

Aesthetic Experience and Creativity of Expert Cultural Entrepreneurs in Colombia: A Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative research addresses the psychological study of the confluence between aesthetic experience and creative process in cultural entrepreneurs, taking into account that research in Psychology of Aesthetics and Psychology of Creativity is necessary to achieve a better understanding of innovation in creative industries. We conducted a qualitative study on the role of aesthetic experience in the creative process, through in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 12 expert cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean. As a result of a thematic analysis, we found that aesthetic experience is a relevant guide in the creativity of cultural entrepreneurs, usually represented in receptivity to aesthetic sensations that emerge during the creative process. Also, in the midst of the creative process, the entrepreneurs try to maintain a balance between individual and collective needs.

KEYWORDS:

aesthetic experience, creativity, cultural entrepreneurs, creative industries, qualitative research, thematic analysis, psychology of aesthetics, psychology of creativity, Colombia, Caribbean

Article history:

Received: July 3, 2024

Received in revised form: September 29, 2024

Accepted: October 31, 2024

ISSN 2354-0036

DOI: 10.2478/ctra-2024-0015

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INTRODUCTION

When cultural entrepreneurs create new artistic objects, they aesthetically experience those products in a unique way, different to the public that appreciates that object, service or experience. In the case of entrepreneurs, they are observing the product from its inception, changing over the time. In the case of the public, they encounter a product of that process. The present qualitative study aims to address a question related to the aesthetic experience and creativity of cultural of entrepreneurs: How is the relationship between aesthetic experience and creativity from the point of view of cultural entrepreneurs?

Although the concept of creativity has not reached consensus, there are common elements among the conceptualizations. First, creativity is the ability to generate new and useful ideas (Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt 2016; Ford 1996; Mumford & Gustafson 1988; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993). In addition, creativity addresses problems and state them in a divergent manner (Chiecher et al., 2018). Secondly, the production of ideas is aimed at creating new resources, means, or factors (Muñoz, 2011) to solve problems (Chiecher et al., 2018). Finally, creativity is based on existing mental schemes and knowledge. In turn, creativity is influenced by a variety of evolutionary, social, and educational experiences that allow it to manifest itself in diverse contexts (Krumm, Arán, & Bustos, 2014).

In the present qualitative study, we understand creativity as a process of generating ideas, a process of solving a problem, as well as a new idea and a solution to a problem (Amabile 1983 cited by Amabile et al., 2005; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt 2016) in certain social context (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). This definition of creativity allows us to understand the creative process and results of creativity in the social setting in which the person is immersed.

Arden, Chavez, Grazioplene, and Jung (2010), mention that creativity implies usefulness, beauty, and innovation. If we consider that definition of creativity, we encounter a gap in knowledge regarding the role of beauty and the role of aesthetic experience in the creative process. Usually, the dominant definition of creativity omits the aesthetic component, privileging only the useful and novel aspects. Other researchers have proposed that elegance is part of creative ideas (Robledo et al., 2012). However, this aesthetic attribute of elegance has not been studied in depth, in reference to the creative process. Aesthetic experience can be understood, from Psychology, as the experience of beauty, taste, or interest that arises from the interaction with works of art, landscapes, objects, and with other people (Smith & Tinio, 2014).

THEORETICAL BASIS OF THE CONDUCTED RESEARCH

The present study draws on the Componential Model of Creativity (Amabile 1997; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt, 2016). The model proposes, within its interactionist perspective, that the individual component of creativity is a process formed by various constructs (i.e., skills in the task

domain, intrinsic motivation to do the task, and creativity-relevant processes), influencing the creativity of the person in the workplace. Taking into account the Componential Model of Creativity (Amabile, 1997; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt, 2016), we consider individual creativity, not only as a result, but also as a process involving multiple constructs influencing the creativity of expert cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean region. In this case, the aesthetic experience would be another relevant construct at the individual level playing a role in the individual creativity, in the context of expert cultural entrepreneurs of the Colombian Caribbean region.

In this sense, if we aim to understand the creative process, it is necessary to explore its aesthetic dimension; an element overlooked in Psychology research. Research reporting 25 qualitative studies of creativity in organizational settings found that those studies explored the role of interpersonal interactions, how creativity is unfolded in different sectors, and elements that foster or undermine creativity (Monroy, Gutierrez-Gonzalez, & Barrios, 2023). None of those 25 studies explored the confluence between aesthetics and creativity. Such aesthetic aspects of creativity are relevant in creative industries that explicitly revolve around the aesthetic experience of producers and consumers. Consequently, one of the first steps to understand creativity in creative industries is to study the role of aesthetic experience in the creative process, in cultural entrepreneurs.

There are studies that have tested aesthetic experience and creativity (An & Young, 2018; Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021). However, research on the confluence of creativity and aesthetics in psychology is still limited. Those studies tested the relation of aesthetics and creativity by assessing the exposition to digital interactive artworks consisting of photographs (Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021), appreciating artwork (van Gogh's paintings), and reading poetic lyrics ("Blowin' in the Wind" by Bob Dylan; see also An & Young, 2018), or by pictures of everyday design products (Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021). In contrast, our qualitative study explores the role of aesthetic experience within the creative process of cultural entrepreneurs. Moreover, previous research studied the relation of aesthetics and creativity in lab-based quantitative studies (An & Young, 2018; Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021) with samples of university students (An & Young, 2018; Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021). None of the samples of these previous studies consisted of experts; all the studies were quantitative and did not explore the context of organizations and the workplace.

In previous studies, creativity was assessed with tests and creativity tasks (Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021). Savaş, Verwijmeren, and van Lier, (2021) measured Cognitive Flexibility, a component of creativity, with "The Unusual Uses Task" of Guilford (1967). To assess creativity, An and Young (2018) engaged participants in two creative tasks: one was to brainstorm design ideas for a new computer keyboard within 3 minutes. The other was to list as many creative brand names as possible for a new pasta product in the same timeframe. Yeh, Hsu and Yastrubinskiy, (2021) measured participants' creativity with Product-based Figural Creativity Test" (PB-FCT) of Yeh, Kao, and Peng, (2013). Our study is focused on exploring the aesthetic experience and creativity of experts in creative industries; due to the nature of their work as cultural entrepreneurs, they are creative in their work. Moreover, the aesthetic experience is a key element in their creative work, since they

are producing artistic objects. Since our study consists of experts and we wanted to have a deeper exploration of the confluence of aesthetic experience in their workplace creativity, a qualitative methodology (with interviews as a tool for data collection) was chosen.

Regarding the definitions of creativity and aesthetic experience, our study has some similarities and differences with previous research (An & Young, 2018; Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021). For instance, the study of Savaş, Verwijmeren, and van Lier, (2021) does not discuss nor does it define creativity in their study. Instead, they discuss the importance of cognitive flexibility for creativity performance. Cognitive flexibility is the divergent aspect of a creative performance.

The definition of creativity of Yeh, Hsu, and Yastrubinskiy, (2021) as well as that of An and Young (2018) and their implications for organizational success are in line with most of the ideas of our study. Although these studies are analyzing aesthetics and creativity (An & Young, 2018; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021), they do not emphasize aesthetic aspects of the creative process itself (as most of the creativity research). For instance, those studies do not mention aesthetic elements in their definition of creativity.

The definitions of aesthetic experiences in previous studies are people's appreciation of art and beauty (An & Young, 2018; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021) and the emotional experiences that art elicits on participants when they encounter art (Savaş, Verwijmeren, & van Lier, 2021; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021). Similar to the definition of aesthetic experience in most of these studies (An & Young, 2018; Yeh, Hsu, & Yastrubinskiy, 2021), our study is focused on the experience of beauty and taste that results from the interaction with art. However, our definition of aesthetic experience is drawn from Smith and Tino's (2014) conceptualization, which regards additional elements such as judgements of liking, interestingness and ugliness, among others, in relation to art, landscapes, everyday objects, and other people. To get a richer understanding of cultural entrepreneurs' reality, regarding creativity and aesthetic experience, we aimed to study their aesthetic experience and creativity in a deeper level.

Our study also draws on the concept of aesthetic experience addressed by Leder and Nadal (2014), which synthesizes a conceptual framework by considering philosophical (Shusterman, 1997), psychological (Leder et al., 2004), and neuropsychological (Chatterjee & Vartanian, 2014) perspectives. According to Leder and Nadal (2014), the aesthetic experience involves sensory-motor, evaluative, affective, and semantic/meaning dimensions. In this line, it is plausible that certain aesthetic experiences are primarily influenced by the perceptual qualities of the object, while others are more significantly shaped by its emotional or meaningful dimensions. In addition, the authors propose that aesthetic experiences do not commence after perceptual processes or even simultaneously with them. Rather, their model suggests that aesthetic experience begins prior to actual perception, originating from the social discourse that shapes expectations. This context influences these expectations, creating an environment that enhances the perceived aesthetic value of an object.

In reference to creativity, one of the benefits of understanding and fostering creative thinking is its democratization (Romo, 1998; Romo & Alfonso, 2003). The massive promotion of creative

thinking in the population can become an impetus for innovation in a variety of contexts, from small and medium-sized businesses to the largest organizations. Democratization of creativity can overcome imitative entrepreneurship (Koellinger, 2008), to progress to innovative entrepreneurship (Koellinger, 2008), capable of achieving great economic and social development (Anokhin & Wincent, 2012).

This highlights the need to study and foster creativity. However, according to Long (2014), in the study of creativity, quantitative methodology has been dominant and only 13% of studies correspond to qualitative research. If this quantitative predominance is sustained, it is feasible to develop a partial understanding of creativity. Therefore, different methods are needed to increase a complete psychological understanding of creativity. More specifically, qualitative research on creativity in organizational contexts is even scarcer. As stated earlier, previous research has reported 25 qualitative studies on creativity in organizations and the workplace (Monroy, Gutierrez-Gonzalez, & Barrios, 2023). According to Silvia et al. (2012), to move forward research on creativity, social scientists must test different creativity scales, as many as possible. Here, we adhere to that reflection. We propose that, in addition to testing a variety of scales, it is necessary to explore creativity from different paradigms.

The confluence between aesthetic experience and creativity in cultural entrepreneurs has not been studied from psychology nor qualitative research. In the light of the relevance to understand and foster creativity, in this study we aim to understand psychological meanings present in the confluence between aesthetic experience and creativity in expert cultural entrepreneurs. To this end, we interviewed 12 cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean.

METHODS

A qualitative methodology was selected in order to understand realities in terms of perceptions and experiences, thus allowing new themes to be explored without the limitation of predefined variables (Miles, 1979), so the approach to qualitative data was done in an inductive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the epistemology of social constructionism (Braun & Clarke, 2006), thematic analysis was utilized for the present study. Thus, we aim to understand the complexity of the phenomena and the participants involved, their processes, and the factors involved, having clarity about what developed in particular contexts (Hindle, 2010).

The interviews with cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean were in-depth and semi-structured. Each entrepreneur was interviewed in 45 to 90 minutes. There were three in-person interviews and nine virtual, through video calls. Both interview modes, online interviews, and face-to-face interviews, helped to understand the phenomena well. A study comparing statistically the effects of the in-person and virtual interviews found that these two interview modes provide on participants the same level of engagement, the same level of understanding of interview questions, and no difference in participants' concentration levels (Peasgood et al., 2023). As there are no differences in these vital aspects of the interview process in either virtual or face-to-face

interviews, the interview modes of this study provided useful and suitable information to interpret the phenomena. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, since it was the first language of the participants, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Universidad del Norte. Participants signed an informed consent indicating their voluntary participation.

Sample

We focused on 12 participants, since we obtained an approximation to conceptual saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Kline, 2017). The research was conducted in the city of Barranquilla, Colombia, involving participants from the same city or that developed their creative work in nearby areas of the region.

Colombia's cultural landscape is characterized by its ethnic diversity, which includes historical influences from Amerindians, Europeans, and Africans (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006). The Mestizo population, comprised by syntheses of these cultural backgrounds, constitutes the majority of the country's inhabitants, alongside Afro-Colombian and indigenous minorities (Chaves & Zambrano, 2006). One of the key cities in the Colombian Caribbean is Barranquilla, renowned for its Carnival. The Barranquilla Carnival was designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a "masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity" (UNESCO, 2003), underscoring its global significance and cultural importance.

As this research was qualitative, our aim was not to generalize results to the population. Our aim was to understand the meanings of cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean regarding the relationship between aesthetic experience and creativity. Qualitative research does not attempt to generalize results. Qualitative research looks for examples of behavior, explores the thoughts and feelings of participants, and interprets participants' experiences of the phenomena of interest in a given context (Austin & Sutton, 2014). This research provided rich information that helps us to understand how the aesthetic experience and creative process of participants is in the context of expert cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean region.

As this research used a purposeful sampling of experts, it did not seek to form a large sample of experts. In purposeful sampling, the aim is not to find a large sample; instead, the aim of purposeful sampling is to intentionally select participants that will best help to understand the phenomena (Creswell, 2014). Moreover, our sample consists of experts, samples of experts tend to be smaller since experts are a minority in any given population. Expert sampling was used, which refers to selecting participants who have special knowledge about a theme and are willing to share their knowledge about it (Frey, 2018). In this case, participants were cultural entrepreneurs with 10 or more years of experience. A national directory of artists and recommendations of people who might be interested in participating voluntarily in the process, made by each research participant, were taken into account. In terms of age, all participants in the present study can be characterized as middle-aged adults, as middle adulthood comprises the age range of 40 to 65 years approximately. A brief description of each cultural entrepreneur (CE) is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Profiles of the cultural entrepreneurs participating in the research.

Cultural Entrepreneur (CE)	Gender	Background
CE 1	Male	Artistic director and playwright. Founder of cultural events that promote Barranquilla's carnival.
CE 2	Male	Musician. Director of a foundation that develops events for artists and amateurs.
CE 3	Male	Director of radio programs. Film producer. Creator of cultural spaces to promote music. Literary editor.
CE 4	Male	Film producer and cultural manager. Director of a foundation that promotes short films.
CE 5	Male	Renowned plastic artist, playwright.
CE 6	Female	Director of a traditional dance of Barranquilla's carnival.
CE 7	Male	Writer. Director and teacher of creative writing workshops.
CE 8	Male	Cultural manager and cultural advisor. Director of a foundation that promotes events commemorating traditional music.
CE 9	Female	Cultural manager. Director of a foundation that promotes arts and dance.
CE 10	Female	Publicist and editor of books and publications related to the cultural sector.
CE 11	Female	Fashion designer, renowned in the Colombian Caribbean.
CE 12	Male	Cultural manager. Playwright and theatre director.

RESULTS

Thematic analysis guided our data analysis. This method identifies, analyses, and reports themes or patterns in the data, allowing for an organized and enriched description (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Due to its flexibility, thematic analysis facilitates an interpretation of the data that remains detailed and faithful to the complexity of the reality studied (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In this study, we report the themes and subthemes that represent the life, experiences, situations, and knowledge of the entrepreneurs in the generation of their creative products. Each theme proposed from participants' discourse is described. Extracts from the interviews were cited with the initials EC (Cultural Entrepreneur), followed by an identifying number to guarantee participant's confidentiality. Five themes were proposed to interpret the experiences that are interwoven in the creation, development, and sustainability of creative endeavors. Theme 1 and Theme 2 illustrate the role of aesthetic experience in the creative process of cultural entrepreneurs.

Theme 1: Preferences shape creations

This theme is categorized into two subthemes that show the role of preferences in the development of cultural and artistic products. These preferences can be the cultural entrepreneur's own or the public's preferences. The subthemes are "my preferences shape the creations" and "public's preferences shape creations."

"My preferences shape the creations" allows us to illustrate the influence of artists' preferences and tastes when making their creations. This is how the preferences, interests, perceptions, past

stories, among other factors of each entrepreneur subjectively set the tone for what they wish to capture. For instance, according to CE 1:

CE 1: *"I believe that the experience with aesthetics relates to this, it involves how one shapes it through their experiences, their idiosyncrasy, their perspective, and their expectations with life. One also influences both the appreciation of the work and the creation of the work."*

However, there is a tendency among cultural entrepreneurs to represent their creations based on the gaps they observe in their territories, needs that become preferences, as they imply an emotional bond with aspects that generates positive experiences, a useful environment for learning (especially cultural), and promote collective interaction. In the following extract, Cultural Entrepreneur 4 (CE 4) explains this.

CE 4: *"Let's say that a person does not have an opportunity to go to a film festival, to watch this type of material. So, that is where that need arises, how we can show people that there are other ways of telling and how we can attract them. An experience of forming an audience, how we can attract the average citizen to consume culture, in this case, cinematographic products."*

In addition, cultural entrepreneurs, based on the influence of their own tastes and interests, work to promote recreational resources for their regions, so much so that they invest their potential and make use of team cooperation to build new projects, find financing, and obtain institutional support.

Cultural Entrepreneur 6 (CE 6) illustrates the above in the following extract:

CE 6: *"The need that existed was that many of us who are currently in the Foundation like theatre, and well, we saw that in the region many municipalities have a theater festival (...). And well, there is a lot of potential here, many actors, many people who like theater, many people who like the performing arts. And that's how we got the idea. Well, every municipality has one festival (EC 6 mentions the name of the municipality), let's do it. And that's how we did it."*

Likewise, the role of the public in their artistic and cultural creations is evident in the subtheme "public's preferences shape creations" in which cultural entrepreneurs from their first instances in public settings detail and put into observation everything commented by the public, who ultimately are the essential clients and consumers of their works. This is why many of the preferences, interests, and desires are also built in community with the influence of social interactions, since the original development and innovation of many municipalities is genuinely deposited in these social factors. The Cultural Entrepreneur 12 (CE 12) shows how the interests of the Departmental Public Health Secretariat play a key role in the creation of a new work:

CE 12: *"On one occasion the Departmental Public Health Secretariat also needed a play that was about psychoactive consumption or psychoactive substances and I sat down to write and we created a play (...) that was also very beautiful and was well received (...). So it starts from a need more than anything."*

Given this, it is highlighted that the preferences that underpin the creations are linked to the artists' own preferences and tastes, which obey the subjective and individual nature of the process. On the other hand, the preferences of the public are guided by collective needs.

Theme 2: I must like the path and the destination

This theme refers to the importance of liking and enjoyment for the cultural entrepreneur. Indeed, the creative process and the creative result must be something that the cultural entrepreneur likes and enjoys. This means that for the interviewed cultural entrepreneurs, the aesthetic experience is a compass that guides them on the path to their destination. For example, Cultural Entrepreneur 5 (CE 5) expresses the importance of having intrinsic motivation, which allows him to enjoy the art he creates in order to continue with his creative efforts and to evolve as an artist by creating new material.

EC5: "When you discover that you are passionate about art, because that is the key word, falling in love with things to be able to move forward with them. One realizes that it is like a chain of links that grow without realizing how they grow, one explores with new elements and forms, with new dimensions, because there is one thing that is important and that is talent, attitude. The attitude one has within oneself."

The importance of carrying out their cultural and artistic projects is also evident. These expert entrepreneurs take into account that the creative result generates pleasure and enjoyment for them. In this regard, Cultural Entrepreneur 2 (CE 2) and CE 10 illustrate the following:

CE 2: "Repetition is simply a study process for me (...) What I like is, more than anything, making my own music or making my own projects."

CE 10: "When I leave this place, I have always believed that the person who can best present your product is you yourself. So, when I go out to visit a client with two or three logo proposals, I am in love with all three. I am convinced that all three will serve the purpose of what you want to sell, and any of the three will be accepted."

The previous excerpts express the importance for cultural entrepreneurs of enjoying the creative process as a way to be consistent with their creations and to achieve their objectives. It also shows how relevant it is for the artist to like their creation in order to persist in the creative product. The next theme (Theme 3) was developed from the meaning that cultural entrepreneurs give to creativity.

Theme 3: The creative product benefits society

The management practiced by cultural entrepreneurs must be at the forefront, seek harmony, and facilitate achieving sustainable success in society, along with the growth of its inhabitants. What's more, CEs see their entrepreneurship as a legacy that benefits the community. Cultural Entrepreneur 2 illustrates this in the following extract:

CE 2: *"Since we do social work, it is seen, it is noted, that people have become very interested in the product and changes their in their lives. A change towards the positive, in what sense? in that at least they have the joy of being able to share and see something that is not commonly done here."*

Cultural entrepreneurs facilitate the generation of solutions based on demands at a social level and champion these solutions, so that new generations or markets can take initiatives or ideas to achieve their own self-actualization. In fact, entrepreneurship becomes an engine that stimulates behaviors, affects, and cognitions for a positive attitude towards entrepreneurship. Cultural entrepreneur 4 (CE 4) illustrates this:

CE 4: *"And it is nice to see how, for example, we (...) have created a community cinema network. How many people to whom we have given community cinema workshops within the framework of the festival, today they want to dedicate to film production, then one knows that it is already an idea that is booming and has repercussions and is successful."*

In fact, creative products for community growth are built from the interaction with the world; the creative act is an initiative to build relationships, social gatherings, and solid bonds that allow new ideas to happen. So, being a creative entrepreneur allows one to involve other people to be part of one's own scenario. Therefore, this is an interdependent process in which communities are the heart of its progress. CE 6 states the above in the following extract:

CE 6: *"We are teaching how to make traditional ornament figurines to children between 7 and 11 years old and young people between 12 and 17 years old (...) in this way, we are preserving our culture and tradition. Regardless of the fact that we are going to become self-sustainable, we leave a beautiful, cultural, practical, homemade souvenir, and we are also weaving culture (sic), creating social fabric (sic), and preserving our culture with young people, with the basics of our culture (...)."*

In this way, the responses of participants link the creative act and the interdisciplinary growth of all areas of the human context. Thus, new educational tools will facilitate student learning, new cultural proposals will increase recreational spaces, or recover the historical memory of the community.

Theme 4: Beauty is in the essence, not just in the form

Beauty is an essential attribute of every creative act of cultural entrepreneurs. That is, for each new resource, element, event, or scenario in which the cultural entrepreneur wants to innovate, they first value and appreciate the beauty of that inner and outer world in a clear, understandable, and communicative way. Cultural Entrepreneur 9 (CE 9) and CE 8 state this in the following extracts:

CE 9: *"Make it elegant... The smile. The smile we put on that idea, how we show it. I think that we first unfold joy, that is, the elegance of an idea, that you show it with joy."*

CE 8: *"It all depends on that internal strength, that spirituality, that love that is expressed in the act of creation. That same strength, that same love, that same spirit from the organizing aspect of the creator is what will be transmitted to the audience. They might see a nice stage or other elements, but if there isn't harmony internally, that will be projected externally, no matter how many lights are used. It's like that communion of spirituality, the feeling of wanting to create beautiful things. That is what people will truly perceive as beautiful."*

In this way, sensations and emotions allow us to connect with our own world and create new, original, and authentic things. Creativity makes it easier to express feelings, imagination, and affiliations to ourselves and to the others.

In this sense, the aesthetic experience prevailed in the Cultural Entrepreneurs to create a product. The cultural entrepreneurs not only make the product aesthetically original and attractive; they also ensure that the product benefits others. The above is expressed in the following excerpt:

CE 11: "We are a super-close brand, we have always worked, we have taken care of the being, not the penny, but the being. There are companies that take care of the penny and concentrate on the material, there are others that take care of the being and concentrate more on the spiritual. So, the research has been the same, it has started with the common well-being, with the collective well-being."

In addition to the aesthetics considerations, cultural entrepreneurs consider the wellbeing of the society when they create, organize, and execute new ideas. Cultural entrepreneurs engage with these new elements becoming part of themselves. In other words, the creative product can be physically present, but it needs people's feelings and being part of themselves to be truly innovative and allow transcendence. The CE 6 highlight this in the following excerpt.

CE 6: "So believe me, that pays me everything, because good work is being done and I'm not just talking to you (CE 6 mentions his own name) but a team effort of everyone, because you can have a very nice wardrobe, very beautifully decorated, but if you don't know how to wear it, nothing to do. It is appropriating from the point of view as soon as you put on your costume, you are ready (the CE 6 mentions a typical costume from the Barranquilla carnival) and you show it off."

Theme 5: Everyone is deeply moved by the aesthetic experiences

This theme shows that for Cultural Entrepreneurs it is essential that the creative product is fully experienced from its ideation, development, to completion. Cultural Entrepreneurs consider that their product evokes sensations in themselves and in the others as a fundamental aesthetic experience. The CE 7 states it in the following extract:

CE 7: "Of course it is important, if it does not move me in principle, then I feel that it cannot move another person and the idea is that the reader is moved, which does not mean that it will move him physically speaking, but that it moves his soul, the heart, the thoughts or whatever we want to pass through the body of the reader, to his mind or his gut, that is essential."

This suggests that the elements, resources, new scenarios, or products that cultural entrepreneurs create are the experiences that they wish to project to society. Their creations are filled with emotions, pleasure, joy, or displeasure, among other aesthetic experiences and sensations, towards these new experiences, that can subsequently be transmitted to others. In this regard, Cultural Entrepreneur 5 (CE 5) and CE 3 express:

CE 5: *"Well, I'll tell you the following, they feel very good, the pleasure is aesthetic, the appreciation of a work of art is an aesthetic pleasure, you feel pleasant, happy. Although this does not mean that suddenly there are works that do not make us feel pleasant, but rather that they clash with a criticism of a time, of a situation that is occurring in society."*

CE 3: *"Once, I was invited to that [event name] to give a talk on this topic, and a photographer who was there told me it was the first time he had seen a conference where people ended up dancing. I had played some songs related to [the themes of the conference], and people ended up dancing. Those experiences are great, they are enjoyable".*

Likewise, in the case of CE 5 and CE 3 as well as for the majority of Cultural Entrepreneurs, the aesthetic experience not only encompasses beauty and joy, but also the unpleasant and ugly. This is illustrated in the following definition of Cultural Entrepreneur 5 (CE 5).

CE 5: *"The aesthetic experience is that feeling that people feel when faced with an external element that we like or dislike."*

For CEs, the important thing is that their cultural endeavors evoke their own feelings and those of others. Consequently, art facilitates the creation of shared experiences, so that the CE and the public can experience the creative product. This in turn shows that in CE there is a very close role between living and feeling its creative product to transmit its experience to others.

DISCUSSION

Creativity plays a relevant role in the economic, social, and cultural development of any society (Güss et al., 2018). This was evidenced as a key element in participants' discourse: creativity helped to benefit the consumers of their products socially and culturally. For cultural entrepreneurs, creativity is the element in their creations that helps society to preserve traditions in new ways and incorporate new cultural elements into community life.

Traditionally, from Psychology, conceptions of creativity mainly contemplate elements of novelty and usefulness (Amabile, 1988; Amabile et al., 2005; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt, 2016; Ford, 1996; Mumford & Gustafson, 1988; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993), in a certain social context (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012), focusing on solutions to society's problems. In addition to being different, creativity should be motivated by a situation in context. These definitions suggest that, in the field of psychology of creativity, aesthetic elements are usually absent from the concept of creativity.

The present research is relevant as we found that the aesthetic experience is a key element in the creative process of cultural entrepreneurs. Creativity encompasses usefulness and novelty in the context of cultural entrepreneurs. Additionally, creativity includes preferences and other aesthetic dimensions for the creation, development, and outcome of creative products.

In our findings, creativity is still conceived as the process of generating ideas, the process of solving problems, including new ideas and solutions of problems, in line with previous research

(Amabile, 1983 cited by Amabile et al., 2005; Amabile et al., 1996; Amabile & Pratt, 2016) in certain social contexts (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012). Besides, we found that creativity also covers the experience of beauty, taste, and interest; these aesthetic experiences are also relevant when creating and developing creative endeavors.

Our research seeks to understand the perspectives of cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean on the connection between aesthetic experience and creativity. According to our participants, interaction with other people is part of the creative and aesthetic process. Entrepreneurs' aesthetic experience and consumers' aesthetic judgement are relevant to the construction and development of the creative product.

Entrepreneurs described that experiences reveal the importance of aesthetics in the creative process. Aesthetic experiences and judgements of beauty and elegance are articulated to each person's vision. In turn, this vision fosters the creative process and product. Aesthetics is a decisive part of what the creative product will be and what will be sought with its creation. In that way, preferences shape creations, including those of the entrepreneur and those of the audience. This also shows that the aesthetic experience is important during the creative process, to the extent that cultural entrepreneurs report they must feel joy, interest, and pleasure in the ideation, development, and completion of their products.

We found that for entrepreneurs, it is meaningful to like the path and the destination. In addition to having an intrinsic motivation to undertake the process creatively, it is important for them to enjoy the process and the result of the creative product. The reasons why the cultural entrepreneur creates are diverse. However, they seek to generate well-being, create real and exclusive content, and preserve cultural values and traditions. In addition, they seek to train consumers about the different creative forms of a particular content. Thus, aesthetics shapes the creations, and, therefore, the ways in which the creative product benefits society.

Regarding the meaning of aesthetic experience, two themes show what aesthetic experience is for the participants of our study (in their context of cultural entrepreneurs). We found that both themes (Theme 4: Beauty is in the essence, not just in the form, and Theme 5: Everyone is deeply moved by the aesthetic experiences) are subject to the reflection of their creative process. Elegance and beauty often represent not only the creation itself (the product), but also how it is displayed on stage, meaning how it is finally transmitted to the public. For this reason, entrepreneurs express that beauty is not only the creation of a beautiful product, but also being. This shows that, for our participants, beauty and elegance represent all the explicit and implicit forms of self-improvement and self-criticism, present during the creative process, where they evaluate the creative product as it is being formed, even before being shown to peers or the public.

However, cultural entrepreneurs recognize that aesthetics for them is not only limited to evoking positive (pleasant) sensations in themselves and the public, but also encompasses negative (unpleasant) sensations depending on what they want to manifest in their creative product. Cultural entrepreneurs and the public are moved by aesthetics to appreciate and experience the creative product. While beauty is not only something pleasant, but also something that generates intense

experiences with the creative product in the entrepreneurs and in the viewers. The above allows us to show that *everyone is deeply moved by the aesthetic experiences*. In this way, we propose that for cultural entrepreneurs in the Colombian Caribbean region, creativity involves aesthetics, novelty, and usefulness at the service of society. This qualitative research helps to understand the role of aesthetic experience in the creative process of expert cultural entrepreneurs from the Colombian Caribbean region.

Considering the preceding paragraphs, we can affirm that the aesthetic experience is a key element in the creative process of cultural entrepreneurs. In summary, traditionally, the psychology of creativity has often overlooked aesthetic elements. However, our participants reported that creativity encompasses a range of aesthetic dimensions, including preferences for beauty, taste, and interest. Interactions with others also play a crucial role in both the creative and aesthetic processes. The aesthetic judgments of both entrepreneurs and consumers are essential in shaping the creative product and influencing its goals. The significance of aesthetic experiences during the creative process is underscored by participants' emphasis on the importance of feeling joy, interest, and pleasure throughout their creative journey. For these entrepreneurs, appreciating both the process and the final product is vital, as aesthetics not only shapes the creations but also impacts their societal benefits. Furthermore, elegance and beauty extend beyond the products themselves to include their presentation and public conveyance. While aesthetics is often associated with positive sensations, entrepreneurs acknowledge that it can also evoke negative sensations, depending on the intended message. Thus, creativity is framed as an interplay of aesthetics, novelty, and usefulness, all serving societal purposes.

Future research could explore such meanings and experiences in entrepreneurs from different industries and cultures. While our research provides insights into the cultural dynamics at play, we recognize the importance of extending this work to include participants from varied cultural backgrounds and industries. Future comparative studies could significantly enrich our findings and offer a broader understanding of the relation between aesthetic experience and creativity.

Our study has practical implications for the curriculum in entrepreneurship education. For example, systematic reviews on the contents of entrepreneurship education (Sirelkhatim & Gangi, 2015; Wong & Chan, 2022) do not report topics related to aesthetics or aesthetic experience. Considering that gap in knowledge, if now we take into account that the aesthetic experience is one of the guides in the creative process, educational policymakers and practitioners could include aesthetic experience themes in the curriculum. Moreover, these insights could be shared with novice cultural entrepreneurs to foster their creativity. In this manner, expert entrepreneurs can be a point of reference for novice entrepreneurs. As an illustration, educational policymakers could create and promote spaces for non-expert cultural entrepreneurs. In these spaces, expert cultural entrepreneurs would share their insights regarding the confluence between aesthetic experience and creativity. In turn, novices could be encouraged to reflect on these topics. However, to err on the side of caution, further research is recommended to develop educational applications of the confluence between aesthetic experience and creativity.

Finally, another implication from our research is to consider the potential of the aesthetic experience in the creative process. That is, during the formulation and development of the creative idea, cultural entrepreneurs are sensitive to creating and developing a creative product that they judge as beautiful (or ugly, among other aesthetic judgements). They consider their own aesthetic experience as well as the aesthetic experience of the public. These experiences become a “compass” that guides the creative process. In this way, the creative product can be useful, novel and aesthetic, and maintain the intrinsic motivation of the entrepreneur throughout the creative process.

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