

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM: A case study on *Filó Talian* (Caçador, Brazil)

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to understand how Filò, a custom that originated with the Italian immigrants, can be preserved through tourism in the city of Caçador, in the Brazilian State of Santa Catarina. This is a qualitative/exploratory research which employed the case study method. As a result, we verified that the event still occurs in a family-like way, and preserves many of the immigrants' original characteristics, keeping their ancestors' culture alive and sparking interest among the local population as well as among people from other cities. We also concluded that in order to become a tourism product, not only should the event be expanded, but adaptations also need to be made to the infrastructure and workforce. This would enable a larger audience to be reached. It is also necessary to preserve the original features of the event and associate it with experiential travel, whereby tourists experience the local reality and exchange knowledge with the community.

Keywords: Intangible heritage. Tourism. Filó Talian.

INTRODUCTION

Technology, modernization and globalization are factors that constantly influence our lives in today's society, and as a result, preserving the tangible and intangible cultural heritage has become an increasing challenge. At the same time, society is coming to realize the negative effects of excessive technology, which results in age-old values, like contact with nature, popular customs and knowledge, becoming forgotten.

The search for better quality of life and the desire for memorable experiences are also generating a new trend in tourism, in which tourists seek to be the protagonists of their own adventures, rather than playing a secondary role.

Within this context, tourism becomes a relevant tool that can help meet or even exceed tourists' expectations, diversify the market and, consequently, preserve the culture of a given location. Cultural heritage can be seen as a way of protecting the customs and cultures of our ancestors. An example of this intangible heritage that deserves to be preserved is Filò, a custom brought to Brazil by the Italian immigrants.

Filò would take place in Italy, usually after dinner, when families gathered to protect themselves against the cold weather, pray, do some handcrafting, and talk. After working hard and achieving better living conditions in Brazil, the immigrants turned Filò into a festival, while not forgetting its origins. Nowadays, Filò is a party filled of joy, music, and traditional food, especially on cold winter nights in the South of Brazil.

The intangible culture of the Italian immigrants - Filò in particular, which represents the tradition of family unity – has largely been forgotten, and is now only present in small groups. Therefore, tools are needed, to preserve and promote the practice.

Nowadays, there is great interest in knowing more about a given people's knowledge and praxis, as well as their origins and traditions passed from generation to generation. In this context, tourism is a way of keeping the collective memory alive.

Thus, tourism provides a way of preserving and promoting this identity, encouraging the protection of a given people's culture. It is easy to see, then, the importance of tourism for protecting the intangible heritage, such as a community's memory.

The objective of this paper is to understand how the Filò Talian can contribute to the protection and promotion of this heritage in the city of Caçador, in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina state, through tourism.

This is an exploratory research with a qualitative approach, using the case study method. It uses techniques such as literature/document research and active observation, as well as informal interviews with the event organizer and participants.

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Cultural heritage can be recognized as a full social fact, as it represents all aspects of a given culture or social group. Through cultural heritage, one can get to know the peculiarities of a culture (Silva, 2012).

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It is an amalgamation of natural objects or products of human activity composed of material, spiritual, scientific, historic, and artistic assets from different time periods that represent human development. As such, it should be preserved and presented, for current and future generations (Puente et al., 2012).

Over time, the concept of Cultural Heritage has been amplified. Besides tangible assets, such as historical buildings, it now it also includes landscapes, cultural expressions, handicrafts, and other particularities of a certain group.

Thus, cultural heritage is defined as the knowledge and praxis of a people, their expressions and traditions that allude to this very people's history. Preserving these assets means caring for them, seeking to deepen the sense of belonging, amplifying the exercise of citizenship, and improving quality of life (Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional [IPHAN], 2012).

Cultural heritage is also related to the memory of a given social group, which consists of recollections, experiences, and knowledge. Together, these are transformed into peculiar characteristics, so that the next generations can know and understand their history and origins and also build their futures, knowing what differentiates them from other groups.

The memory of a people supports its development, allowing the future to be built and shaping citizenship accordingly. The great increase in modernity, and technology are barriers to the preservation of identity. Alongside all the technological growth, there is also an increasing concern to protect humankind's cultural heritage (Leite, 2011).

The idea of preserving cultural heritage in Brazil did not start until the birth of the modernist movement, in the 1920s. Only in 2000 did it begin to include cultural assets, encompassing the everyday activities of ordinary people (Figueiredo, 2015).

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Similarly, it is possible to identify an opportunity for preserving and promoting cultural heritage through tourism, considering all the habits and customs of a given nucleus (Ignarra, 2003).

Cultural tourism is born out of an association between cultural identity and territory, defining a sort of cultural frontier, based on a highlighting of distinctive elements such as language, traditions, dance, music, and food (Guevara, 2011).

Moreover, cultural tourism renovates the economy through the selling of handicrafts and handmade items, generating jobs and income for the location and drawing even more tourists (Kim & Kim, 2013).

TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS OF THE ITALIAN IMMIGRANTS

Traditional festivities and cultural events alike are expressions that refer to authenticity, i.e. adopting rituals from the past in such a way that they are as true to the original as possible. In the case of events, authenticity is conferred by the reproduction of rituals and cultural features as faithfully and precisely as possible (McCartney & Osti, 2007).

These festivals also help local communities show their cultural attributes, and are an opportunity to reinforce a sense of identity (Buch et al., 2011). Cultural identity, in turn, "may be built by a group of individuals who share common characteristics. A person may feel that he/she belongs to a certain group even though he/she may have been born in another" (loose translation) (Lavandoski et al., 2012, p. 218).

Despite the unfavorable historical context, Italian families who settled in Brazil have contributed to the development of the country by building houses, churches, schools, and industries. Besides this tangible heritage, be it architectural or landscape-related, Italians and their descendants have also brought in cultural specificities, which were incorporated into the Brazilian ones and are present even to this day. The Italian influence can be seen especially in the vocabulary and cuisine (A. Zanella, personal statement, February 23, 2015).

Therefore, as emphasized by A. Zanella (personal statement, February 23, 2015), the term Talian refers to an amalgamation of diverse ways of talking and different cultures. The immigrants, who came from several regions of Italy, spoke various dialects, and the distribution of these families across small properties in Brazil led to a mix of dialects. These dialects incorporated expressions from the Portuguese language, creating a new kind of speech; hence the birth of the Talian language in Brazil.

Talian can be found in hundreds of publications, including booklets, dictionaries, and grammar books. Today, it is considered a Brazilian Cultural Reference (Decree no. 7,387,

December 9, 2010) and has been included in the National Inventory of Linguistic Diversity (Minutes; Meeting of the Comissão Técnica do Inventário Nacional da Diversidade Linguística [CT-INDL], September 9, 2014).

Besides the language, Italian immigrants also left a vast cultural legacy, which has not only been passed on to their descendants, but as spread to the whole community who lived in the regions where they settled. This legacy includes, in particular, festivals, games, and cuisine. Conedera (2015, p. 912) states that:

[...] the festivals and family gatherings not only allowed the Italians to fraternize, but also acted as a space that enabled the reinforcement and recollection of customs and habits that peninsular families used to practice in their homeland. Festivals provided an opportunity for the group who experienced migration to bond (loose translation).

The extensive cultural legacy passed on by the Italians includes *Filò*, a practice that was perpetuated by the immigrant families, as a break from the work routine and a way of connecting with the far-off homeland. It usually took place on Saturday evenings at the homes of relatives, neighbors or friends, and involved activities such as traditional card games (*quadrilho*, *scopa*, *tressete*, and *bríscola*), *mora* (a game in which players simultaneously should out a random number and show their hands. Whoever guessed the total number was the winner), praying, discussing everyday problems, or simply chatting. "The length of the get-together depended on their capacity to make up stories or tales, how willing they were to sing or play cards, how much wine was available, etc." (loose translation) (Radin, 2003, p. 77).

Filò was a tradition of poor families in Italy. With no firewood, they would meet with neighbors at stables in order to keep warm. As a distraction, families would some handicrafting, tell stores, anecdotes, short tales, and folk tales. Italian immigrants brought this custom to southern Brazil, where families would gather after dinner. In the early years, they would write letters to their relatives back in Italy, and read out letters they had received (Radin, 2003).

As A. Zanella (personal statement, February 23, 2015) emphasizes, as the years passed by, and living conditions have improved, traditional food was incorporated into the meetings, such as chicken soup, chicken stew, bread, fogassa (a kind of sweet bread), pien (a traditional stuffing), grústolo, cuca, fregolà (a traditional dessert of shell-roasted peanuts), sweet potatoes, grape juice, and homemade wine.

And so Filò became a cheerful party organized by the Italian families, with lots of music, singing, and traditional cuisine – while not forgetting about its origins, born out of hard times. The aims were to visit loved ones, play traditional games, eat, tell stories, sing, laugh, and, of course, pray the rosary (E. Marostica, personal statement, February 23, 2015).

METHOD

This paper presents how Filò, a custom of the Italians who made history in Brazil, can be preserved through tourism in the city of Caçador (Santa Catarina). It is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach, using the case study method, and allowing researchers to extract important holistic features of the event in real life, such as the behavior of small groups (Yin, 2010).

Exploratory research brings more familiarity with the theme at hand, making it more visible and involving a literature review, interviews, and analysis of examples (Gil, 2007).

In the qualitative approach, the investigator works with a universe of meanings, beliefs, values, and attitudes, initiating a deep relationship with the investigated phenomena (Minayo, 2001).

For this study, we initially conducted in bibliographic research on the following databases: SciELO (Scientific Electronic Library Online) and EBSCO (Elton B. Stephens Company) - using search terms such as "intangible heritage", "cultural preservation", "cultural tourism", "Italian immigrants", and "cultural festivals" -; Google Scholar - with the search term "Filò" -; books related to the theme; and document research (Federação de

Entidades Ítalo-Brasileiras e de Mestres e Ofícios da Cultura Talian, Prefeitura Municipal de Caçador - FEIBEMO).

Data were collected through informal, non-structured interviews and active observation. We conducted interviews with the vice-president of the Federação de Entidades Ítalo-Brasileiras e de Mestres e Ofícios da Cultura Talian [Federation of Italian-Brazilian Entities and Masters and Officials of the Talian Culture] - FEIBEMO, who is also a Talian Master and Filò Organizer in the city of Caçador. Some participants of the event, which was held on July 25, 2015 and July 23, 2016, were also interviewed.

Interviews are a form of flexible social interaction in which the interviewer may adapt to the people and circumstances around him/her, entering a deep universe of human behavior (Gil, 1999; Lakatos & Marconi, 2003). Interviews may be informal, focused, have a script, or be formalized. In this study, we used the informal type, which is less structured, and our objective was to collect data, as recommended for exploratory studies (Gil, 1999).

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During an observation, the researcher uses his/her senses for collection information about the phenomenon being studied, which results in the investigator being closer than usual to the object of study. Active observation implies direct contact and involvement of the researcher with the universe being analyzed, gaining the group's trust and making its members aware of the importance of the study (Gil, 1999).

Our data analysis therefore considered all the information obtained from the bibliographic research, documental research, interviews, and observation, allowing a comprehensive interpretation of the object being studied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The heritage of a given location, be it tangible or intangible, is the representation of all of the inhabitants' legacy as shaped throughout the years. It is important not only because it allows the past and its transformations to be known, but also because it is a potential strategy in tourism development.

Filò occurs in Caçador, and was born primarily as a way to protect and spread the traditions brought in by the Italians, who came in large numbers from Veneto (northern Italy) to Brazil in the 1874, first arriving in the city of Vitória, Espírito Santo - ES.

The Caçador region was able to welcome the first Italian settlers thanks to the construction of the São Paulo-Rio Grande railway, which reached the city in 1910. In 1923, the district of Rio Caçador was created, first subordinated to the city of Campos Novos, but soon achieving city status in 1934. Caçador is located in the midwestern area of the state, and is home 75,048 inhabitants. Its economy is based on wood harvesting (which today relies on reforestation of pine trees), farming, and plastic/copper wire/metal/lumber industries, as well as highway transport (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [IBGE], n. a.).

Due to the high number of Italian descendants in the city and the influence of associations and the FEIBEMO, Municipal Law no. 2,662, 11/20/2009 established Filò Day, to be celebrated in Caçador on July 22.

Each year, the organization is responsible for Filò, which takes place at the residence of Aliduino Zanella, one of the FEIBEMO's founders and its current vice-president. The event attracts around 60 people, who are incorporated into the culture, in a family environment, in an urban area of the city.

This custom, brought in Italian immigrants who settled in Caçador, consisted of neighboring families gathering on cold winter nights at the home of one of the participants. It continued from after dinner until bedtime, and people may gather to celebrate an occasion, such as a birthday, or simply get together to talk about business, chat, play *quadrilho*, etc. The host family would, perhaps as a surprise, serve *brodo* (chicken soup), *lessa* (chicken stew), *grústoli*, *pien* (chicken neck stuffed with sweetbreads), *cuhe* (crumb cake), and other dishes of the Talian cuisine, all accompanied by wine produced on site.

Aliduino Zanella is the grandson of Italian immigrants and is a great encourager of the Talian culture. He was raised surrounded by those customs and, for that reason, every year he organizes Filò at his own residence, always around the time of his birthday, on July 22. That is why this date was chosen as Filò Day.

The first Filò event in Caçador was held in 2000, when friends and families gathered to re-live their ancestors' customs. Italian descendants from Linha Pinhal, in the city of Treze Tílias – SC , got together to eat and drink and play *mora*, a traditional game in which each player shouts out a number and shows his/her hands; the winner is the player who guesses the number of fingers held up. The Zanella, Ferronato, Sabedotti, Marini, and Faita families were all part of that first event.

In the years that followed, besides relatives, Italian choir singers were also invited. In recent editions, students from the Talian Culture and Language course - offered by FEIBEMO -, the Federation's board of directors, and the members of the Rotary Caçador Sul Contestado, were also invited. Each year, there are new groups wishing to take part in the event, prompted by newspaper and magazine magazines, and social media.

In the 2016 edition, the event featured a short play showing how Italian immigrants would ride bullock carts in the woods, with nothing but a simple torch, tracing their history through to the point where they improved their living conditions through hard work, and were finally able to buy a kerosene lamp. The participants then prayed together, as always at these meetings, considering that the immigrants (and their descendants, for that matter) were Roman Catholics, and extremely religious. Traditional singing and food are also present: chicken broth, chicken stew, bread, *fogassa* - a kind of sweet bread -, *pien* - traditional stuffing - *grústolo*, *cuca*, *fregolà* - a typical dessert, shell-roasted peanuts, sweet potatoes, cookies, popcorn, grape juice, and wine.

takes place (the basement of the event creator's house). The location has now become too small, in view of the great demand of people wanting to participate, both from the city itself and from other regions.

The month of July is marked by the pride of Italian descendants, who seek to preserve and disseminate the culture of their ancestors, as the chilly weather sparks the memory of the tradition of visiting families in search for some good chat and warm shelter on cold nights.

Besides the descendants themselves, the event sparks the curiosity of families and friends who come to enjoy the event, attracted by all the joy and abundant food of the Talian culture. This was noticeable in the informal interviews conducted in Caçador in the 2016 edition of Filò.

Based on the information collected, we will now discuss the following scenarios:

a) Filò may become even larger in the city of Caçador, drawing a bigger crowd and, consequently, increasing the opportunities to preserve this tradition.

In past decades, events have becoming increasingly important as a tourism strategy. They have been adopted by many destinations with the purpose of promoting and renovating tourism, and revitalizing local economy. Tourist events also provided an opportunity to overcome problems of seasonality, increasing the number of tourists during the low season (McCartney & Osti, 2007).

Popular festivities, when transformed into tourist events, are part of post-modern society. The public authorities may intervene, to ensure that the festivals add positive value to the destinations positively, becoming elements of the tourism offer - in other words, festivals can become a new tourist attraction (Menezes, 2012).

These special events may be regarded as instruments for promoting the image of a certain region as a tourist destination. Moreover, the cultural identity of the community may, not infrequently, be preserved through those events, considering the globalization process (Marujo, 2004).

Nevertheless, this expansion may cause events to lose their original features due to their mass popularization, and all the needs this entails. Meeting the expectations of tourists, and of tourism itself, may require a few changes - in the cuisine, for instance, people's

different preferences must be considered. One of the Filò dishes, for example, had to be adapted in order to satisfy an audience of sixty people. The pien dish, which consists of chicken neck stuffed with sweetbreads, had to be replaced by processed meat due to the impossibility of preparing that many stuffed chicken necks for so many people.

However, we should be aware that it is possible to strike a balance between preserving a culture and the changes it may undergo. "Cultural tourism and popular parties are not incompatible as long as there are mechanisms of protection and detachment between both parts" (loosely translated) (Ribeiro, 2004, p. 55). It is therefore necessary to create public policies in order to constantly preserve, promote, respect, and involve local social actors.

Within this context, Filò may become a cultural festival as long as there is effective support from the public authorities, efficient planning, and protection of its traditional characteristics, involving the local community and, most of all, having people who are directly committed to this culture.

b) Filò may retain its peculiarities in a family environment in a way that is as close as possible to its original features, addressing an exclusive public and developing experiential travel.

Many governments are already exploring ethnic tourism, which is the connection between tourism and ethnicity motivated by cultural experiences, including ethnic parties and events. The aim is cultural and economic development, giving minor ethnic groups the opportunity to showcase their culture and re-live their traditions. However, it should also be kept in mind that it can also have a negative effect on a given group's culture (Yang, 2011).

Despite this, we can detect another tourism profile, one that understands the experience as a differential advantage to be offered to tourists. People today are seeking more than just a service; they are looking for unique sensations, something that will add emotion, affection and feelings to the experience (Panosso Neto & Gaeta, 2010).

With this in mind, experiential travel can indeed be developed, and the particular features of Filò maintained. Tourists might be able to experience the local reality and exchange knowledge with the community, in a family setting. They could experience one-of-a-kind emotions, since Filò is all about a specific tradition brought in by Italian immigrants and their descendants.

During the informal interviews conducted in the 2016 edition of Filò, we concluded that most participants approved of the way it is held i.e. as an intimate, family event. The participants felt welcomed and enjoyed homemade traditional food cooked by the family itself, as well as some pleasant chat, laughter, music, and interaction among all the participants.

We can then affirm that, in this case, experiential travel may be the best indication for preserving and spreading the Italian descendants' culture in the city of Caçador.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Living a culture and being a part of it is the essence of this sort of experience, which can help perpetuate the cultural legacy. Tourism, for its part, is as an alternative for preserving culture, more specifically the Filò Talian, which is the object of study of this paper. It can bring benefits for the local community (since they are proud of the tradition), for the city (attracting tourists and stirring up the local economy), and for tourists (providing them with a memorable experience).

A given community's knowledge and praxis must be preserved and spread so that they can be perpetuated and contribute to the writing of humankind's history. Filò Talian, a party that is held by the Italian descendants to this day, and that represents family tradition, deserves to be shared. It is easy to identify, whether in cultural tourism or in experiential travel, this opportunity to keep their memory alive.

We emphasize that the decision to expand the structure of the event is up to the family that promotes it. If this does happen, support from the public authority will be needed. The event would then be included in the city's events calendar, with proper planning and execution so that it could become a tool for tourism development in the city. Another option would be to keep the family-like features, encouraging the development of experiential travel.

This study promotes understanding of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage of a certain location, so that managers and entrepreneurs can use this resource as a tourist product. Thus, tourism can be developed or improved in a given region, especially in the city of Caçador, where this study took place. We suggest two possibilities for the Filò event, which has already become traditional in the city: expanding it so that it becomes a cultural festival and/or keeping its original characteristics, developing experiential travel.

The limitations found throughout the elaboration of this paper are related to the lack of bibliographic references to Filò in the databases searched. However, this also opens new possibilities of further study for the researchers, as this event is still little known about in the academic world, even though it occurs from time to time in many different cities in southern Brazil. In fact, in some of them, Filò has already become a tourist product.

As a topic for future research, we recommend that the inhabitants' perspective of the event be investigated, given that the support of local community is essential for the development of any tourist activity. In addition, it would also be interesting to analyze the events held in other cities, in the states of Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul (where Filò is also present), paying special attention to its influence on the preservation of the local heritage, and on local tourism and the development of the city.

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