Branding Rio de Janeiro: narratives on *samba* and Carnival in official communication.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how Rio de Janeiro's City Hall shapes the brand "Rio" through institutional narratives about *samba-Carnival* culture. Using the French semiotic approach, it analyzes interviews with key figures in the *samba-Carnival* scene and content from Rio's City Hall website. The study aims to understand the interplay between culture, identity, and official city communication in creating the city's brand. Results indicate that Rio incorporates organically samba into its identity, linked to ancestry, resistance, and memory. However, despite institutional discourses showing an understanding of *samba-Carnival* culture's importance in promoting tourism, they fail to fully embrace the identity discourse of cultural actors. The discourses highlight the importance of public management in associating *samba-Carnival* culture with tourist offerings while emphasizing the need to institutionalize genuine cultural expressions beyond the official Carnival agenda. These findings provide insights into city branding, serving as a resource for public administrators, city communication professionals and branding experts.

KEYWORDS (up to 5)
City Branding; Cultural Branding; Official Communication; Samba-Carnival; Rio de Janeiro.

1. **Introduction**

In today's increasingly consumer-driven societies, there is a growing emphasis on finding meaning that gives direction and significance to everyday experiences. Brands, with their imaginative proposals and systems of meaning, serve as crucial stimuli and resources for identity construction (Semprini, 2010). They are understood as "abstract principles of meaning management" (Semprini, 2010), extending beyond consumption to influence social contexts and public discourses. Consequently, brands embody experiences, lifestyles, and repositories of meanings. In this evolving landscape, even cities and countries adopt these principles. Government marketing and branding efforts contribute to city identity, complemented by organic social interactions shaped by sociocultural dynamics (Green et al., 2018).

This trend is evident in the revaluation and reconstruction of cities worldwide, including their internal spaces and collective imaginaries, which serve as a communication foundation for developing the city brand. The city brand supports potential investments and communication actions that stimulate business in various economic sectors. The symbolic valorization of cities stems from a neoliberal urban management model that creates conditions for cities to compete, similar to business management. This involves promoting attributes that attract new business, tourism, technology, products, and services, differentiating them in the global urban landscape. As Vainer (2000) suggests, managing a city like a business is not new, given that modernist urbanism was inspired by the Taylorist factory model, organizing urban spaces based on business production principles. Nowadays, planners use business management concepts and techniques to treat cities as economic agents in a market, aiming for capital accumulation while sometimes overlooking the nuances of local subjectivities and everyday life.

Reconstructing the image of the city involves linking it to a city brand project legitimized by ideologies, meanings, and culturally constructed narratives that are carefully selected to meet the goals of belonging to the global market (Pinchera & Rinallo, 2017). In today's competitive global arena, city branding plays a critical role as cities seek to attract more visitors and investors, improve the quality of life for residents, and increase their overall visibility (Kavaratzis, 2005; Vuignier, 2017; Walters & Insch, 2018).

Each city possesses a distinctive character, which is shaped by its historical development, geographical influences, and socio-cultural and economic heritage. This character is further defined by both the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which are pivotal in city promotion and branding efforts. Consequently, culture has become not only a marketable asset but also a means for cities to enhance their attractiveness. This dual role has led numerous authors to explore the intricate relationship between culture, identity, and image, emphasizing how these elements collectively contribute to a city's unique brand (Braun et al., 2018; Lima et al., 2019; Padilla-Llano et al., 2020; Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019; Riza & Riza, 2015; Yildirim & Çakici, 2021).

In this scenario, Rio de Janeiro is observed as an important city in Brazil's economic, social, and cultural landscape, with its history deeply intertwined with its music. Among the music genres that originated in the city - *choro, bossa nova*, and *funk carioca* - *samba* is arguably the most popular in the country and the genre most strongly connected to Brazil's identity. The *samba* of Rio de Janeiro and its sources were awarded the title of "assets of the cultural heritage of Brazil" by the Institute of National Historical and Artistic Heritage (IPHAN) in 2007 (IPHAN, 2007).

Grand Junior (2017) highlights the culture of *samba-Carnival* as an element of Rio's territorial distinctiveness. Rio's Carnival is considered the "greatest show on Earth" and holds the Guinness World Record for the largest Carnival in the world (Guinness World Records, 2004). In 2023, Rio´s Carnival generated approximately $800 million dollars in revenue[1] and attracted thousands of tourists

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[1] 4 billion Brazilian Reais

(Rio Prefeitura; Fundação João Goulart; RIOTUR, 2023). These figures only consider the official time frame of Carnival, but the show keeps its production chain active throughout the whole year.

Considering that a brand is a socially and culturally constructed manifestation (Holt, 2016; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015) and consists of discourses structured by culturally conceived meanings (Semprini, 2010), there is an opportunity for research to observe the process of crafting a city brand's discourse in creating a relevant city identity. Given the central role of institutional and governmental communication in shaping place branding strategies, we address the following question: How does the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro give meaning to the brand "Rio" through institutional narratives about the *samba - Carnival* culture?

This work is positioned among other publications that adopt a cultural approach to place branding and aims to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between culture, identity, and city official communication in the process through which place brands are created. It also offers a new perspective through the application of the discursive semiotic approach to branding studies.

The results of this ongoing research seek to provide insights into the development of city branding, serving as a valuable resource for public administrators, city communication professionals, academics, and city branding professionals.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Branding and place branding

This study adopts a communication perspective on the brand phenomenon, which justifies the choice of the brand project/manifestation model proposed by Semprini (2010). This approach goes beyond a marketing perspective and proposes to consider the brand from its semiotic nature, resulting from "a continuous process of exchange and negotiation involving different roles of a large number of protagonists" (Semprini, 2010). This inclusion does not prevent authors from other fields of knowledge, including marketing theorists, from joining the debate, thus ensuring a broader analysis, especially concerning theories of city branding.

For Semprini (2010), the postmodern brand is a concept greater than its isolated manifestations; it is "the set of discourses related to it by the totality of subjects involved in its construction. It is a semiotic instance, a way of segmenting and assigning meaning in an ordered, structured and voluntary way" (Semprini, 2010). Therefore, in the author's view, the brand makes sense when it composes a narrative for those who consume it, proposing an imaginary universe that allows consumers to construct their identity, lifestyle, and personal imaginaries. This perspective suggests that understanding a place as a brand requires a dialectical relationship, with its identity as an outcome (Semprini, 2010), in a continuous process of reconstruction, where this identity is tested in every interaction (Pessôa, 2017; Song & Jeon, 2018).

Activities related to branding, traditionally associated with products and services, have increasingly attracted the interest of governments at all levels—countries, cities, neighbourhoods, and regions—due to the process of globalization and growing international competition (Giraldi & Crescitelli, 2006). The construction of a brand for a country, a city or a territory is based on theories related to place brand, which, as defined by Zenker and Braun (2010), represents "a network of associations in the minds of consumers based on the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of a place, embodied through the goals, communication, values and general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design". In this context, the city brand applies the concept of place brand specifically to cities (Kavaratzis, 2005) and relates the development of the city brand to the creation of a unique positioning to improve the competitive advantage of the place. Thus, the entire management process, whether of a product brand or a place brand, is closely linked to the management of the image that consumers want to have of that brand, and the construction of the identity of a place brand is directly

related to the past and present political, economic, legal and cultural environment in which the place is located (Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2013; Therkelsen & Gram, 2010; Zenker & Braun, 2017).

Braun et al. (2018) analyzed the complexities of place branding, noting that city governments cannot effectively brand places on their own due to limited resources. Instead, they require collaboration with private and societal organizations, residents, and visitors. This process involves a challenging governance dynamic, where stakeholders hold diverse views and emphasize different aspects of the place, contributing to the multifaceted nature of brand identity. Similarly, Clegg and Kornberger (2010) emphasize that a city, unlike a product, lacks a single "controller." As a result, various agents diverge and compete for the city's spaces and identities, significantly influencing the development of its brand identity. Specifically, in Rio de Janeiro, Mello (2018) identifies how the city's preparation to host the Olympic Games was a key moment for constructing the "Olympic City" image, using memory and culture as discursive anchors to introduce new attributes to the city brand.

2.2. City Identity and Cultural Branding

Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) explored the relationship between place brands and place identity, focusing on how culture, identity, and image interact to shape this dynamic. They emphasized that effective place branding should serve as a tool that allows locals to express cultural elements integral to place identity. Complementing this perspective, Boisen et al. (2018) and Kalandides (2012) define place identity as what distinguishes one location from others, incorporating both the tangible and intangible elements inherent to a specific place. Building on the model presented by Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013), Pedeliento and Kavaratzis (2019) examined the gaps in the relationship between culture, identity, and image. They argued that place brands can be most effectively developed by emphasizing their cultural attributes and strengthening the connections between culture, identity, and image, thereby enhancing the depth and coherence of place branding strategies.

According to Acharya and Rahman (2016), the brand of a place is strongly affected by its culture and cultural goods. As Kavaratzis (2005) emphasizes, the development of cultural branding is directly influenced by the increasing valorization of culture, leisure, and the entertainment industries within the contemporary economy. This trend underlines culture's central role in city branding, where the growing significance of these sectors is key to shaping the development of cultural branding strategies. Kavaratzis (2005) highlights how these interconnected dynamics contribute to a comprehensive approach to city branding, demonstrating the pivotal role of cultural, leisure, and entertainment sectors in enhancing a city's attractiveness and identity. Similarly, Kunzmann (2004, p. 384) argues that culture is essential for a city because it "sharpens the image of a city," "strengthens its identity," and "contributes to local economic development." Furthermore, he notes that a city's identity is a crucial asset in differentiating itself from competitors, and beyond the city's landscape, "the arts are the only local asset to display such difference" (Kunzmann, 2004, p. 387). Research by Baiocchi et al. (2024) investigates the relationship between live music infrastructure and musical cultural identity, and how this affects city branding. The results indicate that infrastructure influences cultural identity, which in turn impacts the city's cultural branding. Although the reverse influence of identity on infrastructure is less evident, the findings indicate that a well-supported infrastructure can, over time, enhance the development of a city's identity.

3. Method

This study adopts an approach grounded in French semiotics, specifically through the lens of Semprini (2010), who argues that the initial objective of a brand is to propose a project of meaning that establishes a contract based on shared complicity with the consumer. The project/manifestation model (Figure 1) considers the dynamic nature of this process, where brand managers conceive a primary meaning, referred to as the brand project, which is then realized through its manifestations. These manifestations, both material and immaterial, make the brand perceptible to recipients through observation or experience. They can include the strategy, the product itself, packaging, price, logos,

and, in the case of a city, its cultural expressions, events, urban furniture, and institutional communication.

Figure 1 – Project/Manifestation Model
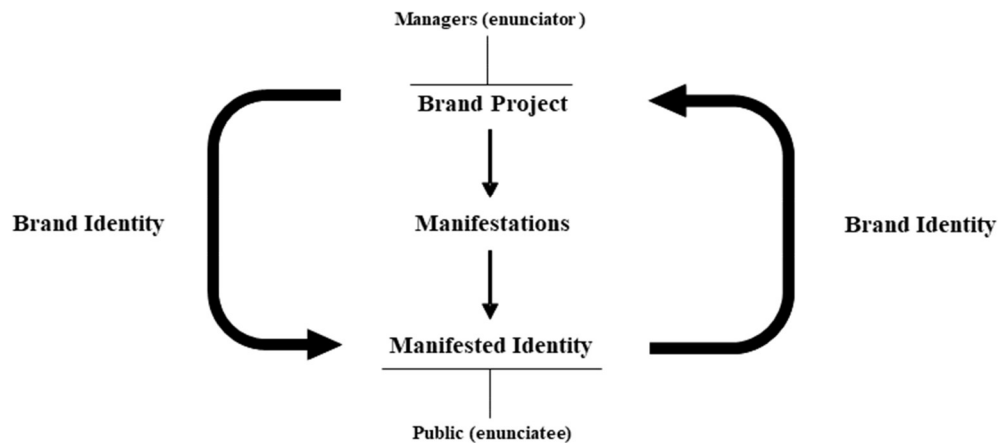
Source: Based on Semprini (2010).

The process of interpretation, i.e., how the receiver decodes the brand's manifestations, is a fundamental moment for the updating of the brand's identity. The meaning of each brand manifestation is constructed with the dual movement of narrative production and contextual interaction. Therefore, each manifestation can be considered as a statement in itself, a complete semiotic structure, to which the semio-narrative analysis model can be applied.

Semprini's semio-narrative model, represented in Figure 2, proposes that the manifestations be analyzed on three levels. In this sense, by analyzing the statements of representatives of the *samba-Carnival* scene and the content of the Prefeitura.rio website, we understand that they are manifestations of the "Rio brand" and that, therefore, they should represent, at least, part of the brand project intended for Rio. It should be noted that the manifestations of a brand do not seek to hide its project (which is born in the sphere of the abstract) but, rather, express it as clearly as possible, thus allowing the receivers to reconstruct it from the sensible, from its concrete manifestations.

Figure 2 – Semio-narrative Organization of Meaning
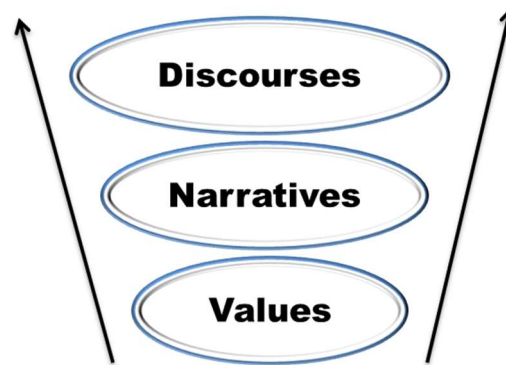
Source: Based on Semprini (2010).

In the semio-narrative model, the value level is the deepest, where the founding values of the identity itself are found, which give meaning to the brand. The narrative level is intermediate, where the brand's values are put into action, giving them narrative structures. The level of discourses or manifestations, which will be emphasized in this work, is where values and narratives are enriched by figures of the world: objects, colours, characters, logos, slogans, and styles, among others. This is the level most sensitive to the sociocultural environment (Semprini, 2010). Theming and figurativization are semantic procedures of discourse that ensure its coherence and create effects of meaning, especially of reality (Pessôa, 2017). Therefore, identifying the themes and figures that recur in the discourses in question is fundamental for analyzing the production of meanings of institutional discourses about the projects envisioned for the city and, consequently, its brand.

Assuming that the brand also constructs its universe of meanings, as Semprini (2010) points out, and consequently creates value through its manifestations, the collection of the research *corpus* was conducted in two stages, aiming to identify signs and elements that help reflect on the projects envisioned for the city and, consequently, its brand.

The *corpus* collection consisted of two stages:

1. Interviews with key figures: Ten interviews were conducted with key figures in the *samba-Carnival* cultural scene between May 2019 and August 2020. The aim was to identify the values and narratives of these cultural expressions. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a type of non-probability sampling method in which the researcher selects participants based on their judgment and the specific purpose of the study, as described by Yin (2016).

2. Content from the Prefeitura.rio website, the official platform for Rio de Janeiro's City Hall institutional communications. This analysis primarily focused on the "News" section, collected between August 2022 and August 2023, including content from Riotur, the agency that promotes the city's tourist attractions. The selected period corresponds to a post-COVID-19 context, as the city experienced a cultural revival and prepared for the traditional Rio Carnival of 2023, the first since the pandemic.[2] The collection started from the aprioristic theming proposed by the "News" tab on the site, which, combined with the analyzed period, guaranteed representativeness to the *corpus* (Bauer & Gaskell, 2008). News items from the sub-tabs "Riotur," "Culture," "Setur," and "City" were then selected. Subsequently, a filter was applied to each sub-tab with the following keywords: "Samba," "Carnival," "Culture".

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[2] The 2022 Carnival was an off-season Carnival, which took place on Saint George's Day (April 23), since there were still remnants of the COVID-19 pandemic in February and March.

The final *corpus* consisted of a selection of 43 news articles, whose central theme was most representative of one or more of the four keywords applied to the filter.

It is important to note that the "News" tab on the Prefeitura.rio website acts as a central hub, bringing together other municipal communication channels like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This tab is not only a platform for interacting with diverse audiences but also a strategic tool for disseminating the city's initiatives. Here, the *samba-Carnival* culture is prominently featured, shaping public perception and contributing to the symbolic construction of the city's brand.

To support documentary research in the field, NVivo® software was used to better systematize, and visualize the analysis *corpus,* in addition to fragmenting the analyzed text, which favors articulation with French semiotics, the method of analysis used in this work.

4. Results

This research presents the process of constructing the meaning of the "Rio brand" based on the attributes of *samba-Carnival* culture. The analysis is based on the "discursive level", where the "codes" or "attributes" of the brands are situated. At this level, the recurrence of themes – linguistic or semiotic categories that repeat in the analyzed text – and the enrichment or realization of values and narratives through figures of the world (Pessôa, 2017) are observed: photographs, objects, shapes, colours, characters, styles, etc., bringing the reader closer to the discourse.

By examining the 10 interviews, two major themes that recur in the stated discourses and sometimes interconnect were identified: Identity and Culture.

The theme of identity encompasses discourses that address the origins of *samba*, its ancestry, the *samba-Carnival* culture as a form of resistance and memory, and its relationship with the identity of the carioca. The discussion about the origins of *samba* is anchored in discourses that affirm Rio de Janeiro as the birthplace of *samba*:

> *(...) You cannot tell the history of Rio de Janeiro without samba; it is impossible, you cannot do it. (...) You cannot walk through Rio de Janeiro without encountering references to samba.* (Interviewee9, co-founder, para-governmental organization related to samba)

In this context, figures who are part of *samba* history, *samba* schools, and characters from *samba-Carnival* culture reinforce the connection between the memory of *samba* and the current scene of this cultural expression, as well as the feeling of identity and belonging, which is directly related to the past and the present sociocultural environment. The collective memory (Halbwachs, 1990) evoked in these discourses forms a constituent element of the sense of identity and these collectively shared memories help to culturally constitute individuals as communities and collectives

> *And when it comes to samba, we have a very vibrant, very thriving scene. There are new generations, new composers creating sambas, and many new singers who find their place in samba.* (Interviewee 2, businesswoman, music agent)

These discourses also refer to the political dimension of *samba-Carnival* culture, addressing the resistance of this movement:

> *I believe that in some way it is about survival. All these agents are somehow related to a logic of resistance. Here, historically, it worked well. Samba was persecuted and yet it conquered the world.* (Interviewee4, researcher, journalist)

The discourses on the theme of culture are related to the narratives of entertainment, the creative economy, and public management. When treating *samba-Carnival* culture as entertainment, it is initially observed that there is a distinction between *samba* circles (*rodas de samba*[3]), which are spontaneously promoted by artists, singers, and music producers, and the Carnival sponsored by public authorities, which consists of the *samba* school parades and the bloco circuit[4]. While *samba* circles are understood as the genuine culture of *samba*, Carnival is seen as a tourist attraction:

> *Samba, Carnival, and street music happen naturally, in a spontaneous manner typical of the carioca* (Interviewee1, journalist).
> *... I thought that the samba school parades (...) were being treated primarily as a tourist spectacle rather than a cultural spectacle.* (Interviewee1, journalist)

There is also a critique of public authorities in these discourses, highlighting that while they institutionalize and sponsor Carnival, they do not provide the same financial support to *samba* circles This situation, on one hand, grants cultural freedom and originality to the movement but, on the other hand, marginalizes and financially penalizes those involved in this cultural scene.

> *There could be an official circuit with support from the city government because the samba circles operate under very precarious conditions, often financing their performances, sometimes for free, and in public spaces without basic amenities like portable toilets or proper sound equipment.* (Interviewee2, businesswoman, music agent)

Regarding the process of figurativization in these discourses, the figures of Apoteose and Cidade do Samba, which are part of the official Carnival circuit sponsored by the public authorities, are highlighted. These are pointed out by the interviewees as "Carnival for show"[5] and contrasted with other spaces in the city where *samba* circles happen spontaneously:

> *When tourists come to Rio to experience samba, unfortunately, they go to Cidade do Samba, right? To see that thing that is literally for show. That thing with the mulata, that kind of 'samba' which is not really samba... (*Interviewee2, businesswoman, music agent)

The economic aspect is again highlighted in the discourses that articulate *samba-Carnival* culture, this time emphasizing the movement as an important sector of the city's creative economy. However, it is noted that there is a distinction between the support given by public authorities to Carnival and to the *samba* circles movement:

> *So, the structure is as follows. Today, street Carnival is treated in one way. We have the Sapucaí Carnival, which is treated in another way.* (Interviewee7, events manager, governmental organization)

Finally, the theme of public management is revisited in the discourses, which indicate a perception that Rio is a Brazilian cultural capital but still has potentialities yet to be explored by public authorities.

> *I think that Rio is known worldwide as a cultural capital of Brazil. If it is a cultural capital, it means that it already possesses the main potentialities to develop a series of elements. The*

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[3] informal performances by *samba* musicians
[4] Blocos circuit refers to the street parade circuit during Rio de Janeiro's Carnival.
[5] In Portuguese: "Carnaval para inglês ver"

enhancement of these elements depends solely on the dialogue that needs to be constructed and facilitated by public authorities. (Interviewee4, researcher, journalist)

Regarding the process of figurativization in these discourses, the figures of the Rio de Janeiro City Hall, Riotur (Municipal Tourism Company S.A.), and LIESA (League of Samba Schools of Rio de Janeiro) stand out:

> *(...) the parade of the special group samba schools should be removed from the scope of Riotur and transferred to the scope of the Department of Culture (...) precisely because of this (...) it is a cultural phenomenon of the city of Rio de Janeiro.* (Interviewee1, journalist)

The analysis of the website prefeitura.rio shows that the predominant theme in the news articles is "information about *samba* and Carnival." The discourse is direct and practical, emphasizing the City Hall's role in providing public services. This theme includes announcements of locations, dates, and times of events sponsored by the municipality, as well as reports on event outcomes, focusing on urban management. Examples include articles like "Check out the balance of actions by municipal bodies on the first day of parades in Sapucaí" (18.02.23) and "Carnival balls in tents, arenas, and mini-arenas are alternatives for revellers in the North and West zones" (14.02.23). The main actors are the City Hall and its municipal bodies, such as the Secretariat for Public Order (SEOP) and the Department of Culture.

On a smaller scale, news articles on "culture" also appear, often from the perspective of entertainment and cultural tourism. When culture is addressed as entertainment, the City Hall attempts to build an ethos as a major promoter and manager of the city's cultural events. Examples include "City Hall presents Alcione's 50-year career tour with free shows in the North and West zones" (22.10.2003). Key figures include the City Hall and its administrative bodies, as well as representatives of the samba and Carnival scene, such as singer Alcione. The discourse is enriched by mentions of cultural spaces sponsored by the City Hall, as seen in "Areninha Sandra Sá inaugurated in Santa Cruz" (16/11/2022). Figures and statistics support the narrative that the City Hall is a leading provider of culture and leisure, highlighted in "Municipal Department of Culture launches three calls for projects with over R$ 13 million from the Paulo Gustavo Law" (20/10/2023).

From a tourism perspective, "Culture" emerges as a key differentiator in attracting tourists. This is evident in "At Cidade do Samba, Minister Daniela Carneiro spoke about the importance of Carnival for Rio's tourism" and "Rio Mayor and Tourism Minister Visit Cidade do Samba and Participate in the Washing of Sapucaí" (11/02/2023). The Minister of Tourism discusses Carnival's importance for the country:

> *"Rio de Janeiro is the gateway to the country, and Carnival is automatically highly remembered. We are here to contribute to the revival of Carnival, to strengthen tourism in Rio de Janeiro and to attract more visitors".*

In this sense, by appearing as an ally of cultural tourism in the site's discourse, there is a connection between the theme of "culture" and the economic aspects related to the scene, especially Carnival, as addressed in the news article "Carnival 2023 is expected to inject R$ 4.5 billion into the city's economy" (20/10/2023). Numbers reinforce the city's ethos as a promoter and manager of culture. However, these articles are divorced from the social and economic issues related to other actors in the movement, contrasting with the interviewees' discourses. Thus, political and social debates are relegated to the background, and in these discursive silences, issues of public interest such as the

marginalization of samba and the economic struggles of the artistic community are not addressed by the City Hall in the "News" section. The figures in these discourses reinforce the ethos of the City Hall as the main manager of Rio's culture, represented by its supporting bodies and the venues where these events take place, especially those promoted for tourists, such as Marquês de Sapucaí, the site of the annual parades of the city's main samba schools.

The theme of "Identity" is also present in the City Hall's analyzed discourses; however, it appears in a secondary and superficial manner, diluted within the news articles under the theme of "Information about Samba and Carnival" and generally intertwined with entertainment discourses. This is evident in the excerpt from the news article "Nova Intendente will know its champion samba schools this Tuesday (27/02/2023)":

> *"After seven days of spectacle and the suburb's reunion with its true Carnival essence, Nova Intendente will know its champion samba schools this Tuesday (28/2). It was a success for several reasons: we provided a great show, and we gave dignity to the suburban sambista."*

In this context, identity is acknowledged but primarily in the context of entertainment and spectacle, highlighting the celebratory aspects rather than engaging deeply with the socio-cultural dimensions.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to analyze how the City Hall of Rio de Janeiro gives meaning to the brand "Rio" through institutional narratives about *samba-Carnival* culture. To this end, we drew a parallel between the institutional discourses and those of the actors involved in the *samba-Carnival* cultural scene.

The small number of relevant news articles on this topic in the news section of the analyzed website is understandable since *samba-Carnival* is only one of the many attributes of the Rio brand presented on the site. The differences that emerge between the discourses were expected, and these proximities and distances provided us with insights into how the municipality institutionally thinks and works on the Rio brand, as well as what can be improved to contribute to institutional city branding strategies.

The city brand is influenced by the identity base that exists in that society (Baiocchi et al., 2024). In this sense, our study, through the discourse of the interviewees, makes it clear that Rio de Janeiro incorporates samba in its identity attributes, linked to themes of ancestry, resistance and memory. Even in discourses that associate samba with the creative economy and entertainment, this connection is evident, for example, in the importance given to *samba* circles, which are popular and authentic expressions of the musical genre in the city. These discourses also highlight the importance of public management in ensuring that samba-Carnival culture is associated with the city's attributes and unique offerings to tourists. However, they also emphasize the need to institutionalize genuine cultural expressions of this genre, beyond the official agenda that prioritizes Carnival.

The City Hall, in turn, portrays itself as a promoter and manager of culture but somewhat reinforces the perception of the interviewees that this management is partial and favours major events. The institutional discourses also show that the City Hall understands the importance of the *samba-Carnival* culture in promoting tourism to the city. However, it misses the opportunity to adopt the identity discourse articulated by the interviewees as a brand-city attribute.

Moreover, the silences regarding the political and social issues of the actors in this musical scene distance the City Hall from the seminal narratives of samba, missing out on approaches that could create an intertextuality between the City Hall's discourses and those of the cultural scene actors, thereby reinforcing the city brand based on the original musical identity of Rio's citizens. It is understood, therefore, that the lack of public policies and the appropriation of samba-Carnival culture as one of the

potential brand attributes, as pointed out by the cultural scene actors, prevents the city from enhancing its identity as the birthplace of samba.

Regarding the identity dimension, the results are consistent with Kunzmann (2004), who argued that cultural identity is an important asset when a city is trying to differentiate itself from its competitors. Finally, it is clear that although Rio's cultural identity is deeply rooted in samba and its musical scenes survive despite the little support from the public administration, this identity could be leveraged as a key element for the city brand.

This work suggests future research avenues, such as analyzing the levels of narratives and the values within the discourses based on the semiotic-narrative model presented by Semprini (2010). Additionally, conducting studies from the receiver's perspective, i.e. from the addressee perspective, could reveal new insights. These studies would focus on the experiences and perceptions of the city's residents regarding the City Hall's narrative on samba-Carnival culture, potentially uncovering new possibilities for interactions between these discourses.

Acknowledgement

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