

# Jão: Understanding the Brazilian Pop Phenomenon

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**Abstract.** Jão is the artistic name of the 28 years old Brazilian Pop Singer and Songwriter “João Vitor Romania Balbino” and this article consists in a qualitative exploratory case study based on trying to understand how could the Brazilian singer “Jão” become a national pop phenomenon, and which events could have contributed to his meteoric rise and success among his vast and diverse audience in Brazil. According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a phenomenon could be described as: “someone or something that is extremely successful, often because of special qualities or abilities”. However, when it is talked about a pop phenomenon, it could be explained and measured as of how successful and important this person, movie or trend can impact a specific target or public. Can someone be able to witness and determine the chronological facts that would add up to an ascension phenomenon? A phenomenon who still isn’t at the end of the career, but, actually, just in its ascension era? This is the main objective of the present study, since it’s intended to examine the extent of the singer’s success and its profound impact on a country where pop music is on the 6th place of the most listened genres.

**Keywords.** Pop, Pop/Rock, Music, Brazilian Pop, Entertainment, Youth Culture, Brazilian Popular Music, Pop Culture, Cultural Industry, Jão.

## 1. Introduction

The reason why I’ve decided to write a whole article on this artist, who’s mainly a Brazilian phenomenon, (even though he’s already performed abroad) is not only because I’m a big fan of his work, instead, this article is supposed to focus on why and how Jão’s been able to enchant Brazilian children, teenagers, young adults and even adults, trying to determinate and gauge which events of his career contributed to his current ascension.

Can someone be able to witness and determine the chronological facts that would add up to an ascension phenomenon? A phenomenon who still isn’t at the end of the career, but, actually, just in its golden era?

This is the main objective of this article. Firstly, it will be studied what defines pop music and a pop phenomenon, then it’ll introduce an overview of Jão’s career, so we can understand how this possible star was born.

Finally, the main section of it’ll consist of a study case of several events that the singer witnessed and which could possibly have owned the media and fans attention to pave the way to his successful career.

## 2. Research Methods

The methodology of this article consists in a qualitative exploratory case study. Meyer (2001) describes a case study as “[...] a study [that] consist [of] detailed investigation [...] with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study...].

The reason why the qualitative method was also included is because, according to Gerring (2017), one of the meanings of this broad methodology is: “Qualitative work is often focused on particular individuals, events, and contexts, lending itself to an idiographic style of analysis”. Although it can not be described and viewed only through this perspective of an idiographic style of analysis, the method was chosen after realising it would be the ideal approach, since I couldn’t find any studies on this pop phenomenon in my native language nor english.

The research method to be able to build the theoretical base was divided in the following steps: Choosing the theme; Searching for bibliographical and scientific articles that could explain the theoretical topics (such as the Concepts of Pop Music and Pop Phenomenon pop music, pop phenomenon, for example) on Google Scholar; Watching videos, reading interviews and following

the main events that the singer would be participating, specially the ones shared by his press agents; Building a schematic of the main topics that should be present in this article; Saving and registering every single source of research, and lastly writing this piece.

### 3. Concepts of Pop Music and Pop Phenomenon

For some time now, the term "pop" has been frequently used to categorise products, phenomena, artists, logics, and media processes. In a broader sense, the concept of Pop Culture has always been linked to the production and consumption of products driven by market logic, revealing the inner workings of cultural industries and influencing imitations, lifestyles, and contributing to an international panorama of images, sounds, and individuals characterised by a "pop" aura (GOODWIN, 1992).

As an abbreviation of "popular" ("pop"), the word relatively clearly defines the expressions to which it refers: they are popular products, in the sense of being oriented towards what we can loosely call a mass audience, the "general public," and they are produced within the principles of cultural industries (television, cinema, music, etc.).

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a phenomenon could be described as: someone or something that is extremely successful, often because of special qualities or abilities. However, when it is talked about a pop phenomenon, it could be explained and measured as of how successful and important this person, movie or trend can impact a specific target or public.

In the following topics it will be pointed and suggested the main reasons why the singer has become a Brazilian Pop Phenomenon, but firstly, it will be presented an overview on Jão's career.

## 4. Understanding Jão

### 4.1 An introduction to Jão's career

Jão is the artistic name of the 28 years old Brazilian Pop Singer and Songwriter "João Vitor Romania Balbino". The singer graduated at Advertising at USP (Universidade de São Paulo) and borned in Américo Brasiliense, countryside of São Paulo. He started his career posting music covers on Youtube (in 2016) with a little help from his friends Pedro Tófani and Renan Silva - and both still work with them in the present days.

He signed his first record label with the Universal Music Group and released his first single "Dança pra Mim" (Dance to me) in the year of 2016.

In 2018, he released his first big hit "Imaturo" (Immature) followed by his debut album, entitled "Lobos" (Wolves), which contained two singles that

are still relevant to his career, named "Vou Morrer Sozinho" (I'll die alone) and "Me Beija com Raiva" (Kiss Me Angrily). The singer also did his first national tour due to his debut album success.

However, Jão always thought ahead and planned (secretly) to release 4 albums that would complete themselves, each one of them representing the 4 main elements, being in order of release: Lobos (Wolves) the element "earth", Anti-Herói (Anti-Hero) the element "air", Pirata (Pirate) the element "water" and, finally, SUPER (SUPER) the element "fire".

"From the moment I've started to do music and perform professionally, I always knew that I'd like to create an album sequel who'd talk about my own personal life. To me, albums are just like personal documents. To each artist it (the personal meaning of the albums) mean a different thing, and, to me, they're just like documents of my life." G1 - Interview.



Fig. 1 Jão. Reproduction: Casaum.org

### 4.2 A record breaker

His latest album "SUPER" (2023), on its debuting day, surpassed Taylor Swift's record of "Best Album Release" on Spotify, reaching 8.1 million streams in only 24 hours. This is not a common thing for the music genre, since according to a research conducted by "Spotify Brasil" in the beginning of 2023, "Pop" is the 6th most heard genre in Brazil, being surpassed by national genres.

With the artist's upcoming tour "SUPERTURNE" (Terra, Ar, Água, Fogo) [SUPERTOUR - Earth, Air, Water, Fire], he was able to sold out the same 50.000 people capacity stadium at São Paulo as Taylor Swift.

Taylor Swift's known as a world breaking recordist, specially with her "The Eras Tour", who's coming to Brazil on this November (2023) to perform at Allianz Parque Stadium (São Paulo) and Estádio Olímpico Nilton Santos (Rio de Janeiro) - which are all sold out and both singers are usually compared here in Brazil, specially because most of Jão songs are linked with one another, which is something the singer himself refers to be inspired by Taylor's marketing actions and narrative songwriting style, when asked by a fan via X (ex Twitter):

"I really appreciate her (Taylor Swift) narrative style of writing, her pictures (scenography), it's

something I'm always observative".

Therefore, the possible chronology that could acknowledge his constant success is going to be present in the next topic of this studies.

## 5. Possible Chronology to Jão's success

### 5.1 Jão's First Viral Hit (2018)

Imaturo (Imature) was Jão's first viral hit, reaching the first spot on the Brazilian Viral List on Spotify, which paved the way for the singer to be able to collaborate with famous brazilians bands and artists - and to be able to sing across the country with his tour.

### 5.2 Anti-Herói's Era (Anti-Hero's Era) (2019)

Even though the album had only 10 songs, it contains one of the singer's most known songs, "Essa Eu Fiz Pro Nosso Amor" (This One I've Written For Our Love). The album also had its national tour and another album released containing live versions from the tour.

### 5.3 Pirata's Era (Pirate's Era) (2022)

This era in specific, which began in 2022 has been a life changing experience for the singer's life. He was nominated to the Latin's Grammy in 2 categories, being: "Best Pop Album" and "Best Portuguese Song" and also started to gain way more visibility from the media and LGBTQ+ due to the following reason: His album had a song called: "Meninos e Meninas" (Boys and Girls), where the singer talks a little bit more about his bissexuality - becoming one of the inspirations for the Bissexual community.

### 5.4 Lollapalooza (2022)

Lollapalooza's a well known music festival across the world and it has it's annual editions here in Brazil, since 2012 (except during the pandemic) and Jão's presentation in 2022 was elected by G1's readers (a well renowned and traditional paper in Brazil) the best presentation of the entire festival, with 35,9% of the votes - while honouring Cazuza - a famous Brazilian Icon and Pop Rock singer, poet and songwriter who passed away in 1990.

### 5.5 Final concert of Pirate's era (2022)

The singer planned to do the last concert of his era for free, "selling" more than 50 thousand tickets and breaking the site that was holding the tickets, since more than 500.000 people tried to access it simultaneously.

"I want this event to be a gift to my fans and also for the city who provided me with such a warm welcome and trust to my work. Singing in the heart of São Paulo to so many people will be such a beautiful thing". Declared the singer during an interview to R7 - a national news portal.

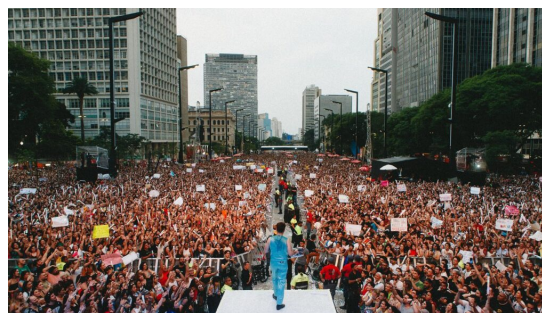


Fig. 2 Jão's final concert of the "Pirate Era". Novo Vale do Anhangabaú, São Paulo. 2022. The Town. Reproduction: Jão's Instagram.

### 5.6 Collective listening to SUPER (2023)

When Jão released his album "SUPER", he decided to plan a free listening "party" to 12.000 fans and to the media one day before the album would be officially released in the mainstream - and it reached full capacity after only 2 minutes. It happened in the city of São Paulo at Ibirapuera Gymnasium.



Fig. 3 Super audition with 12.000 fans. 2022. Ibirapuera Gymnasium. Reproduction: Iris Alves.

### 5.7 The Town (Sep. 2023)

The Town is a music festival designed and created by the same creators of "Rock in Rio" - who's already had more than 20 editions in 4 different countries. It was designed to be the biggest music, culture and art festival in the multicultural city of São Paulo, embracing different genres - from jazz to rock and it had its first edition in September, 2023.

Jão was one of the main ambassadors of the festival, and one of the main structures of scenography from his stage was a technological dragon measuring 30 meters of width and 10 meters height, enchanting fans and debunking most of international singers scenographics, proving that Brazilians singers can also invest in technological and impressives scenographics.



**Fig. 4** The majestic dragon of his presentation at “The Town”. 2023. Reproduction. Jão’s profile on Instagram.

“Scenographics’s a huge part of “SUPER” (SUPER), and in it’s release teaser we made a video that had this dragon. In the trailer it has this symbology that Jão’s attitude of facing his own personal demons - which is something he explores since his first album. On stage, we’ve incremented it (the dragon) in such an aspect that means he’s at peace with”. Pedro Tófani - Concerts Director. G1. Interview.



**Fig. 5** Performing while his hands are on fire to express “he doesn’t feel a thing” (referencing his song “Maria”, at “The Town”). 2023. Reproduction. Jão’s profile on Instagram.

## 6. Conclusion

When I first started to write this article, I raised the following question: “Can someone be able to witness and determine the chronological facts that would add up to an ascension phenomenon? A phenomenon who still isn’t at the end of the career, but, actually, just in its golden era?”, and, after spending months searching and studying Jão’s career, I’m finally able to answer the question: Yes, it is possible to recognize an ascension phenomenon.

Jão’s a singer and songwriter that conquers people from every age, being them a part of the LGBTQ+ community or not. His musical career, marketing and “eras” brings his presentations to a whole another level - which is something that has been present among Brazilian artists in general, but Jão’s one of the first one’s from this new Brazilian wave of singers to invest on tour stadiums and huge structures and scenographies.

Even though his “SUPERTOUR” hasn’t begun yet, I can imagine it’ll be as huge and shocking - in a good

way - as an artist can be, and I can’t even imagine how big his career and success can grow.

## 7. Acknowledgement

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And lastly, I’d like to thank Jão. For his talent, commercial vision and also enchanting and iconographic profile. I couldn’t thank you more for being one of the main Brazilian artists who’s paving the way to the upcoming ones, showing that it is possible to inspire and conquer different age gaps - through his music, art and brave way of showing that LGBTQ+ people are worthy of respect and brilliant careers. Thank you.

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