# The City Soundscape and the Brain

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## Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to explore the possible relationship between sound elements that make up the ambiance, the identity of a brazilian beach and the identification of an urban tribe that atend the place. The study is focused on a tent as an ambiance that stands out in a natural environment. Its symbolic and emotional aspects can be compared to what Thibaud calls medium, i.e., the air, sound, light, smell, all elements of the environment that enable the perception. Through in loco observations of the existing dynamics between the ambiance and the people and analyzes based in the literature review, we seek to understand whether and how one of these aspects, the various sounds present in the studied area and its surroundings, interrelate with others that contribute to the permanence and duration of the tribe that attends the place and contribute to form the identity of the beach.

**Keywords:** Ambiance, Urban Tribe, Consumer

# 1. Introduction

This study is part of a project of dissertation in progress. It's aim is to investigate the symbolic aspects that form an environment in an urban beach in Brazil and their influence on the identification of an urban tribe.

Although it is focused in the field of services marketing and consumer behavior, it was necessary to expand the research and use constructs from other fields of knowledge to form something deeper and more substantial. Regarding the atmosphere of the store, the concept of ambience coming from urbanism was more appropriate to the study, because the tent investigated takes place outside of an enclosed retail shopping environment and is located in a natural surrounding, the beach. Sociological anthropological concepts, as the urban tribe for example, were also aggregated to identify consumers who attend the place.

The venue was a tent that differs from the others and has a steady profile of clients. In this article is also addressed the question of how this ambiance is a factor of identification not only of lifestyles and urban tribe, but also the city of Recife itself. Initially a literature review was done to support the research, the methodological procedures were explained and then an analysis of data collected was made by the literature reviewed.

# 2. Literature Review

## 2.1. Identity of Tourist Destination

The identity consists on the relationship between subjects and the world. For Berger and Luckman (2002), the identity of an individual (consumer) is defined as his or her location in the world and can only be subjectively appropriated with this world in which they live. To convey this concept to a tourist destination, another construct arises, the image.

Image involves subjective knowledge about the place. A image is formed from the point of view of the consumer, since he's the one who receives, interprets and forms the image, which makes it something special and unique. Their perceptions vary according to personal tastes and feelings, opinions of friends and relatives, the media stimuli and previous expe-

riences. For this reason, images formed on a place are difficult to control. (Grönroos 2009; Gandara 2008; Ekinci 2003).

Unlike image, identity, therefore, has an internal focus is the ' self -image', that means the way the location or destination want to be seen (Pike 2008). Ekinci (2003) states that to hold a well-defined identity is the key to identifying how to emphasize what a site has unique against their competitors. Thus, a closeness between what you want to pass to the consumer and what he actually sees is the ideal strategy.

The beaches of Brazil, especially in the northeast, have their own formatting environments and consumer media that constitute their identity and are consistent with your image. In urban beaches of Recife, state of Pernambuco, it's common to find tents scattered on the sand offering food and drinks, and services to cater to different types of consumers. Besides these tents, there are itinerant sellers that complement these services through an informal trade that provided from toys for children to gastronomic items.

To stand out from the competition even according to local identity, tents seek to elaborate the components of their service environment, combining their physical traits to the natural environment in order to offer experiences to their customers.

## 2.2. Urban Tribe

Sociality is something that is defined by the movement of the growing mass and the development of micro-groups that Meffesoli (1987) calls "tribes". The author also discusses the notion of "aesthetic paradigm" to describe the experience or feeling these people have in common. To Thibaud (verbal information) "aesthetics here becomes a real dimension of urban governance once it comes to knowing how we could establish something in common and live in a shared world."

This "living together" exists through the multiplicity of shared identities and groups that favors the emergence of a strong common sense, within which they form a collective subject that seeks to differentiate itself from others by identifying and belonging to a particular aggregation.Meffesoli (1987) calls this process neotribalism, corroborating withMoutinho (2008), according to whomthe standards sought within the tribes is an attempt by individuals to differentiate themselves from other groups .

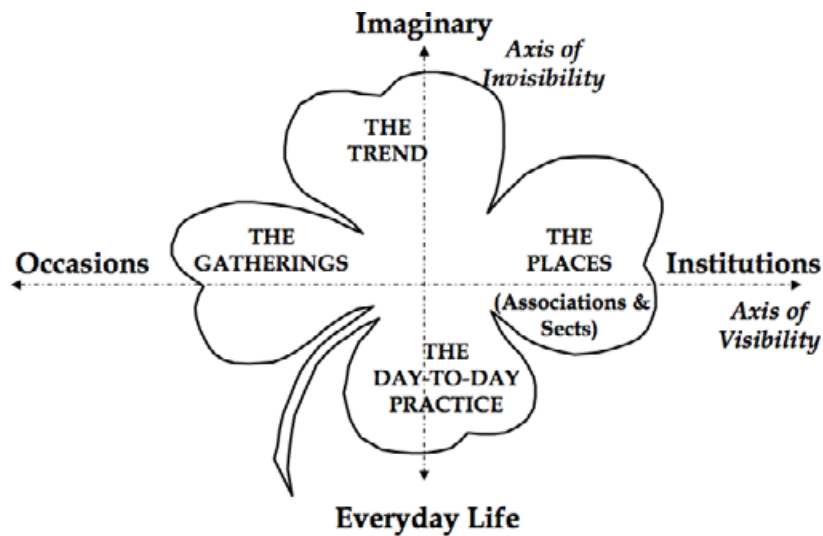Cova and Cova (2001, 13)propose the tribal clover to illustrate the components on wich the urban tribes rely on:

**Figure 1.** The Tribal Clover.

According to this model, there are some factors that contribute to the identification of a tribe among them:

> the physical evidence of the tribes are represented on the horizontal line and refer to the moments in which tribe members gather for their rituals (occasions), and physical or virtual (institutions) where members gather spaces. The vertical axis represents the temporal evidence, which are more abstract clues that explain that the tribes can be identified through the activities of its members practice regularly and by sharing their experiences, or by trends or fads related to your lifestyle that characterize the existence of the tribe. (Moura e Silva and Halpern 2013, 4)

In establishing the identity of an individual there is an "internalization" of the outside world in the subject and "externalization" of his interior, through its action in the social world (Hall 2005). But this connection is not only relative to each other or to everyday experiences, but is in harmony with a space that is "certainly the repository of a sociality that can no longer be neglected" (Maffesoli 1987, 174).

The existence of an urban tribe is directly linked to its place, in line with their lifestyles, appearance and modes of consumption. Thus, the next section brings the concepts concerning the environment in which they establish these consumer tribes.

## 2.3. The setting of a Natural Area

Within the marketing literature, the metaphor of the atmosphere is used for the establishment of service environments and gain a more operational approach, associating the creation of a retail environment through the use of color, lighting, sound and features in order to stimulate sensory and emotional responses of consumers affecting their behavior (Kotler 1973; Januzzi andPacagnan 2009; Kovacs et al 2005).

In the field of services, Bitner (1992) has called servicescape the impact the physical environment has on employees and customers of an organization and their experience with the skills to produce specific emotional effects on buyers, increasing the chances of buying.

Besides the colors, textures, lighting, etc., the occasion, the company, the atmosphere, the food, service and ambience were also some of the constituent variables of the service environment highlighted by Lashley, Morrison and Randall (2005) in their study about what would be an unforgettable meal. The celebration with friends strengthens the bonds of sociability allowing the formation of interactive networks, establishing common experiences and shared memories that constitute the social group memory and the basis of union among its members (Januzi and Pacagnan 2009). These variables call attention because they form a linking value between consumers, and a factor of connection with the environment.

Whereas these dimensions are part of sensorial marketing applied to retail atmosphere, it is necessary to extend its reach to the built environment outside these places, in natural environments to understand the interactions between its elements and consumer behavior. A recurring phenomenon in the economic, cultural dynamics and spatial history of cities is the ambiance of urban spaces. To Thibaud (2010), talking about ambiance of urban spaces means understanding how the transformations of the nowaday'scity embody and propagate in everyday life.

The sensitive sensory realm can claim their relevance in this respect because it is presented as an expression of the most immediate and obvious modifications of the transformations of the environment creating what Thibaud calls ambience (ambiance of urban spaces) and to Malard (1993, 4) is "a set of qualities that make a place a sacred area is the ambience of that domain", being revealed in the process of ownership in a process of humanization of space and giving it human nature according to their needs and desires. It is this interplay between user/space "why people and groups find - or not - their identity in the many places in which they live" (Malard 1993, 4). It is precisely the ambience of an environment that makes it responsive and allows this communication process.

According to Milliot (2013), analyzing the ambience is only possible in terms of impressions and sensations. What once seemed logical and often composed a background, like the

air, the sound, the smell, the heat, the light, is becoming one of the key issues of urban transformations. "In summary, urban planning is not limited to the built forms and the built areas, but also to sensitive environments and climatic envelopes" (Thibaud 2012, 31).

This author discusses the notion of medium, which can be understood as the air, sound, light, smell, in other words all elements of the environment that enable perception, which refer to particular affective tones that allow to speak of a "sounding appeasement" or of an "unbearable lightness". Besides these aspects that make up the medium and the physical elements of a built environment, we can consider that an ambiance is what gives life to an environment to give it an emotional value. "Setting a space implies not only control the physical parameters of a built environment, but to provide the territory of a certain character, a certain emotional and existential value" (Thibaud 2012, 32).

Baudrillard considers two types of structure of a site: the structure of the arrangements, which reveals organizational, hierarchy and power; and structure of the ambience that reveals aspects of so-called "lifestyle".

According to the author's thought as a system of signs, the ambience of the environment is an object of consumption, at least as it relates to their demonstration aspects of lifestyle, supporting the idea that the environments frequented by are consumers according to their preferences and their identification with other people and lifestyles (Cova 1997; Cooper,Mcloughlin and Keating 2005; Ramalho andAyrosa 2009).

The appropriation of elements of a natural medium for the formation of a service space can be understood as an ambience of a site, and as such provides this place sensory and affective tones that allow the identification of a lifestyle shared by people seeking experiences and common goals, reaching what Meffesoli (1987) called urban tribes.

# 3. Methodology

Participant observation is a technique by which the researcher participates in the community or culture being investigated, but maintains an analytical or observational position to be able to describe and interpret patterns, relationships, understandings and meanings attributed by the study subjects (Tacchi et al 2003).

Godoi and Balsini believe that participant observation has a "representative capacity to the interpretative paradigm superior to the case study" (2006, 97) when considering the characteristic of immersion of the researcher in the context investigated, inherent in qualitative research.

Denzin (1989) defines participant observation as a research strategy that combines at the same time, document analysis, interviews with participants, participation and direct observation and introspection from the researcher. Spradley (1980, 34) distinguishes three phases of participant observation:

1. Descriptive note: at the beginning, to give some guidance to the researcher on the field to be studied. Offers no specific descriptions and is used to understand the complexity of the field in general and to develop (while) research questions and lines of more concrete vision;

2. focused observation: narrow perspective for those processes and issues that are most essential to the research problem;

3. selective observation: the end of data collection, is focused on finding more evidence and examples of the types of practices and processes found in the second step.

Although divided into phases, the observation is a technique that involves direct contact with informants; is undirected and has observation of reality as the ultimate goal; and constitutes a qualitative analysis because it involves annotations to describe and understand a situation (Jaccoud and Mayer 2008, 254). Participant observation is presented as a "behavioral context from which an ethnographer uses specific techniques to collect data" (Angrosino 2009, 34).

During the period of investigation, initiated in March 2014 and expected to be completed in August of that year, the observation was made at the study site. This tent was chosen because it stands out amidst the other existing in the same environment by offering products with higher economic value, the difference in its ambiance and the people who attend.

The observation took place on different days during the opening hours of the tent from 9:30 a.m. to 16 p.m. Although not driven, some topics were chosen as initial guidelines such as, for example, the relationship between the components of the physical environment of the tent and consumers. As his colors, the arrangement of chairs and tables, sounds helped to attract customers. After their arrival, what was observed was the reasons for staying there, the aspects of service provision, the most consumed products and what is the profile of the regulars.

In the following topic are exposed some reflections on the observed data and the analysis according to the literature review.

# 4. Analysis

## 4.1. Boa Viagem Beach

Boa Viagem is the most famous urban beach in the city of Recife in Pernambuco, Brazil. Throughout its seven km long, can be found on sidewalks, standardized kiosks, bike paths, tennis courts, fitness equipment and some parks for children. Moreover, its landscape is marked by the presence of large buildings, evidence of continuing humanization. These buildings form a kind of heat island because despite offering shade during part of the day, do not allow the movement of the wind making the hot and muggy weather.

Much of the beach is formed by natural reefs, which gave the name of the city that can be seen when the tide is low. Despite having this natural barrier and be an uncontaminated sea, bathing is not recommended due to the possibility of shark attacks.

Even with the impediment from swimming, the beach is always crowded on weekends, including some people are at risk of entering the sea. The frequency of the site is due largely to the presence of tents along the stretch of sand that offer restaurant and bar services. These services are complemented by informal vendors that supply products and services ranging from simple broths (stews) of seafood to sparkling of high financial value. These service providers allow the venue remains being frequented by families, groups of friends and even those who prefer to go alone.

Within a scenario in which the products and services offered are very similar, tents seek creative ways to stand out from others and attract consumers. The tent studied here innovated in offering products of great financial value, besides resorting to a different ambiance that created an emotional tone and make the customers feel part of the local environment.

## 4.2. The Tent as a Factor Ambiance and Location Identification

The ambiance of urban spaces is a recurring phenomenon in the transformation of cities. Thibaud calls ambience the expression resultant of the sensitive area and the most apparent modifications of the environment. The ambience of a place is revealed through a humanization process, providing it with quality expressing their wants and needs and identify lifestyles. Adding the concepts of urbanism to the marketing literature, one can make an analogy to theories of store atmosphere and expand them to include the ambiance of natural environments.

On the beach of Boa Viagem, the appropriation of natural spaces is through the establishment of tents for commercial purposes. These environments are identified with the local culture that is going to the beach and sit under umbrellas to drink and eat for long hours, which sets much of the Pernambuco coast. Each installation consists of several tables and parasols, however all these elements form a unit.

The tent studied here has the same formatting of others, but stands out from the competitors by having your well prepared and standardized environment, blending the natural elements and forming an ambience. All umbrellas are of a single color (red) and contains the logo of a beer sponsor of the site as well as all the chairs. Each table has a cooler, also from the brand of the sponsor, to the side to facilitate the consumption of cool drinks. The sand is constantly wet at the site to keep the cooler atmosphere which contributes to the persistence of customers for longer time. Employees, unlike other stalls along the coast, are all uniformed and the presentation of dishes reminiscent of restaurants located outside of natural environments. Customers are invited to feel special from the moment they arrive, because instead of stepping directly on the sand, there is the option of going by foot-shaped brackets that are on the ground, simulating a red carpet. The format of these supports references the name of the tent, which shows the concern to harmonize the environment with abstract and subjective elements. All of these elements merge with the air, the sounds, the voices, the smells and the social factor to form an environment of consumption experiences.

The space between tables is small which favors listening to conversations and sounds of each other. There isn't a proper system of sound on the tent for legal reasons, but each consumer can take your speaker, their ipods, phones, etc. and listen to the music they want at the table. Mixed into these shades, listen to the noise of traffic, because the beach is very close to one of the busiest avenues of the city; the voices of vendors selling a wide variety of products, from typical food to kites and plastic pools, and a frequent phenomenon that is the sound of carts sellers of pirated dvds and cds that put loud music as a way of demonstrating product. So many colors and so many voices are found along the entire coast of Boa Viagem beach that can be considered a factor of identity of the local culture.

The harmonization of the physical components of the tent with the natural space plus its sounds and voices form a proper ambiance that attracts a certain type of consumer who identifies not only with the location but also with other consumers who are there, forming what Meffesoli (1987) called neo-tribalism.

## 4.4. The Urban Tribe

According to the tribal clover (Cova and Cova 2001), groups that form the urban tribes need a space with which to identify, corroborating what says Malard (1993) that the ambience established from the desires and needs of people is what makes them find or not their identity where they live.

The construction of the space where is the tent investigated was favorable from the beginning to identify a more elite audience, in Classes A and B. Early in its existence, musical events were held in order to attract this type of public. With the ban by the city these events, the profile of people who frequent the place has not changed.

The urban tribe found there, equivalent to a subculture of consumption (Schouten and Mcalexander 1995) is composed mostly of young adults from 20 to 40 years. Besides these people, families with children and some elderly people attend theplace, but they are the exception and therefore were not considered members of the tribe in this study. The components of the tribe primarily consume beverages, including beers, caipifrutas and coconut water in large quantity. As they go in groups, the customers remain throughout the opening hours of the tent, but rarely use culinary services, they prefer to buy from the informal sellers. Despite the high financial value of the products, this tribe is loyal to the place and is always present.

Even the ease of payment through credit card has not contributed to mischaracterize the tribe attracting people from lower classes. This shows that this ambience, the way it is situated, inhibits this type of audience. A striking feature that differs goers this tent and the other the same beach is the way they dress. While in the other tents informality is prevalent, this costumes are in accordance with this ambience.

## 5. Conclusion

As part of the local culture, the beach tents are recurrent throughout the coast ofPernambuco and seek creative ways to stand out from competitors and win customers.

The tent in question, located in the most famous urban beach Reccife, invested in its ambiance and high-value products to attract high-profile consumers. Factors such as cli-

mate, the arrangement of tables, ease of use, the colors on the site, it's sounds and air, and specially the social aspects of the ambiance are some of the elements that join the natural environment and give the tone of the place.

All this began a process of adding value to both the environment and consumers who attend the place, giving status to both. Something that is common in tourism destination marketing strategies used and ambiance to differentiate. The study of these process is very important to understand the relationship between sociability and natural environment and how the comercial settings in these areas influence the behavior of consumers.

## 6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The fact that it was accomplished in just one beach and one tent was a limitation, but did not muddle the research, since the intention was to study this case. Climate change was also a factor that affected the research process, as in rainy days consumers don't go to the tent. This search can be reproduced in different beaches as a means of comparison to enrich the knowledge gained.

Another suggestion for future research is to apply the concepts in other natural environments that go through the process of humanization, to investigate whether the setting has the same effect on people and tribes are formed because of it. Although it was made in Brazil, it is also possible to apply to study in other countries from the perspective of cross cultural and multidisciplinary studies.

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