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The Experience of Carnival in 2024: Preliminary Insights from Brazil and the Netherlands

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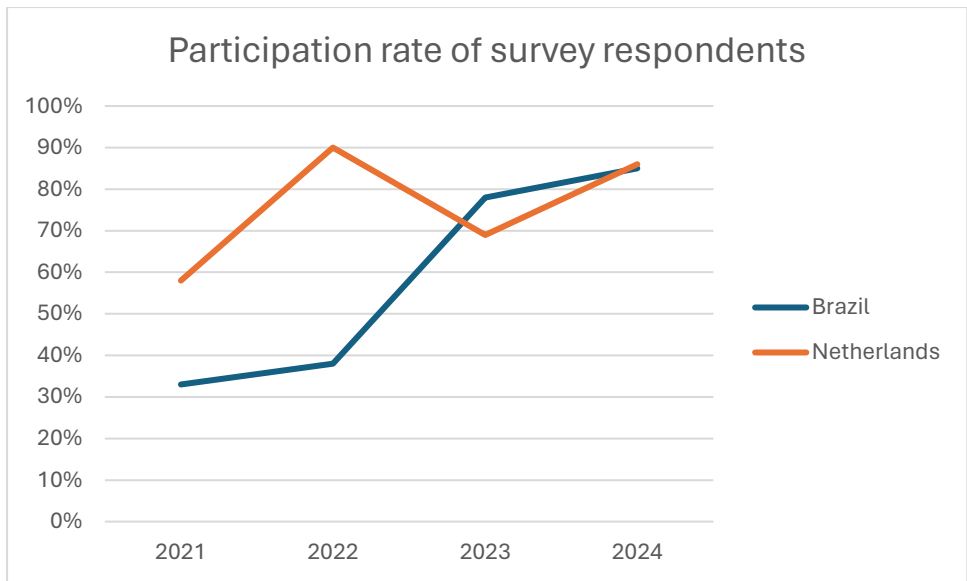
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Together with an international group of researchers we have been conducting research on the experience of Carnival around the world since 2015. In a decade of investigation we have collected almost 12,000 surveys with Carnival participants, examining different aspects of their experiences, motivation and behaviour.

In 2024 data were collected mainly in the Netherlands and Brazil, two countries which we have surveying for many years. This gave an interesting picture of the development in Carnival experiences before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. In this brief summary of preliminary results, we compare the experience of Brazil and the Netherlands, and assess the development of experiences over the last few years.

Not surprisingly, there was a continued growth in participation rates among our sample of over 700 respondents in 2024. Participation rates were at their lowest in 2021, at the height of the pandemic, when just over 30% of Brazilian respondents were able to celebrate Carnival among multiple restrictions. In 2024 participation rates in both countries were over 85%.

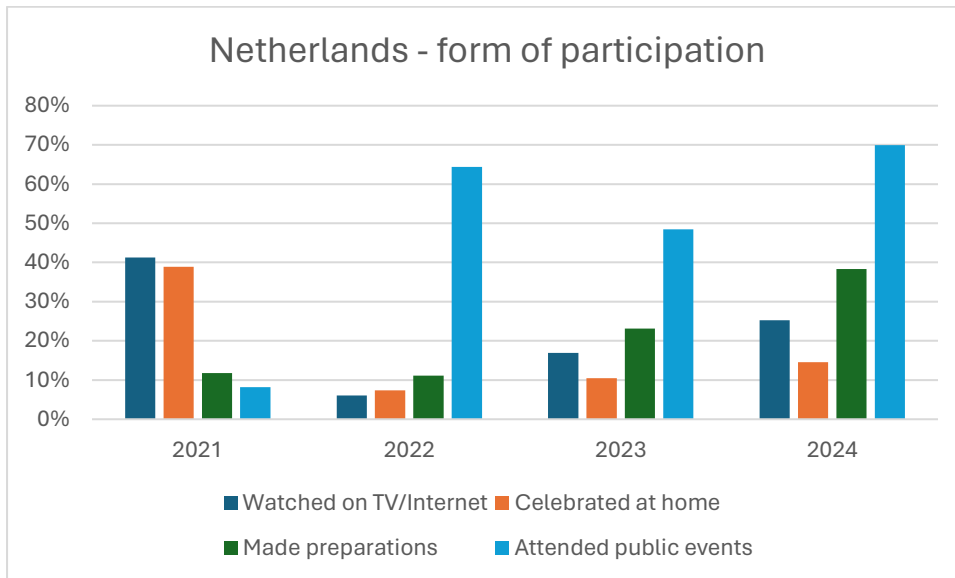


The main motivations for attending Carnival in 2024 included spending time with friends and family, the atmosphere of the event, the sense of community and entertainment. In general, respondents in the Netherlands tended to emphasise the social aspects of Carnival participation (Richards & Marques, 2022a), whereas in Brazil entertainment and programming was more important. This underlines the different styles of Carnival in the two countries, with Brazilian Carnival tending to place more emphasis on star performers and events, and therefore the Carnival programme. The learning aspect of the experience was lowest in both countries, which is not surprising given the celebratory and social aspects of the event.

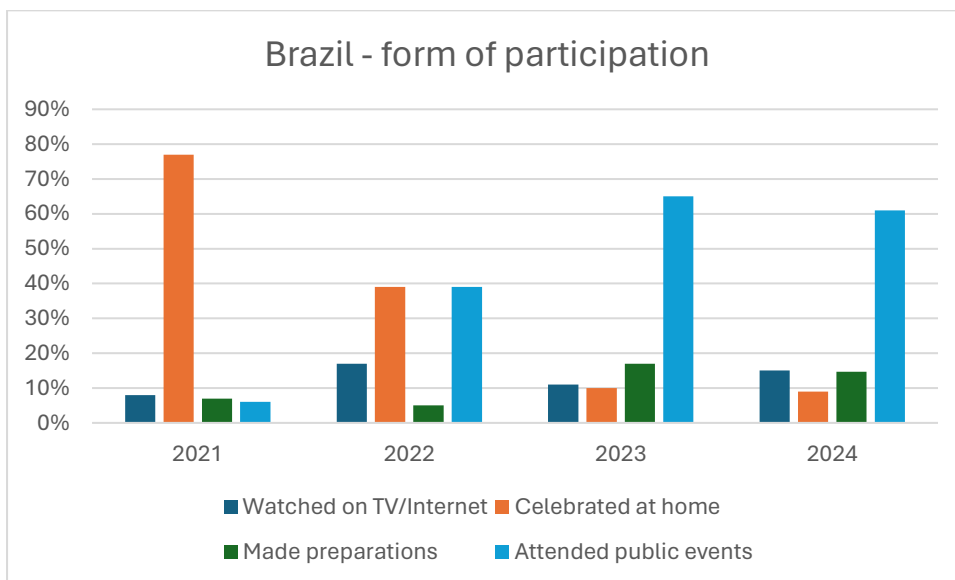


During Covid, restrictions and event cancellations made participation in public events such as Carnival difficult or impossible. Not to be denied the Carnival experience, however, people found different, and often creative ways of recreating the Carnival

atmosphere at home or in private parties. In 2021 the Netherlands saw a significant shift to online or televised events (Richards & Marques, 2022b). There was a strong rebound of public events in 2022, when restrictions were lifted. Even so, the proportion of participants joining online (often as well as attending public events) has continued to rise since 2022. This perhaps points to a mixed media future for Carnival.

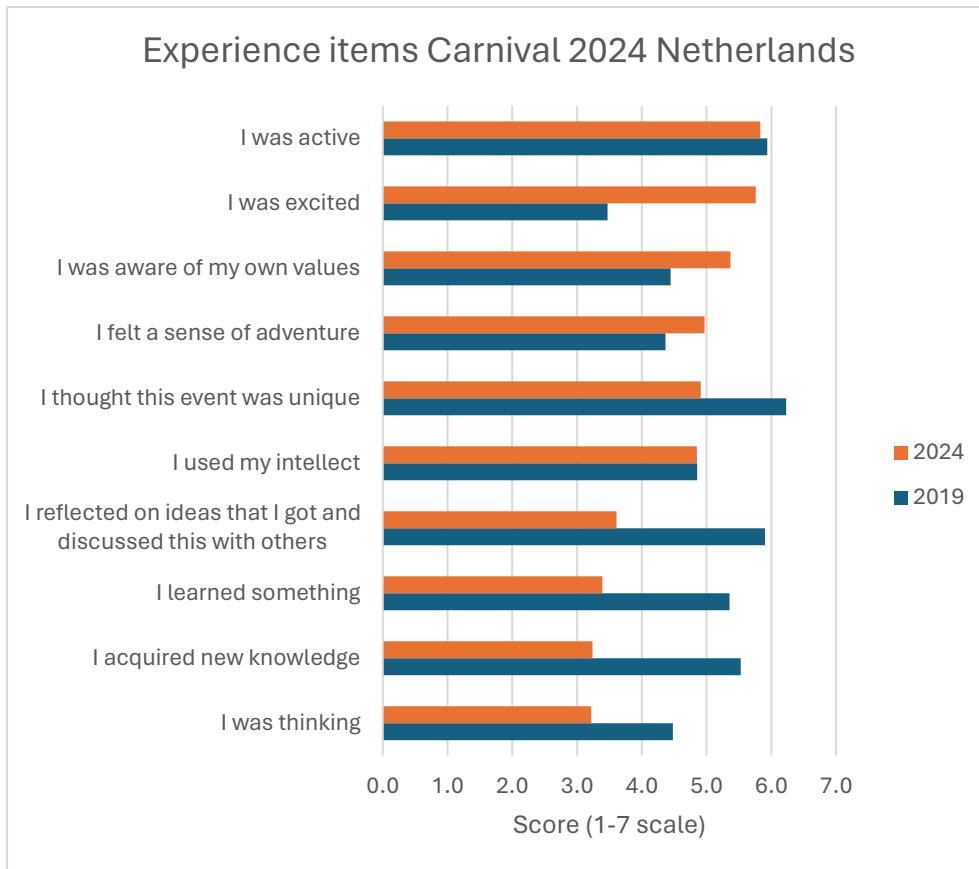


In Brazil, tough restrictions meant that most people celebrated at home in 2021, and public events only made a limited return in 2022.



Some interesting differences in experience emerge when comparing respondents from the Netherlands in pre-Covid 2019 to 2024. After the pandemic there was much more excitement among Dutch participants, and in contrast most of the cognitive aspects of experience, such as thinking, learning or reflecting, scored lower. This points to a

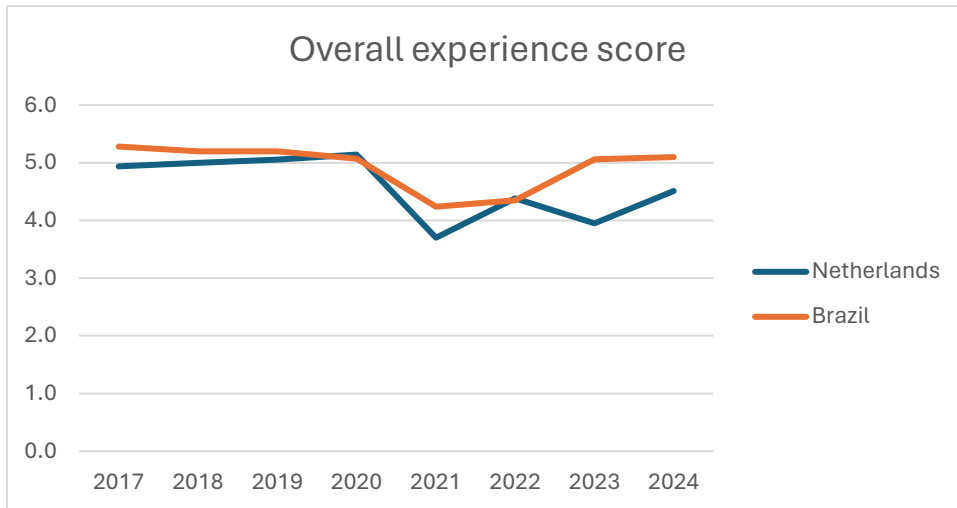
Carnival experience that was particularly exciting because of the post-Covid mood, in which people didn't reflect, but rather concentrated on partying.



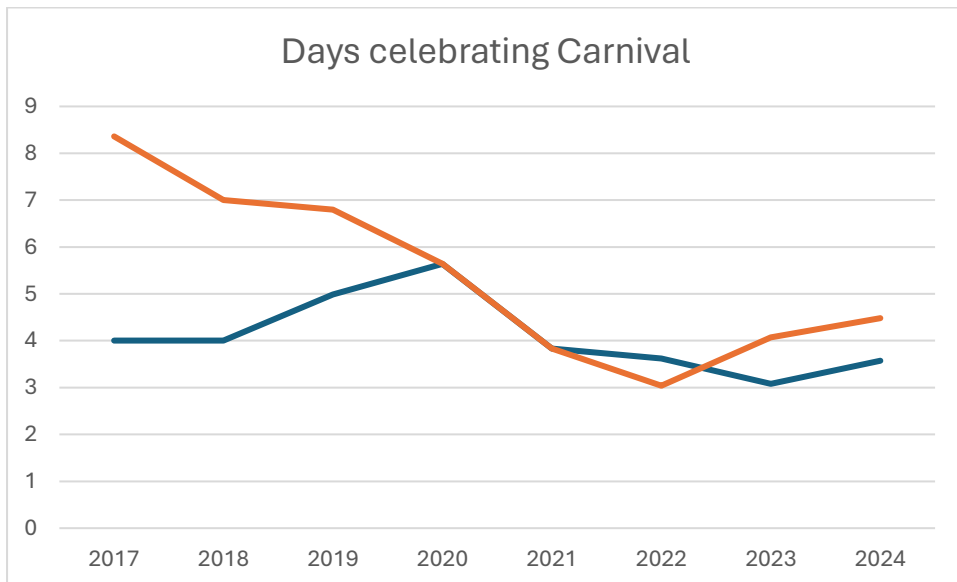
When we compare the experience profile of Brazil and the Netherlands for 2024 we see that activity and excitement are most important in both countries. However, Brazilian respondents said they were more conscious of their values while celebrating Carnival, and also score higher on most cognitive experience items (reflection, learning, thinking).



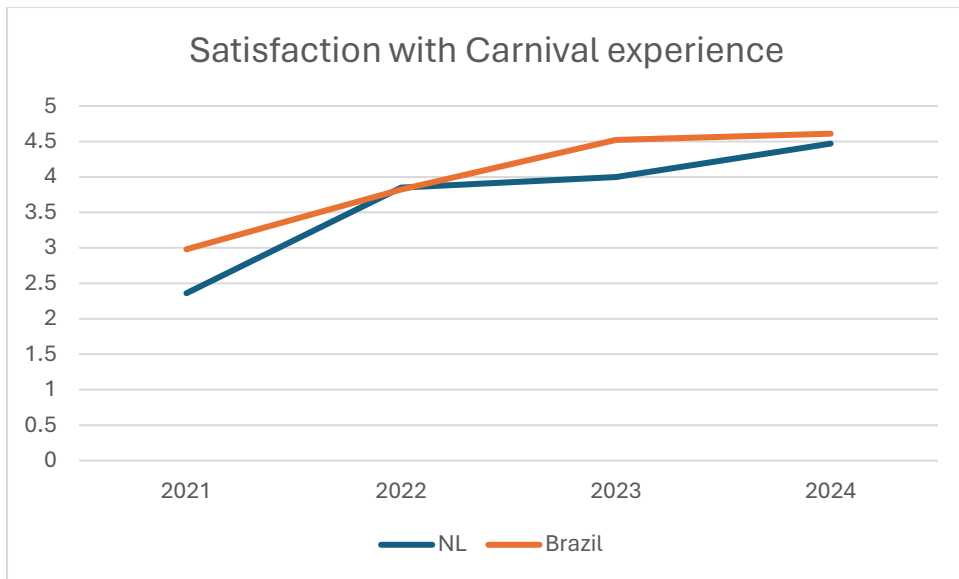
Over the longer term, the overall scores that participants give to their Carnival experience clearly show the effect of Covid-19. However, while Brazilian scores are already back to pre-Covid levels in 2024, the Netherlands shows signs of a slower recovery.



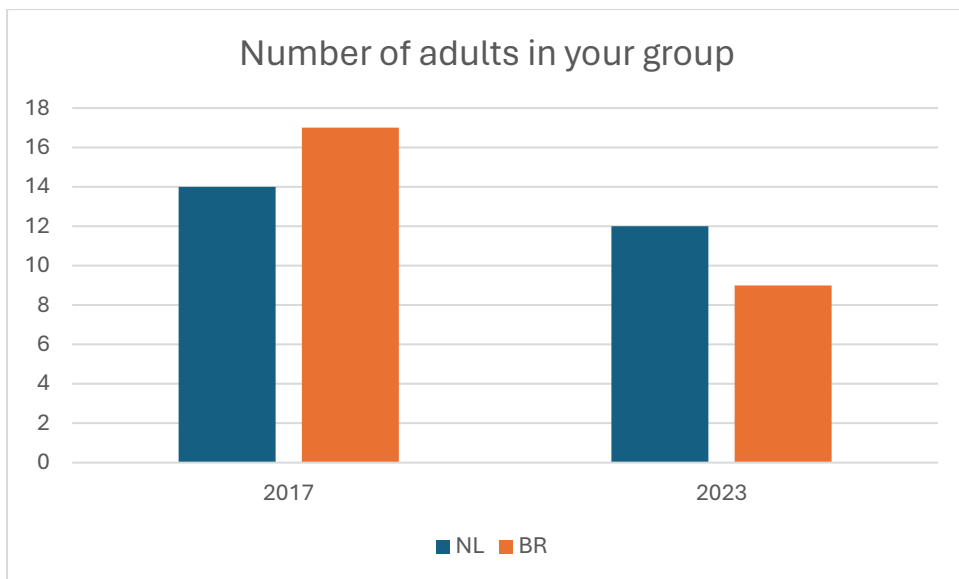
In both countries the long-term trend is towards shorter Carnival celebrations, with a particularly sharp decline in Brazil from more than 8 days on average in 2017 to only 3 days in 2022. Although the pandemic clearly had a negative impact on the length of celebrations, other factors, including the economic climate and social trends might also have had an effect.



Since the pandemic, satisfaction levels have consistently risen in both the Netherlands and Brazil.



It was interesting to note that in both Brazil and the Netherlands the average group size has declined since the pandemic. This might be to do with the social effects of Covid itself (avoiding big crowds, for example), or it may stem from the growing individualisation of leisure consumption or the economic climate. This is certainly worthy of further investigation.



Enthusiasm for Carnival also provides hopeful signs for the future. Although 2023 saw an unexplained dip in intention to return in the Netherlands, 2024 brought optimistic signs of strong future participation in both countries.



Conclusions

This report provides a first look back at the recent experience of Carnival after a decade of research that also included the Covid-19 pandemic. The 2024 Carnival research showed that the celebratory mood of Carnival-goers is back after the pandemic. Participation rates in our sample are much higher, and there is a greater level of excitement than in most previous years. Levels of satisfaction are also at their highest level since we began measuring this in 2021. On the other hand, the number of days celebrating Carnival is still much lower than before the pandemic, with the average duration of celebrations halved in Brazil between 2017 and 2024. This is unlikely to be an effect of the pandemic, because this fall was already evident before 2020. Economic factors are therefore much more likely to be a major cause. Overall enthusiasm for Carnival still seems to be high, and the intention to celebrate Carnival again in 2025 is at record levels.

References

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Further research and publications

For more information on this research and other activities of the ATLAS Events Group, please visit: <https://www.richardstourism.com/event-experiences-research>

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