginalized groups survives in the material assets that their members produce and the experiences associated with them, related to the history, traditions and ways of life of the communities and shared with visitors and tourists (Lopes, 2014).

## ***2.2. The authenticity of tourism and souvenirs***

For travellers, the souvenirs brought the possibility of perennial memories of their trips. Many definitions of a “souvenir” highlight that these objects may turn the intangible into tangible elements and materialize the memory (Perrotta, 2015). Their physical presence helps locate and freeze in time a transitory experience. They may be pictorial products, such as postcards and posters; miniatures of monuments and local icons; products with the place brand; natural objects or products made of these objects, such as shells, stones and seeds; and local products, such as craft and typical local drinks and foods (Gordon, 1986). However, it is important to say that, in a niche of tourists, there is also a lot of prejudice regarding souvenirs, precisely because of their supposed sameness and low quality, especially when related to mass tourism, and inauthenticity. The definition of authenticity of the souvenirs may include singularity, aesthetics and function of the craft, as well as the integrity of the local culture, the link with history and the genuineness of the product. More experienced tourists are not usually interested in trivial products, such as those that carry the message of the tourist destination or some meaning that refers to the place of origin. These people are concerned with living authentic experiences and, during these times, they acquire a specific product, which is not often marketed in a souvenir shop or fair, nor is it produced for this purpose (Horodyski et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, it is very common to identify the researchers' disappointment with the low creativity of the so-called “handmade products” sold as souvenirs in their studied communities. MacCannell (1976) – who introduced the concept of authenticity to sociological studies of tourist motivations and experiences – believes that these products are parts of a “staged authenticity”, which is appreciated by the tourist as “original”, but tourist practices serve the interests of the imaginary of the modern man, revealing a network of culturally defined social relations. This “constructive authenticity” is conceived as the result of a social construction, not an objectively measurable quality of what is being visited. In this sense, authenticity is seen as relative, negotiable, contextually determined and ideological and projects stereotyped images and expectations onto toured objects, such as souvenirs (Wang, 1999). According to Boorstin (1992), tourism is essentially inauthentic, and tourist performances are produced and based on the taste of the tourist

demand, so the tourist has no reason not to enjoy them.

The process of “McDisneyisation” of contemporary tourism (Ritzer & Liska, 1997) – which makes the experiences more predictable, calculated, controlled and, above all, efficient – also happens with the souvenirs, while the real “authentic” may be conceived as difficult, uncomfortable, and unpredictable. That is why many tourists accept “inauthenticity” for its predictability and their own comfort. Not only the same repertoire of products (mugs, keyrings, T-shirts, caps) appear everywhere, but sometimes with the same decorative pattern. Nevertheless, they are easier to be purchased and bring good memories from the visited places. The perspective developed by Stephen (1990) indicates that the persistence in debating the authenticity of tourist objects such as souvenirs may encourage the belief that in some place there may exist a “genuine life”. The recognition of the dialectic of authenticity that underlies the construction, exchange and movement of tourist attractions and souvenirs characterizes the postmodern world. Tourists do not live in submerged myths, but they participate in their creation. Postmodern researchers do not see inauthenticity as a problem, because there is no absolute boundary between what is real or fake.

Critics question the usefulness and validity of the discussion about the authenticity of tourism – which has repercussions to the discussion about the authenticity of souvenirs, as may be seen below – and show that the tourist motivations or experiences cannot be limited to the conventional concepts of authenticity. However, authenticity cannot be ignored when issues related to ethnic, history or culture tourism are discussed, once they involve the representation of difference and its past. Instead of persisting in the debate on object-related authenticity in tourism between objective and constructive authenticity, Wang (1999) tries to bring more clarification to the meanings of authenticity in tourist experiences, which has effects on the debate on the authenticity of souvenirs. The author argues that “existential authenticity” is an alternative source in tourism, regardless of whether the toured objects are authentic. This opens the possibility of a greater variety of tourist experiences, because the notion of “existential authenticity” is conceived as an activity-related situation, which may open the possibility of developing experiences of intrapersonal authenticity – related to bodily feelings as the inner source of pleasure, as well as self-making – and interpersonal authenticity, which is connected to the strengthening of family ties and the possibility of making new friends in tourist activities with the company of others. According to Wang, the authenticity of experiences separated from the authenticity of toured objects – including souvenirs – is crucial for introducing existential authenticity as an alternative source of authentic experiences. While certain toured objects, such as nature souvenirs, are irrelevant to authenticity in MacCannell’s sense, nature tourism is one of the major ways of experiencing a real self, which involves an existential authenticity rather than the authenticity of objects. In this perspective, existential authenticity – as an activity-related issue – may have nothing to do with the authenticity of toured objects, including souvenirs. In this activity-related authenticity, tourists are not concerned about the authenticity of toured objects at all, but rather they are in search of their authentic selves with the aid of activities or toured objects.

### ***2.3. The authenticity of favela souvenirs in Rio de Janeiro and their role in creative economy***

The commercialization of local souvenirs has an economic and cultural relevance for the communities and stimulates specific places as tourist destinations, such as some favelas in Rio de Janeiro. The favelas have always been an issue of great concern of local authorities, but also the curiosity – and

visitation – of chroniclers, who saw something mysterious and exotic in them. Tourists also became gradually interested in favelas as a destination, because many are not satisfied with the superficial knowledge of the place they visit. They want to search for more authentic experiences. This search is bigger and more complex than the search for native places and spaces where official tourism has not yet entered, but the meaning of life through the experience of alterity, diversity, novelty or instability. The “favela tourism” may be taken as an example of the search for diversity. In Rio de Janeiro, this type of tourism was institutionalized in the 1990s following a global tendency of tourism options focused on poverty. According to Freire-Medeiros and Menezes (2016), the tourist poverty in Rio de Janeiro finds its symbolic reference in an “imaginary favela”, set in the mountains, between the forest and the sea, from where it is possible to see the richest neighbourhoods of the city. This imaginary territory starts to compose the tourist package which offers specificity to Rio de Janeiro, complimenting or competing with traditional itineraries.

Although some specialists say that “favela tourism” is a type of exploitation of poverty, this perception is not recurrent among favelas’ residents. They usually do not feel comfortable when the tours are operated by famous agencies in safari jeeps, but local initiatives, with local guides and conducted on foot, developed by people from the favelas, are viewed positively. These tours offer reliable information, generate personal experiences for the tourist, employ local people, support small business and deconstruct violence stereotypes and stigmas associated to favelas and generated by media. The interaction of tourists with the community is stimulated by making them more aware of local problems and daily routines, such as the difficulties of walking in the narrow alleyways and climbing steep stairs without pavement and sanitation. This indirectly generates support for social projects. Many communities invest the profit brought by tourism in local social projects and promote the residents’ self-esteem (Rompu, 2017).

The tourists seek to transform the experience outside their home into something different from their daily lives. This experience may involve the “search for authenticity”, which is actually a construction. Although this search has always existed, discussions on the topic have been more recurrent after the phenomenon of mass tourism, and even more so in the imagery and digital era, when “reality” has been constructed by images, symbols and posts. The more authenticity is sought, the more it is invented. Thematization and scenarization, original to American parks, had already occurred in restaurants, hotels, shops, malls and museums and now they came to exist in cities – and also in the favelas – that turned to tourism as part of the construction of their images for consumption (Fagerlande, 2015, 2017; Luna, 2010).

Freire-Medeiros & Menezes (2016) argue that the version of the favela embodied in most souvenirs fits into a larger set of interventions that targeted the landscape of these communities and the conduct of their inhabitants to fit them into a broader narrative of Rio de Janeiro as an “entertainment machine”. According to the authors, “favela tourism” was used by local authorities as a practice to support the city’s broader reconfiguration project. They also argue that the favela iconography present in the souvenirs treats the communities in a generic way, with no details and specificities that differentiate one from the other. In the interviews conducted by the authors, they identified that many artists thought it would be more advantageous to produce a “generic souvenir” to please tourists – since they did not seem to care much about what was specific to each favela, but what would be typical of the favelas in general – and sell their products in other places (Freire-Medeiros & Menezes, 2016). Nevertheless, it is important to say that Freire-Medeiros & Menezes – as well as most authors who work with favela souvenirs in Rio de Janeiro –

focus on objects produced in Rocinha, the biggest slum in the city. However, they do not explore the production of favela souvenirs in other Rio de Janeiro's poorest communities which might be more original and authentic than the ones in Rocinha. Some authors brought initial ethnographic efforts in the study of favela souvenirs in other communities such as Santa Marta's slum, but they did not bring a deeper research on the object-related authenticity of favela souvenirs in the city.

In the universe of souvenirs sold in the favelas, it is possible to perceive more authentic productions that, even when they dialogue with national and international cultural movements, do not lose fundamental elements of the specificities of communities. Such souvenirs have not only the role of productive inclusion and increase of local self-esteem, but they also serve as repositories of a peripheral memory that resists attempts to erase and eliminate them. In the fields of marketing and business management, Pine & Gilmore (1998) argue that the "experience economy" has a strategic potential to add value to brands by generating memorable experiences in addition to their deliveries of products or services. In this economy, consumers increasingly seek authentic experiences, when storytelling – the narrative that advertising usually uses to tell the story of a brand or product, seeking proximity to its user – has been overtaken by truth-telling. The experience should bring entertainment, learning, stress relief and aesthetic fruition. For creative economy, authenticity is also fundamental – in this case, the development of souvenirs – to meet the human, economic, social and sustainable development premises.

### 3. Methodology

In the first part of our research, we developed how Rio de Janeiro's favela souvenirs incorporated the idea of "staged authenticity". In the second part, we investigated the Santa Teresa's male artist work with a qualitative content analysis. The selected souvenirs are categorized into four categories: the aesthetics elements of the artist's production; the connection of the favela representation in the souvenir with the reality of the portrayed community; the characteristics of the local where these paintings are produced and the tourists' interactions with the artist. Our aim was to examine if and how the authentic experiences connected to authentic souvenirs helped stimulate truth-telling and bring entertainment, learning and a more real aesthetic fruition to tourists. We aimed to verify if the artist's favela souvenirs also carried the specific memories of Santa Teresa's poorest communities, different from those connected to "generic souvenirs", and offered greater visibility to the cultural production of marginalized social groups, which fuels potentially transformative views about the favelas.

### 4. Results

In Freire-Medeiros & Menezes (2016) work about the souvenir trade in Rocinha, there is a picture of a favela artist, with the caption "Rocinha's resident *stages* the painting of a canvas to attract the attention of tourists who pass through Street 1" (emphasis added). The favela artist has a brush in his hand and seems – or simulates – putting the finishing touches on a canvas, practically finished, that represents the favela on the side of a hill, with the starry sky. The naïf strand painting draws attention, because it represents the favela with colourful houses, covered with a clay tile of the colonial type, while Rocinha today is a cluster of small buildings and brick houses with no plastering, which have cemented slab roof. Another important

aspect is the large dimensions of the painting, unlike all the others displayed for sale, which are generally very small.

At the craft fairs aimed at tourists in the neighbourhoods of Copacabana and Ipanema (some of the most expensive locations in the city), it was not possible to find any artist painting in these sites, but several exhibiting paintings from favelas with different languages were found. Some were more abstract or figurative, naïf or realistic, with or without landscapes in the background. Some artists show their own characteristics, while some mix the elements others do. Anyway, the works are repetitive, within the portfolio of each artist. For each “model” presented, some variations are offered, mainly in format.

The canvases of the Santa Teresa’s male artist considered in this research, from an aesthetic point of view, are less naive, colourful and cheerful when compared to canvases sold in other favelas and craft fairs. Regarding the aesthetics elements of his production, the drawings have more depth, less precise and delineated contours and apparent and dramatic strokes due to the contrast of warm with many dark colours. Some canvases even exacerbate real aesthetic characteristics, such as the profusion of electric wires in Rio de Janeiro’s hills. However, when the connection of the favela representation in the souvenir with the reality of the portraited community is considered, some of his canvases repeat elements of the imaginary representation of favelas, such as the small houses with tile roofs. The representation of an “imaginary favela” is reinforced by the artist’s own speech when he justifies – and romanticizes – the choice of his work theme:

They don’t really have any kind of architecture. The guy makes a house one on top of the other, and they don’t fall. Then, one paints one house green, the other yellow, the other red, and it turns into a beautiful scene. I really like painting favelas; I like the chaos, the confusion, the disorder. There is a poetry in the painting that I like.

Regarding the characteristics of the local where these paintings are produced and the tourists’ interactions with the artist, our main aim was to verify whether the artist could be found painting in the gallery or he was only “staging”. The artist’s gallery could be easily found in Santa Teresa. In the place, his work is exposed, as well as other artists’ paintings. However, he also transformed the gallery into his studio and develops his activities between painting and talking to customers. We went twice to the Santa Teresa gallery and found the artist wearing an apron excessively dirty with paint – almost as if it were an abstract painting – in front of a painting that was practically finished, giving a brushstroke and sometimes chatting with visitors. The possible staging of the painting – which reminds us of Helen of Troy’s tapestry (the one that never ended) – is reinforced by some speeches by the artist himself:

I work calmly. I don’t feel rushed to finish a painting. I have clients that receive their work five months later! I don’t paint because I already received the money and must deliver it quickly. On the contrary, I work on the painting in my time, I put in my love, my feelings. When the clients receive it, they are happy because I paint with love.

In the internet, the gallery is closely linked to tourism websites, networks such as Instagram and



platforms such as Airbnb, especially in searches related to tourist attractions in the Santa Teresa neighbourhood. In most articles and posts, there are pictures of him painting a canvas of a favela, which is practically done.

## **5. Discussion and analysis**

Tourists generally want local products, whether they are relatively craft and artisanal, such as wine, olive oil, cheese and chocolate; or industrial, such as Havaianas sandals in Brazil. When small communities are considered, however, there is a clear expectation for handmade products. This is the case of favelas, although they are within the metropolis. Nevertheless, in general, what the communities of Rio de Janeiro offer as “handmade” souvenirs is quite standardized and repetitive. Miniature favelas made from recycled paper and paintings on canvas are common, but always very similar to each other. It is not necessary to go to the favela to take a favela souvenir home. As these communities became a symbol of Rio de Janeiro, their iconographic representation – more related to the collective imagination than to contemporary reality – is in all types of handmade or industrial artifacts, at different souvenir outlets, inside or outside the communities. In these places, it is also possible to find small canvases, supposedly by artists from the communities.

In the work of the Santa Teresa’s artist considered in this research, it is possible to identify the idea of a “tourist favela”, an aesthetic construction which has become a product to be sold and grown rapidly in Brazil in the last decades (Luna, 2010). It resembles the argument developed by Boorstin (1992), which indicates that life is full of inauthentic experiences – “pseudo-events” – that transform cultural manifestations into the repetition of facts, including tourism. The taste for inauthenticity appears in comparison with everyday life, which seems to be as forged as the attractions that entertain it.

When the connection of the favela representation in the souvenir with the reality of the portraited community, the characteristics of the local where these paintings are produced and the tourists’ interactions with the artist are taken into account in the analysis of the work of the artist considered in this research, it is possible to identify elements of what MacCannell (1976) calls “staged authenticity”: although tourists may travel in the search of reality and the authenticity of the visited places – having this search as the main motivation to find the true essence of the local culture –, this authenticity can even be a performance. In tourism, the façade would be the place presented to visitors and, behind the scenes, the place where what will be offered and shown on the façade is prepared. The tourists usually circulate through façades, which are spaces built especially for them. The same can be said about most favela souvenirs, including the ones produced by the artist considered in this research.

However, when the aesthetics elements of his production are considered, his work has differences from some typical favela souvenirs, which may stimulate a more precise perception of the favelas and contrast with a preconceived idea of an “imaginary favela” in his treatment of Santa Teresa’s poorest communities. His work has elements of the “objective authenticity” of souvenirs (Wang, 2009), which carry the memories of the population who lives in the favela and scape from the stereotyped perception of Rio de Janeiro’s traditional tourist destinations. The cultural production of marginalized social groups may also stimulate potentially transformative views and bring about the discussion on the lives of those who live in

these areas.

## 6. Conclusion

In times of post-Fordist consumption, the old packaged and standardized tourism is replaced by segmented, flexible and commercialized tourism, having as one of its characteristics the importance given to “fun, pleasure and imitation”. The spectacle and exhibition helped to produce the generalization of the “tourist gaze”. Satisfaction comes from the expectation and the pursuit of pleasure (Urry, 1990). Tourism is a product of socio-cultural development: the invention of unique places and practices, which is common in elitist tourism, is now copied and no longer unique (Boyer, 2003). This is the case of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro.

The article shows that the commercialization of souvenirs – which are more than gifts, signs or remainders – may create moments of interaction between artisans and tourists, as Freire-Medeiros (2013) argues. It may also generate income and jobs not only for craft workers, but indirectly for tourist guides, food services and other creative sectors connected to the favela tourism. The work of the artist considered in this research brings elements of “objective authenticity”, but he does not escape from some forms of standardization in his pictorial production and the tourists’ visits to his studio. The authentic experiences connected to authentic souvenirs may replace storytelling for truth-telling and bring entertainment, learning and a more real aesthetic fruition, but it is not completely achieved by the work of the considered artist and other artisans. More authentic favela souvenirs could tell more about the memories of the Rio de Janeiro’s periphery, which is sometimes forgotten in tourist images and “generic souvenirs” of traditional tourist destinations and experiences in the city.

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