

The use of communication tools for the dissemination of Maranhense handicrafts as an intangible heritage

Katia do Perpetuo Socorro Viana dos Santos de Alencar¹, Vanessa de Matos Tavares Cogo², Kláutenys Dellene Guedes Cutrim³ and Conceição de Maria Belfort de Carvalho⁴

¹ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade, Universidade Federal do Maranhão, Brazil.

² Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade, Universidade Federal do Maranhão, Brazil.

³ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade, Universidade Federal do Maranhão, Brazil.

⁴ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Cultura e Sociedade, Universidade Federal do Maranhão, Brazil.

Abstract

We propose to analyze the potential of Brazilian handicrafts, citing the handicrafts developed in the state of Maranhão. Here we will also discuss how communication tools can contribute to leverage the work made by artisans in Maranhão. This article also aims to reflect on the stimulus to the heritage preservation and the continuity of these practices from generations to generations directly associated with culture and tourism. The research will be quantitative with a bibliographic survey on the subject addressed.

Keywords: Crafts. Intangible Heritage. Culture. Communication and Local Development.

1. Introduction

The analysis in question has as its main pillar the study of the potential of Brazilian handicraft - in particular, from Maranhão - based on the theoretical framework of handicraft, considering not only the raw material and physical artifacts produced as well as the intrinsic value that artisanal productions represent an intangible heritage for the territories they belong to. This article addresses, albeit in a temporary way, the evolution of handicraft from the industrial era to the contemporary, with the advent of globalization and the use of technologies. This article also deals with the definitions about professionals in this segment, interpreted by various scholars and public administrators who, with their experiences, broke paradigms of an era in favor of valuing regional productions.

Recovering the concepts of intangible heritage and how this concept was implemented in Brazil is essential to understand how cultural public policies have been improved, as well as mentioning how the strategic actions of public management have contributed and continue to contribute to making this sector more representative and profitable. We will give a brief overview of the potential that handicrafts from Maranhão represents on the national scene, citing some special techniques. Finally, this work will address how communication can contribute to the promotion and strengthening of craft practices as manifestations of artistic expression, income generation and cultural identity, in addition to the role of communication in the visibility of the peculiar work of artisans to society and the market as a product in a competitive scenario.

It will be indicated how communication tools can collaborate in dissemination, through the positive use of available technologies, specially by making regional products accessible on the world wide web. For this, we searched, through a bibliographical survey, concepts that would guide the notions of culture, communication and its functions in this context.

2. Crafts: a tour

An excellent concept for handicraft is provided by Pereira (2011, p. 21), when he states that it is “a complex of manual activities, through which man manifests spontaneous creativity” . Handicrafts are also conceptualized as any manual work of their own creation developed by people with the skills to transform items from nature into consumer items, the so-called artisans. Artisans handle objects that are part of the identity and culture of one or more communities and/or regions. These are pieces that can be used both in everyday life and as works of art.

The first handicrafts produced by man, recorded in history, date back to 6,000 BC. Silva (2002), period in which man discovered how to polish stones, make ceramics and weave fibers from animals and vegetables. The Indians were the oldest artisans. They started their techniques using plant straw, bird feathers and feathers, pigments from fruits and clay to produce ceramics. The productions have always been used for subsistence, but over the centuries, handcrafted handling techniques have been perfected and stimulated the population's interest in beauty and utility. The artisans saw the sale of handicrafts as a way to generate income.

According to Boudieu (2017), the term craft comes from the French *artisanat* and means art. Handicraft is one of the strongest characteristics of Brazilian folklore, associating the techniques used to the identity, habits and customs of a people. Artisans and artisans are lacemakers, embroiderers, potters, sculptors, lumberjacks, painters and weavers and all those who create musical instruments, jewelry and wooden pieces, as well as hammocks made with thread, among others.

In the opinions that have been interpreted by several scholars about the artisan, Sennett (2009) stands out and calls him an artisan, referring to a character who seeks quality work, simply for satisfaction rather than commercial interest. It combines doing and thinking, acquiring maturity. In every artisan there is a craftsman, according to this author, a feeling of overcoming in each production, in the search for improvement and novelty through their own techniques and acquired peculiarities. In this way, the artisan or artisan becomes a reference, through his craft skills, drawing attention, primarily from his family members and over time, he stands out in the cycles of friendships, his community or even tourists who feel attracted for their own productions.

Sennett (2009) understands the figure of the artisan as an Enlightenment man, that is, creativity, inspiration, talent and commitment are directly associated with a joint logic, and are constantly improving and perfecting their work. Concrete actions are related to the craftsman as “laboratories in which feelings and ideas can be investigated” (SENNETT, 2009, p. 30).

For Cardini (2004), artisans are cultural producers and the handicraft produced is a cultural product. In Mills' (2009) view, craft presents itself as a model in six dimensions. The first concerns the creation process, the second the characteristics and details of the product considered for the composition of the final product.

In the third and fourth dimensions, the artisan exercises his freedom of expression based on feelings, skills and techniques. The fifth, there is a conjunction between professional practice and personal satisfaction, becoming part of their daily lives and in the last dimension of analysis, the artisan's engagement with his work is considered.

Handcrafted products were described by UNESCO in 1997 as products made by hand or not, for different purposes and which have the predominance of handcrafting. Regardless of the concepts, the process of valuing handicrafts in Brazil and in the world has undergone evolution and ruptures. After the firmament of industrialization and the emergence of technology, handicrafts were being less and less valued from a marketing point of view. It was with globalization that artisan productions gained space

Social contexts and cultural exchanges between different regions and countries have transformed the vision of society and the market. Distances were shortened and what was local became global. In this context, Hall (2006) concludes that consumers were directly influenced by an imposed social process. Social transformations, according to Keller (2011), changed the identity of artisanal work and productions came to be seen as opportunities to generate income from an economic perspective. But this whole process came at a price. It was not enough to acquire only skill and creativity, it was necessary to standardize and professionalize products and craft techniques for acceptance in the competitive consumer market.

3. Crafts as Intangible Cultural Heritage

However, beyond the understanding of handicraft as a product to be sold, we cannot shy away from understanding it as an intangible heritage or popular art, considering it as expressions and styles typical of a region that can manifest themselves freely through artifacts, music, typical food, dance, art, among other expressions.

With regard to the category of heritage - whether material or immaterial - "craft can be defined as something heterogeneous, it is a cultural expression of material value and with a strong immaterial charge, it is inserted between tradition and contemporaneity" (MACHADO, 2016, p. 3). Also based on what is foreseen in the document released by UNESCO in 2003, in Paris, at the time of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage: this can be cataloged as Intangible Cultural Heritage (PCI):

The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated with them – that communities, groups and, eventually, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, handed down from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups according to their surroundings, their interaction with nature and their history, and gives them a sense of identity and continuity, thus contributing to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO, 2003, s/p).

When craft is understood from the perspective proposed by Unesco, it can still be received as knowledge transmitted both in its theoretical and factual expression, impregnated with a symbolic content that transmits human knowledge, related to a region, to a community, to a family and which constitutes itself

as a cultural vehicle. According to García (2015), handicraft stands out in relation to other activities that can be categorized as intangible heritage due to the representativeness it provides for that group from which it originates.

Making a brief history, the notion of intangible heritage gained notoriety within the Brazilian State with the promulgation of the Federal Constitution of 1988, which defined in its article 216 the entry in heritage as the set of "material and immaterial goods (taken individually or in its totality) bearers of reference to the identity, to the action, to the memory of the different groups that make up Brazilian society". Among the goods are included the forms of expression; the ways of creating, doing and living; scientific, artistic and technological creations; works, objects, documents, buildings and other spaces for artistic and cultural manifestations; sites of historical, urbanistic, scenic, artistic, archaeological, paleontological, ecological and scientific value. With the enactment of the 1988 Magna Carta, the most appropriate understanding of cultural heritage and public policies for the preservation of intangible cultural assets became official, and thus the segment gained more space for discussion, planning and investment in related public bodies.

In November 1997, the Intangible Heritage Seminar: strategies and forms of protection was held, promoted by IPHAN in Fortaleza, Ceará. At the time, a document was formulated with recommendations and guidelines for the sector. An Inter-institutional Commission was created with the aim of preparing the regulation proposal for the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Working Group (GTPI) to advise this Commission. The Commission's work yielded results and in 2000 Decree No. 3,551 was approved, which instituted the Registry as an official instrument for the protection of intangible heritage by the Brazilian State.

From the legislation, objects, buildings and physical sites were listed; knowledge and celebrations, rituals, forms of expression and the spaces where these practices develop were registered. In this way, it also instituted its intangible cultural heritage registry books (IPHAN, 2015). In 2004, a specific body linked to IPHAN was created to manage such public policies, the Department of Intangible Heritage, which became responsible for the processes of identification, registration and safeguarding of intangible assets in Brazil. In 2005, the Technical Chamber of Intangible Heritage was created, made up of members of the Advisory Council and DPI Technicians, who became responsible for analyzing requests for Registration of intangible cultural goods.

4. Cultural policies to promote handicraft

When researching the legislative body that establishes cultural policies regarding the promotion and preservation of handicrafts as intangible heritage, we come across the National Program of Intangible Heritage (PNPI) created by Decree No. 3.551, on August 4, 2000. The objective of PNPI is to provide opportunities to identify, recognize, safeguard and promote the immaterial dimension of cultural heritage through partnerships with federal, state and municipal government institutions, universities and non-governmental organizations.

In this same scope, when referring to cultural and intangible heritage policies, it is to make a direct association with the name of Aloísio Magalhães as creator of the National Cultural Reference Center called "intangible heritage", in 1975, when he started his activities at the University of Brasília. According to

IPHAN (2015), "the purpose was to structure a outline of a basic referential system to be used in the description and analysis of Brazilian cultural dynamics, which should encompass and adapt, based on a prospective vision, different areas of knowledge and that had the following characteristics: a) Adequacy to the specific conditions of the country's cultural context; b) comprehensiveness and flexibility in the description of the phenomena that take place in such a context, and in their link to the cultural roots of Brazil; and c) clarification of the link between the Brazilian cultural foundation and the practice of different arts, sciences and technologies, aiming at the perception and encouragement in these areas of adequate regional alternatives".

To meet this purpose, Aloísio Magalhães set up a multidisciplinary team and consolidated new concepts on Brazilian cultural heritage, having in its essence "the idea of an organism capable of identifying, throughout the Brazilian cultural context, peculiar ways of acting, way of life, behavior , etc., which are such latent indicators that if made explicit would give a configuration of cultural identity" (Interview given to *Jornal Correio Braziliense*, in 1982). Thus, the valuation and recognition of cultural assets were understood as cultural policies, without linking only the aesthetic aspect, but mainly due to the cultural value and identity immersed in society. Popular manifestations, dances, music, arts gained prominence. Valuable discussions about collective "know-how", another concept created by Aloísio, associating meanings to artisanal production modes, valuing knowledge and production as symbols of knowledge.

Another very important public manager in the process of recognizing this intangible heritage was Rodrigo de Mello Franco, who worked at IPHAN and promoted the vision of heritage preservation in the institution. In his view, Brazil would become a modern and civilized nation when the Brazilian people started to recognize its tradition and culture as part of a universal civilization and this process would take place from the appropriation and preservation of this heritage.

Starting in the 1970s, in the action of the National Cultural Reference Center -CNRC, and in the 1980s with the merger of this institution to SPHAN, a unification not only institutional, but also in the discourse of preservation. Through the notion of cultural reference, Aloísio Magalhães and the CNRC group problematized the view of both the SPHAN group and the folklorists that cultural goods – whether "stone and lime" goods, or elements of popular culture – they had an intrinsic value. This notion brought into question the fact that values are socially attributed, and, as important as authenticity, tradition, among others are the values and meanings socially attributed by the subjects involved with cultural goods. Therefore, it constituted a discourse of preservation, in addition to the heritage already protected by IPHAN, aimed at assets that had not been consecrated until then in popular culture. The legacy that this vision would provide goes beyond the preservation of material heritage, but would safeguard traditions and customs from generations to generations. The performance of public managers and the bodies they represented were essential for strengthening public policies for the preservation of intangible heritage in Brazil, including handicrafts.

Currently, with regard to cultural policies aimed at handicraft, at the national level, the segment has the Brazilian Handicraft Program (PAB), created by the Decree of March 21, 1991, Ordinance No. 1.007-SEI/2018 that instituted the Program and create the National Craft Commission. The main axis of the PAB is the professional strengthening of Brazilian artisans and handicrafts, in addition to promoting artisanal production and actions aimed at generating work and income, prioritizing regional vocations and specific

techniques existing in the communities.

The program aims to preserve local cultures, allowing the continuity of the culture for other generations, in addition to preparing artisans for entrepreneurship through specific training. In this way, the creative economy is put into practice, promoting the professionalization and commercialization of handcrafted products. In the states, the Program has State Craft Coordination. The Program is managed by the Undersecretary for the Development of Micro and Small Businesses, Entrepreneurship and Handicraft of the Secretariat for Development of Industry, Commerce, Services and Innovation, of the Ministry of Economy and is supported by Decree No. 9,745, of April 8, 2019.

5. Brief overview of handicrafts from Maranhão

When we comes to handicrafts, Brazil is a country with a great vocation for this segment, especially in the North and Northeast regions of the country. Maranhão is one of the great centers of artisanal production in Brazil. The diversity of preserved typologies and techniques, the quality in the execution of these traditional techniques and the significant presence of artisanal practices in all regions of the state are the elements that allow this statement.

According to studies carried out by the Maranhão Tourism Observatory (SETUR, 2020) through the Illustrated Handicraft Mapping project, the number of artisans with active registrations in the Registration Information System for Brazilian Crafts (SICAB) grew by 377% between 2015 and 2020 This demonstrates the great potential that the country and Maranhão have for the sector. In practically all 217 municipalities in Maranhão, some type of artisanal production is maintained or popular artists are housed. In 2020, even facing the COVID-19 pandemic, Maranhão received 392 new records of artisans registered in the SICAB. Despite having become a strong presence, handicraft from Maranhão is still little explored and little known. This fact may be linked to the lack of incentive or even the lack of encouragement to practice entrepreneurship. Small businesses that have an entrepreneurial vision are rare. The handicraft stores in the Historic Center of São Luís, for example, offer few options for handicrafts from regional production, offering products foreign to our artisans for sale. In this way, as well as the people from Maranhão, tourists have difficulty in getting to know and enjoy the local artifacts and handicrafts.

The state has numerous works, with peculiar productions, such as the beautiful and diversified pieces made with buriti straw or even the rich embroidery of the bumba-meu-boi leather. There is also pottery produced in the quilombola community of Itamatatua, in the municipality of Alcântara/MA or even towels in lace from Raposa, produced in the metropolitan region of São Luís. The vessels are another strong artisan reference made in the state. The artisanal fishermen turned into naval workers without even developing robust projects, putting into practice the popular knowledge that comes from everyday life at sea. According to Luiz Phelipe Andrés, engineer and master in Urban Development (1998), vessels are considered objects of popular art, as well as a means of transport and subsistence for riverside communities. These examples do not represent diversity in its entirety, but demonstrate a significant portion of the cultural value that Maranhão concentrates.



Figure 1: Vessels produced in MA. Figure 2- Ceramic House and Sales Hall in Itamatatuiua – MA.

It is observed that there is a need to adopt useful tools that can be managed – in particular – those of communication, so that this collection is known, accessed and consumed both by the public from Maranhão and by the tourists who circulate here.

6. Communication as a way to give visibility to the artisan practice

Communication is the privileged locus for the construction of identities, the organization of collective memory and individual belonging, which expresses and reveals the cultural heritage of the individual and the community. But what is communication seen in this sphere? For Professor João Pissarra Esteves (2019), communicational culture can be defined as the values and beliefs of each individual, including the ways of thinking and acting. From this perspective, when we communicate with people in the most diverse environments, we interact and form who we are and influence what others are and can become. This exchange defines concepts, worldviews, apprehensions of reality and the construction of certain values. Communication is, like many other words that are part of our experience, one of the most ambiguous terms today. The mixture of interpretations and the intricate system of uses to which this omnipresent term refers is intrinsically attuned to the various cultural, political and social processes that guide human development. For Marcondes Filho (2004), communication is rather a process, an event, a happy encounter, the magical moment between two intentions, which is produced in the “friction of bodies” (if we take words, music, ideas also as bodies); it arises from the establishment of a common environment in which the two sides interact and extract from this interaction participation something innovative, unprecedented, which was not present in either of them, and which modifies the previous status of both, despite the vicissitudes that differentiate them. For Professor Ciro Marcondes Filho “To what extent, in fact, do we communicate? (2004, p. 15), communication is not in the widespread propagation of mass media vehicles; then it is just diffusion – they are just signs, sounds, letters disseminated in a concatenated and organized way and then

someone picks them up. Literally, it is not about communication, as there is no reciprocal action that characterizes the exchange between subjects in the same contextual environment.

On the other hand, communicating can mean issuing information through a device – support, platform – which is used as a vehicle, an instrument in the transmission of certain information. In this perspective, communication is managed by means that mediate the interaction and provide circularity and repetition in an abstract territory, absent the cultural exchange that the communicational human relationship can provide, such as sharing the experience of the world (MARQUES, 2005, p. 8). Therefore, communication is, at the same time, this interaction that takes place between people in a direct way - whose meaning is interpreted and re-signified by each of the actors in the process, having as a by-product culture as the symbolic setting where communication takes place through the experience, through the interaction and sharing of knowledge; And at the same time, a discourse that can be mediated and understood collectively based on the worldview of the supports/platforms.

The forms of production and dissemination of a group's culture in the wake of communication – understood here as its forms of insertion in the world – are included in the category of the most important agents of socialization, protection and promotion of this knowledge. Understanding handicraft as an expression of a culture, we can infer that, in its essence, it is a way of communicating the way of being of a group. Communicating, in this sense, reverberates the breadth of the culture that defines and distinguishes its practitioners.

In a society where geographical borders are increasingly blurred, the use of communication tools is essential to expand the knowledge and access of the most diverse audiences to this rich production, which is understood to be essential not only for the sustenance of those who they have handicrafts as their main source of income, but also to strengthen the roots of this cultural expression.

How can communication do this? Intermediating producers and consumers, building a market by attracting potential customers and even projecting an image that adds at the same time appreciation, a feeling of uniqueness and expertise and respect for those who have not yet been engulfed by a market that equals and indifference to everyone. According to Schimidt (2011, p. 125):

The crafts of each location and each group will be able to issue information about themselves – their producer, their people, their location – neighborhood, city or region, and consequently an entire cultural profile – identifying subjects in search of their stories.

More specifically, we can evoke marketing communication – one of the component typologies of a wider spectrum, which is organizational communication, a classification adopted by Kunsch in 2003 – being the one “responsible for all symbolic expressions of a mixture of instruments for persuasive communication, with the aim of conquering the consumer”. It is in this perspective that we can situate this “branch” of communication with the purpose not only of spreading handicrafts and making them a source of profit for workers who work in this area. In addition, Churchill (2005) states that communication intends to arouse interest in a specific audience, drawing their attention to the qualities of the product-service it presents. In this aspect, communication will allow the opening of a window between the sender and the receiver, at the same time as it institutes and projects a new way for both to relate, mediating production and consumption.

In this called information age, where there are more precise levels of production, there is a need to adopt more targeted communication. Thus, artisans, in addition to the quality that permeates their work, need to maintain skills and competences to grow and prosper. And this undoubtedly requires the adoption of communication policies that are responsible for coordinating the interaction of the actors involved.

Within the broad spectrum of these policies, we can elect some specific tools that not only publicize the products – valuing their uniqueness, identity and origin – but that transform them into symbols of a history, as vectors of certain concepts and values. Without communication, a product is just a product. Within a communicational level, the product is much more than that, it is a vehicle for culture, thought, and popular expression (RUBIM, 2000, p. 31).

For this to be possible, an elaborate dissemination plan is needed that involves the use of social networks – in particular, those that have more reach in the target audience; in addition to partnerships with specific websites and blogs in which artisans can not only show their productions, but above all tell their story to attract and retain a clientele. The dissemination planning also involves the production of catalogues, flyers, labels, folders and even various types of packaging that will communicate the intangible basis of artisan objects, from the perspective of the immaterial heritage that they are.

5. Conclusion

Trying to propose the use of communication tools for the artisanal market in Maranhão is at the same time a way of valuing the identity of artisans, their way of reproducing the reality in which they live, as well as serving as a gateway to social inclusion for a State where the rates of unemployment are glaring.

Through the tools already mentioned, it is not intended that the products lose the essence of the way they were built and/or manufactured: on the contrary, it is intended that they are even more valued in line with their identity origin and that they promote consumption responsible. The customer to be sought is the one who will link the purchased product to a belonging, a region, an ancestry, while strengthening the local workforce and the region.

In this way, we have as a consequence the strengthening and preservation of the culture inherent to each product and why not say to the tourist environment and its various potentials, bringing about the recovery of the pride of those who live in the region and affirmation of values. Linking communication tools planning to handicrafts from Maranhão consolidates the regional culture and goes beyond the perspective of a mere subsistence task to a profitable and profitable business.

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