A R T I C L E

Youth media consumption in cosmopolitan experiences: between global entertainment and local practices

Consumo midiático juvenil em experiências cosmopolitas: entre o entretenimento global e as práticas locais

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Abstract *This article presents as a proposal to discuss the connection between youth media consumption and cosmopolitan experiences. It is a constituent part of the research project "Youth Cosmopolitanisms. Brazilian Project. Step 1: Conceptions and cosmopolitan practices among Brazilian university students," hosted by ESPM-SP, linked to the international project "Cosmopolitanism Culture of Young people." The emphasized clipping is anchored on a reflective base about (1) the media consumption and the reality of global entertainment; and (2) the possibilities of cosmopolitan experiences through local practices. Analyzing the narratives of young university students in São Paulo, we see the formation of primarily aesthetic cosmopolitan experiences, which might be called amateur, as a path to a reflective process of otherness.*

Key-words: *Media consumption; Cosmopolitanism; Entertainment; Global; Local*

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Resumo *Este artigo apresenta como proposta a discussão sobre a conexão entre consumo midiático juvenil e experiências cosmopolitas. Trata-se de parte constituinte do projeto de pesquisa Cosmopolitismos juvenis. Projeto Brasil. Etapa 1: Concepções e práticas cosmopolitas em jovens universitários brasileiros, sediado pela ESPM-SP, vinculado ao projeto internacional Cosmopolitismo Cultural dos Jovens. O recorte enfatizado está ancorado em uma base reflexiva sobre (1) o consumo midiático e a realidade do entretenimento global; e (2) as possibilidades de experiências cosmopolitas por meio das práticas locais. Analisando as narrativas de jovens universitários de São Paulo, verificamos a formação de experiências cosmopolitas prioritariamente estéticas, que poderiam ser denominadas de amadoras, como caminho para um processo reflexivo de alteridade.*

Palavras-chave: *Consumo midiático; Cosmopolitismo; Entretenimento; Global; Local*

A R T I C L E

Introduction

This article aims to present the connection between youth media consumption and cosmopolitan experiences. It is a constituent part of the research project *"Youth Cosmopolitanisms. Brazilian Project. Step 1: Conceptions and cosmopolitan practices among Brazilian university students," hosted by ESPM-SP.*

The proposed discussion of our project is part of an international research project, called "Cosmopolitanism Culture of Young people", which aims to develop a comparative study between France, Canada, Australia and Brazil. It is led by the Department of Forecast Research and Statistics of the Ministry of Culture and Communication of France and GEMASS (Groupe d´Etude des Méthodes de l´Analyse Sociologique de la Sorbonne)/CNRS, University of Paris 4.

The initial project started from the observation of two interdependent phenomena: 1) the increasing internationalization of production and cultural consumption, especially among young people; and 2) the effervescence of productions and local artistic receptions, a phenomenon that some cultural sociologists have called "indigenization" of cultural practices (APPADURAI, 1994). The tension between these two movements results in the discussion of the global culture and its various localization processes.

From this cultural perspective of globalization, we propose the discussion about the media consumption of youth. The discussion arises from issues that develop from either global entertainment, in *blockbusters* and musical *hits* present in different parts of the world, as well as from local participation, individuals exercising citizenship and engaging in social movements, within the context of media consumption and cosmopolitan experiences. One of the examples that we can use to illustrate this point is the series of American films "Hunger Games", launched in 2012, and a box office hit around the world. Just as the series of books and licensed products related to the characters of the plot began to be consumed on a large global scale, in different formats and media, one of the story's symbols, a gesture used by the protagonist heroine in protest against the

power of the Capitol, was also used by young people in demonstrations in the streets of Thailand's capital in 2014, against the local government. Could the use of this global entertainment symbol, in the form of local participation, be a possibility of a cosmopolitan experience?

To answer this question, we start with the entertainment market problematization, with entertainment consumer dynamics that are central to the contemporary reality of consumption cultures. We look at how media consumption, inserted in entertainment logic, forms important mediations in the configuration of cultural habits that move between globalizing experiences, unifying and hegemonic, and its reappropriation processes in local experiences. In this light, we also examined how it is equally possible for local participation to occur in the processes of construction of public spaces and citizenship exercises. This practice can relate to global fluxes, enabling individuals to experience what it would consider to be global citizenship. Thus, our discussion raises the question of how cultural consumption leaves gaps for young people to build representations of themselves and others, inserted into 'glocal' contexts - of both global and local formation without hierarchical determination between fluxes (ROBERTSON, 1992).

Our discussion is embedded in the contemporary context, where there is an indiscriminate increase of technology and media consumption modes that require different ways to see, hear, and talk to the world, platforms and formats with new arrangements which constitute the everyday experiences of the young subjects in our investigation. The amount of technological support in conjunction with a historical subject who recognizes media codes leave marks of other forms of significant disputes that feed back into the centrality of the sensationalization of everyday life, according to Guy Debord (2006). Analyzing Debord's concept of spectacle, Kellner (2003) inserts it in the media culture as a daily form of social interaction:

> Experience and everyday life are thus shaped and mediated by the spectacles of media culture and the consumer society. (...) Capitalist society separates workers from the products of their labor, art from life, and

consumption from human needs and self-directing activity, as individuals inertly observe the spectacles of social life from within the privacy of their homes (KELLNER, 2003, p. 2-3).

Since the everyday experiences are shaped and mediated by media shows, to stimulate consumer experiences of the contemporary global market, we realize that entertainment languages are used, according to the logic of *mass media entertainment industry* (CASTRO, 2013).

In this context, we intend to discuss how young people construct representations of themselves and their relationships with the world, through the consumption of cultural goods, being globalized or localized. We seek evidence to demonstrate whether they develop an aesthetic posture that can be considered as a process of building a way of looking at each other. In other words, we aim to understand the aesthetic cosmopolitanism, analyzing cultural consumption (music, TV, movies, series, newspapers / magazines, comic books, video games, blogs/sites, social networks), and experiences with global culture through which young people build their criteria of judgment, knowledge and imagination of each other.

For this, first we developed a discussion about media consumption and the global entertainment reality, followed by reflections on the possibilities of cosmopolitan experiences in relation to the aesthetic dimension. So we then analyzed university student's narratives from São Paulo, in order to understand their everyday experiences, their media consumption, which refer both to entertainment elements and the interest in other cultures and contact with Others.

Media Consumption and Entertainment

Authors such as Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy (2009), Nilda Jacks and Ana Carolina Escosteguy (2005), have analyzed the transformations of media consumption, correlating three perspectives of new behavioral assemblages: the advancement of production technologies and the growth of new media platforms; reflective knowledge of the historical subject; and the multiple and decentralized modes that content is spread.

Considering the necessary differences between the points of view of their authors, there is a confluence of research for what Lipovetsky and Serroy (2009) named as the era of "excess of screens", questioning what Fredric Jameson (1996) pointed out as a "cultural turn" from 1960. In other words, the emergence of new capital configurations linked to the aesthetization processes of everyday life as "cultural dominant."

The discussion on media consumption is related to cultural studies, which transcend the research of means, and so heading to the context of the production, circulation and consumption circuit of media culture, and the influence the media can have on people or cultures remains relative (JACKS & ESCOSTEGUY, 2005). After the technological development, especially of digital devices, the study of media consumption seeks to understand the relationships of the subjects with the different means of technology simultaneously used by a process of media convergence. Through digital media, contemporary young people produce and consume culture and entertainment, as a result of both the familiarity they have with different technologies and the access they have to different devices. In this way, the research "Youth and cultural consumption in convergence times" (JACKS, 2010) seeks to relate the constituent elements of youth identities in construction in the cultural processes and practices through media consumption.

The increasing availability of both production modes and media devices for consumption assumes different appropriation of platforms and narrative formats (genres), creating new constitutional arrangements of daily and youthful experiences in the contemporary scene. Together with this multiplicity in techniques, there is a historical subject recognizer of codes, modes of production, genre and narratives. It leaves evidence of other forms of disputes for significance, which occur mainly by access to participation in non-material networks that provide information and entertainment, in a process that Néstor Canclini (2009) calls the dematerialization of culture by digital networks.

The experience of this subject may also refer, through media hybridism, to this hybridism present in cultural consumption. In the case

of young people, as shown by Canclini (2008), they acquire through screens a combination of knowledge and entertainment, and through this connectivity process there is priority in the stimulation from leisure and entertainment.

Given the centrality of entertainment through media consumption, interactive advertising processes (COVALESKI, 2010) establish a focus on the relationship with youth cultural consumption. Therefore, through the spotlight achieved in the global market, one can verify the advertising strategies of persuasion and entertainment, embedded in the cultural products in evidence. Interactivity, sharing and access result in global cultural fluxes that are consumed and multiplied at an increasing speed. These fluxes are technically appropriated by the entertainment industry in order to attract consumers looking to expand their entertainment experiences to various types of media. Entertainment enables both aesthetic enjoyment and intellectual distraction, eventually generating the cultural repertoire formation for these young people, as well as a consistent and growing demand for leisure options. An example of this phenomenon is the product line created from the Harry Potter books, which ranges from the huge global impact of the movies, the theme parks, experiencing the scenarios of the streets and stores, virtual games, interaction with interfaces of the stories and many others.

Global entertainment and their media products have thus become a globally popular form of culture (Mirrlees, 2013), resulting not only from transnational forces of media consumption, but also production, distribution, financing, encoding, decoding, and the use of the culture surrounding it. These forces concentrate on what is called the *mainstream.*

Frédéric Martel (2012) shows how the American entertainment industry, aimed at the general public, dominant and popular, shapes the mainstream culture. In his study, he shows that there are multiple reasons for this American domination, which would be based on the fact that the "American system for content production is a complex model, the product of history, vast territory and immigration from all countries,

all languages and all cultures" (p. 448). Such a culture can have a positive connotation, in the sense of a culture that can be shared by all, or a negative one, in the sense of a hegemonic and dominant culture.

Acceptance of the proposals made by the global entertainment industry by different local realities can either suggest that the products, even looking exotic, attract the interest of local public, or show a consumption process of hegemonic cultural codes, with little adaptation or resistance. By consuming media products from other cultures, individuals could increase their openness to other cultures, and increasingly accept more foreign products. Alternatively, individuals could also resist the cultural products of other cultures, simply because they cannot relate to them, or because they prefer to value their local codes.

In this perspective, we question: would this be a way to establish a mass cultural consumption relationship, using the global market logic, resulting in standardized global cultural consumption? Would the interaction or appropriation of consumers in this process, by incorporating their comments, content and meaning, result in a local and/or individual participation in the global entertainment market fluxes? Such questions lead us to the everyday aesthetic experiences of subjects within a cosmopolitan conception of the global society.

The concept of cosmopolitanism linked to the aesthetic experience

The course of studies about cosmopolitanism in sociology has followed an interval stretching from Georg Simmel (1971) to Ulrich Beck (2006). A first hypothesis suggests that this pathway may be conceived as the passage from cosmopolitanism sociology to sociological cosmopolitanism. In turn, there is another hypothesis which states that, because of the plurality of theoretical anchors that mark the studies on the subject, cosmopolitanism in sociology refers to several routes. The strategy defined for mediations between the studies being considered is guided by an inherent analysis, by having as a systematic element the internal aspects of each formulation.

We present here a concept of cosmopolitanism linked to the aesthetic experience so that we can start the discussion of media consumption in contemporary cultural contexts. This link is based on the work of Skrbis and Woodward (2013), advocating the need to continue to look at the manifestations and the possibility of cosmopolitanism in ordinary encounters in the everyday life of people, and Cicchelli and Octobre (2013) who claim that it is necessary to employ the concept of cosmopolitanism in relation to ordinary situations, such as everyday cultural consumption.

The nature of the relationship between cosmopolitanism and aesthetics would not be established in organized knowledge, but initially in an accumulation of moments resulting from meetings and shared experiences, sometimes as ephemeral as well as partial and organized as representations. The connection with otherness would, in the first instance, be aesthetic (CICCHELLI and OCTOBRE, 2015): like in Facebook, the person "likes" (or not), comments (or not), shares (or not), ranging from the latest music video released by a celebrity like Beyonce, to the impact of the killings carried out in Paris at the Bataclan in November 2015, marking either one, or even both events on their personal media time lines.

This relationship of cosmopolitanism is often reduced to cultural/global entertainment industries and their consumerist suggestions. As in the case of tourism and leisure, where familiarity with the cultures around the world is seen as "superficial and cosmetic" (SASSATELLI, 2012, p. 235). The aesthetic and cultural dimension of cosmopolitanism would be blamed for keeping the Other as an exotic relationship, reducing the connection with otherness to the consumption of goods and products in standardized urban settings (in anxiety situations of consuming in an ephemeral nature). It is not about looking for a hierarchy between the cosmopolitanism dimensions, as if there were a superior or inferior one, or that one is more authentic and the other more superficial. There is the possibility of intersections of experiences and meetings in the different dimensions of cosmopolitanism.

Living in a globalized world does not necessarily imply the adoption of a cosmopolitan perception of the world or the defense of the realization of their aspirations (ethical, political, cultural, etc.). However, most people are able to develop an aesthetic cosmopolitanism, rejecting the idea of a single definition for cosmopolitanism. In academic literature, the cosmopolitan is defined as a highly mobile subject, curious, open and reflective, which delights in and wants to consume difference, especially in international mobility, experience other countries or other forms of transnational social relations (HANNERZ 1990; URRY, 1995). We employ the concept of aesthetic cosmopolitanism to analyze the inclusion of the subject in the globalization phenomenon as a transnational cultural process that does not erase local cultures and that transmutes the sense of national cultural uniqueness. In this perspective, the subject has an aesthetic feeling that, thanks to cultural hybridization of elements from different horizons, was emancipated from a frame previously, locally and rigidly oriented.

Mechanical globalization of cultural consumption, linked to the increasing circulation of cultural content from different continents, gave birth to aesthetic cosmopolitanism, defined on the one hand, by a strong attraction and curiosity about cultural practices and exotic products from different places with localized, authentic or re-invented references and, on the other hand, by its hybridization with national cultural forms or with localized individual appropriations.

This leads to the need to analyze the individual and social morphology of this cosmopolitan aestheticism: individual in their mobilization, it is built on the unique social folds of experiences, shared emotions and imagery, and can be defined as "a cultural disposition involving an aesthetic and intellectual stance of openness to people, places and experiences of different cultures, especially those of different nations, or a taste for the wider margins of cultural experience" (CICCHELLI, OCTOBRE & RIEGEL, 2016, p. 57). On a theoretical level, it implies a focus on feelings, as well as connections, as a central element of pluralistic and multicultural imagery within and between groups or

communities, since they can both try to preserve their cultures, customs and identities, as well as being encompassed in a mosaic of hybridized cultures. It also implies to make the distinction between the objective knowledge of an individual in relation to others, based on the opening of receiving structures, representations and affects.

Thus, contemporary aesthetic has become cosmopolitan: a) by the individual recognizing the differences between their aesthetic vernacular codes and those of foreign cultural products consumed; b) by comparing the codes without a required hierarchy on a value scale; c) by the development of skills in handling these different aesthetic codes through a familiarization process; and d) the development of an intent in regard to the discovery of the culture from which the product emerged.

For the study of possibilities of aesthetic cosmopolitan gatherings of young people, through experiences, emotions and/or imaginary experiences in their daily lives, we developed the analysis of cultural consumption of university students in São Paulo, focusing on its media aspects.

Media consumption of university students in São Paulo

In the methodological approach defined for the project *"Youth Cosmopolitanisms. Brazilian Project. Step 1: Conceptions and cosmopolitan practices among Brazilian university students"*, two steps were developed, the first qualitative, performed by individual interviews; and then quantitative, by means of questionnaires. For this step, we will detail the narratives from the interviews. The defined script for the semi-structured interview explored issues on Cultural Consumption and Global Culture.

Young people selected for the initial stage of the research project are university students, for their possibilities of education and approach to global issues of this audience, and for the outlined criteria for the beginning of the survey in France, a factor that allows for a comparative analysis between the two contexts. The participants chosen in the two countries were young people between 18 and 24 years old. In São Paulo,

students from higher education institutions of three different sectors were selected: public, private non-profit and private for-profit. In total, there were 40 interviews held during the months of February and March 2015.

Analyzing the questions on cultural consumption, what mainly stands out is the consumption of music, social networks, and websites/blogs. In relation to time however, it indicates a very high priority for use on social networks, which are practically used on a continuous basis and protrude in relation to the other means of cultural consumption in general. This concentration shows the priority of the digital media consumer, as well as the socialization relationships of young people through social networks. We noticed in conversations with young people that the time between waking up and connecting to social networks is very short and represents their first and main way to make contact with information and entertainment for them. Just as cultural consumption focuses on digital products, we found that most hardware used for different cultural products (music, literature, movies, etc.) among students of São Paulo are personal computers and smartphones There is also television consumption, but mainly from private connections, including internet access.

The consumption of different cultural products is mainly of domestic origin, but there also is consumption of foreign origin products, mainly from the United States. This relationship with the American culture can be explained both by the fact that the products from that country dominate global culture - in the mainstream perspective of the culture industry - as well as the youth's knowledge of the English language. Starting with media consumption, mainly from North America, we seek the possibility of reflexivity of young people with other cultures, which could develop a cosmopolitan stance in them.

To study this cosmopolitan attitude, we analyze the narratives of these young people in São Paulo, in relation to the aesthetic dimension of media consumption. About the debate on the application of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, we emphasize that there is no guarantee that the expansion of cultural horizons, the development of abilities and cultural

skills and hermeneutical skills will necessarily translate into the emergence of a sense of responsibility to the world. However, the introduction of the aesthetic dimension marks a major change in the way that you can consider cosmopolitanism as a lifestyle related to consumption. The issue of global citizenship does not just revolve around the political participation and civic engagement, but also around cosmopolitan tastes, styles and consumption patterns (GERMANN Molz 2011, p. 37). So for Nikos Papastergiadis, aesthetic and cultural cosmopolitanism is fundamental because it is based on the individual and collective capacity to build an image of the world (2012, p. 94), with art being less of a way of representing the truth of the world, but another tool for you to imagine its reality.

The configurations personified by young people in their everyday experiences show varying degrees of reflexivity. Cosmopolitanism from consumption can be disconnected from reflexivity and open the way for otherness awareness. In other cases, this reflexivity is much more present and committed to critical insight, possibly for itself and for culture, in the form of explicit comparison, which can feed the production of stereotypes and comparison tools.

We can illustrate the production of stereotypes in Angelica's narrative, 20 years old, who claims that consumption of movies and information is globalized, mainly in English and from a North American origin. For the student, to be connected to the world is to have a connection with the leading global media and *mainstream* culture. Similarly, Oliver, 21years old, says that he only consumes American cultural products, which are part of the *mainstream* culture, and says that he does it for fun and to feel as part of the world when sharing the same tastes and practices that millions of people also experience around the world.

The production of comparison tools can be found in Fabio's narrative, 21, for whom the consumption of music and television comes down to content from other countries, mainly the United States and England. He believes that he should feel more connected to other cultures, and does it mainly by media consumption, through this interaction he seeks possibilities of learning and fun.

In a counterpoint to the mainstream consumer and the search to produce comparisons, we have it exemplified in Bibiana's narrative, 22 years old, which shows a critical perspective to the cultural mainstream products. She declares that she does not consume cinema in the sense of big American successful box office hit movies, although she frequents movie theaters regularly, on average, 3 times per week. For her, cinema represents the world, and world brings together the cultures, peoples and distant and foreign languages to Brazilian culture. She cites contemporary European cinema, Indian cinema, Asian and Oriental, as examples that attract her.

It is in these forms of comparison of cultural products with emotions, identified feelings and knowledge that remains that the consumption of mixed domestic and foreign products results in the figure of the amateur cosmopolitan (CICCHELLI, OCTOBRE and RIEGEL, 2016). This figure is different from other amateurisms because it deals with transient and reversible commitments in cultural repertoires that are not strictly defined by education, as suggested by the model of Bourdieu (1984). In addition, this amateurism is closely linked to the growing importance of horizontal generational socialization among peers in the digital environment, so that this amateurism also serves as a resource for self construction of these young people.

We noticed the figure of the amateur cosmopolitan in Rafael's narrative, 22 years old, when he cites that film and television are completely out of his arch of cultural consumption, focusing on his taste and preference in music and video games, as his own culture and entertainment channels, where he has the possibility to exchange information, get referrals from other sites, and meet with peers from other countries and cultures. Rafael does fall into the segment of consumption of series, not systematically, but occasionally from the moment he finds a series on the Internet and enjoys the sample displayed. He proves to be an avid consumer of cultural products for his entertainment, which have the possibility of exchanging and building, and therefore has the predilection for digital consumption, which gives you freedom of interaction.

So, in this amateurism, the question is not to measure the current level of knowledge about other cultures, but the degree of perceived closeness - or distance - with otherness in a massive flux of cultural context. As in the case of Bibiana, who believes that American cinema is not interesting, while enjoying films from other countries, precisely because they have a different cultural perspective, however fictional the film is, it greatly potentializes her interest in consumption. In the case of Rafael, he demonstrates deep understanding both of what happens in American contemporary music scene, as well as in the gaming world, and considers both important forms of entertainment consumption and contact with American culture.

Finally, in the case of Issaka, 24 years old, who was born in Niger living in Brazil for eight years, curiosity is a determining factor. He has lived in different countries and speaks different languages. His mobility and his experiences allow him to build maps, taking care of the places he wants to visit and to temporarily share the local life. He defines himself as a traveler, but wants to immerse himself in the places to experience them, "I like to know a bit of the history (of these places), to plan a bit, to get to know them beforehand (to) not be surprised." In affinities with other young people living in the places he has visited and lived in, he builds a shared emotions relationship.

Then, our reflection from the narrative of these young people comes to light: their willingness to exchange with each other without being present, with intense use of digital media. The framework that emerges is that of young people, subjects in connection, who make the network an environment of possibilities of what they want to experiment. As cartographers, they use their social networks and other environments to build a different type of map, one of affinities that enable recognition of others. Their findings seem to search for confirmation of what they investigated on the network; on-site, as the browsers that they are, they seek physical contact/location for the construction of their investigative narratives. What are they looking for? Maybe more about themselves, perhaps more about the world that surrounds them and they use the other as another mirror, facing a world of diverse appearances and reflections.

Final considerations

The relations of cultural media consumption studied follow the logic of the global market, particularly in digital media, focusing on institutions and US brands. However, the consumption in these means is not standardized, since there are possibilities of incorporating comments, content and meaning from local signs, which leads us to observe that there are both massive standards for consumption, as well as alternative and unique ones, as we have seen in the profiles reported herein from the interviews. So that while some of the young people surveyed consume the American standard of hegemonic cultural products, there are others who refuse to consume this model.

This clear rejection of the American cultural product was not perceived with the same intensity in relation to the production from any other country. The national production of less significant countries in the volume of cultural products is not as well known as to establish a pattern of denial. Thus, this relationship focuses on aspects of American culture, and their *mainstream* media products. The refusal of North American production in a given genre of cultural production, such as cinema, for example, does not mean, however, a distancing in relationtionships with products originating from that country, mainly if we evaluate the digital cultural consumption and its main media.

Cinema, music, comic books, books, television programs and other cultural products are forms of contact with global culture, as from their local production realities. Standards, especially with regard to cultural consumption and in particular the consumption that occurs from media support, are specific drivers, for it is in the standardization of the audience and the content that the cultural industry concentrates its production of cultural consumer goods. Faced with the global standard, there are, however, different forms of local consumption, which can develop different reflective attitudes and forms of participation.

The proposed discussion of media consumption by university students from São Paulo (a global city, perhaps cosmopolitan), from a cultural perspective, reveals that there is both presence and use of

global products for entertainment, but this does not necessarily mean that this aesthetic experience is transformed in local reflexivity. Thus, we consider that these young people would be what we call amateur cosmopolitans. It is important to note that these young people have a specific profile in relation to the overall picture of the population of São Paulo and Brazil, for they also represent a socioeconomic minority that seeks their university education. Thus, the research project also seeks to amplify, in its next research steps, to other young people profiles, and also compared to other cities.

The media consumption of cultural products, notably the global *mainstream* ones, could be a way of developing multiple reflexivities in young people. Moreover, interests and affinities for other cultures, for their differences and challenges, also mark an intention to look to the Other. Through reflexivity, it would be possible to build a cosmopolitan attitude, a perspective with foreign interpretations, a step forward in relation to otherness. These are the questions that remain unanswered on our research of cultural consumption experiences of young Brazilians.

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