

ETHANOL ACTIVISM: DISCURSIVE AND ADVERTISING CALLS TO THE CONSUMPTION OF PROPAGANDISTIC BEERS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the discursive strategies of consumption solicitation on craft beer labels that referenced the 2022 Brazilian presidential elections. Drawing on the theoretical and methodological assumptions of the French-line discourse approach, the labels of the breweries Rock n' Bräu, Mito, Vapor Negro, and Hey Ho, produced between January and September 2022 and disseminated on websites and social media, were analysed. The study aims to understand how these labels function as rallying cries and performative utterances that associate drinking with forms of political and moral engagement, producing what is termed "effigial consumption". The results indicate that the brands mobilise discourses of political belonging, irony, and candidate celebration, transforming the label into a space for ideological expression and the circulation of civic affects. It is concluded that pamphlet-style beers exemplify a movement towards the politicisation of consumer objects, in which advertising communication acts as a symbolic mediator between consumption and public participation. The article contributes to the field of advertising communication by demonstrating how small-scale brands can intervene in political debate through creative branding and discourse strategies, expanding the boundaries between advertising, culture, and politics.

KEYWORDS

advertising communication, consumption, craft breweries, political participation, discourse analysis

ATIVISMO ETÍLICO: CONVOCAÇÕES DISCURSIVAS E PUBLICITÁRIAS AO CONSUMO DE CERVEJAS PANFLETÁRIAS

RESUMO

Este artigo analisa as estratégias discursivas de convocação ao consumo presentes em rótulos de cervejarias artesanais que fizeram referência às eleições presidenciais brasileiras de 2022. A partir dos pressupostos teóricos e metodológicos da análise de discurso de linha francesa, foram examinados os rótulos das cervejarias Rock n' Bräu, Mito, Vapor Negro e Hey Ho, produzidos entre janeiro e setembro de 2022 e divulgados em sites e redes sociais. O estudo busca compreender de que modo esses rótulos funcionam como palavras de ordem e enunciados performativos que vinculam o ato de beber a formas de engajamento político e moral, produzindo o que se denomina "consumo efígio". Os resultados mostram que as marcas mobilizam discursos alusivos ao pertencimento político, à ironia e à celebração de candidatos, transformando o rótulo em espaço de expressão ideológica e de circulação de afetos cívicos. Conclui-se que as cervejas panfletárias exemplificam um movimento de politização dos objetos de consumo, no qual a comunicação publicitária atua como mediadora simbólica entre consumo e participação

pública. O artigo contribui para o campo da comunicação publicitária ao evidenciar como marcas de pequeno porte podem intervir no debate político por meio de estratégias criativas de *branding* e discurso, ampliando as fronteiras entre publicidade, cultura e política.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

comunicação publicitária, consumo, cervejarias artesanais, participação política, análise do discurso

1. INTRODUCTION

By “propagandistic beers”, Teixeira (2022) refers to the production of craft breweries whose strategies for calling consumers to action are not limited to the gustatory aspects of the products, but also mobilise politicised discourses that articulate “their agendas in parallel with an entrepreneurial sales logic in search of space in the job market, recognition and identity promotion” (p. 10) across various domains. In this sense, several brands link beer consumption to feminist causes, the Black movement, government criticism, and the valorisation of small entrepreneurs, among other topics within the political-media agenda.

Maestri (2019) connects this phenomenon to food-related activism and identifies several craft breweries whose productions are symbolically associated with social issues, discursively linking the act of drinking beer to political action. The communication strategies of these brands place various political demands at the centre of their symbolic productions. In this regard, labels go beyond mere product identification; they construct discursive positions designed to engage consumers through symbolic brand strategies. Advertising communication, therefore, should be understood not only as the dissemination of persuasive messages but also as a discursive practice that constructs meaning for brands within sociopolitical contexts (Semprini, 2010).

This study examines this phenomenon through a specific lens: breweries that produced items related to the 2022 presidential elections in Brazil. The *corpus* comprises products from the breweries Rock n’ Bräu, Mito, Vapor Negro and Hey Ho. These companies were actively involved in the 2022 elections, launching labels that referenced the two leading presidential candidates, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and Jair Bolsonaro. The analysis focuses on the labels available on these companies’ official sales websites and Instagram profiles between January and September 2022, as well as on the communicational strategies they employed.

As Costa (2016) points out, labels function as a form of communication between production and reception, carrying discursivities in their design related to the symbolic modes of product consumption. Through labels, commodities are imbued with meaning and establish an initial point of contact with the consumer, even before the product’s content itself (in this case, the beer). Although aspects of visual rhetoric — such as colour, layout, and texture — could be analysed through the labels, they fall outside the

scope of this study. The analysis focuses on the discursivities that link the symbolic consumption of the product to its labels, particularly those concerning consumption within these productions.

The discursive strategies these brands use to call for consumption are examined through the methodological premises of French-line discourse analysis. The analysis focuses on the discourses that traverse these companies' communication strategies, linking the act of drinking beer to civic and moral appeals. It seeks to deepen debates on how communication processes contribute to the politicisation of acts of consumption by delineating, through discourse, the distinction between discursively legitimised and non-legitimised consumption practices. Since communicational strategies for calling consumers to action involve processes of discursive production in which well-being is discursively associated with consumption (Prado, 2013), the analysis explores how the labels invoke discourses related to the politicisation of consumer objects and, in doing so, address a particular type of subject and construct a specific type of consumer *in* and *through* discourse.

2. POLITICISED BREWERIES

Politicised breweries are a relatively recent phenomenon, primarily associated with small-scale producers. Although beer production originated as an artisanal practice, industrialisation led to the standardisation of fermented beverages, which generally remained indifferent to civic or moral considerations. As Giorgi (2015) notes, Companhia Antarctica Paulista and Manufatura de Cerveja Brahma Villiger e Companhia, founded in the late 19th century, dominated the Brazilian beer market for much of the 20th century.

According to Teixeira (2022), until the 1960s, as a result of brewery industrialisation, brands were recognised not for their uniqueness but for relatively standardised flavours and similar advertising campaigns that shared a standard set of values. In the 1960s and 1970s, under the influence of countercultural movements, some brands began to explore the beverage's symbolic and political potential. This was reflected in the valorisation of small producers (and the *do-it-yourself ethos*) and in nationalist ideals emphasising specific local products and beer styles, such as the revitalisation of Ale in England. This political revalorisation of the product by small-scale producers, in contrast to large-scale industrial production, involves highlighting the locality of beer production and signalling to consumers their responsibility for supporting the local economy.

Beer consumption thus establishes itself as a

potential, if not-necessarily-realised somatic marker for the drinker who, as a (global) citizen, manifests their political culture through the quotidian action of imbibing the hops and barley-based drink of their home country or some faraway land. (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 122)

This has led to the emergence of a new category of beer, which, in discursive opposition to mass-produced beers (despite the absence of an objective demarcation of “large-scale”), is termed “speciality beer” — a market term recognised by consumers. “Speciality beer” denotes a specific mode of production, characterised by smaller scale and greater focus on quality.

It should be noted that there is no consensus regarding the definition of “craft” or “speciality” beer, nor any legal distinction between breweries of different sizes. It is likewise impossible to objectively define “quality”, given the marked differences in the qualifications of products on the market that self-identify as “speciality”. Nevertheless, the niche self-defines “as a space distinct from the mainstream beer market, particularly through the discursive differentiation of its products from those of large-scale producers, employing strategies (...) that secure the exclusion of the ‘other’ from its circuit” (Krohn, 2017, p. 232).

Among these discursive strategies, a value of distinction accompanies artisanal beer as a “food-sign”, since “historically associated with the working classes due to affordability and the ability to consume in large quantities, beer now appears in a noble version, accompanied by a framework of ideas and values that legitimises it” (Giorgi, 2015, p. 103). Cultural factors, such as the pursuit of a refined palate, become part of the symbolic struggle over beer consumption.

The discursive strategies that distinguish “speciality beers”, according to Thurnell-Read (2018), include a series of calls to consumption that rely on discursivities appealing to “a more complex ‘intellectualised’ form of beer appreciation” (p. 539); to discursive approaches borrowing from adjacent practices (such as wine and food consumption) in the pursuit of increased symbolic value of the product; and to an association with discourses of upward social mobility, in a proposal for product refinement that functions primarily as a marker of social status, among others. The beer becomes a “speciality” product by discursively invoking a drinker who is educated and discerning, with high cultural prestige.

In addition to appeals to intellectualised taste, another type of distinction draws on moral, political, or resistance-oriented values in niche self-definition. In these cases, the beverage acquires an ethical surplus in its sign value, expressing various social demands. For these breweries, political appeals enter the enunciative scene, as “artisanal beer production is regarded by brewers (and by many ‘beer aficionados’) as a political act of resistance to a general state of affairs” (Giorgi, 2015, p. 105). Such speciality propagandistic beers (Teixeira, 2022) carry banners and ideals as part of their strategies for calling consumers to action.

Beer consumption can serve as a vehicle for political performance, “in evocative ways, as a product and praxis that evokes lifeways, symbols, and codes” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 121). There may be a (geo)political performativity to drinking, where discursivities around identity and community are evoked. “Like so many of the apparently mundane components of everyday life, ordering your next beer is yet another step in performing

political culture”, adding that “quotidian engagements with the popular are nonetheless deeply and consequentially political” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 141).

According to Chapman et al. (2017), individual choices in craft beer can be amplified or diminished by economic and political narratives surrounding beer production. Beverages can “highlight issues of identity and power in terms of the ways craft beer is used to challenge or reinscribe distinctions based on social class, race, and gender” (Chapman et al., 2017, p. 17). Craft beer production is therefore linked not solely to enjoyment, flavour, or social celebration, but also to civic and political narratives encompassing a broad range of social demands. Sociability here is not about joining a specialised tasting circle, but about articulating discourses that foster shared political and moral values.

Jones and Harvey (2017) document that English craft producers described their enterprises in ethical terms, emphasising “a return to tradition”, “locavorism, a commitment to sourcing local ingredients, their role in the community, and larger sustainability goals, such as resource conservation using renewable energy” (p. 25).

Beyond these broader political meanings, the electoral potential of beer is frequently exploited. Saunders and Holland (2017) note that, in the United States, beer has been mobilised by candidates in presidential elections:

consider the 2004 US presidential election which pitted the folksy Texas teetotaller George W. Bush against the erudite Francophone John Kerry, or Barack Obama’s attempts to alleviate racial tensions via a “beer summit”.
(Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 123)

In the first case, Bush benefited electorally by appearing as “a guy you could have a beer with”; in the second, Obama repeatedly invoked the mantra “beer is democratic!”, claiming it “can unite everyone, despite class, race, sex, religion, or age” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 123). Political beer can therefore function as symbolic capital for brands and political capital for candidates.

The authors also examine beer labels intended to satirise authoritarian world leaders such as Vladimir Putin¹ and Donald Trump². In these cases, breweries created beers with “weaker”, “sweeter”, and “fruitier” flavours to satirise leaders seeking to project a discursive *ethos* associated with autocratic values. Here, communicational and sensory elements combine in strategies calling for consumption.

In Brazil, the growth of the speciality beer sector began in the 1980s, with significant expansion from the early 2000s: “it was still in the first decade of the 2000s that beer culture aligned with the gastronomic wave, gaining traction in Brazilian media through pairings, tastings, slow-food movements, and a renewed appreciation for manual craft”

¹ The authors cite the case of a label released by BrewDog, which, in opposition to Putin, featured the following text: “I am a beer for uber hetero men who ride horses while topless and carrying knives. I am a beer to mark the 2014 Winter Olympics. But I am not for gays. Love wrestling burly men on the Judo mat or fishing in your Speedos? Then this is the beer for you” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 133).

² In the case of Donald Trump, BrewDog produced a fake IPA beer.

(Teixeira, 2022, p. 87). Initially, engagement with small, independent, artisanal production structured consumption-calling strategies for craft beers; over time, some brands adopted stances related to social justice and identity demands. Examples include feminist beer collectives “such as Lupulindas, Batom Malte, Confradelas, Amazonas Cervejeiras, Ceva das Minas, Minas Cervejeiras, Mulheres do Malte, Beba Como Uma Garota, Cerveja Por Elas, Confece, Kalanga Cervejeira, Confraria Fulo de Mandacaru, and Mulheres Cervejeiras” (Teixeira, 2022, p. 93).

Similarly, breweries linked to LGBTQIA+ groups (e.g., Cervejaria Insurreição, Cerveja Macuco, Cervejaria Sapatista e Cervejaria Sapatona), the Black movement (Cervejaria Implicantes, Dutra Beer e Cerveja Territórios), environmental causes (Cervejaria Veterana, Oripacha Cervejaria Pomar), leftist organisations (Cervejaria Latinoamericana, Cervejaria Molotov, Coletivo Minore, Graja Beer, Cerveja Subversiva) and right-wing groups (Vapor Negro) have emerged³.

The political-electoral scenario of early 2020s Brazil motivated some of these brands to align with presidential candidates in the 2022 presidential elections.

For instance, Rock n’ Bräu (<https://www.instagram.com/rocknbrau>), based in Rio de Janeiro since 2014, released labels such as “Fora Temer” (Out With Temer), “Lula Livre” (Free Lula), “Fora Boso” (Out With Boso), “Antifascista” (Antifascist), “To com Lula” (I’m With Lula), and “Lula 2022”. In an interview, one of the founders, Diogo Cavalheiro, stated that “the idea of combining political protest and beer is at the very origin of our brewery. We are a self-managed group; all three members of Rock n’ Bräu are connected to social movements” (Prisco, 2018, para. 3).

The Cervejaria Mito (<https://www.instagram.com/servejariamito>), founded in 2014, offers another example. The company’s name was initially intended as a tribute to mythological beings. With Jair Bolsonaro’s rise to power and the popularisation of the nickname “Mito” (myth) for the politician, the beer gained notoriety, prompting its founders to take a stand against Bolsonaro’s government. As part of this strategy, the brewery launched beers named after political controversies associated with his administration, including labels such as “Golden Shower”, “DesMOROna” (MOROna Off), “Cova América” (America’s Grave), “Comitiva Presidencial” (Presidential Entourage), “Histórico de Atleta” (Athlete’s Record), “Cidadão de Bem” (Good Citizen), “Camarada Bozo” (Comrade Bozo), “Noivinha do Aristides” (Aristides’ Little Bride), “Embaixada do Papai” (Daddy’s Embassy), and “Tchutchuca do Centrão” (Centrão Chick; Moura, 2022).

Bolsonaro also has supporters among craft breweries (Macedo, 2022). Vapor Negro, based in Nova Petrópolis and specialised in personalised beers, produced “Mito” at Flávio Bolsonaro’s request. The family does not receive any share of the profits, but granted the company permission to use their image (Fabres, 2022). The Hey Ho brewery, based in Fortaleza, also produces, on request, the “Mito 22”, created by pro-Bolsonaro entrepreneurs to raise funds for the campaign.

³ An extensive survey of the causes associated with craft breweries and nanobreweries can be found in Teixeira (2022).

It should be noted that consumption does not require purchasing the product. In digitally mediated environments, products circulate both symbolically and affectively, enabling forms of consumption that do not require acquisition. As Trindade and Perez Rodrigues (2019) note, these symbolic mediations cultivate a sense of ideological belonging toward an advertised product. Even without purchasing, users can engage with consumption dynamics by interacting with content on digital platforms, without needing to use the product directly. Allowing a product to circulate in the public sphere (through posts, comments, likes, and shares) is sufficient for individuals to engage with the meaning-making communities associated with the goods (Silva de Souza, 2019) and to consume such advertising narratives, as is the case with propagandistic beers.

The following section analyses the discursive strategies calling for consumption used by four breweries (Rock n' Bräu, Mito, Vapor Negro, and Hey Ho), based on labels produced by these companies. The focus is on their official sales websites and Instagram profiles between January and September 2022. Semiotic elements of the labels are not analysed; instead, attention is given to the discursivities underpinning consumption calls. Based on their multiple meanings, the labels of these beers can be interpreted as “discursive intervention into world politics” that engage with “the discursive foundations that comprise the (often electoral) domestic context” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 126). The objective is to examine these discursive mediations of political beer consumption and to study the discursive processes to which this type of consumption responds through its labels. From the communicational strategies present on the labels, it is possible to observe the kinds of consumption-related discourse they mediate.

3. SLOGANS AND THE LABEL AS ENUNCIATION-EVENT

Among the breweries selected for analysis, only Mito has a formalised public statement of its political premises. On the company's sales website (<https://www.cervejariamito.com/manifesto/>), a manifesto states:

Mito is a social brewery. The brewery defends values it considers universal, regardless of party. Through sustainable and inclusive practices, it seeks to be the transformation needed. The brewery is run by people who want to make a difference, debating social injustices and privileges in a society with long-standing problems. Beer is merely a channel through which a greater good can be promoted. Various actions accompany the beer releases to encourage reflection on the topics addressed.

Some of the company's labels are shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Labels produced by Mito brewery

Source. From *Depois que a gente saiu da Tendinha, o pessoal fica nos perguntando onde achar a família completa da Mito sem ser no... mais* [Photograph], by Cervejaria Mito [@cervejariamito], 2022b, Instagram.

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/Cgkdtjzjr8m>)

Although Rock n' Bräu openly supports Lula's campaign on its Instagram posts and has labels celebrating him, it has not formalised a statement of values. Its profile states only: "born from the spirit of Rio's suburbs and its popular culture, the Rock n' Bräu brewery brings together friends and two great passions: music and beer". One of the brand's labels is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Label produced by Rock n' Bräu brewery

Source. Retrieved from Rock n' Bräu [Photograph], by Rock n' Bräu [@rocknbrau], 2022a, Instagram.
(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CdiymSkLaKH/>)

Vapor Negro and Hey Ho, although they produce beers in homage to Bolsonaro, also lack a manifesto of support. The political affiliations of the breweries with the politician are less engaged than in the case of the other two companies. In the case of Vapor Negro, it is a venture by three entrepreneurs who commissioned the “Mito” label from the brewery, in partnership with Flávio Bolsonaro. Hey Ho’s beer was also produced under commission by a group of Bolsonaro-supporting entrepreneurs, and no mention of the politician appears on the brewery’s Instagram. However, sites selling the product are easily accessible.

The names of beers produced by these companies constitute significant materialisations of political expression, serving as a distinctive discursive element in calling consumers to action. Analysis begins with these names: what type of discourse on consumption do they respond to?

Beyond demarcating a world-view in favour of a candidate, the beer names are discursive elements because they invoke slogans. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980/1995) definition, a slogan is a basic unit of language in which “order does not relate to previous significations (...) but rather the inverse. Information is only the minimum strictly necessary for issuing, transmitting, and observing the orders considered as commands” (p.

11). In other words, as Gomes (2003) explains, even without explicit directives, slogans are discursive arrangements carrying a world-view that “operate as guidance, in an educational process, for taking positions and fulfilling social obligations” (p. 91). Any word or statement can function as a slogan, provided it contains implicit assumptions about social obligations that teach what to see and how to behave in the world.

Gomes (2003) notes the proximity of this concept to Foucault’s notion of a “disciplinary apparatus”, since slogans circumscribe a discursive field and a specific approach to reality, triggering imaginary constructions and social processes of discipline and control. When a slogan is activated, it brings into play a series of discursivities that delimit processes of inclusion or exclusion within certain groups, norms of treatment, stereotypes, social functions, and consumption practices. From a word of command, “a political attitude will be demanded of you and your specific rights therein revealed” (Gomes, 2003, p. 95). In other words, “a word can function as a disciplinary apparatus, educating through the configuration it offers and the articulations derived from this configuration” (Gomes, 2003, p. 95). Slogans, therefore, are also actions; they are performative, as they delineate sets of norms and rules.

Beyond the apparent function of beer names as support for a specific candidate — since purchasing does not only concern taste but also signifies inhabiting a particular political position — the titles of propagandistic beers mark fields of political inclusion and exclusion. As slogans are performative, they call on individuals to take political stances — for or against specific issues. This, on one hand, means that “the announced word isolates a field which, as such, directs a world-view” (Gomes, 2003, p. 100). On the other hand, it establishes potential alliances, declares enemies, and articulates moralising discourses.

Names such as “Mito”, “Golden Shower”, “Histórico de Atleta”, “Noivinha do Aristides”, “Tchutchuca do Centrão”, or “Lula 2022” delineate sociabilities that define groups of belonging and opposition. They are slogans that institute political belonging and positionality. These political sociabilities are performed in the products and extend to acts of consumption. In advertising communication, slogans resemble brand campaign slogans, condensing values into repeatable, mobilising formulas (Semprini, 2010).

Another discursive function of slogans relates to their allusive character. Following Authier-Revuz (2007), slogans involve an implicit borrowing of discourse from segments in their linearity. In other words, slogans carry repeatable materiality in different contexts and situations. Zozzoli (2015) aligns this allusive quality with the notion of an enunciation-event-theme, understood as materialities in which allusions constitute an event (e.g., posters, manifestos, T-shirts, inscriptions on the body). The proximity of the two concepts lies in the fact that the enunciation-event “unfolds into several others linked by the theme (and underlying, similar, or dissimilar themes) on multiple planes” (Zozzoli, 2015, p. 20), allowing the performative character of the utterance to be reused across other events.

Through these concepts, it is possible to observe which discursivities on consumption the beer names mediate. As slogans, they delineate political sociability and candidate support, and are reiterated with every act of consuming these beers. The imperative of repeatability structures discursive calls to consumption: each purchase and act of consumption declares support, reaffirming belonging to a political field.

Thus, label names are performative acts that evoke political belonging and can be easily repeated across contexts. This form of consumption-calling allows the consumer to carry an enunciation-event-theme materialised in a product. Discursive calls to beer consumption concern not only the beverage but also the consumption of an image that serves as an ethical solicitation (Butler, 2015/2019).

The discursivity woven by the label's name entails a form of engagement akin to fandom. Political fans can be understood as "individuals who form part of an audience highly engaged in consuming political information" (M. Santos, 2016, p. 118), manifesting, among other things, through specific consumption practices. Slogans are essential elements of fan culture. Chagas and Fonseca (2017) note that political fandoms are "a sphere of articulation between individual preferences and group performances, highlighting taste, distinction, and enunciative elements" (p. 8). The label names function as enunciative elements demarcating fields of belonging and can be repeatedly displayed to affirm support and establish alliances through a product. The consumption of these labels thus enacts a theatricality of consumption, linked to the demarcation of belonging and to the public display of support and opposition, performed through acts structured around a slogan.

Another implication of this political performance of consumption relates to "effigial consumption", as discussed in the following section.

4. POLITICAL BEERS AND EFFIGIAL CONSUMPTION

Within political relations, the use of effigies constitutes an important performative domain. Saunders and Holland (2017) use the concept to refer to acts that offer "platforms for redemption and moral instruction" through public performative acts (for example, toppling a statue, burning a document publicly, or desecrating monuments) with strong potential for visibility and interactivity. Thus, "the communal and ceremonial act of a (mostly or even exclusively male) group coming together to set alight an inanimate object that is fashioned in the likeness of a distant enemy is a deeply affective experience that engages nearly all the senses" (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 128). From this, the authors propose the concept of "effigial consumption", referring to acts of consumption that mimic the performative nature of the effigy — in other words, a type of consumption that accommodates a communal and ceremonial act that embodies either a celebrated figure or a vilified enemy.

The consumption of political beers can also be understood as part of effigial consumption, since it "has the potential to offer an important potential moment and marker

of resistance, even if the performing of such acts is (...) marked by ‘irony and contradiction’” (Saunders & Holland, 2017, p. 128). It is worth recalling that there is a significant sensory aspect to the effigy — something that can be touched, felt, smelled, or desecrated. Food activism fits within effigial consumption because it strongly appeals to the senses.

Even under the imperatives of the commodification of political culture, effigial consumption retains a ritual dimension that demands a staged articulation simulating co-participation in a cause. In other words, there is an interactive element that is central to its discursive calls. As Cruz et al. (2009) point out, when analysing merchandise supporting Barack Obama, “the idea was to integrate voters so that they would feel co-participants in the whole process, creating a strong identification with Obama, increasing their involvement in the campaign and, consequently, in the political process itself” (p. 9). In contexts of effigial consumption, a sense of social engagement and deliberate participation in a campaign is thus generated.

The same can be said for the beers made in support of the candidates in the 2022 election. The discursive calls to consumption are structured around the notion that, by drinking the beer, the consumer is not only expressing support but also adopting an active, engaged role in that candidate’s campaign. Even if this participation is not fully realised within the institutional spheres of politics, the labels articulate a discourse that co-operation and support are possible through these products. In this respect, the electoral activist beers studied can be distinguished into two categories of effigial consumption: one oriented towards the playfulness of the labels and the other towards the celebration of a candidate, as discussed below.

If institutional political participation requires commitment through practices such as voting and popular mobilisation, Chagas et al. (2014) note that certain communicative practices can mobilise other, more playful forms of political engagement, which possess strong mobilising potential by mediating networks of shared meanings linked to popular culture. By “political play”, Chagas and Fonseca (2017) refer to a dynamic that takes shape through a playful transformation of politics:

it is a situation, therefore, that involves and lies midway between fantasy and direct action upon reality, operating through a framing and always by means of a keying process that enables its reinterpretation. (p. 11)

One mode of political play is the “parody of the publicly known” (Chagas et al., 2014, p. 180) — that is, situations in which issues circulating in the public sphere are re-signified in humorous communicational productions (akin to political cartoons or memes).

For the authors, humour lends positivity to political content, and “comic discourse becomes a vehicle for exploring politics, incorporating elements of popular culture and media entertainment, and acting to include the ordinary citizen in processes requiring participation” (Chagas et al., 2014, p. 179). Furthermore, in political play, “the involvement of the actors is unstable, uncertain, discrepant and casual”, since it “may fluctuate

along a scale that ranges from institutional engagement with a collective agenda to private manifestations of discontent and grievance, as in the case of fan activism” (Chagas & Fonseca, 2017, p. 13).

The anti-Bolsonaro labels produced by the Mito brewery incorporate humour as an essential discursive feature of political participation (Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5).



Figure 3. Label of “Camarada Bozo” by Mito

Source. Retrieved from *Bozo era um traidor ! Comuna, canalha ! Trabalhava pras forças vermelhas e agora retorna para a sua pátria mãe* [Photograph], by Cervejaria Mito [@cervejariamito], 2022a, Instagram.

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CaIQ9-rpTU3/?igsh=MW9yeXY5b2xibXp6dg%3D%3D>)



Figure 4. Label of “Golden Shower” by Mito

Source. Retrieved from *Esses são nossos rótulos de linha. Já conhecia todas essas ilustrações?* [Photograph], by Cervejaria Mito [@cervejariamito], 2020, Instagram.
 (https://www.instagram.com/p/CFoZlibpamU/?igsh=MTRhdHd4bHJuZHl5aQ%3D%3D&img_index=1)

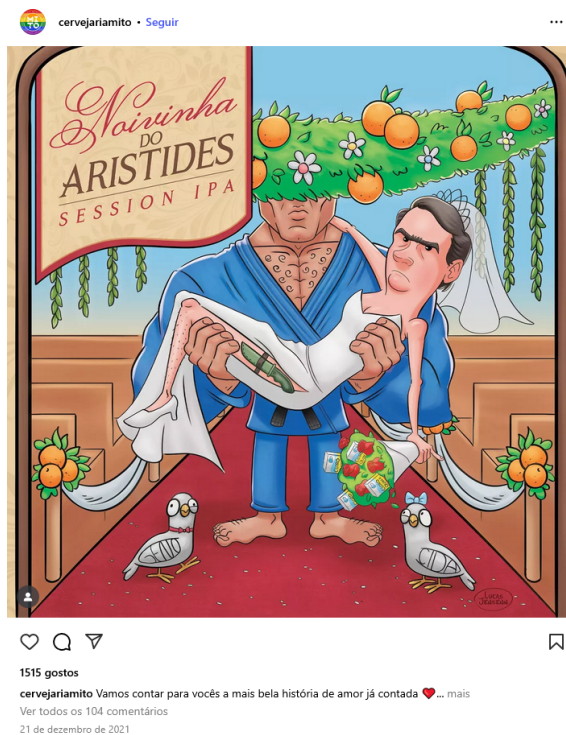


Figure 5. Label of “Noivinha do Aristides” by Mito

Source. Retrieved from *Vamos contar para vocês a mais bela história de amor já contada* [Photograph], by Cervejaria Mito [@cervejariamito], 2021, Instagram.
 (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CXvr4OWrgfX/?igsh=YWtrYl4d3NyZ2hs>)

Mito's labels engage with recent events from Bolsonaro's government, and their understanding depends on following current political developments. References such as "Golden Shower" and "Noivinha do Aristides" are directly linked to factual issues of that administration — such as statements made by Bolsonaro and by his political allies or opponents. In this sense, these are dated labels that require constant updating, since such factual events may quickly fade from public memory; to maintain their potential for engagement, they must be renewed.

The designs presented on these labels clearly draw on the visual language of memes and political cartoons, as the breweries' reappropriation of events from the public sphere "are capable of synthesising/personifying a set of references about politicians or the political scene and, in a certain sense, revive the theses on political theatre and opinion politics" (Chagas, 2018, p. 7). The labels thus operate as communicational artefacts for the public display of the subject's "political engagement" or for their socialisation "within public debate, through a metaphorical language oriented towards the construction of a self-contained narrative or framing, often drawing upon references from popular culture" (Chagas, 2018, p. 11). Mockery thus becomes a mode of mimicking political engagement through consumption, based on an alleged dialogue with current events. The illustrations mobilise "parodies of the publicly known" (Chagas et al., 2014, p. 180), and their consumption may be understood as a form of political play.

These labels employ humour and political satire as their main discursive strategies for calling upon effigial consumption — materialising a mocking image that embodies a political event. There is a kind of discursive intervention in politics (Saunders & Holland, 2017) in these labels that mirrors the gathering of a group to ridicule a political opponent as an everyday form of resistance. There is an element of playfulness in these acts of consumption, grounded in the notion that one can appropriate events, hold them, joke with them, and even put them in one's mouth. As Saunders and Holland (2017) point out, "such activities, despite the global north-consumerist-hipster aesthetic, provide a compelling (if imperfect) parallel to the burning of effigies of Western leaders in the public space" (p. 130). From the perspective that product consumption expresses subjective affiliations, these labels reveal political manifestations within products that, in other contexts, might be interpreted as apolitical.

Another form of effigial consumption materialises in labels that do not aim to mock or oppose candidates but instead express support for their electoral causes — as in the cases of Vapor Negro and Hey Ho (in support of Bolsonaro; Figure 6 and Figure 7) and Rock n' Bräu (in support of Lula).



Figure 6. Beer supporting Lula by Rock n' Bräu

Fonte. Retirado de *Na virada vamos comemorar com uma cerveja geladissima e você já pode reservar a sua para brindar na posse do* [Fotografia], Rock n' Bräu [@rocknbrau], 2022b, Instagram.

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CmrvFK6pyRG/?igsh=dzRucgzZzNweDlh>)



Figure 7. Beers supporting Lula by Rock n' Bräu

Fonte. Retirado de *Passando para te dizer que nossas entregas estão a todo vapor no dia de hoje!* [Fotografia], Rock n' Bräu [@rocknbrau], 2023, Instagram.

(<https://www.instagram.com/p/CmrvFK6pyRG/?igsh=dzRucgzZzNweDlh>)

Labels that exalt these candidates operate a discourse akin to that of the t-shirt-banner. If political t-shirts act as signifiers that “materialise ideas, concepts and culture, producing distinct meanings across different interactions and interpretations, conveying ideas rapidly, as do street billboards or memes” (Assis, 2021, p. 10), the same can be said of these beers, which promote effigial consumption as a means of supporting candidates. Drinking a beer in support of a candidate thus becomes a form of personal expression laden with symbolic value.

In these labels, both candidates are depicted as virtuous protagonists through imagery evoking campaign symbols. In the beers supporting Bolsonaro, a nationalist discourse is woven into the labels through the prominent use of green and yellow, constructing his figure as a national hero. In the labels supporting Lula, signs of resistance dominate the discursive plane, with visual articulations that align him with the figure of the martyr or warrior.

As with mocking effigial consumption, candidate-support beers deploy discursive calls based on an imaginary of political participation. To consume well, in these labels, is discursively linked to engaged, participatory, and activist consumption. In a polarised political environment marked by widespread distrust in traditional institutions, these labels summon consumers to a form of cooperation — albeit never fully realised — between the political and the everyday. Immersed within the logic of consumption, observing the political dialogue these breweries seek to promote does not imply that the consumption of political beers represents engagement in institutional political arenas; instead, it shows that forms of emulated engagement are wide-ranging and may manifest in everyday acts of consumption.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The incongruence between the logics of consumption and those of politics has long been noted, as consumption constitutes an individual solution, whereas politics demands collective action (Fontenelle, 2016). A perspective focused more on political cultures — rather than on their institutional or formal dimension — can, however, grasp the playful aspects of the circulation of political information through everyday consumer objects, such as the propagandistic beers examined here. In addition to creating spaces for the expression of political opinions, these labels also generate a space of simulated engagement and of circulation of political language. Much like political memes, the labels of these breweries “dilute the boundaries between what can and cannot be considered engaged action. After all, if engagement can be understood as an attempt to take part in the process of constituting the public agenda” (J. Santos & Chagas, 2017, p. 8), it is evident that these breweries engage with public issues through their labels.

The discursive calls to consumption on the analysed labels are structured around an appeal to engagement, to the articulation of emulators of participation in electoral debate. As watchwords, the names of the beers summon groups of supporters, mark

adversaries, and mediate world-views through a form of consumption that is easily reiterable and repeatable in different situational contexts. Constructed as effigies, these labels also discursively summon consumers to an effigial form of consumption by proposing their co-participation in electoral campaigns — either through a humorous stance symbolising critique of current policies or through the glorification of political figures.

This article demonstrates that brand strategic communication plays a central role in the politicisation of consumption practices, transforming everyday products into discursive devices of civic engagement. This finding contributes to the field of strategic and advertising communication by showing how small-scale brands, through creative strategies, can participate in public debate. The innovation of this study lies precisely in bringing the advertising of craft breweries to the centre of the discussion as a political communication strategy — something still rarely explored in communication and consumption studies. By analysing labels as performative utterances and watchwords, a specific mode of articulation between advertising, consumption, and politics emerges, expanding our understanding of how brands position themselves and compete for relevance in contexts of heightened electoral polarisation.

By interpreting the labels as advertising communication strategies, this article helps reposition advertising as a central discursive practice in the politicisation of consumption. Its contribution lies in showing that, even within small-scale segments, the strategic communication of brands mobilises advertising resources — such as slogans, brand positioning, and visuality — as forms of political intervention.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge some limitations of this research. The corpus was restricted to four craft breweries and to the period between January and September 2022, which limits the scope of the conclusions. Moreover, the analysis focused on the discursivities of the labels and did not explore in depth consumer reception, which could enrich the understanding of these brands' communication strategies.

Building on the results presented here, relevant avenues for future research are opened. Comparative studies could examine other categories of consumption that also articulate politicised advertising strategies, allowing the identification of less conventional ways in which consumption and politics intertwine in everyday life. Another possibility would be to investigate consumers' reception of this type of advertising to understand to what extent these discursive appeals translate into practices of political engagement.

Machine Translation Post-Editing: Anabela Delgado

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