

YouTube's Home Page: Senses of Brazilianities Configured by the Platform

Página inicial do Youtube: sentidos de brasilidades configurados pela Plataforma

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Abstract

The article proposes a reflection on the ways in which senses of national identity are configured within the boundaries of YouTube interfaces, specifically focusing on Brazilian identities. To do so, we analyze the platform's home page, its algorithms, settings, and user interface using Kilpp's (2003) frames methodology. The dissection of these territories allows us to deconstruct the meanings attributed to Brazil, Brazilians, and certain Brazilianities inherent to this media, as well as to identify some of the imaginaries invoked in constructing these meanings. The text pays special attention to the home page, considering it a central space for understanding the platform's assemblages and the dynamics of contemporary technoculture from which it emerges.

Keywords: Home Page; YouTube; Brazilianities; Imaginaries; Audiovisual.

Introduction

When we think about Brazil, images and sounds come to mind. The same happens when we reflect on anything else in time or space, whether it's the Middle Ages or Spain. Many of these images and sounds come from media content. Due to an intense process of audiovisualization of culture, as outlined by Montaña (2015), we encode and decode the world in an audiovisual manner, giving it multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings. Cinema, television, series, videogames: the images most commonly shared on online social networks constitute a dynamic interplay of codes of diverse natures, techniques, and aesthetics. These images mutually tension each other to attribute meanings to things – to Brazil, the Middle Ages, Spain, the media themselves, and, ultimately, the contemporary world.

When turning our attention to Brazil specifically, we can consider the televised representation of the country, which, according to Montaña (2004; 2007), is predominantly shaped by the narratives presented on Rede Globo. In this context, it portrays a Brazil that is beautiful, clean, well-behaved – especially when denouncing improper behavior – and traversed by colors and high-tech filters. It is a Brazil depicted in period miniseries narrating its history and in soap operas featuring extensive aerial and general shots showcasing the stunning landscapes of lush nature. There is also another Brazil, whose institutions are collapsing, finding in Rede Globo and its technology an emergency aid. In this scenario, the broadcaster assumes the role of justice, pursuing fugitives – as seen in the now-defunct program *Linha Direta* and numerous reports aired on its news programs.

It is worth noting that the Brasil Global is not the sole televised representation of the country. On SBT, for example, we encounter a different portrayal. More vibrant, featuring shades of yellow and orange, SBT is characterized by an aesthetic and programming centered around games and competition, even in its news programs. This is a Brazil of camaraderie, as defined by DaMatta (1986), of the “boss” and the hierarchies that can – and should – remain blatant, whether in the division between stage and audience or in the construction of the stage itself. The

owner of the network, even if no longer participating in new programs due to his age, continues to be the focal point of SBT, with reruns of past presentations.

The “new media”, as named by Manovich (2005), pose numerous challenges for contemplating these Brazilianities, given the ways in which these mediums suggest identity-related meanings. Does Brazilianity remain relevant? Do the major platforms and social networks, strongly characterized as global entities, enable us to consider national constructs, such as the construct of Brazilianity?

In this article, we delve into the realm of YouTube, aiming to identify the type of territory constructed within the interfaces of this platform, how the website shapes images, the imaginaries invoked by these images, and how the platform perceives us as we “walk” through its pages. In order to decipher the enunciated identity meanings, we employ an analytical method that assists us in approaching YouTube and other applications, platforms, and websites featuring a graphic user interface (GUI).

Therefore, we align ourselves with a research tradition that understands that the media themselves are central elements of both the communicative process and cultural construction, creating territories of experience and significance. There is an interweaving of cultures and techniques that cannot be overlooked. The phenomenon under investigation, for example, is rooted in a set of technological apparatuses – from the YouTube website to its algorithms, databases, and hosting servers. These elements operate and manifest themselves in a specific manner, engaging us and programming us within their devices – as per Flusser’s definition (2013). Therefore, we regard them, following Fischer (2013), as part of an audiovisual technoculture, wherein our utilization of its technical dimension shapes a culture and redefines our ways of perceiving the world and the media themselves, initiating the process anew.

In this context, we perceive YouTube as a site, a space into which we can enter and wander. It is a medium, in McLuhan’s terms (2007), that alters our perceptions of the world. Despite YouTube being comprised of a complex technological ensemble, to which we refer, we perceive and experience only the graphic user interface of the platform. Thus, we seek the effects or messages of YouTube within this interface, still following McLuhan’s framework (2007). After all, each technique proposes a new way of acting, which is more or less incorporated by different cultures.

In this sense, we identify four significant territories for the construction of identity meanings, including those related to Brazilianities, that exist within or pertain to YouTube: 1) the home page; 2) the search bar; 3) the channels and videos scattered across the platform; and 4) the playlist featuring the website’s most-viewed videos. In this article, we analyze the home page, where YouTube displays a series of channels, videos, advertisements, and customization options.

From the outset, we emphasize that the platform recognizes us as residents of Brazil, configuring the language as Brazilian Portuguese and the location as Brazil, and suggests related videos, particularly those associated with the country. This configuration persists even when accessing YouTube through an anonymous tab. Furthermore, in conducting access tests using a VPN¹ software, which enables connections to be established with websites from various points around the globe, the recognition of location and language remains accurate. It is noteworthy that, for this process, we employed a browser exclusively for research purposes, with an incognito window, without logging into YouTube, and thus, without any browsing history. This ensures that there is no interference from a profile linked to the platform.

Due to these configurations, we assert that, under certain conditions, we can observe audiovisual portrayals of nations and nationalities on the website’s home page. These images are framed by the mechanisms of YouTube and, on a macro level, by characteristics of the web. These countries may be “hidden” by platform user images if we input our account information, enabling YouTube to suggest personalized content. In this article, we ultimately interpret a portrayal of Brazil and the frames that encompass it, based on its technical and aesthetic dimensions.

In the following pages, we describe the environment into which we are entering, listing characteristics of YouTube that are relevant to this exploration. Subsequently, we present the methodology guiding our analysis and the set of tools aiding us in dissecting the images found on the video platform. Finally, we “unpack” and analyze these images.

Specificities of the platform

We must briefly highlight important characteristics of the web for website analysis. We are investigating what we commonly identify as pages, interconnected by links, with a few addresses tending to aggregate the majority of nodes, as described by Recuero (2009). We acknowledge that YouTube users, in essence, can freely upload new

1 Virtual private network.

videos, but they operate within a hierarchical system in which the most visited pages are expected to receive more traffic.

Furthermore, YouTube employs content customization algorithms, as described by Pariser (2012). These are code segments that bet user preferences based on the analysis and interpretation of their search, consumption, and browsing history. This bet of different content can be made from the analysis of either extensive or limited data, but the calculation is consistently performed. Consequently, the platform generates divergent images of the web and itself for each user and with each new access. This is why we access the website through an incognito window and without a YouTube account.

Finally, in alignment with d'Andréa (2020), we emphasize that platforms limit users' possibilities of action according to their grammars or functions, as seen in the buttons to rate, comment, share, or embed videos. Websites cannot fully control their users, and there will always be social practices detached from what is outlined by companies. Nevertheless, platforms create environments in which users are guided and tracked in various ways. On these websites, every user action becomes data, generating a second wave of information as it is interpreted by machines. These data constitute the primary source of profit for these companies, either through their sale to third parties or for the marketing of targeted advertisements.

Throughout the research, we encountered several controversies involving YouTube, its algorithms, content, or practices. Due to the presence of false information on the site, Lewis (2018) characterizes YouTube as a "disinformation machine". Additionally, the suggestion of videos with extreme themes is understood as a strategy by the website to keep users engaged and thereby increase advertising revenue. Tufekci (2018) supports this view, defining YouTube as a "great radicalizer" and illustrating how the recommendation system functions: from vegetarianism, one could progress to veganism; through aerobic running, we might reach marathons. Such topics may not cause concern. However, this same mechanism deals with more sensitive issues of public interest, such as political debates and environmental concerns.

On the other hand, we encounter YouTube's attempts to address or mitigate these issues. Matsakis (2018), for instance, lists reforms in the site's advertising policy, ensuring that only large channels receive advertising funds. This measure also ensures that companies and brands are not associated with videos containing extreme or prejudiced content. Additionally, Thompson (2018) reveals that materials containing false information, historical revisionism, or conspiracy theories will be combated. For this purpose, the home page and other recommendation spaces will only display content that YouTube understands and designates as "trustworthy" – a label determined through calculations weighing variables such as audience and authority.

It is evident that the YouTube we are delving into is an update of the website created in 2005 and acquired by Google the following year, as noted by Montaña (2015). The platform undergoes frequent transformations, testing and altering technical and aesthetic features, from algorithms to the graphic interface. Change as a constant, moreover, is a characteristic of various websites and signifies the current stage of the technocultural context. Thus, we require a method capable of addressing such phenomena.

We have chosen and adapted Kilpp's (2003) methodology for this analysis. With this method, we dissected three layers of the object: 1) the frames – territories of media experience and meaning; 2) the ethicitities² – media constructs proposing identity meanings; and 3) the imaginaries – records of marks in enunciated discourses. Thus, we can address both YouTube as a means of communication and the messages conveyed on the website.

Henceforth, we explore the YouTube home page to contemplate its interface, the identity meanings constructed within it, the videos that emerge from the platform, and the imaginaries summoned by these materials.

Home pages

At the outset, it is important to note that the home page is a component of websites, as well as of applications, software, and operating systems. It represents an ethnicity, a media construct, as per Kilpp (2003), that frequently appears on digital computers – whether desktops, laptops, or smartphones. According to Manovich (2005), the digital computer marks the emergence of a non-linear montage logic, distinct from the sequential structure of cinematic films. Computers enable users to request multiple images on the screen simultaneously and control their reproduction. Manovich (2005) defines these qualities as "spatial montage" and "database narratives".

In this context, the home page signifies the creation of a reference point, a space to which users can always return. It is a construct of a starting point or beginning, indicating the preservation of certain cinematic montage

² Ethicitities are media constructs, images of any and everything elaborated by the media. The term "ethnicity" is coined by Kilpp from the "liquefaction", in Bauman's terms, of the word "ethos", which refers to cultural customs and habits.

logics – although this beginning is not inherently accompanied by an end. This aspect is reinforced by the use of the expression “home page” to designate this page. Additionally, a house icon is often used as a representation and a hyperlink to the address. It is a combination of expressions and images that directly and obviously reference home, dwelling, and residence.

These elements summon a set of imaginaries, since there is an indication that website users are “safe and sound” on this page because it is an environment perceived and portrayed as secure. Furthermore, there is the suggestion that other territories within the platforms can be explored without concerns, as it is possible to “return home”. The user can continually move forward to new pages and other websites, creating an idea of vastness or even infinity.

It is imperative that we emphasize that this logic is not valid only for YouTube. On the contrary, all other websites, the web as a whole, in addition to applications and computer systems, operate with similar, if not identical, dynamics. After all, even as we navigate different addresses on the web, such as online social networks, we can return to the web browser’s home page; and as we switch from one software to another, we can close them and return to the computer’s home screen – also known as the desktop.

In both cases, these are environments programmed with default suggestions that, nonetheless, can be customized according to each user’s preferences. This potential for customization is another aspect that characterizes home pages as personal spaces for users. In Brazil, for instance, there is a notable desire for homeownership, for a private “corner” with the owner’s touch.

Now, what is the YouTube home page like?

The YouTube Home Page and the senses of Brazilianity

Distinct from the home pages of other websites, YouTube possesses a unique set of technical and aesthetic features that prompt us to recognize the portal we are entering. Simultaneously, while the page identifies YouTube as a space, it scrutinizes the users accessing it to provide them with content.

At the outset of the investigation, we accessed the site by typing www.youtube.com into the address bar of an incognito window in the web browser. In this process, we omitted the .br extension that delimits the Brazilian territory on the web. We observed that, even so, YouTube recognizes our location, as: 1) there is a BR next to the logo, assigning meanings of Brazil; 2) the majority of content – videos and advertisements – is related to the country; and 3) the structure is configured in Brazilian Portuguese.

Due to this set of frames, we can argue that YouTube produces meanings of territories, nations, nationalities, and national ethos. Now, as we are not connected with a Google account and have no browsing history on the website, YouTube suggests content to us based on what it can discover: our location, the approximate geographical point from which we access the platform. With this data, it deduces a language and predicts which materials are most relevant for us, a visitor in a very specific space-time.

When dissecting the graphical interface of the YouTube home page, we note that the website’s logo is positioned in the upper-left corner, occupying a prominent location. The reading movement we perform, as Westerners, starts from this point and moves to the right and the bottom of the page. Anchored in Flusser (2013), we suggest that, although contemporary technoculture is marked by the presence of images, certain technocultural characteristics of the text survive, such as the movements we make when reading. The fact that we name these web files as pages reinforces this notion.

As for the content of the page, we know, according to Pariser (2012) and d’Andréa (2020), that the ads and videos presented by YouTube are personalized. We do not have access to the calculations performed by the website’s algorithms. However, we believe that the platform considers variables such as the number of subscribers to channels and the number of views on videos, as well as interest in topics over a certain period. Let us remember, after all, the controversies we presented in the previous section, regarding false or radical content. Therefore, promoting materials that have already been “tested and approved” by the audience – or at least, have not been rejected – is an action that provides security to YouTube and its users.

At the top of the website, we find a button urging us to log in. This request is reiterated in the side menu with a phrase emphasizing the importance of having a profile: “Log in to like videos, comment, and subscribe”. In other words, there are several customizations that are unavailable to those who do not identify with a YouTube account. As we lack an identity on the platform, we are alienated from certain “rights”, as seen in the special indications of customization algorithms, with channels or content calculated especially for us, and the possibility to rate, comment, and even report videos.

As d'Andréa (2020) argues, the view of the web as a space of freedom needs to be put into tension. Platforms are not neutral but powerful agents. YouTube, as well as other websites, constructs a controlled environment built on the collection and exchange of data. That is why, for platforms, it is crucial for each visitor to have their own account, because the information of their users is the main commodity traded by these companies. The advertising spaces, often highlighted, confirm that advertisers are the customers of YouTube, seeking data and targeted ads for users more likely to be interested in their brand or product.

Throughout the YouTube home page, we also notice certain mechanisms that repeatedly suggest more and more content, exploiting the vast database of the platform. These include buttons, for example, that display new videos, and an automatic action that creates sections when we reach the “end” of the website’s scroll bar. In this case, we observe that YouTube exploits the construction of the senses of vastness or infinity, indicating an inexhaustible audiovisual library that continues to grow at every moment. In the website’s collection, there is more material than users can imagine. And, on each page, more content, including comments and descriptions. As noted by Montaña (2015), there is a statement that the entire audiovisual history is on the platform – or, at least, that it could or should be.

Moreover, we note that the YouTube home page recycles television patterns, such as the designation of “channel” for registered user pages, the frequent vignettes in video openings, the primacy of novelty, and many other television remnants. In the image we captured, the first five videos had been posted a day or less ago. This feature contrasts with the idea of infinity, as both temporalities tension each other. On one side, we have history, like a bottomless chest but full of audiovisual materials to the brim; on the other, the latest news, the most ephemeral, which appears and disappears suddenly. Opposing elements can appear side by side, however, because the web, we remind, operates with a non-linear logic, from the spatial montage.

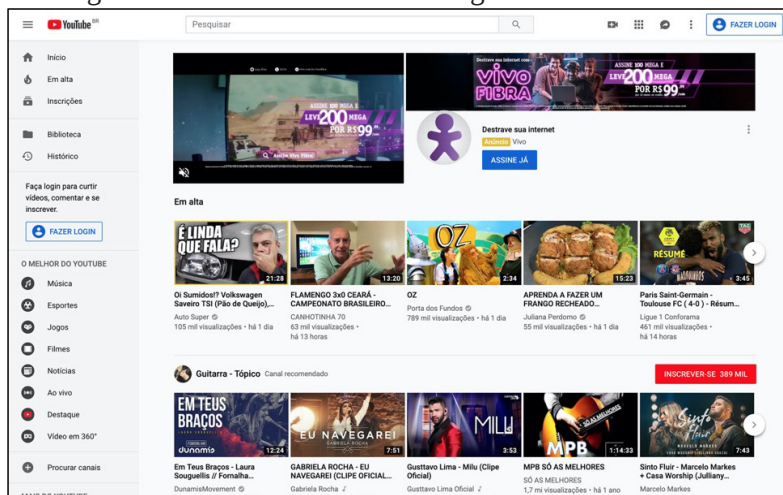
Finally, the colors that separate the top and the menu of YouTube from the central part of the website, where the content is located, also deserve our attention. Through them, the platform distinguishes what is theirs and what belongs to others – advertisers and users. In other words, boundaries are built that delimit that the algorithms, codes, and graphic interface belong to YouTube, as well as other sections of the website; however, channels and videos belong to users, while ads belong to clients. These are senses that distance, from YouTube, the responsibility for the content on the platform and that help dissociate the company from controversies and contentions involving these materials.

So, what videos emerge on the platform?

A Brazil of/on YouTube

The videos on the platform are highly diverse, displaying heterogeneity in their technical and aesthetic dimensions. The website imparts a sense of horizontality to the content, as if there were no distinctions or hierarchies between amateur and professional videos. Both users who have never created videos and YouTube itself have “channels” on the platform, with no apparent advantages for any channel over others. It is a space, as we mentioned, that presents itself as open to almost all audiovisual content – given that YouTube is evolving to deal with controversial materials.

Figure 1 – YouTube Home Page in Brazil and in Brazilian Portuguese



Source: YouTube (2019)

With that said, we reaffirm the importance of territories for the platform. Through them, the website configures identities for its users, imagining their nationality and a possible national ethos. The screenshot we show in Figure 1, for example, is a record from August 26th, 2019, at 10:55 AM. The circumstances of this capture and the main frames of YouTube allow us to point to this image as a media construct of Brazil in Brazilian Portuguese on a Monday morning proposed by the website. This ethnicity, according to Kilpp's concept (2003), summons various memories related to Brazil and the Brazilian people, as well as pointing us to an imagined Brazilianity.

Although the following analysis is brief, it allows us to highlight how the YouTube homepage frames a portrait of Brazil. At that moment, the platform highlights ten videos: one automotive; two sports-related, about soccer; a skit, a comedy video; a cooking video; and five musical – three gospel, one country, and another identified as MPB (Brazilian Popular Music). It is these Brazilianities that we begin to dissect, with the support of DaMatta (1986) and Freyre (2016), that create complex and rich images of Brazil.

Thus, we ask: what imaginaries do these materials evoke?

Brazils, Brazilians, Brazilianities

As we proceed with the analysis, we clicked on each link, accessed the pages, and watched the videos. Subsequently, we highlight some of the imaginaries invoked or tensioned by the materials.

The first video is about the automotive or car universe, with the car as the central element. The item is an important part of Brazilian culture and history. In contrast to railways and waterways, we, as a nation, decided to prioritize highways. Through the roads and the adoption of videotape, Brazilian television managed to nationalize itself, thereby contributing to the formation and promotion of Brazilianities. These are national ethnicities, constructs that appear in the media and gradually consolidate imaginaries of Brazil.

We also recall the advertising campaign of a fuel station network that declares itself “passionate about cars, like every Brazilian” and reaffirms the importance of the automobile in Brazil. Furthermore, there is a long tradition of race car drivers becoming national idols or heroes, from the 1970s to the 2000s, with Ayrton Senna being their main representative. The Brazilian fixation on cars may be associated with the adventurous and nomadic spirit of immigrants who, according to Freyre (2016), “moved” the borders of Brazil towards the west and south of America.

Next, we have a sports video about soccer. The content features Gérson “Golden Left Foot”³, who was a champion for Brazil in the 1970 FIFA World Cup. Additionally, Gérson stars in an advertisement for a cigarette brand, responsible for the emergence of the expression “Lei de Gérson”⁴ – the idea that Brazilians want to take advantage on everything. Immediately, the memory recalls the imagery of a country of soccer, as Brazil has the highest number of world titles and is a significant “exporter” of players. Freyre's (2016) assessment seems impeccable, and soccer emerges as a typical dance of Brazil.

Due to Gérson's presence and history, however, the idea of a country of “malandragem”⁵ also emerges, where selfishness and deceit prevail, and personal gain holds more value than the public good. According to DaMatta (1986), “jeitinho”⁶ and “malandragem” are “modes of social navigation” for Brazilians, appearing between the freedom of Carnival and the strictness of discipline. In other words, DaMatta (1986) places “jeitinho” between the permitted and the prohibited. It is the way we find to survive impositions and absurd situations, such as laws that are impossible to comply with – not necessarily due to a lack of ability or desire, but because of their detachment from the social reality of the people.

The fifth video in the first row of suggestions is also related to soccer. In this case, the content showcases highlights from the French championship, featuring Brazilian players. It appears that users' primary interest lies in European soccer, perceived as “better” than Brazilian leagues. Thus, we observe the perpetuation of the “vira-lata”⁷ complex, a concept encapsulating Brazilians' low self-esteem regarding their country's products. It is noteworthy that this expression was coined by Nelson Rodrigues after Brazil lost the 1950 FIFA World Cup final to Uruguay – an episode known as the “Maracanazo”. Following Freyre's insights (2016), we understand that this submission to

3 In Brazilian Portuguese, “Canhotinha de Ouro”.

4 In English, “Gérson's Law”.

5 Malandragem is a Brazilian Portuguese term denoting a way of life characterized by indolence, rapid-paced living, and minor criminal activities, often glorified in samba lyrics. The embodiment of this lifestyle, known as the malandro (masculine adjective), has acquired prominence in Brazilian national identity as a folk hero – or anti-hero.

6 “Jeitinho” is the diminutive form of “jeito”, translating to “way.” Stemming from the expression “dar um jeito”, meaning “to find a way”, it signifies resourcefulness, personal connections, and creativity. Often employed to address illogical issues or excessive bureaucracy, jeitinho is a means of creatively solving problems. While it may be perceived as dishonest or cunning, it arises from the necessity born out of limited resources and a lack of official assistance.

7 In English, stray dog.

Europe originated during the colonial period, almost as a condition of indebtedness stemming from colonization.

We now return to the third video, a skit. It is a parody in which the characters' journey from the story of "The Wizard of Oz" is interrupted by a beggar. In the first part, the content invokes the imagery of beaches, forests, fertile soil, and the natural riches of Brazil. However, when the intruder enters the scene, he reminds us of other scenarios. We recall the profound social inequality of a nation where the elites possess much, and the majority of the population survives with very little; a country that presents itself as a "giant by its own nature" and yet remains entangled in severe socio-economic problems.

Due to these characteristics, DaMatta (1986) describes the streets as inherently cruel and insecure spaces. They are transitional places, whether going to or returning from work, but always in contrast to the home, the comfort of one's abode. The term "street dwellers", for instance, carries this stigma. In another dimension, Freyre (2016) identifies caricature and satire as typical expressions of Brazil. Mockery and jesting are ways in which we expose the country's problems and confront figures of power in a therapeutic process. Still according to Freyre (2016), Brazilian art is as mixed as its people, a characteristic evident in the appropriation and reinterpretation of "The Wizard of Oz".

Finally, the fourth piece of content is a video tutorial on how to prepare various recipes. It is a typical tutorial, common on YouTube and the web. A woman, along with her father, demonstrates how to prepare stuffed chicken, Greek rice, French fries, and breaded bananas. Once again, we observe the imagery of abundance and culinary plenty, along with the idea of the blending of customs and cultures. According to DaMatta (1986), food functions as a code in Brazil, a language that proposes identities for social classes, groups, and individuals. Brazilian typical dishes are mixtures, such as rice and beans or the stew, which brings together both solid and liquid elements, from meats to vegetables.

Also, according to DaMatta (1986), the foods that satisfy hunger are different from the meals that fulfill desires. With this video, it becomes evident that meals are moments of communion, where friends and family gather around the table. In these events, individual differences are ideally set aside. Thus, those present can appreciate the shared interests among all. However, it is essential to heed Freyre's (2016) warnings: according to the author, Brazil has an image of ecological and natural power since the colonial period, dominated by almost feudal production logics. However, this strength is not translated into a worthy, healthy, and regular diet for all Brazilians.

On the second row of suggestions on the YouTube homepage, we find five music videos. Of these, three belong to the gospel genre and are very similar to each other. This detail also exposes an algorithmic logic of the platform, calculating that the subject is significant in Brazil or for Brazilians. In the religious music videos, we can identify the amalgamation of different styles, given that the instruments could be part of rock'n'roll songs if their lyrics did not characterize them as gospel. When there is an audience, the public appears in religious poses – with raised hands or closed eyes, for example – an image that also evokes the idea of prayer or ritual.

Religious singing, as described by DaMatta (1986), is a highly popular form of community prayer, traditionally observed in Brazil. It is a way of praying with "greater strength", so that supplications quickly reach the saints, who are so intimately connected to the Brazilian people. Now, the history of blended cultures and religions, as narrated by Freyre (2016), gives way to a fundamentally Christian Brazil. This phenomenon occurs at a time when the country is reshaping its faith, with an increasing number of evangelicals – including in public offices, elected positions, or other positions of power. Within this trend, the neo-Pentecostal movement gains strength and shapes various beliefs as inappropriate by proposing worldviews, considering their definitions regarding the roles of men and women in society.

Later, we come across another musical performance. This time, it is a music video of a sertanejo-style song. The expression, which refers to a music genre, also identifies the Brazilian from the countryside, the part rooted in the rural and country origins of Brazil. Recall that, after the colonization of the coastal areas, the American shores, different groups began to migrate towards the interior of the continent, occupying the "heart" of the country. With this genre, we recall the imagery of the cordial Brazilian, the individual who "thinks" with the central organ of the circulatory system and is emotional and impulsive – a concept that is often confused with the idea of an affable and receptive person.

We have already discussed the adventurous Brazilian, as proposed by Freyre (2016). Here, this figure appears once again. According to Freyre (2016), a significant part of the expansion of the western and southern boundaries and its subsequent occupation is due to a mixture of Portuguese and indigenous people. They would mostly be men, living as nomads, advancing into the forest towards the interior of America. Thus, we have a dual image of the sertanejo. As an essential characteristic, we can highlight their exaggerated and intense relationship with their feelings. And YouTube understands that the sertanejo genre, alongside gospel, is one of the most important musical styles in Brazil.

Finally, of the ten highlighted videos, the last one is a collection of songs grouped under the designation of MPB – or *Música Popular Brasileira* (Brazilian Popular Music). This compilation brings together some slower songs, whose style is closely identified with Brazil, and others with a more “electric” sound, related to foreign genres like rock’n’roll. In itself, the compilation recalls the logic of radio, where we tune in to a station and await the programming without knowing for sure what content is coming. In turn, the symbol of MPB revives an imagery of resistance to the Military Dictatorship in Brazil, a period during which several artists opposed the regime in both cultural and political spheres.

In Freyre’s (2016) conceptualization, the Brazilian Army plays significant roles in the history of Brazil. However, during the dictatorship that began in 1964, this image is undoubtedly shaken. This is due to the severe economic crisis the country undergoes during the period and, primarily, because of accusations of human rights violations and restrictions on individual and political freedoms. We can contrast Freyre’s (2016) ideas, asserting that Brazilians have a special affinity for democracy – both as a system of government and as a concept of cultural and social equality. It appears to us, on the contrary, that the history of Brazil is marked by authoritarian ideals, prevalent in the colonial period, as seen in slavery, and revived in recent years.

Thus, we conclude the analysis of this portrait of Brazils, Brazilians and Brazilianities. This image is composed by YouTube. Users create channels and upload videos, but algorithms select them, and the website’s graphical interface frames them on the home page. In this process, certain imaginaries are summoned and reinforced, while others are put in tension or questioned.

Final considerations

After a brief exposition of our theoretical-epistemological position, we turn our attention to the web and YouTube. Following an examination of the platform, we delve into the home page and the highlighted contents within the space. In the videos, we encounter images of Brazil, dissecting them in search of identity senses and imaginaries. Furthermore, we recognize that the materials suggested by YouTube are the platform’s bets on the country and the trends among Brazilians, the Brazilianities.

The home page, in turn, becomes a crucial component of usability, a navigation dynamic central to contemporary technoculture. This element is present on websites, online social networks, and mobile applications, as well as in software and digital computer operating systems. More than mere transit zones through which users reach a destination, home pages serve as reference points that can be accessed whenever needed.

When we go to the cinema, watch television, or access online social networks, we are either tensioning or reinforcing identity meanings, whether in the montages or the imaginaries of these media. The senses of national identity do not disappear in the new media, as per Manovich’s terminology (2005), even though these mediums present themselves as global territories. Thus, the forms of constructing Brazilianities, the techniques that “create” Brazils and Brazilians as ethnicities, and the interfaces through which we experience these media constructs are modified. Even the imaginaries, summoned from other media and social fields, acquire their own ways of conveying meanings, albeit in different forms. These meanings are fragments because our journey through YouTube is fragmented: we stumble all the time upon videos, advertisements, and links that propel us to other pages.

Martín-Barbero and Rey (2004) indicate that television organization – the montage – is a metaphor for the ways of coexistence in large cities. Similarly, we can think about contemporary media and the technology from which they emerge. The car, soccer, the “Gérson’s Law”, lush landscapes, and the perception of inequality are no strangers to Brazil and the Brazilian people. All these elements can be mixed and overlaid.

The number and diversity of “neighbors”, however, are multiplied. There is always a homepage – Brazilian or .br – and a geolocation that will tell us that “we are” in Brazil. Thus, from soccer to homemade recipe tutorials, to music video clips of gospel, MPB, and sertanejo genres, the homepage presents itself as a large, welcoming, and georeferenced home. From the beginning, the platform is constructed as a range of tags and establishes new relationships for images and meanings. There is a suggestion that the Brazil of/on YouTube accepts the neighborhoods of this platform and the web, while, contradictorily, revives old imaginaries.

The fact is that this Brazil, of any given Monday, is strongly crossed by videos, navigation and search bars, links, channels, users, and a large menu of topics that, to a greater or lesser extent, draw near. A programmed Brazil, according to Flusser’s term (2013), which we can only access through hardware (computer or smartphone), software (website or mobile application), and if we have learned to navigate the paths of this global village that connects our senses to the territory of YouTube.

We deconstruct these images gradually, as the knowledge in communication advances over the coded world of Flusser (2013), the environment of McLuhan (2007), and the technoculture, according to Fischer (2013). Realities reinvented by each new media. For now, we are greeted by the homepage, which is open to improbable creations and frames a beginning, a reference point to not lose ourselves as contemporary Brazilians.

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