

Brazilian press release: Unpublished study assesses the cultural legacy of the Rio 2016 Games (Author: Nicholas Vital)

Work undertaken by researchers at the University of Liverpool, the University of Sao Paulo, and Aberje analysed more than 500 articles from Brazil and the UK and concluded that the Rio Olympics left no permanent legacy in the popular imagination.

The 5th of August marked a year since the Games began in Rio de Janeiro. The Olympics, which cost billions of the taxpayer's money and was meant to be a milestone in the country's history, spreading Brazil's culture and strengthening the country's image. However, it left no permanent legacy in the popular imagination, either within Brazil or internationally.

This is the conclusion of an unpublished study undertaken by the *Institute of Cultural Capital*, a branch of the University of Liverpool, in association with the Department of Arts and Communication at the University of Sao Paulo and Aberje (the Brazilian Association of Business Communication). The research was supported by the *British Academy's Newton Fund*, a British government funding body for the sciences and the humanities.

The project, 'The Cultural Legacy of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games', was carried out using in-depth media analysis of the Brazilian and British media in key periods for the Games' narrative, which were seen as profitable and/or missed opportunities during the Games' cycle: from 2009 to 2017. According to the researchers, Brazil's socio-political context took up most of the column inches usually dedicated to sporting and cultural consequences of the Games, above all in the post-Olympic period, meaning that a positive narrative could not be established.

'Our investigation encompasses the entire cycle of the Rio Olympics, from the moment Brazil was chosen to host the Games to the Closing Ceremony. Sadly, corruption scandals and the serious financial crises that the country has experienced mean that the news related to sport and the city of Rio were not a focus', confirms Beatriz Garcia, project lead, who works closely with the IOC and who has been analysing the cultural impact of the Olympic Games since Sydney 2000. 'The stories told in the media during the event did not help to change stereotypes about Brazil. It's clear that diplomacy and communication strategies in the country and the city failed, above all due to the absence of any investment in cultural strategy'.

In total, more than 330 Brazilian press articles were analysed, in addition to over 140 from the British media, in order to distinguish the media narratives established about the Games during key periods: Rio winning the bid (2009), a year before (2015), the year of the Games (2016) and post-Games, from December 2016 and the start of

2017. Media analysis was connected to the Brazilian socio-political framework during those periods in order to provide context to findings. This afforded comparisons to be drawn between various Games editions, above all with London 2012.

Another notable contributing factor for the output of negativity after the Games were issues such as the abandonment of newly-constructed Olympic arenas, the millions worth of debt left after the Games, and the bankruptcy of Rio State. This news took up space that could have been used to remind the public of Rio 2016's successes.

'The symbolic legacy promised by the Rio 2016 Olympics was devoured by stories which took on Olympic significance. In the pre- and post-Games period, the British and Brazilian traditional presses highlight record levels of violence, corruption, and political instability. At this time, Brazil was burning on a pyre of background events, not focusing on fun, innovation, and diversity: cultural aspects which the Games highlight', says Professor Paulo Nassar, from the School of Communication and Arts at the University of Sao Paulo.

Aberje, as a Brazilian think tank which focuses on organizational narratives, was a key part of the research. Along with the ICC and USP, Aberje embraced the project as a way to develop research that has been ongoing since the 1990s, such as the *Brazilian Corporate Communications Day* (published in New York, London, Paris, Milan, Buenos Aires, Mumbai and other cities across the world), which aims to strengthen the international image of Brazil, its cities, institutions, and its businesses.

Final findings of the project will be presented next week on the 15th August in Sao Paulo, and on the 17th August in Rio at event promoted by Aberje with the participation of Beatriz Garcia, Paulo Nassar, and other professionals linked to the organization of Rio 2016.