

# Co-creating a city brand image based on cultural identity: the case of Cali and the Salsa music and dance scene

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AQ:1

## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper explores Salsa co-creation processes in the city of Cali, Colombia. The purpose of this paper is to uncover the processes of bottom-up and top-down place governance at work in the system. This study proposed that these processes are founded on a place-based cultural identity in Cali's civil society.

AQ: 5

**Design/methodology/approach** – This research draws on practice and structuration theories to understand how social structures frame place-based cultural identity and takes a social constructivist approach to place making and place branding. Empirical data was collected using a qualitative, multi-method approach, with primary data gathered from interviews with key actors and records of in-situ interactions between tourists and local citizens.

AQ: 4

**Findings** – Evidence is presented to show how tourists and visitors are attracted to Cali in pursuit of an urban existential authenticity generated through sensory experiences connected to music and dance mediated by interpersonal interactions with local residents.

**Research limitations/implications** – Further investigation is needed to gain greater insight into tourists' motivations, and in addition, a more quantitative approach is required to understand better the range of interpersonal and intrapersonal factors involved.

AQ: 3

**Practical implications** – Place branding should consider synergies between economics and culture as well as exploring the potential of sensorial interactions to produce emotional place attachment in a range of different stakeholders.

**Originality/value** – While place branding research tends to focus on the views and beliefs of stakeholders (cognitive dimension), this investigation takes an approach to the topic based on interpersonal sensorial interactions between visitors and local inhabitants as part of daily life (emotional dimension).

**Keywords** City governance and DMOs, Bottom-up cultural identity, Dance and music authenticity encounters, Creative city making, Sensorial place branding

**Paper type** Research paper

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AQ:2

**Co-creando una imagen de marca de ciudad a partir de la identidad cultural: El caso de Cali a través de la música y danza de la Salsa**

## Resumen

**Objetivo:** esta investigación analiza la co-creación artístico-cultural en relación con la Salsa –baile y música- en Cali Colombia; estudiando cómo este proceso emana de la identidad cultural-afectiva de la sociedad civil, y a partir de la base socio-cultural, se crean estrategias económico-culturales y de marketing territorial.

**Diseño/metodología/enfoque:** el enfoque teórico-conceptual sigue un enfoque de construcción social para explorar la autenticidad territorial; y una lógica de servicio -Service-dominant Logic- aplicada a los procesos de co-creación cultural y socio-económico de la música y la danza como artes escénicas populares. Se adopta un enfoque multi-método cualitativo que analiza in situ las interacciones entre turistas y ciudadanos locales.

**Hallazgos:** se evidencia que las músicas y danzas populares se basan en la identidad de la sociedad civil, de interacciones sociales y expresiones artístico-culturales que co-crean una identidad sensorial

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cultural; y luego esas manifestaciones culturales son adoptadas por las elites empresariales para crear grandes shows o festivales de música y baile, y por los gobiernos para consolidar políticas culturales.

**Limitaciones de investigación:** *el análisis se aplica a una ciudad en concreto, el proceso de co-creación de la Salsa en Cali, Colombia, donde turistas y viajeros son atraídos por la autenticidad de experiencias sensoriales de música y danza a través de interacciones interpersonales con los residentes caleños.*

**Implicaciones prácticas:** *los procesos de Marca Territorial deben considerar las sinergias entre las dimensiones económicas y culturales, y también las interacciones sensoriales, que propician conexiones afectivas y emocionales para diversos grupos implicaciones con el territorio.*

**Originalidad/valor:** *más allá de las grandes ciudades mundiales productoras de cultura, es necesario conocer mejor cómo emergen propuestas creativas de ciudades pequeñas y medias de países emergentes cuyas ricas tradiciones culturales, atraen viajeros y turistas en busca de experiencias de autenticidad interpersonal, en contacto con habitantes locales, en sus vivencias diarias e interacciones culturales.*

**Palabras clave** *Palabras clave Interacciones sensoriales, Co-creación creativa de marca ciudad, Procesos de identidad cultural desde la sociedad civil*

**Tipo de papel** *Trabajo de investigación*

## 1. Introduction

The management and marketing of arts and culture entail complex synergies between artistic-cultural elements and socioeconomic (Scott, 2000). Furthermore, while destination marketing has traditionally focused on promoting tourism exchanges, place branding integrates a more generic set of exchanges among different stakeholders – both internal (residents) and external (visitors and tourists) – (Merrilees *et al.*, 2012; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2019). More recently, destination branding has emerged to address a more holistic set of multi-stakeholder processes involving a region's inhabitants as much as tourists (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).

Territorial and cultural management have traditionally been conceptualized from the perspective of the cultural and creative industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2012), focusing on top-down processes instigated by either organizations involved in the production of culture, governments forming cultural policies or destination marketing organizations (DMOs) promoting tourism exchanges. However, there are also bottom-up economic and cultural processes of value co-creation at work. These are founded in civil society and involve multiple civil society stakeholders (Golestaneh *et al.*, 2021) that enact the place-specific practices of daily life which configure its local cultural identity and, in turn, develop a location's place branding (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2020). Certainly, the world's largest, most cosmopolitan cities constitute the major centres of cultural and economic production; however, in the past decades, medium-sized, second-tier cities have begun to deploy their cultural heritage to enter the creative tourism market (Scherf, 2021) engaging in cultural value co-creation.

AQ: 6

The search for existential authenticity (Wang, 1999) is an increasing trend in tourism, and in terms of city tourism, the emphasis is on immersive travel experiences that enable tourists to get a flavour of the daily city life of their chosen destination, including attending specific events and venues and engaging in genuine interactions with local residents (Nientied, 2021). These bottom-up collective processes involving cultural interactions between stakeholders (both internal and external) in a given community with a strong cultural identity give rise to the concept of *interpersonal authenticity*. In response to these processes, top-down activities may be initiated. These generally take the form of cultural policies implemented by local governments and the organization of various cultural events (Colombo & Richards, 2017) by cultural destination management organizations that seek to promote creative tourism based on place-making (Richards, 2021). Nevertheless, despite the growing body of work looking at these two types of process in isolation, there remains a need to gain a better understanding of how top-down and bottom-up processes unfold simultaneously in a given location due to multi-actor co-creation practices.

The research presented here will address this gap in the literature by examining the social construction of place and analysing how existing social structures frame human actions

from the top down while socially shared practices in civil society contribute to shaping social structures from the bottom up. To do this, the work draws on several theoretical areas, including structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), founded on the idea of dual macro-and micro-structures with additional insights from social practice theories (Bourdieu, 1990) and institutional logics (Thornton *et al.*, 2012). In this way, as Pedeliento & Kavaratzis (2019, p. 353) put it: "recursive interplay between action and structure makes up place culture, place identity and place image". That is, culture and society can be conceived as outcomes of dynamic interactions between the actions and practices of social actors within institutional structures, and also that shared practices by individuals and organizational agents are active co-creators in the formation of socio-cultural structures (Scott, 2013).

This investigation centres on Salsa, both the music and the dance, as a cultural movement based in Cali (Colombia). The Salsa scene attracts tourists who want to learn the dance in the company of locals at the city's many specialist dance academies or who wish to attend some of the numerous events aimed at tourists such as the Salsa World Festival. Cali is regarded as the home of Salsa, guardian both of its history and its present (Waxer, 2013); in turn, Salsa constitutes a cultural-artistic activity that creates Cali's city brand, proclaiming it as the world capital of Salsa. Salsa was also key to restoring Cali's image in the aftermath of the drugs war in the 1980s and 1990s when the Cali and Medellin cartels fought for control of the drugs market and the city experienced a period of violence and economic upheaval due to the influx of illegal funds. At one time, Cali was considered to be Colombia's most prosperous city with a vibrant cultural and sporting life in addition to significant economic power; however, its image has been considerably sullied due to the stigma of its association with drugs.

There has been a tendency to research sensory tourist experiences largely from the visual perspective, that is, prioritising the sense of sight: looking at beautiful landscapes and natural places (Cohen & Cohen, 2019) or viewing cultural heritage in cities (Bellini & Pasquinelli, 2016). This has been to the detriment of other forms of sensory tourism involving, for instance, sounds, smells, tastes and textures (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2015). Furthermore, while some work has been completed on music and dance tourism (Daniel, 1996; Matteucci & Filep, 2017), more research is needed to gain greater insight into the meanings attached to human contact in movement. The research presented here attempts to redress this imbalance by considering not only the visual attractiveness of Salsa dance and the incredible costumes seen at Salsa shows but also the auditory and kinaesthetic experiences of tourists' encounters with this particular music and dance genre.

In the context of the present study, we can assume that the tourists looking for sensory experiences related to dance and music take the role of service users. However, the role of local residents is less well defined and ~~indeed, may~~ be manifold: as service providers in interpersonal interactions with tourists and as service users going out to dance in Cali's many Salsa bars. Indeed, in many tourist destinations where marketable cultural experiences form part of daily life in that location, local inhabitants not only use and provide the cultural services of interest to tourists but are also adopting active roles in cultural oversight and promotion (Boorsma, 2006). This may also be the case in Cali.

The objective of this investigation is to analyse the governance processes involved in creating Cali's city brand based on the sensorial practices of Salsa music and dance. This objective has been distilled into two specific research questions:

- RQ1. What is the role of local citizens as bottom-up value co-creators in the dance encounters that attract visitors to Cali seeking authentic sensorial experiences?
- RQ2. What is the role of DMOs in promoting the top-down cultural policies and marketing activities that have positioned Cali as the world capital of Salsa music and dance and are now contributing to it obtaining the status of a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts?

Through the exploration of a specific case study, Cali's Salsa scene, this work makes contributions in several areas. Firstly, it advances our understanding of sensorial place-making and place branding based on emotional cultural identities linked to the popular artforms of dance and music. Secondly, it provides an understanding of destination branding within the more holistic concept of place branding, which includes the consideration of multiple stakeholders: an internal audience of citizens and other inhabitants of the region or place in question and an external audience of tourists and other visitors. Thirdly, this study improves our knowledge of the roles played by tourists and the local residents of cities and small communities where the main attractions are sensory-emotional experiences linked to popular music and dance. The conclusions drawn from this case study are relevant to many similar cities in the world where elements of local cultural identity attract tourists in search of genuine emotional experiences based on the daily lives of local people.

AQ: 7

Additionally, this research is of interest to policymakers and practitioners working in the cultural and tourism industries as it highlights the importance of instigating place-making and place branding processes that not only involve top-down cultural policies and provider-centric tourism strategies but also incorporate multi-actor bottom-up cultural processes. This research is also relevant for academics aiming to, on one hand, understand cultural value co-creation in terms of growing multi-stakeholder engagement and, on the other, extend the perception of territories not only in cognitive terms but also in ways that are multi-sensory and emotional.

This work begins with a conceptual analysis of how artistic-cultural value co-creation processes emerge from a civil society-based cultural identity that generates a sense of place and a forum for shared social interactions from the bottom up. Following from this, is an exploration of how top-down creative cultural place-making develops from city marketing strategies that use music and dance events. These ideas are then applied to the specific case of Salsa value co-creation in Cali, Colombia, to examine how tourists are attracted by the place-associated urban dance culture and how their interactions with local people as they engage in sensory and kinaesthetic experiences of music and dance lead to a sense of existential authenticity. Cali's Salsa scene, we argue, is a case of a holistic sensory place that has successfully generated an affective, sensorial city brand. This article also indicates some of the negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic for activities like Salsa which are based on close interpersonal contact.

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1 Place identity and branding as a governance process based on the interplay between cultural and institutional structure and social practice*

Place identity emanates from, on one hand, complex combinations of various physical and material elements: its climate; level of urban development; and socio-cultural, political and economic interrelationships (Skinner, 2011), and on the other, multiple individual actions and shared social practices with cultural significance that are continuously being reshaped (Pedeliento & Kavartzis, 2019). While DMOs implement short-term promotional strategies to highlight the profile of a particular destination, as well as long-term marketing strategies to increase that destination's supply and demand market exchanges, place branding concerns the co-creation of a territorial reputation from the inside out. This process involves identifying the idiosyncratic socio-cultural characteristics of a location and enabling the expression of these through narratives that project an image with associated cognitive and affective dimensions (Boisen *et al.*, 2018). Like corporate brands (Merz *et al.*, 2009), place brands are co-created among multiple stakeholders – internal and external – enabling, in the more multi-faceted locations such as cities, the emergence of multiple brand meanings (Merrilees *et al.*, 2012; Braun *et al.*, 2013; Golestaneh *et al.*, 2021). Where the process of place branding is co-created according to a shared socio-cultural identity the place in question distinguishes itself from other similar places.

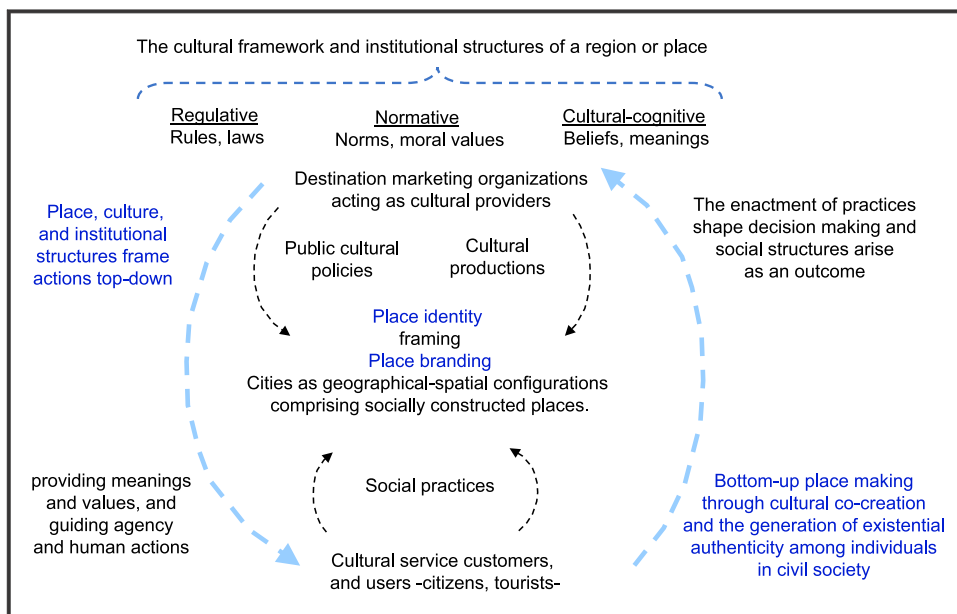
Music ecosystems, themselves the product of shared socio-cultural identity, are also co-created by multiple stakeholders within the particular cultural and institutional context of their location be that a city or wider territory. These ecosystems have economic consequences as discussed by Power & Hallencreutz (2002) in their comparison music production in Stockholm (Sweden) and Kingston (Jamaica), and also entail complex, dynamic network interactions (Larson, 2009).

Thus, place branding is increasingly conceived as a relational process involving place-based cultural identity and the expression of the selected values and narratives of a given place to sustain or improve the reputation or image of that place (Boisen *et al.*, 2018). However, place branding has, in general, been enacted and planned using top-down approaches directed by governments, agencies and DMOs, generally without the involvement of local citizens (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).

According to Kroeber & Kluckhohn (1952, p.181), culture consists "~~of patterns of historically derived and ideas and their embodiment in institutions and practices~~". This view is reflected in current institutional theory, which views cultural and social structures as interdependent (Scott, 2004) such that regulatory (rules, laws), normative (norms and moral values) and cognitive-cultural (beliefs and meanings) structures, together form a related set of institutions. These institutional arrangements form in specific historical contexts and within particular cultural milieux resulting in a relatively coherent assemblage that enhances the coordination of human activity in value co-creation within a given service ecosystem (Vargo & Lusch, 2016, p. 18).

F1 To illustrate this, Figure 1 shows the socially constructed city. Firstly, the macro-cultural framework of a given place and its institutional arrangements frame human actions and agency through shared meaning and values. Cognitive-cultural structures then guide the enactment of cultural practices through multiple social interactions between the internal and external stakeholders of the place in question, constructing a place identity and helping to mould social structures by influencing decision-makers to create new regulative and normative structures. With the passage of time and the social legitimacy certain practices

**Figure 1** The socially constructed city: bottom-up and top-down value co-creation mechanisms



gain through being shared socially, these become routinized and thus come to form part of institutionalized structures (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019).

## 2.2 Integrating top-down and bottom-up artistic-cultural co-creation processes through music and dance lived experiences

The complex synergies between culture and the economy have been studied from the perspective of the *cultural economy* (Scott, 2000) and that of the so-called *experience economy* (Pine et al., 1999), as well as within the context of what Swedish cultural theorists have termed *emotional geography* (O'Dell & Billing, 2005). These approaches have revealed a form of affective economy that has a cultural-territorial interpretation through sensory experiences and which manifests through meanings and signs, so providing insights into the economic implications of human emotional response. Thus, the relationship between travel, place and emotion can be rethought in terms of what has been called *performative authenticity* and *spatial tourism experiences* (Knudsen & Waade, 2010).

As early as 70s, Trilling (1972) noted how the popularization of tourism as a leisure activity and the huge boom in destinations led to a loss of distinctiveness between the offerings of different locations in terms of local customs (traditional festivals, dress, rituals, cuisine and the built environment). Faced with this cultural homogenization, tourism's search for "the genuine", "the unique" and "the real" has intensified, and the concept of authenticity, both with respect to objects (in exhibitions) and experiences, is a crucial element in this process.

AQ: 8

Wang's (1999) notion of existential authenticity focuses on tourism as interpersonal and intrapersonal lived experiences. Interpersonal authenticity is related to "self-making" whereby people act spontaneously, according to their true selves, while intrapersonal authenticity refers to the process of sharing tourism experiences with other travellers. The active participation in sociable activities such as dance allows tourists to experience sensations (moving to the rhythm, achieving a sense of emotional well-being, having fun and experiencing pleasure and joy), all of which contribute to feelings of self-empowerment. These fun activities help tourists to leave behind the problems of daily life and provide space for a certain level of sensory self-indulgence; dance in particular, is a physical activity that nourishes the spirit and feeds the hedonistic tendencies of participants.

AQ: 9

The genuine nature of the music and dance produced by local communities attracts tourists in search of authentic sensory experiences: learning new skills, gaining knowledge or watching live performances. In addition, the authenticity of these experiences can be further enhanced if they take place in the location most closely associated with the socio-cultural identity they represent, that is, particular cities. Learning how to dance in a popular style, such as Salsa, requires full physical involvement: a bodily performance that causes feelings of empathy and mutual understanding between dancers. Furthermore, these encounters not only co-create shared social capital benefiting local communities (Scherf, 2021), but in addition, the arrival of foreign tourists gives these communities a renewed sense of self-esteem and pride in their traditional culture (Cole, 2007), something that is maximized where the community in question has been previously marginalized.

Recently, the concept of authenticity in tourism has been analysed in the context of the increasingly important sharing economy (Paulauskaite et al., 2017). However, the implications of city or regional place branding in this type of interaction have only recently been addressed (Nientied, 2021). Thus, the research presented here will examine both these elements, specifically, the relationship between tourists' search for authentic experiences based on dance and music in a city where local people interact with tourists as part of these experiences.

Much tourism now relies on the formation of complex human relationships in which certain external stakeholders – certain types of tourists – seek authentic experiences linked to the cultural identity of the internal stakeholders – local residents – of the region they are visiting.

AQ: 10

In this way, many cities and regions could be considered as multi-actor, poly-sensory entities (Baccarani *et al.*, 2019) in which multiple stakeholders contribute to a continuous process of place making. From this, the idea of place branding emerges as a set of governance strategies aimed at, on the one hand, projecting an image of a given destination to its users (e.g. residents, tourists and investors) and, on the other, shaping perceptions of said destination among these same stakeholders (Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019). However, the identity of a place involves far more than the visual; it also includes elements that stimulate the other four senses: sounds, smells, tastes and textures, and thus, we arrive at the concept of the sensuous city (Low, 2015).

Traditionally, place marketing strategies tend to be oriented from the top-down, often to promote heritage locations such as monuments, museums and other urban historical sites (Bellini & Pasquinelli, 2016), on the whole, excluding sensory components (Beckman *et al.*, 2013). This approach limits the conceptualization of place to a narrow tourist-centred vision that excludes a location's users – in the case of a city, it is inhabitants. The more modern approach, however, involves a far more holistic notion of place; for example, cities are seen as locations that can be not only viewed but also lived in and perceived emotionally and sensorially (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2018). Place then becomes a social construction formed via human interactions and the everyday lived experience of urban dwelling and encompasses a range of multi-sensory experiences mediated by sight, hearing, smell and taste (Low, 2015). This new conception involves dynamic socio-cultural processes arising from the emotional and social relationships between stakeholders in civil society taking place from the bottom up (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2019). In this way, the sense of taste and the experience of flavour, for instance, are key to the development of the new area of food-based place branding (Berg & Sevón, 2014), gastronomic and culinary place development (Rinaldi, 2017) or food and wine tourism (Croce & Perri, 2017), whereas smell is an area that shows promise as an element of urban identity formation and city marketing (Henshaw *et al.*, 2016). Music is of course principally associated with the sense of hearing and encompasses a highly diverse field including a myriad of popular music and dance styles, often specific to very well-defined neighbourhoods or regions, developed by local communities and artists in their particular historical era and cultural context (Connell & Gibson, 2003).

AQ: 11

Many of the well-known popular music and dance genres have very humble folk origins based on everyday social interactions, for example, Samba from the streets of Rio de Janeiro (Barke *et al.*, 2001) and Flamenco from Andalucía in Spain's rural south (Aoyama, 2009). Nowadays, the territorial identity associated with these music and dance styles is further enhanced by the marketing of so-called musical cities and sonic spaces, as well as festivals giving audiences new avenues through which to enjoy music. Examples of this kind of marketing can be seen in cities such as London, a key node for worldwide music production (Watson, 2008) and renowned for its music scene (Christodoulou, 2011), and also in countries, for instance, Senegal, which is celebrated as a musical nation (Madichie, 2011). Music is of course often accompanied by a visual feast in the form of the costumes worn by musicians and dancers, stage sets, in addition to dancing which, through its uninhibited rhythmic, sensuous movements creates a sense of well-being. In cities, locally based popular music and dance helps generate a distinctive urban atmosphere bestowing authentic, lived experiences (Löfgren, 2014) and implying a sensory dimension to the production of place (Cohen, 1995). Thus, the concept of place involves not just tangible and symbolic elements but also a sensory component (Spielmann *et al.*, 2018), implying that when we talk about cities, in addition to considering their physical-geographical properties and socially constructed dimensions, we must also explore how they are sensorially experienced (Alves *et al.*, 2015).

A city like Cali, where its image is projected through a musical genre intimately connected with its cultural identity provides sensorial experiences beyond the physical and

geographical dimensions (Ulloa-Sanmiguel, 2020). The sounds and sensorial ambience that make the city distinctive are co-created by the daily cultural practices of its local residents, and the meanings generated are perceived as authenticity by tourists and visitors. This process of place branding, emerging from the sensory experience of a city, is essentially a bottom-up phenomenon (Rodrigues *et al.*, 2019) in which internal stakeholders co-create a sensorial place identity, be that of a city or, indeed, a larger geographical area. **AQ: 12**

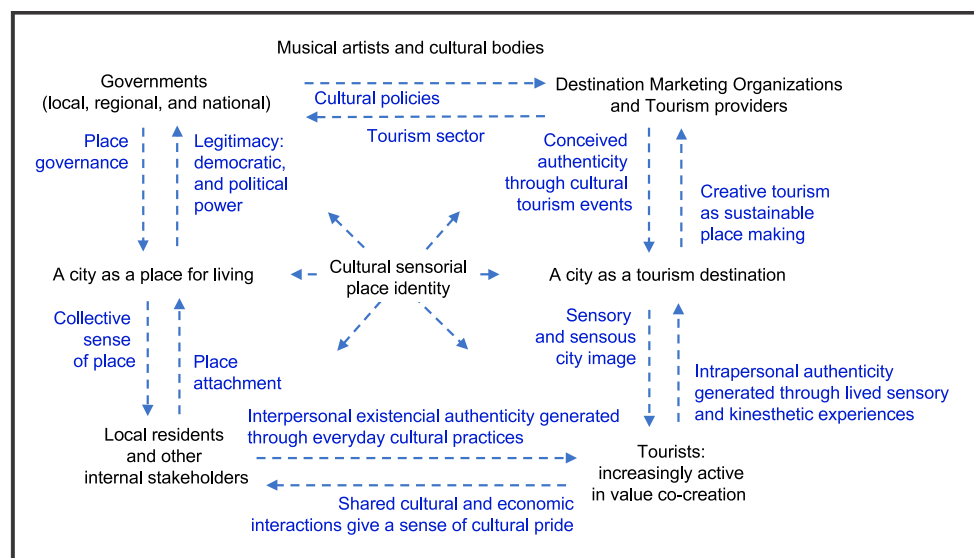
Cultural creation in the performing arts, and especially music and dance, arises fundamentally from the huge cultural richness of the world and the diversity of artists and cultural organizations inventing new musical genres and artistic movements (Connell & Gibson, 2003). **Figure 2** is a graphical representation of how the interactions between top-down and bottom-up value co-creation mechanisms construct cultural place identity. **F2**

Referring **Figure 2**, the upper section shows the processes initiated by top-down cultural stakeholders: the formation of cultural and place management policies by governments (city, regional or national) directed at the needs of local inhabitants and cultural tourists as well as the creative place-making (Richards, 2021) of tourism providers that organize cultural events to attract tourists. Events in this context do not necessarily need to be world-leading affairs but rather economic and cultural processes that generate chains of value co-creation before and after a given event, enabling a city to obtain positive publicity through large audiences.

Through their daily practices and emotional involvement, the users of a space – residents and visitors – contribute to place making through bottom-up, lived practices. These processes often contest the social narratives of conceived authenticity proposed by official actors (Piazzoni, 2018). Thus, cities that previously have not been considered as tourist destinations can now attract visitors keen to interact in the everyday lives of locals (Mordue, 2017; Nientied, 2021), and in turn, the role of local residents becomes key in designing balanced programs of tourism management (Bichler, 2021).

Destination branding research has considered this kind of tourism – based on encounters between visitors and local people – in terms of co-creation processes that unify demand and supply side exchanges (Giannopoulos *et al.*, 2021). This has helped to broaden the theoretical framework of this field to encompass the concept of holistic city branding as an

**Figure 2** Constructing cultural place identities: bottom-up cultural co-creation in civil society and top-down cultural policies and actions





exercise in relational governance processes (Eshuis & Klijn, 2017) based on regional cultural identity (Muñiz-Martínez, 2016), involving internal stakeholders as much as external stakeholders. As discussed by Pedeliento & Kavaratzis (2019), the involvement of both these groups of stakeholders is done on one hand by creating a sense of place attachment and on the other by projecting an image congruent with this place attachment to create a consistent destination marketing strategy as part of wider place branding (Zenker *et al.*, 2017).

AQ: 13

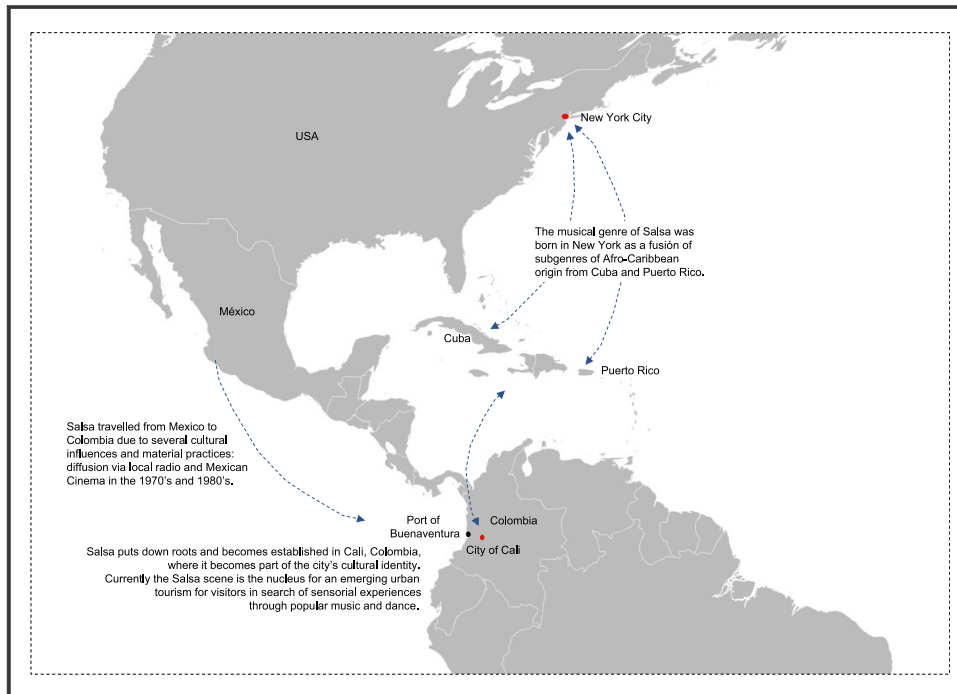
### 3. Case selection: Cali's socio-cultural identity and sensorial city branding as a Salsa city

F3

Salsa was born during the 1960s (Ulloa-Sanmiguel, 2008, 2020) when exiled Latin artists living in New York (Figure 3) inspired by the distinctive Son Cubano and Afro-Cuban jazz traditions (themselves descended from a fusion of musical forms from Africa, Europe and the Caribbean) came together in New York. In this way, from its inception, Salsa has always been an urban genre rooted in the problems and emotions of everyday life, finding expression in song and through rhythmic, vitally agile dance moves. The term Salsa, meaning "sauce" in Spanish, was popularized through its commercial use by the Fania record label. Run by the Dominican producer, Johnny Pacheco, this label was dedicated to marketing various Salsa subgenres (Padura, 2021) and to branding the swing of this music. Yet Salsa is more than a musical genre or dance style, and it is a cultural movement that integrates several Latin American popular dance traditions, including the Mambo, Boogaloo and Danzón.

Salsa arrived in South America via Buenaventura, a port on the Pacific coast of Colombia (Waxer, 2013, pp. 219–245). In general, music and dance would be considered elements of intangible culture; however, Salsa consolidated itself in Colombia as a cultural product through material practices such as its diffusion via local radio and in Mexican cinema during

**Figure 3** Inspired by the music of the Caribbean, Salsa has its origins in New York and later put down roots in Cali (Colombia)



the 1970s and 1980s. Its reproduction and storage on vinyl records has also had a key role in establishing Salsa in Colombia. Taking the case of Cali in particular, the city's unique ethnic and social make-up have also played a key role in Salsa's popularity and, as a socially shared phenomenon, starting in the streets and bars, this music genre has increasingly contributed to Cali's sense of place (Ulloa-Sanmiguel, 2008; Waxer, 2012, 20–22). Thus, while in New York, Puerto Rico or Cuba, Salsa has subsequently been largely displaced by other popular genres, in Cali, Salsa has maintained its presence due to its firmly established roots in the city's Barrio Obrero (which literally translates as the "workers neighbourhood"). Evidence of the deep-rootedness of the genre can be seen in how, even today, Salsa records have significant cultural cache in Cali among the city's many collectors – often inheritors of vast record collections from parents and grandparents – and is recognized in Cali's special role as Salsa's city of musical memory (Waxer, 2012; Ulloa-Sanmiguel, 2020).

Over many decades, the Salsa-based social practices co-created by Cali's inhabitants have attracted an emerging tourism based on authentic sensorial experiences centred on the city's Salsa scene. The way in which this city has managed to create such a strong place identity and city brand around its Salsa scene, thus, makes it the perfect context in which to study how bottom-up social practices interact with and shape top-down cultural policies.

#### 4. Methodology

The methodological approach chosen for the present study reflects the complex nature of the socio-cultural value co-creation involved in generating Cali's Salsa-based city branding. In this way, several methods of data collection were used, including interviews and content analysis of various sources. In addition, care was taken to ensure the data ~~was~~ representative of all stakeholders engaged in the Salsa scene: from service users such as local residents dancing Salsa and tourists wishing to learn Salsa or watch Salsa shows to service providers such as DMOs, local governments, cultural organizations and Salsa tourism providers (Table 1). The methodology is appropriate to the theoretical framework of this research because, on the one hand, interviewing service providers – managers and decision-makers – allows us to address the top-down focus of DMO's while, on the other hand, interviewing service users – visitors and tourists – enables us to consider bottom-up co-creation.

T1

AQ: 15

This investigation took place between 2019 and 2021, with the majority of data being collected during a research trip to Cali in 2019. In total, 26 stakeholders were consulted in person during 20 interviews (18 face-to-face and 2 online) and informal conversations [Table 1, Section 1: (a)]. Further data ~~was~~ collected through onsite participant-observation [Table 1, Section 1: (b)] when the author visited three of the biggest Salsa shows in Cali (Delirio, Ensálsate, El Mulato Cabaret), three Salsa dance academies providing lessons to tourists (Arrebato Caleño, Hermandad Latina, Stylo y Sabor), as well as two Salsa bars (Zaperoco, La Topa Tolondra) where locals and tourists meet to dance Salsa and interact socially. The combination of interviews and onsite observation allowed for a full appreciation of the sensations and emotions transmitted by Salsa, as Pink (2008, p.7) describes it, that: "sensuous interrelationship of body-mind-environment" experienced in poly-sensory encounters with others. Furthermore, it also enabled an understanding of what Löfgren (2014) calls the "urban atmospheres as brandscapes and lived experiences", giving insight into the urban sensory experiences.

AQ: 14

Other data ~~was~~ collected from content analysis of various sources, including the work of several researchers and writers who have explored the development of the Salsa scene in the world context (Padura, 2021) or in Cali itself (Valverde, personal interview; Ulloa, 2021: an online lecture), and a series of online lectures presented by Cali's cultural managers and other Salsa experts at the 1<sup>st</sup> Symposium on the Creative and Cultural Economy, Cali 2021

**Table 1** Multi-method qualitative approach used to analyse cultural and sensorial Salsa co-creation processes in Cali

<p><i>Primary data collection</i> In-depth interviews: 19 with key actors involved in Cali's Salsa tourism</p> <p>Onsite participant observation (photographic report, formal and informal conversations)</p>	<p>Two interviews with CEOs of a Salsa shows Interview with the logistics manager of a Salsa company Five interviews with managers of Salsa academies (four onsite face-to face and one online during the pandemic) One interview CEO of a tourism company providing Salsa tours Five interviews with Salsa tourists and service users: from Ireland, USA, Peru and Cali locals (2) Two interviews with culture councillor for culture in Cali and her secretary (Cali's City Council) One interview with writer and journalist specializing Salsa history and artists: Mr. Humberto Valverde Onsite conversation with a Salsa bar (Zaperoco) manager Online interview with a Salsa manager academy and company (during the pandemic) Three Salsa shows, three Salsa academies and two Salsa bars (eight sites).</p>
<p><i>Secondary data collection</i> Online presentations and published interviews with cultural managers in the city and other Salsa experts (total 20). 1st Symposium on the Creative and Cultural Economy], Cali 2021 November 30 to December 1</p> <p><a href="https://fb.watch/agaLGvQWs7">https://fb.watch/agaLGvQWs7</a> November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021 <a href="https://fb.watch/ae_YWgIkNQ/">https://fb.watch/ae_YWgIkNQ/</a></p> <p>Literature concerning Salsa history: a book of interviews with key artists from the world Salsa scene over the past decades</p> <p>Source: Author</p>	<p>Session: Public policies to invigorate and consolidate the creative economy as a key strand in economic, social, and cultural development. <a href="https://fb.watch/aeUvYVksUx/">https://fb.watch/aeUvYVksUx/</a> (4 speakers) Session: The social and economic impact of touring artists and festival organization as a way to rehabilitate the sector. <a href="https://fb.watch/aeZL4gk1Im/">https://fb.watch/aeZL4gk1Im/</a> (3 speakers) Session: Creative districts: urban transformation and policies designed to promote innovation, creativity, and economic growth. <a href="https://fb.watch/aeVXZ8OXOw/">https://fb.watch/aeVXZ8OXOw/</a>; 5 speakers Session: The impact of UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts designation <a href="https://fb.watch/aeX6eeecbO/tch/aeX6eeecbO/">https://fb.watch/aeX6eeecbO/tch/aeX6eeecbO/</a> (5 speakers): the Colombian Ministry of Culture; Cali's City Council; Occidente University, Cali; the CEOs of Media and Creative Arts Cities in Austin (Texas), Braga (Portugal), Guadalajara (Mexico) Session: Cultural heritage recognition for Cali's Salsa music and dance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ A collective presentation by managers from Cali's Municipal Culture office concerning the process of recognizing Salsa as cultural heritage</li> <li>■ Alejandro Ulloa (professor at del Valle University, Cali)</li> <li>■ Presentation: "The past and present of Salsa in Cali; a panoramic view of music and dance"</li> <li>■ Ernesto Fundora (cinema and music video producer)</li> </ul> <p>Presentation: film and audio-visuals in Cuban music and dance <a href="#">Padura (2021)</a>. <i>Los rostros de la Salsa</i>. [The faces of salsa] Tusquets Editores</p>

(17 sources). This Symposium is a forum where numerous experts in the field gather to discuss cultural management in relation to Salsa and, at this particular meeting, Cali's strategy to become a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts, see [Table 1](#), Section 2.

The timescale of the study coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, and this gave the work an additional dimension. Over the two years of the investigation, it has been possible to observe the development of Cali's Salsa service ecosystem and determine how it has met the challenges of the pandemic: social distancing poses significant problems for an industry based around a dance involving close interpersonal contact. To address the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic a number of post-pandemic online interviews were completed: with a Salsa school director, the director of another academy, and the then secretary for culture in Cali's City Council. These persons were also among those previously interviewed face-to-face.

The multi-method approach adopted here allows the triangulation of data from various sources (Bryman and Bell, 2007; Walmsley, 2019), generating a more rounded picture of the system under investigation and fully addressing the research questions posed. Several other studies have used a similar approach to data collection, for example, in the analysis of creative governance and co-creation in place branding (Comunian, 2011; Ye & Björner, 2018); in the analysis of multiple stakeholder engagement in Music festivals and the roles of such festivals in branding the cities where they are held (Larson, 2009; Colombo & Richards, 2017); technology enhanced tourist experiences (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2014); and urban tourism (Nientied, 2021).

### 5. Findings

The field research completed enables a wide overview of how the social meanings associated with Salsa have evolved over time and how Cali is positioning itself as a Creative City of Media Arts. The social foundation of Salsa as a cultural identity in Cali is formed by 72 dance schools and 12 orchestras, and the way in which these organizations work together with other cultural bodies is shown in Figure 4 which applies the schema laid out in Figure 2 to the particular case of Salsa co-creation in Cali.

F4

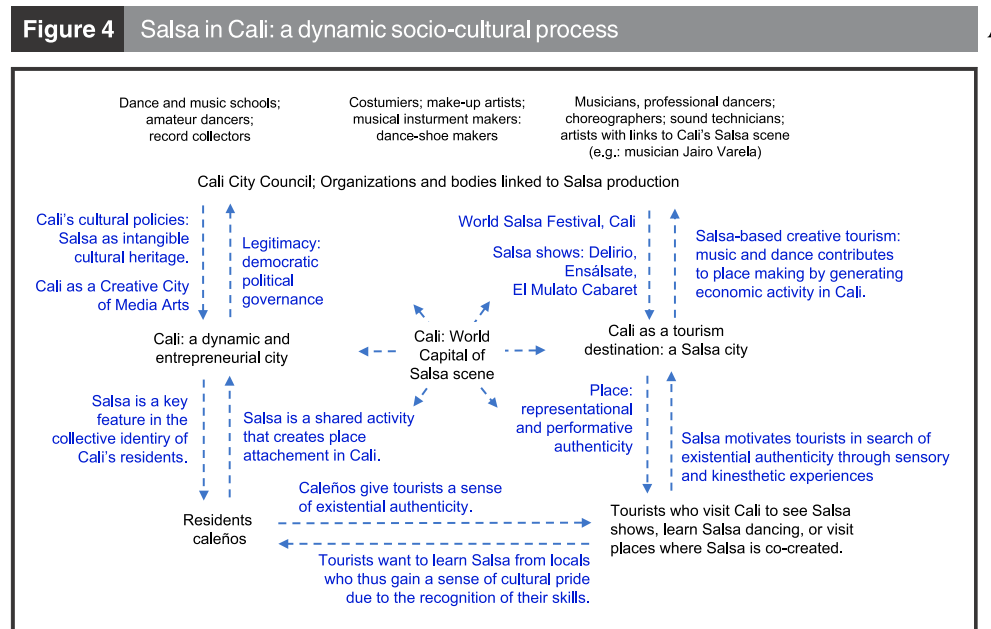
Figure 5 illustrates the bottom-up Salsa-based practices taking place in Cali, whereas Figure 6 shows the top-down cultural policies in place to promote Salsa as a core element of Cali's city branding.

F5

F6

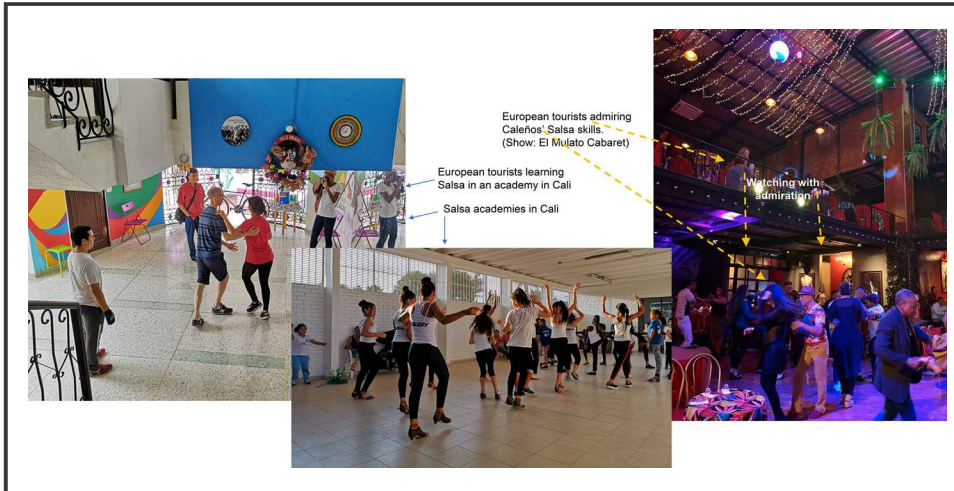
#### 5.1 Using Salsa to build cultural identity from the bottom up

Salsa is part of Cali's contemporary urban culture, its so-called "Salseridad" (Ulloa-Sanmiguel, 2020), and it has its historic foundations in the region's large afro-Colombian population whose ancestors worked on the Valle del Cauca sugar plantations during the eighteenth and 19th centuries. For these people, maintaining their African musical heritage was a part of overcoming this history of forced displacement and exploitation. The Valle del Cauca region underwent modernization and industrialization in the 20th century, and this saw a huge growth in urban development, particularly in the 1950s. In Cali, the growing salaried working class would spend their leisure time in its dance halls and, latterly, buying

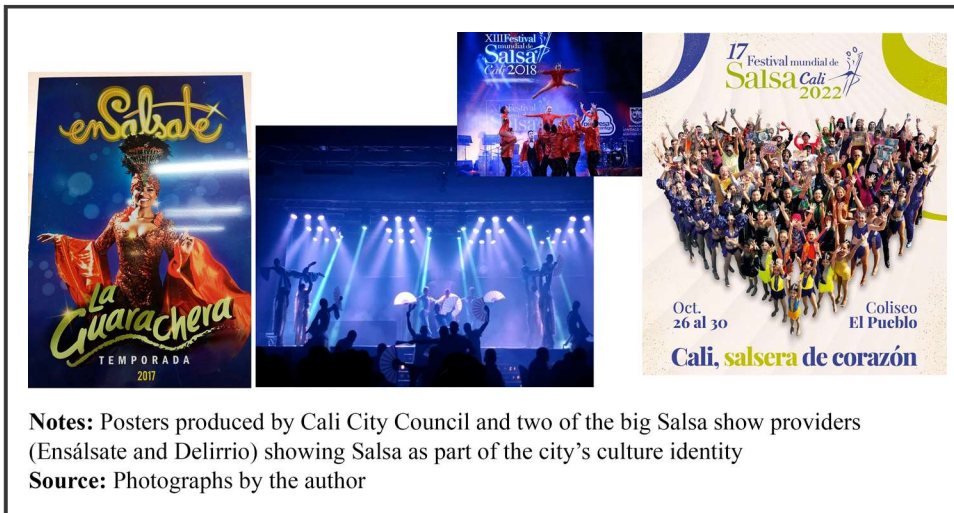


AQ: 21

**Figure 5** Bottom-up cultural practices based on Salsa music and dance: Salsa academics, bars and shows where locals and visitors interact



**Figure 6** Top-down marketing actions by destination marketing organization: the Cali City Council and big Salsa show providers



**Notes:** Posters produced by Cali City Council and two of the big Salsa show providers (EnSalsate and Delirrio) showing Salsa as part of the city’s culture identity

**Source:** Photographs by the author

records to play at home. Thus, a dynamic socio-cultural co-creation process was set in motion based around Salsa music and dance combining three main dimensions: business, concerning music production and leisure marketing; fun, comprising elements of hedonism and sensual enjoyment of music and dance; and an institutional element, concerning cultural policy and a collective sense of place.

Salsa constitutes a form of social glue for the residents of Cali, Caleños, who themselves are key actors in relationships with tourists in search of existential authenticity. Cali offers a unique Salsa experience, its dance rhythms are faster than those of traditional Cuban Salsa, and Caleños interacting with tourists – teaching them how to dance, for example – provide interpersonal authenticity. This interpersonal interaction also gives Caleños a sense of cultural pride because their skills are admired and appreciated by visitors. For example, many tourists visit Cali to see Salsa shows or to go to locations where Salsa is co-created:

Our clients, British tourists, come to Cali to find authentic local Salsa; they love to visit the Salsa schools and see the neighbourhood kids practicing and learning Salsa. In personal contact [with Caleños through local Salsa], they [tourists] appreciate local interactions because, in Cali, people dance using moves that bring them into close personal contact and are more rhythmically driven. This enables them to discover a level of physical closeness that enhances, ~~and improvement in~~ the sensual, body language between two people and they like the emotional, interpersonal warmth.

In-person interview with the CEO of a tourism provider in Cali, 28 November 2019.

AQ: 16

For tourists visiting Cali looking for interpersonal authenticity Salsa provides a multi-sensory experience: visually, through the vibrant colours of ~~dancer's~~ costumes and stage sets; aurally through listening to the music; and kinaesthetically through dancing. Thus, creative tourism based on Salsa music and dance generates economic activity in Cali and contributes to place-making in the city and within its smaller communities. These processes based on interpersonal relationships create a social fabric of closeness:

I came to Cali to learn Cali-style Salsa. After taking some basic Salsa lessons in my country, Ireland, I initially came here for three weeks but I stayed longer... There is no other place on Earth like Cali if you want to listen to and live Salsa, with the people, all of the time. Not even in Cuba, there the young people are all into reggaeton.

In-depth interview with an Irish tourist who visited Cali to learn Salsa.

### *5.2 Top-down creative place-making in Cali based on salsa events and cultural policies*

Once Salsa was firmly rooted in Cali as a key part of the city's cultural identity, local government started to become involved. Cali's Municipal Culture Office, the Valle del Cauca regional government, as well as Colombia's national government started to implement cultural policies in a top-down effort to promote the cultural industry surrounding Cali's Salsa scene:

The Culture department of Cali's City Council fosters a socio-cultural focus to promote Cali's Salsa ecosystem through cultural policies aimed at preserving the cultural identity of Cali with respect to Salsa and its value chain. Salsa is a fundamental element of Cali's intangible heritage and its cultural tourism offering to the world. In-person interview with Cali's Culture Secretary, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2019.

An example of these top-down processes at work is the Cali World Salsa Festival. Organized by Cali's City Council alongside multiple Salsa stakeholders, this festival has been held annually since 2005. The event takes place on a single location, the Salsadrome, and hosts Salsa artists from Colombia and many other countries including Cuba and Puerto Rico who come together to show off their talents in front of an audience comprising locals and tourists.

When Cali's elite cultural businesses became aware of how Salsa was gaining international attention and attracting foreign tourists, they started to organize Salsa shows. Delirio and Ensálsate, for instance, organize performances once a month, whereas El Mulato Cabaret puts on shows at the weekend. Besides their shows in Cali, these businesses also organize national and international Salsa tours:

These shows consolidate a world class cultural offering with excellent choreography, costume, and dance. In-person interview with the CEO of Ensálsate, Cali.

Salsa also fulfils a role in promoting social inclusion and racial integration by providing a route to good employment opportunities for working class youngsters. Indeed, some have found huge success through Salsa: opening up their own dance academies in Europe or

Asia, spending periods abroad or touring, particularly in Asia (Turkey, Dubai, China, Japan and Singapore).

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic had a huge influence on the Salsa scene, both culturally and economically. Lockdowns, social distancing and the lack of tourists due to travel bans had a dramatic impact on Cali's Salsa schools as well as on its shows. On this subject, one manager of a Salsa school and show production company explains:

We didn't get any help from local or national government to enable us to get by. We had to develop online Salsa courses – for beginners and for more advanced learners –. We hope that the clients from those courses may now come to Cali in person when the pandemic is over.

Also commenting that:

The shows that are opening little by little are doing so with routines involving fewer dancers and artists.

Online interview: manager of a Salsa academy and show provider

The recovery of Cali's Salsa ecosystem after the pandemic has followed a similar path to that seen for other performing arts in cities across the world that suffered due to lockdowns and social distancing. This highlights an important area for future study, that is, how cultural businesses deal with and adapt to various extreme conditions: pandemics, political turmoil and environmental disaster. Indeed, it would be interesting to look not only at the business sector but also at the roles of civil organizations, NGO's, local governments and other stakeholders engaged in maintaining cultural production through times of change.

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

This investigation considers how Salsa, both its music and dance, constitutes a key element in the cultural identity of Cali, Colombia. Salsa is a cultural movement with its roots in civil society, that is, among the internal stakeholders, the residents of Cali, who have made its practice part of their everyday lives. In this way, a popular cultural identity has been established, and this has attracted an increasing number of tourists who come to Cali in search of authentic sensorial and emotional experiences through Salsa: attending Salsa shows and even learning the dance.

The bottom-up value co-creation processes described above have, over time, given rise to top-down cultural policies and tourism offerings mediated by DMOs such as the Valle del Cauca regional government, Cali's City Council, Salsa show providers and Salsa-themed tourism companies. This activity has configured a relational process of city branding based on Cali's cultural identity. This research attempts to examine the integration of the top-down strategies of DMO's and the bottom-up co-creation of local residents so opening a line of investigation in which the multiple tourism-based exchanges – economic and cultural – occurring in the system are considered holistically in terms of multi-stakeholder governance.

The theoretical and conceptual contributions of this research to the study of city branding and tourism include the following:

- Advancing our understanding of the roles of the various stakeholders engaged in the processes of economic and cultural co-creation in cities. In particular, an important element of this work is an exploration of the fundamental role of local residents in designing schemes for integrated tourism governance (Bichler, 2011). As discussed in other work, local people are key actors in generating place authenticity and in new forms of creative tourism (Nientied, 2021) based around the idea of experiencing everyday life in some of the world's less well-known cities and smaller communities (Scherf, 2021; Richards, 2021). Similarly, tourists who travel to Cali to learn Salsa over a

few weeks are aspiring to dance like the Caleños who have Salsa swing in their souls; effectively, they want to experience and feel Salsa like the locals do (Paulauskaite *et al.*, 2017).

As this work discusses, tourists appreciate Salsa as a non-elitist artform that is part of Caleños' daily life, the practice of which strengthens social links and the sense of community through creative emotional encounters. For Caleños themselves, the Salsa scene also provides the working classes with a viable career path with many of Cali's Salsa professionals coming from its poorest districts. In this way, Cali's Salsa scene is a demonstration of how cultural-sensorial value co-creation can empower small, close-knit communities, enabling minorities or marginalized groups to gain a renewed sense of pride in their cultural identity (Richards, 2021):

- Extending the scope of cultural experience in city tourism from a consideration of simply cognitive or audio-visually stimulated emotional aspects to include kinaesthetic sensorial experiences. This case study gives an example of a form of tourism based on interpersonal encounters and creative performing arts that stimulate socially shared emotions. The work highlights how Salsa engenders a feeling of existential authenticity due to its corporeality and promotes interpersonal bodily sensations in the form of sensual pleasure and a sense of fun. Tourists are attracted to Cali's Salsa scene searching for sensation, and this has benefits for the body including feelings of vitality, energy, health and creates a certain beauty and romance.
- This investigation extends the scope of destination marketing towards a broader multi-stakeholder conceptualization. Traditionally, destination marketing has focused on promoting specifically tourist exchanges in a particular area. The present work, however, examines how this can be broadened in scope to form a more holistic place brand aimed at integrating various stakeholders – both internal and external – engaged in the area in question, emphasizing the key role of local residents in place branding (Freire, 2009; Golestaneh *et al.*, 2021) who, besides being the principal users of a given place, are also active in co-creating its place brand. This article also proposes that place branding processes are based on cultural identities (Muñiz-Martínez, 2016; Pedeliento & Kavaratzis, 2019) formed over long time periods through multi-actor processes involving shared practices and meanings and framed by the institutional arrangements and cultural context of the place in question.

Speaking personally, ~~this author~~ was attracted to Cali's vibrant Salsa scene while taking part, as an invited speaker, in a conference on Place Branding in that city. This is the reason that, several years later, I made a field trip to the city to gather data for this work. I was fascinated by the socio-cultural phenomenon of Salsa and was able to verify how Cali's Salsa-based cultural-sensorial identity emerges from the social base of the working classes. While collecting data on this trip, among many memorable experiences, I was invited to receive a complementary Salsa class in one of the academies I visited.

Many cities across the world have the potential to co-create a place brand on the basis of their cultural identity. Cities already attract tourists due to their visual cultural heritage, but there are also opportunities, especially for cities in the developing world, to ~~develop~~ their brand position in terms of multi-sensory cultural vectors and participatory emotional encounters based around local music and dance genres, foods and beverages, crafts or myths and legends. Cali, the case study for this work, is an example of success in this ~~regards~~. In this city, a dynamic economy has developed in parallel with a cultural identity based on social interactions connected with Salsa music and dance and the tourism this has attracted.

Several areas of the Colombian Salsa ecosystem still remain to be explored. One of these is the international dimension of Salsa, for example, how it constitutes an ambassadorial cultural brand for Colombia. Other areas include the way in which Salsa has promoted social cohesion



in Cali as elite businesses and DMOs have come to recognize the value of Salsa, which, due to the working-class origins of this popular artform and its practitioners, had been somewhat dismissed until the scene began to attract foreign tourists. Salsa is a form of interpersonal interaction, and its rhythms, colour and sensuous nature make it a social phenomenon with a collective energy that has continuously invigorated Cali's economy, despite the city's many problems. The intersecting cultural-economic axes of Cali's Salsa scene have also allowed the city to develop its position as a glowing example of a Creative City of Media Arts.

The implications of this study with respect to practice in urban tourism and for policymakers include the need for governments and businesses to recognize the importance of integrating ~~the~~ top-down cultural policies with the co-creation processes that arise in civil society, in cities and regions where popular art forms such as music and dance contribute to cultural identity. The study of city tourism more generally, offers the opportunity to assess the integration of resources by multiple actors within multi-level value co-creation where micro-level processes, in which certain key actors engage in direct interactions with clients and service users, are embedded in broader macro-societal systems (Vargo, 2011). Analysis could then zoom out to consider macro-level interactions such as those occurring across the wider Salsa-based cultural-economic system in Cali and, ultimately, the world.

AQ: 17 With respect to the effect of the pandemic on the subject of this work, as might be expected, there were significant implications. On the one hand, there have been negative consequences in terms of the loss of tourism to Cali; however, it is clear that (thanks to the internet) new opportunities have also opened ~~in terms of online dance classes, for example~~. Since the end of the pandemic, while many of the larger Salsa shows and the World Salsa Festival have returned, gradually regaining their audiences and increasing participation little by little, Salsa schools and academies still remain closed (Valverde, 2022). This consequence of the pandemic will most likely only be reversed when international tourists – particularly visitors from Europe and North America – come back to the city in sufficiently significant numbers.

AQ: 18

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