

Construction of the **image** of the city of Rio de Janeiro as a tourist destination through **airline posters** (1930 – 1960)

Construção da **imagem** da cidade do Rio de Janeiro como um destino turístico por meio de **cartazes de empresas aéreas** (1930 – 1960)

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Abstract | The study of the construction of the destination image imparted by advertising, present in the relationship between tourism and air transport, is challenging, particularly due to its multidisciplinary aspects. This study is exploratory and descriptive, qualitative in nature, based on bibliographic research, for the purpose of building a theoretical review on tourism and communication, notably advertising, and the relationship between tourism and air transport from the perspective of images. More specifically, the synergy between air transport, communication and tourism by examining five posters urging tourists to visit the city of Rio de Janeiro by air was analyzed.

Keywords | Consumption, advertising, tourism, air transportation, image

Resumo | O estudo da construção da imagem de um destino promovida pela publicidade, presente na relação entre o turismo e o transporte aéreo, é desafiador, particularmente por conta dos seus aspectos multidisciplinares. Este estudo é exploratório e descritivo, de natureza qualitativa, baseada em pesquisa bibliográfica para a elaboração de uma revisão teórica sobre turismo e comunicação, especialmente a publicidade, e a relação entre o turismo e o transporte aéreo na perspectiva das imagens. Mais especificamente analisou-se a sinergia entre o transporte aéreo, a comunicação e o turismo, por meio da apreciação de cinco cartazes que convidavam o turista a visitar a cidade do Rio de Janeiro por via aérea.

Palavra-chave | Consumo, publicidade, turismo, transporte aéreo, imagem

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1. Introduction

This study analyzes the construction of the image of the city of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) as a tourist destination through advertisements (posters) involving four airline companies that offered flights to the city in the twentieth century (Varig, Pan American Airways, Panair do Brasil and Air France, the last one still flies to Brazil). For this purpose, five posters were selected for analysis of verbal and visual language, seeking to identify the main feelings and meanings contained in them. The city of Rio de Janeiro was chosen because it is a traditional international tourist destination, a fact partly due to air transport. The city has been through a substantial transformation, prompted mainly by sports mega-events: the FIFA World Cup, hosted by Brazil in 2014, and the Olympic Games and Paralympics, hosted by the city in 2016. Among other improvements, these are serving as impetus for modernization and expansion of Rio de Janeiro International Airport (SBGL/GIG), better known as Galeão Airport. Therefore, understanding the role air transport played in establishing Rio de Janeiro as an international tourist destination, especially by means of the images projected through advertising involving airlines that offered flights to the city, is an opportunity to better understand the important ties between the various components of the tourist industry. The study is exploratory and descriptive, with a qualitative nature. From a methodological standpoint, the literature and original documents, selected texts and images in books and various websites were surveyed. The article is organized in four sections besides this introduction.

2. Literature Review

In general, the tourism sector is supported by the creation of images, because this is one of

the main characteristics that compose tourist products, with a strong influence on consumers' decision process (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999). Images can differentiate a tourist destination from others, helping consumers to make their decisions (Chen & Kerstetter, 1999; Chen & Hsu, 2000). This occurs especially because tourism is composed of services and experiences, which by their nature are intangible, so that the consumer, before making a purchasing decision, cannot try or touch the product (Echtner & Ritchie, 1991). In tourism, the purchase and consumption occur at different moments. The consumer must first choose a type of product, represented only by an image at the time of purchase, and then wait until the travel date to materialize the consumption. Hence, tourists are above all buyers of images, and consequently consumers of signs.

The image of a tourist destination is composed of a mix of affective components: different feelings that every individual has towards a destination and cognitive elements, which refers to the information that they might have about the destination (Gartner, 1993). Just as the other characteristics of a consumer good, the image of a destination can be constructed, modified or completely changed by communication strategies (Pike, 2005). This construction work is especially done through the publicity campaigns sponsored by official promotion agencies of cities, regions or countries, mostly through city marketing, place marketing or destination branding. The destination is therefore treated as a good, about which the advertisers seek to re(create) and disseminate a positive image. "Selling a city is like selling other goods: emphasis is placed on their 'packages', 'labels' and 'symbolic aspects, which [...] become more important than the utility of the product" (Muricy, 2001, p. 181).

The formation of the image of destinations has been described in the literature as a complex and subjective process, in which different elements or variables produce distinct degrees of predisposition to consume a destination (Ryan & Cave, 2005).

Hence, besides the advertising campaigns promoted by official agencies, various other elements contribute to the representations of a tourist destination as a consumer good. The place's image, formed by its representations, can also be built through material images (picture postcards, blogs, films, tourist guidebooks, folders, newspapers, travel magazines, souvenirs, etc.) and immaterial ones (legends, tales, discourses, narratives, memoirs, etc.), all of which are socially shared by the actors involved in tourism (tourists, companies and local communities) and conveyed by the varied communications media (Santos, 2008).

Whatever the good to be consumed – a tourist destination, an airplane seat or a meal – it is filled with meanings that go beyond its utilitarian character and commercial value. This involves its capacity to contain and transmit cultural meanings (McCracken, 2003). However, the contents of the elements that convey these meanings are not neutral; they are restricted to the limits of experience and guide the eyes of tourists (Jenkins, 2003). According to Urry (1996, p. 29), tourists are practitioners of semiotics, because they “look for certain concepts or pre-established meanings, which derive from the various discourses of travel and tourism.” Therefore, communication, through advertising or other elements, is able to mold the tourist's eye, so that when people travel, they go in search of “experiencing for real the pleasant dramas that they have already enjoyed in their imagination” (Campbell, 2001, p. 131).

Furthermore, advertising transfers a set of meanings to the product that is being disclosed or another element that is contained in the publicity material, as is the case of Rio de Janeiro in advertising involving airline companies. This transfer happens through a series of choices on narratives, biographies, personalities, identities, colors, figures, photographs, texts and so on, that manage to instill in the good the cultural meanings that are present in the context in question (McCracken, 2003).

These choices have a direct reflection in the visual and verbal languages of the publicity material. To suitably interpret the contents of an advertisement, it is necessary to consider how the visual and verbal languages interact and complement each other to produce a particular feeling in the target audience. The visual language is especially important in conjugating the world with the good, because it has enigmas and associations that words cannot convey (McCracken, 2003). Even though the visual language is broad, polyphonic and effective in the process of transferring meanings, its combination with textual elements makes the communication even more effective. Verbal language works as an element to constrain the range of meanings that can be attributed to the visual image, thus communicating the proper message (Frossard, 2013). The text has the role of instructing the “viewer/reader in the salient properties that are supposed to be expressed by the visual part of the advertisement” (McCracken 2003, p.108).

So, when the known properties of the world come to reside in the known properties of a consumer good, the transfer of meaning from world to good occurs satisfactorily (McCracken, 2003). From that point on, the consumer good possesses meanings that it previously did not have, connecting consumers to their life experiences.

The relationship between air transport and tourism is symbiotic. No other transport technology has ever been more important for the development of tourism on a global scale than air transportation. Airplanes enable tourists to reach virtually any place in the world safely and quickly, allowing tourist destinations to capture a large part of their potential markets due to its convenience and low cost (Castro & Lohmann, 2013).

As an example of this relationship, the study of Prideaux (2004) must be mentioned. Studying tourism in the Australian city of Cairns, the author identified the improvement in transport infrastructure and the increasing number of international visitors to the city due to the reduced travel time

needed to reach the northern part of the state of Queensland by direct international flights (especially to/from China). The same phenomenon has occurred in Brazil: the modernization of airport terminals in the northeast region has enabled direct flights between the main cities in that region and Europe, the United States and Panama, with connections to other destinations. In both cases, the increased accessibility has made tourist destinations more competitive (Castro & Lohmann, 2013).

Tourism, whether from the emergence of new segments or new destinations, also affects aviation by boosting demand. The contribution of air transport to the development of tourism goes far beyond provision of accessibility to destinations. The vertical integration of airlines with other tourism organizations, mainly in the 1970s and 80s (most of which still survive), and the sale of package tours combining hotel accommodation, local guided tours and rented cars expanded the opportunities to sell trips around the world (Lafferty & Fossen, 2001).

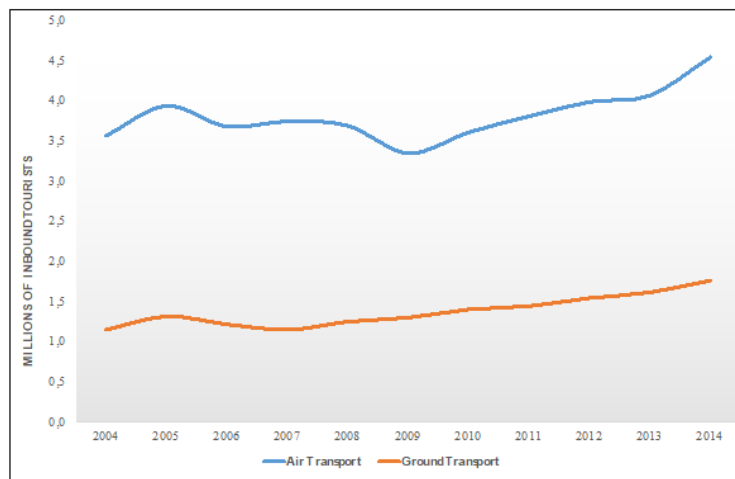
Sometimes, such vertical integration, however, does not happen so smoothly. Strict regulation of the aviation sector, for example, can constrain this process. Even though air transport is essential to the expansion of tourism in the African country of Zimbabwe, the contribution of its national airline, Air Zimbabwe, to the promotion of tourism has been seriously hampered by the government's inflexible control of finances, acquisition of new aircraft, fares and operational policies. According to Turton and Mutambirwa (1996), many of the problems faced by the country's hotel industry to expand tourism can be attributed directly to the inability of Air Zimbabwe to freely negotiate with hotels and tour operators to put together attractive packages aimed at the international market.

Due to this issue, the deregulation of air trans-

port was and still is essential to the development of tourist destinations. The process, which started in 1978 in the United States, caused a series of changes in the sector, among them the consolidation of hub-and-spoke networks and the entry of new low-cost/low-fare airlines (and the consequent bankruptcy or takeover of traditional ones). The cheaper fares resulting from deregulation have been essential for the development of many tourist destinations, since this enables a larger number of people to travel (Castro & Lohmann, 2013).

Deregulation also affected the advertising strategies of airlines. Until the mid-1980s (beginning of the deregulation process), the traditional carriers tended to focus on selling tourist destinations, reachable most conveniently by the airline responsible for the advertising. For example, in 1965, Philippine Airlines launched a campaign called "We're island specialists" to play up its flights to Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore and other destinations in island nations. After deregulation and the increase in competition in the 1990s, the advertising focus changed, seeking differentiation of carriers by arguments related to comfort, modern fleet and other attributes. However, there are still airlines based in small countries (with significant and boosting economies though), like Emirates and Singapore Airlines, which have strong identification with their destinations (Lohmann, Castro & Valente, 2013). This is due to the adoption of strategies of leadership, cost and quality formulated in synergy and verticalized by airlines, airports, travel agencies and other companies involved in tourism that have culminated in the transformation of hubs into tourist destinations sought by tourists all over the world (Lohmann et al., 2009).

In Brazil, the great majority of international tourists arrive by air. Figure 1 shows the number of international tourists arriving in Brazil between 2003 and 2013.

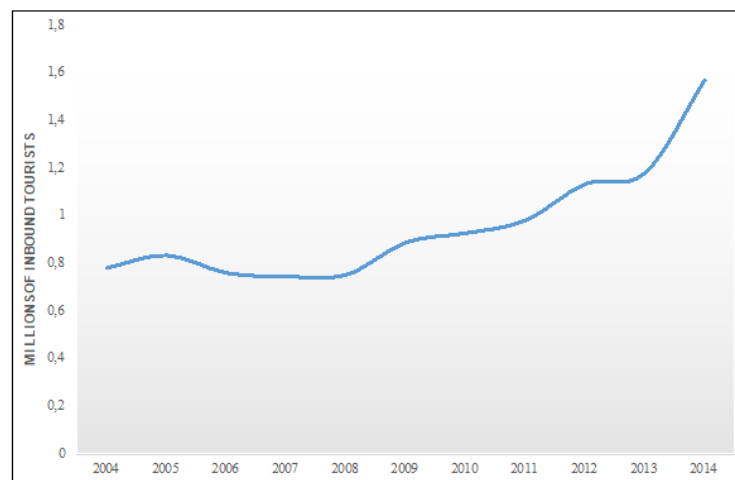


Source: Prepared by the authors based on various tourism yearbooks (Ministério do Turismo, 2014)

Figure 1 | Number of international tourists arriving in Brazil, by mode of transport, between 2004 and 2014

A specific analysis of the city of Rio de Janeiro reveals that air transport is also of fundamental importance to attract international tourists. Figure 2 shows that the number of tourists arriving in the

city by air has increased considerably in recent years, rising from just over 700,000 in 2004 to nearly 1.6 million in 2014, making a large contribution to the city's development as a tourist destination.



Source: Prepared by the authors based on various tourism yearbooks (Ministério do Turismo, 2014).

Figure 2 | Arrival of international tourists by air in Rio de Janeiro between 2004 and 2014

Some of the main obstacles to increase tourism in the city are related to the deficiencies in the air travel sector in Brazil as a whole. One of the main constraints is that the airport structure is not compatible with the market needs. Overcrowded airports are the bane of travelers and airlines alike, limiting flights to Brazil, including Rio de

Janeiro (Castro & Lohmann, 2013).

3. Methods

As observed in the second section, no other technology is so essential to the development of tourism on a global scale than air transport. Therefore, air carriers play a fundamental role in the development of tourist destinations, more so if one considers the interest in internationalization of public officials and private companies in promoting tourist destinations. It is evident from the literature consulted that a destination's image is crucial to the decision to purchase a specific trip, by differentiating that destination from other competing ones. The association between the image of air travel and of the tourist destinations served is a powerful factor that can influence tourists' decisions at the moment of choosing a trip. Therefore, the formation or reinforce of the image of a tourist destination can be investigated by analyzing the verbal and visual language of advertisements related to air transport.

The posters were selected by considering four factors: (1) the current importance of the city of Rio de Janeiro as an international tourist destination; (2) the relevance of understanding the role of air travel for the country; (3) the institutional connections and frameworks for governmental participation in promoting tourism in Brazil; and (4) the low competition among air carriers before the 1990s, which provided a setting for advertising more focused on the destinations served rather than other competitive elements. Through a web search of advertising posters, several examples were located, from which five were selected

for in-depth analysis considering their visual and verbal language.

4. Results and Discussion

Advertising related to airlines, especially during the twentieth century, were focused on the promotion of tourist destinations they used to fly to. A search on Google Images platform using the terms "airlines" and "posters" reveals that most of the images found are airline posters highlighting characteristics and some worldwide known clichés of tourist destinations all around the globe. This is interesting, because in the particular case of airlines, the intention of a client to consume its services depends directly (but not only) on the interest that each individual may have in a particular destination, whether travelling for business or pleasure. Thus, to sell their seats, an airline needs to sell also the destinations in which it operates. By doing that it not only contributes to the formation of the tourist destination image, but it also reinforces the stereotypes and the cliché images.

Table 1 shows the airlines portrayed in each poster (it cannot be stated that they have actually been used by any particular airline), the decade of its publication, its authors and the analysis for each poster. Although it was not possible to determine the exact date of the posters, only the decade, they are all historical sources for analysis of the construction of Rio de Janeiro's image as a tourist destination, notably in the twentieth century.

Table 1 | Posters Analysis

Posters Identification	Analysis	Image
<p>Poster 1 Air France 1940 Victor Vasarely</p>	<p>Image of an airplane flying to the city of Rio de Janeiro, with a panoramic vista of its two main tourist attractions, Sugarloaf and Corcovado Hill (location of the iconic Christ the Redeemer statue). The notion of distance is also conveyed by the light reflected from the ocean. Although there is no mention of Rio de Janeiro, the airplane is clearly approaching this destination. In terms of verbal language, the name Air France stands out, followed below by "Amérique du Sud", referring to South America. Hence, there is an evident association of South America with Rio de Janeiro, reflecting a stereotype of the continent. Furthermore, the city of Rio de Janeiro, unmistakably identified by its two leading tourist attractions, is relevant for the internationalization of South America in the tourism context of the time. Besides this, the advertisement conveys the notion of shortened distances between South American destinations and departure points (notably France). This poster reinforces the main clichés presented in images of Rio de Janeiro, though not in the angle most traditionally used (from land to sea), but instead from the perspective of "crossing the ocean" (from sea to land), indicating air as the fastest way for tourists to reach the city. Castro (2012, p. 83) helps elucidate this question by observing that "the travel guides in the 1930s directed tourists' eyes to Guanabara Bay, where the ships arrived carrying most of the city's visitors." Perhaps although the advertising involves air transport, the culture at the time was still permeated with the image of ocean liners as the main way of traveling long distances. In terms of meaning, it is noticeable that, in the poster, the city of Rio de Janeiro is summarized by the Corcovado and the Sugar Loaf Mountains and that these elements could also be used as a synonym for South America.</p>	
<p>Poster 2 Pan Am 1930 Paul George Lawler</p>	<p>This image expresses the notion of a shrinking world, of shortened distances between origin and destination by using air transport. This is expressed in the slogan: "It's a small world by Pan American Airways". This was part of an advertising campaign of Pan Am, because many other posters can be found on the Internet with the same slogan but depicting other destinations. The idea is of flying as the fastest and best way to reach distant places in the world. The poster also carries the phrase "Flying down to Rio", indicating the city as one of the airline's important destinations. Although it was not found any evidence of a relationship between the poster and the 1933 American movie of the same name, it is relevant to consider that cinema was the leading entertainment medium of the era, and as such could have had an influence on the image of Rio and also on the publicity campaign. The visual language again depicts the city's two leading landmarks. However, the angle and proximity of the elements indicate the view is from behind and above Corcovado, more precisely an aerial view behind the upper part of the Christ statue (land-sea).</p>	
<p>Poster 3 Panair do Brasil 1950 Marmos</p>	<p>Besides identification of the Brazilian airline Panair do Brasil, the phrase in Italian "sovrana del sud atlântico", or "sovereign over the South Atlantic". Hence this poster is comparable with the first one in singling out Rio de Janeiro as an important tourist destination in South America. Although sovereignty is visually associated with the company's logo, this sovereignty can be extended to Rio de Janeiro as the reigning tourist destination in South America. The language used indicates the ad was targeted at the Italian market. Unlike the other two posters, this one focuses on Sugarloaf alone, without any depiction of the Christ statue. However, the notion of an airplane's "vertical stabilizer and rudder" seems to make an allusion to the beachfront sidewalk of Copacabana, giving the idea of movement associated with airplanes. The intention appears to be that by taking this airplane, visitors can quickly reach Copacabana beach. The Copacabana district has been important for the development of tourism in Rio de Janeiro since the early twentieth century, as evidenced by the construction of the Copacabana Palace Hotel in 1922, which Velho (2012, p.11) calls a "symbol of affluence, international prestige and the promise of tourism."</p>	

<p>Poster 4 Varig Airlines Early 1960s Unknown Author</p>	<p>It mentions the Brazilian airline Varig, alongside the words "Rio" and "Brasil". The literature indicates that Rio de Janeiro has long occupied a leading place in promotion of Brazil, notably abroad. Bignami (2002, p. 89) stresses this in citing Swarbrooke, according to whom "to the world, Brazil is Rio de Janeiro". Varig started operating in 1927 and played a leading role in the development of commercial aviation in Brazil. The poster reflects the importance of the company's brand name, which appears in the central portion, taking up a good part of the poster. The top shows the image of an airplane flying over Ipanema Beach, with the district of Leblon in the background. Therefore, Brazil, and especially Rio de Janeiro, is characterized by a beautiful beach on a sunny day, crowded with bathers. The background image also shows Dois Irmãos Hill and to its left rear, Gávea Rock, completing the typical image of this beach. Bignami (2002) stresses that the depiction of beautiful beaches reflects the representation of Brazil as a tropical paradise.</p>	
<p>Poster 5 Varig Airlines 1960 Unknown Author</p>	<p>Also referring to Varig, bears the word "Rio" at the top, alluding, again, to the city of Rio de Janeiro. The Christ statue occupies the central part, while Sugarloaf is shown in the background. Besides this, a bird appears (probably a macaw, a typical Brazilian bird), a beach umbrella, a flower (again which appears to be typical of Brazil) and the ocean plied by sailboats. These figures depict various features of Rio de Janeiro, but altogether they convey a consolidated image of the city as a tourist destination. The Christ statue and Sugarloaf have already been discussed sufficiently, but this poster contains other elements, which reinforce or add to the traditional ones of Rio de Janeiro as a tourist destination. The umbrella and sailboats play up the idea of the beach (sun, sea and fun), elements that had appeared previously in other posters, but more directly. The two new elements not appearing in the other posters analyzed are the figures of the bird and flower. The idea of abundant flora and fauna has been associated with Brazil since the reports of the first European explorers and naturalists who reached what is now Brazil (Bignami, 2002). Finally, unlike the other posters, in which an airplane plays an important role, in this one it is a small figure at the top, but still transmits the idea of "arrival" in Rio, because the airplane is depicted entering the letter "R" of the word "Rio".</p>	

Sources: Museu Histórico Nacional (2015); Szurovy (2002, p. 50); Chrisholm Poster (2015).

5. Conclusions and Implications

This article is an exploratory study of the interplay of air transport, development of tourist destinations and the creation or reinforcement of the image of places in tourists' minds, through analyzing the contents of advertising posters involving airlines and the destination Rio de Janeiro. For this purpose, it was briefly outlined the literature review on the relations between advertising and the image of destinations as consumer goods replete with cultural and symbolic meanings. To complement the theoretical analysis necessary to understand the posters, a set of arguments on the intrinsic relationship between air transport and tourism, more specifically on its role for the development of tourist destinations was presented. In the case in-

vestigated here, the role of air transportation goes beyond the objective elements of the destination, also contributing from another perspective, that of formation and/or consolidation of the tourist image of Rio de Janeiro.

Although from analyzing only five posters it is not possible to pin down the image of the city of Rio de Janeiro in the tourism scenario constructed by the influence of advertising (posters) involving airlines, this study can work as a starting point for a deeper study of the theme. The systematization of new studies can allow a more profound analysis of these relations in time and space by bringing in political, historical, economic and sociocultural factors.

The posters analyzed indicate the importance of Rio de Janeiro as a symbol of Brazil, and in some

cases of all of South America. Besides this, the two most noted tourist attractions (Sugarloaf and the Christ statue on Corcovado Hill) were highlighted in the majority of the posters as elements able to attract tourists. They also depicted other elements, which still today are trademarks of Rio de Janeiro, such as the beachfront sidewalk in Copacabana, Ipanema beach and exuberant flora and fauna, have long been used in publicity involving Rio de Janeiro. These posters also convey meanings that have been associated with Brazil and Rio de Janeiro since early times, such as the idea of a tropical paradise. Furthermore, the highlight of the ads as a whole is the destination, not specifically the utilitarian elements of air transport, such as comfort, speed and convenience, etc. In this work it was not investigated in detail the notions of institutional connections and governmental frameworks in tourism in Brazil. However, deeper analysis of these questions can illuminate the future discussion of the history of strategies to market Rio de Janeiro and other tourist destinations abroad, and also the role of airline companies in this publicity combined with the destinations they serve.

For future research, it is urged a broader dialog in temporal terms between the dynamics of air transport and tourist destinations, and also investigation from the perspective of public policies and the notions of planning that guide both activities in question. Finally, the difficulty of finding evidence in the sources consulted of the year and authorship of the posters prevented advancing in these directions in this particular study.

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