

**COMUNICAÇÃO**  
**MÍDIA**  
**E CONSUMO**

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# **Comunicação, mídia e consumo**

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## **Foreword**

The theme of the International Congress in Communication and Consumption, which took place at ESPM in the second semester of 2018, “Communication, Consumption and Alterities”, was chosen bearing in mind the fact that the collective negotiations of policies of recognition and the management of visibilities implied in media practices participate in the structure of consumption cultures, re-updated in the valorization of certain forms of life over others. The September-December 2018 issue of the publication *Communication, Media and Consumption* magnifies this discussion and brings studies that cross those questions through different theoretical perspectives.

In a first axis, we bring studies that take these issues under the point of view of mechanisms of control and management of desires. The first one, by Michael Marder, approaches disposal as affection and the form it engenders social relations and media practices. The issue of objects not only as items of consumption, but also as mediators in social relations is the theme of the second study: Maria Luiza Zenobio de Assumpção Villar Laufhütte and Alberto Cipiniuk refer to a study of accessories used in Hollywood movies under the optics of symbolic exchange. Also in the field that correlates affective and political issues, the third study, by Judith Cavazos-Arroyo and Rogelio Puente-Díaz, brings issues about the effect of trust in a brand through the television coverage of a big disaster in Mexico. It is an aspect that dialogues with the study by Fernanda

Martinelli, João Guilherme Xavier da Silva and Sofia Zanforlin, which discusses the relationship between dynamics of capitalism and rhetorics around international migration with the analysis of advertisement campaigns. The study by Melina Meimaridis and Thaiane Oliveira studies the interactions and motivations of spoiling under the fans' perspective.

Memory and its materialities in testimonial articulations compose the second axis of this issue. The connections established, as well as the social roles and performances present in the testimonies of suffering in popular programs are the theme of the sixth study, by Vera Regina Veiga França, Fabíola Carolina de Souza, Filipe Monteiro Lago and Paula Lopes. In turn, the forms of assimilation and availability of memories through digital media as ageing instances of strategies of media in narrativizing and managing knowledge are dealt in the investigation proposed by Diogo Andrade Bornhausen and Norval Baitello Junior.

The third thematic axis is about the articulation of affections with religious practices of consumption. The second-to-last article, by Ronivaldo Moreira de Souza, discusses the symbiotic relationship between religion and market from the understanding of sacred as an effect of discourse present in the advertisement narrative. Antonio Hélio Junqueira, lastly, analyzes the pope encyclical *Laudato si*, in order to think about discursive construction of interfaces between communication, education and consumption in the contemporary society.

We wish you all a delightful reading!

*Prof. Dr. Mônica Rebecca Ferrari Nunes*

*Prof. Dr. Eliza Bachega Casadei*

## Sumário

**410** Lixeiranomia

Dumponomics

---

Michael Marder

**427** A streetcar named consumption, an object named desire

Um bonde chamado consumo, um objeto chamado desejo

---

Maria Luiza Zenobio de Assumpção Villar Laufhütte

Alberto Cipiniuk

**447** Confiança da marca em redes de televisão aberta e suas consequências após um mega-desastre em um país emergente

Brand trust on open television networks and its consequences after a mega-disaster in an emergent country

---

Judith Cavazos-Arroyo

Rogelio Puente-Díaz

**470** O humanitário como *branded-content*

Humanitarian as branded-content

---

Fernanda Martinelli

João Guilherme Xavier da Silva

Sofia C. Zanforlin

**496** Vingar e punir: motivações para a prática do *spoiling*

Avenge and punish: motivations for spoiling

---

Melina Meimaridis

Thaiane Oliveira

**517** Testemunhos na mídia: o relato do sofrimento  
Testimonies in the media: the report of suffering

---

**Vera Regina França**  
**Fabíola Carolina de Souza**  
**Filipe Lago**  
**Paula Lopes**

**538** A memória midiática: projeções e sujeições no ambiente digital  
The mediatic memory: projections and subjections in the digital  
environment

---

**Diogo Andrade Bornhausen**  
**Norval Baitello Junior**

**559** A simbiose entre religião e mercado: o sagrado como efeito de  
discurso  
The symbiosis between religion and the market: the sacred as an  
effect of discourse

---

**Ronivaldo Moreira de Souza**

**583** A Igreja entra no clima: comunicação, educação e consumo em  
“Sobre o cuidado da casa comum” – encíclica papal de Francisco  
The Church enters the climate: communication, education and  
consumption in “On care for our common home” – pope Francis’  
encyclical letter

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**Antonio Hélio Junqueira**



## Artigos

## Lixeiranomia

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### Dumponomics

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Michael Marder<sup>1</sup>

**Resumo:** *O presente artigo aborda o conceito de descarte como elemento socialmente compartilhado e a forma como ele engendra as relações sociais e com o meio ambiente. A partir de uma reflexão sobre o consumismo e sobre as formas avançadas do capitalismo, o artigo discute as influências das vicissitudes da corporeidade nas nossas formas de pensar. O descarte, nesse sentido, entranha-se nos mais diversos registros de existência, de forma a reproduzir os efeitos que têm nos elementos ambientais.*

**Palavras-chave:** *dumping; consumo; capitalismo.*

**Abstract:** *The present article approaches the concept of dumping as a socially pervasive, theorising the forms it engenders in social and environment relations. From a reflection on consumerism and on advanced forms of capitalism, the article moves on to discuss the vicissitudes of corporeality and their influence on our ways of thinking in the age of global dumping. Dumping, in this sense, is embedded in the most diverse strands of existence, so that it reproduces the same effects it has on the environmental elements in our forms of thinking, everyday living, and interacting with the world.*

**Keywords:** *dumping; consumption; capitalism.*

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## Descartados

Todos os dias, estudos científicos, reportagens midiáticas e experiências viscerais a respeito do estado acelerado de degradação do meio ambiente nos atingem com força crescente e desconcertante. Há uma abundância de microplásticos na água potável e a previsão é de que, até 2050, a massa total de materiais sintéticos lançados no oceano ultrapassará a população de peixes. Grandes cidades em diferentes continentes adoecem sob a névoa de toxinas contidas na atmosfera durante os longos períodos de *smog* extremo. Incêndios consomem grandes faixas de floresta devido a uma combinação do aumento das temperaturas globais, secas, plantio de monocultura e pouco investimento (além da falta de vontade de confiar no conhecimento local) na prevenção de incêndios. A erosão e degradação do solo, que ameaça a saúde e fertilidade da terra, implica acidificação, crescimento das taxas de salinidade e toxicidade, além da diminuição da capacidade de nutrientes e a disponibilidade de oxigênio para plantar raízes.

Da mesma forma que essas tendências empíricas são preocupantes, elas também são um indicativo de uma alteração sutil nas condições delicadas que sustentavam a vida no planeta até agora. Água, ar, terra e até fogo (os quatro elementos que, apesar de admitirem outras adições, são compartilhados pelas tradições filosóficas e míticas) não correspondem às nossas representações mentais do que elas são<sup>2</sup>. A imagem mental criada por uma pessoa quando ouve a palavra “água” raramente inclui resíduos plásticos, cádmio, mercúrio e chumbo, coliformes fecais e hidrocarbonetos de petróleo. Ao pensarmos em ar, normalmente não o associamos com dióxido sulfúrico, óxidos de nitrogênio e matérias expelidas em queimadas ou em fábricas de combustível fóssil. O significado de solo não tende a compreender metais pesados, fosfatos, ácidos inorgânicos, pesticidas e nitratos, hidrocarbonetos aromáticos polinucleares, bifenilos policlorados, compostos aromáticos clorados, detergentes e radionuclídeos. Enquanto algumas mudanças são visíveis (por exemplo,

2 Para ser justo, é incerto que os elementos tenham sido capazes de aparecer como são de fato.

a manifestação de *smog* fotoquímico), a grande maioria passa em branco e não se apresenta a esfera da cognição.

A balança entre regra e exceção está desequilibrada. Em comparação ao passado não tão distante, quando a preocupação era voltada aos bolsões de poluição, hoje as condições ambientais normais são tais que ar, solo e água “pura” desviam da norma. Nós ainda precisamos alcançar no pensamento a estranha realidade das consequências cumulativas que as nossas tecnologias e economias geraram. A condição atual da água e de outros elementos apela para a necessidade de criar uma representação adequada do objeto alterado e um ajuste mental da parte do sujeito. Com tal ajuste, nós também faríamos justiça ao mundo que desaparece diante dos nossos olhos.

Apesar de a filosofia iniciar em espanto, ela também pode terminar em pavor. Se profundos o suficiente, esses dois estados mexem com o âmago de quem quer que esteja experimentando-os. Ao contrário da perspectiva complacente do mundo de acordo com as estruturas pré-fabricadas de entendimento, a filosofia, no sentido mais radical do termo, é um encontro com a existência, que acontece em uma atmosfera da aguda falta do entendimento. É essa característica que coloca os filósofos (me refiro à filosofia não como profissão, mas como vocação, um chamado, uma dedicação, um estilo de vida) fora de um estado de fadiga, além de uma familiaridade habitual com o entorno do sujeito, aparentemente indigno de tão pouco quanto um olhar de lado. Essa também é a qualidade que imbuí a atitude filosófica com uma alegria e curiosidade infantil ou, na ponta oposta do espectro emocional, com medo e precaução frente ao desconhecido. Entre as reações possíveis às últimas transformações nos elementos e condições ambientais, uma abordagem desdenhosa, apoiada por governos, corporações e ideologias dominantes, não é uma opção viável. O gosto da filosofia por arranjar um rendez-vous sem paralelos com o mundo é indispensável hoje em dia, porque nós somos realmente confrontados por um mundo altamente desconhecido, esculpido pelos efeitos persistentes da atividade industrial, pela primeira vez no século XXI.

O que eu proponho é entrar em contato com a força única da disciplina capaz de abrir uma visão não ortodoxa do mundo, avaliando o que a Terra é e o que ela se tornou. Minha hipótese é a de que cada região elementar, cada domínio, incluindo crescimento e decrepitude das plantas, estão num estado avançado de conversão em um aterro para produção industrial e seus subprodutos, isso sem contar o consumismo e *seus* excessos. A liberação de grandes volumes de dióxido de carbono na atmosfera e o uso indiscriminado de garrafas e sacolas plásticas, redes de pesca, embalagens de alimentos, atualmente onipresentes nos ecossistemas marinhos, são suficientes para considerar um depósito (de lixo). Separado dessas práticas no tempo e no espaço, os seus efeitos – ou, seja, os resíduos – não são mais traços insubstanciais no ar e na água, mas sim forças que remodelam *habitat*, climas e meios elementares.

Supondo que nós não estamos apaziguados pelos clichês da incorporação das nossas vidas e corpos no contexto ambiental, com o qual estamos mutuamente constituídos, rapidamente descobriremos que o fato de que o meio ambiente está se tornando um aterro a céu aberto se relaciona diretamente com a nossa existência. Nossas dietas, possibilidades sensoriais e doenças estatisticamente prevalentes (câncer, doenças respiratórias, diabetes, e assim por diante) estão instigadas por uma mutação elementar. De tal maneira, que a corporalidade, o fato físico e fisiológico da incorporação, está totalmente implicada nas dinâmicas do depósito.

Se nós concordarmos mais ainda com o ponto de vista da mente integrada (ao invés de separada) ao corpo, veremos que as vicissitudes da corporalidade têm uma influência profunda na nossa forma de pensar. As ideias se condensam em palavras-chave arranjadas em correntes de livre associação; a enchente de informação submerge percepção e cognição ao mesmo tempo. A mente não é menos afetada que o corpo pela mutação elementar que ela provocou. O depósito penetra nas mais profundas fibras do nosso ser, os processos e eventos que criam o quem somos: nossa humanidade, animalidade e vegetalidade, nosso raciocínio e organicidade, sensação e percepção, capacidades nutritivas, emotivas e

de discernimento. Ao entranhar-se em diversos registros de existência, o depósito os embaralha, reproduzindo os efeitos que têm nos elementos ambientais.

### **As economias de dumping ou a utilidade arcana do inútil**

Ao terminar com um parceiro romântico, as pessoas se comportam como um ser humano de maneira pior que um objeto descartável: sem valor, o ex-amante se mistura com o lixo. De fato, enquanto o capitalismo avançado designa valores monetários até para coisas e atividades fora da esfera econômica *per si*, a hiperdesvalorização parece ser uma constante do depósito do lixo ontológico através de suas diversas encarnações. O lixo é recusado, posto fora e rejeitado. No entanto, a drenagem de valor do descartado não é sem utilidade. Por um lado, a lógica de desvalorização orchestra furtivamente a manipulação inescrupulosa do desvalorizado e o uso do que é considerado valioso. O jogar fora do desperdício deriva energia da queda do que cai massivamente. Por outro lado, o estado “sem valor” pode ser uma etapa congelada e indefinidamente suspensa de transvalorização, a transição incerta e inacabada dos valores obsoletos do passado para uma valorização flexível a seguir. Seja como for, outra positividade esconde sob a capa da negação.

A massa que é jogada fora não é só recuperada depois de sua queda e reintegrada aos circuitos de utilidade, como na reciclagem. Ao invés disso, ela é utilizada na medida em que é descartada, desperdiçada, considerada inútil. As economias de mercado admitem abertamente essas práticas. O dumping cíclico, estratégico, do comércio estatal, da expansão de mercado e da precificação predatória “cobrem a prática de exportar a preços abaixo do custo de produção” (WILLIG, 1998, p. 59). Ao desperdiçar propositadamente uma parte do valor incorporado na mercadoria, eles sacrificam algo que devem eliminar como uma perda para garantir as possibilidades de lucros no futuro. Os benefícios da desvalorização, incontáveis por planilhas regulares, precisam ser vistos

em uma perspectiva externa de contabilidade *quasi-transcendental*, que garante a possibilidade do sistema econômico como um todo.

O que se apresenta como uma perda pura no dumping é um ganho especulativo de futuras ações de mercado e poder de monopólio. Nesse sentido, a conclusão de Georges Bataille de que “a extensão do crescimento econômico em si requer a virada de princípios econômicos” (BATAILLE, 1991, p. 25) é perspicaz. No entanto, é imprudente pensar como ele quando diz: “se uma parte da riqueza (sujeita à estimativa grosseira) está condenada à destruição ou pelo menos ao uso improdutivo sem possível lucro, é lógico, ou até *inescapável*, ceder as mercadorias sem retorno [*céder des marchandises sans contrepartie*]” (BATAILLE, 1991, p. 25). “Sem lucro possível” e “sem retorno” é como o *dumping* deve aparecer nas planilhas da economia restrita de Bataille. Expectativas sub-reptícias de lucro e retornos de longo alcance além do investimento dado, dos ciclos de consumo e produção, motivam esta prática. Despesas generosas da economia geral e luxos sem sentido inundam as “margens de operações sem lucro” (BATAILLE, 1991, p. 26) reivindicando utilidade pelas nossas costas por meio da boa e velha astúcia da razão. Eles são governados pelas leis de um jogo de contabilidade que converte perdas em ganhos diferidos, diversão em trabalho duro, gasto em investimento, o menos em mais.

O aparente desperdício de dumping econômico é compreensível dentro da lógica do capital determinado a conquistar o mercado estrangeiro. Conforme os preços despencam, uma massa de mercadorias desvalorizadas é lançada aos consumidores na oferta de estabelecer um padrão de compra e um senso de dependência do item em questão. Tais maquinações devem dar ao produtor uma vantagem competitiva em marketing e varejo. Mas, qual é o significado filosófico de vender algo abaixo do seu custo de produção? Será que isso não afirma, a curto prazo, a não reprodutibilidade do capital, uma certa morte econômica? Ainda assim, de forma hegeliana, será que isso não se alimenta, também, da morte, aproveitando o poder negativo da finitude e ocupando a posição de mestre, expressa na subsequente monopolização do mercado?

ARTIGO

Dumping coloca a economia geral a serviço da economia restrita e extrai o valor excedente da desvalorização. Para não ficar para trás, “a legislação antidumping” cria um paradoxo próprio. Nos EUA, depois que o Departamento de Comércio (DOC) recebe da International Trade Commission (ITC) uma queixa preliminar a respeito de dumping, emite questionários “a respondentes obrigatórios” nomeadamente os maiores produtores estrangeiros e exportadores da relevante mercadoria produzida nos países em questão. A papelada burocrática é tão extensiva que “responder a um questionário antidumping normalmente requer o desvio de recursos significantes da companhia e retém a expertise jurídica, contábil e econômica” (LINDSEY; IKENSON, 2003, p. 2). DOC combate fogo com fogo: ao denunciar um dump, o departamento multiplica o que ele opõe. Se fôssemos honestos ao lidar com o dumping, teríamos que analisar e subverter as fundamentações teóricas e práticas do capitalismo.

Para traduzir Marx na linguagem das leis do comércio neoliberal: sob o regime do capital, o trabalho é sempre uma mercadoria subvalorizada, não importa o quão “justo” é o comércio. Enquanto o capital existir, os proletários suportarão permanentemente o peso da desvalorização e vão vender a sua mão de obra abaixo do seu valor total. Com o aumento do precariado, os trabalhadores nem recebem o bastante para a reprodução das condições de produção, ganhando de volta abaixo do “valor das mercadorias concedidas todos os dias ao portador da força de trabalho para que ele possa renovar seu processo de vida” (MARX, 1976, p. 276). A existência do capital implica *ipso facto* que os trabalhadores são subvalorizados. O valor excedente, a mais-valia, ou a porção do valor do trabalho que ao invés de retornar ao trabalhador é investida no crescimento do capital, é equivalente à margem de dumping “que é calculada subtraindo o preço de exportação ao preço normal e dividindo a diferença (supondo que o resultado é positivo) pelo preço da exportação” (LINDSEY; IKENSON, 2003, p. 1). Tente substituir o salário no lugar ocupado pelo *preço de exportação* na equação, e o valor total criado pelo trabalho no lugar do *valor normal*. Você obterá a margem



real do dumping do capitalismo, sendo a única medida antidumping o comunismo, uma articulação do comum que resiste à desarticulação do acúmulo privado.

Na prática comercial do dumping, comércios se colocam temporariamente no lugar dos funcionários. Os comércios descartam uma parte do seu valor para recuperar mais que o investimento inicial nas balanças do poder econômico e da potencialidade. Os trabalhadores, ao contrário, não veem os seus blocos de tempo-e-vida voltar para eles como a empresa vê. O valor que, desviado deles, forja e reforça os meios de opressão deles cai como uma indiferenciada e indiferente massa, uma palavra que Marx frequentemente usa no seu *Das Kapital*. A massividade crescente é um aterro no qual os trabalhadores são descartados, recorrentemente, independentemente de suas capacidades únicas e do tempo de trabalho que colocaram. Mas há outro aterro, com contornos instáveis seguindo as bordas do primeiro. É o exército industrial (e, agora, pós-industrial) de reserva.

Abrangendo as massas desempregadas e cronicamente subempregadas, o exército-reserva de trabalhadores flutua conjuntamente com as necessidades de produção do capital, dilatando ou diminuindo de acordo com as fases de expansão e contração econômica. *Dentro* do processo econômico, a força de trabalho em excesso da capacidade total de emprego é inútil; desde a *relativa externalidade* da economia capitalista, este excesso interpreta um papel vital: “O exército-reserva industrial, nos períodos de estagnação e prosperidade média, pesa sobre o exército ativo de trabalhadores; nos períodos de superprodução e atividade febril, a reserva coloca um freio em suas pretensões” (MARX, 1976, p. 792). A massa daqueles ansiosos para trabalhar, mas sem emprego faz com que os salários caiam em proporção inversa ao crescimento do exército-reserva. Essa massa pesa nos trabalhadores ativos, como Marx diz, fazendo um dumping ainda maior nos salários que já são um dump em si. O crescimento do depósito humano, da dispensabilidade e inutilidade formal, é tão útil para o capital que este “não pode estar contente com a quantidade de força de trabalho descartável que rende o crescimento

natural da população. Requer, então, para sua atividade irrestrita, um exército-reserva industrial que é independente desses limites naturais” (MARX, 1976, p. 788).

As linhas separando o exército de trabalhadores ativos dos reservistas – o *dump* interno do externo – têm sido cada vez mais tênues ao longo dos cento e cinquenta anos desde a publicação do *magnum opus* de Marx. A relativa externalidade foi jogada para a interioridade econômica: desprovida da segurança econômica e forçada a trabalhar em contratos a curto prazo, a oferecer trabalhos voluntários e serviços de treinamento voluntário, e a trabalhar mais por benefícios percebidos do que um salário real, a força de trabalho flexível é uma reserva para o capital explorar sempre que achar necessário. A massa de reserva pesa no “exército ativo de trabalhadores” já não de fora, mas sim por dentro. O trabalho sofre desvalorização contínua, deixando ao capital derivar o seu valor do uso irrestrito do formalmente inútil. Ainda caindo, a mercadoria em *dumping par excellence* (quer dizer, o poder de trabalho) é sujeita a superdesvalorização depois de ser utilizada. A extração de valor do que já está desvalorizado, da energia liberada no impacto do *dumping*, é agora o modelo para instrumentalidade e uso em geral.

Condições de vida miseráveis, em outro sentido de *dump* em inglês, fazem parte do lançamento massivo do trabalho mercantilizado. Nos séculos XVIII e XIX, a proletarização ocasionou a urbanização, o rápido deslocamento de populações agrárias para os novos centros lotados de produção industrial em cidades que mais pareciam favelas. As massas de trabalhadores industriais colocados em áreas urbanas passam por “tal negação de toda a sensibilidade, tal confusão suja de corpos e funções corporais, tal exposição à nudez animal e sexual, que é mais bestial que humana”, nas palavras citadas por Marx de um relatório de 1866 sobre o estado da saúde pública (MARX, 1976, p. 813). Aplicada ao proletariado, a bestialização discursiva é um tema familiar na economia política clássica, tal como na obra de 1786, escrita por Joseph

Townsend, *Dissertation on the Poor Laws*<sup>3</sup>. E, na verdade, o relatório que entrou no *Kapital* de Marx emoldura tacitamente a bestialização da classe trabalhadora na obscenidade de lixo e do seu depósito: humanidade reduzida a funções corporais, uma “confusão de corpos”, “tal negação de toda sensibilidade”.

A gentrificação pós-industrial de áreas centrais da cidade desloca o depósito de lixo para outro lugar, por exemplo, as favelas – como nos *banlieues* parisienses, e o redistribui globalmente para pontos da industrialização contemporânea, como Bangladesh. Tão móvel quanto o próprio capital, o depósito de lixo urbano e suburbano é tanto horizontal, frequentemente coagindo estranhos para coabitar o mesmo apartamento, quanto vertical, empilhando famílias e indivíduos um em cima do outro em arranha-céus. No pior dos casos, a gentrificação abandona pessoas na rua, sem teto e expostas aos elementos. Em todos os outros casos, ela fornece um abrigo aos corpos que não é um refúgio<sup>4</sup>.

Não é de se admirar que o conceito de uso se tornasse tão contorcido. Nos falta acesso direto à utilidade por razões “genéticas” – porque uma coisa é necessariamente útil para algo que não ela mesma, apontando além do seu corpo em ser usado – e por razões historicamente contingentes – porque hoje em dia, considerações quantitativas e relações de troca mediam a utilidade desde o início. Visto através da câmera obscura do capital, o uso não tem utilidade, e fenômenos aparentemente inúteis são cruciais para o aumento do valor.

Propósitos e fins singulares desaparecem do depósito de lixo que é a nossa época. Se usarmos como recurso a linguagem de Nietzsche, o depósito está além do bem e do mal. A atitude tecnocrática, economista, voltada para a eficiência postula usos sem o bem, um conceito

3 “A fome doma os mais ferozes animais, ensina decência e civilidade, obediência e submissão aos mais perversos. Em geral, só a fome pode estimular e incentivá-los [os pobres] ao trabalho; ainda assim, as leis dizem que eles jamais passarão fome... A restrição legal é atendida com muito trabalho, violência e ruído... sendo que a fome não é apenas uma pressão pacífica, silenciosa, mas o motivo natural mais poderoso para a indústria e o trabalho, ela apela para os mais poderosos esforços” (in POLANYI, 1957, p. 113).

4 Sobre a distinção entre abrigo e refúgio, consulte: HEIDEGGER, M. *Phenomenology, Ecology, Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.

rechaçado por suas conotações supostamente teleológicas e obsoletas. **Apagada** está a intuição básica de que o uso sem o bem não é bom para nada.

### **O retrato de uma coisa como sua própria lixeira**

Vamos deixar para trás o panorama completo (e a esfera de produção) por um momento e considerar um modelo em miniatura do depósito de lixo, que nós encontramos no universo do consumidor. Nos Estados Unidos se pode observar como as compras são duplamente embaladas com zelo quase obsessivo. De copos de café de papel a sacolas plásticas de supermercado, você sempre recebe um excesso não tão simbólico com a compra. É possível citar razões pragmáticas para essa prática. Usar dois copos descartáveis de café previne que seus dedos queimem por conta da bebida quente (apesar de que um protetor de papelão – um objeto parcial que com sua própria incompletude demarca a ineficácia do objeto principal – pode ser usado com esse propósito). Colocar uma sacola dentro de outra faz com que a sacola não se rompa quando você levar as compras para casa, e assim por diante. Mas até explicações simples como essas apontam algo diferente do princípio da conveniência.

Na cultura da obsolescência, de mercadorias já produzidas e consumidas como lixo, as coisas não trabalham como deveriam. Para preencher as suas funções adequadamente, elas devem contar com suporte e reforço disponibilizado por outras coisas, frequentemente do mesmo tipo. Isoladamente, um copo de papel falha em segurar o líquido que contém e uma sacola plástica se desintegra, e é por isso que se introduz outro produto de má qualidade para fortalecê-los. Força em números compensa a fragilidade individual: o capital neoliberal transfere para arena das mercadorias o mesmo princípio que nega aos trabalhadores nas suas vidas profissionais, colocando-os uns contra os outros e interferindo na sindicalização do trabalho.

Estou ciente da cumplicidade silenciosa – literalmente: uma dupla embalagem comportamental – entre a geração industrial de lixo consumível e a recusa do consumidor a se comprometer a usar objetos

reutilizáveis que diminuiriam o desperdício dos nossos estilos de vida. (Isso também está mudando gradualmente, pelo menos a respeito de hábitos de consumo; em 2014, a Califórnia se tornou o primeiro estado dos EUA a criar uma lei banindo sacolas plásticas de uso único). Isso dito, o que me interessa é como o fenômeno da embalagem dupla, considerada normal no universo de consumo americano e suas extensões metastáticas a outras partes do mundo, encapsula a lógica de depósito do lixo além do antagonismo entre economia e ecologia. Como navegamos no desconcertante dobro do duplo e do singular, uma ocorrência ou uma coisa duplicada em si mesma e uma ruptura do horizonte repetível da experiência devido a esse redobramento material? Como as sacolas e copos duplos criam um mundo de uso único onde a finitude significa o fim, o término, è finita *la commedia*?

Antes de cortado ao meio, aproveita as pontas de uma corda superestendida, esticada entre o singular e o duplo, um em dois e dois em um. Você obtém algo assim:

1. *Macrossingularidade*. Sacolas, copos, lenços contendo fibras de plástico, e mundos nos remetem ao fragmento 89 de Heráclito: “Aqueles que estão despertos têm um mundo em comum [*koinos kosmos*], mas cada um daqueles que estão dormindo se retira para o seu mundo próprio e privado [*idios kosmos*]”. Esse fragmento ressoa, como um estranho duplo, com outro de Heráclito, “assim como é um monte de lixo [*sarma*] amontoado sem propósito, é também o mais belo mundo [*kallistos kosmos*]”. Um mundo dos sonhos é isolado e isolante. Na escuridão do sono, tal mundo brilha para cada sonhador separadamente, para o benefício de cada um individualmente, ou nem isso<sup>5</sup>. Se não houvesse nada além dessa fragmentação, o mundo seria uma pilha de lixo. (*Idios kosmos*)<sup>∞</sup> = *sarma*. Copos e sacolas duplas são indicações de caminho para o sonhado mundo de consumo

5 Jean-Luc Nancy contradiz Heráclito tacitamente quando ele postula que “tudo se reverte à equivalência geral em cada adormecido vale tanto quanto outro adormecido e cada sono vale tanto quanto todos os outros, cada um que apareça... Sono ou disparidades” (The Fall of Sleep. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009, p. 17). Para aqueles cuja perspectiva revela a si mesma? Como o sono vê a igualdade, “a medida comum a todos”? E isso é comunalidade ou a igualdade formal e indiferente do lixo?

privado, as indicações que superimpõem esses mundos ao comum, à ecologia, a qual eles quebram e aprisionam no isolamento idiótico (*idios*) do depósito. Ao macronível, o depósito de lixo consiste em singularidades acumuladas fortuitamente, independentemente de um ao outro e dos círculos do metabolismo planetário. Sendo assim, há uma assimetria temporal entre os artefatos desperdiçados-porém-duráveis e os processos ambientais: o instante de uso é seguido, no caso do plástico, por séculos de decadência.

2. *Microduplicação*. Esquematizaremos um pouco. Depois que você tira uma camada de embalagem, você descobre, como uma matrioska, uma segunda embalagem idêntica dentro dela. Uma sacola dupla (a expressão em si junta dois em um) e um copo duplo são coisas jogadas fora dentro de outras coisas e presumidamente segurando algo “real”, seja as compras ou uma bebida quente. Seus conteúdos são jogados dentro do que é jogado dentro do seu dobro em antecipação de ser jogado fora logo depois do fim da bebida ou de levar os produtos para casa. O lixo autorreplicado é uma casca a ser descartada quando eu recolher o núcleo valioso. Mas não tão rápido! O núcleo não está encerrado dentro de uma fachada meramente exterior; ao abordá-lo por fora, encontramos uma fachada por trás de outra fachada inútil, um deserto crescendo ao redor da mercadoria adquirida. No micronível, o descartado se divide em mais do mesmo.

Um copo duplo ou uma sacola dupla é uma coisa como sua própria lixeira, jogada em si mesma. O depósito de lixo, por sua vez, é massivo: começando com uma embalagem, aumenta a um fator de dois e então é multiplicado por x número de itens não reutilizáveis. Os conteúdos aparentemente valiosos são jogados ou despejados dentro dessa forma de lixo volátil, rapidamente espalhada, autoduplicante e, ao mesmo tempo, isolada. Lixos superficiais nos dizem mais sobre a ontologia do que os conteúdos preciosos. É como a água engarrafada cheia de microplásticos, muitos deles derivados da própria garrafa e tampa plástica. A embalagem é jogada dentro dos conteúdos que ela contém; nós definitivamente bebemos “a garrafa com a água” (WALKER, 2018, s.p.).

No acúmulo frenético que já está acontecendo dentro de uma sacola ou copo que não dialeticamente é dividido em dois (estou, claramente, fazendo uma alusão ao princípio de Mao Zedong, *yi fen wei er*, “um divide em dois”), então as consequências sociais, ambientais e globais são desastrosas. Note que o processo de divisão não é apenas reprodutivo. Nem é um resultado da iterabilidade, repitabilidade, a possibilidade de reinscrever ou remarcar uma marca singular ou um objeto. A duplicidade de uma embalagem jogada dentro do seu gêmeo idêntico – ou seja, jogada virtualmente em si mesmo – é semelhante à fissão atômica. Seria essa a projeção externa, material da autorrelação do *eu* e *eu mesmo*?

Na superfície, a embalagem dupla é o epítome da interconexão material das coisas, seja sob o título de *res extensa* ou *res cogitans*. De uma maneira silenciosa, essa duplicidade transmite que nada nem ninguém existe em isolamento dos outros, que a autonomia objetiva e subjetiva é ilusória. Não obstante, na sua autorrepresentação consumista, conjuga dois objetos que são cópias fiéis uma da outra, um criptograma da homogeneização do nosso mundo. O mesmo combinado com o mesmo, é, na verdade, o modelo da realidade, da comunicação e do pensamento massificados, impingido sob nós na era do aterro global. Articulados fisicamente, os dois são desarticulados ontologicamente, acumulados e descartados no clima da obsolescência obscena. Esta duplicidade é oposta ao princípio de Luce Irigaray “ser dois”, que implica o compartilhamento da e pela diferença (IRIGARAY, 2001, p. 12).

Se houvera alguma dúvida presente de que estamos lidando com mais do que apenas papel e plástico, devemos considerar a duplicidade como o *sine qua non* da significação. A unidade quebrada do signo consiste no significado e no significante, tomando o lugar de e em última instância substituindo o que o significante significa. Na obra de Durkheim, *Formas Elementares da Vida Religiosa*, o precursor da divisão do signo é o princípio do antigo animismo, onde uma coisa é, ao mesmo tempo, ela mesma e um receptáculo para *mana*, a alma que dá

vida e faz com que ela seja o que é (DURKHEIM, 1998, p. 50)<sup>6</sup>. Com a *mana*, a árvore é uma árvore e não é uma árvore; ela é ela a mesma coisa e um transbordamento de si mesma. Isso também se aplica ao sentido humano que, transbordando a materialidade do corpo que significa, sobrescreve as autossignificações da matéria, a qual Derrida deu o neologismo *arquiescrita*. O mundo é encantado porque, cheio de sentido, está transbordando em significações – em outras palavras, porque os seres não coincidem completamente com as imagens rígidas (ideias, conceitos) de si mesmos.

No processo de desencantamento, o que é duplicado é substituído por si mesmo, pela sua réplica exata, apesar de ser fisicamente presente, no local da sua substituição. Assim que o excesso de duplicidade material é incorporado à coisa, ela perde o seu sentido. Uma coisa é deficiente, inútil, e vazia de significado. Mais ainda se uma coisa for acrescida da mesma coisa<sup>7</sup>. Ora bem, dado que a síndrome da sacola dupla toca a vida humana em seu cerne, o que isso diz sobre a nossa realidade é que, percebidos desde o ponto de vista da “subjetividade automática” (Marx) do capital como sacolas e copos falantes, nós somos substituíveis em relação a outros, que são presumivelmente os nossos duplos. A promoção do trabalho em grupo e da cooperação em um lugar de trabalho capitalista não valoriza a interdependência mútua e o compartilhamento de diferenças; ela só abriga a substituição próstética de umas partes do capital humano defeituoso por outras, sempre à sombra da redundância (nos dois sentidos dessa palavra).

Ao segurar um copo dentro de um copo na sua mão, é esperado que você descarte essa coisa dupla praticamente despercebida quando você acabar com o seu café. Você fará uma boa ação se for reciclá-la (ou reciclá-las). Mas você vai agir com um atraso despercebido. Antes de qualquer ação da sua parte, você já recebe de uma barista uma coisa

6 “Once he [the primitive] arrived at the idea that man is a body that a spirit animates, then he must of necessity impute to natural bodies that same sort of duality, plus souls like his own. The phenomena of the physical world above all – the movement of the waters or of the stars, the germination of plants, the abundant reproduction of the animals, and the rest – are accounted for by the soul of things” (DURKHEIM, 1995, p. 50).

7 Essa falta de sentido não impede a lógica econômica de explorar esse defeito e lucrar com ele.



descartada dentro de si mesma. E essa oferta é nada menos que um convite sutil a descartar seu futuro, além do futuro possível do nosso planeta. O copo se torna o seu próprio lixo e a sua própria lixeira, descartado junto com os restos de sentido que tivera uma vez. Apesar de seu tamanho diminuto é uma lixeira para a pessoa que faz a sua bebida, para você que a bebe, e para o ambiente que nós todos temos em comum. Mais do que uma bebida quente, isso é o que você *consume*.

Não há quase nada mais lucrativo do que o depósito (de lixo, e não de luxo – quer dizer, de dinheiro em excesso a necessidade de uma conta bancária). Dentro das logísticas capitalistas descobertas por John Maynard Keynes, não seria mais lucrativo triplicar ou quadruplicar as coisas, inserindo um copo dentro de um copo dentro de um copo, e deixar com que o deserto, que é o depósito de lixo, cresça exponencialmente?

Não é suficiente só criticar, com escárnio e desprezo, o desperdício da embalagem dupla e seus efeitos adversos no meio ambiente. Mais que uma aberração, o fenômeno expõe elementos essenciais na criação das coisas e na condição humana na atual conjuntura histórica. As coisas não são autossuficientes, nem os humanos, cuja existência tem o caráter de ser jogada no mundo para nada, potencialmente desperdiçada. A questão é como lidar com essa interdependência endêmica ao ser. Nós não podemos por um fim à duplicidade de signos nem podemos prever a curva exata da jogada que é a vida humana. Mas podemos ir contra a tendência de duplicar o corpo da coisa à custa de seu significado e viabilidade ambiental. Com todo o nosso ânimo, devemos pressionar contra a determinação fatalista do depósito de lixo existencial, direcionado nesse momento histórico para a finalidade de desperdício útil.

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## **A streetcar named consumption, an object named desire**

### **Um bonde chamado consumo, um objeto chamado desejo**

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**Abstract:** *The focus of the present article is the Design Field inserted into the Cinema Field and its intervention in the production of props for Hollywood movies, which are desired by consumers after. The Nike Air Mag sneakers, for example, worn by the character Marty McFly in the movie Back to the future part II, created a sort of countdown by viewers for its launch. In 2011, Nike launched it on the market in a limited number of only one thousand and five hundred units in a virtual auction whose initial bid was five thousand and five hundred dollars. All pairs were sold quickly. Our goal is to understand the consumption of such props based on the theory of symbolic exchanges developed by Pierre Bourdieu.*

**Key words:** *design; props; desire; consumption; Pierre Bourdieu*

**Resumo:** *O foco de interesse presente artigo é o Campo do Design inserido no Campo do Cinema e sua intervenção na produção de objetos cenográficos para filmes de Hollywood que, posteriormente, são desejados pelos consumidores. O tênis Nike Air Mag, por exemplo, usado pelo personagem Marty McFly no filme De volta para o futuro II, criou uma espécie de contagem regressiva pelos telespectadores para seu lançamento. Em 2011, a Nike lançou no mercado em um*

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*número limitado de apenas mil e quinhentas unidades em um leilão virtual cujo lance inicial era de cinco mil e quinhentos dólares. Todos os pares foram vendidos rapidamente. Nosso objetivo é compreender o consumo destes objetos com base na teoria das trocas simbólicas desenvolvida por Pierre Bourdieu.*

**Palavras-chave:** *design; objetos cenográficos; desejo; consumo; Pierre Bourdieu*

## Introduction

According to the theoretical aspect which we use to our research and to such article, the Design Field begins its constitution dating from the second half of the 18th century, more specifically from the Industrial Revolution, which offered the conditions of possibility for the development of a new field of professional activity for a set of technological innovations, as well as to the new social needs which emerged during this historical period, as described by Adrian Forty (2007) in the book *Objects of Desire*.

Forty (2007) reported that, regarding industrial artifacts, the word design could assume two main meanings. The first referred to the appearance or to the shape of the objects which was determined under judgments related to notions of beauty. The second sense was related to the preparation of rationalization instructions for the production of manufactured goods, i.e., the first referred to the aesthetic dimension and the second to the utilitarian dimension of the industrial object. According to such meanings, it is clear that it would be a huge mistake to separate them, because the word design shows, in a broader sense, that the appearance of the objects is a consequence of the conditions of their production, that is, their material dimension cannot be detached from its symbolic dimension. It is not, therefore, a question of opposing one and the other, but of understanding them as complementary of each other.

At the same time, one of the important aspects brought by Forty in *Objects of Desire*, was the historical situation where the phenomenon design first occurred, by establishing it as an integral part of the production system of manufactured goods which is native from the capitalist system, it was implicit that the manufacture of industrial objects aimed for profit for the manufacturer and that the design not only had the objective of making them beautiful or functional, but also give them the production of added value. Forty emphasized that this is what design is, therefore, it is a social practice in charge of creating or producing objects, mainly industrial ones and also the “desire” of consumption itself

by such objects. Besides, this is the title of Forty's book who generally asked us: who actually produces desire for this or that object? This notion was very important for the approach about design, because it was clear that the industrial production mode builds not only the object itself, but also the desire of its acquisition – its necessity –, as well as other symbolic notions that surround it.

By symbolic notions are meant the processes used by designers in order to win over the consuming public for something or anything that has or does not have use value. Such as, for example, the important contribution of design for the construction and legitimation of abstract social value as was the case of extreme cleanliness (FORTY, 2007). This notion was built or produced at the same time as such industrial objects related to personal hygiene of people and maybe this is the most important content of the book *Objects of Desire*, in which it would be possible to think about the Design Field. Vacuum cleaners with freaky shapes, for example, were produced in abundance from 1920 as soon as the industry realized that they could be the biggest opponents against what people called dirty. The vacuum cleaner besides being important, is emblematic, because an abstract cultural arbitrary, such as the “cleanliness” or the “hygiene” is embodied in an industrial object which presents itself as a tool to “eliminate” or to suck the “dirt” from a place called “dirty”. Furthermore, and by the way, the organization (rationalization or ordering of spaces) and the hygiene were considered the origins of beauty. Thus, it is possible to observe that hygiene exaltation was expanded with extreme force by the market, i.e., by manufacturers of vacuum cleaners and, consequently, the housewives have come to consider that it was of the utmost importance do not allow the dust to accumulate. The demonized notion of accumulated dust was a symbolic notion brought forth by the producer market itself of hygiene products, including the vacuum cleaner. As highlighted by Forty (2007), the rise of capitalism is unavoidably linked not only to the production of industrial objects, but also to the ability to “innovate” and sell the products. Moreover, innovate or the concept of the production of the “new” for

commercial purposes was also a product or a social technology produced by the Industrial Revolution to legitimize the production of values or to transform the old symbolic values into those which were interested in the production of added value. So, the design needs to be understood more broadly, not only restricted to the objective aspects of the product, i.e., technical aspects, but also in relation to the production of symbolic notions which helps in order to build it, because they have substantially changed the way we perceive the goods. There is something far beyond the function and utilitarian purposes of industrial objects to be investigated. That is, the value of use can be examined from its meanings, their functions and their visual aspects.

With time, houses were filled with industrial objects that are currently sold in thousands on a daily basis. Design field theorists have observed that the objects constitute the surroundings and the environment itself of each individual. In the last paragraph of *Objects of Desire*, Forty (2007, p. 330) has written: “Such book [...] intended to show the ways in which design transforms ideas about the world and social relations in the shape of objects”. It is obvious that the design cannot be understood as something independent, something in itself, but as a social practice which was performed to meet social demands. It is a way of working, of producing objects inserted into the capitalist industrial society. When we understand the revealing design phenomenon of the economic system of industrial society, we will conclude that it is also determined by cultural values that emulate this production method. At the same time, the demand for the design phenomenon can be understood as a social practice which produces pieces that operate as a code of social distinction of different groups of society.

We note that, as Gustavo Bomfim explained (2014), the design is translated into a representative activity both of the objects of use and of information systems which materialize through themselves the ideals, the archetypes, the convictions and also the contradictions and the inconsistencies of a society, incorporating a portion of the values and cultural events which compose it. In addition, the design is part of the

cultural creation of a society and, as such, it is also a social practice of the aforementioned society, expressing or even denouncing their perfections or imperfections.

The consumer society is evidenced primarily by the socially constructed desire for possession of what exceeds the necessary and it is frivolous. The constant insatiability for purchasing something “new”, which is preliminarily satisfied soon, generates other necessity with something automatic which is inserted in an endless cycle of consumption.

If developed especially with the Industrial Revolution, the consumer society gains greater agility throughout the second half of the 20th century, when consuming comes to mean economic development and element of mediation of the various relations which are established in societies.

It is perceived that the objects have become members of our frequent activities. The new relations established between objects and social subjects are based on the practice of consumption, in which the importance of the objects is increasingly valued by people. A wide range of objects was developed and it was available to the consumer, extrapolating the full purchase needs. In fact, it turns out that there is no longer the prospect of simply buying an object only for its intended use without the possibility of its power of choice. In view of this, the election of a specific object becomes significant, because the choice personalizes its owner. Such subject is inserted, above all, into a group of a particular economic order, joining their peers and differentiating itself from the other social classes.

The goods establish the basis of the existence of consumption, constituting endless creations which will soon be destroyed and replaced, as well as the desire for this or that commodity. However, for what reason people started to wish for themselves an object which is in a movie? It is considered necessary for this paper to understand the Production Design of the movie for the development of such complicated social demand. Objects of various Hollywood movies are found for sale in auctions, galleries, stores and even in American museums. The goal of the



present article is to understand the consumption of such objects based on the theory of symbolic exchanges developed by Pierre Bourdieu.

Among cars flying and other wonders of the year of 2015 pictured in the movie *Back to the Future II*<sup>3</sup> broadcasted in 1989, one of the items created a sort of countdown by viewers for its launch until that exact year. The *Nike Air Mag sneakers* used by the character Marty McFly, played by Michael J. Fox, besides seemingly comfortable, automatically adjusted to the feet. Before the expected, in 2011, Nike put it on the market. Even without such automatic adjustment technology, the item was released in a limited number of only one thousand five hundred units in a virtual auction whose initial bid was five thousand five hundred dollars.<sup>4</sup>

Consumption practices occur within a symbolic universe. From Pierre Bourdieu on, the notion of field can be identified as, for example, in the Field of Literature or in the Field of Fashion and, therefore, it is believed that it can also be used for the movie industry. In dealing with this article, our focus of interest is the Field of Design inserted in the Field of Cinema and its intervention in the production of props, which are subsequently desired by consumers.

Objects act as mediators of human relationships, or still, as intermediaries among man, his wishes and his desires. And it is to that extent that we will approach the relations between consumers and some props of the Hollywood movies.

### **The consumption of props**

Until the first half of the 20th century, especially Hollywood credits, the work of Production Design was called Art Direction.<sup>5</sup> However, such productions and even American independent productions currently

3 *Back to the future part II [feature film]*. Dir. Robert Zemeckis. Amblin Entertainment, 1989. 108mins.

4 <http://www.cinepipocacult.com.br/2012/10/objetos-mais-cobicados-do-cinema.html> Available in: Accessed on: June 20, 2017.

5 We note that Art Direction credit often and currently appears as a function subordinate to Production Design.

present the credit of Production Design which refers to the design or election of environments, furniture and props. The Production Design embraces so in addition to scenography (including furniture and props), costumes, make-up and special effects. Under this article, the intention is to approach both props, and objects, and costumes used by the actors.

Vera Hamburger (2014, p. 46) described that props are called the fundamental elements for the conduct of the action and also the objects of personal use of the characters and figuration, such as a travel bag, for example.

The work of the production designer surpasses the function of being a mere interpreter of the director of the movie. Vincent Lobrutto (2002) disclosed that the process of the Production Design presents the script with visual references, color palette, texture options, architectural and time details, the selection of furniture and objects. The production designer creates a visual set that supports history and intends to communicate with the viewer. Ward Preston (1994) discloses that the production designer has visual tools to induce emotions and this is its ability to manipulate visual associations which define the style of a well-designed movie. We agree.

With hair tied back and wearing a black dress, Holly Golightly character from the movie *Breakfast at Tiffany's*<sup>6</sup>(1961), played by Audrey Hepburn, walked through the streets of New York carrying a cigarette holder and elegant sunglasses.<sup>7</sup> The film was not only a Hollywood hit but also led in popularizing the model of sunglasses when it was not yet widely known. The character of Holly Golightly caused quite a stir and is thought to aid in changing views of women at the time. Holly has a free spirit, she knows what she likes, and she is very stylish. From the enormous sunglasses to the pearls and cocktail dress, Holly's look is timeless and still copied today. The sunglasses, as well as Holly herself, synthesize the cultural arbitrary that it is now considered fashionable. Are these constituent factors of consumer desire for such an object? The

6 *Breakfast at Tiffany's* [feature film]. Dir. Blake Edwards. Jurow-Shepherd, 1961. 114mins.

7 We can not help but wonder why the glasses are considered "elegant".

Manhattan, by Oliver Goldsmith, is still on the market today for sale now for three hundred and sixty dollars.<sup>8</sup>

The black leather jacket worn by Johnny Strabler, leader of the “Black Rebels Motorcycle Club”, character played by Marlon Brando in the movie *The Wild One*<sup>9</sup>(1953) has become a symbol of a generation, meaning rebellion and freedom. Maybe, that is the reason why almost everyone needs a biker jacket still nowadays, sixty-five years after Brando donned one. If you’re looking to follow suit and ride away on the biker trail, where do you start? Officially known as Perfecto, the jacket was used as a garment by James Dean and by Bruce Springsteen. Its original manufacturer was Schott, which was the first company to apply zippers in jackets and currently selling them for something between seven hundred and nine hundred dollars.<sup>10</sup>

Since 2001, the virtual store Premiere Props<sup>11</sup>, with the slogan “Bring Hollywood Home”, sells numerous objects and costumes. Weekly, the store does virtual auctions and each item includes a certificate of authenticity in order to ensure its integrity. The store has partnership with several movie studios, such as Paramount Pictures, MGM, 20th Century Fox and Universal, and the main independents, such as Spyglass and Constantin Film, among others.

Inside The Forum Shops, in the city of Las Vegas, it is located the store Antiquities<sup>12</sup> which sells, among its various articles, props and costumes of Hollywood movies signed by some directors, actors or even by the whole cast. The jacket used in *Rocky II*<sup>13</sup> and signed by Sylvester Stallone, for example, was sold for four thousand, ninety-five dollars. However, we ask again for what reason people started to wish an object which is in a movie? How did this process begin?

8 <http://www.eyegoodies.com/Oliver-Goldsmith-c-372.html> Available in: Accessed on: April 20,2016.

9 *The wild one [feature film]*. Dir. Laszlo Benedek. Columbia Pictures, 1953. 79mins.

10 <https://www.schottnyc.com/search.cfm?searchterm=perfecto> Available in: Accessed on: April 20,2016.

11 <http://www.premiereprops.com> Available in: Accessed on: April 20,2017.

12 <http://www.antiquitieslv.com> Available in: Accessed on: April 20, 2016.

13 *Rocky II [feature film]*. Dir. Sylvester Stallone. United Artists, 1979. 120mins.

Hollywood movies have a major impact on material culture of the United States and Britain since, at least, the 1920s, described Anne Massey (2000, p. 2), author of *Hollywood beyond the screen: design and material culture*. Through the scenography and props used in movies, it was possible to define a direction for what we call tendencies, influencing and inspiring millions of Americans, as well as thousands of other citizens from different countries, as happened with the author herself who is from England. Massey (2000, p. 3) reported that her book blends into the stories of the generations of her own family, in particular from both writer's grandmothers. Massey's paternal grandmother, Violet Green, was born in the town of Consett in England in 1913. For several years, Violet, a big fan of Hollywood movies, had gone to the movies at least twice a week and, like many other women of her social class and age, copied the clothes and hairstyles from Hollywood movie stars. Sarah Johnson, Massey's maternal grandmother and also from England, was born in 1911 and shared the same enthusiasm for Hollywood movies. Sarah desired to resemble Clara Bow in the 1920s and Olivia de Havilland in the 1930s. Massey's parents were equally influenced by fashion and behavior of Hollywood movie stars. Massey reported that herself was later deeply affected by Hollywood movie's lifestyle also she witnessed her daughters watching *Titanic*<sup>14</sup> several times in the late of 1990s. As fans of Hollywood movies, this was the common element among the generations of her family.

We note that for the proposal of her book, Massey (2000, p. 4) defined material culture "as the study of how people have used objects to cope with and interpret their physical world". In this way, material culture becomes a kind of key to understand the impact of a movie on the viewer during and after watching it.

In parallel, one of the aspects described by Gabrielle Esperdy (2007, p. 199), author of the article *From introduction to consumption: architecture and design in Hollywood movies of the 1930s*, was that one of the most convincing ways to transmit social messages is through scenography

14 *Titanic [feature film]*. Dir. James Cameron. Paramount Pictures, 1997. 195mins.

and props. The scenography of Hollywood movies promoted the vision of the American society, becoming even more convincing after technological advances in the 1920s.

With two hundred units only in Manhattan in 1907, the first movie theaters were popular and synonymous of mass entertainment. It was also when women of audience began to adore movie stars (MASSEY, 2000, p. 21-22). Fan magazines were introduced in the United States like *Photoplay* and *Motion Picture*, both released in 1911, and stamped what was called the “American way of life”. These magazines were powerful supporters of social ascent aspirations for a luxury life generated by modern industrial society.

Massey (2000, p. 22) mentioned that until the early 1920s, the United States dominated movie productions on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. In 1920, the creation of luxurious scenography and rich costumes for Hollywood movies collaborated grandiosely as a reference for increasing the consumption. This period was one of the most economically expansive in the nation’s history. In 1922, the United States Department of Commerce made the slogan “trade follows the motion pictures”. Complementing Massey’s thoughts, Esperdy (2007, p. 199) described that the press was talking about the growing film industry in the United States. Magazines, such as *The American Architect*, *Pencil Points*, and *The Architectural Record*, advertised movies as an ideal field for architects because of spatial characteristics and advantages about aesthetic knowledges. Through architecture and design observed from scenography, it was believed to be possible to implant values and beliefs that would become the realization of the “American dream”. Movies really have become one of the most powerful ways to form opinion of a civilization. Such configurations were dictated by movies, promoted by press and applauded by audience. The United States has taken the global lead in creating a consumer culture.

In the movie *Our Dancing Daughters*<sup>15</sup>(1928), there are two important characters: Diana Medford, played by Joan Crawford, and Anne, played by Anita Page. The popularity of the movie and its impact as a vehicle for representing a particular lifestyle, could be verified in interviews for the book *Movies and Conduct* written in 1933 by Herbert Blumer. In an interview, a sixteen-year-old girl admits wanting a dress exactly like that Joan Crawford wears in a scene. Indeed, Blumer found that in a total of 458 autobiographies of high school students, sixty-two percent copied some aspect of the Hollywood movie stars dresses. In another interview, a seventeen-year-old girl tells about repeating the behavior of her favorite actress, Anita Page, after seeing her performing in the same film (MASSEY, 2000, p. 29-30). The interviews reinforce the idea that movies have been influencing consumption habits of several generations. Massey (2000, p. 35) revealed that in 1928, the secretary of the most significant trade organization for the motion picture industry, Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America, gave a speech at a conference about people watching movies as animated catalogs for ideas of dressing, decorating and living.

Allen W. Porter, quoted as an expert because of his position as a movie curator in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, noted that movies were a form of mass “education” of Interior Design. The middle class duplicated in their homes the scenography they had seen in the movies. Film studios received a huge number of letters from fans indicating the scenography of movies was, in fact, serving as pattern for their homes. Through letters, viewers asked for photographs, sketches and specifications of smallest decorative details. How many fans actually changed the décor of their homes because of scenography is uncertain. However, the desire of audience to imitate scenography from movies can be seen as a symptom of the way American taste in houses was trending (ESPERDY, 2007, p. 206).

15 *Our dancing daughters [feature film]*. Dir. Harry Beaumont. Cosmopolitan Productions, 1928. 85mins.

## Applications of the social theories of Pierre Bourdieu

In accordance with the theoretical guidance we have used, we consider that we purposely imprint to objects certain meanings through their social use, what is already legitimized by the *habitus*.

We assume that some aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's proposal, such as for example, the notion of *habitus*, are appropriate in terms of consumption. This would be, according to our point of view, a system of symbolic representation in which relations of power and distinction are fully diluted.

Reexamining the foundations of sociology, Bourdieu intended to discuss power relations and, therefore, also existing domination in their theoretical assumptions regarding social structures, conceiving certain notions, being the most relevant the notions of "*habitus*" and "field".

Bourdieu took up the notion of *habitus* and developed it as an organization of provisions in our ways of thinking, feeling and acting. Bourdieu (1983) has explained that the term "disposition" seems particularly appropriate to express in effect the notion of *habitus*, it is understood as "disposition systems", because it firstly expresses the consequence of an organizing action, exposing thus an approximate meaning to words like structure, for example. From another perspective, the term indicates "a way of being, a habitual state (of the body in particular) and, in particular, a predisposition, a trend, a propension or an inclination" (BOURDIEU, 1983, p. 61).

Such dispositions or *habitus* are socially structured and mentally structuring for each subject that makes up a particular society. They were analyzed by Bourdieu as flexible, that is, conditional on social structures, i.e., they are located in time and space, becoming dynamic. Thus, which is as an example in a certain place does not fit for another. The *habitus* seems something rooted in our daily lives, which emerges randomly in our actions and in behaviors that we do not perceive rationally. Do we think before acting or simply act? It is a process supposedly "natural" of which we are often no longer conscious and it seems routine in our lives. We simply reproduce it.

Bourdieu (1983) has explained that the *habitus* produces both individual and collective practices. A system of provisions and cohesive discourse is set up to provide and ensure the symbolic dominion of the principles practiced by those dominated by each social class and such speech is also noted in Hollywood movies which produce the sense that objects are socially necessary through the affirmation of its symbolic value. Thus, the objects related to the characters that aim to synthesize the understanding of what is elegant, beautiful or ugly, for example, are inserted in the same social structure as those who designed them, the production designers themselves. Bourdieu has observed that we belong to social structures, that is, we are all agents of such structures. Thus, we came to consider that the use of sunglasses similar to those of Holly Golightly make us elegant. Note, for example, that Massey mentioned that in the first decades of the 20th century, thousands of women used to go to the movies at least twice a week, which was common among those who belonged to the same social class. Therefore, these women were inserted in same *habitus*. The *habitus* reproduces the peculiar practices of a given class<sup>16</sup> of the social structure, creating particular codes for this specific class and designing a logic for social behaviors such as, for example, the way we behave in a certain ceremony or our table manners or even regarding our mental and intellectual operations and all the practices that surround us all the time, simply through actions.

By Bourdieu (1983), the notion of field presented is clarified as a conflict space structured by dominant and also by dominated, whose structure is strengthened by the participants and active agents on it. The field should not be understood as a fixed structure. The specific interests demarcate the set, such as economic ones for example, of agents who are owners of the same *habitus*. The *habitus* is structured by the field and the field consists of the *habitus*. What is copied from Hollywood movies by the viewers was already legitimized or consecrated previously by the circulation agents through the American collective *habitus* itself.

16 We note that, in fact, Bourdieu prefers to use the term “social place”, rather than “social class”. He considers that the term “class” is more widely used among Marxists, but often he uses the term “class” or “social place” as synonyms.



Or is this *habitus* influenced by the prior validation of what is “elegant” in Hollywood?

Before we move forward, it is essential to understand the position of agents within the field, because their operation is limited to the domination of the participants who determine what is inside and what “should” be outside the field. What would that be that demarcates the monopoly of the authority of these agents to affirm that this is design and that it is not? The field is a consequence of the categorization system operated by such individuals who at the same time work, and who are also objects of this social action, suffering the results of this action, i.e., the social agents are at the same time subjects and objects of the social actions taken by them. For example, the same person who designs or proposes the use of the sunglasses Manhattan (the production agents), as examples of elegance, also uses them. Thus, the power relations promoted by agents and institutions, fighting each other inside the field to the legitimacy of this or that cultural arbitrary, organize it and generate its internal structure, i.e., their reference codes, the values to be respected.

Other important agents in the field are agents of circulation, who are responsible for establishing the bodies that operate after the production agents invent or create the sunglasses, for example. They operate in the consecration and legitimation of such objects. Who states that the props of a Hollywood movie must and may be for sale by a particular price at an auction or store? Besides, who decides whether the glasses model “x” or “y” are elegant or not? Why is Hollywood a world reference for movies considered to be good for the majority of the public? For Bourdieu, the agents of legitimacy or consecration are the ones who operate in the circulation, i.e., in the definition of what is a good movie in Hollywood and throughout America and also what is elegant or not. The field is a social convention and a process of social differentiation, based on values established by peers, founded by rules and consolidated by hierarchies. Therefore, almost all, if not all the conceptions conveyed in our culture, have meanings that emerge from these relationships built by the field. It is the field that gives the role played by the films in the formation of the

people in audiovisual societies such as ours. Thus, if you want to look elegant, use the same sunglasses as Holly Golightly.

Our “competence” to watch a movie is not restricted to simply seeing what is on the screen, but it is circumscribed in the social and cultural universe of individuals, in what Bourdieu called a prior disposition which precedes not only the movie, but what we mean by ontological reason for our existence.

As well as in design practice, we understand that the practice of cinema is understood as a social practice, because the meaning of a movie depends on the context or field in which it was produced and in which it is watched. There must be an appropriate atmosphere for it to exist as a form of social representation. In this sense, the movies present varied conventions and social standards in an attempt to generate some meaning for the public.

From there, we think of the production of meanings generated in symbolic exchanges and we believe that the study of Production Design is also capable of showing such meanings. Using Bourdieu’s notions, we understood that the props began to participate in the practice of producing symbolic exchanges and, thus, became themselves producers of symbolic codes of consumption. The props introduced in the films become, besides a cultural and symbolic production, a commodity to be financially traded. Thus, we are faced with issues such as: for what reason does a prop become the target of consumption by certain social groups? In what ways do certain objects produce symbolic meanings, becoming symbols of distinction between the social classes?

The importance of consumption is fundamental to the development of capitalism, with the need to create new strategies to achieve ever-increasing profit margins and, even if it cannot be effectively put in practice, this is present in the beliefs and desires existing in societies. Consumption is a constituent part of contemporary culture, establishing itself as a practice greatly encouraged by the capitalist system, through which the various socio-cultural groups are related to each other owning

or wishing to have certain products that act as dispute and distinction elements.

Bourdieu (1983, p. 80) reported that “Since the history of the individual is never more than a certain specification of the collective history of their group or of their class”, it is possible to observe in the systems of dispositions of each individual structural arrangements of *habitus* for a specific group belonging to a social class. From this point of view, so the *habitus* is the generator of the taste of social class and it is also understood as the cause of all practices. Thus, there would be a possible taste for each social position and such taste is not free from the impositions of life in society.

Bourdieu (1983, p. 84) explained that social groups tend to invest in everything that contrasts them when compared to other groups, wishing to express a particular identity, “I mean, its complete difference”.

In many cases, it is easy to identify socio-cultural groups, because they are differentiated by the desire to possess certain objects in terms of their predominant symbolic values considered representations of social inclusion in a given group and status for the others.

It is observed that the socio-cultural groups that exercise the same consumption practices permanently reproduce the same behavior, which is based on characteristic representations of that determined set of members. Simultaneously, the goods operate not as functional elements, but of social distinction, causing the desire of the social classes to possess what has the power to highlight them in a certain way and we return to the consumer case of the Nike Air Mag from the movie *Back to the Future II*, for example. Therefore, the irrationality of appropriation of the symbols inserted in differentiated socio-cultural groups is established through the desire to become a standard element included in a set by acquiring the same object considered symbolically superior.

Bourdieu (1983, p. 83-84) referred to the set of “properties”, term used in a double sense, of individuals or groups – “houses, furniture, paintings, books, automobiles, alcohols, cigarettes, perfumes, clothing” – and in the practices in which its distinction is evidenced – “Sports,

games, cultural distractions” – because they are inserted in the *habitus*. The taste, preference for material and / or symbolic appropriation of a particular category of objects, is the generative formula that lies at the beginning of the lifestyle. The Lifestyle translates it into a set of distinctive preferences which are expressed, among others, in furniture and clothing.

The rarer, “newer” and / or more luxurious, the more distinctive the object is. Consuming reveals itself as a process of mediation of social relations and revealing social distinctions, producing symbolic values through objects, including the props of Hollywood movies.

## Conclusion

Having the notions of Bourdieu prolonged, we humbly understand that design is expressed in objects designed by designers, but what produces such process is instilled through the *habitus* of the social context in which such designers are inserted and so do production designers and the props of Hollywood movies. Thus, it seems to be a mistake to believe that the symbolic value is in the object. Would it then be in the back of each spectator individually, in the subjectivity of the consumer? We conclude that meanings are in social structures and are reproduced by the social agents inserted therein. The presence of the props in the auctions and in the stores, confirms that the design process is in the social context where it appears.

Auctions and stores are the legitimation of the Hollywood movie industry exalted through the props consecrated also by the agents of the Field of Cinema. And why not to say that it is also by the Field of Design?

The props reflect the movie Hollywood dominance as a symbol of power, ideologically symbolizing patriotic nationality and the pride of possessing something that represents the idealized America of Hollywood movies. Hollywood is consecrated by the Americans who are influenced by this great industry and by its circulation agents who work there. Hollywood is at the same time the cause and effect, structured

and structuring, of the social representation of the American nation as sovereign and the affirmation of this social structure.

The *habitus* of the American social structure, both collective and individual, is constituted also of this exacerbated patriotism, of this feeling already imposed through a process of inculcation to belong to this great influential nation and such *habitus* is reaffirmed at every moment through each object exposed in the auctions and in the stores and in the Hollywood movies themselves. The props are heavily traded, because the “need” of the individual to be part of something it is verified, even if it is due to the obligation to feel adequate to a social structure, participating in the symbolic exchanges that other people are participating in, that is, consuming and this fact could be verified from the beginning of the 20th century.

The oil can belong to the character Tin Woodman from the movie *The Wizard of Oz*<sup>17</sup>(1939) which was signed by the actor, whose value at the Antiquities store was two thousand four hundred and ninety-five dollars, when the store’s website was accessed on April 20, 2106, it was no longer on sale. The second access to the website was made on April 26, 2016, less than a week later.

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## **Confiança da marca em redes de televisão aberta e suas consequências após um mega-desastre em um país emergente**

### **Brand trust on open television networks and its consequences after a mega-disaster in an emergent country**

Judith Cavazos-Arroyo<sup>1</sup>

Rogelio Puente-Díaz<sup>2</sup>

**Resumo:** *Esta investigação examinou o efeito da confiança da marca em empresas de televisão aberta sobre as percepções do público, após um escândalo durante um mega-desastre no México. Uma pesquisa quantitativa foi desenvolvida e enquetes pessoais foram aplicadas a 300 mexicanos que sofreram o terremoto e seguiram um escândalo da mídia durante os trabalhos de resgate. Os resultados mostraram que, mesmo no escândalo, a confiança da marca nas empresas de televisão aberta teve um efeito positivo sobre a responsabilidade social corporativa e as percepções de capacidade de marketing do público. Além disso, ambos afetaram a credibilidade corporativa e isso teve um efeito significativo na percepção do risco de mega-desastre e a disposição de doar para as vítimas. O artigo fornece informações úteis sobre a relevância da confiança da marca das emissoras pelos públicos de televisão aberta.*

**Palavras-chave:** *redes de televisão aberta; confiança da marca; credibilidade corporativa, audiência*

**Abstract:** *This investigation examined the effect of brand trust on open television networks on perceptions the audiences, after a scandal during a mega-disaster*

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*in Mexico. A quantitative research was developed and personal survey was applied to 300 Mexicans who experienced the earthquake and followed a media scandal during the rescue works. Results showed that even the scandal, brand trust on open television companies had a positive effect on corporate social responsibility and marketing ability perceptions of audiences. In addition, both affected the corporate credibility and this had a significant effect in the perception of mega-disaster risk and the willingness to donate for the victims. The paper provides useful information on the relevance of brand trust of broadcasters by open television audiences.*

**Key words:** *open television networks; brand trust; corporate credibility, audience*



## Introduction

Communication is a fundamental tool during emergency events and response to disasters (SIMON *et al.*, 2015). Governments, institutions and citizens have high expectations for media that are perceived as accurate, trustworthy and credible in order to consider them as a reliable source of information (TORIUMI *et al.*, 2013). However, during emergencies, it is common for false, inaccurate information to emerge, which has the potential of misleading media audiences, delaying rescue efforts, and costing lives (LINDSAY, 2011). In Mexico's earthquake (the main event took place on September 19th), more than 300 people died, including 19 children whose bodies were found and others that were classified as missing in an elementary school that collapsed in Mexico City (CHAVEZ *et al.*, 2017). Many rescuers, residents and media gathered in the school to help. The media, especially the open television networks operated by private firms, played a crucial role in informing about the rescue efforts. During the coverage of the rescue efforts at this elementary school, a name began to emerge, Frida Sofia, as a possible survivor under the rubble. Open television networks suggested that the rescue efforts were focused on saving Frida Sofia. This kept the whole country in suspense, hoping for days that Frida Sofia could emerge from the rubble alive. The story was amplified by journalists and broadcasters until it was discovered that the child did not exist. The truth was that a few days before, it had been determined that no one was alive under the rubble, putting the credibility of television networks under the scrutiny of the public. Whereas some considered it a media montage to take the management of the disaster out of focus by the authorities, others believed it was a media montage to create marketing sensationalism (BBC, 2017) and increase TV audiences.

Regardless of the motives behind the story of Frida Sofia, open television networks were severely criticized. Unlike other organizations, the media hold a direct responsibility in the development of public risk perception, amplifying or attenuating it (BUM CHUNG; WOONG YUN, 2013). Although there are several ways in which the perception of risk is

affected by the mass media, the discussion persists about which and how the cognitive and affective aspects related to the media affect the level of risk (PAEK *et al.*, 2016; WU; LI, 2017). In the face of serious humanitarian crises after natural disasters, more funds are required from different sources; therefore, media networks can encourage the willingness of the public to donate. Thus, aspects as brand trust (DELGADO-BALLESTER *et al.*, 2003) and credibility (KIOUSIS, 2006) can provide a feeling of security in consumers. Likewise, over the last decade, an interest in understanding the development of marketing abilities and corporate social responsibility efforts in media networks has increased (GULYÁS, 2011; OLKKONEN, 2015; KARMASIN; APFELTHALER, 2017). However, the literature is still scant and there is a lack of research examining the antecedents of the risk perception and the willingness to donate money for victims. Therefore, this investigation seeks to address some of these shortcomings by examining the influence of audiences' brand trust on the marketing abilities and corporate social responsibility actions of open television networks in Mexico, after the scandal of Frida Sofia. In addition, we examine the consequences of marketing abilities and corporate social responsibility in terms of perception of risk and willingness to donate money to the victims of the earthquake.

## **Literature Review**

### **Brand Trust and Social Responsibility in Media**

In communication research, trust is a critical variable for media effects (TSFATI; CAPELLA, 2003) and social cohesion (KOHRING; MATTHES, 2007). Earlier, many media managers were skeptical about using branding strategies; however, nowadays they have become more relevant, especially for the television industry, because it faces different challenges including globalization, deregulation and new media growth (BARSHI; MISHRA, 2017). Brand trust in media and consumer products differs in important ways. Media provides a service that relies on information, has audiences and advertisers as buyers or consumers, and

the content generated depends on creative efforts that try to influence audiences' perceptions (BARSHI; MISHRA, 2017).

In addition to the challenges just described, branding efforts in the media industry have become more complex due to advances in technology, the advent of Web 2.0, more competitors, and the emergence of new marketing channels (CHAN-OLMSTED, 2011). Thus, traditional media have had to adjust by rethinking their branding strategies (LIN; PEÑA, 2011) and by strengthening audiences' trust (DELGADO-BALLESTER; HERNANDEZ-ESPALLARDO, 2008). Enhancing trust has become a priority for media companies (RINSDORF, 2017) as seen in the increased use of CSR activities (HOU; REBER, 2011) as a way to gain credibility, positive reputation and legitimacy (MUELLER, 2014). These efforts have tried to balance the need to satisfy shareholders, while at the same time show social responsibility to audiences (ADAMS-BLOOM; CLEARY, 2009) and engage in environmentally friendly actions when doing business (BABIAK; TRENDAFILOVA, 2011).

Social responsibility efforts play an important role in different media activities including (BERTELS; PELOZA, 2008; GULYÁS, 2011; INGENHOFF; KOELLING, 2012; MUELLER, 2014): the formation of the opinion of the public through social performance, the obligation to educate and inform, the need to protect freedom of expression and impartiality, the promotion of operational transparency, respect for privacy, corporate values, media literacy, diversity of output, creative independence and stewardship, among others. The social responsibility efforts just described become more relevant once one acknowledges that news media have the ability to form and affect how the public thinks about different issues (CARROLL; MCCOMBS, 2003; DEEPHOUSE; HEUGENS, 2009). At the same time, however, the public currently has more mechanisms to monitor the content generated by media outlets and hold media companies accountable for their social responsibilities (OLKKONEN, 2015). Consequently, media companies design strategies to increase audiences' trust (RUIZ MAFE *et al.*, 2010). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Audiences' trust on open television networks would have a positive influence on the perception of television networks' social responsibility efforts.

### **Brand Trust and Marketing abilities in Media**

Marketing abilities refer to the complex set of skills and knowledge that help describe and implement the use of existing resources in an organization to create marketing efforts (DAY, 1994). Marketing abilities are developed when applied knowledge and skills in combination with other resources or tangible assets are used to transform marketing inputs into related outputs (VORHIES, 1998). Hence, marketing capabilities have important implications for strategy, the commercial success of products and services, competitive advantage and corporate performance (DAVCIK; SHARMA, 2016; DAY, 1994; NAJAFI-TAVANI *et al.*, 2016).

Trust influences important marketing outcomes (SIRDESHMUKH *et al.*, 2002). For instance, empirical research shows that trust affects the success of marketing strategies (HURLEY *et al.*, 2014), consumers' purchase intentions (HONGYOUN *et al.*, 2009), satisfaction (KHODADAD *et al.*, 2017) and loyalty (DELGADO-BALLESTER; MUNUERA-ALEMÁN, 2001). In the context of the media industry, we suggest that trust might also help audiences develop positive perceptions about the networks ability to produce and deliver high quality programming (BRYANT; ZILLMAN, 2002), services (HOEFFLER; KELLER, 2002) and communication (KOHRING; MATTHES, 2007), based on the company's strategy and values (CULNAN *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Audiences' trust on open television networks would have a positive influence on the perception of television networks' marketing abilities.

## Corporate credibility

Credibility, its antecedents and consequences, has been widely studied in media research (KIOUSIS, 2006). The marketing literature shows that organizational credibility is an asset or a competitive advantage, yet scholars have used different terms or assess different types of credibility such as corporate credibility, institutional credibility, retailer credibility or advertiser credibility (METZGER *et al.*, 2003). Corporate credibility refers to the degree that consumers believe that a company has the competencies and capabilities to deliver in a reliable, sincere and truthfulness form the products and services promised (FEATHERMAN *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, the bases of corporate credibility are expertise and trustworthiness (GOLDSMITH *et al.*, 2000). Media corporate credibility is part of the overall company's image (ATKIN *et al.*, 2008). Corporate credibility is part of the institutional structure and is formed by the experiences and information shown to the public (METZGER *et al.*, 2003). Research shows that CSR has a positive influence on corporate credibility. Similarly, several empirical investigation have found support for the important role of corporate credibility as a mediator between CSR activities and important marketing outcomes such as attitudes toward the brand, brand equity or intention to purchase (HUR *et al.*, 2014; LAFFERTY; GOLDSMITH, 1999). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Open television networks' social responsibility perceptions would have a positive influence on corporate credibility.

Similarly, research shows that marketing abilities have a positive influence on corporate credibility (JOHN; MARTIN, 1984). Lack of credibility leads consumers to question a company and makes them less likely to consume the companies' products or services (GOLDSMITH *et al.*, 2000). To avoid this, companies develop and use their marketing abilities in order to achieve positive responses from consumers (HUR *et al.*, 2014). Nowadays, it has become even more crucial for television networks to develop effective marketing strategies in order to obtain differentiation and respond to the new demands of real and potential

television viewers (LIS; POST, 2013). Hence, marketing abilities can make a significant contribution to corporate credibility (HATCH; SCHULTZ, 2003). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4. Open television networks' marketing abilities would have a positive influence on perceptions of corporate credibility.

Risk has different meanings in diverse contexts and risk perception can be shared between the members of a society reflecting their values, history and ideology (WEINSTEIN *et al.*, 1989). Risk perception can be conceptualized as the subjective assessment of the probability of death or premature fatality (FISCHHOFF *et al.*, 1993). Given that mega-disasters cause catastrophic damages, risk perception acts as psychological stimulus that serves to evaluate negative consequences and adopt precautionary behavior to alleviate perceived threat. In communication research, several empirical studies have shown that media have the power of influencing audiences' risk perception (DONG *et al.*, 2018; PAEK *et al.*, 2016). For instance, Keown (1989) concluded that society perceptions of risk vary, among other factors, as a function of what media outlets choose to report, what people decide to discuss, and the cultural norms endorsed by society. Similarly, Paek *et al.* (2016) found that fear-arousing news messages were positively related to individuals' and societal risk perceptions.

Regarding corporate credibility, it is hypothesized to lower risk perceptions (HYUN BAEK; WHITEHILL KING, 2011), leading to higher consumers' purchase intention (DE RUYTER *et al.*, 2001; GOLDSMITH *et al.*, 2000; LAFFERTY *et al.*, 2002). The reason behind this effect is because corporate credibility acts as a signal for the quality of goods, services and management, honesty, helpfulness, friendliness, and a positive corporate culture (GÜRHAN-CANLI; BATRA, 2004), which often leads to higher consumers' purchase intentions (GREGORY, 1991). However, during critical situations such as natural mega-disasters, the credibility of the information provided by open television networks or any media outlets help shape perceptions about the crises, which influences important behaviors (PARKER; PAGLIA, 2012) such as the

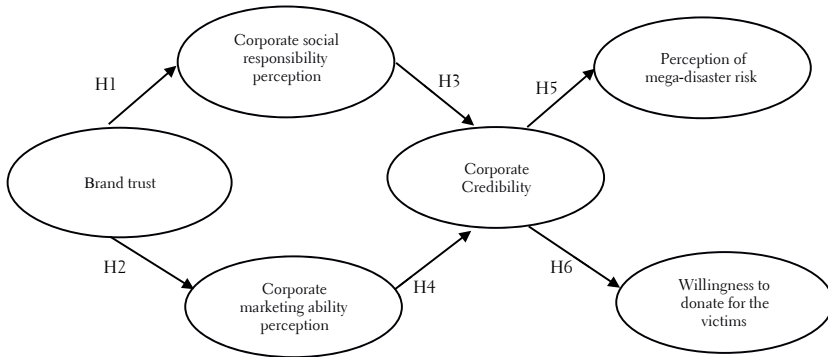
willingness to make donations (WALTERS; MAIR, 2012; ZAGEFKA; JAMES, 2015). Thus, two hypotheses are proposed:

H5. Open television networks' corporate credibility would have a positive influence on perceptions of mega-disaster risk.

H6. Open television networks' corporate credibility would have a positive influence on willingness to donate money for the victims.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model identifying the hypotheses to be tested.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



**Method**

A quantitative, explanatory, cross-sectional design was used to test our hypotheses. We conducted face-to-face surveys with 300 residents of Puebla and Mexico City (53.8 females, 46.2 males, 18 to 63 years of age), two cities affected by the September 19<sup>th</sup> earthquake. Participants needed to classify themselves as regular news watchers of any of the open television networks operating in Mexico to participate in the survey. Fieldwork was conducted during the months of October, November and December of 2017, collecting a non-probabilistic sample of convenience. Face-to-face surveys lasted between 10-15 minutes.

**Measures.** To measure brand trust, four items were taken from the scale developed by Zhang and Bloemer (2008). To assess social

responsibility (six items), marketing abilities (six items), and corporate credibility (three items), we used the scales developed by Kim, Lee and Prideaux (2014). Willingness to donate was measured with two items developed by White, Poulsen and Hyde (2017). The wording of the items was slightly modified to the context of earthquakes. Last, risk perceptions was assessed with three items developed by Guo and Li (2016).

**Data analysis procedure.** We used a two-step procedure to test our hypothesized model. First, we tested our measurement model followed by the examination of our structural model. Specifically, we used the partial-least-squares structural equation modeling method to test our hypotheses with the statistical software Smart Partial Least Squares.

## Results

As explained earlier, we first tested our measurement model. We assumed that all indicators of the latent variables were reflective. When examining the factor loadings for each indicator, we used the cut-off criterion of .60. Two items from the Corporate Social Responsibility perception (CSR2, CSR3, CSR5), two from marketing abilities (CMA3, CMA5) and one from the risk perception scale (PM1) were eliminated because their loadings were below the .60 threshold. As shown in table 1, the scores from the remaining indicators of each latent construct showed acceptable levels of internal consistency, Cronbach alpha ( $\alpha$ ), composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE).

To establish discriminant validity, three methods were used: cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio [HTMT] (see Table 2 for summary of results). Regarding the cross loadings, each indicator should have its largest loading on the latent construct that is supposed to measure, with values greater than 0.70. As shown in table 2, this criterion was met. Concerning the Fornell-Larcker criterion, this method compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlation of the latent variables. The assumption is that the AVE values should be greater than any of the correlations between the latent variables. As shown in table 2, this criterion



was met as well. Last, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) values should lower than .90 (Gold *et al.*, 2001). Only the scores from the Marketing abilities construct are at the limit of the suggested threshold 0.905. Hence, the psychometric properties of the scores coming from latent constructs were adequate to test our structural model.

Table 1: Loads associated with items, reliability and convergent validity

Construct	Item	Loading factor	Cronbach alpha	CR	AVE
Corporate credibility	CC1	0.852	0.825	0.895	0.741
	CC2	0.852			
	CC3	0.878			
Corporate marketing ability	CMA1	0.759	0.78	0.858	0.602
	CMA2	0.788			
	CMA4	0.773			
	CMA6	0.783			
Willingness to donate	WD1	0.926	0.866	0.936	0.881
	WD2	0.951			
Brand trust	BT1	0.908	0.887	0.922	0.748
	BT2	0.892			
	BT3	0.896			
	BT4	0.752			
Perception of mega-disaster	PM2	0.930	0.700	0.844	0.731
	PM3	0.772			
Corporate Social Responsibility perception	CSR1	0.801	0.731	0.848	0.605
	CSR4	0.798			
	CSR6	0.818			

Table 2: discriminant validity criteria

Cross loadings						
	Corporate credibility	Corporate marketing ability	Corporate social responsibility perception	Brand trust on open television companies	Perception of mega-disaster risk	Willingness to donate for the victims
CC1	0.852	0.463	0.420	0.325	0.318	0.168
CC2	0.852	0.613	0.531	0.456	0.189	0.149
CC3	0.878	0.535	0.515	0.467	0.272	0.186
CMA1	0.551	0.759	0.532	0.485	0.130	0.144
CMA2	0.432	0.788	0.507	0.541	0.044	0.010
CMA4	0.452	0.773	0.593	0.451	0.181	0.179
CMA6	0.503	0.783	0.599	0.496	0.075	0.096
WD1	0.164	0.103	0.046	-0.020	0.269	0.926
WD2	0.198	0.150	0.138	0.032	0.228	0.951
BT1	0.486	0.621	0.660	0.908	0.127	0.091
BT2	0.401	0.578	0.575	0.892	0.072	0.058
BT3	0.449	0.572	0.585	0.896	0.069	-0.024
BT4	0.327	0.397	0.414	0.752	0.153	-0.149
PM2	0.278	0.149	0.153	0.124	0.930	0.229
PM3	0.231	0.069	0.106	0.066	0.772	0.229
CSR1	0.503	0.560	0.801	0.510	0.223	0.133
CSR4	0.451	0.589	0.798	0.477	0.064	0.131
CSR6	0.427	0.588	0.818	0.596	0.085	-0.010
Fornell-Larcker criterion						
	Corporate credibility	Corporate marketing ability	Corporate social responsibility	Brand trust	Perception of mega-disaster risk	Willingness to donate for the victims

Table 2 (continuation)

Corporate credibility	0.861									
Corporate marketing ability	0.627	0.776								
Corporate social responsibility perception	0.571	0.718	0.806							
Brand trust	0.487	0.637	0.657	0.865						
Perception of mega-disaster risk	0.299	0.137	0.156	0.117	0.855					
Willingness to donate for the victims	0.194	0.137	0.103	0.009	0.262	0.939				
<b>Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)</b>										
Corporate credibility		Corporate marketing ability		Corporate social responsibility		Brand trust		Perception of mega-disaster risk		Willingness to donate for the victims
Corporate marketing ability	0.774									
Corporate social responsibility perception	0.732	0.905								
Brand trust	0.558	0.753	0.800							
Perception of mega-disaster risk	0.405	0.179	0.214	0.150						
Willingness to donate for the victims	0.228	0.167	0.153	0.106	0.357					

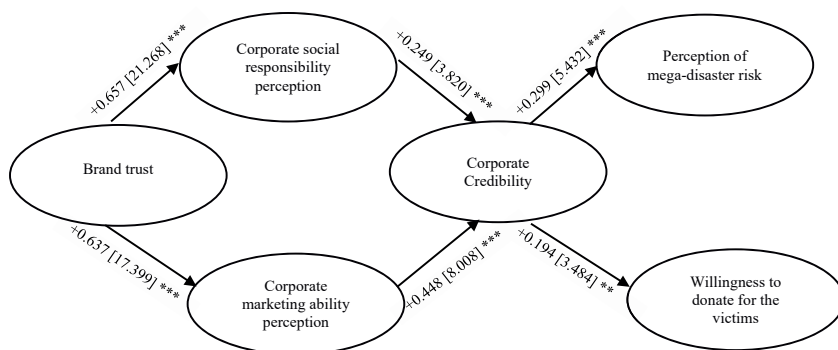
**Evaluation of the structural model.** Regarding the individual coefficients, results showed a positive, direct effect of brand trust on social responsibility ( $\rho = 0.657$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and marketing abilities ( $\rho = 0.637$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Social responsibility and marketing abilities had a positive effect on corporate credibility ( $\rho = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.001$  and  $\rho = 0.448$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , respectively). Last, corporate credibility had a positive influence on risk perception ( $\rho = 0.299$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and willingness to donate ( $\rho = 0.194$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Hence, all hypotheses were supported (See Table 3 and Figure 2 for a summary of results). In addition to the direct effects, we also tested for the indirect effects. As shown in Table 4, all indirect effects were significant.

Table 3. Results of the analysis of the structural equation model

Hypothesis proposed	Hypothesis	Path coefficient ( $\rho$ )	t-statistic
Brand trust → Corporate social responsibility perception	H1	0.657	21.268
Brand trust → Corporate marketing ability	H2	0.637	17.399
Corporate social responsibility perception → Corporate credibility	H3	0.249	3.820
Corporate marketing ability → Corporate credibility	H4	0.448	8.008
Corporate credibility → Perception of mega-disaster risk	H5	0.299	5.432
Corporate credibility → Willingness to donate for the victims	H6	0.194	3.484

Nota:  $n = 300$ . Bootstrapping 500 subsamples.  
 $\rho$  = Standardized coefficient

Figure 2. Contrasted model



\*\* Significant with an alpha of 0.01; \*\*\* Significant with an alpha of 0.001

Table 4. Indirect and total effects

Indirect effect	Effect	t-statistic
Corporate marketing ability → Perception of mega-disaster risk	0.134	4.519***
Corporate marketing ability → Willingness to donate for the victims	0.087	3.092**
Corporate social responsibility → Perception of mega-disaster risk	0.074	3.095**
Corporate social responsibility → Willingness to donate for the victims	0.048	2.604**
Brand trust → Corporate credibility	0.449	11.970***
Brand trust → Perception of mega-disaster risk	0.134	4.908***
Brand trust → Willingness to donate for the victims	0.087	3.318**

\*\* Significant with an alpha of 0.01; \*\*\* Significant with an alpha of 0.001

## Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the influence of audiences' brand trust on the marketing ability and corporate social responsibility actions, after a mega-disaster in Mexico. Furthermore, we examined the effects of marketing abilities and corporate social

responsibility on the perception of mega-disaster risk and willingness to donate money to the victims of the earthquake. We found support for all the hypotheses tested. Consequently, we explored the theoretical and applied implications of the results.

### **Theoretical and applied implications**

As stated earlier, prior studies have established the relevance of media networks effects on risk perception and willingness to donate money after mega-disasters (DONG HU; ZHU, 2018; ZAGEFKA; JAMES, 2015). Therefore, we found that brand trust was a crucial variable that directly and indirectly influenced perceptions and behavioral intentions in open television networks audiences. This not only leads to differentiation against competitors, it is an indicator of the customer-brand relationship status (SHIN *et al.*, 2016). Thus, with respect to hypothesis 1 and 2, we found that ever after a scandal; brand trust had a positive effect on the perception of the audiences in terms of social responsibility and marketing abilities. Despite the reduction of advertising revenues in open television networks in Mexico during the last years (CORONA, 2016), 74% of Mexicans tend to watch content on open television channels and the most viewed content is news (RIQUELME, 2017). Therefore, open television networks need to maintain positive publics' perceptions about its social responsibility and marketing mix through a creative, truthful and differentiated strategy (BAKSHI; MISHRA, 2017).

The results also showed that the perceptions of the audiences about social responsibility and marketing ability in the open television networks had a positive and direct effect on corporate credibility, supporting hypotheses 3 and 4. The relevance of these results is that the open television networks credibility maintains a genuine and positive expectation on the networks' promises based on expertise and trustworthiness (FEATHERMAN *et al.*, 2010; GOLDSMITH *et al.*, 2000). Despite the media scandal during the natural mega-disaster, the perceptions of social responsibility and marketing ability had positive effect on credibility. These results are consistent with findings from other investigations

showing the positive effect of social responsibility and marketing abilities on attitudes (PRACEJUS; OLSEN, 2004), brand equity (HUR *et al.*, 2014), and purchase intention (LAFFERTY; GOLDSMITH, 1999).

Hypotheses 5 and 6 were also supported. Consistent with findings from previous studies (GREGORY, 1991; WALTERS; MAIR, 2012) it was found that corporate credibility had a positive effect on perceptions and intentions. Specifically, corporate credibility had a positive effect on risk perceptions and the willingness to donate money for the victims. Credibility as a sign of communication and corporate image can amplify or attenuate the public risk perception (BUM CHUNG; WOONG YUN, 2013) and persuade and mobilize the public to donate money for the victims. In sum, our investigation showed some antecedents related to open television networks and its effects on the perception of mega-disaster risk and willingness to donate money for the victims after a media scandal during the catastrophe.

### **Limitations and future research**

Our investigation had some limitations. First, we used a cross-sectional design and a sample of convenience, which limits the generalization of the findings to the entire adult audience who experienced the earthquake and watched the news on one or more channels of the open television networks in Mexico. Future investigations might want to use longitudinal designs to compare the effects of media brand trust before, immediately after a natural disaster and six or twelve months later. Last, the findings open several research possibilities in order to analyze their effects of other variables such as brand equity and media engagement or in the context of digital media.

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## O humanitário como *branded-content*

### Humanitarian as *branded-content*

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**Resumo:** *Este artigo discute a relação entre dinâmicas do capitalismo e retóricas em torno das migrações internacionais e refúgio através da lente do consumo e dos discursos corporativos. Analisamos campanhas publicitárias e projetos de três grandes marcas por meio das narrativas por elas construídas para desenvolver estratégias de comunicação a partir dos processos de migração e da recente crise global de refugiados.*

**Palavras-chave:** *migração; consumo; capitalismo.*

**Abstract:** *This article discusses the relationship between the dynamics of capitalism and the rhetoric around international migrations and refuge through the lens of consumption and corporative discourse. We analyze advertising campaigns and projects of three major brands through the narratives they built to develop communication strategies based on migration processes and the recent global refugee crisis.*

**Keywords:** *migration; consumption; capitalism.*

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## Introduction

This article discusses the relationship between the dynamics of capitalism and the rhetoric around international migrations and refuge through the lens of consumption and corporative discourse. We analyze advertising campaigns and projects of three major brands through the narratives built by them to develop communication strategies based on migration processes and the recent global refugee crisis.

The goal is to reflect about how capitalism defines its agenda in relation to social changes, and thus, updates itself, at the same time it covers its contradictions. We discussed how the strategies and agendas of migrants and refugees are associated to corporate values in three contexts: a) the global campaign of the whisky brand Johnnie Walker; b) the Better Shelter project, developed by the brand of furniture and décor items Ikea with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR - UN Refugee Agency), consisting in the manufacture of shelters for refugees; and c) the advertisement piece Born the Hard Way, from Budweiser, broadcast in the break of Super Bowl in 2017.

It is not fortuitous that the term branded-content is highlighted in the title of this study. It is a category of market that emerges as a new marketing tendency and strategy in the 2000's. This denomination, created in the media world, begins to be employed to define a type of advertisement that produces content in a particular manner, blurring the distinctions between what is traditionally perceived as advertisement content and editorial content. In the field of this study, this is relevant because it qualifies the actions of communication of corporations that link their advertisement discourses to the defense of migration as a right.

Associating to causes is not a new strategy. The traditional actions of social responsibility of business marked actions of brands in the most diverse sectors throughout the last decades, so that capitalism disseminates ideas of “conscious consumption”, “responsible consumption”, “citizen company” and a series of other qualifications attributed to institutions and to people, equalizing ways of consuming and producing the exercise of citizenship (MARTINELLI, 2007; SANTA CRUZ; MARTINELLI,

2010; MARTINELLI; MACHADO, 2010). Nowadays, this discourse acquires different outlines, in Burrowes and Rett (2016), who define as expanded advertisement, and social engagement emerges as communication strategy through the brands' "humanization". Big corporations begin to stand out from one another not only for the products and services they offer, but in many cases, for the causes they support. These companies attribute to themselves the role of (environmental, social, humanitarian) activists, and show off an awareness agenda and mobilization - around themes like the environment, public health, education, culture, poverty and social exclusion, urban violence, human rights and the most diverse issues that constitute the contemporary social agenda - which begins to be the engine of this strategy of communication (SANTA CRUZ; MARTINELLI, 2010). This is also frequently linked as a responsibility to act. What draws attention in this market dynamics is the form the capitalism is instituted as a universal value and is located as the terrain where social change indeed has possibility to happen, in which these mobilizations can be converted, through strategies of capital circulation - as consumption, production and the financial circulation - into something which dialogues with the individual without the mediation of other institutions of collective, political or solidarity action.

The attention mobilized around international migrations and refugee nowadays is explained by the context of the so-called global refugee crisis. The report *Global Tendencies 2016* published in June 2017 by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) shows a total of 65.6 million people dislocated due to wars and conflicts until the end of 2015. According to the report, this is the first time the numbers of forced displacement surpassed 60 million people in the world (UNHCR, 2017). In Brazil, the publication *Refugee in Numbers (Refúgio em números)*, organized by the Justice Ministry which consolidates data of refuge in the country until the month of April 2016, Shows that the numbers of refugees recognized grew 127% from 2010 to 2016, reaching 9,552 people with 82 nationalities, after a couple of years of percentual growth even more intense in the requests made, which varied 2,868% at the same period (BRAZIL'S MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, 2016).



Different authors discuss how the engagement to the cause of refugees would translate to moral appeal to the atrocities shown by the media (NUSSBAUM, 2002; AGIER, 2016; ZANFORLIN, 2016). Martha C. Nussbaum (2002) reinforces that, in the age of global connectivity, the cosmopolitan ethos became a moral necessity, since it cannot be more distant to global humanitarian crises made visible through the flows of images and information that circulate in the transnational media. In consequence of the experience of contemporary international migrations, Agier (2016a) point towards media as a device capable of enabling exchange of common feelings and experiences. The citizen of the contemporary world is tied to global media, making knowledge and the real-time follow-up of events possible. Therefore, cultivating the good will of locals or nationals to become empathetic to foreigners, to create a sense of responsibility, especially with foreigners in vulnerability, mobilize empathy and creates a fertile path to the most diverse forms of participation and engagement.

Calling out the civil society and private companies for active participation of the management of humanitarian causes began to be a part of the agenda of the United Nations in a document released in October 2016, after a meeting about the theme which took place in September 2016 in New York (UNGA, 2016). After that, in an article published at *Le Monde Diplomatique Brasil*, under the title “Refugees, a good deal”, Nicolas Autherman (2017) reported about the performance of a fair of diverse exhibitors, on May 2016, Istanbul, alongside the first UN’s World Humanitarian Summit. In the fair, there were selling from “drones, photovoltaic bulbs and other food kits” to “companies of MasterCard financial services or big audit offices and reduction of costs of companies, Accenture and Deloitte Consulting” (AUTHERMAN, 2017). The news showed that:

This is huge sector nowadays. Some call them the “industry of help”. We know this represents at least 25 billion euros per year. “Evidently, from a commercial point of view, there’s money to win, and for this industry, a new efficacy to prove”, concludes Ben Parker, director until 2013 of the

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Unocha) in Siria and East Africa. (AUTHERMAN, 2017)

In this context, corporate humanitarian activism mimics some of the dilemma and ambiguities of a wider humanitarian action. And what is this field, which we relate to the idea of humanitarianism? Didier Fassin, synthetically, defines it from the experience lived and mediatized of the tsunami that hit wide regions of southeast Asia in 2004. The purpose of tragedies with large scale of destruction, the complex of reactions that unfolds in their repercussions activate profound articulations in an equally global scale:

For the attentive observant of the tsunami, the impressive magnitude of the impact, with its thousands of deaths, was as significative as the unparalleled demonstration of solidarity, with billions of dollars of assistance. We mourn their dead, but we celebrate our generosity. The power of this event resides in the rare combination of tragedy and ruin and the pathos of assistance. These disasters now belong to our experience in this mundanum, as well as the organizations of assistance, the operations of help and the humanitarian interventions. We get used to the global spectacle of suffering and the global exhibition of help. (FASSIN, 2012, p. ix, authors translation).<sup>4</sup>

Components of compassion associate both in the production of assistance and the emulation of feelings of loss and destitution. Formos of acting in the state and distinctive social actors, promoting alterations in the strategies of action of these authors as well as structural modifications in their own frameworks of action (XAVIER DA SILVA, 2017). Those elements are mobilized in the continuum generated between the imperative of acting and responding to a narrative of survival. This narrative, more than an accessory, is revealed as an ontological necessity

4 For the attentive observer of the tsunami, the impressive magnitude of the toll, with its tens of thousands of casualties, was as meaningful as the unparalleled deployment of solidarity, with its billions of dollars of aid. We lamented their dead but celebrated our generosity. The power of this event resides in the rare combination of the tragedy of ruination and the pathos of assistance. Such disasters now form part of our experience of this worldliness, just as do aid organizations, relief operations, and humanitarian interventions. We have become used to the global spectacle of suffering and the global display of succor. (FASSIN, 2012, p. ix)

of survival as constitutive, or re-constitutive, of the threat itself. Fassin evokes the classic meaning conceived to the word witness, in one of its Latin etymologies, *superstes*, in contrast with the etymology *testis*, which brings the neutral observation, present in the connotation received by the term judicial witness. In contrast:

Superstes is the person that “exists beyond” the event - in other words, who experienced it and survived. In the first case [*testis*], the witness was outside the scene, but he observed: to be more accurate, he does not have interest, and it is this supposed neutrality that forms the foundation to listen and believe in him, even in judicial processes. In the second case, the witness survived the event: it is, therefore, because he was present, but as a victim of the event and, therefore, a survivor, that his word is heard. One witness based in his observation, and the other based in his experience. (FASSIN, 2012, p. 204, author’s translation)<sup>5</sup>

While the validity of the judicial testimony is supported in the premise of neutrality and distancing, the meaning of witness of survival is extracted directly from the experience of capacity of production of affection inherent to his narrative - the capacity of re-constituting the tragedy as affective experience and again effective over the destinaries of this testimony. Beyond the first meaning, in which the humanitarian situation is testified, the capacity of activating affections of the testimony is a central component of the grammar of humanitarianism that we analyze in this study, as producing active affective reactions in the production of moral economies (XAVIER DA SILVA, 2017). We discussed how these aspects are dynamized in actions of communication in three global brands about the theme migration and refuge, in contexts that explore adversity, catastrophe and overcoming, having as background the resurgence of one of the biggest human displacement crisis in history.

5 Superstes is the person who “exists beyond” the event in other words, who experienced it and survived it. In the first case [*testis*], the witness was external to the scene but observed it: to be more precise, he has no vested interest, and it is this supposed neutrality that forms the grounds for hearing and believing him, including in legal proceedings. In the second case, the witness lived through the ordeal: it is therefore because he was present, but as a victim of the event and hence a survivor, that his word is listened to. One testifies on the basis of his observation, the other on the basis of his experience. (FASSIN, 2012, p. 204)

We go back to Foucault's argument (2006) about the new configurations of liberalism and how the exercise of power is capilarized in institutions, which include here the symbolic systems of communication. The methodology consists on the analysis of representation (HALL, 2013), insofar as we investigate the meanings of difference, in other words, the representation of alterity in these campaigns having two axes in the horizon highlighted by Hall: poetic and politic, the first referring to discourses of exhibition and the second referring to power relations (2013, p. 215). We observe how the meanings produced in the practices of media representation of migrants and refugees in the three campaigns are frequently reduced to those meanings that the brands (which control this media production) want to highlight, in a process defined by Hall as stereotyping (p. 216).

We identify as values and characteristics of narratives about migrants and refugees are highlighted or overshadowed to converge with friendly corporate narratives that talk about the challenges and irreconcilable frustrations under the biggest mark of capitalism. Examples of this dynamic are the emphasis on cosmopolitanism, entrepreneurship, resilience and hope, as well as the erasure of power relations, conflicts and sufferings that are rooted in these human displacements, or the growing number of victims of these contexts produced in its origin. In the analyzed pieces, communication is the bond between these elements.

### **Keep walking: Johnnie Walker and humanitarianism as trajectory**

In 2016, the Scottish whisky brand Johnnie Walker released a documentary about the European migratory crisis directed by Talal Derki, who was a Syrian exiled himself. The film, titled *Ode to Lesbos*, has four and a half minutes of duration and registers testimonials of residents of the little town of Skala Sikamineas, that has only 153 inhabitants and is located in the island of Lesbos, in Greece. In 2015 these inhabitants rescued and gave different kinds of help to approximately 300 thousand refugees that arrived there (ODE TO LESVOS, 2017).

The first scene of the documentary is shocking and refers to a 1<sup>st</sup> person testimony of a survivor: the submersed camera focus on many lifejackets floating in the surface of the sea, against the sunlight. Then, the camera quickly reaches the surface, as if it needed to “take a breath” simulating the perspective of a person who could be drowning but manages to escape. What can be seen is little waves passing through the eye level and the infinite horizon, where the blue from the sea and the sky is blurred. The fade for the other scene brings the feeling of “eyes closing” in the subjective camera facing the horizon without land in sight and shows, in the sequence - or when “the eyes open”, mountains of lifejackets piled in the land getting mixed with the natural mountains in the background. At this point, the narrator explains: “All these lifejackets represent people who arrived here looking for a place to live” (ODE TO LESVOS, 2017). And then he continues talking about the arrival of boats with refugees, usually overcrowded and therefore wrecked in the vicinity of the island. The amount of people is shocking: there were thousands each day, to the point a local fisherman said: “We used to fish people instead of fish”. The documentary proceeds alternating testimonies of town residents, who tell their experiences of humanitarian help organized in a domestic spontaneous way. The film never shows stories through the point of view of refugees, so that the representation of this population is given through the inhabitants’ perspective. In the resident’s testimony, we highlight sentences like “we did what we have to do”, “we are not heroes because of that”, “you can’t sit and watch this type of thing happen”, “tomorrow it could happen to me, and I would like to receive this kind of help”. The final scenes show one of the local fishermen telling how the refugees thanked him for saving their lives: they put their children in line so that they would give him hugs. Visibly touched, he says: “That is a Nobel prize”. In the end, one lettering shows: “For the efforts during the refugee crisis, many residents of Skala Sikamineas were indicated to the Nobel Peace Prize as representatives of the Lesbos island (ODE TO LESVOS, 2017). Next, the slogan Keep walking appears and the logos of Johnnie Walker and Mercy Corps,

global organization that works in favor of humanitarian causes with the slogan “Saving and improving lives in the world’s toughest places” (MERCY CORPS, 2017). In the end, there’s a request for donation to Mercy Corps.

“Ode to Lesbos”, Johnnie Walker documentary, shows the spontaneous humanitarian response of Greek citizens living in the island of Lesbos, who helped almost half a million refugees forced to flee their lands.



Source: MERCY CORPS, 2017.

The island of Lesbos, an islander, Aimilia Kamvisi, and the fisherman Stratis Valamios.



Source: PNewsFoto/Johnnie Walker, 2016.


This initiative was reproduced in other local contexts that also became destinations of migrants and refugees. In Brazil, a version of this campaign was released, consisting in a series of testimonials published on Facebook in 2016. The pieces stood out for celebrating the joy of diversity brought by migration. In contrast with the campaign Ode to Lesbos, the pieces directed to the Brazilian context had a more local broadcast, with stories of the migrants themselves about their experiences of displacement and how they rebuilt their lives in a new country. Each story highlighted special realities and ended with the sentence “Change begins with a first step”, followed by the hashtag with the slogan #KeepWalking.

Johnnie Walker campaign published on Facebook in 2016 with migrants arriving in Brazil.

**Johnnie Walker**  
13 de outubro de 2016 · 🌐

Tudo por terra.  
O terremoto destrói.  
Fim.  
O sol nasce e carrega uma vontade maior que ela.  
Um sonho que não era dela.  
Uma alegria que ia com ela.  
O nada se tornou um pouco.  
Com vontade, foi mais um pouco.  
E o pouco, com tão pouco, virou muito.  
Sem cansar. Sem parar. Sem saber.  
Genevieve Cherubin.  
Seus passos encontraram a cidade do santo chamado Paulo.  
Do Haiti, trouxe o sorriso e o francês.  
Ensinando a brasileiros uma nova língua.  
Sua nova terra.  
Sem tremores nem temores.  
Sua nova vida.  
Recomeço.  
A mudança começa com o primeiro passo.  
#KeepWalking

Se beber, não dirija. Não compartilhe com menores de 18 anos.




👍 Curtir    💬 Comentar    ➦ Compartilhar

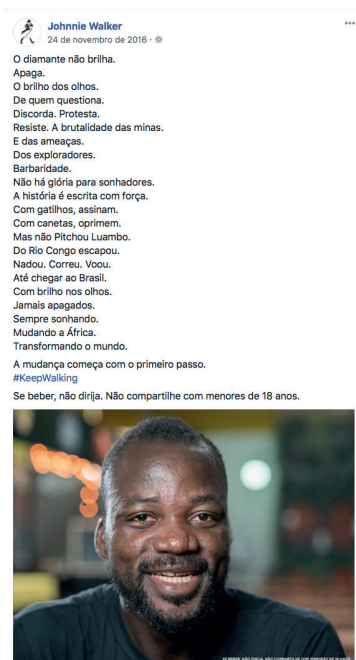
**Johnnie Walker**  
20 de outubro de 2016 · 🌐

A bomba passa, mas fica.  
Nunca some de fato.  
Explode na memória.  
Todo dia e com hora marcada.  
Antes de dormir, só pensava: “Não errou”.  
Adiou o encontro.  
Fitou o horizonte.  
Depois do Mediterrâneo.  
Atravessando o Atlântico.  
Subindo a serra.  
Uma jornada de 10.815 quilômetros.  
Finalmente.  
Da Síria para o Brasil.  
Talal Al-tinawi enxergou sua família dormindo tranquila.  
Em cima do seu restaurante.  
Onde continua acordado.  
Não pela guerra na televisão.  
Mas pela cozinha que sustenta o que a guerra jamais encontrou:  
sua esposa e os três filhos.  
A mudança começa com o primeiro passo.  
#KeepWalking

Se beber, não dirija. Não compartilhe com menores de 18 anos.







Source: JOHNNIE WALKER, 2016.

Both the global and the Brazilian campaign highlight actions that focus a lot more on personal or community initiative than an action of a state institution and/or public policies. But while the global campaign highlight stories of residents about the refugees, the Brazilian one gives voice to wider perspectives and different personal migratory projects. An explanation for that might be the fact that these people who arrived the town in Greece are still undocumented and in a situation of extreme vulnerability, therefore, exposing their lives in a global campaign could have consequences in delicate bureaucratic processes of recognition of refuge and the inclusion in welfare system in European countries. However, in Brazil, the stories highlight a trajectory of solid paths, and the situation of the people who already overcame these struggles of the step of displacement and are facing now posterior challenges of social integration, to the point they can tell in retrospect a story of personal endeavor and certain distancing of their stories, structured around a past suffering,

in contrast with images of a present-future represented by pictures smiling, in environments, when possible to distinguish, referring to their personal identity, outside the contexts produced their displacements.

Beyond the focus on the individual, it is the community action the only collective instance activated in these narratives, distancing the role of the Country, both in the creation of conflicts as in the management of humanitarian crises and the population displaced by them.

### **Better Shelter: between emergency design and production of hope**

Another brand initiative which associates to the theme of migration and refuge is the project Better Shelter from the Swedish company Ikea. It is about the creation of a modular emergency shelter, with 17.5 m<sup>2</sup>, to work as a temporary residence for vulnerable people living in refugee camps. As explained in the company's website: "It attends the basic needs of activities in daily life, enabling privacy, safety and familiarity" (BETTER SHELTER, 2017). Despite not being a commercial product, the project brought public recognition for Ikea and even won the 9<sup>th</sup> Beazley Designs of the Year prize.

The Better Shelter project has its own website. In there, there are information about the product, which involve from its conception - "Designed with and by refugees" - to orientations about how to order it.

The exterior and interior of the Better Shelter.



Source: BETTER SHELTER, 2017.

Units of the Better Shelter hosting refugee families in transit between Greece and the border of Macedonia.



Source: MY NEWS DESK, 2016.

Unit of Better Shelter in exhibition at MoMa, in New York.



Source: MY NEWS DESK, 2017.

The conception of the project was dialogic, in a way that the design follows parameters defined after listening to refugees. Stories in the website indicate the reception of the product, as it is the case of the story of Iraqi Hamid Abdelraza, who lives in a shelter with his family. Abdelraza, his wife and children fled Fallujah, his hometown, under constant threat by ISIS. According to him:

We got so excited when we found out (about RHU / Better Shelter). RHU is a God's blessing for us in the desert. We are so grateful to ACNUR for giving us shelter. The low ceiling was the worst in the tent. During the summer it got so hot and you also could not move inside. At RHU there's space to move without restrictions and we began to buy things so we could feel at home, like a dresser and a TV. That gives us more privacy. My wife and sleep behind the curtain and my children sleep in this side, in the main bedroom. (...) The new shelters are the best because they give us privacy, which is extremely important for the values of our people. (BETTER SHELTER, 2017, author's translation). In the same website, other refugees give their testimony about the importance of the shelter in the process of re-building their lives. It is, however, a residence presented as temporary - even if some families spend a few years living in these shelters. This aspect of temporariness marks the shelter as a mediator between two steps of these people's lives, between a past marked by a tragic event and

the perspective of a better future. To some extent, Better Shelter re-signifies and brings a new respectability about living in a refugee camp - which is expressed in Abdelraza's speech when he highlights the difference between his old tent and his new home.<sup>6</sup>

The complexity of a refugee camp and the forms of life organized in this space is expressed in the following way by Michel Agier:

The refugee camps are always hybrid organisms, not reproducing any existing sociospatial form; they are new experiences for the place in which they are established, even if only by the permanent paradox of its existence means, between an indefinite temporality and a space which transforms because its occupants appropriate it so they could live in it. Originally conceived without any project other than mere survival, or the temporary positioning of a displaced, controlled population, these camps were transformed throughout time and with multiple uses the occupants made for themselves of the resource the humanitarian assistance represents. (AGIER, 2016b, p. 53, author's translation)<sup>7</sup>

Comparing Agier's description with Abdelraza's story, it is possible to assume that the notion of temporariness itself is a media construction. Despite the website announcing Better Shelter as temporary housing, Agier says the refugee camps are much more permanent than planned. Most of the time, people don't come back to their original homes, and

- 6 We were so excited when we found out [about the RHU/Better Shelter]. The RHU is a blessing from god for us in the desert. We are so grateful to UNHCR for providing us shelter. The low ceiling was the worst in the tent. During the summer it was very hot and you couldn't move inside either. In the RHU, there is space to move unrestricted and we started to buy things to make ourselves feel at home, like a set of drawers and a TV. It provides us with more privacy. My wife and I sleep behind the curtain and my kids sleep on this side, in the main 'room'. (...) The new shelters are better because they give us privacy, which is extremely important for our tribe's values (BETTER SHELTER, 2017).
- 7 The refugee camps are always hybrid organisms, not reproducing any social-spatial form that already exists; they are new experiences for the locality in which they are established, if only for the permanent paradox that their existence expresses, between an indefinite temporality and a space that is transformed because its occupants necessarily appropriate it in order to be able to live in it. Conceived originally with no other project than that of simple survival, or the provisional stationing of a displaced and controlled population, these camps have been transformed over time and with the multiple uses that their occupants have made for themselves of the resource that humanitarian assistance represents. (AGIER, 2016b, p. 53)

the situation at camp begins to acquire increasingly definitive outlines, configuring a structural drama.

The Better Shelter project is also mentioned in Autherman's article for *Le Monde Diplomatique* Brazil, quoted above:

Since 2010,, the Ikea Foundation, located in the Netherlands, integrally finances a company of social responsibility: the "Better Shelter". With headquarters in Sweden, this society signed a contract with Acnur for 30 thousand tents for an amount of approximately 35 million euros. The product in form of kit was sent to Acnur's refugee camps in Ethiopia, Iraq, South Sudan and Kenya. (AUTHERMAN, 2017)

The speech by Heggnes, CEO of Ikea, does not object any paradox between capitalism and humanitarian action and understands its commercial partnership is not opposed to humanitarian spirit: "For me, it is not about 'getting a profit' or 'making humanitarian work', but, overall, of obtaining profit on one hand, and at the same time, reaching development [...]". However, Ben Parker's speech, former director of the United Nations's Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), calls into question this view with the testimony of his experience:

When I was working in Kenya, in 2011, there was a huge draught in part of the country where this huge refugee camp for Somalis is located, the camp of Dadaab. They said at the time that Ikea would donate US\$ 60 million only for Dadaab. And it was linked with this concept of tents, of magic shelters that would be built to give to refugees formidable conditions of life. I wonder if Daddab camp really needed new interior designs at that time. Frankly, I'm not so sure. Sometimes, nowadays, the private sector tries to explore new markets through the sector of charity; it is probably what is happening with Ikea. That is good for shareholders; for refugees, I'm not so sure.

Still according to the article, in 2016, Ikea was ACNUR's first donator "in an amount of 32 million euros".

Questioned about the risk of seeing these companies taking a crescent place in the decision-making processes, Acnur answers invariably that their financial participation still remains marginal if compared to the

countries' contribution. However, partnerships conceived in the origin as simple donations assume new forms. According to Parker, the agency is involved in a system that is hard to get out: "The Ikea Foundation promised millions of dollars to Acnur. Now, they sent a person to Switzerland to see what they did with the money. At the beginning, I believe Acnur believed they could simply receive free staff and donations. They are learning that is not really how these things work in the private sector. [...] Companies will not come without conditions. What would they say if Ikea, for instance, decides to test materials in refugee camps?". And how would they react when European parliamentarians reveal, as it happened in February 2016, that Ikea is implicated in a huge tax evasion scandal, evading taxes precisely in countries that allow Acnur to finance their budget (La Tribune, Feb. 13th, 2016)? UN's agency never heard about that... (AUTHERMAN, 2017)

### ***Born The Hard Way: adversity and resilience in the construction of the migrant as a self-made man***

*Born The Hard Way* is the title of a film of the North American brand of beer Budweiser. The narrative begins with the story of the hard journey of migrants by sea and land, facing many risks and hostility along the way until they finally find hospitality in their final destination. The film is filmed with short dialogues, and as images are shown there are sentences on the screen with the sayings: "You don't seem like you're from here", "We don't want you here" and "Go home". This narrative, as shown in the final scenes, intends to show how two migrant German businessmen - Adolphus Busch and Eberhard Anheuser - met in Saint Louis, in the United States, in 1850, and founded the Anheuser-Busch, company owner of one of the most emblematic brands of American beverages, Budweiser (SCHULTZ, 2017; BELAM, 2017).

Scene from the advertisement piece *Born the Hard Way*, from Budweiser.



Source: BELAM, 2017

The scenes show the displacement from Germany to the United States filled by adversities of different kinds: since the tension with xenophobia, storm in open sea, precariousness in the boat and a fire in the ship. Thus, despite the European white migration shown in this advertisement is located in a historic period and conditions different from the other situations linked to the brands Johnnie Walker and Ikea, the representation of the displacement of these migrants in the Budweiser's advertisement seeks to blur these distinctions. There are scenes that show one of the brand's founder travelling in the basement of a ship in poor conditions, others show walks in dangerous terrains, other revealing in one point of the path, that his travel mates are all black.

A significant point is that this film was released during the finals of Super Bowl, in which the breaks are considered the most expensive advertisement spaces in the American advertisement industry<sup>8</sup>. In addition, the release happened a few days after the enforcement of an executive order of president Donald Trump, suspending temporarily the entrance of refugees and any citizen of seven countries of Muslim majority in

8 Um comercial padrão de 30 segundos no intervalo da final do Super Bowl, em 2017, custava \$5 milhões de dólares. O filme *Born the Hard Way*, da Budweiser, tem 60 segundos de duração, logo o custo de veiculação foi de \$10 milhões de dólares por exibição (Ad Age).



North American lands. In a few hours, the film reached record repercussions, with 21.7 million views (ATKINSON, 2017), but it also generated a wave of conservative manifestations, with people proposing a boycott to the brand on social media (BELAM, 2017).

### **Final considerations or Humanitarian as communication strategy**

Stuart Hall says that “the global culture needs ‘difference’ to prosper” (2006). Throughout the analyzed pieces, this relationship between difference and production of an economic and cultural value is fed from the image of the refugee, outlined in an ambiguous way, simultaneously as an entrepreneur and enterprise, presented sometimes as subject, sometimes as recipient of social and economic transformative forces. This relationship is presented for the viewer of advertisement pieces as intrinsically mediated by symbols and material artifacts inscribed in the economy of Capitalist production and consumption. This mediating position is filled by the sponsored brands, which suggest the possibility that, through consumption, subjacent meanings to the presented migrant identities, as personal initiative, solidarity, boldness and inventivity, can be shared by a community without borders, linked through consumption.

They are pieces that, from an advertisement standpoint, reached some type of distinction, either through recognition linked to awards, as it is the case in Johnnie Walker and Ikea, or the investment for their release, as it is the case in Budweiser’s ad. It is important to see how the representation of humanitarian follows some patterns, considering the geopolitical north as place of symbolic production of these three brands.

These three actions share elements that refer to an aesthetic and a discourse common to humanitarianism, as described by Didier Fassin (2012), as mediated by a logic of compassion and assistance in context of crisis, precariousness and catastrophe. The pieces reproduce an intermediate space between subjects who act in humanitarian interventions

(giving assistance) and those who survive these dramatic situations (migrants and refugees), exercising a testimonial and mobilizing function. This testimonial function presents the experience to people dedicated to assistance (the experience of residents in the little community of Lesvos, for instance) and refer to the narrative - outlined in epic shapes - of entrepreneur-migrants, who find solidarity and recognition after long journeys - the encounter of Adolphus Busch with Eberhard Anheuser, linked by immediate solidarity in a shed where the skill and life plans of the newcomer to Saint Louis find an echo in the new land.

In relation to the experience transmitted to audience in the analyzed pieces, the central element for the construction of testimonies is operated with the sense adversity-solidarity-entrepreneurship, filling a gap between the testimony of those who suffer and those who only tell something observed in an exercise of a task of emergency assistance. This distinction is also evidenced by Fassin (2012) when he ponders that the formation of testimonies on behalf of humanitarian agents has some distinctive characteristics in relation to those who directly go through these tragedies:

The humanitarian agents witness not only based on what they lived but based on what they saw. They didn't go through the suffering, since their intervention presupposes that safe spaces named "humanitarian corridors", in which they are protected against hostilities, were established, but become spokespersons for the victims. Even if they try to analyze the political issues involved in the situations they go through, the register in which they establish their public testimony corresponds logically to the way their legitimacy is built in the public arena: it is compassion. They talk about bodies, wounds, suffering. (FASSIN, 2012, p. 206, author's translation)<sup>9</sup>

9 Humanitarian agents testify not on the basis of what they have lived through, but on the basis of what they have seen. They have not endured the ordeal, since their intervention presupposes that safe spaces termed "humanitarian corridors", in which they are protected from hostilities, have been set up, but they render themselves the spokespeople for the victims. Even if they attempt to analyze the political issues involved in the situations they face, the register in which they set their public testimony corresponds logically to the way in which their legitimacy is constructed in the public arena: it is that of compassion. They speak of bodies, of wounds, of suffering (FASSIN, 2012, p. 206).

The dimension of what was lived and suffered is reproduced by the media and advertisement language of the actions that were portrayed, which puts a third layer of complexity about this production of testimonies, the mediation of circuits of production, consumption and solidarity, supported by different ways of engagement and mobilization, reached by the identification which what those who survived can or could do with their own lives. These migrants and refugees are presented through a discourse that highlights the potential of transformation and inspiration that their trajectories cause. There is an articulation between mobilization of personal and cultural story of the migrant/refugee as a factor of calling attention and engagement of action of economic actors, as analyzed in this article, as governmental political actors<sup>10</sup>, both through the creation of affections as a moral feeling around a humanitarian cause of refuge and the so-called “migration crisis, term widely used in Brazilian and international media to refer to the set of interactions amongst group of migrant people in contexts of insufficiency of public services in the country.

These campaigns can suggest the erasure or generalization of individualities, of cultural particularities in a “menu” of people and personal stories of suffering homogenized by the term “refugee”. These individualities would join themselves to become artifacts, potencies of an experience linked to the tourist cosmopolitanism, close to, therefore, cultural consumption, as explicit by the authors Cohen and Vertovec (2010, p. 284): “The massive transference of foods, artistic products, music, literature and fashion. Such processes represent the multiculturalization of society, but also the advanced globalization of capitalism”.

Besides first person testimonies of catastrophes and human displacement, and third person witnesses formed by entities that mediate actions of assistance, there are messages proposed by the media discourse which establishes an involving experience working towards the expectator. If, as Fassin (2012) observes, to produce compassion this language of

10 Como, por exemplo, em XAVIER DA SILVA (2017b) a respeito da relação entre visibilidade midiática e comportamento de agentes governamentais.

testimony focuses bodies, wounds and suffering, the engaging narrative of experience of consumption and production emphasizes resilience, solidarity and inventivity - all necessary to survival in the contexts where they are extracted to - to produce the action in different circuits. Displacements and migratory processes discussed here are phenomena of the capitalism itself, which has a dialectic relationship with the development and the faces taken by the different forms of contemporary humanitarianism. From this experience, we say: keep walking, reader, persevere the hard way, contribute to lower the suffering through solidarity circuits, without disconnecting from the consumption circuits.

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## Vingar e punir: motivações para a prática do *spoiling*

### Avenge and punish: motivations for *spoiling*

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**Resumo:** *Através de um survey com fãs brasileiros de séries televisivas americanas (n = 1.805), buscamos lançar luz sobre a prática do spoiling. Sabendo que a prática realizada pelos fãs é constituída por discursos enraizados no capital cultural e subcultural e, em negociações de poder dentro de cada comunidade, procuramos entender o espectro de toxicidade por trás do spoiling. Os resultados indicam que o spoiling tornou-se uma fonte de sociabilidade, troca de conhecimento, bem como prazer para o fã brasileiro. Porém, a prática também é utilizada por vingança ou até mesmo para “punir” espectadores atrasados. Observou-se que os fãs se aproveitam da possibilidade de mostrar mais conhecimento entre si, levando a conflitos nos fandoms e revelando o potencial tóxico por trás da difusão de spoilers.*

**Palavras-chave:** *spoiling; séries; fãs; práticas tóxicas.*

**Abstract:** *Through a survey with Brazilian fans of American television series (n = 1,805), we seek to shed some light on the practice of spoiling. Having in mind that fans' spoiling practices are made up of discourses rooted in cultural capital or subcultural capital, and in the dynamics of power inside communities, we seek to understand the spectrum of toxicity behind the practice of spoiling.*

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*The results indicate that spoiling has become a source of sociability, knowledge exchange, as well as, pleasure. However, the practice is also used for vengeance and to “punish” tardy viewers. It was observed that fans take advantage of showing more knowledge among each other, culminating in conflict in the fandoms and revealing the toxic potential behind the circulation of spoilers.*

**Keywords:** *spoiling; series; fans; toxic practices.*

## Introduction

In the current media context, spoilers have become a relevant issue for fans and consumers of audiovisual narratives, especially television series. In a simple way, spoilers are defined as an “information that anticipates an ending or an important event” in a narrative (PASE; SACCOMORI, 2015, p. 189). Even though the subject have been approached by some studies (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007, PERKS; MCELRATH-Hart, 2016a), the most part of literature reflects a focus on the dimension of reception and consumption of this paratext. However, in this study we chose to focus our analysis in a face that is still not very explored of the theme: the issue of spoiling, or, the production and circulation of spoilers.

The predominance of academic studies in the dimension of spoiler reception is related to the fact that is culturally accepted that the consumption of this paratext can impair the experience of consumption of text, mainly because this action entails a breach of expectation and suspense (JOHNSON; ROSENBAUM, 2015). Recently, this negative view has been questioned by some authors that propose the possibility of a positive engagement with spoilers (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007; HASSOUN, 2013).

At the same time, the issue became more complex with the arrival of social media, which allow fans to group collectively and share information online without restrictions or limitations. The lack of identification of posts with spoilers on Facebook and on Twitter alters the dynamic around the discussion in a way that previous studies may not be capable of resolving. Because fandoms commonly operate in social media, the dichotomy between people who love or hate spoilers become extremely problematic when gathering these individuals in the same online community, creating, thus, a space of dispute and conflict between both views. The situation becomes very intriguing when it is understood that part of the pleasure of consuming a television narrative is found in the dialogue between fans and other viewers about these productions (BAYM, 2000).

Recognizing that the practice of spoiling is as important as the reception of the paratext, we made a study with Brazilian fans of American television series ( $n = 1.805$ ) through a survey available on 10 Facebook groups. American TV shows have been popularized in Brazil in the last decade, despite the difficulties some individuals find in getting access to these narratives. Many fans still depend on pirate links and would wait for days to get subtitles in Portuguese. In this context, we observe that Brazil has the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest number of internet users<sup>3</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> biggest number of users on Twitter<sup>4</sup>. This increase of interest for American TV series, and the strong online presence allows Brazilians to be exposed to spoilers on their social media, coming from American fans and even other Brazilian fans that consume these narratives through live pirate links, thus generating numberless conflicts.

Since fan's spoiling practices are constituted of discourses rooted in cultural capital, subcultural capital (THORNTON, 1995; CASTELLANO *et al.*, 2017) and in power dynamics within the fans community, we seek to understand the spectrum of toxicity in spoiling practices. Results indicate that, although a vast majority said only they only give spoilers when the paratext is requested, a relatively significant part enjoys the possibility of showing more knowledge among peers. Therefore, the spoiler can be configured as a mechanism used in the struggle for power, as well as, social and subcultural capital in series fandoms. At the same time, we understand that, due to the particular cultural interpretation that Brazilian have of the practice, they take advantage of supplying spoilers, affecting another individual's experience for their own personal pleasure or even to reveal the access to a material good, network television.

### **Spoilers: definition, reception and function**

Despite being culturally accepted as paratexts that impair the consumption of a narrative, spoilers are not as studied in academic literature,

3 <https://goo.gl/FWhVy6>

4 <https://goo.gl/TMJ4DT>

given that most part of the existing studies emphasize empirical analysis that have inconclusive or discordant results. The struggle of studying spoilers occurs due to different factors, among which the arrival of time shifting technologies (GRAY, 2010), the asynchronic distribution of content (NEWMAN, 2011), and the technologic advances of the last decade which allowed viewers to have the opportunity of watching (again) shows after their endings (PERKS; MCEL RATH-HART 2016a). To better approach the subject, we will cast a light over the three main points we consider important to understand the complexity of the theme: definition, reception and function.

*Spoilers are a particular type of paratext that does not have a clearly established definition.* Gray and Mittell (2007, p. 2) argue that the definition is variable from person to person. There would be those who believe that any information could potentially be a spoiler, while for others spoilers could only be important information of narrative endings. At the same time, there are multiple definitions in the Academy. Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a) say that for many years, researchers had a perspective that spoilers would only be relevant information given before the show is on. With that in mind, after the exhibition of the episode, these pieces of information would stop being considered spoilers. With the arrival of new technologies and the popularization of time shifting practices, these view became obsolete, since these narratives can be consumed days, weeks, months or even years after the exhibition.

Secondly, we observe that literature has been overly concentrated in the reception of the paratexts and in the consequences of its consumption for the approval of a narrative (BAYM, 2000; JOHNSON; ROSENBAUM, 2015). Recently, through a multidimensional perspective, researchers have argued that spoilers can be voluntarily consumed, and its consumption can even be pleasurable (GRAY; MITTELL, 2007; HASSOUN, 2013). Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a) go beyond talking about the existence of a certain ambivalence in relation to the consumption of spoilers. According to the authors, the bigger the investment of a viewer in a narrative, the bigger it is their desire to avoid spoilers. Thus,

one only viewer can receive the paratexts in a favorable and unfavorable manner depending on how invested they are in a given narrative. Alternatively, in the empirical study performed by Gray and Mittell (2007), authors propose that the search for spoilers is born by the raise of interest of the viewer for a show, in this case, the drama *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010). The apparent contradiction between both studies reveal the complexity and ambivalence behind the reception of spoilers.

Finally, it is necessary to consider that spoilers have different functions. Hassoun (2013), when analyzing the consumption of this paratexts, argues that they can quench fans' curiosity and intensify the anxiety. Gray and Mittell (2007), in turn, identify a preparatory function since that when consuming a spoiler, *Lost* viewers claimed they could pay more attention during the presentation of the episode, since the suspension of chock would allow them a bigger focus on details that were happening in the episode. Similarly, Williams (2004, p. 7) found a different preparatory motivation by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fans (WB, 1997-2001/UPN, 2001-2003), who consumed spoilers as a way to emotionally prepare for future events in the series, as for example, the death of a character.

Bearing in mind this brief landscape and understanding that most part of the analyses focused on paratexts and in its reception are contradictory, we understand that the academic discussion around the issue has to look for new analytical paths, it cannot remain limited to the paratexts, while the sphere of diffusion and circulation of spoilers remain relatively underestimated.

### **Spoiling, power and disputes**

This study approaches a specific group in its analysis: Brazilian fans of American TV series. The criteria which define the fan still varies a little in the academic reading. In this study, we assume that fans are different from the general audience due to their special relationship with a given story, marked by an admiration for the text and involvement with it through different practices. Jenkins proposes the following definition:

Someone becomes a ‘fan’ not for being a regular viewer of a certain show, but for translating that experience into some type of cultural activity, sharing feelings and thoughts about the content of the show with friends, joining in a ‘community’ of other fans that share common interests. (2006a, p. 41, our translation)

In Brazil, the area of fan studies counts with many quality studies that approach themes that are similar with the discussions presented in this article (CAMPANELLA, 2012; CASTRO, 2012; FECHINE, 2015). Some studies seek to present and discuss fan practices in the context of digital culture (AMARAL; SOUZA; Monteiro, 2015). Among the practices that normally receive attention, for example, fanfics, fanarts and even fan activism, the practice of spoiling between fans remains not as explored.

In order to understand the motivations fans have to perform spoiling, it is important to understand that if spoilers have individual inherent quality and meaning (HILLS, 2012), Brazilian fans may have a different interpretation of the practice, therefore having different motivations. In Brazil and in other countries, it is common to face the issue of temporal disparity as the main motivation behind spoiling between fans, since the sharing of spoilers was always motivated by temporal issues (JENKINS, 2009). Currently, while sharing online files through the “peer-to-pee” model (P2P) have “solved some of the temporal problems” related to the asynchronic distribution of global content (NEWMAN, 2012, p. 465), this practice have been heating the debate about spoiler around the world.

In the Brazilian case, we observe that for many years, individuals depended on cable television or the “charity” of open channels, that frequently showed incomplete, to consume foreign series. Despite the popularization of cable TV in Brazil, we can observe that that reaches a relatively small quantity of the population (LÓPEZ; GÓMEZ, 2017). Therefore, Brazilian fans at times depend on pirate downloads of the access of streaming services, like Netflix, to consume their shows. At the same time, we observe that due to the fact that only a limited amount

of the population has access to cable TV, these productions gained a certain status and prestige in the country. This is relevant because it will influence the particular relationship that Brazilians have with spoilers and the way they interpret and translate the practice of spoiling, as we argue ahead.

Although the justification of temporal disparity is plausible, we cannot consider it the only answer to this issue. It is necessary to understand that the practices in digital culture are coordinated entities that call for performances and these can be the same or not according to the same practice of appropriation (WARDE, 2005). Using the Practice Theory, Sandra Montardo (2016) defends that there is the need to define and distinguish consumption of practice in the digital culture. According to her, it is possible to understand “consumption as a factor of performance in the practice of online socialization, in a way that consumption in this sense, consists in the access, the availability and the sharing of digital content” (MONTARDO, 2016, p. 14). In this perspective, consumption is the enabler element in the practice of online socialization that is given within practices, being necessary the application of knowledge on behalf of those who practice, inferring over the perception of social capital about them (RECUERO, 2009).

That being said, we observe that “in the informational economy of the internet, knowledge equals prestige, reputation and power [...] So there is a compulsion for being the first to share new information and being the first to have it” (JENKINS, 2006b, p. 125, our translation). Despite of the difficulties in defining spoilers, it is uncontroversial to think of spoilers as information around a certain text. Bearing in mind that the “control of knowledge is one of the main forms of social power” (BROWN, 1994, p. 132, our translation), we can affirm that the accumulation of information through consumption of spoilers shows a concentration of knowledge that gives the individual a bigger subcultural capital within a determined fandom.

The term subcultural capital was coined by Sarah Thornton (1995) and is similar from the notion of cultural capital theorized by Bourdieu

(1989). While cultural capital is gathered through the concentration of knowledge, subcultural capital works in a similar way, however, instead of coming through learning, the individual who accumulates this capital has a knowledge valued by a certain subculture. Therefore, in the case of communities of fans of television fiction series, the individuals can take advantage for showing subcultural capital and accumulating power over the less knowledgeable fans through sharing spoilers (WILLIAMS, 2004).

In that same thought, when the fan posts spoilers in the community he acquires power, since they become a source of information. According to Williams (2004, p. 8) fans who knew spoilers from *Buffy* were considered more “knowledgeable” than fans who didn’t consume and/or shared spoilers. Thus, the author establishes that information = control = power. Alternatively, Perks and McElrath-Hart argue that in the current television context, the isolation is also a way of conversational control, and therefore, power (2016a, p. 6-7). Thus, the authors argue that many viewers are assertive about the amount of information they want to have access to and fight for the establishment of norms and ethics that protect them from spoilers.

Considering the temporal disparity and the dispute for power are only some of the possible reasons for spoiling and bearing in mind the specific use Brazilians do of the practice, we seek to problematize the issue and investigate the existence of other motivations behind the practice.

## Methodology

In order to perform this study, we elaborated a survey with 23 open and closed questions, distributed into 10 groups<sup>5</sup> of series fans on Facebook of different formats and genres, looking to reach a wider audience and obtain a bigger degree of variability in the sample. It is important to

5 The questionnaire was published in the following Facebook groups: *Grey’s Anatomy You’re My Person*; *Viciados em Séries e Sagas*; *How I Met Your Mother Brasil*; *Glee Brasil*; *Game of Thrones da Depressão*; *Game of Thrones Brasil L&S*; *The Big Bang Theory Brasil*; *Netflix Brasil Assinantes*; *Netflix Brasil – Assinantes*; *Séries da Depressão*.



reinforce that we chose not to restrict our analysis to a determined group of fans, but rather we performed a study with a wide group of avid consumers and viewers of television series, because we believe certain productions can lead their fans to relate in different forms with spoilers. In total, we've collected 1,805 valid answers. The survey received answers throughout 10 days between April 30<sup>th</sup> and May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016. The questions were divided into: i) profile of the respondent, ii) consumption of voluntary spoilers, iii) involuntary consumption of spoilers and iv) production of spoilers<sup>6</sup>. In this total sample, 71.6% (n = 1,293) are female, 28% (n = 506) male and 0.3 (n = 06) non binary. The minimum age of the responders was 11 years old and the maximum was 62 years old. About series consumption, most of the respondents (41.7%) watches up to five series currently and dedicate from one to two hours to series consumption a day (36.5%).

Through that, it was performed a crop about respondent who said they usually give spoilers, main issue for the discussion of this study, totalizing 787 (n = 787) respondents, representing 43.6% of the total of collected answers. In this sample, there was performed lexical and semantic categorization for content analysis (BARDIN, 2011), from the type of answer given were indicated seven wide categories, split into "Non-toxic practices": Accidental (26.3%), politically correct (37.9%), Sociability (23.8%), Informative (8.76%), and Others (4.06%), and "Toxic Practices": Pleasure (17.9%) and Revenge (5.46%). You must observe that as questions are open, some answers could be framed into two or more categories, as, for example, Paula's<sup>7</sup> answer: "Sometimes it is involuntary, sometimes as a joke and sometimes it's because the person is asking for it" (woman, 29 years old).

6 In this study, we will focus only in the issue of spoiling.

7 All the respondents received pseudonyms. We included the genre and the age to refine any patterns related to the condition of the subject.

## Discussion/Analysis of the results

The word “toxic” comes from the expression developed by John Suler (2004), in which he writes different effects of disinhibition on online environment. According to Suler, anonymity, invisibility, asynchrony, introjection and the reduction of authority are elements that affect an inhibited behavior in online environments, in both ways: positively, a benign behavior based on acts of kindness and generosity; and negatively, like a toxic behavior of interactive practices. As indicated by the psychologist, the toxic behavior in online environments can be understood as a cathartic act of pleasure motivated by unpleasant necessities and desires without any personal growth.

Although we discuss that disinhibition is not the only element that supplies toxic behaviors in online environments, as we’ve showed during our analysis, we shared data in two categories based on Suler’s definition: Non-toxic practices - understood by us as any activity which there’s no intention of generating conflicts in a interpersonal relationship and/or within certain community, specifically, the non-intentional circulation of spoilers and/or the intentional circulation of spoilers - and Toxic practices - understood here as any activity that intentionally lead to conflicts within an interpersonal relationship and/or a particular community, specifically, the intentional circulation of undesired spoilers.

### Non-toxic practices

#### Accidental

Many respondents (n =207) said they gave spoilers “unintentionally” as we can see in Rebecca’s response: “Normally it is an accident” (woman, 32 years old); or Bárbara: “It is rare for it to happen and usually it is not intentional, it happens because I think the person already watched that episode” (woman, 20 years old). There is also those individuals that claim not to be paying attention and end up slipping out a spoiler, as in João’s discourse: “Lack of attention” (male, 21 years old). We observe that some respondents said the existence of an “expiration date”

for spoilers, quality already indicated in Castellano et al.'s work (2017), as, for example, Thais's answer: "They escape. But sometimes I assume someone saw something that came out five years ago and they didn't" (woman, 26 years old).

### **Politically correct**

The category with the biggest number of answers was the politically correct (n=299) in which respondents indicated to give spoilers only if someone ask them, as it could be evidenced in Daniel's answer: "Only when they ask" (male, 28 years old; or Alessandra's: "Because people ask. I wouldn't give a spoiler without someone's consent" (woman, 26 years old). In some cases, respondents reaffirm their status of knowledgeable as in Daniela's discourse: "Since I Know a lot about series, people always ask" (woman, 30 years old), indicating the existence of a dispute of information around subcultural capital (THORNTON, 1995), present amongst TV series fans, to be analysed in future studies.

### **Sociability**

The category of sociability comprises the answers (n =188) which indicated the need/anxiety to talk about events of a certain series, as in Alex's discourse: "Due to the anxiety of commenting some event that happened in a series" (male, 26 years old). Many indicated an "excitement" and a difficulty to get abstained as in Simone's answer: "I like sharing my happiness in relation to someone that happened. When it's something bad, I want to see if the person would get the same reaction as me. I give my all not to share spoilers, but, sometimes, I am so excited that some friends end up giving in" (woman, 19 years old). With that, Simone indicates the necessity to have an audience or an outlet for your thoughts about the show she's watching.

At the same time, some respondents reinforced that the exchange of spoilers would happen, because they had the need to talk about the series, exchanging hypothesis, ideas and assumptions of what is coming

next in the production, as Beatriz says: “I give spoilers for anyone who wants to hear. Therefore, I supply it to discuss and create hypothesis around situations” (woman, 22 years old). In other cases, respondents claimed spoilers belong in the conversation about fiction television series, as in Luiza’s discourse: “Because I want to talk about the show, and I cannot discuss about certain subjects without giving away some spoilers” (woman, 20 years old).

The necessity of an audience can, sometimes, lead a fan to more extreme measures, with interviewees indicating that sometimes they threaten their friends and acquaintances with spoilers so they “keep up” and consume the series in the same rhythm, as we can observe in Afonso’s speech: “I threaten more than I speak, with the intention that my friends watch it quickly so we could talk about the show” (male, 24 years old); and Denis “Just kidding, maybe that way the person watches right away and keeps up, so we can chat about the whole episode” (male, 16 years old). These “threats” bring up the issue of sociability, invariably associated with television consumption. However, a fan takes advantage of having “more knowledge” than the other and “blackmail” them so they can watch the series at the same pace. The information present between this group integrates a web of power relations in which different subjects act, through different social dynamics, for which processes of negotiation and information have some type of value and interest, especially local. More than wanting to be one of the firsts to circulate the information, as Jenkins studied (2006b), spoiler is also seen as a mechanism of sociability built in their own dynamics beyond the prestige between their social group.

### **Informative**

The ‘informative’ category (n =69) comprises answers that indicated in the practice of spoiling the functionality of informing and transmitting information about any determined production for other individuals, as it can be observed in Thiago’s speech: “I normally give spoilers about some event of the series to increase someone’s curiosity about the show.

In my circle of friends this is something common, we always recommend series to each others sharing spoilers” (male, 19 years old), and Eduarda: “Need to share information” (female, 23 years old). At the same time, many respondents indicated they give spoilers as a form of “seducing” their friend’s curiosity, motivating them to start or continue to watch some series, as indicated by Bruno: “Instigating someone to watch the next episodes” (male, 21 years old).

### **Others**

The “others” category (n = 32) comprises a small percentage (4.06%) of answers that in general lines were individuals that did not exactly know why they gave spoilers as we can see in Ligia’s response: “I don’t know why” (female, 28 years). However, Davi indicated he gives out fake spoilers so “people would get upset and then get surprised” (male, 18 years old). However, other respondents said not to care with the paratexts and, because of that, they suppose others would also not care, as Pedro said: “Generally people don’t care a lot with that, the same way I don’t, so I don’t necessarily give out spoilers but I don’t necessarily not give them as well”. (male, 21 years old).

## **Toxic practices**

### **Pleasure**

Among the toxic practices, the category that received the biggest number of answers was “pleasure” (n = 141) in which the respondents said to have feelings of “fun” and “happiness” in the practice of spoiling, as we can observe in Raquel’s discourse: “It is funny” (female, 17 years old); and Talita’s discourse: “It’s cool to see your friends angry” (female, 15 years old). Cristal goes a little deeper when she says that: “Because it’s good to see people suffer!!” (female, 16 years old). Similarly, some respondents indicated to be pleasurable to frustrate other’s experience, like Ana: “Because it’s a good feeling to take away someone’s pleasure of getting surprised with something while watching” (female, 15 years old);

Isabella: “To spoil the expectation of our friend” (female, 37 years old). As we can see, it is not a behavior instigated by disinhibition or anonymity, as presented by John Suler (2004) while analyzing the psychologic dynamic in cyber space, but a practice that reinforces the distinction of having knowledge between peers instead of pleasure. Showing that this pleasure is both a psychological phenomenon and a practice sensitive to context subjugated to a cultural behavior of the Brazilian people, some of the respondents used the Brazilian expression “zoeira”, because they would practice spoiling only to have fun with their friends.

The notion of pleasure linked to a bigger knowledge of a fan can be observed in Gustavo’s discourse: “It is pleasant to show you’ve got more information than another fan that doesn’t know” (male, 33 years old). The fact that cable TV in Brazil is still restricted to a small part of the population that can pay for it, contributes for the thought that whoever has access to this content would have “more rights” than other fans, as it could be evidenced in Thales’ answer: “To boost my ego, and show my poor friends I’ve got cable TV with premium channels” (male, 19 years old). The youngster certainly seeks to stand out for having access to this service in Brazil, a distinction that is not only comprised in economical capital, but to a multidimensional space with different forms of capital (social, economic, symbolic...) Is manifested by the social reaffirmation of appropriation of different goods. According to Bourdieu:

The social world could be conceived as a multidimensional space built empirically by the identification of the main factors of differentiation that are responsible for differences observed in a given social universe, or, in other words, by the discovery of powers or forms of capital that can begin to act, as ases in a game of cards in this specific universe that is the fight (or competition) for the appropriation of scarce goods... (BOURDIEU, 1987, p. 4, our translation)

Despite expressing pleasure revealing spoilers, Rafael’s discourse demonstrates the negative reaction of his friends when he says: “I like to tell my friends that didn’t watch yet, just to make them angry. People insult me a lot of the time” (male, 30 years old). What we perceive from

this discourse is that the disputes around subcultural capital are not restricted solely to status or prestige within a social group (BOURDIEU, 1979), but also refer to a dynamic in which hierarchic distinction are built through informational dominion, regardless of being positively recognized among their peers, contrary to a bias in which it points to legitimacy of the subject within a fandom. Therefore, it is not about a legitimation among subjects (BOURDIEU, 1987), but rather disputes around the information as a valuable good and instrument of power, reinforcing the studies developed by Williams (2004) and Perks and McElrath-Hart (2016a), mentioned earlier.

### Revenge

What we can observe is that in toxic practices - the information being an instrument of distinction, as previously reinforced - social dynamics are built in a constant negotiation between fandoms, establishing political relations among knowledges. The category “revenge” (n = 43) is considered by us the one who demonstrates the biggest toxic potential in the practice of spoiling. In this category, the respondents indicate using spoiling as a way of getting revenge from other individuals that already said unwanted spoilers in the past as in the discourse of Carol: “I usually give spoilers back for someone who gives me a spoiler that I don’t want” and Adriana: “Usually as a form of revenge for receiving some other spoiler before” (Female, 20 years old).

In this sense, spoiling becomes a mechanism of justice in which people who were “betrayed” (received a spoiler) feel they have the right to punish others. However, this motivation isn’t found only linked to previous incidents with the paratexts, some respondents got further and said they give out spoilers for other reasons, as in Caio’s discourse: “Usually I give out spoilers about things I heard about or something I already watched if the person is very annoying or I don’t like that person too much. When I get angry of seeing a spoiler without wanting it I tell somebody took, Because that way the anger will be shared (donn’t judge me, thanks)” (male, 22 years old). It is implied in the young man’s

answer that he considers his action toxic, and even can feel shame from them - “don’t judge me” -, but he still feels comfortable enough to use spoilers as a way of generating conflicts in social relationships.

The practice of spoiling, thus, is used as a social mechanism not only for justice, but for punishment, as we can notice in Camila’s discourse: “Because sometimes, friends that doesn’t like spoilers do or say unpleasant things to us” (female, 26 years old); and Gabriel: “Only when a friend makes some type of action I dislike!” (male, 16 years old). Lilian’s discourse is particularly clarifying about how the practice of spoiling can be used as a mechanism of revenge and punishment: “Revenge. When someone does that to me I only return the ‘favor’. Seeing the expressions on someone’s face when we give a spoiler like “it was Glenn who died” is priceless. Or when your boyfriend does something wrong, sometimes it isn’t worth the fight, I just say a massive spoiler from Game of Thrones and that’s it” (female, 24 years old). Through Lilian’s quotation, we also can observe that the attainment of knowledge is not only an important element of social capital, but it is used as a coin of exchange in the revenge category. This negotiation is not solely restricted to the dynamic of consumption of audiovisual production, but it can serve for other daily disputes. We also can see the cultural representation of toxic behaviors as part of Brazilian cultural identity, reflected in Rodrigo’s answer when he uses his nationality to justify his vengeful spoiler: “Because I am a typical Brazilian guy that, when he suffers from something, wants to create a victim of the same suffering” (male, 16 years old).

What we can verify is that in this category, spoiler exceeds the narrative. In this case, it is not only seen as a paratexts of fictional production. It is not only about experiences related to contemporary narratives and textuality in the digital era, but to a set of social practices and dynamics, in which the information is central for disputes around subcultural knowledge.



## Final considerations

This study had the intention to cast a light over the phenomenon of spoiling in Brazilian communities of fans of American series. The research concluded that among the multiple motivations for spoiling among fans, there would be practices that can be considered as Non-toxic and toxic practices. We observe that soiling a practice of interpersonal communication, based in exchange of knowledge and intentionality, can enable social and cultural disputes when the attainment of knowledge is more than just a mean to gain prestige among peers, which can potentially be used as a bargaining tool in social relationships.

It reinforces studies that indicate the use of spoiler as a symbolic capital of distinction in negotiations within fandoms, at the same time the category of Toxic practices is revealed as a real empirical finding in our analysis. Even though it represents only 23.37% (n = 184) of the analyzed sample, toxic practices show the use of spoiling as a form of fun in the behalf of the Brazilian viewer, that takes advantage of the fact that only a limited amount of people have access to cable television and uses spoilers as a way of standing out in fandoms. At the same time, these viewers use spoilers as a social mechanism of punishment and revenge in fans' interpersonal relationships that may be used for reasons related or not to the television programs.

Again, it is important to reinforce that spoiling is also a manifestation of social and cultural phenomena that can reflect the cultural behavior linked to the social dynamic established by the practice. We understand that spoilers are sensitive to context and can be subjugated into a cultural manifestation of Brazilian behavior, "zoeira". The same way, it is also a social capital linked to the attainment of knowledge, in addition to being used as an economic distinction to those who have access to cable television in Brazil. Therefore, it is important to reinforce that the literature about spoilers shouldn't generalize online behaviors without considering the complexity of each cultural context, especially about the issue of distribution and access to content is different from the countries who produce these TV programs.

We observe that among the nontoxic practices, spoiling showed positive potential of paratexts in interpersonal relationships within fan communities in which they exchange information and mutually motivate themselves to continue to watch series. Evidently, it is necessary to point out that the methodology applied here must be validated in other procedures that supply a more robust subsidy to deeply understand the motivations of viewers in the production of spoilers, since despite the surveys anonymity, the application of this method cannot understand more complex feelings that wouldn't be verbalized through a survey. Understanding spoiling as a cultural and social phenomenon, additional studies are also necessary to see whether other countries viewers share the same motivations to reveal spoilers as Brazilian did in this study.

The possibility of getting pleasure in spoiling re-structures our understanding of these practices, as well as allow us to think about the cultural capital of spoilers as profoundly variable and sensitive to context, indicating new issues and perspectives beyond those already evidenced in researches raised in this study.

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## Testemunhos na mídia: o relato do sofrimento

### Testimonies in the media: the report of suffering

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**Resumo:** *Propomos neste estudo investigar o papel que o testemunho dos indivíduos comuns assume na construção narrativa dos programas populares. Nossa análise está centrada nas narrativas construídas em torno da história de três mulheres, em programas de auditório do SBT e da Record, sendo nosso interesse o modo como as mulheres testemunham a própria vida e seu sofrimento e também a forma como os programas tratam esses testemunhos e constroem uma narrativa em torno deles. Nossa análise revela não só uma estrutura comum na narrativa midiática do sofrimento, como também o quadro das relações estabelecidas, os papéis e as performances desempenhadas nestes programas e o que dizem de nossa sociedade.*

**Palavras-chave:** *Programas populares; Sofrimento; Testemunho; Televisão*

**Abstract:** *We propose in this study to investigate the role that ordinary individuals testimony assumes in the narrative construction of popular programs. Our analysis is centered on the narratives built around the history of three women in*

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*SBT and Record auditorium programs, and our interest is the way in which women witness their lives and their suffering and also the way the programs treat these testimonies and build a narrative around them. Our analysis reveals not only a common structure in the media narrative of suffering, but also the framework of established relationships, the roles and the performances that are seen in these programs and what they say about our society.*

**Keywords:** *Popular Programs; Suffering; Testimony; Television*

The desire (and even the need) to tell about what was lived, of remaking the narrative of our origin, is part of our humanity since the beginning; to this movement, we join the interest in stories told by the other. The fabric of the experience - our own and other's - is something that is attractive to us, especially if it is surrounded by suffering. In the last century, particularly in the last decades, the development of the media came to enhance this desire and the possibilities of construction and circulation of narratives of self. The television especially adds particular resources for this type of production, which can be analyzed under different perspectives, exploring the television logic, sociability, the market dynamics and even the psychoanalytic bias.

In this text, we will talk about the narrative built around the story of three women, in television programs broadcast by SBT and by Record, in a way they build their life testimony. These women have in common the pursuit of their mother, from whom they were separated at childhood. More than the spectacularizing of suffering, the transformation into a merchandise, or the banalization of emotions, what is interesting for us to analyse is the outline of the media narrative, the board of established relationships, the roles and performances that were given. This analysis seeks to investigate the procedures of television production, as well as portraying aspects of life and values of a society.

For a better understanding of our path of reading, it is important to highlight two framings that north the present analysis and constitute parameters of our research work<sup>5</sup>: the concept of “popular media”; the emphasis in the word of the common people (the story of the experience on behalf of ordinary people in the field of media).

What we are calling “popular media” or, in the case of television in Brazil, “popular programs in TV”, is characterized both for the presence

5 The present reflection belongs to a wider research developed in the context of a four research group (GRIS – Grupo de Pesquisa em Imagem e Sociabilidade da UFMG - Research Group in Image and Sociability at UFMG) and has the support of CNPq (Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico) and FAPEMIG (Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do estado de Minas Gerais).

in scene of a common people, representing popular classes<sup>6</sup>, and the treatment of problems of the daily life in big cities, especially in peripheral neighborhoods and related to different forms of violence. Such programs are, as a general rule, marked by an approach based on formal exaggeration, emotional appeal and dramatic performances.

It is true that the presence of “common people” or “low income people” on television is not new - but they used to appear a lot less, and in very specific moments and places, with their marks of status, as humble workers, criminals or representing folk arts. In the last years, however, this presence has intensified. The causes are numberless, a response of the media to the criticism of expropriation of the word popular; the depletion of the existing television models (the television of specialists, the television that talks about itself, according to the classification established by Umberto Eco<sup>7</sup>); the expansion of acquisitive power of certain layers of popular classes in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (the so-called “low income class”). Well, this audience already existed; the news is that it starts to exist more strongly as a consumer audience, provoking a bigger interest and attention on behalf of open TV channels and focusing in changes in the way of representing it. Since then, individuals of popular classes were present in different emissions taking the place of inferior; a new reality gives them a new Protagonism and seeks to establish a more proximal dialogue between the channel’s schedule and a “popular” audience<sup>8</sup>.

Numberless shows of different genres, developed their own way of promoting the insertion of the presence and the word of common people, both in the context of journalism and in other types of show - auditorium program, variety, reality shows, talk shows, etc. The model we present here is about programs in which individuals come to testify on

6 We understand that there isn't a “common citizen” in the singular, and that the collective we call “popular classes” is heterogeneous and unstable. We are referring to different segments of low class, marked by precarious jobs, restricted access to education, health and residence.

7 According to the distinction that became classic, between Paleotelevision and NeoTV (ECO, 1984).

8 It is worth mentioning, however, that the audience of these so-called “popular” shows (segments of class C, D and E) and are also watched by a middle-class and high-class audience.



their own life, their dreams and wishes, something very close to “intimacy television”, named by Dominique Mehl (1996). They are shows that outline the daily life, with non-fictional confessional drama.

The shows analyzed here do not focus on socially relevant events, but they bring small narratives that portray specific people’s life story. They are stories lacking a power of emotion beyond the people who experienced it (they are not bearers of an evident social or political dimension), however, they reveal a lifestyle and a social scenario that is certainly not exclusive of these characters.

## Methodological outline

With the goal of investigating the role of testimony of common people in the narrative construction of popular programs, our first step was to identify, within the schedule of the main Brazilian television channels<sup>9</sup> - Bandeirantes, Rede Globo, Rede Record, RedeTV! And Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão (SBT) - the shows in which the common people fills the role of witness, being invited to narrate their own story. We found a board of 14 shows<sup>10</sup>, which led to the necessity of limiting our corpus. For that, we’ve selected two channels that invest more strongly in the popular format - SBT (four shows) and Record (six). Then, we made an analysis of content of the shows<sup>11</sup>, seeking to identify, within them, the parts in which the common people were the main character. We found 27 shows<sup>12</sup> - ten from SBT and 17 from Record.

9 Observation made in November 21st, 2016.

10 *Brasil Urgente* (Bandeirantes); *João Kléber Show* (Rede TV!); *Caldeirão do Huck e Esquentá* (Rede Globo); *Programa do Ratinho*; *Domingo Legal*, *Programa da Eliana*, *Casos de Família* (SBT); *Xuxa Meneghel*, *Gugu*, *Hora do Faro*, *Domingo Show*, *Programa da Sabrina*, *Cidade Alerta* (Record).

11 Due to the difference in format, we excluded from our corpus the newscast *Cidade Alerta*, from Rede Record.

12 Within a show, we call “segment” specific sequences with defined structure, easily recognizable and normally with their own name, logo and jingle.

TABLE 1 - SBT and Record's selected shows

Channel	Program	Selected show
SBT	<i>Programa do Ratinho</i>	DNA Test
		Miracles of Faith
		Coming home
	<i>Domingo Legal</i>	The princess and the commoner
		Building a dream
	<i>Programa Eliana</i>	Sueli in your house
Renewed Beauty		
Family asks for help Delivery to you		
<i>Casos de família</i> <sup>1</sup>	Complete program	
Record	<i>Xuxa Meneghel</i>	Knock Knock
		One day of Diva
	<i>Gugu</i>	Gugu's cab
		Bus station
		I am back
	<i>Programa da Sabrina</i>	People from Brazil
		Pause for Love
		Sabrina was here
	<i>Domingo Show</i>	I survived
		A Sunday's Dream
Princess and Me		
<i>Hora do Faro</i>	Twist hour	
	I want you back	
	I confess I've lived	
	Makeover my husband/wife What do you gain with that?	

1 The program *Casos de Família* was not divided into segments, but it presents, in every episode, an average of three different cases about the same theme.

In the analysis of content of the programs, we identified suffering as the main theme which the common citizen was called to testify, and which could be occasioned by physical violence (domestic or decurrent

of urban criminality); by the precariousness of life conditions (residency, medical assistance); body issues (illness, aesthetic); love and marriage problems, and, finally, complicated family and neighborhood relations.

After mapping different testimonies of suffering, we looked for segments that dealt with the same form of suffering, enabling a comparison in a common grid. We found, then, in Programa da Eliana e do Ratinho, on SBT and in Hora do Faro, at Record, segments dedicated to the promotion of encounters with family members where the narrative was built from the story of suffering of the participants, due to the absence of a family member. In the segment Coming Home (Programa do Ratinho), the suffering is given due to the distance of a family member, and in the segments, I Confess I've lived (*Hora do Faro*) and Delivery to You (*Programa Eliana*), the suffering comes from not knowing the whereabouts of part of the family. In order to make our analysis easier, we chose segments that promoted the same type of reunion. Among the segments available on Youtube<sup>13</sup>, we chose those dedicated to a daughter looking for his mother.

Our analysis of the three segments came about based in the identification of the following elements: proposal of the segment and synopsis of the case; sequence and structure of the segment; scenic resources; image of the host / second narrator; narration of the suffering. We begin with a quick synopsis of the segments, and then, we will deal with the other elements.

### **Coming home: the fighter Elsa**

Unlike other segments presented in Programa do Ratinho, Coming Home is hosted by the reporter Fábio Marcos, on Fridays. With an average of 20 minutes of duration, the segment promotes the reunion of people that, traveling to other regions of the country, had been away from their family members. The episode of Coming Home we analyzed was broadcast May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015 and had 23 minutes of duration. It talks about

13 During the YouTube selection we didn't have the concern with the choice of programs with close dates of exhibition.

Elsa's story, woman living in São Paulo who does not see her mother for 14 years.

The segment begins with Fabio Marcos arriving to Elsa's house, who receives him with surprise and emotion. The character is then, presented to the viewers through a simulation, through which we see her struggled childhood and also the problems she faced with a teenage pregnancy. Afraid of the child's father, Elsa runs away to São Paulo and doesn't come back to her hometown, the town of Catarina, in the state of Ceará. Through the simulation, we also witness her difficulties in a new city, how she meets the man who would become her husband and the violence she suffered during their marriage. After the separation, she receives the diagnosis of breast cancer, goes through the entire treatment by herself, which motivates her to look for the show to reunite with her mother, dona Francelina.

At the end of the simulation, the participant received the news that she will go to Ceará to visit her mother and does not contain her excitement. After that, we watch Elsa, amidst laughter and tears, pack her bags and travel with Fábio to Ceará. Her reunion is not immediate. The reporter talks to dona Francelina about her daughter, while Elsa watches everything inside a car. So that she would not suspect her daughter's return, Fábio asks Francelina to teach the viewers how to make a *co-cada*, since she earns her sustenance by selling candy. While her mom is focused on preparing the candy, Elsa enters the kitchen and surprise her. When Francelina looks back and recognizes her daughter, she immediately stops everything she's doing to hug her.

Francelina: [while they hug each other] My kid, is that you?

Elsa: It's me.

Francelina: [crying] I need to thank all these people, my god. You came from so far, you, to make such a thing. To bring my kid back to me! My god! Oh my god!

Elsa: This day, mom, it had to happen the way I always dreamed, I always dreamed about it!

The segment ends with their reunion. We see a long scene of the both of them hugging with an emotional musical background and the narration of Fábio Marcos, highlighting the ending and victory of Elsa over life's obstacles.

### **Delivery to you: a 40-year-old journey**

With the purpose of promoting reunions of people that do not see each other for a long time, mainly family members that were distanced, Delivery to You has an average of 50 minutes of duration and is presented by Eliana and Walter Peceniski, founder of GoodAngels, a non-profit organization specialized in looking for missing people. The segment analyzed was broadcast on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 and had 56 minutes of duration. It tells the story of Alaíde, who was separated from her mother and sisters when she was four and was delivered to the land owner where her family lived. Almost forty years later, Alaíde still has the desire of meeting her family members once again.

The segment begins with Eliana on stage making a brief presentation of the case that will be shown, reinforcing Alaíde's suffering for being away from her family. Later, there is an external video, when Walter Peceniski meets Alaíde, in her house, where she tells her story and gives him the few details she has (like a piece of paper that is a type of birth certificate). In the next scene, Eliana receives Alaíde on stage with a hug. In the interaction between both of them, Alaíde tells more details on her life story and the host asks questions, emphasizing the more dramatic moments and aspects. A clip is showed, simulating three situations of Alaíde's childhood - her father's love with his daughters; the death of the father, bitten by a snake; the passing of the three daughters.

Then, Alaíde and the host (and viewers) watch the trip and search conducted by Peceniski until he found dona Alice, Alaíde's mother, in a rural settlement in Mirante do Paranapanema, in São Paulo. The images show Walter's encounter with dona Alice, the questions he asks and the invitation to come to Eliana's show to receive a delivery in the segment Delivery to You. All moments are marked by suspense, with a

lot of pauses, in which Eliana brings doubts about Dona Alice coming to the show.

In the video, dona Alice appears to be suspicious about Peceniski's invitation, she smiles, covers her face with her hands and expresses doubt with the word "Oh my god", but she accepts coming to the show. The moment of the reunion arrives. Eliana asks Alaíde to hide and dona Alice is invited to come in. They have a long conversation, Eliana asks dona Alice to tell details of her life and motivates him to try to identify the possible delivery sender. The three simulations are shown to dona Alice, who begins to get more serious, quiet and contemplative. Eliana invites dona Alice's son to come in (it appears she started a new life after her first husband's death and the separation of her daughters) to be with her in the moment she opens the box; the old handwritten paper reveals personal information about the person sending the delivery, Alaíde. Then, they show a video where Alaíde, filled with emotion, talks to her mother. Crying, dona Alice asks if Alaíde is there. Eliana asks Alaíde to come in, and finally mother and daughter hug each other. As the subtitle summarizes: "40 years of distance couldn't make this mother and daughter forget one another".

### **I confess I've lived: the dream of having a mother**

With an average of 60 minutes, I confess I've lived is one of the most successful segments of the show Hora do Faro and it exists since 2013, when the host Rodrigo Faro was still in Melhor do Brasil. The segment promotes the gathering of family or friends that haven't seen each other for a long time, with Humberto Ascencio as the responsible for searching the person missing. With 1 hour and 27 minutes of duration, the analyzed segment was broadcasted in June 19<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and talks about the story of Noemy. Because she got pregnant very young, Noemy's mother trusted her newborn child to an aunt and disappeared. Thirty-two years later, Noemy still dreams of meeting her mother, knowing whether she was alive.

As in the other segments, Noemy is also presented in her house. However, who is going to visit her is the host himself, Rodrigo Faro.

In an outdoor scene, he briefly tells her story and the reason she was there. The host's discourse shows something recurrent throughout the segment: a strong feeling of suspense to let the viewer on the edge of their seats regarding the reunion. Noemy is very touched by Faro's visit. She talks about her past answering the host's questions, who promises to help her. Unlike other segments from SBT, *I confess I've lived* does not use the tool of simulation; however, it also goes back to the past through childhood photos of Noemy and parts of their conversation that bring out important moments of her life.

Noemy is invited to go on stage and follows the search of Humberto for her mother. The investigator walks around the town of Belém, asks for information, and ends up going to Tailândia, Pará's countryside, where Noemy's mother lives. When she arrives to the house, Humberto meets a woman, Damares. At the same time, on stage, Faro is talking and asking questions to Noemy about who this lady might be, and she answers she might be her sister.

The sister Damares and the niece Beatriz arrive on stage to meet Noemy and it's a very emotional moment, filled with long heartfelt hugs. Again, scenes of Humberto, who continues to walk around town looking for the mother, who wasn't home and is only found in the fourth and last part of the show.

The scene is cut to the stage, where Noemy says, in tears, how much she loves her mother and that she forgives her for abandoning her. Then, the host invites her to sing a song for her mother. When Noemy is singing, her mom appears behind her and they hug and cry together. While this is happening, Faro narrates the emotion of the reunion, highlighting the 32 years without seeing each other.

After the hug, Noemy says she's very happy, that it was everything she could dream of and that she has no words to express how she feels. Faro asks the mother: "You never forgot her, right?", and she confirms: "Never, never". She says she loves her daughter, from the bottom of her heart, and she never stopped loving her. Rodrigo Faro ends the show giving Noemy a picture frame with pictures of her mother, her sisters and her niece.

## Narrative analysis: common structure

After describing the three cases, our next step was to identify the structure of narratives. The analysis of que sequence of segments allowed us to find a common matrix where he can show an interest instrument in the analysis of reunion shows in general. Such scheme can be divided into five steps: a) Host or reporter introduces the case, still alone; b) presentation of the character that requests the reunion; c) narrative of the character's story, since their separation (some with dramatic simulation); d) Journey of the "detective" looking for clues; e) moment of the reunion.

These five topics seem to be very similar regarding the content and dynamics involved:

- a. The role of the host or reporter stands out in the presentation as the narrator of the story, responsible for conducting the narrative asking questions directed to the participants.
- b. The character is presented in their daily lives, reinforcing the lack of a mother. The presentations happened in the participant's home, a place of intimacy, that is unfolded throughout the narrative;
- c. The narrative of the story reveals itself as being an appealing strategy for the viewer, that sees the story being acted and becomes a witness to what is being narrated. Through that, the participant relives her story and gets moved with what is being shown;
- d. The trip, the search for the loved ones, is the climax of the show, the moment of biggest suspense that will culminate, or not, in a "happy ending";
- e. The moment of the reunion, despite the suspense created, ends with a happy ending. It's important to highlight that the reunion always happens in the final minutes of the segment and does not last more than five minutes<sup>14</sup>. It's the moment of positive emotions,

14 Coming Home had 23 minutes of duration and the reunion happened at 21min28s. Delivery to you had 56 minutes and the reunion happened at 53min36s. I confess I've lived had 1:27:00 and the reunion happened at 1:22:00.



where suffering gives place to happiness, relief, gratitude. Words give place to gesture, the hug being the biggest expression of emotion experienced at that moment. It's important to highlight, however, that the reunion wraps up the journey with an abrupt manner, and the show ends without showing the viewer what comes next. In short, the programs are concerned more with the story and drama of the search; the emotional reunion is only an ending (just like the "happily ever after" of fairytales).

Regarding scenic features, we perceive a lot of similarities between the three segments, having the soundtrack and close ups (first plane detail plan, close up) features used in the three segments in a way to involve the viewer with what is being narrated. To reinforce the emotion of characters and their suffering with the absence of the loved one, the edition privileges the dramatic soundtrack, the moments of crying, the silences, the suspense, the capture of the face of suffering, of commotion, of the joy of the reunion.

The concern of rebuilding the past is another narrative element that is commonly employed. On both SBT shows was used the feature of simulation as a form of resumption. In Record's segment such reconstitution is made through Noemy's childhood pictures and her story. Another tool used both on Record's segment and in Delivery to you was screen division, enabling the viewer to follow the participant's reactions on stage while they watched the journey looking for their loved ones unfold. At the end, we could highlight the use of subtitles in the three segments, framing the events and offering keys of reading for the viewer.

We also analyze the image of the host, who appears as a second narrator of the story. In the three segments, the hosts are responsible for the conduction of conversation. They highlight the facts they consider important, often making repetitive questions and sentences, to reinforce the information. Suspenseful sentences beginning with "I wonder" are also frequently used.

We perceive that the questions demand the participants to reveal more than their stories - they demand emotions, they want to understand what

is going on in their head and in their “hearts”. The presenters orient the story of the participants, direct their narration and performance. Eliana and Pecenisiki motivate Alaíde not to hold grudges, to feel first and think later. None of the two seem to condemn dona Alice, but they encourage compassion with her story. Faro also motivates Noemy to forgive her mother and tries to redeem her as he asks her: “You never forgot her, right?” And the mother confirms: “Never, never”. Fábio, in turn, insists in reinforcing with his questions the love between mother and daughter and highlighting Elsa as a hard-working woman worthy of the show’s assistance. In the end of the segment, he highlights: “Elsa came back home to see so many people she loved, who were far away in her worst moments. Elsa is a winner and deserves every day from here on out to be as happy as this one. Congrats, Elsa!”.

It’s interesting to point out the fact that the hosts (Fábio, Eliana, Faro) seek to identify with the role of the audience, sharing the expectation about how the story will unfold. What is told by the participants is faced with surprise, as if they were listening to that content for the first time; they keep the suspense, creating doubts about the possibility of the reunion. Faro and Eliana show great involvement with the story of those women, since they hug them and get emotional with them.

### **Witnesses of suffering and happy ending**

Analyzing the terminology of the term “testimony”, Seligmann-Silva (2003a) explains that, in Latin, testimony can be determined by two words: *testis* and *superstes*. The first one indicates the testimony of a third party in a law suit. In turn, the meaning of *superstes* indicates a person that has been through a test, therefore, a survivor, the Greek concept of “*martir*” being very close to this definition. Testimony in this second sense has to do with surviving, coming from a once-in-a-lifetime event, radical, facing death from which is necessary to say. Good examples of that are the testimonies of post-World War Two, where victims are called to testify about the Holocaust. Facing the atrocities lived and the near-death experiences, the survivors live the harsh task of building

the memory of the experience, of translating through language the experience lived. Testify, in this sense, becomes a moral obligation of only to those who are gone, but also to future generations. As Seligmann-Silva explains, “the person who testifies relates in an exceptional manner with language, it breaks the seal of language that tried to cover the “unspeakable” that sustain it. Language is nothing more than the trace - substitute and never perfect and satisfactory - of a lack, an absence” (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2003a, p. 48).

Facing these stories of victims, we establish, according to Dosse, a relation of compassion and resentment. We have compassion for the victim and resent the experience they had. The testimony enables the experience of a strong emotion, to the point we project ourselves in what is experienced by the witness, and their suffering brings sympathy and empathy. Seligmann-Silva (2003b) also highlights the empathy provoked by the testimony of the survivor, at the same time it disarms disbelief. According to the author, even a fictional text of testimony, if presented as authentic, is capable of moving readers, as if it was real. “We tend to give voice to the martyr to respond their need to witness, to try to give shape to the hell they came to know - even if the gusto of the lie prowl their words”. (SELIGMANN-SILVA, 2003b, p. 379)

The idea of a testimony is generally still greatly associated to something exceptional that demands a story, either registered in the History books or in media, it’s up to us to respond, in our analysis the reason for which the story of common people, in their daily dramas, emerges in popular shows as worthy of telling.

Thinking about the segments analyzed, we believe the testimony of characters can, to a certain extent, be thought as a survivor speech. Instead of witnessing life and death situations, they witness everyday afflictions, the pain and suffering of absence, the way how they got to survive away from being what was essential, the mother figure. When they seek to give voice to the ordinary citizen, popular programs aim something that brings identification, that makes us similar, being human dramas, the testimonies of suffering and overcoming, popular forms of the popular cultural matrix.

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Still reflecting about the testimony, we must highlight the particularities of the media testimony. According to Frosh and Pinchevski (2009), that includes the appearance of witness in the mediatic scene and consists in the possibility of the media itself to act as a witness, as well as the position of audience components as witnesses. In this sense, we can understand media testimony as those performed in media, by media and through media, therefore, media does not only give testimonies, but also has the capacity of witness and locate their viewers as witnesses of the events described.

More than media production, the authors understand media testimony as a culturally significant phenomenon, that says something about the new modalities of interaction between media and audience. It is about a performed testimony, in which what matters is not only what you say, but the way you say it, the performance of the actors involved, which includes the use of words, body, gestures, posture, facial expressions and even silence. We see that, in the analyzed testimonies, often is hard to translate into words the pain of absence, of abandonment, and gestures, silences and tears become important features in these stories.

Another important aspect is also the way these stories involve viewers and invite them in; as Frosh and Pinchevski say, when following a testimony, the viewer also becomes a witness of what is being narrated. The testimony approaches the audience to the one who is talking, either by identification to what is talked about, or the dramatic and moral content in which this testimony is built.

Looking at the three segments analyzed, we perceive that in the segment Coming Home Elsa is called to testify about the suffering that permeates her life and shows not only in her words, but also in her body and face. Their survivor story approaches the hard life she had in Ceará countryside, the moment she saw herself forced to abandon the family life to run away from her ex that threatened her, the ten years of marriage she suffered in the hands of a violent husband, the breast cancer and, during all these 27 years away from home, the lack of contact with her mother. Facing the stories of suffering, Elsa comes as the hero that

overcame all of life had to offer, being in the narrative as an example of overcoming obstacles and courage. As opposed to faith, which is described as cruel, she is characterized as a warrior, a fighter and a winner.

In the narrative, Elsa's performance is initially centered in suffering, her tears, gestures, facial expressions contribute for her story to express the pain of the experiences lived. The reporter also acts in a way to reinforce the suffering lived by her, asking questions, calling attention to her tears and having compassion to her story, projecting himself, as Dosser points out, in the place of the "victim" and manifesting sympathy and empathy. At the end of the segment, Elsa's segment gains new outlines and suffering gives place to the joy of the reunion. The tears are no longer of pain, but happiness, and the hug is the biggest expression of that.

In turn, in the segment *Delivery to you*, we see that Alaíde is called to testify the suffering for being abandoned by her mother and the distance from her origins. The doubts cause anxiety: "Where is my family? I wonder if everyone is ok? I wonder if anyone remembers me?". Suffering is also performed by the mother, dona Alice, in her sad face, in her silences seeing her story being narrated through simulations. We perceive the testimony of suffering not only in the anxious lines of mother and daughter, but also in their gesture (hands in the face, covering the mouth, looking down, looking sideways, tears, sighs).

If in the segment *Coming Home*, Elsa is the lead character and the hero of the story, in *Delivery to You*, Alaíde and Dona Alice are the lead ladies of the story, both being victims of the separation. The testimony of the two have importance in the narrative, being their performance conducted mainly by the host, Eliana, which, in different moments, highlights the lines and gesture of the participants, in order to showcase their suffering.

Regarding *I confess I've lived*, we perceive that Noemy has the role of lead character of this narrative, having a very similar suffering to Alaíde: the pain of absence and doubt. Out of the three characters, Noemy is the one who most performs for the cameras. We see her concern with what she let it show and a bigger involvement with what is being proposed

by the host. She gets emotional, but never is desperate. She smiles with Faro's jokes and is patient even with the prolonging of the ending of her story. Even without knowing her mother, all the time she says she forgave her and love her regardless of what happened. The unconditional love for the mother she doesn't know is reinforced numberless times, mainly in her host speech ("Do you love her without hugging her? How beautiful!"). Noemy's wish is that embrace, and her biggest fear is not having reciprocity of her feelings. She questions repeatedly whether her mother also loves her, whether her mother also wants to embrace her.

Finishing our analysis, we highlight as the last aspect the role of shows and also viewers as witnesses of what is being narrated. We perceive that Eliana, Rodrigo Faro and the reporter Fabio assume the role of witnesses in the media narrative, in that they appropriate their character's story. They not only testify that what is being said is true, but they also know details of the character's life and, through their questions and comments, give detail to their journey.

As for the viewers, we perceive that the narrative is always inviting us to witness what is being experienced. We (the audience) also put ourselves as witnesses of this suffering, of the suffering of those who are disposed to expose their intimacy to the camera. Mainly in the moment of the reunion, whoever plays the role of witness is the audience, who was invited throughout the narrative to identify with those women and root for them. We suffer, we cry, we get emotional and, in the end, we witness the happy ending.

## Conclusions

Ending our analytical path, we want to rescue some points that are central in the reading of the three segments. The first one is, without a doubt, the decisive role of the host, who conducts the narrative, rescues and establishes their most significant aspects, builds an emotional environment and seeks to establish a affectionate partnership both with the character (in their suffering) and the audience (with their expectations). The interventions and the weaving established by them does not leave

a margin for creations, unforeseen events nor they stimulate the appearance of spontaneity.

It is also very evident how the segments analyzed (and certainly we could extend the result of the sample to other emissions) obey a standard structure, in which the host gives the initial framework and later he presents the character. Then the quest begins, filled with uncertainties, ending with the reunion. Even though the show produces elements of doubt and suspense, it is known everything is going to end well. The ending, however (just like the “happily ever after” in fairy tales) is quick and without any complexity.

The emotion, as we previously said, is the main point. Thorough the host’s performance, through soundtrack, image effects or producing simulation videos, everything works to gain the affectionate participation of the viewer - commotion being the central emotion in Eliana’s show and suspense on Faro’s.

Some aspects regarding the characters of the three shows called our attention, and only a study with a wider range could confirm the recurrence in other segments of the same format. Out of the three stories of daughters separated from their mothers, two are related to a teenage pregnancy and the impossibility to raise a child. In the third story, we have the death of the husband, situation where the widower also gives up her daughters. We can perceive a strong issue of gender in the analyzed sample.

Regarding the testimony, our guiding principle, we got to an ambivalent result: whether it’s true that the segment is all conducted around the narrative of a suffering experience, reported by the person that experienced it, we perceive, however, that the (abandoned) daughters are more interviewees than narrators, which weakens the very notion of testimony. The story already was appropriated and played by the show, and the characters work more as an illustration of the narrated story rather than bring it to life.

Finally, a small aspect that seems to be relevant and also reveals a issue of gender and generation. The three mothers, older women already

marked by the time, by the life of intense labor, present a restricted verbal expression. Despite the host's interaction and motivation to talk, they almost don't talk, and, in their marked bodies, the emotion already does not quickly appear, nor with great intensity. Thus, it is the frail body, and especially the facial expression - which translates more surprise than joy, more resignation than guilt, more tension than suffering - that are presented as true testimonies of a life filled with loss.

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## **A memória midiática: projeções e sujeições no ambiente digital**

### **The mediatic memory: projections and subjections in the digital environment**

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**Resumo:** *O propósito deste estudo é investigar como a memória é assimilada e disponibilizada pelos meios digitais. Esta interrogação parte do valor que a memória possui para a cultura, para a comunicação e para o como é reconhecida na atualidade, projetada por sua totalidade e plenitude. Em razão disso, nota-se que sua presença ultrapassa a funcionalidade tecnológica cumulativa ao se formar como agenciadora das estratégias dos meios em narrativizar e gerenciar os saberes. Estas ocorrências, observadas a partir do Google e do Facebook, serão ainda vistas como determinantes para a formação deste ambiente comunicativo, que centra as experiências de memória a partir do automatismo e do excesso, o que ressignifica suas compreensões coletivas e subjetivas, principalmente.*

**Palavras-Chave:** *memória midiática; memória no Google; memória no Facebook*

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study is to investigate how memory is assimilated and made available by digital means. This interrogation starts from the value that memory has for culture and for communication as it is recognized today, projected by its totality and fullness. Because of this, it is noted that its presence exceeds cumulative technological functionality by forming as an agent of media*

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*strategies in narrativizing and managing knowledge. These occurrences, observed from Google and Facebook, will still be seen as determinants for the formation of this communicative environment, which centers the experiences of memory from the automatism and the excess, which mainly re-signifies their collective and subjective understandings.*

**Keywords:** *mediatic memory; memory on Google; memory on Facebook*

## Introduction

The use one makes of memory, in this or  
that social or technological context,

The genre of functioning that in  
this case characterize it,

The idea that this forms individuals,

Determine to a great extent the  
type of culture in question.

*Paul Zumthor*

The study presented here has as main goal to ask oneself about how the memory is manifested in contemporality, focusing on how it is assimilated and provided through digital media. That is because we observe that these technologies, in addition to their archivist resources, agglutinate deep communicational and cultural meanings that bring them a mnemonic fascination of full performance when they promise to store everything. In this study, we believe that, through reading this scenario, it is possible to elucidate the construction of a specific communicative environment, praised for their capacities, and potentially building a peculiar model of thinking. In order to do that, we propose to think of this phenomenon through the employment given to memory, of the meanings it has on culture, in the way the access and apprehension of information are measured through these systems and how the participant subjects are involved with this offer.

## Memory in Culture and Communication

Looking to understand the meanings employed to memory in digital, this research face, in its beginning, with a wide array of meanings involved with the idea of “memory”. A problem that gained growing attention nowadays in different fields of knowledge and, especially in Communication Sciences, mainly when related to the crescent development of information technologies and their storage capabilities.

Sometimes taken arbitrarily, memory can be designated *lato sensu* as “the faculty of conserving and remembering past states of conscience and everything you find associated to them” (HOUAISS, 2009) which, beyond being a conclusion, it problematizes two capabilities of the human being: the retention and recovery of content. Two categories that create an opportunity to think how the human being sought to control, conquer, recreate and unify their individual and collective past and give analytical background to the quoted difference of interpretations. In addition to that, there is the varied scientific uses of the concept - which in its diversity go from macroscopic meanings until the complete subjectivation of mnemonic systems. Beyond that, there is the wide diffusion of common sense, which increases its plurality while participating the everyday scope produced individually or socially. With that, its use, at times abusive, makes believe everything is memory, making it impossible to have any reflexive approximation.

Because of that, we will not consider it as an univocal instance of humans, but, on the contrary, as a permanent conceptual challenge. An object marked by a profound epistemological mobility that requests a look that consider it a problem, a quicksand where humans always wanted to set foot in. Proposing not to entangle in extreme concepts nor invalidating oneself in generalization, this study chooses to think memory through its conflicts and its conceptual interdisciplinarity. In order to do that, it considers a nodal point of human intellect, taking into account their neurological and psychological functions, but also extending it as a producer of cultural representations, that seek to apprehend it as a complex field tensioned by disputes of meaning. That is because, when thought through its participation in the history of thinking, it's possible to observe the meanings linked to it have always involved in different processes of cultural production and appropriation. Therefore, through memory, the human being sought to detain and conquer his world to understand himself, genealogically, on this environment he built.

In this sense, his coverage is originally allied with theogonic representations, deified in the emblematic image of Mnemosyne, mother of

Muses, recurred and manifested in Greek poetry and chanting. For this reason, memory first had its action linked to the presentification of origin and the universal knowledge, being a sacred gift reserved to few people (ELIADE, 2013; VERNANT, 2012). In this conception, the goddess meant “everything that was, everything that is, everything that will be” as Hesiod says in *Theogony* (2011, p. 32), through which Alethea (truth) was revealed. This terminology clarifies that, under the opposition prefix *a-* of the radical *léthe*, has as contrasting *par* *Lete*, name of the river that gave oblivion to the soul of the dead and to what wasn't true.

Its transcendental nature - Greek mythology attributed a superhuman role, having their power mentioned in interpretations made by Plato<sup>3</sup> and Aristotle<sup>4</sup> - allowed memory to be, in the end, assimilated by two other fundamental fields of western thinking, Judaic and Christian. Either for considering its participation in Judaic folklore, which has in it the conservation of its origin and base of union of their people (HERSCHEL, 1995) or in rites of Christian remembrance, extended to exhausting exercises of *ars memoriae* (YATES, 2007), memory detains an essential psychological function to the constitution of self, of social and of time, which always needed to be dominated and conquered, as Jean-Pierre Vernant (1990) said.

For this reason, parallel to its deification, the concept of memory was appropriated for other uses, linked to great narratives and their capabilities of creating a social unification based on the collective time, such as understood by Social Sciences in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Social Sciences, with special mention to the studies of Maurice Halbwachs (1990), “collective memory” served to political and ideological constructions created about these societies. Its laicization, as Jacques Le Goff (2003) observes, has contributed for the historic scientific base,

- 3 For Plato, memory is the ability of accessing pure and absolute knowledge that the soul found amongst their many passages through the Earth and forgot to reincarnate in the moment he drank the water *Lete*, because of that, it occupies a privileged place in his Theory of Ideas.
- 4 Aristotle (2012) understandings disconnect the ideal of memory from immortality by approximating it from a limited, incomplete body. According to him, the source of knowledge is linked to the senses, your perception is linked to imagination, in which memory would respond this mental image.

controlling and fictionalizing of a past that does not stop being uncovered and evidenced.

This effort in raise a comprehension and a dominion over memory is verifiable at least in other two perspective that sought to guarantee continuity and the permanence of knowledge and social experiences. One surrounded by the variability of meanings belonging to individual memory, focus of scientific competences that thought it as base in their neurological, psychological and philosophical qualities, counterposed with other, with specific temporality, determinist and chronological, influenced by social and historic discourse.

For the first, more than a social conditioner, memory is configured as an open phenomenon in dependence to the way individual experiences are generated and managed. For this reason, mnemonic functions are allied to the body, as a place with the purpose of conserving it not only to reinvent it through its own temporality. With highlight to interpretations performed by Sigmund Freud (1996, 1989) and Henri Bergson (2011), we can observe, in its different focuses, the preoccupation in seeing that this type of memory is the result of the way reality is abstracted and articulated to images the subject narrativizes to self. It is, according to Lev Vigotsky (1987) a phenomenon resulting from an intense imaginative exercise of production - and also covering - experiences, that determine especially the way the individual apprehends his world.

When they are capable of imagining what isn't visible, when they can conceive what they personally and directly experienced, based in stories and descriptions from others, the human being is not restricted to the strict circle of their own experience, but they can go beyond their limits appropriating themselves, based on imagination, of historic and social experiences of others (VYGOTSKY, 1987, p. 21)

This variation naturally does not guarantee full conservation of information, because before it Is subject to constant re-modelings, performed both by subjective experiences and biologic change, exemplary

approached in pathology described by Alexander Luria<sup>5</sup> and Antonio Damásio<sup>6</sup>. Facing this, attempting to guarantee the perennality of information, a fourth focus about possibilities of memory was thought, serving the modern project of accumulation of knowledge. The “places of memory”, as studied by Pierre Nora (1993), represented in archives, libraries, museums and patrimonies, begin to be holder of the past of societies. Even if permeated by historical perspective, this consolidation is institutionalized as a space where, at first, would have immunity to the fallibilities that other memories had, because it would guarantee the security of information and would collaborate for its enlargement. Under the responsibility of Sciences of Information - area that comprise many other subjects like Archivology, Library Science and Museology -, which is in charge of “production, collection, organization, storage, recuperation, interpretation, transmission, transformation and utilization of information” (BORKO, 1968, p. 3), memory gains a different meaning to what History gave them. For this field, memory, contrary to other conceptions, are not explicitly referred to the past, even if it is based on the past, but rather it is an “information to be revitalized”. Past works solely to be potentialized through its various representations of informative inter-relationships, which form a fully available “informational loom”.

Although it is succinct, this presentation allows the confirmation of the information given to memory in these different stages was not linked to a unique conception, but rather a concept allied to the way it responded to the different forms societies sought to narrativize and spatialize their past. These comprehensions, fundamentally linked to the sacred, the social, to subjectivity and to archive, demonstrate its action contributed to a project which the man sought to guarantee the security

5 In one of the most emblematic cases of neurological reading, the doctor Alexander Romanovich Luria (2006) describes his patient S., who had a inexhaustible, unlimited memory, being able to remember in detail all experiences he already had.

6 Counterposed to the pathology of Luria's patient, Damásio (2000) describes the case of the patient David, who had a severe encephalitis which took his memory, making him lose the factual sense of things around him, which meant his perception of the world was established without any reference with the past.



of these pieces of information. In this process, memory went through a gradual rationalization in the way it was observed.

Under this perspective, Vilém Flusser (2014) links this passage of comprehensions to the different models of communication and thought lived by humans. According to the author, who defines communication as the “storage, processing and transmission of acquired information” (FLUSSER, 2014, p. 33), memory has a central place in communication and culture while highlighting that is in that that is observed the permanent denial of entropy.

In view thereof, memory is observed by Flusser as an ideologic field capable of indicating the different assimilations made by the man about his reality. According to him, thus, memory is divided into three main moments: the mythical storage, determined by the oral culture; magical storage, manifested in the material culture of objects holding memory; and in the historiographical storage, figured in writing and in search of trans passing problems linked to ephemerality that the other two had. Flusser highlights while synthetizing the previously seen readings that even if always contrasted with the risk of oblivion, those dispositions reveal the memory to be the biggest project ever created by the mankind:

All of our buildings will fall into ruin, all of our books, paintings and music compositions will be condemned to oblivion, and probably numberless cultures of the pest disappear without leaving a trace. The entropic tendency of the world is obviously more powerful than human's negatively entropic deliberation. However, declaring war to the absurdity of the world is human dignity (FLUSSER, s. d)

However, still according to the author, precisely in response to this impulse for “dignity”, the contemporary times is surrounded by a new mnemonic configuration, cumulative of cultural precedents and propositional of a new cognitive scenario. To him, the current technological advance offers the men the feeling of achievement of being reached the desired dream of full memory, and consequently, having won the above-mentioned absurdity.

There's an ongoing network connectivity that spreads out like a brain around the globe, the channels are the nerves, and the knots are peoples and devices: this network that lies over the biosphere, as the biosphere lies over the hydrosphere, this collective brain that is rising, that does not know geography, or history, because it suppressed (aufgehoben) in itself geography and history. Your function is a crossover of competences to secrete new information and increase total competence of the brain. This is the model of telematic society (FLUSSER, 2014, p. 276).

Under this image of an electronic brain - which brings Flusser in dialogue with the classic conceptions made by Marshal McLuhan (2012), of "media as extension of mankind" and Pierre Levy (2011), regarding "collective intelligence" - the media would be responsible for archivistic realization and also for complying other cultural idealizations. That is because, due to the suppression of space and time, these would enable to create a memory that would guarantee security, unity and trust in the access of information.

When evaluated the denominations that seek to express the current technological achievements, such as "knowledge society" "information democratization culture" and "culture of sharing" it is possible to notice the memory that is being propagated is directly involved with the mentioned ideologies. Because it is a quality offered for its completeness and perennality, apparently free from any barrier and for everyone, this digitally promoted memory actually receives a magical character, proper of a mythical memory, promoting supernatural fascination. A "technological reason", as denominated by Eugenio Trivinho (2001), which cancels any critical capacity that it may have over its mechanisms.

Technologic reason in the sense of a daily reason, pragmatic-utilitarian, immediatist, in relation to a machine. Implicitly ideological and nationalist [...] In relation to the technological society, this reason always presents a happy re-enchantment facing achievements and potentialities of technology. As such, it is about a matter not mediated by symbolism, in other words, lacking critical self-reflection about their own exterior and practical manifestations, particularly those in relation to technological objects (TRIVINHO, 2001, p. 88).

When we analyze these projections in action, in digital platforms of provision and exchange of information, such as Google and Facebook, it is possible to notice the feeling of fascination appears in them precisely because they overcome the merely cumulative data functionality. In the first case, not only in their research portal, but also throughout its system, Google describes that their main motto is: “Organizing world information and make it universally accessible and useful”, which means to become the “perfect search engine”, “something that understands exactly what you mean and takes you exactly where you want to go” (GOOGLE, 2016). A hyperbolic intention, if you think about the quantity of data that should be included but it transforms it in an influent mediator of content currently disposed on the net. As observed by Steven Levy, this motto ensures that Google has a variety contained in answers, which brings the feeling of “if you looked on Google you really researched it.” (LEVY, 2012, p. 78).

The same way, even it has specificities in the dynamic it proposes, Facebook seeks to conglomerate and articulate information available in the network, with the difference that there, the contents are not referring to the constitution of a full memory, but rather a memory built with their user’s participation. The users, under the question “What are you thinking about?” are invited to the interaction<sup>7</sup> and led to the role of authors of their own ideas and experiences, which makes this platform an instrument primordially geared towards individuality - which will only then be disposed in connectivity. For that reason, Marion Strecker (202) indicates that Facebook ended up becoming a “catalogue for the whole earth”, being capable of gathering “people’s experiences, memories and narratives about the world”.

Narratives and memories that, notwithstanding, have specificities, because their contents are produced in the instantaneity of the experiences

7 It is worth mentioning that, with all everyday information, who uses the system is also required to inform name, e-mail, gender and date of birth, followed by another list of data, like education, where and when you studied, profession and where you work, place of residence and birth place, Family members and their degrees of kinship, marital status, religious beliefs, political affiliations and cultural tastes, mainly.

that happen and the insertion of registers happens almost at the same time of what happens. With the presentification of memory, who effectively builds the mnemonic ballast, transforming the archive in memory experienced where the past is manifested in the present, is not the user, but Facebook itself, which is responsible for the storage and provision. The user, involved in the production of content, expressing their ideas, experiences, collecting collective acceptance in “likes” and comments they receive, is led to the role of contributor of the raw-material used by this platform. These data collaborate for the objective of creating “the story of your life and has three parts. Your apps, your stories and the way to express who you are. We WANT to make the Timeline a place where you proudly call ‘home’, according to Mark Zuckerberg (2011).

Both for the function of accumulation and narrativization, both platforms illustrate the offering potential of organizing and providing information. Naturally, those dynamics aim at sustaining the business success of both companies, denoting that the accumulation of content is a clearly monetizable asset to those systems. However, precisely because they have their value centered in memory, it is possible to question how much of these engines - and all the allure they have - are not also creating effects about the communication established with their participants and their memories.

### **Media Memory**

When we think about the assimilation performed by digital media, as indicated in the analyzed platforms, it is possible to notice that the memory and its diverse representations are led to respond some specific necessities of this time. These include the sum of its meanings in favor of an idealized realization, but mainly, and from that, being technically appropriate to deal with the information diversity currently produced. However, the situation also allows to think that something that initially make these media have a successful functionality and a performance seemingly efficient in the universal articulation of knowledge is not developed through the literal absorption of the aforementioned

mnemonic faculties, but rather through the conversion of these in efficient strategies for their purposes.

In this sense, Harry Pross (1980) clarifies that those strategies do not come only from technical peculiarities of these media, but reflect potential forms of domination, supplied by their own symbolisms originated from culture. According to the author, the mediatization of communications implied in the rise of directive referentials, “verticalized”<sup>8</sup>, capable of outweigh masses and legitimate in their hierarchic posts. In this position sought after by those who intent to detain the power, the media are apt to project themselves more easily through a “signal economy”<sup>9</sup>, which guarantee them a coverage and timely optimization in the divulgation of their messages.

Still according to Pross (2004), the increasing acceleration of transmissions propelled the gradual loss of proximity of the participants in communication. The “tertiary media”, as the author calls it, when they win the spatial and timely limits, get responsible for the emission and reception of information, which gives them the continuous importance in intermediating reality. These issues become sensitive for the formation of memory, since its operation is marked by the immediate presentification of the past, adding still a control employed to the media of imposing their participants of this immediatism, both in the access and the retention of content.

The mediatization of memory, therefore, is established in the way mnemonic values are appropriated by the dynamics inherent to those media and how they serve to legitimate themselves as concentrators and dissipators of these contents. It’s the media, after all, that pre-establish how this memory will be experienced (BORNHAUSEN, 2016, p. 98).

- 8 According to Pross (1980), the rise of the vertical is found in the search for the erect body in edifications and hierarchic structures of communication, which intend to control and conquer the physical and social space.
- 9 Pross (1999) says that as the ritualized sequence brings confidence to the social and subjective time, the mediatic system acts as a “social synchronizator”, which by repetition and ubiquity operates over Society in order to coordinate it.

When they detain control over the management and availability of this memory, media makes it manipulable according to their own intentions. Either for the monetization of its possession, as mentioned, but mainly for inserting it into its dynamics of exposure. However, if we evaluate the conditions where it occurs, it is possible to perceive an inherent contradiction. The same way information excess is the primordial condition for the consolidation of the totalizing offer of data, the exploitive dynamic of media also values novelty, which confronts the value that no longer occupy the space of attention. Thus, their contradiction is found in a speech that praises the access to information and that, in fact, continuously value only the new, therefore, contents that will get the status of holding visibility. To Norval Baitello (2005) this situation leads to what he calls “visibility crisis”, defined as:

The visibility crisis is not an image crisis, but a rarefaction of its capacity of appeal. When appeal enters a crisis, more and more images are necessary to reach the same effects. O que se tem então é uma descontrolada reprodutibilidade (BAITELLO, 2005, p. 14).

The dynamics referred by Baitello, being investigated on Google and Facebook, is perceived as intrinsic to the way these systems deal with content. In both cases, the algorithmic tools that regulate access show that, if a page does not have an expressive number of views or do not adhere to the mechanisms that enable them to be in the top results, they gradually lose importance, to the point of even never being shown in a more profound search.

In Google’s case, the tool responsible for that control is called PageRank™. Its functioning, credited to the machine and because of that, advertised as impartial, operates like a “spider”, that tracks and privileges the most relevant information<sup>10</sup>. They are also ranked in the order they believe to be the closest to intention of searching. In a test performed to

10 According to Google (2016), when the company explains their algorithm, “Important, high quality websites, receive a higher score, which google stores at every research made (...) Thus, Google combines high-quality results with the search you are looking for so that the result is as relevant as possible.”

check this operation, it was observed that the composition of this offer is followed by the expressions “Did you mean...” And “I’m feeling lucky”, as well as “auto-fill” and the ranking of pages exposed, insinuating which one of these pieces of information is ideal. However, in order to check this dynamic, we researched<sup>11</sup> the tag “google” on Google itself, which allowed us to arrive to the value of seven billion three hundred and eighty million possible results, spending 0.41 seconds to get to them. Seeking to understand system operations, we’ve decided to go until the end of the search results. In the first attempt, it was possible to go until the 16<sup>th</sup> page, each page adding 10 links, totalizing 162 possible pages to be visualized, because in the end the following message appears: “to show more relevant results, omitted some entries very similar to 162 results already exhibited.” If you want, you can repeat the research including the omitted results”. With the intention of keep proving the efficacy of researches, we chose to repeat the procedure, which in the second time allowed us to get to page 53, with a total of 530 available results, after this point, Google does not allow more research extensions. Thus, we perceive the value of the data informed in the research and the real access you have, considering the second search, it is 0,000071816% of the total announced, evidently far inferior to the promised result.

In a similar relation on Facebook the algorithm is called EdgeRank, through which the concentration of its functioning is in what the program believes to be valued to be seen and accessed, operating through the relation between Affinity/Familiarity, Weight/Relevance and Time/Depreciation of content (FACEBOOK, 2017). In the first case, the algorithm measures the level of relationship between the user and the information they access, therefore, the amount of times a certain person or brand is “liked”, commented and viewed by the user. Allied to this criterion, the weight or relevance of contents are determined by Facebook based on how engaging an information is, how comments are worth

11 When looking for information supplied by Google, this research consider the data analysis supplied by this platform when the researches are done. The values related to time and quantity of data available and the affirmations related to relevance are informed by the system, which proves the aforementioned directioning of content.

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more than “likes” or images that gain bigger notoriety than texts. And, finally, the time of publication or how much it is depreciable, similarly to the novelty criterion proposed by Google, characterized by the valorization of the latest information instead of the old ones, stimulating a bigger quantity of access. To include the selection of what will be seen in the scroll bar that does not stop updating, it’s clear the incumbency disposed and conceived to Facebook to guide the validity of information, remembering and narrativizing user’s experiences. As proven by Chris Ingraham (2015) in a study performed for the Washington Post, this resource makes approximately 60% of the content that would be available there are not possible to visualize. The occurrence denotes that, facing the vast field of information, the system tends to funnel certain contents, personalized to specific users and groups, always according to their own interests. These contents obey the view disposed on their layout, that due to functioning in a scrolling system, tends to cover past information due to latest, freshly published news.

In this sense, the memory of these media is led by its opposite, the obsolescence, because it participates in an oscillation between what has more or less chances of being accessed among the information that will appear and disappear according to the intention of the programs. As a consequence, the user himself also begins to deal with this variation, since they are the ones linked to the information, either depositing them or accessing them. And it is them who recur to the search of visibility in order to raise the exposure.

To Flusser, being ahead of this mnemonic outsourcing promoted by the digital, the user would face two possible outcomes: a) the extreme informative redundancy resulting from an excess of available content; tb) the des-ideologization of memory, which would allow the full human creativity, in which all need of possession would be linked to the machine, conceding the man the free articulation of knowledge. One situation or another would depend on the way they keep the relation with this information and the way the machine and the user are corresponding.



If thought from Flusser's (2011) contributions, the relationship established between the machine that intends to perform a mnemonic project and its users, named by the author as "employees", is that the first aims to be a "toy that simulates a type of thought" (FLUSSER, 2011, p. 17). Thus, memory would be available in a way that the rules inscribed in the workings of the machine itself in its program, and in how these regulate the way their participants will act, according to what is demonstrated by the algorithmic features. To those, according to the author, would remain to play with it through what was pre-established.

In this type of game, disguised in the informational exaggeration proven in both platforms presented, the participant subject believes he's in charge, because he is the one who choose which memories he wants to access or which he would voluntarily put inside the system, that only has the role of giving access to all of that. Under this sense, Flusser glimpses the creative path to deal with the available knowledge. However, as Baitello (2010) observes, closer than autonomy, is the automation of the way this access is built and projected:

A mark gets thus underlined not only of technical apparatus, but also from all contemporary social and media apparatus: the dispensation of thought and desire, because this task of thinking and wanting is simply taken away by the apparatus, freeing the employee of such heavy and hard onus, allowing him to only enter the game of possibilities of the apparatus, an attitude of surrender, therefore, of letting oneself be devoured (BAITELLO, 2010, p. 21).

In both readings the issue on knowledge acquisition proves to be an important participant element of this memory. According to Nicholas Carr (2011), when reflecting about the brain effects caused by the speed in which the information is presented, there's a possible saturation of the individual in retaining everything that is exposed:

The influx of messages competing among themselves, which we always receive when we are on-line, are not only an overload of our working memory; it becomes very hard for the frontal lobes to focus our attention on only one thing. The processes of memory consolidation cannot even be

initiated. The more we use the web, the more we train our brain to be distracted (CARR, 2011, p. 264-265)

In this situation, even if theoretically the creative alternative presented by Flusser was possible, the readings presented help to detect that the own mnemonic action, originally a concern of the man, can be put in second level, at least when this subject is the responsible for it. This is a condition also proven in the recent study promoted by the psychologists Betsy Sparrow, Jenny Liu and Daniel M Wegner (2011). Symptomatically called “Google Effect”, they suggest that the internet is seen nowadays as a “personal database”, a type of “external memory” that influences user’s capacity of retaining information. According to them, this occurrence is developed because the trust given to the system overlaps the exercise of searching and attaining different results.

According to Baitello (2012), when you observe the underlying meanings of these dynamics, this condition is expressed by a perceptive sedation conditioned by the own environment in which the individual is put in. Not only due to the physical position of the individual of interacting technologically, but for the perceptive settling of receiving information the way they are available, its numbing confirms how this conditions deeply affects their own memory, since the software controls the ideal contents of access.

The numbing or its lethargy, from the same radical leth- of forgetfulness, confront themselves, thus, with many philosophical and psychoanalytical presuppositions [...] In which the memory was seen as an extremely complex process, which involves the permanent perception and re-elaboration of the way the individual is related to their surroundings, as a result of their experiences, practices and observations they had. Consciously established or not, memory is referred to an individual’s learning skills, not limited to the immediate retrieval of memories - like a file - but involved with the permanent influence of emotions and its own imagination (BORNHAUSEN, 2016, p. 110).

In this same sense, Dietmar Kamper (2016), going against the readings that exalt the mnemonic outsourcing, clarifies that is under the

“strength of the imagination” (*Einbildungskraft*) that memory fundamentally, historically and psychologically. It, contrary to this media memory, is in permanent renewal, since it is based on internal images thought and re-worked in the body (*KörperDenken*) According to the author, it is precisely this imaginative capability that is decreased with the crescent abstraction created by the media. Facing this situation, immediate responses offered by this memory imply the effective non-generation for the individuals, but rather a literalization of knowledge and the apprehension of the world, increasingly mediated by these types of software.

### Final considerations

Under this perspective, it is possible to conclude that the media environment in charge for this memory, product of every cultural idealization, which would provide a freeing articulation of information - mentioning Flusser’s affirmation - seems not to correspond the goals it was initially thought of. That is because he sees himself covered by conditions, as the saturation of contents and the automatization of availability, which direct it to another configuration. As showed throughout this analysis, memory appears more as an ideal image conquered by these technologies than an effective accomplishment. Its main consequence, therefore, is in the clear alteration of the way the information is received and apprehended, with a clear impact over the communication that is being generated.

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## **A simbiose entre religião e mercado: o sagrado como efeito de discurso**

### **The symbiosis between religion and the market: the sacred as an effect of discourse**

Ronivaldo Moreira de Souza<sup>1</sup>

**Resumo:** *Este artigo investiga a relação de simbiose entre religião e mercado cristalizada no discurso da Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus. Tendo como embasamento teórico as perspectivas do campo das Ciências das Religiões e do Consumo, neste artigo, especificamente, propomos investigar, por um lado, o sagrado como um efeito de discurso presente na narrativa publicitária para construção da natureza transcendente e da sacralização de produtos; por outro lado, pensar no sagrado como um efeito de discurso também nos permite analisar como a religião, por um processo inverso, transforma sua doutrina transcendente em produtos disponibilizados para consumo dos fiéis/consumidores. Adotamos como metodologia os pressupostos teórico-metodológicos da Análise do Discurso de Escola Francesa.*

**Palavras-chave:** *comunicação; consumo; religião; análise do discurso; Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus*

**Abstract:** *This article investigate the symbiosis relationship between religion and market crystallized in the discourse of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. In this article, we propose to investigate, on the one hand, the sacred as an effect of discourse present in the advertising narrative for the construction of the transcendent nature and the sacralization of products; on the other hand, thinking of the sacred as a discourse effect also allows us to analyze how religion, by an inverse process, transforms its transcendent doctrine into products made*

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*available to the faithful/consumers. We adopted as methodology the theoretical-methodological assumptions of the Discourse Analysis of the French School.*

**Keywords:** *communication; consumption; religion; speech analysis; Universal Church of the Kingdom of God*



## Introduction

This study presents findings of a wider research which resulted in a PhD thesis in which we proposed to study the discursive symbiosis between religion and market having as object of study the doctrinal and testimonial<sup>2</sup> discourse of Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. The appropriation of the biological metaphor was necessary due to the perception of the imbricated relationship of coexistence between these two instances (religion and market) crystalized in the discursive level.

Symbiogenesis, theory proposed for the first time by Margulis around 1960's, revolutionized the studies in the biologic field. Symbiosis, the tendency of organisms to establish a close relationship with one another, was already a widespread and popular theory. However, Margulis proposed the hypothesis that every life consisted in a type of long life symbiosis capable of producing new forms of life (CAPRA, 1996, p. 171). In the words of Margulis herself

Symbiosis refers to an ecological and physical relation between two types of organisms that is far more intimate than most associations. [...] Symbiosis, like marriage, means a life in common, in good and bad times; but, when the marriage is made between two different people, symbiosis occurs between two or more different types of living beings (MARGULIS, 2002, p. 132).

As one could notice, the biologist ruptures the dominant idea that evolutive life happened in a bloody battle for survival, in which the most fit would always win. Contrary to that, she says that the core of the evolution of species is cooperation, and not competition. This pact is often so intimate and strong that the death of one of the members of the alliance means the death of both parties (MARGULIS; SAGAN, 1995, p. 139, our translation) In other words, life on Earth is not a game where

2 Para a composição do *corpus* da pesquisa de tese de doutorado foram selecionados e analisados 305 testemunhos e 219 textos doutrinários publicados pela Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus entre os anos de 2010 e 2017 em seu portal na internet ([universal.org](http://universal.org)) e em seu canal no YouTube (IURD TV).

someone win and someone lose, but rather the victory of cooperation in the art of coexistence.

The analogy has been used to explain the relationship of ritualistic practices between different religious matrixes (BENEDITO, 2006); in the relation between religion and media (RASLAN FILHO, 2015) or between religion, media and society (REFKALEFSKY; PATRIOTA; ROCHA, 2006). However, it is more about the use of the term as a label for a phenomenon than an attempt of explaining more deeply the relationship and how one benefits from the other.

The analogy appears to be very appropriate to comprise the intrinsic relationship between religion and market, the main purpose of this research. We understand that this relationship was born out of the tendency of these two organisms to develop similar ways of facing similar problems, establishing a relationship so intimate that, today, one does not survive without the other.

### **Discourse Analysis as theoretical-methodological presupposition for the investigation of religious discourse**

In the origin of every discourse, there is the interdiscourse. In other terms, “interdiscourse comes before the discourse. This means that the relevant unit of analysis is not the discourse, but a space of exchange amongst a variety of discourses conveniently chosen” (MAINGUENEAU, 2008a, p. 20). We understood as interdiscourse the manifold relation of a discourse with other discourses, in other words, a discursive space in which discourses articulate meaning exchanges, sometimes appropriating from one another, sometimes excluding one another (CHARAUDEAU; MAINGUENEAU, 2008, p. 286).

However, in the case of religious discourse, this relationship with other discourses is given in a very peculiar manner. To take the place of a maximally authorized discourse, religious discourse cannot recognize authority beyond their own, however, its constitution as discourse will

always happen in the interaction with other discourses. Religious discourse, however, denies this interaction and seeks to submit it to their principles:

Discourses like the religious discourse [...]Are defined by the position they fill in the interdiscourse, by the fact they don't recognize discursivity beyond their own and that they cannot be authorized except by their own authority. [...]in order not to authorize themselves, they must appear as connected with a legitimating Source. They are, at the same time, self and heteroconstituent (MAINGUENEAU, 2008b, p. 38-39).

Maingueneau perception points us to a double challenge that is put in front of the analyst of religious discourse. The first challenge is to handle its heterogeneity. Since there isn't any ground zero of discourse and that every discourse emerges from its relationship with other discourses, it is up to the analyst to apprehend the constant work of negotiation between statutes of discourses. The second challenge is to handle the discursive game that enables the religious discourse to deny its heteroconstituent nature and present itself as self constituent. In addition, we dare to say that the polyphonic nature of religious discourse - in other words, the different voices constituting this discourse - is suppressed so that this is presented to the enunciate as a monophonic product, whose origin and legitimation comes from only one voice: divinity.

### **Similar forms of facing common problems: the symbiotic principle in the relation religion and market**

The relationship between religion and market arises from the need for survival in an ever changing society. Both the transformation in the religious scenario and the market created necessities more or less common between them.

From the market side, we understand that three factors influenced this approximation with religion. With the arrival of new technologies that enabled the de centralization of communication, based before in a standard one for all and now in all for all, consumers began to produce

counter-narratives capable of refute, or at least call into question, the narratives that brands produced of themselves. The brand discourse begins to be rectified or even contested by the consumers, and, thus, the credibility of this discourse produced by the brand withers everytime it is put into doubt by the different social actors (SALMON, 2008).

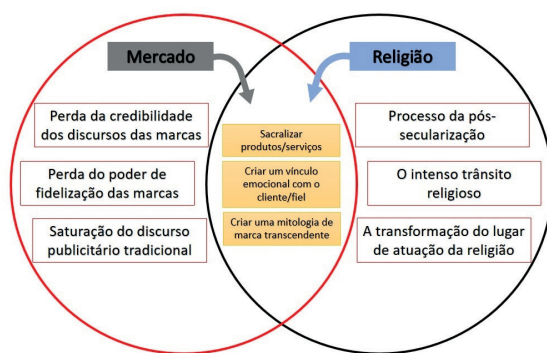
In Addition to that, there is a social transformation gradually built, in which hedonism become the main regulating agent of social life (CAMPBELL, 2001). With that, the form of adhesion of the customer to certain brands leave the field of family tradition and migrates to the individual quest for pleasurable experiences (LIPOVETSKY, 2007). Thus, the coveted client fidelization becomes a complex and delicate challenge, because this customer also narrates their experiences on social media, either it was positive or negative, and for their group of followers their narrative can be more trustworthy than the brand itself.

Thus, the advertisement discourse needed to go through a process of reinvention, adequation to these new factors. Mainstream advertisement already did not communicate efficiently with this customer that begins to look for products less due to their value of use and more due to the universe of meanings it gave access (BAUDRILLARD, 2008); Consumption dislocates from the materiality of objects for the universe of intangible of hedonistic experience. What begins to be consumed is not what the object is in its materiality, but rather its transcendent nature (SOLDEVILLA; ERRANDO; FELICI. 2014).

This set of factors created three needs in the market universe: 1) Sacralize products and services - build a sacred aura around products/services giving them a transcendent nature (SCHWERINER, 2010); 2) Creating an emotional bond with the client - to attend this search for pleasurable individual experience, the brands needed to create an emotional bond with their clients (MARTINS, 1999), something that overcomes the previous form of adhesion, based on tradition; 3) Creating a transcending brand mythology - brands needed to link themselves emotionally and spiritually to their customers (RANDAZZO, 1997). For that it was necessary to mythify it.

According observation in the following image, besides religion we also present other three factors linked to what is close to the market. First we highlighted the gradual process until getting where Habermas (2008) called post-secularized religion. If the Weberian forecasts (2004) of secularization weren't concretized with the weakening of religion and loss of their power of influence, what happened in contemporaneity is that the forms of religious adhesion were metamorphosed. A form of religious adhesion based in a type of hereditary familiar transmission - from parent to children - is replaced by the same impulse characteristic of the marketing universe: the individualized quest for a pleasurable experience [with transcendent] (LIPOVETSKY, 2007). With that, the faithful becomes more faithful to himself than the institution. That originates an intense religious transit.

IMAGE 1 - Space of intersection between religion and market



Source: Made by the author

The necessity of an individualized and personalized experience with the transcendent induce this believer to a constant quest for the best experience, creating dissatisfaction and hope. Dissatisfaction with the former experience and the hope to find it in the next door of some religious temple. This individual does not seek the meaning of life in explanations about his origin and his destination, but rather in current

experiences that guide him and prepare him for the immediacy of daily life. That obligates religion to dislocate their place of action. For a hedonistic society, pleasure cannot be present in another life, there cannot be a time lapse between desire and satisfaction. Religion turn towards here-and-now (BAUMAN, 1998).

Before, religion was occupied with existential issues like the origin and destination of humans, therefore, their experience before life and after death<sup>3</sup>. In other terms, the religious specialty was about that nothingness that precedes and succeed human history. However, religion finds in contemporaneity an audience absorbed in living History. Thus, religion faced the necessity of producing new goods and services, as well as producing their own consumers sharpening “the needs destined to be filled by their services and, therefore, transforming their indispensable work” (BAUMAN, 1998, p. 210). A new type of religion geared towards consumption arises.

Based on the above considerations, we can say that these factors created in religion similar needs to the market, such as: 1) Producing sacralized products and services - if on the market side, it was necessary to sacralize products and services, from the religion side it was necessary to objectivate sacrality and transform it into products and services for consumption; 2) Building an emotional bond with their believers/customer - if before the christian religious discourse was centered in the appeal of gaining souls to God, now, it is necessary to gain the soul of the believer/customer first for the religious brand, producing in him an empathetic identification with the name/brand; 3) create a brand mythology - in this marketing religious scenario, different denominations behave as any other non-religious brand, competing against each other for the believer/customer<sup>4</sup>. The religious brand appeals to the mythological universe to build its transcending nature.

3 Basta recorrer aos escritos de teólogos puritanos, tais como Richard Sibbes, John Owen e Richard Baxter (só para citar alguns), para comprovar isto. As ideias ascetas destes teólogos demonstram um grande contraste se comparadas com a teologia neopentecostal praticada pela Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus.

4 Para as intenções deste artigo, no entanto, nos concentraremos especificamente em evidenciar a maneira como a religião transforma sua doutrina em produtos e serviços para consumo.

As we can perceive, from these common need among apparently different species arises a symbiotic relationship, in which religion and marketing benefit from and cooperate with one another. Let's see that in detail.

### **Sacred as effect of discourse**

Facing this symbiotic relation between religion and market, we propose ourselves to first analyze the appropriations of sacred through the advertisement discourse. In order to do that, we come from the presupposition that the sacred can be apprehended as an effect of meaning of the discourse.

Our hypothesis is product of the observation of three theories about the issue of sacrality. First, we assume sacrality as the supernatural dimension revealed in common objects of human experience. In the words of Eliade, the sacred stone, the sacred tree are not worshiped as a stone or as a tree, but precisely because they are hierophanies, because they 'reveal' something that is not a stone or a tree, but sacrality in itself" (ELIADE, 1992, p. 13).

In Berger (1985) we find a wide and convincing explanation that the place of manifestation of sacrality is in the everyday experience. The everyday experience is where we recognize sacrality, because it is there where the sacred is manifested and, at the same time, this manifestation is only perceptible because it transcends the common experience of everyday life. Sacred is what is beyond common everyday experience.

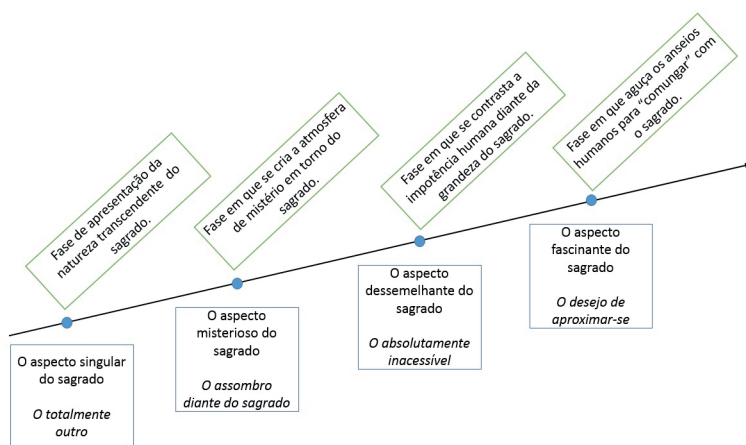
Finally, we identify in Otto four aspects of sacrality that arouse in the human being a outpooring of feelings. They are: 1) The singular aspect of sacrality; 2) The mysterious aspect; 3) The dissimilar aspect; 4) The fascinating aspect. To validate your answer, Otto (2007) took two biblical narratives of sacrality: the experience of Moses in the desert facing burning bush that never consumed; and the vision narrated by the Apostle Paul<sup>5</sup>. Otto (2007) wanted to check manifestations of the sacred and

5 Moisés e o encontro com Deus no deserto (Êxodo 3); e a visão do Apóstolo Paulo (II Coríntios 12).

the reaction of individuals facing them. We take to ourselves the same biblical narratives, however, in a discursive perspective, with the aim of apprehending sacrality as an effect of discourse. Our guiding question was: How is sacrality built in the narrative?

Based on Otto's (2007) study and in discourse theories, we arrived to a proposal that allowed us to check our hypothesis analyzing sacrality as an effect of discourse. Let's see in the image below the narrative scheme that enables that analysis:

IMAGE 2 - Sacred as an effect of discourse

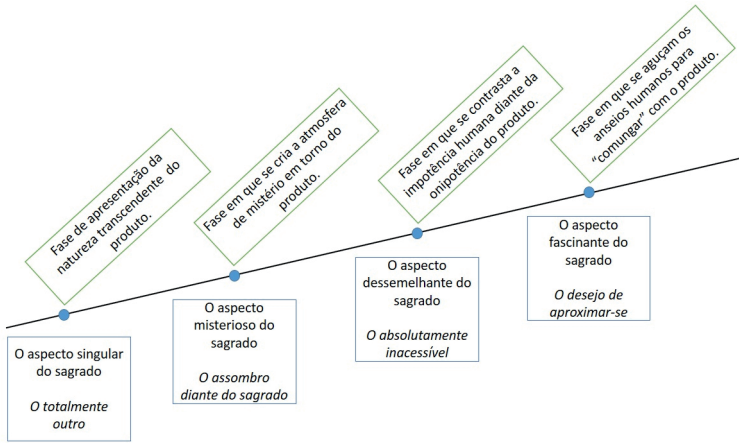


Source: Created by the author

Through this preliminary conclusions, understanding that sacrality can be apprehended as an effect of discourse, we started to verify the incidences of these narratives of sacrality in the advertising universe. Our goal was to identify this discursive symbiosis between religious and advertising discourse. Facing that, we concluded that in the advertising discourse, the narrative of sacrality is built the following way:



IMAGE 3 - Discursive construction of sacrality in advertisement



Source: Created by the author

In the advertisement narrative, the first phase of this structure is always focused on the presentation of the singularity of the product. Even though the changes may be merely cosmetic, like little design alterations of the product or even the label, this product is always presented as holding an absolute singularity (BAUDRILLARD, 2012, p. 99), something which the customer never got in touch with. A surprising product that may have come from another world and does not belong to the natural order of life.

In the second narrative phase, the advertising discourse creates the atmosphere of mystery around the product. There will always be a secret formula, a brand new technology, coming from the future to now and available for the customer. Mystery sharpens the desires of the customer and that becomes an invitation to discover it.

In the third narrative phase, the binomial problem/solution enters the advertisement discourse. Advertisement narrative creates a problem beyond the capacity of human control and resolution. Then, arrives an omnipotent product that solves the problems and re-establishes the order in chaos. The product always has the exact measurements of human wants and needs. This idea is applied from the sale of an insecticide to

the sale of life insurance. Here, the dissimilar aspect of sacrality gets the contrast of natural with supernatural. Sacrality is exactly that that differs from the natural world for its beauty, strength, or other super-human attribute.

In the fourth and last phase, the advertisement discourse leaves an appeal that evokes the approximation between the customer and the sacralized product. It is exactly this dissimilar nature that provokes a desire of getting close to and get in communion with sacrality. In this case, the contact with sacrality seems to also sacralize the own human experience. In the advertisement discourse, this appeal can come in the shape of an advise, a suggestion, an order or even a provocation. All the transcending and mysterious aura built around the product is converged into the incitation of human desires in relating themselves with the sacralized nature of the product.



We admit that this division we proposed is purely for didactic purposes, since in the discursive level, in some cases, these phases intertwine and complement each other. We will analyze an advertisement of the car manufacturer Hyundai<sup>6</sup> in the release of HB20 model 2016. The advertisement was broadcast on prime time in the main TV channels and also on the internet.

### **The process of sacralization of the product in the advertisement discourse**

For a better understanding, we transcribed the advertisement below. It is interesting to notice the logical chain between images and narration.

6 Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WxuJblPGU1k>. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

IMAGE 4 - Transcription of the advertisement of the new HB20

IMAGE	VOICEOVER
	<p>You see HB20 and soon perceive that the new front</p>
	<p>Is very aggressive.</p>
	<p>That the rear is</p>
	<p>A dive in design.</p>

	And the interior
	Something from another world.
	Too bad this isn't yours yet! - Relax! Happens every time.
	New HB20. Hyundai did it again.

Source: Hyundai/Youtube.

The narrative begins establishing a scenario that locates the object on everyday life. A pedestrian walks on a street where the car is parked. He is attracted for the singularity of the product, for its totally surprising nature. The voiceover reinforces the imagetic text: “Whoever sees HB20 soon perceives the new front is very aggressive” (Our highlight).

The narrative sequence builds throughout all the advertisement the transcending nature of the product. Once attracted to the irresistible desire to get to know the product, the pedestrian starts to establish tactile contact with the product and, every time that happens, he is immediately transported to another world, argument that also integrates the voice over: “and the interior is something from another world”. We can see that the object of consumption inserted into everyday life, despite having a form from the physical point of view a materiality similar to all other cars (rubber, steel, plastic, etc), it differs from all of them precisely because of what it stopped being: a car. The hierophany of the object of consumption is built throughout the narrative as the element of desire is no longer the object in itself, but this singular character and this other world it promises to give access to.

The mystery around the product is precisely constituted of this singularity. In the narrative, every time the pedestrian touches one of the “new” parts of HB20 (front, rear and lateral glass), it’s clear in the imagetic text his astonishment for the direct contact with the transcendence of the object and the other world that becomes possible.

The more the narrative exposes the singularity of the product and builds a mystery around it, the more it gets evident the dissimilarity of the universe of the sacralized object for the profane universe of the customer. The product is presented as absolutely inaccessible for the pedestrian that limits himself to the tactile contact and a little peek through the glass of the car. Remembering McCracken, the more the object of consumption seems unattainable to the customer, the more it will be desired by him. The power of seduction and attraction of a product is exactly in the exploitation of its unattainable nature. The customer will always desire what is beyond his reach (MCCRACKEN, 2003, p. 147).

It's this atmosphere that creates the fascination for the product and creates the desire to have it, since having the sacrality means also covering oneself and appropriating its sacrality. The narrative merge these two phases together around the same object and its unattainability and its possibility; inaccessibility and accessibility: "Too bad this isn't yours yet" (Our highlight).

This paradox is built in the narrative when the pedestrian is brought from the other world due to the sound of the alarm of the car coming from a remote in the hands of the owner: "Relax! Happens every time." The second character, even though he belongs the natural world as much as the first one, is presented as superior to him precisely because he already participates in the transcending nature of this sacralized object. He already has access to this other world experience enabled by the transcendence of the object of consumption. The singular nature of the sacralized object singularizes and sacralizes the own human experience.

### **Sacred for consumption**

The religious field, in this perspective, can be defined as a field of forces where the specialized agents (priests) act in the production of salvation goods that fill the demands of certain social groups (uninitiated). The priests in Bourdieu's (2007, p. 25) opinion, are agents of a certain institutionalized symbolic instance, employees of a permanent company organized in bureaucratic terms and counts with special installations for cult. The specialization of these priests goes through the dominion of doctrinary discourse and learning from a wide array of practical problems that reach the uninitiated, recipient of this doctrine, whose everyday life must be regularized by it. In other terms, religion acts with on demand services.

One of the visible brands of the hyperconsumption society in the Iurdian logic is the segmentation of their services, enabling the believer/customer to find what they are looking for. The Universal Church maintains their temples open 12 hours per day, every day of the week. Their

cults are segmented into themes that offer services of orientation to solve central problems that afflicts most people.

Monday is dedicated to solve financial issues, in the Meeting of Prosperity. Tuesday is the day to overcome frustrations and failure in the Meeting of Combat to the Dream Destroyer. Wednesday is dedicated to spiritual issues, reconciling the individual with god in the Meeting of God's children. Thursday is the ideal day for those who want to solve sentimental problems on Love Therapy. On Friday, they exorcize evil that prevents prosperity, personal well-being, in addition to fighting evil eye and envy in the Meeting of freedom. And to those who wish to accomplish the impossible, Saturday is the day for it, in the fast of Impossible Causes. And to close off, Sunday is the big day to learn how to use faith in an intelligent and rational manner in Meeting with God<sup>7</sup>.

This dynamics enable the believer/customer the control over their own agenda, selecting in this catalogue of options the best days and schedules that fill their needs and desires. However, this possibility of personalizing religiosity does not end here.

The church disposes in its internet portal a page called Online Pastor, available 24 hours, every day of the week, where the believer/customer gets in a direct conversation via chat with a pastor. In the lower part of the page, the believer/customer selects which is the area of interest amongst the following options: marriage problems, pain or illness, spiritual problems, financial difficulties, family fights, doubts. We observe that all the propositions of solution are towards issues that afflict the everyday life of the believer/customer.

In the upper segment of the page, two sentences clearly define what the chat is about: "Why are you suffering? Thousands of people arrived here with their lives destroyed by problems. However, after the service, they could now smile again"<sup>8</sup>. We perceive that, in every case, what is sought and what is proposed is happiness and personal satisfaction of the believer/customer. This is the expertise and the field of action of

7 Available at: < <http://www.universal.org/reunioes>>. Accessed in: Aug. 2015.

8 Available at: < <http://www.universal.org/pastoronline>>. Accessed in: Aug. 2015.

Universal Church: provide services of orientation to convert any human suffering into personal accomplishment and satisfaction. It is important to mention a quote from Lipovetsky:

From a religion centered in the salvation in the afterlife, Christianity became a religion operating towards intramundane happiness, emphasizing values of solidarity and love, harmony, interior piece and total accomplishment of the person. The hyperbolic universe of consumption wasn't the grave of religion, but the instrument of its adaptation to modern civilization of terrestrial happiness (LIPOVETSKY, 2007, p. 131).

As a service provider, Universal Church also releases sacralized products that are tool to orient their believers/customers. It is what we will see next.

### **The transformation of sacrality into a product for consumption**

We will not talk in this topic about this the common liturgical procedures in the neopentecostal field to transform common objects into sacred objects, as it is the case in the Rose of Prosperity, Coarse Salt to expel evil eye and the traditional anointed oil. In these cases, mundane objects become sacred after the pastor's prayer.

We want to study the process that enables the Universal Church to materialize their doctrinarian teachings, therefore, their sacralized services, in sacralized objects of consumption. Recovering the term proposed by Eliade (1992), it is interesting to us this hierophany constantly performed by IURD. We will list some of these cases below.

#### **Shielded marriage**

The show *The Love School* airs every week on Rede Recor at noon. The idea of the show is to offer "practical orientations to those who recognize the value of married life and desire to protect it from the risk



of separation”<sup>9</sup>. The orientations given by the couple Renato and Cristiane Cardoso, doctrinators of Universal, were transformed into a series of books: *Shielded date*, *sShielded marriage*, *120 minutes to shield your marriage*, in addition to the DVD *Sex in a shielded marriage*. The success of the books, especially *Shielded Marriage*, that became a bestseller in the country, originated a whole collection of sacralized products.

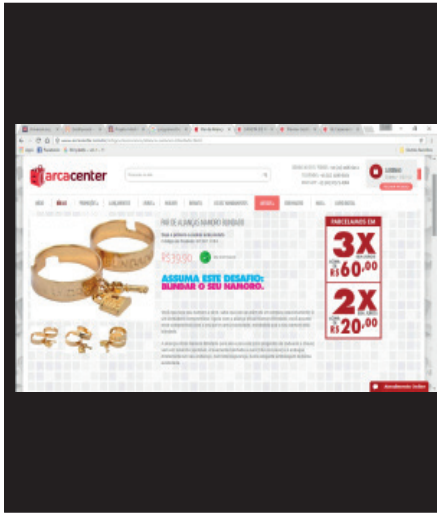
It is the case of the porcelain mugs *Shielded Marriage*. An object taken from the ordinary life and presented with a sacralized dimension, result of a hierophany performed by the Universal Church in the following sales pitch: “it is much more than a gift, it is a tool to shield your marriage”<sup>10</sup>. The product stops being desired for its profane materiality (porcelain object), to become an object of desire in the sacred dimension (a tool to shield your marriage).

Another product of this collection is the commitment rings *Shielded Date*. Let’s see next how the profane description of the product’s materiality lives with its sacralized description. The substance of which the product is made gives place to what the product has power to do. What the object means exceeds its physical value.

9 Available at: < <http://entretenimento.r7.com/love-school-escola-amor/quem-somos-10042015> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

10 Available at: < <http://www.arcacenter.com.br/artigos/canecas/caneca-de-porcelana-casamento-blindado-modelo-feminino.html> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

Image 5 - Ad for the official ring Shielded Date



You, who take your relationship seriously, know it goes beyond a simple relationship: it is a real commitment. Now, with the official ring Shielded Date, you take on this commitment with your couple and with society, showing that your relationship is shielded.

The official ring Shielded Date for him and for her [ with pendants of lock and key ] come in adjustable size, is lightly coated with gold [ does not go dark ] and it is directly delivered to your address, with full security, in an elegant velvet package. (Our highlight).

1 Available in: < <http://www.arcacenter.com.br/artigos/acessorios/alianca-namoro-blindado.html> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

Source: Universal.org

The sales pitch of the product always revolves around its transcendent meaning and nature. In the case of the Shielded Date T-shirt, after a very direct description that is a product 100% cotton 40wt, comes the following text: “The single women can show they are preparing themselves to be in a heartbreak-proof relationship. And the ones committed can show everyone they have a shielded relationship and are walking towards a divorce-proof marriage.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Intellimen and Godllywood**

Other two examples of this process of hierophany practiced by the Universal Church are the projects Intellimen<sup>12</sup> and Godllywood<sup>13</sup>. The proj-

11 Available at: < <http://www.arcacenter.com.br/artigos/vestuario/t-shirt-namoro-blindado-feminina.html> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

12 Intellimen is a project made for men and has the duration of one year. It consists in practical challenges that the participant must comply and that involves different areas of life, such as: Family, business, personal human development, among others.

13 According to the directors of the project, “Godllywood has the goal of rescuing forgotten values in female Society, forming better women in all aspects, joining personal care with social

ects basically consist in a series of weekly tasks that the believer needs to accomplish to become a better person. Due to the success and the acceptance, the project was turned into a book and also gave origin to a collection of products.

It is the case of the Intellimen pen, whose sales pitch is the following: “Made out of metal in a premium model, the official pen Intellimen is ideal for man that want to make a difference and leave their mark wherever they go.”<sup>14</sup> We highlight the Planner Godllywood as well, an ordinary personal appointment book at first sight, but presented to the customer the following way: “The Godllywood 2017 appointment book is an opportunity for you to live the life you always dreamed of”<sup>15</sup> It is very interesting that a pen or an appointment book get attributed so eccentric, and even, transcendent. It is thus that the Universal church transforms their doctrines into a service provision, and, finally, in collections of sacralized products available for the believer/customer.

The list of products is so big, that the Universal Church opened an online store to receive their clients. Products include squeeze bottles, hats, pens, key chain, T-shirts, planners, mugs, etc. All following the same logic: doctrine - service provision - sacralized products.

## Final Considerations

The rigid frontiers between sacred and profane that restricted advertising to the limits of profane and religion to the limits of sacred became fluid, enabling to find the sacralized religious in advertisement and profane advertisement in the religious.

The own concept of sacred is changed in this relation, in such way we cannot talk about sacred as a noun - the sacred -, but rather, as a temporary state of something or someone. Therefore, sacred is much

support”. Self-help group that clearly has a position against feminist philosophies.

14 Available at: < <http://www.arcacenter.com.br/artigos/acessorios/caneta-de-metal-intellimen-er169b.html> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

15 Available at: < <http://www.arcacenter.com.br/planner-godllywood-2017.html> >. Accessed in: Dec. 2016.

more linked to the transitory relationship with the meaning of experience than a permanent nature of the object itself.

Sacred is much more about the hedonistic relationship with a transcending experience that emanates from the meaning of objects and gives meaning to being - and, therefore, glorifies and exalts the human, subject in this relation - than the property of a specific relationship that is comprised in itself the transcendence and immanence going back to the deity itself. In consumption society, sacred is that meaning of objects that distinguish humans and not that distinguish objects from one another.

This new way of thinking about the sacred propels the Christian religion to rethink their place of action and give a new meaning to all their doctrine. In order to justify their existence and legitimate their place of action, the Christian religion, more specifically the neopentecostalism, gave a new meaning to their doctrinary discourse. If on one hand, the market learned with religion to communicate with the human spirit and satisfy their wishes, religion learned with the market to value the physical dimension of human beings, integrating desire and satisfaction as the maximum objectives of a unique being.

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## **A Igreja entra no clima: comunicação, educação e consumo em “Sobre o cuidado da casa comum” – encíclica papal de Francisco**

### **The Church enters the climate: communication, education and consumption in “On care for our common home” – pope Francis’ encyclical letter**

*Antonio Hélio Junqueira<sup>1</sup>*

**Resumo:** *A conformação tridimensional do campo comunicação/educação/consumo objetiva dar conta dos complexos processos e relações que envolvem a construção do cidadão enquanto ator social ativo na produção das suas próprias identidade e cultura e responsável pelo seu destino histórico. Em seu bojo, tais dimensões adquirem estatuto de um direito inerente aos sujeitos na construção material e simbólica de uma existência problematizadora e libertadora. O artigo visa, a partir da aplicação dos princípios teórico-metodológicos da Análise do Discurso ao texto da encíclica papal *Laudato si'*, de Francisco, evidenciar a propriedade, pertinência e eficácia desse campo no entendimento do sujeito contemporâneo imerso em seus desafios cotidianos de autoconstrução identitária como cidadão livre, lúcido, atuante e transformador da realidade do mundo.*

**Palavras-chave:** *consumo sustentável; comunicação; educação; sustentabilidade*

**Abstract:** *The three-dimensional conformation of the communication/education/consumption field aims to account for the complex processes and relationships that involve the construction of the citizen as an active social actor in the production of their own identity and culture and responsible for their historical*

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*destiny. In their midst, such dimensions acquire the status of an inherent right of the subjects in the material and symbolic construction of a problematizing and liberating existence. From the application of the theoretical and methodological principles of Discourse Analysis to the text of the encyclical papal of Francisco, Laudato si', the article aims at evidencing the propriety, pertinence and efficacy of this field in the understanding of the contemporary subject immersed in his daily challenges of self-construction identity as a free, lucid, active and transformer citizen.*

**Keywords:** *sustainable consumption; communication; education; sustainability*



In today's society, consumption, beyond the simple belonging of objects and satisfaction of needs, constitute the phenomenon of communication and symbolic exchanges, within which common meanings and values are built, defined, transformed and reconfirmed. It must be thought as an activity of "joint production, with other customers, of a universe of values" (DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2004, p. 115). In this context, in which the act of consuming does not constitute as an isolated process, but a social one, merchandise, reified, conduct subjectivity and the construction of identities.

Thus, consumption "is affirmed as a fundamental referent for the conformation of narratives, of image representations and imaginary universes filled with meaning" (ROCHA, 2008, p. 122). Consuming is, thus, a narrative act, an identity, profoundly rooted in culture. Thus, changes in standards need to be forged in the ambiance of constructive movements of new identities, co-related to new lifestyles, that may emerge along with a new paradigm of the contemporary being.

In the complex relationship between society and nature, strongly tensioned and problematized in the unescapable crisis of climatic change (GIDDENS, 2010; KLEIN, 2014) and other ecological phenomena of global magnitude and impact, consumption, understood also as a political act, requires an important dislocation of more frequent axis of their study. Thus, beyond the identity narrative of "self", in a narcissist and alienated society, consumption signals a possible place of recuperation of public space and a life politically and socially active (CANCLINI, 1996). It represents, thus, a privileged perspective for the discussion of issues related to social processes of contemporary life production and sustainability (LEFF, 2016).

Looking for wider answers more consistent to this set of restlessness, socially more inclusive visions and postures are being shaped in terms of access and distribution of wealth, and also better focused in the aspect of use and consumption of natural resources. These new articulations go through the contemplation of the sustainable production and the consumption, while the responsibilities become meaningful if and when

are shared socially; far beyond the sphere of individual behavior. We establish, thus, through the focus of consumption, the space for a new political practice, putting in scene issues related to citizenship and political revalorization of the public space (CANCLINI, 1996).

In this perspective and in the context of world environmental crisis, the encyclical letter of Pope Francis, “*Laudato si’*” – about the care of the common house” the second letter since the beginning of his term, announced in June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015, acquired notable repercussion both in the scientific, intellectual and media fields, and the civil society organized around ecologic and environmentalist themes. Internationally distributed, in eight languages, by the Libreria Editrice Vaticana<sup>2</sup>, the papal letter was promptly nicknamed in Brazilian media as the “green encyclical letter” and received with praise for being considered the most striking document among all of those which the Catholic Church approached crucial issues for the defense and promotion of the environment and nature.

For the purpose of this study, it is interesting to us, overall, the treatment given in the encyclical letter to the inter-relations between communication, education and consumption in the promotion of a new global social economic scenario, guided by what the Pope called “integral ecology”, which would be consolidated by the collective adoption of new sustainable practices of production and consumption. The papal text used here maintains the original spelling in Portuguese, according to the edition published by the Vatican, and the transcribed quotations bring, between parenthesis, the respective numbers of paragraphs where they were extracted.

We proposed to discuss the encyclical of Pope Francis under the emancipating perspective of the emerging field of communication/education/consumption, in a quest to evidence its pertinence and efficacy in the understanding of the complex processes of construction of conscient subjects, critical, active and reflexive in the contemporary society. We

2 The name of the encyclical letter was inspired in Saint Francis’ canticle “Praise be to you my Lord”, which in the “Canticle of creatures” remembers that Earth, the common home “can be compared to a sister, with whom we share existence, and a mother, who opens her arms to embrace us”.

highlight that what is advocated for this so-called emancipating perspective of the communication/education/consumption field translates into the education of the subject both for consumption and the construction of their possibilities of critical and reflexive critic over media content, over mass media and its function in contemporary society. In other words, its configured in the search of a reflexive and critical education for consumption, understood as an inalienable right of the subject (BACCEGA, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012), since it recognizes the power of their practices in the production of identity, inclusion and citizenship.

### **Communication/education/consumption: a field under construction**

In today's hyper-mediatised society, the traditional agencies of socialization - family, church, school - and, therefore, of formal, informal and non-formal education of individuals, are pervaded by media, that come, more than to share, to add a relevant role in the conformation of new subjects. Media educate and must be recognized as places producing knowledge (CHARLES-CREEL; OROZCO GÓMEZ, 1990; BACCEGA, 2005). It is in this space of intersection between traditional instances and media that the field of communication/education is configured (CHARLES-CREEL; OROZCO GÓMEZ, 1990; BACCEGA, 2008, 2010, 2012), having as objects the new forms of production of knowledge, of social meanings and cultural imaginary. It is about opportunities coming from the dialogue articulated between both agencies - communication and education - in search of a more inclusive and equitable construction of conscious, critical and reflexive citizens.

In this context, the incorporation of consumption as a fundamental part of the field in construction points towards the recognition of their practices and sociocultural dimensions - both symbolic and material - while structuring elements of identity, subjectivity and daily existence of the contemporary subject.

According to Maria Aparecida Baccega (2010, p. 51), the "incorporation of knowledge over paper and the function of consumption in the

constitution and organization of contemporary society is filled with fundamental importance for the formation of capable and critical citizens. And, she adds, it is this knowledge that will allow the verification of the way the events act in the culture where the subject is formed and with which he interacts. In other words, the education allows the reduction of fragmentation of reality, developing the capability of perception of connections between phenomena.

In the encyclical papal analyzed, the discursive operationalization of this perspective is revealed, among others, in the paragraph 110, where the pope criticizes the alienation of the contemporary subject, which is conditioned by the “fragmentation of knowledge proves helpful for concrete applications, and yet it often leads to a loss of appreciation for the whole, for the relationships between things, and for the broader horizon, which then becomes irrelevant”.

### ***“Laudato si’ - On care for our common home” and the paradigms of sustainable consumption***

The encyclical of Pope Francis, “Laudato si - on care for our common home” is an extensive document, composed by 192 pages, organized into six chapters: i) What is happening to our common home; ii) The gospel of creation; iii) The human roots of the ecological crisis; iv) Integral ecology; v) Lines of approach and action and vi) Ecological education and spirituality.

Without getting deep into the scientific or technological dimensions of the issues approached, the catholic document embodies dense concerns on climate change, with the planetary problem of water, pollution, genetically modified organisms and the preservation of biodiversity, among other relevant themes under the point of view of contemporary environmentalism. In this context, they direct sharp criticism towards society in its “weak responses” (§54) facing the themes approached and what he called a “false or superficial ecology” (§59) which “bolsters complacency and a cheerful recklessness” (§59) in the social recognition of the real dimensions of the problems enrolled. On the other hand,

it advocates for the coping of which the considers fundamental, therefore, the implementation of lifestyle changes and the incorporation of sustainable standards of production and consumption (§13).

As a response to the criticism he incites, the encyclical advocates for the adoption of what he calls an “integral ecology” (§11), that adds to the human, and the place he occupy in the universe, all the relationship with the place that surrounds him, including the institutions and social, political and economic spheres that integrate the everyday life, not allowing that the human being keep seeing nature as something different than themselves. Thus, he calls on authorities from around the world for the adoption of new transparent and sustainable standards of development, production and consumption, product of real, open and honest social dialogues. He decidedly criticizes the “efficientist and immediatist” technocratic approaches that believe it is possible that the market defends or promotes adequately the environment in its critical contemporary issues. Similarly, it condemns technology in its pretended capability of always finding, in each situation given, efficient solutions for serious environmental problems that they provoke.

According to Maria do Rosário Gregolin (2007, p. 13) “the discourse is taken as a social practice, historically determined, which constitutes subjects and objects”. Reinforcing this understanding, the pope’s document is structured based in the recognition, by the Church, of the fact that the challenges and the threats of all current societies, even with different degrees of intensity, are today exposed related directly or indirectly with hegemonic consumption patterns in a global scale, which, in turn, structure and are structured homologically by the current systems of production.

According to the pope, that situation comes from what he calls “technocratic paradigm”, which conforms the meanings and lives of today’s societies. Such paradigm, given by products and conquests of technique, impose, in a global scale, lifestyles and mass, alienating systems of production and consumption that are sustained by the illusion of freedom of choice and self-determination of the subject; those values maintained in circulation and constantly renewed by the interested action of mass

media. In other words, subjects and objects are built vivified and put into interaction by their own logics and discursive practices originated from the paradigms of technique. In this sense, these discourses “operate a game which they constitute identities based in the rule of knowledge over the use people must do of their bodies, their souls, their lives” (GREGOLIN, 2007, p. 18).

We have to accept that technological products are not neutral, for they create a framework which ends up conditioning lifestyles and shaping social possibilities along the lines dictated by the interests of certain powerful groups. Decisions which may seem purely instrumental are in reality decisions about the kind of society we want to build. (§107) [...] The idea of promoting a different cultural paradigm and employing technology as a mere instrument is nowadays inconceivable. The technological paradigm has become so dominant that it would be difficult to do without its resources and even more difficult to utilize them without being dominated by their internal logic. It has become countercultural to choose a lifestyle whose goals are even partly independent of technology, of its costs and its power to globalize and make us all the same. Technology tends to absorb everything into its ironclad logic, and those who are surrounded with technology “know full well that it moves forward in the final analysis neither for profit nor for the well-being of the human race”, that “in the most radical sense of the term power is its motive – a lordship over all”. [GUARDINI, 1965, p. 63-64] As a result, “man seizes hold of the naked elements of both nature and human nature”. [GUARDINI, 1965, p. 63-63] Our capacity to make decisions, a more genuine freedom and the space for each one’s alternative creativity are diminished. (§108).

Designed so discursively the scene, pope’s encyclical - where it interest us - becomes the proposition of a strategy of communication/education focused on the critical deconstruction of the interested use of media in the production of elusive meanings for life, which maintain and recreate “anxious, dissatisfied” (§203) subjects, “melancholic, with a harmful sense of isolation” (§47) and “with a tedious monotony” (§113).

Through this investment, the Pope believes in his discourse the subject can free himself from the technocratic game, unraveling the astuteness put forward in and through mass media and by the new media, and

then create, self-educating oneself, a new possibility of social insertion. In this context and through the free conscious adoption of new lifestyles and sustainable patterns of consumption, the subject can rebuild his citizen dimension, experiencing new and regenerating meanings for their everyday existence.

Since the market tends to promote extreme consumerism in an effort to sell its products, people can easily get caught up in a whirlwind of needless buying and spending. Compulsive consumerism is one example of how the techno-economic paradigm affects individuals. Romano Guardini had already foreseen this: “The gadgets and technics forced upon him by the patterns of machine production and of abstract planning mass man accepts quite simply; they are the forms of life itself. To either a greater or lesser degree mass man is convinced that his conformity is both reasonable and just”. [GUARDINI, 1965, p. 63-64] his paradigm leads people to believe that they are free as long as they have the supposed freedom to consume. But those really free are the minority who wield economic and financial power. Amid this confusion, postmodern humanity has not yet achieved a new self-awareness capable of offering guidance and direction, and this lack of identity is a source of anxiety. We have too many means and only a few insubstantial ends. (§203).

We know that, throughout the process of transformation of the capitalism from its “rough” shapes, characteristics of modernity, to the “liquid” shapes of contemporaneity (BAUMAN, 2008), consumption of goods, services, values and meanings acquired material and symbolic materiality never socially experienced before (CAMPBELL, 2002; FEATHERSTONE, 1995; GIDDENS, 2002; HARVEY, 2007; SLATER, 2002). Within this long and complex process, alterations, cracks, ruptures and emergency of the new models of production and consumption were, at the same time, cause and effect of a new lifestyle, permanently in construction, unstable, mutant and unrested. In this path, individual and collective identities were shattered, doomed to the infinite process of permanent reconstruction, which where consumption will mean, if not the only one, at least the main promise of salvation, pleasure and reward, even if eternally dissatisfied (BAUMAN, 2008; HARVEY, 2007, LIPOVETSKI, 2009).

Maintained thus dissatisfied and willing, subjects need to be fed and filled with new products and their endless substitutes, in a whirlwind of production and programmed obsolescence of new merchandise, whether they are products, services, values or meanings. Thus, the generation of excess and elimination of residue became essential necessities of the new lifestyle of the world. And, without a doubt, they became the main articulators of the forms of unstoppable and insane forms of exploitation over the available natural resources, which the world has been watching throughout the last decades, and that nowadays show signs of evident exhaustion.

Pope Francis discourse adheres to this understanding and, through that, is equipped with elements to elaborate harsh criticism to consumerism “where a constant flood of new products coexists with a tedious monotony” (§113), and the culture of disposables, in “this same “use and throw away” logic generates so much waste, because of the disordered desire to consume more than what is really necessary” (§123). However, in its understanding, the pope doesn’t deny the relevance of the role of consumption in the identity conformation of the subject, since “In our rooms, our homes, our workplaces and neighborhoods, we use our environment as a way of expressing our identity.” (§147).

His lines reproduce, to a certain extent, the contemporary context where the word sustainability was incorporated into our daily lives and began to be employed with such prodigality, that the majority of the discourses - including the media discourse that we intent to analyze - seem to renounce the necessity to specified the term employed, denying the character of inconclusion and sociopolitical fluctuation of its meaning<sup>3</sup>.

However, even if we cannot think about the existence of a consensus on the definition about what sustainability is in the contemporary human societies, it is possible to conclude that in every version proposed to discuss this issue, the issue of revision and redefinition of socially

3 In a particular manner, it is highlighted that there is no precision of meaning for the concept that is socially being constructed for the expression. “sustainable consumption” or its variables: “responsible consumption”, “smart consumption”, “proactive consumption” “conscious consumption”, “ethical consumption, among others.



dominant consumption patterns emerge in the center of the discussion<sup>4</sup>. The same way, the concept of “sustainable development”<sup>5</sup> doesn’t find a consensual base for its best accuracy. Anthony Giddens in “The politics of climate change”, published in Brazil in 2010, questions the contradictory meanings between the terms “development” - linked to dynamism and change - and “sustainable”, related to continuity and balance. He says: “One of the responses to the evasive nature of this concept was to simply avoid defining it, and, instead, replace it with an agglomerate of goals” (GIDDENS, 2010, p. 88).

### **New schedules for consumption: from private to shared**

Isolated individuals can lose their ability and freedom to escape the utilitarian mindset and end up prey to an unethical consumerism bereft of social or ecological awareness. [...] The ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion. (§219).

The individualist organization of consumption in contemporary life, resulting in a consumerism morally criticized by authors like Hannah Arendt (1997), Richard Senett (2006) and Zygmunt Bauman (2008), produce as a result the alienation of subjects of collective problems and interests<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand, we can’t disconsider that the consumption practices can also be rearticulated in the production of new possibilities of political action and reconstitution of subject-citizen. In this sense, Pope Francis says:

Many things have to change course, but it is we human beings above all who need to change. We lack an awareness of our common origin, of our

- 4 About the purpose of the process of consensual construction - in process - of the concept of sustainable consumption, see study of Rosseti e Giacomini Filho (2010) about the social consensus in Habermas and its interaction and pertinence in the study of communication and sustainable consumption.
- 5 The expression was socially introduced through the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, presided by Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, and became known around the world as the Brundtland Commission (Cf. GIDDENS, 2010).
- 6 About the issues and visions of morality and ethics of consumption in contemporary societies, their conflicts and contradictions, see PERES-NETO, 2015.

mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone. This basic awareness would enable the development of new convictions, attitudes and forms of life. A great cultural, spiritual and educational challenge stands before us, and it will demand that we set out on the long path of renewal. (§202).

Here we find a discursive alignment from Pope's encyclical letter to what Lucien Sfez (1996) interpreted in contemporary society as the utopic vision of "Big Health". According to Sfez, it is about the last post-modern ideology and the utopia par excellence of 21<sup>st</sup> century, which consolidates what he called an integrating "eco-bio-religion", in all its symbolic magnitude, of the project of regeneration and purification of the integral health of the human species and the planet.

According to this direction towards the desirable and urgent changes in the construction of new lifestyles and models of consumption are possible, it is important to call on, also in the pope's understanding, the agencies of the field of communication and education, because "change is impossible without motivation and a process of education" (§15) and, in this path, ecological education can take place in a variety of settings: at school, in families, in the media, in catechesis and elsewhere" (§213).

The pope evaluates that one cannot underestimate the importance of a wide environmental education, which includes the mobilization of all the instances to this end - formal, informal, non-formal - and the forms how it can reconfigure daily habits of consumption.

To attain such end, it is up to the media to perform a social role of collective agencing of subjectivities, when putting in circulation and articulating utterances that "regulate" discursively the forms of being and acting of subjects<sup>7</sup>, "Otherwise, the paradigm of consumerism will continue to advance, with the help of the media and the highly effective workings of the market." (§ 215).

7 It is important to remember that, according to Gregolin (2007, p. 23-24) "it would be restrictive to understand there is only passivity towards the collective agencing of subjectivity; on the contrary, there are points of fugue, of resistance, of singularization [...] As a consequence of these movements, identities are no longer rigid or concluded".

Going through this path, pope's text evolves for the consideration that, in the current environmental context, changes in lifestyle became essential. In this process, he considers that the aware and active citizen can, through their choices "A change in lifestyle could bring healthy pressure to bear on those who wield political, economic and social power" (§206), inducing changes also in companies behavior, "forcing them to consider their environmental footprint and their patterns of production" (§206).

What is transparent is the understanding that sustainability cannot be disconnected from the search of understanding and the systematic questioning of consumption and its meaning in today's society, mixing and weaving consumption patterns both from individuals and business themselves, whether they are national companies, big corporations or multinational conglomerates, governments and organisms of the organized civil society, etc. (SANTOS, 2006).

About the media, including all contemporary digital media, pope's encyclical is clear to recognize its irrefutable role in deepening thinking and the construction of critical thinking and citizen's ethics (§47). He doesn't spare criticism, however, when pointing their notorious omission in this sense, specifically in the case of the internet that,

[...] which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than with other people and with nature. Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise (§47).

We, therefore, see that in the discursive construction of the inter-relations communication/education/consumption for the production of the new social subject - or even we'd say the new conscient consumer - any

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communication isn't enough, not the abundant, excessive, selective and "omnipresent" (§47) offered by the digital environments. A problematizing, complexifying communication of the understanding of relationships of difference among beings, between classes. A communication that points toward the revelation of the Other, and only then, is capable of integrating necessary knowledge for the promotion of freedom and regeneration of the Human species and the Planet. Communication and education merge into a new emancipating perspective, since that, more than informing, they aim to conform new free forms, critical, balanced and reflected of the relationship of the subject with himself, with alterity and with the world.

Environmental education has broadened its goals. Whereas in the beginning it was mainly centered on scientific information, consciousness-raising and the prevention of environmental risks, it tends now to include a critique of the "myths" of a modernity grounded in a utilitarian mindset (individualism, unlimited progress, competition, consumerism, the unregulated market). It seeks also to restore the various levels of ecological equilibrium, establishing harmony within ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God. Environmental education should facilitate making the leap towards the transcendent which gives ecological ethics its deepest meaning. It needs educators capable of developing an ethics of ecology, and helping people, through effective pedagogy, to grow in solidarity, responsibility and compassionate care (§210).

Contemporaneity brought a set of complications, anxieties and risks to human life, among which environmental and food issues began to represent their most dramatic axes (BAUMAN, 2008; LIPOVETSKY, 2007). It is important to outline that those dangers began to be experienced with a bigger load of drama in the individual and private sphere. Such conditions, according to the analyzed encyclical, can and must be overcome, since it has no way out than the rupture of the sphere of isolation towards active, conscient and political occupation of the community and the public sphere.

Disinterested concern for others, and the rejection of every form of self-centeredness and self-absorption, are essential if we truly wish to care for our brothers and sisters and for the natural environment; These attitudes also attune us to the moral imperative of assessing the impact of our every action and personal decision on the world around us. If we can overcome individualism, we will truly be able to develop a different lifestyle and bring about significant changes in society (§208).

### **Final considerations**

Through the perspectives outlined in this article, based on the encyclical by Pope Francis, it is legitimate to consider the emergency of a new invigorating space of social practice, capable of rescuing the individual for the exercise of their role as citizens, politically participant and active, supplanting the pessimism of his condition of a mere individual consumer, isolated, apathetic and demobilized. In this context, the analysis proposed revealed that, for such transposition to become effective, we need to mobilize apparatus, devices and media of communication agencies and education agencies that may comprise the construction of a new and regenerated subject. And, in this context, so that the subject may be acting in the construction of the new social reality, becomes indispensable that it has, still, conditions that relate critical and reflexively with the sphere of consumption.

Therefore, the discursive analysis of a wide, meaningful, current and consistent corpus, as Pope Francis' encyclical, points towards consistent answers aligned to the goal of this article, which was recognizing and reinforcing the triad component of the field communication/education/consumption as operationally satisfactory, productive, pertinent and efficient for the understanding of the contemporary subject immersed in their daily challenges of identity self-construction as a free, lucid, active citizen changing the reality of the world.

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