

# **Sensual Tourism in Brazil – The Off-Season Carnival (Micareta) Experience**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

People travel for many reasons, and attending events is one of the major motivations to travel. Events can be classified into cultural, sporting and business events and vary in form and size. From small village fetes to major Expos, cultural events are sought after by tourists worldwide. Events bring about many benefits, both for tourists and for tourist destinations. For consumers, events provide the opportunity to satisfy a range of needs, whether personal (e.g., play) or interpersonal (affiliation, reputation) (Correia and Moital 2009; Getz 2007; Murray 1938). For destinations, hosting events can have a positive influence on them; events help maintain and strengthen a destination's image and act as demand stimulators (Edwards, Moital and Vaughan 2004). In Brazil, out-of-state travellers are one of the major drivers of domestic tourism. Besides Carnival events, some cultural events attract a substantial number of visitors. For example, Natal Luz in Gramado, Southern Brazil attracts approximately 800,000 visitors, of whom over 65 percent are from outside the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Generosi 2011).

The culture of a people is reflected in their festivals, music, dance and other forms of cultural celebrations. In Brazil, many cultural festivals are associated with religious celebrations (SPPERT n/d). Some still contain a strong religious component such as "Festa do Divino", "Folia de Reis" and "Cavalhada". Other events, such as the celebration of Carnival, have developed into having more of a 'profane' role. The 'Festas Juninas' (June celebrations), which also has religious origins, started as a means to honour the June Saints (St. John, St. Peter and St. Anthony). Today, these celebrations are largely driven by profane celebrations involving music, food and dance.

The 'Reveillon' or New Year's Eve events are also very popular across Brazil. These celebrations have both religious (Christian or African) and non-religious elements and are associated with the search for prosperity in the New Year. There are also cultural events that do not have religious origins, for example, the 'Boi Bumbá' events, which take place mainly in Northern and North-eastern regions, or Rodeos.

Among the various types of cultural events, music-based events in Brazil have grown considerably over the past years, mirroring the trend in many other parts of the globe (Mintel 2008). While many of the aforementioned cultural events are not strictly music-based events, music is often the main component, or it has the same level of importance as the other key attractions of the event. Many of these events feature top performers in one or more of the music genres with large national appeal: Axe, Samba, Pagode, Funk, Forró, Sertanejo, Bossa Nova and Brazilian Rock and Brazilian Popular Music (*Música Popular Brasileira* - MPB).

Irrespective of their origins, in general, cultural festivals are places where people from different backgrounds can be found and where social, physical and ideological differences are often forgotten (Bueno, 2008; Barbosa, 2005). Bueno and Barbosa further argue that the relaxed atmosphere transforms participants in a way that encourages communication and contact with others, which strengthens social ties. Events are oriented towards celebrating life, fostering happiness and challenging pre-conceived values and rules. In Brazil, Carnival events are perhaps the type of event where such values are most reflected.

The celebration of Carnival in Brazil has taken many forms throughout the country (e.g., the Parade of Samba Schools in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo, the street blocks in Olinda / Recife and the Fancy dress (or not) balls and 'blocos de sujo' across the country)(SPPERT n/d). In Salvador, the Carnival is celebrated through 'Trio Elétricos', which are live music parades.

The Carnivals in Salvador and Rio de Janeiro are the biggest in terms of participant numbers. The Rio Carnival involves Samba music and theatre via parades all over the City, and the main Carnival takes place at the Sambódromo. The Salvador Carnival is very music oriented. Salvador Carnival is one of the largest street Carnivals in the world, with an estimated daily attendance of 1.7 million (Carnaval de Salvador 2011). The Carnival takes place every year in February or March, and it resembles a music festival. Although the range of music genres has expanded recently amongst Carnivals, the music played at this Carnival is 'Axe', a genre that originated in Salvador. The Salvador Carnival (and Axe music) has become so popular in Brazil that many cities all over the country, inspired by its success, have started to organise off-season Carnivals inspired by it. These events first started in other Northeast states and later spread to central and southern states (Gaudin 2000). 'Micaretas', as these off-season Carnivals are known, attempt to recreate the Salvador Carnival, but at a smaller scale. However, this does not mean that these events are small. A typical three-day micareta featuring some of the major Axe music artists will attract around 100,000 attendees, with the largest reaching 1,000,000 attendees over four days (Diário de Natal 2010). These off-season Carnivals attract a combination of locals and domestic tourists, and they have little, if any, ability to attract international tourists, mostly because they feature Brazilian music (with lyrics in Portuguese), which is presumably not attractive to foreigners.

A Micareta is a cultural event that celebrates Brazilian music and values. Although music is a central driver for attendance at Micaretas, it is not the only one. What is particular about the Salvador Carnival (and, consequently, Micaretas) is a sensual practice called 'pegação'. The pegação is the generalised (and accepted) practice of 'snogging' or 'french kiss'. While kissing is not uncommon at music events in Brazil (and elsewhere), what is unique about Micaretas is that attendees can (and are encouraged to) engage in the 'pegação' practice with several different participants.

Thus, the Salvador Carnival and its offspring, micaretas, have developed a unique culture whereby specific rules of seduction have been established. Physical contact is accepted even between those with minimal previous interaction (it is not uncommon for kissing to happen even before words are exchanged). Thus, one important element of Micaretas is the opportunity to interact with individuals (of the opposite sex) at a quasi-sexual level. In other words, sensuality is materialised through several brief romantic relationships. During the event, these brief relationships encompass a 'flirting' stage, which can take merely seconds, followed by the kiss. Depending on this episodic romantic experience, things can be taken to the next level: continuation of the romantic relationship during or even after the event.

The popularity of Micaretas results from the importance of sensual experiences as a basic human need (Murray 1938, Maslow 1943). Previous research of the influence of sensuality on tourism clearly suggests that there is a segment of tourists who travel in search of sensual experiences (Ryan et al. 1996; Wickens 2002; Sonmez et al. 2006). The word 'sensual' has been used in many ways; however, in this chapter, a narrow definition was adopted. Sensuality refers to engaging in behaviours of a romantic and/or sexual nature. Therefore, sensual tourism refers to tourism motivated by travellers seeking engagement in sensual (i.e., romantic or sexual) behaviour. While sensual pursuit as a driver of tourism has been researched in the past, most previous studies have focused on sex tourism. There has been little research on sensual tourism practices not directly associated with (commercial) sex. Therefore, the study detailed in this chapter aims to explore sensual tourism in the context of micaretas. Its objectives are as follows:

- to investigate the importance of sensuality as a motivation to attend micaretas;
- to explore sensuality in the micareta experience; and
- to identify facilitators of the sensual experience.

To address these objectives, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first part provides background for the research, including an overview of a micareta and a review of the literature on both tourism motivation and sensuality in tourism. Next, the methodological steps that were taken to collect the data are explained, followed by a presentation of the results. Finally, the results are discussed, and conclusions about the role of sensuality in micareta tourism are drawn.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The micareta concept**

Micaretas are unique to Brazil, and therefore, a short explanation for international readers is necessary. Micaretas are off-season ‘mini’ Carnivals that attempt to recreate the Salvador Carnival and take place all around Brazil. Although they are labelled as Carnivals, micaretas resemble a music festival, but with some particularities. Singers perform on top of trucks travelling along a circuit at a very low speed (approximately 1 km per hour). Thus, the event resembles a parade, albeit one in which participants can walk in rather than just watching the parade pass by. Most micaretas last 3 or 4 days and usually feature two or three of the five Axe-music headline artists: Chiclete com Banana, Ivete Sangalo, Banda Eva, Claudia Leitte and Asa de Águia. A number of other lesser-known artists also perform at the event. There are three forms of participation at micaretas:

*Bloco or Pista (Block)* – These participants travel along with the truck (called Trio) carrying their chosen artist. In public spaces, the boundaries of the block area are defined by a rope circling the truck held by security personnel. To access the area, a participant needs to hold a ticket in the form of a t-shirt (or Abadá)

*Camarote (VIP Box)* – A camarote is a tribune overlooking the circuit. Access to these VIP boxes follows the same rules as the block – entry is granted by showing the correct t-shirt. Tickets usually include drinks (on an open bar basis), and many have now started to offer food as part of the ticket price. Besides providing an opportunity to watch the parade, these VIP boxes recreate the nightclub experience when no artists are parading.

*Pipoca (Popcorn)* – These attendees do not hold a ticket and watch the event for free. Initially, most micaretas were located in town/city centres; however, recently, many of them have started moving to specialized temporary venues. Micaretas taking place at these venues usually do not feature this type of participants .

### **Motivation**

Motivation is a central concept in studying consumer decision-making. Previous studies on tourist motivations have focused on the entire set of motivations (Beard and Ragheb 1983; Cohen 1972; Correia and Crouch 2004; Crompton 1979; Dann 1977; Iso-Ahola 1982). A different strategy has been adopted by some researchers who alternatively look at individual motivations. For example, Correia and Moital (2009) developed a model to examine the motivation of prestige in travel. While a broad analysis of tourist motivations is important, examination of specific needs is required for a more detailed understanding of travel motivation. This chapter aims to contribute to this body of research by examining desire for sensual experiences in the context of event tourism.

Two types of motivation theories can be found in the literature (Mullins 2009). Process theories focus on how certain variables motivate behaviour, whereas content theories examine what motivates people. Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory is one of the widely accepted process theories of motivation. According to the theory, three variables interact in motivating behaviour: expectancy, instrumentality and valence. Valence refers to the importance of the outcome, instrumentality to the expectation of achieving

the outcome (performance) and expectancy to the extent to which the person believes that his/her effort will lead to achieving the outcome. Based on Vroom's theory, the stronger the expectancy, the instrumentality and the valence, the greater the motivation is to perform the behaviour. In tourism, the valence and instrumentality components have been researched under the label of 'push' and 'pull' factors (Crompton 1979). Push motivations are the individual needs of the consumer, while pull motivations are the attributes of the destination/tourism product. The means-end theory (Gutman 1982) further suggests how the two ends of motivation (push/valence and pull/instrumentality) come together. According to this theory, products (and their attributes) are a means to an end, in which the end is the satisfaction of the needs.

### **Sensuality in tourism**

Sensual tourism practices have traditionally been investigated by examining romantic and sexual relationships between tourists and locals. Most of this research has focused on 'sex tourism', which is defined as relationships of a commercial nature involving an economic exchange (in cash or in kind) between a seeker and a provider (Ryan and Kinder 1996, Dahles 2008). When the relationship does not involve monetary exchange, it is labelled as 'romantic tourism'. While, initially, these two types of sensual tourism were conceptualised as distinct categories, Herold, Garcia and DeMoya (2001) conceptualised them as two ends of a continuum of motivations rather than as distinct categories. Based on gender studies, some authors have argued that sex and romance should be viewed not from an economic point of view but from a motivational point of view. Sex tourism involves entering a sensual relationship with the main purposes of having sex, while in romantic tourism, priority is given to affection and companionship (Dahles 2008). In other words, sex tourism is mainly driven by physical needs, whereas affection/psychological needs drive romantic tourism. Research suggests that men are more explicit about sex as a motivation, whereas women tend to look for romance (Dahles 2008; Sonmez et al. 2006).

References to sensual tourism have typically focused on the relationship between elements of the inner travel group, i.e., other tourists known to the tourist (Sirgy 2010, Trauer and Ryan 2005) and other tourists not known to the tourist before departure (Wickens 2002), and locals (Ryan and Kinder 1996; Herold, Garcia and DeMoya 2001; Meisch 1995). Earlier studies have focused on host-tourist interaction, but more recent studies have started to examine sex and romance among tourists themselves (Trauer and Ryan 2005). The clear identification of who is involved in the romantic or sexual encounter is important. According to Trauer and Ryan (2005), there are two types of relationships based on who is involved: relationship development or relationship reinforcement. The tourist decision-making process is likely to be different according to the type of relationship. For example, in relationship development, tourist decision-making is likely to incorporate considerations about the extent to which a suitable potential romantic or sex partner is likely to be found. In relationship reinforcement, this would not be a relevant consideration. The identification of the parties involved also leads to moral assessments by those not directly involved in the relationship (Oppermann 1999); interaction with locals is usually viewed negatively, while that between tourists is considered adventurous. One of the reasons why the host-tourist relationship is often viewed negatively is due to the assumed differences in economic

power between the two parties (Herold, Garcia and DeMoya 2001). This, in turn, leads to concerns about exploitation. Such exploitation is not thought to exist when the relationship is between tourists because it is generally assumed that there is no power differential.

There are a number of characteristics related to sensual tourism encounters involving someone new that make them different from those that take place at home. First, these encounters are likely to be driven by experiencing the moment without much concern about the future (Trauer and Ryan 2005). Trauer and Ryan related these encounters to situational involvement, which is characterised by superficial (rather than profound) emotional investment and are, consequently, more selfish. As they are temporally bounded by the holiday period (Ryan and Kinder 1996), these relationships imply a minimal level of responsibility (Trauer and Ryan 2005). A particular characteristic of the relationships between hosts and tourists, especially if monetary exchange is involved, is a tendency to desire secrecy (Ryan and Kinder 1996).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section reviews the main methods used to collect and analyse data. To examine sensual tourism in the context of attending micaretas, a mixed-method approach was adopted, whereby the researchers' partial, historically derived, embodied experiences are brought together with a 'data collecting' approach (Daymon and Holloway, 2011). Data were collected through participant observation and a participant survey. Participant observation is a data collection technique that involves studying subjects within their environment (Sarantakos 1998). It involves taking "part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as a means of learning the explicit and tacit elements of their life routines and culture" (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002; p. 1). The majority of the data reported in this chapter was derived from a purposive observation that took place at one of these micaretas, namely, Carnabeirão, in 2008. Carnabeirão takes place in Ribeirão Preto (São Paulo State), around 300 km from the São Paulo city centre. In this instance, one of the authors bought a package and joined a trip party of around 30. The trip started in São Paulo on Friday afternoon and returned on the Sunday evening after the show. The package included transportation (by bus) to and from the event, accommodation (Friday and Saturday), tickets to the event (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) and a barbeque on Saturday.

The observation focused on participants' behaviour during the trip (from São Paulo to Ribeirão Preto and return) and the conversations, either between participants themselves or between the author and participants. A diary was kept during this trip to record observations and conversations. Participant observation focused on identifying elements of the micareta experience through observing topics of conversation, body language and the interaction between participants and the environment (e.g., singers, venue). Data collection was undertaken through informal interviewing in the form of conversation (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002; p. 1). In conversation, each interaction between the participant and informant is unique because the flow of the discussion does not follow a pre-defined or uniform set of questions. Participants in the trip were informed of the research and of the fact that data were being collected about their experience of the Micareta. To ensure anonymity, at no point in this chapter were names or detailed personal information presented.

The same author has attended a range of micaretas over the years. While formal observations were made only at Carnabeirão in 2008, perceptions developed through informal participant observations at these other micaretas were also used in this chapter. In fact, the idea of undertaking participant observation came from first attending the Salvador Carnival in 2005 and one micareta in 2006 (Fortal in Fortaleza, Northeast Brasil). Previous experience from attending the Salvador Carnival and micaretas contributed to developing sensitisation with the field, which is an important element in participant observation (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002). In addition, being an experienced micareta attendee facilitates acceptance by the group, which permits the researcher to take on a 'full membership' role and thus enables a greater level of immersion in his/her experience (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2002, p. 21). Since the formal observations in 2008, the author has participated in two other micaretas, Carnabeirão and CarnaRioPreto (São José do Rio Preto, São Paulo), which were both held in 2010 and have helped the author to consolidate reflections on the micareta experience.

Participant observation clearly identified sensual motivations as a critical element of the micareta experience. However, because the exact importance of sensuality was unknown, an online survey of past and present micareta tourists was undertaken in May 2011. This survey, which had a broader aim of profiling the micareta tourist, asked past and current micareta tourists a range of questions. The results of the following three questions that indicate the importance of sensuality in the micareta experience are reported: 1) what the best micareta they had travelled to was, and why it was the best 2) what micareta they had not been to yet but would like to travel to and why and 3) a general motivation question asking the tourists why they travel (or travelled) to micaretas. The answers to these three open-ended questions were used to draw conclusions about the role of sensuality in the decision to travel to micaretas. Responses were analysed for content and meaning, followed by coding and aggregation into major categories. The results are displayed in Table 1, which contains the frequency (in count and percentages) for each category.

The online questionnaire was advertised using a variety of methods. Posts were made on micareta-related communities within social networks (Facebook and Orkut). A simple message containing the information about who should answer, the academic (non-commercial) nature of the survey, and the time it took to complete the questionnaire (around eight minutes) was included. In addition, because a number of past and present micareta tourists were known to the researchers, snowball sampling was employed. These individuals were asked to fill in the survey (via an Orkut scrap or a Facebook wall post) and were also encouraged to invite others that they knew had travelled to micaretas. The survey was also promoted in an online discussion board consisting of over 400 tourism academics predominantly from Brazil. The Brazilian academics were also asked to promote the survey among their students, which are part of the age group that tends to attend micaretas.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Participation**

The responses from 92 past and present micareta tourists were used. The age of the respondents varied from 18 to over 60 years, with an average age of 25 years. The

sample contained residents in 15 Brazilian states and was evenly divided by gender. Half of the respondents were not in a relationship, 8 percent were not in a serious relationship, 31 percent were in a serious relationship and 10 percent were married. The mean number of trips to micaretas taken by the sample was 11, and the median number of trips was 5. The difference between the median and mean is explained by a group of respondents who had attended a fairly high number of micaretas. While more than half had not travelled to more than five micaretas, 10 percent of the sample had travelled to between 20 and 50 micaretas, and five respondents reported having travelled to more than 50 micaretas.

### The ‘sensuality’ motivation

Table 1 shows the results of three open-answer questions contained in the survey, which focused on understanding why the tourists travel to micaretas, why they liked the micareta they thought was best and why they would like to travel to a desired micareta that they had not been to before. According to the results, the motivation to attend micaretas is driven by a range of reasons, with people and music being among the most important ones. The sensual elements were also cited frequently: it was the fourth most frequent reason for travelling to micaretas and the third most frequent reason for choice of the best micareta. Sensuality was also mentioned as a reason to travel to the micareta that they had not been to before. A number of answers were related to the act of travelling, such as the existence of other tourist attractions and undertaking a trip, while the rest were related to the event itself. Tourist destination reasons were particularly important in explaining why they wanted to travel to the micareta that they had not been to yet.

**Table 1: Reasons to travel to micaretas \***

Why they travel to micaretas (N=158)		Why they liked the micareta they thought was the best they had been to(N=165)		Why they would like to travel to the micareta they have not been to (N=98)				
	N	%		N	%	N	%	
People	33	20.9	People	44	26.7	Tourist attractions	16	16.3
Music	30	19.0	Music	33	20.0	Famous	15	15.3
Pleasure	23	14.6	Sensuality	27	16.4	Music	13	13.3
Sensuality	21	13.3	Atmosphere	20	12.1	Word-of-mouth	12	12.2
Entertainment	20	12.7	Structure	14	8.5	Size of event (large)	9	9.2
Tourist attractions	10	6.3	Tourist attractions	9	5.5	Sensuality	8	8.2
The trip	8	5.1	Event organisation	9	5.5	Desire and curiosity	8	8.2
Escape/relaxation	5	3.2	Price	5	3.0	Traditional	6	6.1
Other	8	5.1	Other	4	2.4	People	4	4.1
						Other	7	7.1

\* The total number of answers is greater than the number of questionnaires collected (92) because the respondents could provide more than one answer/reason.

How did respondents refer to the sensual component of the event? Several respondents indicated the presence of ‘beautiful’ people at the event as a key motivation to travel to the event. It has also emerged as a key factor among the decisions of which micareta to travel to. For example, several respondents mentioned ‘a lot of beautiful women’ to explain why they travelled to micaretas or why they considered a certain micareta to be



the best that they had ever travelled to. Two respondents explained that there are regions in Brazil known to have beautiful women and that this factor has a lot of influence in the selection of the event to travel to. Several answers were more overt in their recognition of the sensual component. For example, one respondent said that the reason behind his choice of the best micareta was due to the number of women that he could kiss (in Portuguese 'pegar', which can be translated as 'catch'). Other respondents mentioned conquests ('conquistas'), girlfriends ('namoradas'), lots of dating ('muito namoro'), the quantity of women ('mulherada'), to flirt ('paquerar') and romantic relationships ('amores'). All of these answers suggest the opportunity to engage in sensual interactions with more than one partner.

A small number of respondents also mentioned sex. The reasons for considering a certain trip to be the best included 'fascinating sexual experiences' and 'ease in engaging in sexual intercourse'. One respondent said that he was driven to travel to micaretas by the opportunity to engage in adventurous behaviour, including sex. Another set of answers were much more abstract and thus more subjective to interpretation code. However, an understanding of their meanings in the context of attending events (which is usually different from the standard definitions in a dictionary) further suggests the importance of the sensual component. Answers that were understood as encompassing sensual elements included 'farra', 'animação' and 'festa'. One respondent answered 'rsrsrsrsr nem vou falar', which means 'lol, I won't even mention it'.

### **Sensuality in the micareta experience**

Participant observation contributed to identifying a number of behaviours and conversations related to sensuality. From the outset, the 'pegação' (kissing) topic was a topic of conversation between members of the trip. The short journeys between the hotel and the event venue and return also included discussions about 'pegação'. On the way to the venue, the topic was about expectations and tactics, and on the return journey, the discussion was about successes. The topic of 'pegação' continued till breakfast the following morning, with the conversation often centred on how many people each person had kissed. A low number of 'hits' led to condemnation and pressure to change one's behaviour. Implicit in this behaviour was a sense that not partaking is 'uncool', and therefore, talking about 'pegação' worked as a pressure tactic to lead everyone who was not travelling with a partner to conform and do the 'right thing'. On the last day of the event, one of the topics of discussion was anticipating what was likely to happen that day. One group of participants in the trip compared the last day of the micareta with the last day of the Salvador Carnival, arguing that the 'pegação' on the last day was much more frequent and forceful than in the previous days. Because it was the final day, it was the last opportunity to engage in such behaviour. The forcefulness element was also evident through observations at the event of many men insisting on a kiss, sometimes using physical strength to do so.

During the event, there were many behaviours adopted by both men and women that were associated with sensual interactions. The men showed the most overt behaviours. As the crowd slowly moved along with the Carnival truck, several men faced the direction of the crowd, enabling them to make eye contact with potential girls they could kiss. Several men had no shirt on for the purposes of emphasizing their physical

attributes. Some girls also engaged in overt flirting behaviours by dancing, sometimes effusively. This was to attract the attention of men. It was also very common for women to carry lipstick and to use it while in the middle of the crowd.

### **Drivers of the sensual experience**

Sensual encounters do not happen by chance, and a number of drivers could be identified. To start with, the ‘pegação’ was well embedded in the culture of the event. As illustrated earlier, this topic was very much discussed throughout the trip. The extent to which the sensual element was an expected feature of the event is illustrated in the views of one male participant who, right at the beginning of the trip before departure from São Paulo, asserted that people were also attending the event for romantic reasons. He further suggested that ‘no one was joining the trip without expecting to kiss/stay with someone’. According to him, snogging was unique to micaretas, and this was influenced by the Carnival spirit, which is embodied by sheer happiness. He further noted that micaretas are more social than other events, such as raves, in which people tend to stay within their own groups.

The presence of alcohol was also a driver. Alcohol was widely available throughout the journey, either for free or at relatively low prices. Alcohol intake started even before the bus departed from São Paulo and was consumed throughout the entire journey to Ribeirão Preto (300 kilometres away). Most of the trip participants carried alcohol with them, while beer and some spirits were freely available to be consumed on the onward bus trip as a part of the travel package. On Saturday and Sunday, there was an ‘esquentá’, which involved starting to drink alcohol a few hours before travelling to the event venue so that participants arrived at the event ‘warmed up’. On Saturday and Sunday, men carrying coolers boxes mixed with the crowd in the block, which meant that event participants did not have to travel to a bar to buy alcohol – the bar ‘came’ to them. This is common practice at both the Salvador Carnival and at micaretas. Unlike the Saturday and Sunday events, which were strictly open to participants 18 years of age and older, 16- and 17-year-old participants were also allowed to attend the first day (Friday). By law, alcohol cannot be sold to participants under 18 years of age; hence, the organisation made sure that alcohol was only sold and consumed in an area not accessible to those under 18 years of age. This meant that no alcohol could be consumed in the circuit area (close to the Carnival truck). Several participants voiced their dissatisfaction with the fact that they had to leave the centre of the party (around the truck) to buy and consume alcohol.

There were other general elements of the event that appeared to be drivers of sensual interaction:

- The event concentrated a large number of people in a relatively small area. This led to a physical proximity that, it could be argued, drives sensual encounters.
- Because many people were engaging in the activity, there was an element of ‘anonymity’ through not ‘standing out’ in the crowd.
- Within each area (VIP box or block), everyone used the same t-shirt (Abadá). However, participants are allowed to change the shape of the t-shirt as long as they keep the event’s hologram in the centre front. The overwhelming majority of women

made changes to the t-shirt to make it more feminine (and sexy). Many men also modified their t-shirts to uncover more of the upper body.

- Many Axe-music songs have an associated choreography, with several of these actually involving physical contact such as by hugging in small groups and by holding hands. For example, one song required the crowd to open an aisle in front of the truck, with men and women separated to either side. At the command of the singer, the men and women would run towards each other, closing the aisle. At this moment, there was intense body contact.
- Many of the lyrics of the songs also appeared to encourage sensual behaviours. For example, one song portrayed the story of a young man arriving in Salvador to attend the Carnival, saying that he is single in Salvador and asking where his love is. There were also songs dedicated to short-lived Carnival romances. Some lyrics also focused on kissing.
- Singers also frequently encouraged kissing and romance between attendees. For example, they asked the crowd to be happy and to enjoy the moment through an intense kissing activity. During the last day, they asked if anyone had not kissed yet. This further shows that the attendees faced an intense external pressure to partake in sensual behaviour.

Although the above drivers are common to all of the participants in the event, they are more intense in the 'block' area than in the VIP or popcorn areas. Additionally, some drivers are specific to certain parts of the event. Notably, for block-ticket holders (those enjoying the event along with the truck), the dynamic/moving stage facilitated a frequent change in the people around block-ticket holders, providing them with the opportunity to interact with a greater number of people when compared to those at other areas of the event.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter sought to explore sensual tourism in the context of micareta events. An underlying assumption of this endeavour is the existence of 'sensual tourism', defined as tourism motivated by the desire to engage in sensual behaviour. The results suggest that sensuality is an important element associated with the motivation to travel to micaretas. Using the means-end theory principles, which argues that a product (or its attributes) is a means to an end (the needs or values), the results suggest that participants travelling to micaretas perceived the event as containing a range of attributes that are able to satisfy their need for sensuality (the end). These attributes refer to both tangible and intangible elements. The tangible elements include the extent to which beautiful people attend the event, the constant physical contact often encouraged by lyrics/singers, a similar dress code (Abadá), which is often adapted to show more of a participant's body, and the widespread availability of alcohol; the intangible elements include the 'culture' associated with the micareta event. Culture refers to the 'accumulation of shared meanings, rituals, norms and traditions among the members of an organisation or society' (Solomon, 2006, p. 542) and informs the members of a culture about what is expected and what should be accepted and rejected. The results of this research suggest that the culture of the events was one geared

towards the expectation that participants engage in sensual behaviours (notably, the ‘pegação’).

While research on tourism and sensuality is not new, most of it has focused on (paid) sex tourism involving hosts and guests. This chapter has documented a different perspective of sensual tourism whereby a relationship, whether at a romantic or a sexual level, does not have a commercial nature. While both the hosts and the guests engaged in sensual behaviour at micaretas, most of the time, it is not possible to distinguish between locals and tourists because all of the participants were in the same place with important physical cues removed (all are wearing the same t-shirt). While the event is unlikely to be attended by lower classes due to its cost, the removal of physical/symbolic barriers between participants through the wearing of a common t-shirt led to reducing any differences in the social background of participants (i.e., between those of the middle and upper classes). Hence, all of the participants tended to be at the same compatible social levels.

As suggested by Piorkowski and Cardone (2000), there are four levels of intimacy: physical intimacy (actual body contact), communication intimacy (verbal and non-verbal communication), spiritual intimacy (sharing values and beliefs) and intellectual intimacy (sharing knowledge). The results of participant observation suggest that there are three levels of sensual encounters in the micareta travel experience, which are conceptualised in terms of progression: flirting, passionate and sexual. These three levels can be looked at in terms of the type and amount of intimacy that they involve. The research also suggests that both the types and amount of intimacy vary according to the type of ticket held: VIP box or block. Table 2 provides a tentative profile of each type of sensual encounter based on the types of intimacy that they encompass (spiritual and intellectual were merged into one category, as their separation is not thought to be relevant in this analysis). They reflect the minimum levels of intimacy required at each sensual encounter level.

**Table 2: Intimacy according to the three levels of sensual encounters**

	Block			VIP Box		
	Physical	Communication	Spiritual and Intellectual	Physical	Communication	Spiritual and Intellectual
Flirting	No	Non-verbal, possibly verbal	Inexistent or minimal	No	Non-verbal and Verbal	Limited
Passionate	Yes	Non-verbal, possibly verbal	Inexistent or minimal	Yes	Non-verbal and Verbal	Limited
Sexual	Yes	Non-verbal and verbal	Minimal	Yes	Non-verbal and Verbal	Limited

Unlike flirting, the passionate and sexual levels involve physical intimacy. The main difference between passionate and sexual sensual experiences is that the latter involves sexual intercourse. Within the block experience, communication intimacy at the flirting and passionate levels can be non-verbal only. It is not uncommon that physical contact (a kiss) happens without the exchange of words. In the VIP box, both verbal and non-verbal communication usually involve all three levels, as encounters tend to last longer. At the sexual level, both verbal and non-verbal communication intimacy exist, irrespective of the type of ticket held. While spiritual and intellectual intimacy are not intense during the event itself, they are less likely to exist within the block experience,

given the episodic nature of many sensual interactions. Travelling as part of an organised trip provides an experience closer to the VIP box, as participants travelling in the same coach are able to interact throughout the whole trip. This greater interaction leads to greater levels of intimacy – communication, spiritual and intellectual – as it is possible to ‘get to know’ more about the participants in the trip. Those who joined the trip tended to be in their late twenties or thirties, which is at the higher end of the age range of the typical attendee (18 to 40 years).

Besides economic reasons, one plausible explanation for the preference for travelling in a group is that, as people grow older, they are keen to experience higher levels of knowledge and intellectual intimacy along with physical intimacy. Based on observing the participants, this chapter has provided evidence of a different form of sensual tourism, which is mainly driven by ‘passion’ (physical contact without intercourse). While sex appears to be involved and is likely to be an important element, it does not appear to be the driving motivation. Micareta tourism is centred on the opportunity to interact with individuals of the opposite sex at a quasi-sexual level, where the need for sensual experiences is materialised through several brief sensual relationships underpinned by the practice of kissing. Using the three-factor model of satisfaction (Fuller and Matzler 2008), for the sensual tourist attending micaretas, relationships at the sexual level are likely to be viewed as an ‘excitement factor’ (they increase satisfaction if materialised but do not cause dissatisfaction otherwise), while relationships at the passionate level are considered to be a ‘performance’ factor (they lead to satisfaction if performance is high and to dissatisfaction if performance is low). This contrasts with sex tourism, in which the extent to which the relationship happens at the sexual level functions as being a ‘performance’ factor.

Depending on the ‘satisfaction’ with the episodic sensual experience, the relationship can then be taken to the next level: continuation of the romantic relationship during the event/trip or even after the trip. In other words, for those who were not in a relationship (the vast majority of attendees), there was an element of enjoying the moment, but there was also the possibility of developing a post-trip relationship with individuals that they met at the event. In fact, there were plenty of examples of long-term relationships that developed between people who met at these events. In a sense, micaretas appear to work as a mega-speed-dating event, albeit one in which the ‘2 minutes’ of interaction involve mainly physical contact. This long-term perspective is usually not associated with romantic or sex tourism (the labels used previously in the literature refer to sensual tourism). Sex tourism is short-term oriented, in the sense that relationships are unlikely to develop at the destination after the trip has ended, even those of a non-commercial nature.

While similar forms of sensual tourism have been identified, such as clubbing tourism, micareta tourism is different. Sensual behaviour at micaretas is highly visible, accepted and encouraged, whether subtly through lyrics or overtly by singers during the shows. Event organisers also understand this sensual component and have used it in marketing micaretas. A recent update on the ‘Folianópolis’ Facebook page (Folianópolis is the off-season Carnival in Florianópolis in Santa Catarina state) said ‘good morning, greetings from the most beautiful micareta in Brazil’.

This chapter reported an exploratory study of sensual tourism in Brazil. The findings suggest that there are different types of micareta tourists, one type of which appears to

be driven largely by sensual needs. However, not everyone is likely to seek sensual tourism. In fact, a proportion of attendees appear to reject the 'episodic romance' component of the event by not engaging in the kissing behaviour. Even within the sensual tourist group, there appears to be sub-groups. For example, those who go to the VIP box, while still looking for romance, do not want to undergo the intense kissing pressure that occurs in the block area. Therefore, future research should examine in more detail not only the different types of micareta tourists but also the existence of different types of sensual tourists.

Another possible future research direction is to explore the relationship between one's sensuality and micareta attendance career. The results appear to suggest not only that sensuality is strongly related to micaretas attendance but also that it is related to how people experience the event. It appears that behaviours associated with travelling to micaretas change according to changes in personal circumstances (e.g., age, relationship status and past micareta attendance). This suggests the existence of an event career directly anchored in the sensual element. Finally, a close examination of differences in sensual motivation across genders could also be made. Preliminary evidence from this study appears to support findings from previous studies that suggest that men and women are different when it comes to engaging in sensual behaviour while travelling (Dahles 2008; Sonmez et al. 2006).

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