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Sumário

Artigos

O estrato de baixa renda entre a publicidade excludente e a publicidade redentora

The low-income stratum between exclusionary and redemptive advertising

Lívia Valença da Silva[1]

Resumo: *Entre os anos 2006 e 2012, no Brasil, houve relevantes transformações quanto ao disparo no crescimento econômico associado ao nascimento da suposta nova classe média, cuja participação no mercado de consumo se mostrava inédita. Refletir sobre o conceito de classe social permite discernimento para reconhecer esse estrato de baixa renda ascendente como uma nova classe trabalhadora reconfigurada. Tornou-se fundamental compreender como os indivíduos consumiam mercadorias em busca de inclusão e cidadania. O acesso a bens duráveis era um dos maiores símbolos de ascensão para esse estrato emergente. Este artigo se propõe a analisar a representação do estrato de baixa renda nos discursos publicitários do segmento varejista de móveis e eletrodomésticos, desde antes do boom do consumo – etapa excludente –, até depois – fase redentora.*
Palavras-chave: *consumo; nova classe trabalhadora; discurso publicitário.*

Abstract: *Between 2006 and 2012, in Brazil, there were relevant changes in terms of the increase in economic growth associated with the birth of the supposed new middle class, whose participation in the consumer market was unprecedented. Reflecting on the concept of social class allows insight to recognize this rising low-income stratum as a new reconfigured working class. It became essential to understand how individuals consumed goods in search of inclusion and citizenship. Access to durable goods was one of the greatest symbols of ascension for this emerging stratum. This article aims to analyze the representation of the low-income stratum in advertising discourses of the Furniture and Appliances retail*

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segment, from before the consumption boom – excluding stage –, until after – redemptive stage.

ARTIGO

Introduction

Brazil has experienced considerable transformations, which had their origin in the last decade of the 20th century, but which have in fact been intensified in recent years – from 2006 to 2012 –, especially in relation to the surge in economic growth associated with the birth of a supposed new middle class, whose participation in the consumer market was heretofore unheard of.

It was an explosion in access to consumption by the individuals that made up an emerging stratum of society. In contemporary society, consuming goes way beyond simply acquiring. It is related to the "right" of being able to belong to the "consumer society", where symbolic struggles take place that add values to the much desired goods as they translate lifestyles that reflect ideas and ideals of belonging, social inclusion, recognition and the right to happiness – in other words, citizenship (BAUMAN, 2008; TASCHNER, 2009).

Pochmann (2014) declares that, beginning in the 2000's, Brazil had a combination of factors that allowed a certain social mobility, above all, the one whic is associated with the base of the pyramid – economic growth, income distribution, expansion in the level of employement with remuneration slightly above minimum wage and a considerable part of the low-income population starting to consume durable goods, such as televisions, refrigerators, computers, among other goods and services that, until then, were intended for higher income families. But, as Pochman (2014) explains, this did not cause the birth of a new social class, much less did it lead to the inclusion of new members in the traditional middle class; only the working class was reconfigured in new consumption bases, which promptly changed the structure of society and families.

To support this reasoning, Souza (2016) states that "the discourse on the 'new middle class' is problematic, given that it is irremediably 'economistic'". For this sociologist, the economic dimension of the social classes cannot be analyzed separately from other factors, including, for example, social conflicts. The idea that access to consumption is the

passport to social inclusion is a belief that tends to mask social injustices of all kinds, in addition to reproducing the privileges of the dominant classes (SOUZA, 2016).

Souza (2012) explains that this new class of "emerging" Brazilians is composed of 30 million Brazilians that entered the consumer market through their own efforts, with hard work. However, these emerging people do not enjoy any privileges, unlike what is understood about the upper and middle classes in Brazil.

Thus, when we speak of working class here – to the detriment of middle class –, we are referring to these emerging people who ascended socially and began to have access to the consumer market, coming from much less affluent layers of society and with no purchasing power similar to the one that they started to have, as a result of this consumption boom, as cogitated. They are probably, members of the so-called lower C class. In the same way, they are possibly, even some old members of the so-called D class, the most discredited ones, but who, with a lot of hard work, also managed to increase their consumption power. Therefore, they are hard working people who, only then, managed to gain access to the consumer market of durable goods and certain services, and started to go beyond the consumption of the basics.

This discussion does not intend to exhaust the concept of social class, but to clarify the aspects that demonstrate how the practice of calling the new emerging social stratum the "new middle class" is a mistake. As this stratum of a reconfigured new working class is named, it is recognized in it, in addition to the consumption issues, the lifestyles that are reflected in the market and lead in its symbolic desires. These are people from the lower strata of society and from a low-income stratum, without a pejorative tone, who began to feel empowered in the market and, therefore, more like citizens, even if under specific conditions of consumption.

The role of advertising as a tool for the capitalist system

The idea of social ascension, of leaving the poverty zone and entering a supposed "new middle class", was broadly exalted by advertising, which celebrated with these people each one of their achievements, emphasizing their struggles and efforts, as well as exalting their merits and the better lives that everyone started to enjoy from every one of their acquisitions.

In the same way, with the crisis (2013-2016), advertising certainly adapted to the new context, especially in what corresponded to the public composed of the new working class, which then began to face great difficulty in accessing consumption and, therefore, it started to gradually disapear from the market. However, still it is in its nature and logic that advertising would stimulate consumption. And that's what it did, but in a more pondered manner, always seeking to reach the "heart of the matter" with regard to the targeted public: their considerable financial difficulty in consuming, but, also, their great refusal of not having access to the consumption of certain goods once again.

Advertising has shaped itself in harmony with the new context of crisis and the disappearance of the emerging euphoric consumers in the market, seeking to reach them in a less "sensationalist" or "spectacularized" way, a bit more rationally, speaking more sensibly about consumption and addressing issues of lower risks, more savings, although still resorting to ideas of opportunities and possibilities.

In addition to that, the focus of advertising also changed, in the sense that companies opted not to offer too many products and durable goods considered more superfluous or not so immediately necessary, goods that sold very well in the heyday of the new working class and to which this public had never thought of having access before, products that provided comfort and well-being. This also became visible in advertising, which began to emphasize the basics more, but not like before. A different world of consumption had been opened up and advertising still had a lot to say to that consumer public, who would not accept the idea of

once again being needy and deprived, of returning to that stage of social exclusion.

The advertising discourse under analysis

At a moment when much is discussed about the emergence and rise of a social class through its power of consumption, as well as about its subsequent disappearance from the market due to issues that refer, mainly, to the economic crisis that Brazil is experiencing, it is very important to analyze how advertising elaborates its discourse and how the individuals in this group are represented, since advertising is intimately related to the capitalist system and to the way in which people compose their identities.

In order to understand that, it is first necessary to understand some theoretical-methodological issues regarding the analysis of a discourse. Therefore, we sought here a development related to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), according to Fairclough (2001), who proposes his three-dimensional model.

As conceived by Fairclough (2001), the three-dimensional conception of discourse brings together three types of discourse analysis to be carried out simultaneously and in an interrelated way: 1) an analysis that considers **discourse as a text** – considering the issues of its production and interpretation, contemplating four items: 'vocabulary', 'grammar', 'cohesion' and 'textual structure'; 2) another analysis that sees **discourse as a discursive practice** – involving processes of production, distribution and textual consumption, in which aspects such as the "strength" of statements, the "coherence" of texts and "intertextuality" must also be analysed; and, finally, 3) the analysis that considers **discourse as a social practice** – understanding it in terms of power relations, which reproduce, restructure or challenge the existing hegemonies – resorting, for this purpose, to reflections on ideology and concepts such as hegemony (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001).

Here, the field of study was the Brazilian retail sector – the furniture and home appliances sector –, one of those responsible for the growth of

the Brazilian economy that took place from the insertion of millions of consumers in the market, consuming items that represented their entry into a higher social class, to a more dignified life condition, to comfort and well-being, in short, to more expensive products and to which they did not have access, but had fed dreams and desires that they were then able to fulfill (YACCOUB, 2011).

Among the largest companies in the furniture and home appliances segment in Brazil, in termos of annual revenue and administrative transactions, are Casas Bahia, Magazine Luiza and Ricardo Eletro (SBVC, 2017).

Regarding the adverstising pieces whose discourses have been analysed, the corpus was cut from the television media. In it was found one of the most complete channels, in terms of textual and visual resources. TV is one of the most watched media by the studied public, who has it as its object of leisure, the conquest of the much-desired home appliance, the embodiment of comfort for the family and the means to stay informed about the opportunities for social insertion (RESEARCH, 2012; C CLASS, 2013).

Considering the time frame from 2003 to 2016, the corpus of this research was delimited by the order of discourses in three different stages: (a) from 2003 to 2005; (b) from 2006 to 2012; and (c) from 2013 to 2016, found in three advertising films (from 30 to 60 seconds) explained more clearly below:

- Stage 1 – The film *Dia dos Pais – Os tipos de pais (Fathers Day – The types of fathers)*, by Casas Bahia, was selected for the phase prior to the consumption boom, of the excluding discourse;
- Stage 2 – The film *Felicidade Já!* (*Happiness Now!*), by Magazine Luiza, was selected for the euphoria phase of consumption of the stratum; and
- Stage 3 – The film *Proibido Perder Venda* (*Losing Sales is Prohibited*), by Ricardo Eletro, was selected for the period of economic crisis and recession, which compromised access to consumption.

The analysis

Stage 1 – Before the consumption boom – 2003-2005

Film script Os tipos de pais – Casas Bahia – Fathers Day 2004 – 1'

With soft music in the background, the film begins with a close-up of a newborn child being kissed by a man, who is supposed to be the father and happily holds the baby on his lap, accompanied by his probable wife, the baby's mother. (SPKR. Voice Off of a child: *There are many kinds of fathers: The father that life chose for us*.) / The scene moves to an open environment, in which, below a tree, a father – light-skinned – pushes his daughter – a black child – on a swing. They both have fun. (SPKR. Voice Off: *And there is the father that chose us for life*.) / In another scene, on a park bench, another father plays with his twin girls. (SPKR. Voice OFF: *There is the father who is a father twice, at one time*.) / In another scene, while the father sits at the table with his daughter – a child –, an old man, his father, comes and kisses his face. (SPKR. Voice Off: It goes on with a tone of one who mentions the kinds of fathers: *There is the father who is a son*.) / We see a father helping his daughter with her homework, both sitting at the table at home. (SPKR. Voice Of continues: *There is the teacher father*.) / Passing a soccer ball into the hands of a boy, the father – with black skin – gives his son – also black –, tips about the game, in a locker room. (SPKR. Voice Off continues: *The coach father*.) / At the edge of a pond, a father shows his son the fish he has just caught. At the end, the camerca closes on the child's happy face and we see that he is an oriental boy. It is believed that the father is too. (SPKR. Voice Off continues: *And there is the hero father*.) / Sitting on a pier by a lake, a father talks with his son in Brazilian Sign Language. (SPKR. Voice Off continues: *There is the counselor father*.) / In a bathroom, after the bath, a father wipes his two sons. They are happy. (SPKR. Voice Off continues: *And there is even the father who is a mother*.) / When the image focuses on the faces of the three characters, we note a resemblance to the indigenous pattern, in aesthetic terms of

skin color, eyes and hair. (SPKR. Voice Off continues: *And all these types of fathers have one thing in common: total dedication*.) / With the image of this father and his children hugging, the logo of Casas Bahia appears, and their slogan: *Total dedication to you* and the website (signature). / Voice-over changes for the closing. (SPKR. Voice Off: Firm yet smooth masculine voice: *A tribute from Casas Bahia to Father's Day*.)

Discourse as text

The word game with "chose" and "life" stands out, when the texts refers to the biological parents – whose children life chooses – and to the adoptive parents – who choose their children for life. Similarly, there are associations of the words used to characterize the types of fathers – "teacher", "coach", "hero", "counselor", "mother" – with aggregating values that elevate the father figures before the child, always demonstrating how superior they are and how dedicated they are to their children, from the moment they spend time, attention and affection with all of them, performing tasks that even seem to be exclusive to mothers, women. In the latter case, especially, when referring to the mother as one of the strongest features to indicate a father's high level of dedication, the text makes use of a metaphor, since it makes the analogy of the dedicated father as a mother.

Discourse as a discursive practice

While producing, distributing and consuming, the different actors who were responsible for the tasks of creating the film ended up getting involved in a context that went beyond what is shown in that commercial. When it was proposed to narrate the types of fathers, it was expected that all the existing types would be presented. However, they would not fit in such a short space of time. Not to mention that the film's intention was to speak only of the good types, examples filled with metaphors and stereotypes which would elevate the figure of the father, representing well what a father dedicated to his children would

be, exactly like the advertiser – Casas Bahia – behaved in front of its clients, with total dedication.

These are the "species" of fathers metaphorically displayed as superior characters, references to anyone who would like to know what an ideal father should be like – idealized models in the society of perfection: the teacher father, coach, counselor and even the hero father.

These definitions were powerful, no question about it. And they were coherent, because they portrayed a society that thought this way and was touched by such discourse, worried about covering as many "types" of fathers as possible in that advertising film, in order not to leave anyone out, to reach a larger audience and, of course, to be politically correct, since the script included black, adoptive, oriental, indigenous and deaf-mute fathers. However, among all these, it was not possible to see much of the father who, in fact, represented the low-income population.

A gap is perceived in the advertising discourses and if, through consumption, people were led to build their personalities, identities and social relationships, these individuals of the low-income population saw themselves excluded from the possibilities of interacting with goods and, even more, with society. Those lifestyles shown in the film did not correspond to their realities.

Discourse as a social practice

When the cases of metaphorical and stereotyped discourses are verified and it is stated that, if that took place nowadays, they would not go unnoticed within a more critical and conscious society, we are dealing precisely with preexisting ideologies in society. Perhaps, the film producers would have tried to tone it down, for example, when talking about adoption, for which they used the term "chose" to refer to the father who adopts a child, making use of the more romanticized complement "for life". If this occured, it would demonstrate what has been defended about the importance of the necessary awareness in order for the dominant hegemonic discourses not to be simply reproduced, providing more lightness to a theme such as adoption, at least on Fathers

Day. It would have been a smooth and small step, but a step forward, if indeed it existed and was not only a persuasive and seductive resource to make the text more charming. But, even if it were, it would work as a tool of enchantment for some reason. This demonstrates a social change.

The characters in the film, as well as the text, corroborate for the maintenance of a hegemonic order of discourse in which the profile of the country's low-income population was not seriously seen. The purpose of the adverstising film is to enchant through a world of fantasies, therefore the concern not to open wide the reality of the consumer public of Casas Bahia on national TV was enormous, because this would disaggregate value to the brand and frighten the population, who would face themselves in a not-so-magical way on TV.

The fact that the low-income population did not see itself represented in this discourse was something debated by researchers of the advertising discourse at that time – when consumers from the most popular, dominated classes saw themselves distanced from the market, limited to basic goods for survival, even so, sparsely.

Thus, there is talk about how the low-income population could be ignored in society, which discursively silenced its existence.

Stage 2 – Euphoria of stratum consumption – 2006-2012

Felicidade Já! (Happiness Now!) film script – Magazine Luiza – 2010 – 1'
Images show part of what seems to be the central point of a city, where the first movements are seen and the sounds of a nearby demonstration are heard. And this catches the attention of people who are at home or at work, in the buildings around the forked streets from where people are coming on a march and meet at an intersection. The sound fades in and gets louder. When the crowd is seen marching, we can hear the group chanting a slogan: (Happiness now! Happiness now! Happiness now! Happiness now!). And they come holding banners, flags, chanting slogans and calling for those who are watching everything to join them,

who are led by a man who is ahead, speaking into a megaphone, inviting everyone to participate in that action. And the protesters approach with placards and banners where it is written: "Happiness now!"; "Smile now!"; "No more waiting". (SPKR. Man on megaphone: *No more leaving happiness to next year. It's happiness now!* And he continues in an appealing tone: *No more leaving happiness for the weekend, for after work. No more leaving happiness for later*.). Several images show the crowd shouting "Happiness Now!", raising banners and placards, calling the people who are watching. From the buildings, we can already see people on the balconies waving flags. In the midst of the crowd, we notice black people, young people, children. The man on the megaphone looks like a salesman from Magazine Luiza, wearing black dress pants and a white button-down shirt with short sleeves. Protesters continue with their slogans. Then, from among the crowd, a man starts a new refrain: *No more waiting, Happiness Now! No more waiting, Happiness Now!*. (SPKR. Man on megaphone: *And at this moment, the Magazine Luiza movement begins for your happiness now*.) Part of these people from the demonstration are actually heading to a Magazine Luiza store, which is waiting for all these customers. As the man talks about the store, many internal scenes are shown, in which we see televisions, refrigerators, micro systems, toys, sofas, shelves, home appliances. (SPKR. Man on megaphone: *Magazine Luiza promises to help you by doing what it does best: promotions, payment conditions and discounts. Always with that smile on our face. It's Happiness Now!*). In the internal scenes a song/jingle begins, in the background, which is already a Magazine Luiza trademark: (... *happy life, happy life, happy life*...). Meanwhile, the protesters continue with their slogans in the street, while the man speaks into the megaphone. Then, an old lady appears on the balcony of a nearby building and asks them to "sing" more quietly. The protesteres boo her. (Old lady: *Hey, hey, can't you sing a little lower? Protesters boo her*). One of the protesters, a black woman, turns around and invites her to be happy, which is the proposal of the advertiser's movement and the brand's slogan. (Woman protester: *Come be happy*). Then, Magazine

Luiza's signature appears on the screen, with the brand and the slogan in the center, followed by the musical reading of the slogan: "Come be happy". Musical signature – slogan: *Come be happy!*

Discourse as text

Many words and expressions were found that demonstrate the atmosphere of empowerment that the low-income population, interpreted by the protesters and customers in the film, searched for, through struggles that could seem merely for the consumption of goods, but were actually for rights and social inclusion, for being able to enjoy, at that moment, the benefits that those products would provide them, that that consumption would offer, for the conquests of goods, lifestyles and symbolic values more fair, egalitarian and happy. Those people were seeking to get rid of the ties of recent earlier times when they had no right to consume, they were not even considered in TV commercials as potential consumers, citizens, and needed to postpone plans and dreams because their financial condition was not enough to make them exist and compose their identities as members of that capitalist society.

That manifestation for happiness demanded an end to those situations. Their moment had arrived. In this way, the spectators could, by watching the movie, feel even more motivated and stimulated to go out in search of everything they always wanted, but could never have. It was Magazine Luiza that was making those achievements possible for everyone, understanding well what "waiting" and "leaving it for later" meant in those people's lives. True social appeals, *Happiness Now!*, *No more waiting* and *Happy life* represented more than just slogans. The "happiness", in several *nuances* and linked to many imperative verbs was, in fact, extensively explored in the text.

Discourse as a discursive practice

Possibly, the producers of this discourse knew that they wanted a film about the idea of the happiness of being able to consume certain products

right now, without having to postpone dreams and plans, being able to pay on time, with the recent payment conditions and credit concessions that, at that moment, were presented to low-income consumers. Many marketing, communication and advertising professionals were being helped by researches that explained the characteristics of this social stratum, what they wanted, how they behaved and what they valued. The government reinforced the idea that a new social class had emerged and that all Brazilians were experiencing an unprecedented period of social and economic transformations that favored a population that was gradually becoming important to different sectors and was being responsible for placing Brazil among the successful emerging countries in the world.

Discourse as a social practice

In an analysis of the film's social and discursive practices, much of what was going on at that moment is perceived, the entire context in which a certain low-income social stratum started to have access to the consumer market in an unprecedented way, due to factors such as the raise in minimum wage, the lower interest rates, granting credit, income transfer by the government and the increase in employment rates.

Everyone in the film clearly demonstrated what part of the dazzled society was feeling: a unique and good sensation of freedom, of achievement and merit, of belonging. No one there, as in the "real life" represented, was fully aware that their insertion into society and the conquest of their citizenship was taking place only due to the "fragile" way of access to consumption, by the increase of income, and not through other criteria in which they continued to be set apart and dominated, as in political and cultural issues and in different social spheres.

That was a manifestation that, in the short term, would be for the search for the right to consumption, but which represented, effectively, the right to citizenship, to belonging. However, the fields of cultural, social and political capital were not considered.

At Magazine Luiza, we would find simple products, but without aesthetic differentials, of even "questionable" quality and not so resistant and durable materials. For the public they were intended for, they were already a luxury. This is especially true because those people had a low cultural capital and, even if they had a higher purchasing power than in the past, they were not able to choose goods with added values legitimized in society as superior.

Stage 3 – Period of economic crisis and recession – 2013-2016

Proibido perder venda (Losing Sales is Prohibited) film script– *Ricardo Eletro – 2016 – 30"*

As a poster boy for Ricardo Eletro, TV host Rodrigo Faro appears, in a scenery that simulates a computerized stage, from where he communicates with people who, given the context, are supposed to be the salespeople of the advertising brand, who receive instructions from the host, on behalf of Ricardo, on how the customers should be treated and that losing sales is prohibited. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *This is the moment to defend purchasing power...*) / Throughout the entire film, there is an instrumental background music in tone of action, with moments of revelation and impact, especially following the most incisive gestures by the poster boy and the entry of the brand of the LOSING SALES IS PROHIBITED campaign. The host speaks in an incisive way, with strong gestures, while on the screens behind him, images that correspond to what he informs are shown, such as scenes of Ricardo Nunes himself attending to customers, shaking their hands and hugging them. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *... from each one of our customers. If we were to do the same,...*) / As Rodrigo speaks, looking at his audience, communicating with everyone in a firm and calm way, behind him are shown, on the screens, images of Ricardo Nunes in the shed where products are stored, then solving problems on the telephone and making firm gestures that are similar to the ones that Rodrigo Faro makes when talking to his audience. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *... Ricardo wouldn't have*

called me. *We have to do it better*.) / At this moment, on the screen behind the host, we see the image of a thermometer rising fast, reminding us of the arrival at the limit mentioned by Rodrigo Faro, subtly. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *We must get to the limit*.) / Rodrigo Faro then appears full body on the screen and in a definitive gesture speaks the text that is followed by the brand created by the promotion: a golden coat of arms in which is written LOSING SALES IS PROHIBITED, with a star on top and Ricardo Eletro's brand below. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *We must not lose sales under any circumstances*.) / Rodrigo Faro keeps talking, with the camera closer to him. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *It's up to us to reach the condition...*) / We keep seeing these scenes. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *... And for the price the customer wants*.) At this time, as the host speaks, the scenes behind him start showing Ricardo Eletro employees in the sheds, carrying goods, or salespeople in the stores serving customers and closing sales, tearing up papers to suggest "tearing up prices" and Ricardo Nunes assisting a customer. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *We will respect every penny from our customers*.) / Rodrigo Faro talks with the audience and insists that everyone understands the importance of not losing sales, alerting them about the possibility of them calling Ricardo Nunes to negotiate the price. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *If necessary, call our Price Center . Call Ricardo*) / In a close medium shot and looking at the camera, Rodrigo Faro talks to the spectator. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *Losing sales is prohibited...*) / At this moment, the camera opens the image and, beside the host who turns to the audience again, appears the brand LOSING SALES IS PROHIBITED. RICARDO ELETRO. The brand's website appears on the screen, below the coat of arms. (SPKR. Rodrigo Faro: *... at Ricardo Eletro*.)

Discourse as text

The vocabulary used in this film is a reflection of the discourse of that occasion (2016), the year in which the economic crisis that Brazil was going through reached its peak, along with the year 2015, according to the numerous inflation rates that prove it and to other economic indexes.

It was a moment of recession. Consumption, in general, was compromised, but the lower classes felt this blow strongly and one could no longer speak, as before, of a high purchasing power for these people.

Retail was allied to advertising in order to make up discourses that continued talking to the public about aspirations and victories, about not losing what had been achieved and the many opportunities to consume, at low prices and excelent payment methods.

The word "defend" is not being used in the film by chance, associated with "purchasing power". This was everything the low-income strata – the majority of that advertiser's customers – needed to hear. Likewise, we see the term "respect" followed by "every penny" and we understand the strong attempt to demonstrate the effort to collaborate with customers, who were going through hard times and needed to be recognized and respected as hard working people and deserving of their achievements.

In order to individualize the message, we notice expressions such as: "each one of our customers" and "every penny from our customers", which individualize the discourse, do not generalize and prove that everyone is important.

Other impressive statements and which prove the seriousness of that negotiation on behalf of the customers are: "Losing sales is prohibited"; "do it better"; "get to the limit"; "not lose sales under any circumstance"; "It's in our hands"; and "Call Ricardo". These are imperative, firm words that make it clear that the order is to do the best to satisfy the customer.

Discourse as a discursive practice

Because the film's narrative reflects a scenario that already has discourses in circulation among the society, it is said that it is an interdiscourse, or an intertext manifested by the context, that is, an indirect discursive representation takes place, referring to the situation of economic crisis and recession and everything related to them in 2016.

The producers of the discourse do not just consciously respond. Everyone involved was already imbued with historical, social, cultural,

political, economic facts and symbolic values that led them to compose such filmic narrative.

When the text speaks of the fight for "every penny", it already makes itself coherent and its audience is anticipated, since those who experience this situation of needing to be respected, recognized and to have every penny in their pockets valued are the members of the less affluent classes of society, the most needy population that suffered and felt that crisis and was being forced to return to a condition of anonymity before the world.

Discourse as a social practice

It was necessary to keep the low-income stratum close to the market, believing that the ladder was doing everything possible to ensure their purchasing power and their citizenship, which they had obtained with sacrifice. In a sense, this stratum of the population could no longer be the same as when it was limited to the consumption of the basics. Their habitus had already been influenced, even if not profoundly and not at the origin (BOURDIEU, 2011).

And those people were not the subjected ones; they were socially active and demanded to stay in the race against social inequalities. They could not get lost in that crisis, nor could the citizenship they had obtained through consumption.

In the film, we see the advertiser's effort to satisfy the customers, individualizing them and proving to them that their difficulties are considered and their money respected. Everything that could be done, that the establishment would do, so that the customer would not leave without buying.

Results and discussions

From the film selected for Stage 1, it was verified that the advertising almost never resorted to black characters in discourses to the country's low-income population. If the intention of these TV commercials was to

get closer to their customers and potential customers, who were part of the low-income population, the way in which the advertising discourses were elaborated showed a lack of representativeness, especially concerning their image, which was not seen in those narratives, in addition to the appeals directed towards them in tones of a lesson to be learned and apprehended: "consume our products and consume our discourses, because these are the models accepted and legitimized in society".

The advertising discourses were produced to be consumed by this strata of society through aspirational stimuli, desires and behaviors which were imposed on them to be internalized, exactly like a symbolic violence (BOURDIEU, 2004).

About the film in Stage 2, it was found that advertising was communicating with its target audience for the first time and in a way that placed it in a prominent position. In fact, the entire capitalist system, aided by governmental and private measures, was favoring this change, making enterpreneurs begin to see the low-income population, which had emerged in society and would be part of a pseudo-new Brazilian middle class, which would have an unprecedented purchasing power that would be responsible for significant economic advances across the country.

That was the moment to praise those people who were including themselves in the consumer society, recognizing how important they were for the profits and expanding the knowledge about the profile of the country's new low-income stratum.

Concerned with reaching, persuading and seducing the new working class, the adverstising discourses became more popular and more coherent with the lifestyles of the target audience. Everything seemed more plausible when one took into account that it was necessary to make the target audience of those discourses feel represented in the filmic narratives.

In the analysis of Stage 3 (from 2013 to 2016), advertising sought not to focus on the crisis, of course, because it was the negative side

of that context of blocking access to consumption seen in the previous stage. The attention was focused on people – the low-income stratum –, showing, more and more, that they were the center of all attention, deserved recognition for being fighters and hard working people and wanted to be respected and understood in their tough realities of many efforts.

The discourses continued to talk about consumer desires, but in a more thoughtful way. There was born an advertising challenged to deal with its public, which had been empowered in the previous stage and that, at that moment of crisis, was having to understand the value of its money and the difficulties people faced.

Final considerations

In fact, there is a new advertising discourse in practice, which recognizes the more empowered consumer, in a position to make more conscious choices, even if he/she seeks the realization of dreams and a more pleasant lifestyle.

The moment of economic crisis and recession forced advertising to communicate with the target audience in a more attentive way, demonstrating concern for them, who cannot be ignored, excluded from society.

If the new working class needs recognition for its efforts and comprehension of its difficulties during the economic crisis, the market, through advertising, transmits the message that there is a friend worried about ensuring its achievements and the fulfillment of consumer desires.

If consumption is the door to happiness – the salvation –, the advertising discourse has a "redemptive tone". Thus, advertising goes from excluding to redeeming, after a period of boom in consumption, which is crucial for the awakening and empowerment of a social stratum.

It is a fact that these analyses, for reasons of time and delimitation of the research, occured within the universe of the furniture and home appliances retail segment, which has a particular way of communicating with its target audicence, through predominantly descriptive discourses

and focusing on prices and payment conditions for goods. However, there were many other retail and service segments that experienced considerable changes with the phenomenon of the unprecedented access of the low-income stratum to the consumer market, between 2006 and 2012, in the same way that, in the previous stage, the advertising discourses did not represent it.

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Mulheres sem rosto: o corpo feminino e a violência em cartazes de filmes

Faceless women: the female body and violence in movie posters

Janaina Wazlawick Muller[1]
Saraí Patricia Schmidt[2]

Resumo: *Este estudo versa acerca das interpretações do corpo feminino em cartazes de filmes cujas tramas alicerçam-se na violência sexual contra mulheres: 120 Dias de Sodoma (1975), A Vingança de Jennifer (1978) e Irreversível (2002). Objetiva-se identificar as construções heteronormativas nos cartazes e os vínculos entre violência e desejo. A base teórica designa-se pela abordagem de Yuri Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998) para a Semiótica da Cultura, Stuart Hall (2016) na intersecção com os Estudos Culturais, Douglas Kellner (2001) referindo-se à influência midiática na construção dos sujeitos, e Judith Butler (2001, 2010), Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) e E. Ann Kaplan (1995) para a heteronormatividade e o corpo feminino representado no cinema. Nos resultados da análise, apontou-se que os cartazes enunciam diretrizes que conectam o corpo feminino, ainda que imerso na violência, ao desejo e à sensualidade.*

Palavras-chave: *cinema; corpo feminino; gênero; semiosfera; heteronormatividade.*

Abstract: *This study deals with the interpretations of the female body in movie posters whose plots are based on sexual violence against women: "Saló" (1975), "I Spit on Your Grave" (1978) and "Irréversible" (2002). The objective is to identify heteronormative constructions in the posters and the links between violence and desire. The theoretical basis is designated by the approach of Yuri Lotman (1978,*

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1996, 1998) for the Semiotics of Culture, Stuart Hall (2016) at the intersection with Cultural Studies, Douglas Kellner (2001) referring to the media influence in the construction of subjects, and Judith Butler (2001, 2010), Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) and Ann E. Kaplan (1995) for heteronormativity and the female body represented in cinema. In the results of the analysis, it was pointed out that the posters enunciate guidelines that connect the female body, even if immersed in violence, desire and sensuality.

Keywords: *Movietheater; Feminine body; Gender; Semiosphere; Heteronormativity.*

Introduction

The body, transcending its flesh and biological functionality, is composed of a set of cultural inscriptions. Focusing specifically on the feminine, there is a framework originating from different discourses that builds particular ways of interpreting the body. From this framework, thinking about institutionalized norms, characteristics understood as feminine are perpetuated in a process in which the body, conduct and gender would be irresistibly connected. Thus, attributes such as sensuality, naivety, delicacy, beauty and subjection would be understood in stabilized perspectives, gradually built into a system of encoding and decoding.

Considering that such characteristics include the cultural framework, since they were built by the collective, we make it clear that, for the present article, the investigation focused on media manifestations, recognizing the media and its possibilities of intervening in social dynamics, focusing on film productions and their publicity posters. In the composition of the corpus, we chose films that were similar in termos of their plots – all centered on sexual violence against women – whose posters exposed the female body through heteronormative perspectives. Three movies and their respective posters were chosen: *Salò*, or *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1975, Italy), *I Spit on your Grave* (1978, USA) and *Irreversible* (2002, France).

Based on these initial observations, a semiotic analysis of the heteronormativity of the female bodies in the posters was chosen as a proposal for the research, aligning them with the sexual violence exposed in the films. With regard to the objectives, the intent is to present the relationships between the social-historical context and the productions, connecting them to the intertextuality in the material that composes the *corpus*, as well as bringing a contemporary look and the specificities that guide the article´s approach, identifying the centripetal movements in the images and considering heteronormativity as an element that brings them closer to the central area of the semiosphere.

For this purpose, the theoretical framework designates the studies by Yuri Lotman (1996, 1998) about the Semiotics of Culture, relating

the understandings of semiosphere, translation processes, intertextuality and the centripetal and centrifugal movements. In this, an interweaving with Cultural Studies was carried out, from Stuart Hall (2016), focusing on the crossings of gender relations, in order to investigate the feminine and the interpretations of the body in cinema. At the intersection with Cultural Studies, Douglas Kellner (2001) approaches the media influence, while Judith Butler (2001, 2010) and Michelle Perrot (2005, 2007) inquire about gender expectations and body constructions aligned with heteronormativity. Finally, E. Ann Kaplan (1995) reflects on the exposure of the female body on movie screens.

It is hoped that the study may contribute to highlight the links between gender relations and the placement of the female body in cinema, as ways of emphasizing the different texts inscribed in the bodies and their relationships with violence and heteronormativity. It is important to note, however, that regardless of the conclusions reached, the questions associated with violence and heteronormativity, in their relevance and multiple approaches and manifestations, do not end here.

Constructed bodies, violated bodies

On the big screens, the spectator is faced with plural characters, and also the bodies and meanings attributed to these subjects are plural. It is stated that every body seen in the images is connected to a building process based on a system of beliefs and values, given that the body tells stories (PERROT, 2007). In the collectivity, there are frameworks of codes, or the semiosphere, which build the filters used by the subjects in order to look at and interpret what surrounds them (LOTMAN, 1996). The filters are linked to conditioning, since the system of values establishes guidelines that mold such interpretations.

It is revealed that this system is not stable and there are moments of fragmentation in the constant interaction between individuals, which causes the semiosphere to be demarcated by contrast and tensions. Therefore, it is claimed that the posters analyzed are understood as texts, considering that Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998) works with a broad

understanding of the notion of "text" by treating it as cultural. Thus, both films and posters, being cultural texts, highlight ambiguities and institutionalized values; being artistic, they present tendencies, conflicts, contradictions and tensions (LOTMAN, 1996). They are composed of multiple layers and multiple voices, and enunciate elements connected to the context in which they were produced. Therefore, they are more than messages transmitted to a recipient, since they produce effects on those who come across them. According to Lotman (1996, p. 55)[3], "[...] when moving to another cultural context, they behave as an informant transferred to a new communicative situation: they update aspects which were previously hidden in their coding system".

Texts are crossed by different perspectives. In relation to Cultural Studies, it is pointed out that cultural manifestations build interpretations, relationships and identities, and that the new meanings structured by the subjects are articulated to the diversity of the representation of things. For Hall (2016, p. 21), "[...] the words we use in order to refer to them, the stories we narrate about them, the images we create of them, the emotions that we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, in short, the values that we embed in them". In this system, the texts fulfill the function of collective cultural memory (LOTMAN, 1996) and the three posters, as artistic texts, bring in their images the complexity and the conflicts arising from the moment in which they were produced.

Considering the contextualization of the views towards the feminine throughout the 1970's, when *The 120 Days of Sodom* and *I Spit on your Grave* were released, there is a conjuncture of cultural effervescence in the West. Social ruptures since the 1960's indicated changes in conceptions that were previously seen as permanent and collective (LOURO, 2001), in addition to the beginning of the gender studies carried out by women who, according to Perrot (2007), elected women as the object of studies and placed them as a visible subject. A dichotomous

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3   Translated from Spanish: "*[...] al trasladarse a otro contexto cultural, se comportan como un informante trasladado a una nuevasituación comunicativa: actualizan aspectos antes ocultos de su sistema codificante.*"

interpretation perpetuated among the claims of the strands of feminism was also consolidated, allocating men and women on opposite sides and connecting "gender" exclusively to women (SCOTT, 1995). It is important to note that, in such a context, these resources were seen as necessary due to the search for the legitimacy of gender studies and the expansion of the unification around the feminist movement. This is a moment marked by the explosion, when immutability was replaced by unpredictability (LOTMAN, 1998), and values and beliefs, previously dogmatic, were questioned.

Distinguishing the 21st century in the western panorama, when Irriversible was released, it is declared that the ruptures have enabled new configurations for the feminine gender. According to Marlise Matos (2008), themes were inserted in a significant way, in the academic and social spheres, with debates around the roles of gender, of the relations of power, sexualities and identities, in an articulation between the questioning of one-dimensional interpretations and binarisms, in order to expand the potential of the feminine analysis. However, alongside the achievements are tensions and contradictions, because, in the words of Ana Paula Antunes Martins (2015, p. 238), "[...] The history of the subject of feminism moves from construction to deconstruction and, nowadays, to reconstruction, characterized by instability". In other words, the institutionalized codes were not eliminated and coexist in contradiction with the codes built by the ruptures. In this conflict, the heterogeneity of the semiosphere is characterized.

Through this brief contextual explanation, it is claimed that the interpretations of the feminine are linked to different factors, and that the movie posters are products of texts that precede them. The formats of the exposure of women in the images are not limited to the gaze of a particular subject or group, they are intertwined with a set of meanings that legitimize points of view and underline spaces, both for men and women. That said, the posters are intertextual because they correspond to a plurality of texts that exist in social dynamics, and they become models because they reconstruct an image of reality (LOTMAN, 1978).

In the female body, there is a complex system of values and beliefs, from which the codes that will provide the bases for decoding are established. Therefore, the meaning is not in the body itself or in the posters, but in the subjects who establish these meanings, reproducing them, legitimizing them and naturalizing them (HALL, 2016). And there are multiple tools to promote both the reproduction and the ruptures, the media being an essential example. The means of communication have an ambivalent role in the representation of the feminine, subverting normative ideas or validating them. It is worth noting that media productions have plural positions within the semiosphere, sometimes turning towards the periphery, sometimes approaching the center.

According to Lotman (1978, 1996, 1998), the semiosphere involves centripetal and centrifugal movements. Respectively, there are the movements that approach the center of the semiosphere, in which the production has conservative aspects, and the movements that move away from the center and towards the edges of the semiotic space, that is, the periphery. In the analysis, the ambiguity between these movements was verified, given that "[...] the media culture sometimes legitimizes the forces of domination and induces the public to extract pleasure from adhering to ideological positions, on other occasions it is not able to do so and other times it even leads to pleasure through the contestation of dominant ideologies and institutions" (KELLNER, 2001, p. 150).

Between positions and contestations, one notices that female and male bodies are produced and regulated in order to be understood by the collective in different ways. In this context, the ways of experiencing and interpreting desires related to the body and sexual practices also integrate regulatory movements (LOURO, 2001), making "sex" not only the norm, but a regulatory force that circumscribes and differentiates the controlled bodies (BUTLER, 2001). Such force is evident in practices that promote the constant reiteration of norms, here turning specifically to the heteronormative. The way subjects attribute meanings to the bodies is linked to the set of attributes that establish the places to be occupied by men and women, setting interpretations and operating the

freezing of the gender (BUTLER, 2010). From this perspective, the performance of a constant surveillance is distinguished, as the woman, in her body and actions, regardless of her particularities, would raise suspicions and motivate the desire for confinement, with the aim of combating these suspicions (PERROT, 2005). In the demarcation, a dichotomous relationship is structured in which the female body ends up being subjected to the masculine: the female body would have the role of being appreciated and consumed by the heteronormative desire, because women would be, primarily, "[...] an image. A face, a body, dressed or undressed. Women are made of appearances. "[...] Women's first commandment: beauty" (PERROT, 2007, p. 49-50).

In this case, the woman, seen in the heteronormative as an entity – something one-dimensional and standardized, would be a seductive body that is the target of looks. In this objectification there is the restriction of women to the physical, which forges the filters and provides the legitimation of images. The conceptions of gender and their implications for understanding the body become "[...] one of the norms by which the 'somebody' simply becomes viable, it is what qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (BUTLER, 2001, p. 155). In such a process of becoming viable, it is important to note the influence of the media: not only cinema, but all the manifestations that constitute communication systems interfere in the subject's understanding and in the way he deciphers the others and the world around him. The media culture, in fact, is a space for implosion and ruptures of the identities (KELLNER, 2001).

In placing the woman as a body whose existence serves desire, one can see the mechanism that intends to eliminate a threat: female seduction, which would be a tool to manipulate males. In Kaplan's (1995) perspective, it is through domination and the act of "fetishizing" that the camera guides the look and, therefore, exercises the construction of meanings, highlighting the woman who is continually relegated to the role of victim, in addition to the frequent hostility to female sexuality, which should be subjugated and restricted to masculine desire.

Therefore, the relationships between the body, desire and violence are pointed out. The notion of the feminine that permeates heteronormativity is demarcated by the contemplation of beauty and the desire for the physical, in which the homogeneous female body is repeated and naturalized. The existence of deconstructions and ruptures is reinforced, however "[...] if we scratch the surface, the known model is there" (KAPLAN, 1995, p. 17). The female body must present itself, above all, beautiful and seductive, in order to meet the expectations built by the collective. Even if it is assaulted, wounded or killed, it must remain not as the body of a subject, but as a body without its own identity.

The faceless women

The first movie, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, was adapted from a text by The Marquis de Sade[4] and tells the story of four men in the context of Italy under a fascist regime, who meet in a mansion named School of Libertinage. They choose a group of teenagers, of boys and girls, and hire three prostitutes, whose job is to tell the most sordid stories. These stories guide the movie, dividing it into three parts: The Circle of Manias, The Circle of Shit and The Circle of Blood. The role of the teenagers, or students, is to submit to the fetiches of the four men, reproducing the violence enunciated by the prostitutes.

During the film, the youngsters experience the most diverse humiliations, from ingesting the men's feces to rape sessions. However, it is important to note that the sexual violation scenes were usually protagonized by girls, which is reflected in the movie poster; even though the movie seeks to explore the sadism in submission of both boys and girls, it is the female body that prevails in the publicity image.

4   Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) was a French aristocrat and writer, best known for his pornographic works.

Figure 1 – Poster of *The 120 Days of Sodom*
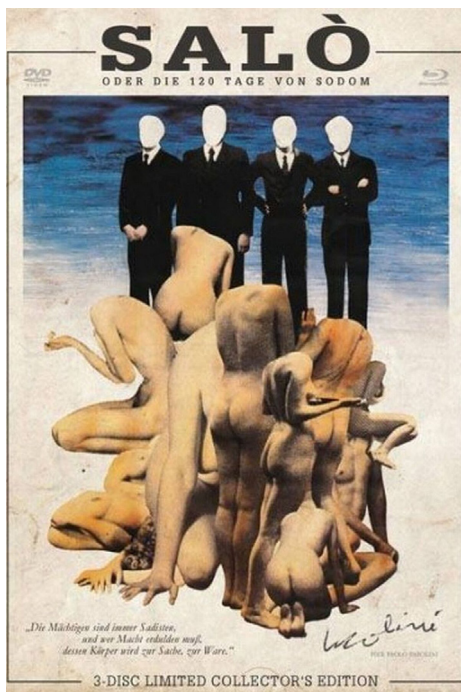
Source: Pinterest (2019).

The second movie is called *I Spit on your Grave*. The protagonist is a writer, Jennifer Hills, who decides to rent a house in the countryside in order to get inspired for her new book. On the way, she is harassed by a group of men, which she repels. Enraged, they discover the rented house and invade the place, raping Jennifer in long and explicit scenes. Left for dead, the young woman recovers and devises a revenge plan, and then kills all her attackers. In the poster, as can be seen, Jennifer's body is shown from behind, with torn clothes and some wounds on her skin. She still carries a knife, signaling her intentions of vengeance.

Figure 2 – Poster of *I Spit on your Grave*

Source: Pinterest (2019).

The third movie, *Irreversible*, was released in 2002. In the case of this film, it is worth mentioning some clarifications provided by director Gaspar Noé[5], in which he defends the nine-minute rape scene in the movie. According to him, the intention was to show the cruelty and rawness of that violence, without allowing the audience the chance to hide from the pain[6].

In *Irreversible* there are also differences in the ways in which the plot is conducted. The movie begins with the credits, which are shown in reverse order, and it is in this same order that the plot is developed – first,

[5]   Argentine filmmaker. Known for being provocative, his films usually deal with themes understood as controversial, such as explicit violence and sex.

[6]   More information can be found in the article entitled "Irreversible' director defends long rape scene". Available at: https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/cultura/021022_pollardcb. shtml. Accessed on: 06/11/2019.

the final scenes are shown, then the climax and, only later, the origins of the story and the characters are presented. The spectator comes across two friends who are seeking revenge because the girlfriend of one of them has been raped; the woman, who was in a subway tunnel, was brutally attacked and raped. In the poster, this woman is walking around the place where the rape occurs; she is pictured from behind and her face is not shown.

Figure 3 – Poster of *Irreversible*
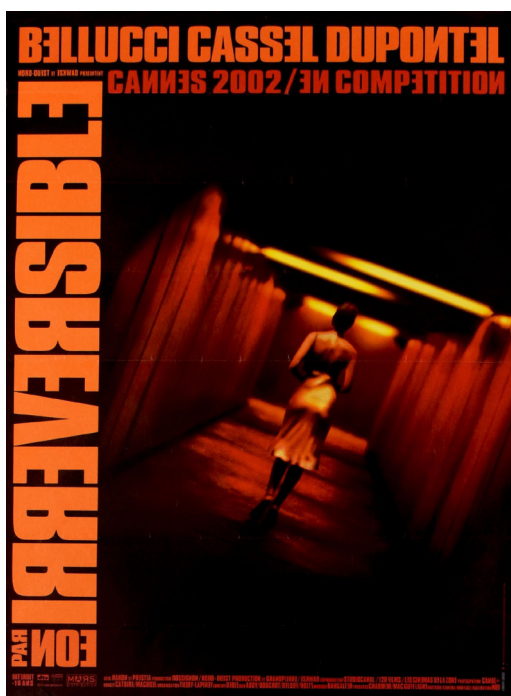
Source: Pinterest (2019).

One can see that the posters are composed of different images that refer to similar meanings, promoting an approximation between them. The three images present the female body in evidence, exposing it from the back and, notably, without showing the face. In the case of *The 120 Days of Sodom*, the outline of the heads can be seen in the figures that

allude to the four fascist aggressors, but the shapes that represent the victims are just bodies, one on top of the other in a homogeneous mass.

According to Lotman (1998), human beings have the need to be individualized. Usually, this would be achieved through first names, but here, the issue of the face is highlighted. In the context of the posters, the features would be the evidence of individuality – the way of expressing the singularity of the characters and presenting them as subjects to the audience. By placing them as faceless bodies, a process of deconstruction takes place; they stop being people, inhabiting a hostile zone shared by those who are not understood as subjects by the collective (BUTLER, 2001). Also, the silencing of their existences is observed, linked to the perception that "in many societies, women's invisibility and silence are part of the order of things" (PERROT, 2007, p. 17).

Hiding the characters' faces puts them in specific places, influencing the possibilities of interpretation by the audience. In the construction of meaning, people go through moments of creation of a provisional meaning, which is guided by different clues (MERCADER, 2001), such as the movie title, the reviews and the publicity – as in the poster. In the image that de-characterizes the character, the audience may have difficulties in creating bonds of empathy with the woman, which would result in an emotional distance both with the character and with the violence she suffered.

In Lotman's (1998) perspective, there are texts that, through approximations between content and audience, transform what is distant into something close and intimate. Taking cinema as an example: in the development of a plot, characters are presented and provoke effects in the audience. Thus, the one that was the "other" becomes the "own" when the spectator appropriates the fictional subjects by making them familiar. In the analysis of the posters, it is clear that the dynamics of distancing and approximation is unbalanced, since the characters remain as the "other".

In the words of Butler (2010, p. 20), "if someone 'is' a woman, this certainly is not all that this someone is [...]". However, in the coding and

decoding based on gender guidelines, the view that the word "woman" represents all the individuals identified with the feminine is reproduced, confining them to homogeneity. This is what occurs in Figure 1, from *The 120 Days of Sodom*: in the plot, there is no individualization of the characters who are raped, because they are exposed as bodies subject to the aggressors' desires. They have no names, past, ambition or will, and such indifference appears on the poster, in which the undefined bodies merge and, above them, overlapping with more evident contours, the four fascists declare their dominance over their victims.

In Figures 2 and 3, the abused character appears in evidence because, in their respective movies, the protagonists have names and personalities. However, for the poster, the so-called individuality is lost in face of the exposure of the body. In *I Spit on your Grave*, Figure 2, the torn clothes and discreet bruises do not correspond to the images in the film in which the young woman is undressed and attacked with extreme violence, provoking scabs, dirt and purplish bruises spread across the skin. All these elements were attenuated in the image, linking to the reasoning that, when showing to the audience, it would be appropriated for the character to look more sensual than hurt. Whereas in *Irreversible*, Figure 3, the woman walks alone down the corridor where she is raped – the picture is taken with her back to the camera, which can be associated with vulnerability and impossibility of defense or reaction to what is about to happen. Furthermore, we can see the reflection of a woman approached as an offering, a body to be consumed by the eyes, given that her own body would not belong to her (PERROT, 2005).

Such traits enunciated on the posters link to a complex structure of attributions of meaning. According to Hall (2016), the subject, in its particularity, builds its meanings but is subordinated to the limits of a culture and a certain context. He/she can become the carrier of constructed meanings, but cannot orbit outside the limits of the framework of codes that demarcate his/her existence in the social body. Thus, both the posters and the movies as well as the interpretations structured in the analysis, are articulated with previous texts. In this, a

set of texts that cross the images can be identified, since they do not have the mere function of transmitting information about the film and are submerged in a dialogical relationship (LOTMAN, 1978, 1996, 1998) whose ideological and cultural traits are investigated.

In the investigation of these traits, it is understood that "[...] the matter of the bodies will be inseparable from the regulatory norms that rule their materialization and the significance of those material effects" (BUTLER, 2001, p . 155), and it should be clarified that regulatory norms are manifested not only in the projection of the feminine, but also in the masculine. In all three plots the aggressors are mostly men, every one of them limited to a bestial characterization in which elements such as sexual desire, and even the own violence perpetrated, are naturalized as if they were part of a suposed masculine essence. Men and women end up homogenised, and in the fixation of contents and attributes for characters would lie the premeditated definition of spaces to be occupied, in an action of stereotyping that aligns representations, relations of power and difference (HALL, 2016). In the standardization of gender exposure and in the sexual desire considered inherent and uncontrollable, occurs, therefore, a simplification of plurality, moving away from the fluidity that permeates the individuals (LOURO, 2001).

However, in considering that the text is subject to collective memory (LOTMAN, 1996), it is stated that heteronormativity is only one of the facets to be addressed. The movies and their posters are coded, and in order to decode them one needs to rely on information given in the text. In this production of meanings, which transits between the individual and the collective, there is a complex internal game that can be noticed, for example, by the relationship between the posters and the socio-historical contexts in which they are inserted. As previously exposed, the decade of 1970 was marked by the expansion of movements by several groups inserted in the outskirts of social dynamics. In contemporaneity, it is noticed that the struggle is still expanding, but, at the same time, the reiteration of dictates has not been nulified by transformations. Different

readings coexist, clashing against each other, contradicting themselves and provoking tensions in social practices.

The productions and products associated with them represent the pluralities and ambivalences that permeate the contexts: Kaplan (1995) argues that movies express conflicts between the normative expectations and the subversions that would oppose stabilizations. For this reason, *I Spit on your Grave* addresses the character's process of revenge after the rapes: the woman remains tied to hegemonic desires, but, in order to respond to the changes in course in the context of the film's production, she could not be confined to fragility and suffering, turning vengeance into a tool of alleged visibility for the deconstruction of the normative feminine – although, in the poster, the only evidence of revenge is the knife. This is a sign of ambivalence, which ends up becoming another factor of approximation between the movies and their images.

It is understood that heteronormativity is an element that approaches the center of the semiosphere in a centripetal movement. The center is marked by conservative aspects, linked to the reiteration of the guidelines already established. However, there are resources in the three movies that move away from conservatism, and the body exposure is an example: in scenes where breasts, genitals and buttocks are shown on the screen, the hesitations and censorship of the body are broken; and, in the recording of the sexual act, there is an abscence of modesty and the camera does not turn away. In this context, *The 120 Days of Sodom* provoked ruptures in the treatment of fetishes by bringing eschatology, sadomasoquism and sex; *I Spit on your Grave* exposed nudity, sex and graphic violence; *Irreversible* broke with the criteria of filmic structure since it was edited with the narrative in a reverse time sequence.

It is pointed out that, for Lotman (1998), the explosions or ruptures take place through the dialogic relationship with the mechanisms that promote destabilization, so ruptures and guidelines are not disconnected from each other. In this relationship, it is clear that the similar points of apparent subversion between the movies – sex and nudity – are associated with a third element: violence. In the words of Perrot (2007, p. 64),

"women's must be protected, closed and possessed", and in the posters, considering the narratives to which they refer, the act of possessing is based on violence and domination. It is a combination of factors that results in a destructive chain, and makes the supposed deconstruction of the body's erotization, which would bring a centrifugal movement towards the peripheral region of the semiosphere, be understood as a normative repetition by exerting a centripetal displacement and turning towards the conservative side.

Furthermore, sex, nudity and violence have the feminine as a linking point, which highlights the need to question the possible transgressions provided by the movies. After all, the apparent breach of traditional values occurs through the payment of a price, which is printed on the posters: the fixation of the female body in subjugation, removing from the violated characters the possibility of individualization through the concealment of their faces, results in a mitigation of violence that uses the normative sensuality of the physical.

In these images, the mitigation factor is still manifested by the relation of the content of the movie transposed to the poster. In the image of *I Spit on your Grave*, the female revenge is minimized in order to highlight sensuality and indicate sexual violence in a sanitized version, which contradicts the content of the film, that deals with brutal and explicit violence. In a similar case, the poster of *The 120 Days of Sodom* goes through a cleansing process in order not to show the humiliations, eschatologies and rapes of the plot, limiting itself to the exposure of the homogeneous mass of bodies. And *Irreversible*, as a hint to its narrative differential, has the title of the movie written in reverse, but does not bring any major clues about the plot. Finally, it is claimed that in an individual examination, the posters could be isolated and disconnected images, but, when interlaced, images and plots become more important than themselves and acquire "[...] characteristics of a model of culture [...]" (LÓTMAN, 1996, p. 55).[7]

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7   Translated from Spanish: "[...] *rasgos de un modelo de la cultura* [...]."

Combining images and movies, sexual violence against women becomes an essential element, which is seen and consumed by an audience that, on the other hand, is immersed in a set of guidelines that permeate social life. In this view, the spectacularization of suffering is pointed out, because the production of the film appropriates the traumatic experiences of countless women and transports them to the screen. And, furthermore, objectification, combined with spectacularization is perpetuated in the posters; without faces and in sanitized versions, the violated body is delivered as sensual, since the physical forms are revealed in the posters in positions of submission, vulnerability and desire.

Such interpretations, even if they were not intentional on the part of the people involved in the production of the materials, designate disturbances in the process of interpretation, which make it possible to question certain codes and their possible translations.

In the identified codes, in the construction and deconstruction of dictates that allocate the feminine in certain positions, it is noticed that the corpus promoted the reiteration of a culture that places women not as a subject, but as something that, like movies and posters, must be consumed. Faceless and homogenized, the characters are marked by heteronormative inscriptions, becoming representations in which there are no raped women, but bodies exposed in shop windows to attract the consumer.

Final considerations

In the present article we sought to investigate the disturbances in cultural texts from three movie posters, combining the images with their respective plots, characters and contexts of production, bringing the heteronormativity focused on the feminine and reflecting on how the guidelines, existing and reitarated by the social body, were manifested in the publicity posters. For this purpose, the following productions were chosen: *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *I Spit on your Grave* and *Irreversible*, in which the construction of female characters was examined considering

the relationships between the contexts and meanings that permeate the material, in addition to the movements of center and periphery that bring to light the ambiguity in the analysis, and the exposure of the female body associated with submission, desire and violence.

In the dynamics of the semiosphere, highlighting the socio-historical context of the 1970's and contemporaneity, the existence of ambivalence in the views of the feminine was perceived. After all, coexisting with the tranformations, especially evidenced by social movements and the development of gender studies, guidelines remain that understand women as a one-dimensional entity, placing them in demarcated places, deconstructing them as a subject and homogenizing them. In this context, the intertextuality that crosses the posters and movies was pointed out, since they are connected to world models and previous texts that make them means of legitimation or subervsion of the guidelines. In the game of meanings, centrifugal movements were observed, considering that the posters show nudity as a break from conservatism in the view of the body, in addition to plots that transgress conventional formats of film narrative and expose sexual intercourse and nudity. Interlaced with this, the centripetal movements were identified, which ended up standing out in the analysis and contributing in the production of the study. It should be noted, however, that the intention was not to demonize posters or movies, but to reflect on discussions that permeate social dynamics.

Despite the transgression of certain norms, the rupture in the movies was achieved in the destructive relationship between sex, nudity, desire and violence. The scenes shown in the posters, of the woman alone and vulnerable, promote the link between the female body and submission to masculine desires, establishing the idea that desire would be natural and instinctive, and therefore unstoppable. In this dichotomous relationship, women would be the sensual and consumable beings; men, a puppet of their own desires, inclined to bestiality in order to appease their sexual desires.

Finally, with posters that avoid exposing the characters' faces, there is an action of homogeneity, given that the characters are not individualized.

In addition to making it difficult to establish bonds of empathy between the audience and the character, these women are summarized in their bodies, as if they were not subjects. Thus, it is concluded that the posters, articulated to the violent themes of their respective films, provide the reiteration and legitimation of heteronormative guidelines.

In the structuring of arguments, it was verified that in the frequent viewing of images, such as the ones investigated in the movies that deal with violence against women in long and explicit scenes without having the problematization of this violence, or even in the media manifestations that limit women to the role of victim, of a body to be admired or rejected, a process takes place that results in the collectivity's familiarity with these representations. After seeing, hearing and feeling so many times, one begins to understand the images as inevitable, as part of the human condition. However, not even the frequency of the images is capable of completely inhibiting the questioning; in the discussion about normativity, it is possible to move towards deconstructions, thus moving away from the center and reaching what exists on the edges.

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A R T I G O

A conversão semiótica da ilha do Combu: representações e ressignificações estéticas da Amazônia no Instagram

The semiotic conversion of Combu Island: Representations and aesthetic resignifications of Amazon on Instagram

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Resumo: *Neste artigo, analisamos a ressignificação ou recriação dos signos na compreensão da ilha do Combu, localizada na região metropolitana de Belém. Tomamos como visada teórica e metodológica a conversão semiótica do pesquisador Paes Loureiro (2007) que se configura em um movimento de passagem pelo qual as funções se reordenam e se exprimem numa outra situação cultural. Nosso corpus de análise são as imagens fotográficas de 2019, período pré-pandêmico, postadas nas hashtags #ilhadocombu e #combu no aplicativo Instagram. Observamos que os indivíduos que visitam ou experienciam esse espaço amazônico convertem a ilha de rio num outro de si mesmo, num ambiente em que a natureza é incorporada como imaginário. Os novos sentidos são dados conforme os indivíduos cenarizam o espaço e suas vidas, em que a tecnologia passa a ressignificar os signos culturais.*

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Palavras-chave: *Amazônia; conversão semiótica; ilha do Combu; Instagram; imaginário.*

Abstract: *In this article, we have analyzed the resignification or recreation of signs in the comprehension of Combu Island, located in metropolitan region of Belém. We have taken as a theoretical and methodological vision the Semiotics Conversion of the researcher Paes Loureiro, 2007, which is configured as a transitioning movement in which the functions are rearranged and expressed in another cultural situation. By analysis corpus is the photographic images from 2019, posted under the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu in the application Instagram. We have observed that the individuals that visit or experience this space in the Amazon convert the river island into another one of itself, in an environment which nature is incorporated as imaginary. The new senses are given according to how the individuals scenarize the space and its lives, which the technology starts resignifying cultural signs.*

Keywords: *Amazon; Semiotics Conversion; Combu Island; Instagram; Imaginary.*

Amazonian imaginings: initial considerations

The semantic, polysemic, and symbolic charge of the word Amazon constitutes a form of powerful sociability, for it enables possible imaginings of all kinds, ranging from a vision of a "wild Amazon" to the market brand that adds aesthetic values, which has its origins, according to Amaral Filho (2016, p. 71), "in components of the imagination that came from the forest," transferred from a vision on the physical territory, and that expand themselves to "an image immobilized by tradition, which transformed the region in an avatar for a new Eden, an El Dorado, a heaven on Earth." (AMARAL FILHO, 2016, p. 15). The imagination on the Amazon also constitutes an open concept over which different types of discourses are manufactured, especially pictorial ones, in which, today, individuals with their cell phones stage narratives about themselves and the places that incorporate them, giving the impression that the fiction about the territory exceeds the reality experienced by its inhabitants.

Here, we consider the Amazon conceptually in a macro construction and a specific perspective among the Paraense,[5] the legal, and the continental. This perspective is coherent with the Amazon's diversity and its imaginary construction but also, as Márcio Souza (2019, p. 17) shows us, with the idea that in it "lives some ethnicities descendent of the original peoples, witnesses of the presence of rich civilizations prior to the Spanish and Portuguese colonization, which operated from the previous of Discoveries."

Hence, in this article, we propose to take the island of Combu, or the Belém of rivers, as an object of investigation and an expressive Amazonian space for the natural characteristics that compose its physical territory. Our aim is to understand how people appropriate this space in their aesthetic representations on Instagram. These representations intermediate the dialogue among production, perception, and reception and the need to establish a dialogical relation. We adopt this relational and interpretive perspective because, according to Paes Loureiro,

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5   The Paraense Amazon corresponds to the State of Pará, which holds the second place in terms of territorial extension in Brazil, about 1,247,950.003 km², and a population of 7,581,051 inhabitants distributed in 143 municipalities.

it is hard to define what Amazonian and Amazonicity are since "it is something to be perceived and felt rather than rationalized and explained." (LOUREIRO, 2014, p. 34).

The starting point of our investigation questions how image representations activate the imagination and configure an aesthetic between individuals and the Amazon, as well as semiotically convert the linguistic and cultural signs of this representation. We base ourselves on the understanding of the use that people make of social media, especially Instagram, and the construction of a type of community of belonging or social group that privileges the image and its identification in relationships with places. In these forms of sociability, individuals re-signify their relationships with people, objects, and places. We take as the *corpus* of analysis photographic images produced in 2019, during a pre-pandemic period, and posted under the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu on Instagram, having as methodological procedures Paes Loureiro's (2007) semiotic conversion, which configures the movement through which functions reorder and express themselves in another cultural situation, and the qualitative research, including interviews with subjects that live in the island's universe.

Island of Combu

Combu is one of the 42 river islands that form the insular region of the capital of Pará. Currently, the island is one of the most referenced and visited in Belém, both by the local population and by tourists. Considering its territorial space, Combu is the fourth largest island in the municipality of Belém, located 1.5 km to the south of the city. The banks of the Guamá River are to its north. Furo São Benedito is to its south. Furo da Paciência is to the east. And, to the west, it is bathed by the Guajará Bay and intercut by tributaries. Even though this island belongs to the municipality of Belém, it maintains characteristics and aspects of traditional communities, such as the form of social organization, occupation, and use of the territory for subsistence.

The island's more than 15 thousand kilometers are known as a special protection area as per the State Law n. 6,083 of November 13, 1997[6], promulgated to restore and protect its floodplain ecosystem and forest. Because of its valuable genetic resources, biodiversity, and endangered species, the island is one of the favorite spots in the state for the scientific community. On the other hand, entertainment attractions installed on the island's shores have been seducing photographers, tourists, and visitors in general on a daily basis.

The eighteen hundred inhabitants[7] that compose the local community, distributed among the riparian communities of Igarapé do Combu, Igarapé do Piriquitaquara, Furo da Paciência, Furo do São Benedito and Beira do rio Guamá, depend basically on açaí extraction, cacao seed for chocolate production, other forest resources, and fishing in the island's waterways, such as the rivers Bijogó, Guamá, and Acará, the channel Furo da Paciência, and the tributaries of Combu and Piriquitaquara.

According to the Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020 (BELEMTUR, 2019), the island of Combu does not have a drinking water supply system (the riparian inhabitants use water captured directly from the river) nor a sewage treatment system. The island has electricity, garbage collection service, communication services rendered by three operators, a family health clinic, and a municipal elementary school.

To access basic services, many riparian people need to go to the capital's mainland because the island does not offer the necessary infrastructure to its residents. Houses are built in wood, with elevated floors and clay roof tiles, near the riverbanks. Some of them have a small pier or bridge giving access to the river (see Image 1). Both residents and tourists commute in small boats[8]. The City Hall of Belém has 54 watercrafts of the motorboat type, organized in two cooperatives[9], but the

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6   Available at: https://www.semas.pa.gov.br/1997/11/13/9776/. Accessed in March 2020.
7   Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020. Available at: http://www.belem.pa.gov.br/ belemtur/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IOT-BEL%C3%89M-2019-FINAL.pdf. Accessed in May 2020.
8   Boats for visitors leave at 9 a.m. every day from the Princesa Isabel square in the Condor neighborhood. On average, the journey lasts 10 to 15 minutes and costs R$ 7 to R$ 10 per person. During the weekends, there is also a flow of private motorboats and Jet Skis.
9   The cooperatives Coopmic (Cooperativa Mista da Ilha do Combu) and Coopertrans (Cooperativa Mista de Transporte de Passageiros e Cargas do Estado do Pará) integrate the

boatmen[10] increase the offer to 70 by providing "*rabetas*" – canoes with a small propulsion engine attached to the back, conducted manually with the help of a stick to determine the direction –, which leave from various points in the shore, assisting the island's residents.

Image 1 – A riparian house on the banks of Combu

Source: Roma News[11]/October 2019.

In July 2019, during the state's high summer season, the island of Combu received about 10 thousand visitors[12], which reflects the opening of bars and restaurants by its shores (see Image 2). According to the City Hall of Belém[13], there are 31 establishments operating on the island, made of wood, which have around 300 employees to assist visitors.

CADASTUR of the Ministry of Tourism.
10 According to data obtained through interviews with two boatmen, Mizael Rocha and Rosivaldo Oliveira Quaresma, in May 2020.
11 Roma News, October 17, 2019: https://www.romanews.com.br/cidade/pontos-turisticos-do-para-podem-ser-entregues-para-a-iniciativa/57387/. Accessed on December 4, 2021.
12 Data from the Communications Advisory of the City Hall of Belém (May/2020).
13 Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém 2020. Available at: http://www.belem.pa.gov.br/belemtur/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/IOT-BEL%C3%89M-2019-FINAL.pdf. Accessed in May 2020.

This flow of people transforms vision, or the cultural sign of interpretation, or the understanding of the island since the smartphone is the indispensable luggage that creates other narratives of this Amazonian space. Aubert and Haroche (2013, p. 14) explain that "the individual begins, thus, to be considered, appreciated, judged by the number of signs, texts, and images they produce, incited to exhibit them incessantly.". Bakhtin (2000) reflects on a tongue's practical reality through language, presenting it not as a descriptive normative set but as enunciations whose meanings are in their uses and in the practice of dialogues. In this line of thought, Sodré (2006, p. 92) emphasizes that places reflect "the topological configuration in the fabric of relations of meaning in which the interpretation takes place.".

Image 2 – Restaurants in the island of Combu.

Source: Agência Belém and Rede Pará.

In the weaving of the present writing, our analysis focuses on 1,230 posts on Instagram in July and October[14] 2019 with the hashtags #ilhadocombu and #combu, which total more than 21,000 images on that social media, prioritizing a specific aesthetic in which the island appears as a setting and part of a visibility strategy that guarantees interaction through followers' likes.

The choice of this social networking app is related to the fact that it enabled the camera-network "hybridization" in the digital world since searching for a specific audience interested in and knowledgeable about photography, identified when cell phones started to become recording platforms as the first model with a photographic camera attached was launched in 2000.

From theoretical references, we resort to the semiotic conversion of João de Jesus Paes Loureiro[15], a researcher of Amazonian culture who considers reality stimulates and activates the symbolizing process "through which reality itself is also changed, apprehended, understood, and integrated into the communicational system." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 13). In this symbolizing process, the author highlights vision, considering it the most acute of our senses. In the author's terms, we reshape the things we see of the world through our symbolizing faculty as we see them in relation to each other (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 14). Human beings construct symbolic relations among what they know, what is in memory, and what they feed with their experience. For Loureiro, vision is individual and social because it produces symbols that connect to knowledge.

In short, Paes Loureiro thought of the semiotic conversion, firstly, from his experience as a riparian inhabitant, then, more profoundly, as a researcher, in the process of change in the quality and function of myths

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14 We chose July and October because the first month is the vacation and high summer season in Belém, while the second marks one of the biggest religious and cultural manifestations of the state of Pará, the Círio de Nazaré (the Taper of Our Lady of Nazareth).

15 João de Jesus Paes Loureiro is a Paraense poet, essayist, researcher, and professor of Aesthetic and Arts. He earned his Ph.D. in Sociology of Culture from Sorbonne, Paris. The universality of his poetic work is built from signs of the Amazonian world – culture, history, imagination.

and their poetic dominance in Amazonian imagination and culture, applying the concept for any other situation or culture.

Looking to understand the concept of the other of oneself[16], we also interviewed[17] two researchers, Adriano Quaresma from the National Institute for Amazonian Research (INPA) and Ágila Flaviana Alves Chaves Rodrigues from the Center for Advanced Amazonian Studies at the Federal University of Pará (NAEA/UFPA), two boatmen, Mizael Rocha and Rosivaldo Quaresma, and seven bar owners, Luis Sabóia de Oliveira, Raimundo Pureza da Costa, Edivaldo Silva do Espírito Santo, Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto, Wagner Roberto da Silva, Jarina da Silva de Souza, and Mônica Reis de Souza.

The other of oneself: the reconversion of the island of Combu

Our analysis intercepts people's interpretation of Combu, having the island as an enunciated setting through an image and technological language, in the comprehension of this scenery's configuration as a linguistic and image form that reveals a kind of scenographic environment in which the story unfolds as concentrated polyphonic narrative. In that context, every sentence (here, images) composes with one another the "scenographic architecture that makes action present. Its poetic meaning is in that the spectacular character happens in the virtual sphere of the expressive language of human feeling." (LOUREIRO, 2009, p. 155-156).

In this sense, the semiotic conversion derives from this state of symbolic thought; it is a vehicle for the reception of reality from meanings that result from the reception of objects and their transformation into forms understandable to human thought. Loureiro explains that:

16   "*outro de si mesmo*" (trans.)
17   We carried out the interviews on different dates and times, during April and May 2020, over cell phone calls, given the social distancing measures in place since March 2020 due to the new coronavirus pandemic.

This human capacity to elaborate and re-elaborate symbols from the reality of the world allows something symbolically perceived under a determined function to be received in another way and through a new stimulus that makes "technology" evident as another function if its cultural insertion is modified, given that functions are qualities perceived/attributed to objects. Its reception under another, culturally legitimized, symbolic configuration converts the object into the other of oneself. (LOUREIRO, 2009, p. 156, our emphasis)

According to Paes Loureiro, people reshape life with meanings, making new senses emerge in the world in a continuous process of creation and rearrangement of symbols: "Man creates, renovates, interferes, transforms, reformulates, summarizes, or expands their understanding of things, their ideas, through which gives meaning to their existence." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 11). The author reminds us of the real and symbolic dynamics of our relationships with reality, which demands adjusting objects to new fruition needs. According to him,

Semiotic conversion leads to a mode of comprehending reality in a way that is dynamic and pertinent to its procedural system of changes. Initially, it is a form of comprehending reception, and only later does it transform itself into an explicative condition. [Semiotic conversion] is intrinsically attached to the transformative experiential praxis of man and its reality. (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 16)

In this perspective, we observe the relationship established by people with technology, appropriating its resources with the purpose to give cultural sense to their sociability, creating a re-hierarchization of its symbolic meaning, modifying the dominant position. This way, technology gains another status for individuals and exceeds the reductionism of cultural objects seen only in their apparent form or content. As a metaphor for Paes Loureiro, the material work is the sensitive support of the aesthetic object, its external symbol. The aesthetic object is the object converted into a new sign. Here, we interpret technology and nature and the new meaning given to them by people in their relationships.

Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 17) reiterates that humans create symbols wherever they are and, in so doing, renew and enrich relationships with reality. But no human symbolizes only to himself nor only from himself. Humans symbolize or create supported by a local and universal cultural inheritance. Likewise, the author expresses: "there is no material change without there being a symbolic change" (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 12) in individuals' relationships in society.

We identify this perspective in the discourse of researcher and islander Adriano Quaresma when he states, in his interview[18], that the transformation of Combu, which is not necessarily physical but perceptual, began shyly in the 1980s as an entertainment option, in line with data in Table 1. The big boost for the island's visibility came in the 2000s when the local chocolate production attracted the attention of Paraense chefs and became a reference. In fact, as Quaresma recalls, news stories about the chocolate production circulated for some time in in-flight magazines of airlines such as TAP Portugal, TAM, and GOL.

Table 1 – Number of bars/restaurants per year of opening – Combu (Belém/PA)

CATEGORIES/ YEAR	1980-1990	1991-2000	2001-2010	2011-2019	DID NOT INFORM
HOTEL			01		
RESTAURANT	01	01	02	20	05

Source: Inventário da Oferta Turística de Belém, 2020[19].

Initially, this change in the island bothered residents that do not earn economic profits from the flow of visitors. On the other hand, explains Flaviana[20], this kind of visitor does not get into contact with the insular

18 Interview granted to researchers in April 2020.
19 The information is available under Category B - Tourist Services and Equipment, which shows 28 restaurants registered. Our research includes two additional restaurants, following information provided by the owner of Açaí do Combu and Sabor da Ilha, who dissolved a partnership and opened another establishment called Mururé in 2018, increasing the number of restaurants to 30.
20 Interview granted to researchers in April 2020.

reality, even if some local economic and cultural activities are a part of the leisure attractions.

Reconfiguration of sociabilities: technology as a cultural sign in contemporaneity

Digital technology became a potent cultural sign in contemporaneity, considering the possibility to generate sociabilities, to make visible places, experiences, and emotions once restricted to specific environments. Today, thanks due the technological resources, we share experiences, making them visible to the world, offering everyone knowledge about them. Hence, according to Aubert and Haroche (2013, p. 15), visibility becomes one of the principal contemporary devices, given there is a desire for an unlimited extension of the exterior and visible self, concomitant to the process of reducing the self, the inner self.

In this conception, it is also important to understand the meanings of material culture in people's lives. Anthropologists Daniel Miller and Heather Horst (2015) reflect on how things also compose human sociabilities, especially considering technological artifacts mixed among objects and subjects or how people relate to things and how such things constitute people. To them, societies can be better understood through the analysis of their material aspects and materialities.

When reflecting on this materiality and the use that people make of it, we selected Instagram as the social media for the analysis of the island of Combu, taking into consideration Muniz Sodré's perspective on this virtual world:

> It presents itself as a systemic connection or a global network of techno-cyber-neuronal nature, where effective experiences tend to be assimilated by information in real-time. Therefore, instead of individuation (where the idea of free individuality is impregnated), we can talk about 'individualization': the particular as a mere fulfillment of the systemic functionality; an individuality without singularity, that is, without the enigmatic dimension and irreducible to alterity […]. Here, the functional dimension of consciousness present in virtual reality is appropriate. (SODRÉ, 2002, p. 160)

Launched in 2010, Instagram emerged as a free-to-access social networking app in which users could share images from their cell phones and tablets, displaying not only photographs but online image narratives. On its website, one sentence, "We bring you closer to people and things you love," [21] summarizes the definition and goal of the app, which initially was only available for iPhones. The statement recalls the notion of "aesthetics of affectivity," highlighted by Souza and Silva (2014, p. 69) when defining as "telephotography" the image posts on the app. "Contemporary image production aims long-distance transmission within an unprecedented scale of social permeability," promoting an inevitable mixture of narratives that bring together different users and promote bonds resulting from this dynamic, remaining in a constant dialogue.

Turning the island of Combu into a scenery

We begin this section setting a temporal mark in the end of the 2000s as the period when the island transformed the most due to the substantial increase of bars – from 4 to 24 – at banks of the Combu river. With these new installations, the island acquires a scenery character and starts to be described by Trindade Júnior and Rodrigues (2020, p. 13) as the composition of "an ever more artificialized system of objects – swimming pools, soccer fields, artificial grass, spaces for parties and varied activities." On the island, the bricolage of the natural landscape with urban and sophisticated values contrasts with the local reality, as Image 2 and the data in Table 2 show.

21   Available at: https://about.instagram.com/about-us. Accessed in March 2020.

Table 2 – Profile of bars on the island of Combu

RESTAU-RANT	OWNER	ESTABLISH-MENT	EMPLOY-EES	CAPAC-ITY	DECOR/ATTRACTIONS
AÇAÍ DO COMBU	Edivaldo Silva do Espírito Santo	2017	05	100 people seated	Rustic, mechanical music, fiberglass pool, boat tour around the island.
CASA COMBU	Luis Sabóia de Oliveira	2017	10	120 people seated	Traditional rustic, view to Belém, track, accessibility ramps, children's toys.
CHALÉ DA ILHA	Wagner Roberto da Silva	2015	20	250 people seated	Bar on the river, cascade, pool, hammocks on the river, game area, children's toys
COMBU GRILL	Mônica Reis de Souza	2017	12	200 people seated	Children's pool, hammocks on the river and land, three photo settings
MALO-CA DO PUREZA	Raimundo Pureza da Costa	2017	7	120 people seated	Party venue, live and mechanical music, and bar.
MURURÉ[22]	Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto	2019	12	100 people seated	Floating and fixed pool, decor with colored fabrics
RESTAU-RANTE DO TATU	Jarina da Silva de Souza	2018	12	150 people seated	Children's pool, hammocks on the river, bar on the river, curtains, armchairs, and basketwork in the décor.
SALDOSA MALOCA	Prazeres Quaresma dos Santos	1982	29	190 people seated	Live and mechanical music, toys, *wi-fi*, bar, stage, ecologic track, handcraft store.

Source: Authors, 2020.

22 The owner closed the restaurant Sabor da Ilha (established in 1994) and opened a new one in 2020 after terminating the rental contract of the previous one.

The island heightens its scenery-like character by aestheticizing nature according to the demands of people who wish to reconcile nature with comfort and modernization and to the visibility of experiences in the place. Mônica Reis de Souza, responsible for Combu Grill[23], states, "social media are important because they promote us. And people don't come here without a cell phone, without showing others where they are. Because of this we create special spaces for photography."

The corpus of analysis for this research were two hashtags, #combu and #ilhadocombu, on Instagram. Hashtags are keywords preceded by the hash (#) symbol that, thus, become tags to indicate relevant words. This way, hashtags become indexable links for search mechanisms that allow users to research and visualize information, images, videos, and so forth related to the topics they represent. The expression became so relevant on the internet that the *Oxford Dictionary*[24] incorporated it in 2014.

The use of tags is a strategy of the digital environment for visibility and engagement, referencing people, places, and objects while, at the same time, serving as a territorial guide beyond the spatial sense as production and construction of narratives, which, in the present case, concern people's experiences in the island. Hence, a narrative emerges in the digital platform totally different from the island's everyday life. It is the island of the other of oneself. In the words of Trindade Júnior e Rodrigues (2020, p. 4), "the production of an everyday life that creates spaces focused on nature consumption, where the force of images and aesthetic reason prevails."

Methodologically, we cataloged the indexers through *Gramho*[25], a hashtag search engine, to list every use of #Combu (14,000) and #IlhaDoCombu (27,000). By applying filters, we selected the months of July and October of 2019, which presented the highest number of posts. To select the material (see Table 3), we discarded duplicated photos,

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23   Interview granted to researchers in May 2020.
24   Available at: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/hashtag. Accessed March 2020.
25   Available at: https://gramho.com/. Accessed in September 2020.

photos that did not pertain to the island, and advertising photos about parties and festivals hosted in Combu.

Table 3 – Total of images with *hashtags* per month in 2019

HASHTAG	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
#COMBU	182	188	370
#ILHADOCOMBU	530	330	860
TOTAL			1.230

Source: Authors, 2020.

Through these filters, we selected four categories of images, given the scenery presents itself in images that make visible individuals, the collective (groups of people), objects, especially those related to the cuisine, and, finally, landscapes, as we show on Table 4. These choices were not random but taken as an effect on the ways of "being and living, under the structures of thought, of ideation, of modes of representing and expressing the self and the other, as well as on the modes of feeling and perceiving." (HAROCHE, 2015, p. 853).

Table 4 – Classification of *#ilhadocombu and #combu* images

#ILHADOCOMBU	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
INDIVIDUAL	187	120	307
COLLECTIVE	62	66	128
LANDSCAPE	107	83	190
CULINARY	15	12	27
#COMBU	JULY	OCTOBER	TOTAL
INDIVIDUAL	81	50	131
COLLECTIVE	34	16	50
LANDSCAPE	58	33	91
CULINARY	09	14	23

Source: Authors, 2020.

Examined images show the place, geolocated by its own name, presents itself not as a land extension that has a history, routine,

economy, residents, and identity but as a scenery-like space in search of social media engagement. The Amazon remains polysemic (GONDIM, 1994), documented in the twenty-first century with the same exogenous eyes of the past colonizer, which renders the place's identity invisible.

However, differently from the past, today natives are protagonists in their stories, since they explore businesses related to the island. As a result, they resort to artificialism as a way of becoming competitive in a demanding market and under the influence of the digital environment, which determine aesthetic standards for visibility, as the local entrepreneurs themselves acknowledge. "All the investment comes from customers demand. There's a kind of standard, a level, which, once raised, everyone must keep up with, otherwise you don't stay in the market," says Jarina da Silva de Souza[26], owner of Restaurante do Tatu. Her statement is reinforced by Hermias Cavalcante de Castro Neto, owner of the island restaurant Mururé: "investing in innovations and in sophistication is a necessary attraction. Visitors leave if they find just a restaurant. We need to win customers over."

Bars end up offering not just the exotic but also a reflex of what visitors expect: autoreferential images, settings very close to everyday urban life, recalling Sodré's (2006, p. 92) understanding that "mediation is, thus, a complex semiotic operation that articulates relations of determination and representation."

The image narrative on the island translated Combu to the digital medium, re-signifying it as the other of oneself, as an appropriation of the place, which becomes the romanticized other; the other that has a predominance of nature, only domesticated with the pacification between rural and urban; the other that mixes a self and another whom I desire or in which I see myself, which I recreate from my imagination and my experience.

In the examined images, the island is always framed in comparison to the city. The forest is the opposite of the city, a retreat, a peaceful place, but that does not forego what the urban offers (see Image 3).

26   Interview granted to researchers in May 2020.

Image 3 – The contrast between the forest and the city

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #combu.

In the examined images, the island is always framed in comparison to the city. The forest is the opposite of the city, a retreat, a peaceful place, but that whithout giving up what the urban offers (see Image 3).

Prazeres dos Santos, the owner of the oldest restaurant on the island, the Saldosa Maloca, says she invests in local recognition as a market strategy, even if that means "going against the tide." The idea was to reinforce a tropical forest image:

> It's not a criticism, but it's a style. [We] invest so that visitors get to know, get in touch with the forest, with the island's interior. Hence the choice of offering a walk in the woods identifying species. This way, there're plenty of photos at the piers, in the middle of the forest, and at our samaumeira, which is 400 years old and has huge and beautiful roots. (Verbal information, 2020)[27]

27   Interview granted by Prazeres Quaresma dos Santos to researchers in May 2020.

Based on this statement, we understand that, even if not resorting to prefabricated sceneries, the production of images for Instagram is an indispensable strategy; that is, the exotic is relevant to the extent that it apparently connects me to nature. In images, it is perceptible that the self "reverences" the natural and makes others visible.

Photos that indicate the path to Combu are a similar kind of record in both tags. Usually, these photos present the boat's tip, showing the island in the backdrop, opposite the city, a repetitive framing that indicates the idealization of an escape to paradise. It is the moment of reuniting with nature. The exoticism of paradise (Gondim, 1994) re-signifies itself as an "ecological paradise" with a more attractive and seductive, appeal of modern inspiration. El Dorado is no longer just economic – the symbol of the Amazon during the military dictatorship – but an idealized oasis that distinguishes itself from the islanders' routine. It is an enchanted place "like a submerged Olympus where deities of the Amazonian theogony live." (LOUREIRO, 2007, p. 42).

Most individuals' photos highlight the insertion in the island through technological resources. Records show the search for an aesthetic dimension that instrumentalizes every natural object (the river, trees, riparian homes), which become components of a narrative that transcends the reality of riparian life but that repeats itself in a standardization.

The awakening of visitors' interest on the island of Combu occurs through the aestheticization of artistic capitalism, where "the real builds itself as an image that integrates an aesthetic-emotional dimension, which has become central for competition." (LIPOVETSKY and SERROY, 2014, p. 16).

Image 4 – The use of nature in aesthetic standardization

Source: Instagram, July 2019, #ilhadocombu.

The symbolism of tranquility is frequent in individual photos: still waters, canoes moored to the piers, and hammocks set up inside the river and among trees. However, this indigenous furniture so present in the records of visits to the island of Combu is just a setting that materializes the idealization of a riparian life far from the city's everyday life. An "utopian nativism" dominates image narratives of the Amazonian paradise, like what Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 43) describes: "The utopia of an ideal city, resulting from an idyllic combination with nature, populates the imaginary certitude of native men who love their land and desire it to become a happy place for men to live in equality with shared labor, a dream of harmony and peace."

The river also frames this utopian and poetic dimension that the author emphasizes. Its waters are part of the setting of individual and group photos. The river is in the journeys to and from the island (see Image 5), signaling the crossing, the migration to a mythicized dimension; it surrounds seductive poses when bodies emerge from the water and complements piers that give access to the island's bars. Photos register this

path toward amusement as an individual space. It is the accomplishment of the mythical space, delimiting the split between the lived space and the island. When these instruments are no longer enough for narratives that reconfigure the island, artificial spaces take over the sceneries (see Image 6), composing with elements offered by nature.

Image 5 – The river as a frame

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #ilhadocombu.

Image 6 – Groups of people in environments produced by bars

Source: Instagram, October 2019, #combu.

Images captured on the access pier, where boats bringing visitors moor, always show the river. There is no record of the bar's wood structure over the rivers. At the bars, photos capture smiley groups, usually toasting or having fun. And the third space is the prefabricated one, the so-called "Instagrammable"[28] settings (see Image 7), which bars have been investing in over the past years due to market competition: rugs, vases, curtains (that frame the river), armchairs, lounge chairs, rocking chairs, and even wooden borders that ornament the river like a swimming pool deck. However, these spaces that "artificialize" the island are the more frequent in the examined photos.

Image 7 – "Instagrammable" settings in Combu

Source: Instagram, July 2019, #ilhadocombu.

The cuisine appeals to an image category that highlights simplicity, naturality, and the colors of food. Photos of food are always produced, reinforcing the Amazonian imagination: the white and simple dish on a wooden table or in contrast with green banana leaves, recalling offerings to pagan gods or to the original peoples of the Amazon. These images exemplify Paes Loureiro's semiotic conversion with the qualitative and

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28 The expression derives from Instagram and refers to settings produced in environments specifically for photographs that will become popular on the feeds of app users, especially for their aesthetic appeal. Available at: https://www.mundodomarketing.com.br/artigos/felipe-morais/37971/ambientes-instagramaveis.html. Access in April 2020.

material revaluing of objects, re-signifying their comprehension and treatment based on market value. Images of regional dishes undergo a conversion chain to an appearance state that has the constitution of an essence. Therefore, the object transforms itself into what is received as a dominant function. In the case of food, it is an exaltation of the forest. Which one presents is which one intends to be.

Imagem 8 – Imagem da culinária exaltando o regional

Fonte: Instagram/julho de 2019/#combu.

In the months we researched, islanders only appear in six images among the twelve hundred and thirty selected. Three record the work with canoes, an açai picker, an elderly riparian at their doorstep, and children at their homes. There is no interaction with the islanders because these photos record an exotic landscape.

The island's symbolic configuration opens diverse narrative dimensions, though converging, in the digital environment, into an artificialized aesthetic representation that denies the riparian identity of Combu. Through the perspective of images on Instagram, we observed

this passage that rearranges the symbolic function, where one thing becomes and is received as another, as Paes Loureiro (2007, p. 75) summarizes: "man remakes the world and remakes itself in it."

The conversion of vision through technology: some final considerations

If, on the one hand, our interpretations intercepted comprehensions that lead us to think of how individuals relate to places through technologies, on the other, we noticed a standardization of images on the platform, a kind of inclusion "passport," which results from market demands conditioned by the other's view, since they recreate new sociabilities, emphasizing vision as a mainly element in the relationship.

W. Butler Yeats, cited by McLuhan (2007, p. 53), states that "The visible world is no longer a reality and the unseen world no longer a dream," for, to interpret it, it is necessary a movement of faculties that includes and transcends them. Therefore, a simplifying answer on individuals' sociabilities and technologies is not possible. This thought contributes to our understanding of Combu as a setting in which the image becomes the immateriality of the material. Or the representation of the absent or distant reality, which acquires meaning or a new sign according to images captured and posted by individuals on Instagram.

Individuals incorporate technology to biuld meanings about themselves to others and, at the same time, knowledge and understanding of reality just as they take it as extensions of their experiences, habits, and emotions. Aesthetic representations and re-significations in which individuals incorporate elements of nature to biuld narratives of themselves. Therefore, in the aestheticized experiences of subjects, places, whether natural or cultural, transform themselves into spectacles and landscapes valued for aesthetic perceptions or emotions, mixing contemplative pleasures, imaginative pleasures, and novelty pleasures.

From this perspective, the semiotic conversion of the island on Instagram renders invisible the Combu of extractivism, artisanal fishing,

the floodplain, and sociocultural processes that dynamize the diverse environment of the original peoples, given the protagonism of narratives is the artificialism dictated by the market present in decorative elements and standardizing frames that simplify the complexity of life in the Amazon.

For the bar owners, this artificialization is necessary to seduce and attract people, as there is a desire to experience things of nature, but according to the comfort offered by the capitalist world. I adapt and stage the natural or rural spaces with elements or symbols of the developed urban world. It is an image of involvement that seems natural; it is the other of oneself in which people are not attracted by the island but by the appeal of cultural categories as consumer goods, combined to the Amazonian mythical imagination.

Even when photos show residents, the image narratives they construct do not establish a communication link with the riparian dimension because the setting produced by the bars, in response to the dictates of the market, bears no knowledge of the web of relationships configured and separated from this setting, which must be considered in its multiple realities and needs. Social networks facilitate visibility, but, at the same time, they can make the web of relationships existing on the island invisible.

There is an ambiguity in digital narratives: on the one hand, there is the visibility of the island's front; on the other hand, there is a discontinuity when trying to go beyond the limits of entertainment spaces, as the interest of visitors is limited to recording what the bars offer. Images incorporate elements of riparian culture – the river, the canoe, the cuisine, the forest – not to talk about them but to compose narratives of their images aesthetically and superficially.

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A R T I G O

Uma reflexão sobre pós-colonialidade, decolonização e museus virtuais. O caso do Museu Virtual da Lusofonia

A reflection on post-coloniality, decolonization and virtual museums. The case of the Virtual Museum of Lusofonia

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Resumo: *O artigo trata de questionamentos sobre políticas culturais e formas de musealização, e como tais questões se adaptam ao processo de virtualização dos museus cuja intermediação dos bens simbólicos e culturais torna mais complexa a compreensão do fenômeno. Como referencial teórico, utiliza-se da pós-colonialidade e decolonialidade, que apontam como o discurso originado nos impérios coloniais deve ser superado, e a interculturalidade, com a qual se desmonta os discursos de ódio e favorece as trocas simbólicas efetivas entre o Norte e o Sul globais. Finalmente, traz-se considerações sobre consumo cultural circunscrito aos espaços museológicos, especificamente em museus virtuais, tendo como caso de estudo o Museu Virtual da Lusofonia (MVL), ambiente organizado segundo conceito pós-colonial da lusofonia, e que recentemente compõe um dos museus do Google Arts & Culture.*

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Palavras-chave: *Museu Virtual da Lusofonia; políticas culturais; pós-colonialidade; decolonialidade; interculturalidade; Google Arts & Culture.*

Abstract: *The article deals with questions about cultural policies and forms of musealization and how these issues adapt to the virtualization process of museums, whose intermediation of symbolic and cultural goods makes understanding the phenomenon more complex. As a theoretical framework, it uses the post-coloniality and decoloniality, which point out how the discourse originated in colonial empires must be overcome, and interculturality, which dismantles hate speech and favors effective symbolic exchanges between the global North and South. Finally, it brings considerations about cultural consumption circumscribed to museological spaces, specifically in virtual museums, which the case study is the Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL), an environment organized according to the post-colonial concept of Lusophony, and which recently composes one of the museums from Google Arts & Culture.*

Keywords: *Virtual Museum of Lusophony; cultural policies; post-coloniality; decoloniality; interculturality; Google Arts & Culture.*

Introduction

This reflection has the theme of lusophony as a background, with the focus of the debate from the Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL)[5], in a proposition within the post-colonial theoretical-epistemological field.

It is about questioning the cultural policies about the forms of musealization and its consequences in the reinforcement of hate speech (based on the rise of far right parties and movements) and against intercultural valorization. In Europe and the Global North, these manifestations are intensified based on a supposed "heroic" past, resulting from colonial empires.

It is in our interest to stress the hegemonic patterns built in the political, sociocultural and economic fields, with a central focus on the geographic area of the infrastructure that "subalternized" other parts of this process, which promoted a split in the possibilities of effective intercultural exchanges.

From this starting point, we have structured the text in four parts: (i) museums and their decolonization processes; (ii) the area of post-colonial and decolonial studies; (iii) virtual museums; (iv) MVL as a case of Lusophony interculturality.

The decolonization of museums

It is a mistake to think that differences can constitute a threat, since our world is made up of an enormous plurality. This narrative takes place through an official discourse of the European Union, which is based on a multicultural logic, assuming the conviviality of two stratified and hierarchical cultures, which can be insufficient for an intercultural dynamic, seen as a process.

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5   The Virtual Museum of Lusophony (MVL) is a platform for academic cooperation, in science, education and arts, in the space of the Portuguese-speaking countries and their diasporas, and also extended to Galicia and the Autonomous Region of Macau, bringing together in a common effort universities with projects of investigation and post-graduate teaching in the area of Communication Sciences and Cultural Studies, as well as cultural and artistic associations, all interested, universities nd associations, in the construction and deepening of the meaning of a Lusophone community".

What is observed, however, in Europe, as well as in the rest of the Global North, goes in the opposite direction, with the growth of far right parties and movements and the dissemination of discourses against interculturality, based on a "heroic" colonial historical past. It is in this context that cultural policies are discussed in a critical way, especially the ones discussed in this article, the forms of musealization, namely in Europe and the USA, for insisting on standards centered on the geographic area of the infrastructure, subordinating other parts that make up the process.

In traditional museums, we refer to the colonial period of several countries and to the way in which people's lives in society are represented at the time, with the institutions themselves being a colonial product little updated over time, and which show a western superiority in their collections, curatorship and narrative. From our point of view, this contradicts the idea on which they were based, which sees museums as civic education platforms, grounded in significant material culture, and which should be projects of reflection on heritage, history and civilization (SOUSA, 2020).

This is why we defend the existence of museums that are more inclusive and more involved in the public debate, keeping in mind a story that should be told "in a less simplistic way, in which the 'heroes' can also be 'villains'" (CANELAS, 2019, P. 16).

Thus, it is often said that the first step for a serious discussion about the decolonization of the discourse about museums must involve the recognition of responsibilities (or "blame") in the colonization process itself, an idea which is shared by Chris Whitehead (CANELAS, 2009). Without this recognition, it is not possible to assess what work can be done in museums to promote change, even bearing in mind that most of them depend on the current political power, which is the one who determines the eventual changes.

As a way of decolonizing museums, Felwine Sarr, co-authour of the report on the restitution of the African works of art handed, in 2018, to the president of the French Republic, Emmanuel Macron, reflects

in the newspaper *Le Monde*, on the transmission of cultural memory and about a new ethic based on mutual respect between Africa and the West. He notes that, in Europe, museums are the heirs of the cabinets of curiosities, being thought of as the place where the group is constituted and enunciates its identity through the objects, therefore being "a museum of the 'us'" (SARR, 2019, n.p.). Then came the moment of colonial conquests, in which Paris, for example, considered itself as the center of the universe and decided that all the beauties in the world should be found there. Now, during the colonial period, the etnographic museums were created, which fabricated a stereotyped discourse about others, so he questions wether their primary functions were not compromised by obsolence (SARR, 2019).

It is from this perspective that Dan Hicks, in the book *The Brutish Museums* (2020), appeals to western museums to return the objects stolen in the violent days of the empire, during what he calls "world war zero", as part of a larger project of addressing the outstanding debt of colonialism.

There are some museums that integrate decolonization dynamics into their processes, which leads us to question what this means, in addition to the need to know who has the right knowledge in this whole theme. And more: how could the collections be opened to the people from the countries where the exhibited artifacts come from? Wayne Modest, specialist in material culture, in an interview for *Público* (CANELAS, 2019), recalls that what prevents museums from having a more serious content policy related to the theme of colonization derives from a strong belief in the safeguard systems of the existing heritage, "in the way in which we are told that things must be preserved, inventoried, studied" (2019, p. 18).

Therefore, in order to contribute to the debate about the MVL as a post-colonial proposal, we consider it necessary to address the fact that, in most museums, a discourse that ratifies the fact that the objects on display belong to white European people seems to be consensual, even though this is not entirely true.

The dominant logic, according to Wayne Modest, shows that many European museums already see themselves as civic spaces, although they continue to privilege white people as the stereotype of European citizens, evidencing colonial practices that exclude many people. Today's mistakes do not have to be repeated in the future, which is the case of certain ethnology museums that are designed from the perspective of a "us" and not of a "them".

In this sense, it is urgent to decolonize museums, allowing the presentation of collections to be done in a different way from those that are currently used, contextualizing them and observing the way in which eventual artifacts were obtained, in addition to considering different curatorships regarding temporary exhibitions. In other words, as pointed out by historian António Camões Gouveia, in a conversation conducted by Marta Lança and published on the *BUALA* portal, "what exists in the museums and archives can be told in a different way" (LANÇA, 2019).

In an effort to synthesize, a trans-historical approach could constitute an encounter "between the old and the new, objects from the past and present, linking heritage and tradition, contemporary art and social issues"; and "new approaches to our historical premises are spaces that allow for rekindling the interpretations of individual objects in relation to their contexts and narratives"; allowing the correction of "the historical look and still haunted by the colonial archive" (LANÇA, 2019, n.p.).

Post-colonial and decolonial studies

The MVL was created far from the Portuguese colonial empire, in the midst of post-coloniality (2013); therefore, it was not subject to the constraints experienced in relation to the so-called "traditional museums", namely those with an ehtnological profile. Thus, that structure came from a reflection based more on decolonial and post-colonial studies than on the perspective of museological studies, which may suggest some contradiction, but which, in practice, gives it a better structure.

The criticisms of the field of post-colonial studies by Latin American decolonialism start from the epistemological origins of the former, "insofar as their genealogy is located in French post-structuralism, and not in the dense history of the decolonial global thinking" (MINGOLO, 2017). In fact, it is easier for the European intellectuals to accept post-colonial thinking than decolonial thinking, since it is closer to them, through Third World migrants, than that of "native Europeans" in the First World. Furthermore, in the scientific production of the Global North, Latin America and the Caribbean are absent or occupy a marginal place in central debates and texts which, at least, should "face the seductions and promises of neoliberal globalization" (CORONIL, 2000, p. 107).

Despite the fact that post-coloniality contains coloniality within its origin, it can differ from what was traditionally done in the field, with a critique of the paradigm of European rationality and modernity.

> The post-colonial theory not only describes the disadvantages, but also aims to deconstruct the reasons for marginalization, inequality and evolution of a feeling of alterity, ultimately seeking to propose ways to improve. (GANTER; ORTEGA, 2019, P. 262)

From this perspective, post-colonial thinking aimed to contribute for the deconstruction of the "myth of a single and objective science" (GANTER; ORTEGA, 2019, P. 262), only with regard to its aspects of social and economic domination. This would not include the entire West (only its ruling classes), spreading the idea of a hegemonic ethnocentrism or a homegeneous, exclusionary and class-ridden aristocracy.

Furthermore, there would be a blind spot in the analysis of both fields (QUIJANO, 2000; QUIJANO apud CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFOGUEL, 2016) regarding the naming and exploitation of the North over the South, based on long-lasting ethnoracial structure, which since the 16th century has offered a European hierarchical system against a non-European one. Therefore, it would be interesting to incorporate a new approach that included both reflections, such as the understanding

that the processes analysed by the decolonial and post-colonial fields work in a network (GROSFOGUEL, 2016, P. 16), integrating complex, heterogeneous, multiple elements in a world-system of long duration[6]. In this way, decolonial and post-colonial studies could offer, together, a greater complexity of analysis and of comprehension of reality.

As ways of executing this joint proposal between the fields, we believe it is possible to install the colonial differences at the center of the knowledge production process (MIGNOLO, 2005). This could be done by highlighting a symbolic resistance (CASTRO-GÓMEZ; GROSFOGUEL, 2016), opposing the hegemony of knowledge of the North, fostering a "decolonial spin" (MIGNOLO, 2008), which encompasses modern institutions, such as the university, towards a turning point where Latin American communicology can renew the theoretical paradigms, and by breaking with the epistemology of coloniality and with the models of the Global North (RIVERA, 2016).

The relationship between post-colonial studies and media and communication studies takes place in the role of "local production as a resource in the face of cultural colonization and as a way of influencing global currents" (SUZINA, 2018, P. 25). This goes through community communication, commercial media and even the regulation of the media sector in Latin America, in order to "intervene in the composition of the narrative, with the possibility of transforming the hegemonic narrative" (TORRES, 2008, p. 28).

Escobar (2005), on the other hand, raises a relevant question in the face of trends in post-structuralist geography, which helps us think about the place of nature and the nature of the place from the discourses of globalization arising from "capitalcentrism", in the sense that the theoretical construction of post-development places capitalism at the center of the development narrative, which pressuposes refusals, devaluations and marginalizations of other and new forms of development outside this centric logic.

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6   Tal como uma hetetarquía (KONTOPOULOS, 1993, in CASTRO-GÓMEZ y GROSFOGUEL, 2016).

Overcoming this logic evokes the decolonization of places, of the "center" and the "periphery", and the incorporation of effective practices, platforms and languages of intercultural exchanges that are based on pillars imagined in "non-centric" fields of disputes. For this exercise, Mignolo (2008) advocates the need to combine civil desobedience with epistemic desobedience, as an effort for the decolonizing option, which starts with an overwhelming revision of history, museums and memory to imagine things, shapes, values and the world view of the past, present and future.

The virtual museums

Regarding the "virtualization" of museums as a way of adapting to the current socio-technical contingency, this dynamic emerges as a basis for a possible change of paradigm in the consumption of art and culture, thanks to the potentialities based on new communication and information technologies. This is because if the consumption of art and culture already expands the boundaries of what is understood as the experience of consumption, it derives from the interaction between a subjective entity, the consumer, and an objective entity, the product, in a given context (ADDIS, 2005).

In other words, the consumption of culture through virtual museums allows the subjective entity to interact and share its experiences thanks to multimedia tools, thus being able to reach the level of what Aksal (2014) calls "edutainment". With the interactivity generated by new communication technologies in the process of museological consumption, as in the case of virtual museums, the cultural work exposed virtually responds to the demands of the consumer, already called "interactor" because of this (TANG; WU; ZANG, 2020).

Added to the ability of the media to share that make up the virtual museums, it is possible to share the museological experience in many ways, from the virtualized work itself, through our registration in the form of an opinion, and it can be consumed by any other individual who has access to the web environment and is connected to the same digital

social network. In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020, for example, there was an exponential growth in visits to virtual museums, which can be stabilized at high levels after the so-called "new normal" (whatever that means) is established (RAPOSO, 2020):

Figure 1 – Global search trends for museums in search engines, between September 1, 2019, and August 28, 2020. Percentage relative to 100 defined by most access (virtual museum).
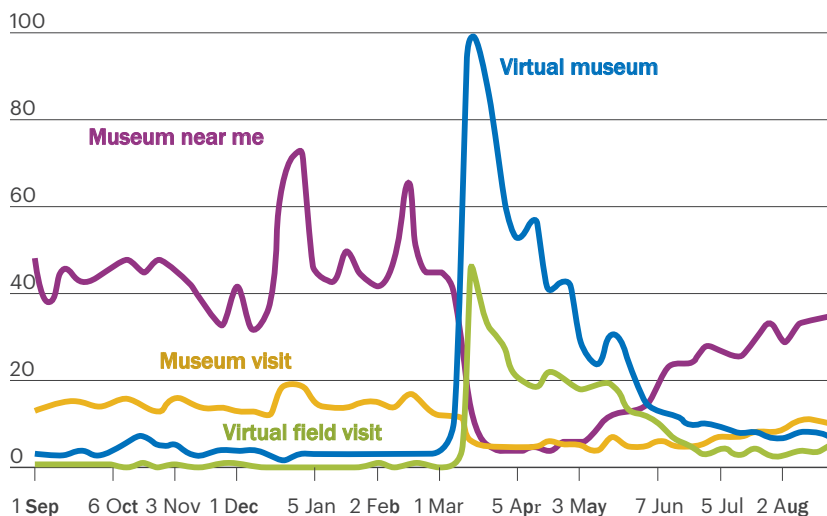
Source: Google Trends. At: JORNAL PÚBLICO, Sep 6. 2020.

However, there are many criticisms to the virtualization of museums, as in one of the first works on the theme, "The museum of the third kind" (ASCOTT, 1996), in which what a virtual museum is is discussed and what the consequences are of the indirect/remote mediation with the work, the dissociation of the museological object from its aura (MUCHACHO, 2005, P. 579), or the trivialization of the concept of museum for any initiative of an artistic compilation on the web (MAGALDI; SCHNEIDER, 2010). Nonetheless, given that "multimedia applications, connectivity and interactivity turn technology into a variable (not a medium) whose effects enrich the expericence and

its value" (ADDIS, 2005), it is undeniable that virtual museums create a new reality in the communicability between the museum and its public (MUCHACHO, 2005, p. 581):

> The virtual museum is essentially a museum with no borders, capable of creating a virtual dialogue with the visitor, giving him/her a dynamic, multidisciplinary vision and an interactive contact with the collection and as an exhibition space. By trying to represent the real, a new reality is created, parallel and coexisting with the first one, which should be seen as a new vision, or a set of new visions, about the traditional museum (2005, p. 582).

After Lewis' (1996) definition of what a virtual museum is for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*[7], in which the distinction between what is a real collection and what is a virtual one is clear, Schweibenz (1998) advances with the concept, treating the virtual museum as

> (...) a logically related collection of digital objects composed in different media and, through its capacity to provide connectivity and multiple access points, lends itself to transcending traditional methods of communication and interaction with visitors. Flexible in relation to its needs and interests, it does not have a real place or space, its objects and information related to them can be disseminated all over the world (1998, p. 131).

Since the beginning of the experience of art and culture consumption in museums, the experience has always extrapolated outside the walls of the buildings, both in online environments, as previously presented, and offline, in the lives of the visitors (JAFARI et al., 2013, p. 1742), thus, it is necessary to understand in what cultural context the museum is inserted, whether virtual or not. Therefore, virtual or not, museums are considered places of memory, responsible for disseminating a representation of a certain "reality". The narratives built to express this chosen reality depend on the objectives, methodology and experience

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7   "A collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents and other data of historical, scientific or cultural interest which are accessed through electronic media. A virtual museum does not house real objects and, therefore, lacks the permanence and unique qualities of a museum in the institutional definition of the term". (LEWIS, 1996)

of the teams in each cultural sector, as well as on the objectives and capacities of the institutions.

However, it is a fact that the experiences allowed by new communication and information technologies enhance the revision of museological issues, both the conceptual ones (such as the issue of colonizations discussed in this article) and paradigms such as public participation, with in-person visits to museums, in addition to other resources allowed by digital media, such as customization, interactivity and navigability (SUNDAR et al., 2015). Through them, one can get closer to the details of the work of art with high definition cameras; it is possible to see the collection in virtual environments thanks to videos with 360^0 techonology, or obtain information in text, audio or video while contemplating the real work, through 3D glasses and the augmented reality narrative.

With regard to Google Arts & Culture (A&C), an aggregator of museum pieces from the whole world, like a "museum of the museums", or a metamuseum (TANG; WU; ZHANG, 2020), the digital platform allows linked or physical virtual museums with virtualized collections to take advantage of the platform's potential. Released in 2011 as Google Art Project, it offers virtual visits to hundreds of museums, their collections and exhibitions, without a curatorial interference, according to Google, on the availability of external content on its platform.

In our case study, MVL has been part of the GA&C since September 4, 2020, offering high-resolution images and videos from its collection, which increases its audience reach on a global scale[8]. In addition to this, Google's metamuseum has tools for new immersive experiences, such as Live View in Street View, which emulates the real room where the work of art is exhibited, or the "Art Camera" feature, which leads the spectator

8   Since the Virtual Museum of Lusophony already existed before the integration with Google, it had its own characteristics before being included in the GA&C platform. According to Lima and Mendes (2009), there would be three categories of virtual museums: the ones that exist through virtual communication media, with no counterparts or correspondents in physical media; the ones that have counterparts or correspondents in physical media; and those with no correspondent in the physical world, but whose collections are digitally converted counterparts or correspondents in the physical world. This last one is the case of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony.

to see details of the work – which might not be possible in person. There are also other entries based on new forms of participation, since, installed on a powerful platform such as Google, the collection inserted on GA&C is allowed sharing criteria, from self-portraits with the works, thanks to a selfie tool, to the transposition of the art piece in physical environments, thanks to the same 3D feature, made popular by the Nintendo application, Pokémon GO.

Lusophony as a proposal of interculturality: the case of MVL

The metaphor of circumnavigation constitutes a creative way of characterizing the contemporary experience, which is, after all, a technological experience (HUGON, 2010). It allows us to think about the crossing as a human experience in a network and in which the dominant "contingent intelects" (COSTA, 2020) circulate more easily. The current circumstances are those of a world mobilized in its different practices by all kinds of technologies, especially mobile platforms of communication, information and leisure, by new forms of social interaction and by emerging models of interaction and association.

Figure 2 – Homepage of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony.

Source: Self-authored.

The case of the MVL (Figure 2, previous illustration), contributes to the elaboration of an intercultural cartography in the Portuguese-speaking world, of hypermediated places (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 1996), spots where technological mediation favors immersive states, geographical displacements, social exchanges, sensory crossings and imaginary evasions.

The technological circumnavigation that we put into perspective is intended to be hosted on the MVL platform, which is part of a strategy aimed at the symbolic ordering of the world, through transcultural and transnational networks of knowledge, openness to the diversity of langauges and cultures, and in which are discussed the problems of hegemonic language and political, scientific, cultural and artistic subordination (MARTINS, 2018a, 2018b).

The point of view adopted for this technological crossing is that a great language of cultures and thinking, such as the Portuguese language, can not fail to be in the "contingent intelects" (COSTA, 2000) and therefore must be, equally, a great language of human and scientific knowledge (MARTINS, 2014), regardless of the colonial violence associated with it.

To accomplish this process, and already registered in the GA&C since September 2020, the MVL proposes the mapping of the intercultural dynamics resulting from Portuguese colonization through the eventual preservation of these tangible vestiges and the correspondent reuse today (COSTA, 2019).

In short, the investigation that we propose to carry out intends to act in five axes: in the landmarks of memory, through the survey, identification and analysis of statues, streets, sculptures and memorials that represent the presence of the Portuguese; in linguistic landmarks, through the survey, identification and analysis of documents (books, magazines, articles, among other written records) that relate the Portuguese presence in the local culture; in sociocultural landmarks, through the survey and description of rituals and other common socio-cultural practices, perceiving the intercultural dynamics; in the application of inquiries in strategic posts of the Portuguese-speaking space; and in the maintenance of the MVL's current interactive platform.

The MVL excludes the idea that with the globalization process there was merely an economic phenomenom, aimed at the electronic integration of financial markets, with its development connected to information and communication technology (GIDENS, 2004). It is not just like that: through the internet (browsers, websites and hosts), references of trips and wandering are used, inviting us to give in to the appeal of the open sea (through the web), to an impulse that inhabits the nomadic being, shaped by the technological revolution (COSTA, 2013; HUGON, 2010).

We do not "deny" that a process of unification or the world has occured through the expansion of capitalism, but it has also been diversified, referenced by resistances and different adaptations (SAHLINS, 1993). Regarding the phenomena of uniformity and fragmentation provoked by the cosmopolitan globalization, this technological circumnavigation goes in the opposite direction, privileging the results based on an intercultural, transcultural, critical and inclusive possibility (MARTINS, 2018).

It is assumed in the MVL that the "multiculturalist globalization" may oppose the "cosmopolitan globalization", thus framing an inclusive Lusophony, based on a globalization of what is diverse, different, made by mixing, by the diversity of ethnicities, languages, memories and traditions (MARTINS, 2017), in which the idea that uniformity is not the same as homogeneity stands out (BAYLY, 2004), and in which only the affability towards the "other" will allow the sense of humanity to awake (KAPUSCINSKI, 2006).

The question of how the inhabitants of the previously colonized countries and the ex-colonizers represent the colonial past (LICATA et al., 2018) and recycle it is a crucial question to understand the Lusophone cartography resulting from the proposed technological circumnavigation.

In the MVL, the concept of interculturality is privileged (COSTA, 2019), which is different from the notion of multiculturalism, which only presupposes the coexistence of two stratified and hierarchical cultures. Therefore, interculturality distances itself from the Luso-tropical

dynamics, associated with Portuguese colonization, where a one-dimensional cut was emphasized by those who held power (ABADIA et al., 2016; CABECINHAS, 2007; CABECINHAS; FEIJÓ, 2010; MARTINS, 2015; SOUSA, 2017). For this reason, the MVL considers interculturality as a process, which means that several people with various inequalities participate in it, transcending any multicultural rethoric (CABECINHAS; CUNHA, 2018).

The European maritime expansion of the 15th and 16th centuries was a process that opened itself to alterity, diversity and to knowledge of the other, but which failed because it assimilated and destroyed every difference, producing colonialism. It is in this sense that failing to consider the differences between colonial histories and colonization processes may lead to imposing on one people the post-colonial narrative of another, as pointed out by Ana Paula Ferreira (2007).

In this paradigm crisis, the identity plan integrates a broader process of change which, according to Stuart Hall (2000), shakes the frames of reference that previously seemed to give a certain stability to individuals. Homi Bhabha (1998) even talks about hybrid intercultural spaces.

With regard to Lusophony, the MVL proposes the deconstruction, together with its protagonists, of the mistakes resulting from a history of the relationship between a colonial "self" and a colonizing "other" (MARTINS, 2014). This is so it does not turn into any "luso-aphonia" (COUTO, 2009).

In this sense, the MVL outlines a reimagining of Lusophony, decolonizing the minds of its protagonists (NGUGI WA THIONG'O el al., 1986; MBEMBE, 2017), in order to overcome these mistakes and resolve resentments (FERRO, 2009). As pointed out by Margarida Calafate Ribeiro (2016), it is not just a matter of decolonizing the languages of the great European narratives, to which Edward Said appealed, but of decolonizing people, decolonizing the colonizer and their image and decolonizing the decolonized and their image, resolving resentments, senses of superiority and/or inferiority, as well as ideological imaginaries.

Lusophony is understood in the MVL as a post-colonial vision that results from Portuguese colonization in relation to the currently self-determined countries (Angole, Brazil, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, São Tomé and Príncipe and East Timor). Despite the mistakes in which it navigates, we do not look at it in a Lusocentric dynamics, since it does not have the yoke of "Portugality" weighing on its shoulders, as occured in the colonial period. It is a term inscribed in the cultural area, even if an exercise in needed to dismantle its misunderstandings (MARTINS, 2014).

Thus, The MVL emerged from this intense debate in 2016, having been developed and promoted by the CECS – Center for Communication and Society Studies (University of Minho, Braga, Portugal), as part of its strategic project financed by the FCT – Foundation for Science and Technology (Government of Portugal), taking advantage of the fact that the Portuguese language is the fourth most spoken language in the world, being used by over 260 million people. According to the United Nations projections, in 2050 there will be close to 400 million Portuguese speakers, a number that will grow to 500 million by the end of the century (RETO et al., 2016).

On the other hand, Portuguese is the third most used language on the internet, a fact that values the language in the context of new technologies of the present and future. These are data that have weighed in the design of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony as a virtual platform, taking advantage of the ballast that digitization allows for the encounter of cultures in the context of Lusophony, developed with a focus on the promotion of interculturality, having emerged, consequently, in an already decolonized form and in accordance with the proposal of definition of a museum by ICOM – International Council of Museums.

The MVL emerges as a platform for academic cooperation in science, education and arts, in the space of the Portuguese-speaking countries and their diasporas, which extend to Galicia and Macao, and in its mission we can read about the intention of promoting knowledge by the Portuguese-speaking countries, of their countless forms of artistic and cultural

expression, which must be gathered, preserved and disseminated, both within the Lusophone context and internationally.

It is a decolonized space that intends to be a mechanism that invites the active participation of citizens, making records available, commenting on the preserved "works" in the museum and (re)constructing a collective memory. This goes through the questioning of the way in which the colonial past weighs on intercultural relations nowadays, both on the side of the colonizer and on the side of the ex-colonized, allowing its inhabitants to look to the past as a way of building dynamics for the future.

According to the objectives it presents, we highlight the intention of articulating of the competences of digital technology with the preservation, research and promotion of the Lusophone historical-cultural heritage, as well as a contribution to the expansion of reciprocal knowledge between Portuguese-speaking countries, bringing their peoples together and allowing the construction of a more informed future, in which the intercultural dialogue and respect for the cultural heritage and the sigularity of the other prevail.

The participation of citizens, still in its initial stage, begins in the period of construction of the museum's collections. The MVL hopes that the gathering of "works" to be registered in the museum (photographs, sound recordings, audiovisual recordings, texts, music, achitectural and ethnographic heritage records etc.) will be done with the populations of the Portuguese-speaking countries with their active participation; that the recording of histories and lifestyles will be done as close as possible to all social groups in Portuguese-speaking countries; that all the survey and analysis work actively involves education professionals, politicians, cultural and artistic agents, journalists and other media professionals, historians, sociologists and communication researchers[9].

9   Information on the website of the Virtual Museum of Lusophony. Available at: http://www.museuvirtualdalusofonia.com/.

Final considerations

The museums with ethnographic collections are filled with fragments of the world. As Joaquim Pais de Brito (2016) points out, part of the knowledge that embodied antropology was built with them, the academic discipline that is at their origin and that developed with them. The collections had an evolutionary approach, highlighting the stages of evolution of cultures and peoples, with European culture being placed at a superior level, since it was assumed that it had already reached its maximum level of civilization. In the last 30 years, some of the most important museums in the world began to change their designation by no longer being known for specialities in anthropology, ethnology and ethnography, or even for arts and popular traditions, to be designated as museums of the cultures of the world or museums of the civilizations. It is the very idea of a museum as it was constructed by the Western view, and in the way in which its collection was accumulated, that is now questioned.

Today, the question asked is how museums are going to represent the "other". Also, the scenario is a complex one, because, as pointed out by Mónica Ferro, director of the United Nations Population Fund, "the great crisis of our times is this inability to put ourselves in the other's shoes" (CARVALHO, 2019, n.p.), which causes the intercultural dialogue to suffer even more constraints.

In practice, the role of curatorial artivism takes into account learning that every decolonization process does not occur by iteslf. Artivism consolidates itself as a cause and social claim and, at the same time, as an artistic rupture – namely through the proposition of alternative scenarios, landscapes and ecologies of fruition, participation and artistic creation. Artivism is a conceptual neologism still of unstable consensus, whether in the field of social sciences or in the field of the arts. It appeals to links, as classic as prolix and controversial, between art and politics, and stimulates the potential destinies of art as an act of resistance and subversion (RAPOSO, 2015).

Altogether, it is translated into a process that cannot be configured in an ahistorical dynamic, given that its development must take into account the context in which the events took place, taking steps forward, but promoting a contextualization that avoids presenteeism (TORGAL, 2015), in addition to anachronism.

From this perspective, the MVL, as a post-colonial creation, born in a decolonized way, can contribute to the promotion of diversity, reconfiguring identities, and to the improvement of intercultural relations in the 21st century.

It is a process that is neither linear nor simple, since the weight of the colonial past still wieghs today and is visible in the parts that comprise it. Hence the need for mental decolonization, which is practically felt in the museums, but which, in Portugal, although a member of Sul Global (Global South), also stands out in school history textbooks, which reflect a Lusotropicalist vision of Portuguese exceptionality, which, in the end, still reflects what happens in the society.

The struggle is established in the exercise of strengthening a vision of an inclusive and decentered Lusophony, far from Lusocentric dynamics, but based on diversity.

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O racismo brasileiro a partir da Publicidade: um olhar sobre a representatividade em anúncios de revista

The racism from the Advertising: a look at representativeness in magazine Ads

Pablo Moreno Fernandes[1]

Resumo: *Por meio da coleta de anúncios das marcas mais valiosas do Brasil, analisamos a presença de pessoas negras em peças veiculadas na revista Veja no intervalo 2018-2020. Colocamos em discussão a formação da identidade negra brasileira, em virtude do racismo, observado aqui de forma tridimensional, em suas dimensões estrutural, prática e ideológica. Refletimos sobre o lugar da Publicidade como instrumento cultural na afirmação e na consolidação das estruturas racistas, a partir de suas representações. Os resultados da análise apontam para uma oscilação na representatividade de pessoas negras ano a ano e, quando comparados ao trabalho de outros pesquisadores da temática em outros períodos, nota-se pouca evolução no enfrentamento ao racismo.*

Palavras-chave: *consumo; publicidade; racismo.*

Abstract: *Through the collect of advertisements of the most valuable brands in Brazil, we analyzed the presence of black people in ads published in Veja magazine in the 2018-2020 interval. We discuss the formation of black Brazilian identity, due to racism, observed here in a three-dimensional way, in its structural, practical and ideological dimensions. We reflect on the place of Advertising as a cultural instrument in the affirmation and consolidation of racist structures, based on their representations. The results of the analysis point to an oscillation in the representation of black people from year to year and, when compared to the*

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work of other researchers on the subject in other periods, there is little evolution in the fight against racism.

Keywords: *Consumption; Advertising; Racism.*

Introduction

Brazil established – through a project that contemplated the population's whitening, eugenic policies, and marginalizing strategies – the extermination of the Black population brought to the country from the African continent as a workforce during the colonization process. As part of this project, social sciences defended theories that preached the idea that the country was a racial democracy in a logic of silencing (KILOMBA, 2019) and "epistemicide" (CARNEIRO, 2005).

Communicational thought integrated the intellectual project of the other social sciences without critically considering racial relations, colluding with the structuring of racism as a cultural, political, and ideological element in Brazil. In consumption studies, that was not different. So far, there has been little discussion on advertising's responsibility in maintaining Brazilian racism and whether it has done anything to face it.

Black movements faced the results of this project through resistance over time and echoing their voices on social networking platforms, in culture, arts, politics, the media, and in other fields of society. Their voices began to achieve more resonance during the twenty-first century, enabling the establishment of a debate that recognizes the forces of racial structures in the formation of Brazil.

The purpose of this work is to examine how advertising has positioned itself over the last three years with the broader reach of discussions concerning Black people in the media through observing their presence in magazine ads. The selection of ads considered Interbrand's ranking of most valuable brands of 2018, 2019, and 2020, resulting in the following group: 1) Itaú; 2) Bradesco; 3) Skol; 4) Brahma; 5) Banco do Brasil; 6) Natura; 7) Antarctica; 8) Petrobras; 9) Vivo; 10) Cielo. We searched for ads in the issues of *Veja*, the weekly print magazine with the largest circulation in the country, published in 2018, 2019, and 2020. Bardin's (2004) content analysis procedures guided this moment of collecting materials.

The justification for this work finds support in consumption's place as an element of identity assertion in contemporaneity, having advertising as an instrument of meaning transfer (MCCRACKEN, 2010). We acknowledge how advertising is responsible for constructing possible and desirable worlds in which consumer goods acquire symbolic and material value through advertising representations.

Identity, racism, representation, and representativeness

Processes that have subjugated the Black population intended to annihilate its notion of identity, a collective personality that saw Blackness as something positive and coveted. This happened because "the identity of a group works as an ideology insofar as it allows its members to define themselves in opposition to members of other groups to reinforce the solidarity existing between them with the purpose to preserve the group as a distinct entity." (MUNANGA, 2020, p. 12). Therefore, the national interest in erasing the traces of Black identity that resulted from the high presence of people originated from the African continent and their descendants due to colonial processes.

Culture had, throughout history, an important role in the consolidation of racist images related to the Black population. Hall (2016, p. 18) explains that "Language is one of the 'media' through which thoughts, ideas, and feelings are represented in a culture. Representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced […].". Hence, we must recognize artistic manifestations like painting, literature, and so forth contribute to the naturalization of images that place Black people in a position of inferiority.

Regarding consumption as a sociocultural phenomenon,

> […], products and services generate institutional and promotional discourses to move equity financing through the sales of goods and services, acting not just politically and economically but, above all, as mediating instances in the regulation of cultures according to the interests

> of the commercial productive logic, which comes into conflict with the
> logic of consumption. (PEREZ; TRINDADE, 2018, p. 6)

Besides the interests of commercial logic, we cannot disconnect the role of the cultural dimensions of consumption in their mediations based on Martín-Barbero's (2008) map. Considering the Cultural Matrixes of society have arisen from racist structures, advertising reproduces them and thus contributes to their consolidation since its origins in Brazil. Through representations of a culturally constituted world (MCCRACKEN, 2010), advertising acts to awaken desire, projecting idealized situations for the consumption of goods. Advertising indicates the idealized representations of this world in consumption scenes (CARRASCOZA, 2012).

At the beginning of its consolidation in the nineteenth century, Brazilian advertising was more descriptive than creatively elaborate, based on classifieds (CASAQUI, 2007). This category of advertisements was an essential instrument for the consolidation of advertising, and there was a specific role for the Black population in it: a product. Slavery did not acknowledge Black people's humanity, and, for that reason, they were traded and appeared as one of the most advertised products in Brazilian advertising in the nineteenth century (FREYRE, 1979).

With abolition and discourses on miscegenation and racial democracy, the twentieth century observes a shift in Black people's representations in culture as a whole – and, consequently, in advertising – while the narrative of an absence of racial tensions in Brazil also becomes naturalized. In advertising, racial tensions disappear since Black people can no longer appear as an advertised good. We see, therefore, the use of culture to erase the Black population, a process that happens concomitantly to other marginalization strategies that also deny their subjectivity as consumers in a society of consumption under construction.

Understanding representation as "[…] the process by which members of a culture use language (broadly defined as any signifying system deploying signs) to produce meaning" (HALL, 2016, p. 108), we

have the illustration of its strength in the production, consolidation, and reaffirmation in the imagination of Brazil as a whitened country or, at the most, mixed-race, where racial tensions are absent. Culture – that has the media as one of its spaces – erases the Black population from its representations since abolition, initiating a process of constructing the imagination of the whitening of the Brazilian population. Throughout the twentieth century, the narrative of the unfeasibility of representing Black people in advertising consolidates itself, gaining supporters with explicitly racist discourses through the association of Blackness to poverty, an undesirable characteristic in a society of consumption, like the one between Africa and Black, as Mbembe (2018) points out. These associations recall Hall's (2016, p. 193) discussion on power and representation: "We often think of power in terms of direct physical coercion or constraint. However, we have also spoken, for example, of power in representation; power to mark, assign and classify; of symbolic power; of ritualized expulsion." Diverse narratives that aimed to attribute negative meanings to Blackness, such as poverty, violence, and marginality, made racist statements by advertising professionals, like those recorded by Pires (1988), recurrent in common sense and the media. Clóvis Calia, Enio Mainardi, and Washington Olivetto, important Brazilian ad pros who participate in an interview cited by Martins (2019), utter racist discourses on Black representation, associating it with poverty and the undesirable.

Sodré (2015, p. 278) explains how imageries that build negative representations of Black people operate. According to the author, "since the nineteenth century, Africans and their descendants were connoted by elites and intermediary sectors of society as beings outside the ideal image of the free worker for Eurocentric reasons." Sodré mentions the role of the media in the construction and reinforcement of racist images, demonstrating how they occur based on four factors: 1) Denial: "the media tends to deny the existence of racism unless when it is the object of news due to the flagrant violation of this or that antiracist device or episodic racial conflicts" (SODRÉ, 2015, p. 279); 2) The repression

of "positive identity aspects of symbolic manifestations of Black origin" (idem); 3) The stigmatization of phenotypic traits as a basis for discrimination, marking the disqualification of difference, "the starting point for every type of discrimination, conscious or not, against the other." (idem); 4) The professional indifference in the limited presence of Black people in Brazilian media, except in backstage functions.

In the twenty-first century, amidst economic growth and the expansion of purchase power, brands have begun to recognize the Black population as a consumer target. Sodré views the acknowledgment of this group's existence under the perspective of its consumption power critically. Nevertheless, in line with debates on relations between consumption and citizenship (CANCLINI, 2008), we have this fact that changes brands' perspectives compared to discourses previously in effect in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Black people began to be treated as consumption subjects (SODRÉ, 2015). Representations of Black people in advertising increased, though still restricted to specific products, not acknowledging them as the universality of the human category (KILOMBA, 2019).

Campos (2017) interprets racism under a tridimensional prism that observes how ideologies, practices, and structures solidify. The ideological dimension demonstrates how racism depends on beliefs and ideas about race to hierarchize groups from their characteristics. The practical dimension considers discriminatory actions produced by a racist ideology and subtler, more reactive attitudes. The third dimension is structural, which considers racism as a structuring part of a social system. Campos (2017, p. 14) explains that approaching racism in a three-dimensional way contributes to understanding: "1) the contemporary form that racism is taking. 2) Some problems related to its conceptual definition. 3) The ontological status of the notion of race. 4) Part of the dilemmas faced by the antiracist struggle." This way, the disproportionate presence of Black people in advertising, considered under a tridimensional lens, can be seen as the result of a racist ideology that denied Black people's humanity and allowed the

existence of slavery (along with developments we mentioned previously like the nineteenth-century classified ads and the marginalization and association of Blackness to negative signs), resulting in racist practices that become solidified in the experience of the Brazilian population. Ideologies and practices consolidate racist structures, making the debate on the theme and the antiracist struggle complex.

Brazilian racism was built from structures that involved important elements of social life, practiced through an ideology defended by the social thought of the time. Disguised in narratives that created the idea that Brazilian people are cordial (HOLANDA, 1977), that its miscegenation was harmonious (FREYRE, 1963), and that the country's enslavement procedures were the least violent in the Americas (FREYRE, 1979), racism organizes itself. After centuries, racism consolidates itself as one of the most substantial structures of Brazil, as perceptible in social indicators that reserve a prominent position for the Black population in terms of poverty, violence, low schooling, and so forth.

Mbembe (2018, p. 171), discussing Black reason, concludes that, due to historical processes of slavery and racism, Black identity corresponds to a becoming, a network of affinities. In the same direction, Munanga (2020, p. 15) argues Black identity corresponds to the "political identity of an important segment of the Brazilian population excluded from political and economic participation and the full exercise of citizenship." It is, therefore, an identity marked in the universal perspective by alterity, exclusion, and marginalization.

The path to building a Black identity, according to Munanga, initially goes through the acceptance of physical traits that represent Blackness, turned into negative signs by Eurocentric patterns reinforced in culture. Historically, processes in Brazil, such as the population's whitening through miscegenation and the devaluing of phenotypic traits (nose thickness, hair texture, and skin color), built a repulsion against Black identity, which led to its denial. "The recovery of that identity begins by the acceptance of the physical attributes of Blackness before reaching cultural, mental, intellectual, moral, and psychological attributes, for

the body constitutes the material focus of all aspects of that identity." (MUNANGA, 2020, p. 19). Understanding the power of the presence of Black bodies in advertising is essential to comprehend the level at which the process of recovering Black identity is. Beauty standards in vogue establish themselves in culturally constituted worlds. Advertising is one of the pillars of this process, along with fashion, in the society of consumption.

In the twenty first century, representativeness emerges as a term to refer to situation in which people from marginalized groups appear in diverse situations. Silvio Almeida (2018, p. 84) conceptualizes representativeness as the "[…] participation of minorities in power and social prestige spaces, including inside centers of ideological diffusion such as the media and academia." In this sense, we understand the presence of Black people in advertising can illustrate representativeness when a product – or a brand or line extension – designed for Black people emerges. This same representativeness is insufficient to solve racism in our society, seen as the universal representation of humans continues to belong primarily to White people. In the case of advertising, representativeness would signal a rupture from racist structures if it were proportional to the percentage of that population in the country and if it placed the Black population recurrently as representative of human universality, as it occurs with whiteness.

Almeida indicates two critical effects of representativeness in facing racism:

1. It provides an opening in the political space so that the claims of minorities can gain repercussion, especially when the accomplished leadership results from a collective political project.
2. It dismantles discriminatory narratives that always place minorities in a subaltern position. Moreover, representativeness is always an accomplishment due to years of political struggles and intense intellectual construction by social movements that successfully influence institutions. (ALMEIDA, 2018, p. 84)

Turning to this article's object of study, assessing the number of Black people represented in ads published in *Veja* by the most valuable brands in the country is an important exercise to comprehend what the indices of Black representation tell us about society's progress in confronting racism.

Methodological considerations

The first consideration is that the brands Brahma, Petrobras, and Skol did not have ads in *Veja* during the three years of collection and, therefore, were discarded. The remaining brands were Itaú, Bradesco, Banco do Brasil, Natura, Vivo, and Cielo. We selected every ad from these brands with either photographic or illustrated figures of humans in them, totaling 54 ads. In this material, we counted the total of people regardless of their ethnic-racial classification and set apart those featuring Black people (Black and Brown according to the criteria applied by IBGE in the demographic census). We did not classify the amount of White, Yellow, or indigenous people because this project aims to verify the proportion of Black people in advertising, considering they are 54.9% of the country's population (POPULAÇÃO, 2017).

We analyzed the portrayal of Black people based on heteroidentification criteria (RIOS, 2018; DOS SANTOS & ESTEVAM, 2018; EDNILSON, 2018). Table 1 presents the total number of people represented in ads, the stratified number of Black people, and their distribution among men and women.

Table 1 – Numbers of people represented in ads

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2020	111	56	55	33	23	10
2019	52	28	24	25	17	8
2018	125	69	56	30	19	12

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Given the variation of people and the number of ads, we converted numbers to percentages for the graphic representation to make interpretation easier (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Percentages of people represented in ads

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Sorting the data per brand in 2018, we excluded Cielo because the brand had only an ad with no representation of Black people. Natura did not publish ads in *Veja* in 2019 and 2020. Table 2 shows the number of people represented in the brand's ads in 2018. 133.64430.27-5

Table 2 – Numbers of people represented in Natura's ads.

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2018	22	17	5	6	5	1

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Figure 2 presents the conversion of numbers to percentages.

Figure 2 – Percentages of people represented in Natura's ads
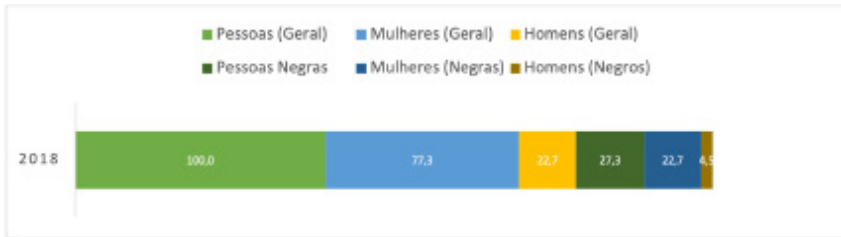
Source – Elaborated by the author.

In ads for Banco do Brasil, representativeness grows from 2018 to 2019 due to an increase in the number of Black people and, yes, a reduction in the number of human figures (Table 3) in the two ads that portray Black people in each year.

Table 3 – Numbers of people represented in Banco do Brasil's ads.

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2019	3	1	2	2	1	1
2018	9	5	4	2	2	0

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Still, the fact that a Black woman represents all women in the brand's ads in 2019 is surprising, seen as representations never give Black women the place of universality (KILOMBA, 2019). In 2020, the brand did not publish ads in the magazine.

Figure 3 – Percentages of people represented in Banco do Brasil's ads
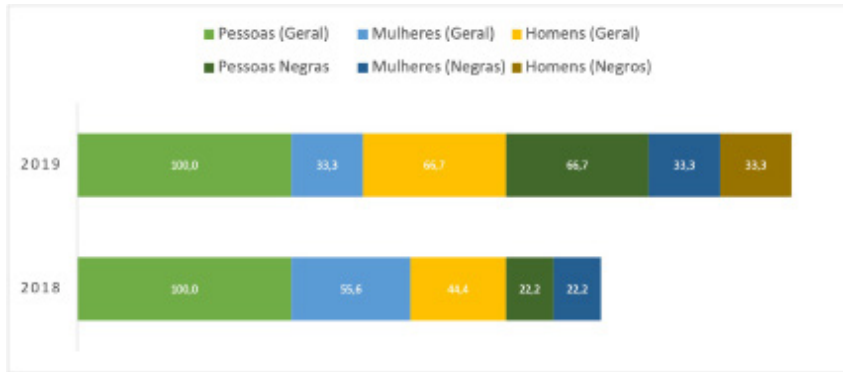
Source – Elaborated by the author.

In Bradesco's ads, there is an increasing presence of Black women, who were, proportionally, a minority compared to men in general, Black men, and women in general (Table 4). The brand's advertisements with Black representation totaled five in 2018, one in 2019, and eight in 2020.

Table 4 – Numbers of people represented in Bradesco's ads.

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2020	23	12	11	11	8	3
2019	1	1	0	1	1	0
2018	18	8	10	4	1	3

Source – Elaborated by the author.

In 2019, the brand reduced the number of people portrayed significantly, featuring a Black woman as the only person in the examined ad, again, in a position of universalization of the human category. In 2020, Black women's representation reached its peak, corresponding to most Black people portrayed. Still, they are not most people in general, seen as the number of non-Black men exceeds the number of Black women. Black men also lost space in representations over the years,

despite the increase in male figures from 2018 to 2020, not counting 2019, when ads featured no man (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Percentages of people represented in Bradesco's ads

Itaú published eight ads with Black representation in 2018, nine in 2019, and two in 2020. The presence of Black people evolves proportionally over the observed years in the collected material (Table 5); it grows in terms of the number of Black women but oscillates for Black men, who were absent from the bank's ads in 2018, in smaller proportion than women in 2019, and even fewer in 2020. Men, in general, are a minority in the brand's representations, except in 2019. Black men are the least portrayed in all years of observation, especially in 2018, when they had no representation.

Table 5 – Numbers of people represented in Itaú's ads.

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2020	22	14	8	12	10	2
2019	36	17	19	14	9	5
2018	21	17	6	8	8	0

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Figure 5 – Percentages of people represented in Itaú's ads

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Vivo had four ads featuring Black people in 2018, five in 2018, and four in 2020. The trajectory of the brand's communication points to an oscillation in percentages of Black people's representations and a decreasing proportion in the portrayal of women in general (Table 6).

Table 6 – Numbers of people represented in Vivo's ads

Year	People (General)	Women (General)	Men (General)	Black People	Black Women	Black Men
2020	66	30	36	10	5	5
2019	12	9	3	8	6	2
2018	53	22	31	9	2	7

Source – Elaborated by the author.

Black people were the majority in 2019, which had predominantly female figures. However, they go back to being the minority in 2020 by a significant reduction. The number of Black people in 2018 and 2020 is proportionally very low. In the last year of analysis, nevertheless, there is parity between the representations of Black women and men, even though men, in general, were the majority.

Figure 6 – Percentages of people represented in Vivo's ads
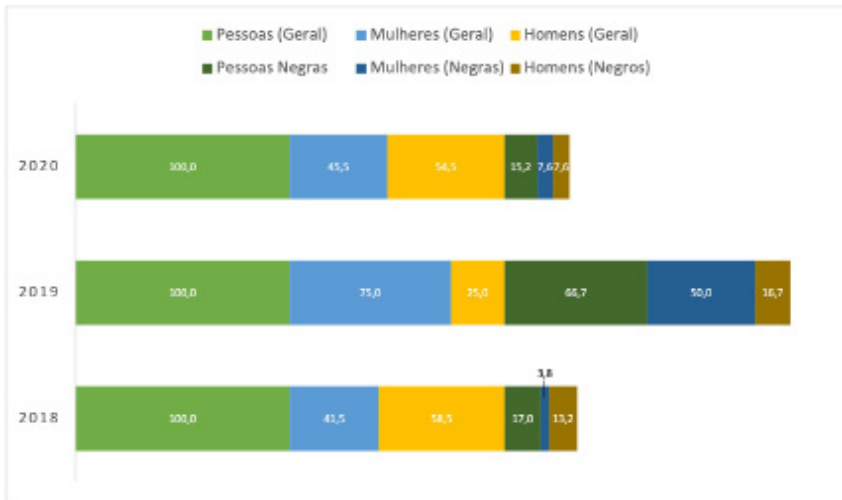
Source – Elaborated by the author.

Overall, the representation of Black women is more significant than of Black men. This factor is an important indicator for thinking about the intersectional dynamics involved (CRENSHAW, 1991). Considering

their presence only, Black men are the minority with rare exceptions. In the intersectionality of oppressions, Black men's ambiguous position in relation to White men and women, who exert distinct powers over them (FANON, 2008), is extensively discussed among Black feminism researchers (DAVIS, 2016; HOOKS, 2019).

Discussion on the collected material

Though we mentioned the low volume of reflections on racism in consumption studies in Brazil, it is important to acknowledge the works of researchers who have previously dedicated themselves to this issue. Other researchers have performed the work of verifying the presence of Black people in advertising over the years and presented relevant contributions on Brazilian racism in light of that object.

We highlight here the studies of Hasenbalg (1982), D'Adesky (2002), Corrêa (2006), Martins (2010), Corrêa (2011), Santos (2019), and Campos and Félix (2020) that, through their specific methodologies, analyzed these data to reflect on racist structures.

To debate the results of our assessment, we refer to these authors' final considerations and compare them to our results. Hasenbalg (1982, p. 106) indicated that "Despite attempts to the contrary, Black identity is basically defined by the White." Though our count did not stratify the set of people between White, Yellow, and indigenous, the fact that the Black population – a statistical majority – is not the most represented demonstrates how its identity is still defined in advertising as alterity. The author concludes: "Advertising is not oblivious to the symbolic dimension that rules racial relations in Brazil. It is an effective instrument for the perpetuation of a White aesthetic full of racial implications through action and omission." (HASENBALG, 1982, p. 112). The conclusion is still pertinent four decades later. Even for specific segments, black people's presence in ads is a more constant reality, but they are numerically portrayed as the minority. In other words, advertising continues to act in the ruling of social relations that

defend a whitened Brazil, denying the statistical data that places the black population as the majority.

In 2006, Laura Guimarães Corrêa's (2006) study on representations of Black people in advertising resulted in a significant analytical classification work. The researcher first resorted to quantitative analysis to carry out a qualitative analysis, using D'Adesky's (2002) methodology. Corrêa's research found a shy increase in the circulation of ads featuring Black people in 2004, 10 years after D'Adesky's assessment. However, when observing 2005, the number drops to a level just 0.1% higher than D'Adesky (2002) identified, presenting the same irregularity we found comparing ads in three years. "Reading these data as representative of advertising in other magazines and other media and comparing these numbers to the presence of Black people in the constitution of the Brazilian population, I can conclude that advertising, in general, continues to exclude this portion of the population." (CORRÊA, 2006, p. 63). The statement still holds true today, the difference being specific situations in which Black people occupy the place of universality, which are still insufficient to solve representation problems, as argued previously.

In the final considerations, Côrrea indicates that representations obey "plural modes of showing the Black body in advertising. There are many meanings, goals, and bodies represented. But common points in the way of showing this body made the separation into categories a facilitating resource for the analysis." (CORRÊA, 2006, p. 116). Comparing the author's comments, based on her research results, to the numerical analysis of this work demonstrates how few were advances in making representations more proportional to reality in advertising.

Martins (2010) analyzes ads displayed in Brazil between 1995 and 2005, starting with the hypothesis that Black people's representations in this media were still based on nineteenth-century racial stereotypes. The author also analyzes magazine advertising and, like this and other studies, points to the instability of representation percentages in the selected years. In his final considerations, the author is optimistic

about the shy increase in representations, despite noting that they are insufficient to signal structural changes: "We believe they were extremely modest in such a way that they cannot be considered signs of a radical rupture, or even of a totally new posture of the advertising segment with regards to the traditional ways of conveying the image of Black people." (MARTINS, 2010, p. 101). Once again, his conclusions serve our research, especially if we consider that representations of Black people decreased in 2019 and 2020, reaching smaller numbers than in 2018 for some brands.

Costa's (2010, p. 283) investigation analyzed ads published in *Veja* in 2009. In her final considerations, the author argues that "The denial of this other, the Black being, in a society ruled by the White morphological aesthetic, is the denial of explicit phenotypes in the Black body." She points to how the low rates of Black presence deny the existence of this population according to the reality's proportions, thus playing an essential role in maintaining racism and affecting the constitution of Black identity. The author continues: "Therefore, the fact that the visual image of the Black is shown disproportionally compared to the visual image of the White ends up ratifying the notion that the Black person is part of a minority group in a society that would be predominantly White." (COSTA, 2010, p. 289). In this sense, her work also acknowledges the limited representation of Black people as a practice that reinforces an ideology of denial of Black identity in Brazil.

Santos (2019, p. 270), when analyzing ads published after the implementation of the Statute of Racial Equality, concludes that "there was no quantitative evolution in the post-period with an average of 9.7% of Afro-descendant presence in the advertisements, that is, 2.7 percentage points higher than the 7% average observed in previous surveys." The author's conclusions also agree with our findings. He states, "ads seem to reproduce marginalized groups scarcely or, when they do, they fix limits, spaces, and roles familiarizing them with the current status quo." (SANTOS, 2019). Although our focus is not on the qualitative analysis of representations, the fact that representativeness is so low makes them

insufficient for the transformation of a racist imaginary. The author also states that this "reduces the possibility of producing new representations and reinforces those that already circulate [...], making it difficult for society to change." (SANTOS, 2019). Furthermore, in an analysis published as a book chapter in *Publicidade Anti-Racista*, Santos (2019) demonstrates there are no significant changes in the representation of Black people.

Final considerations

When looking at advertising as constituting and resulting from culture, we see the consolidated structures, inferring results from these phenomena. Now, what is the reason for the low rates of Black presence in ads? These rates are related to the limited presence of Black people in advertising agencies (HILÁRIO; FILHO; BARRETO, 2019). They are related to the limited participation of Black people in other sectors of advertising's production chain, such as photographers, producers, and so forth; the little presence, still, of Black people in higher education; the absence of discussions about race in the curricula of undergraduate courses in Advertising (DA SILVA, 2019). In other words, there are structures that allow racism to persist. However, such structures remain due to racist practices promoted by everyone who occupies the previously enumerated spaces and the racist ideologies that support them.

Theoretical reflections on racism and advertising's place as a socio-cultural element in a consumption society allow us to conclude how advertising is still far from healing the damage done to the construction of a Brazilian Black identity with its participation. Although racism is discussed more, the numbers indicate that it is not possible to assert the growth of the Black presence in advertising. The representation curve has an irregular trajectory, demonstrating how racism structures endure. These continue manifest, and the quantitative indicator of representativeness is still enough to measure the imbalance in representations of Blackness in advertising.

We resort to the conclusions obtained by authors who investigated racism in advertising in different periods to demonstrate how it is still not possible to assert significant advances towards advertising that intends to be anti-racist concerning the claim for a greater presence of Black people. As the numbers in preceding studies, our research shows the inconsistency of improvement, and the theoretical path seeks to problematize the reasons for the lack of such advances.

This work allows us to reflect on the role of culture, and advertising as a part of it, in affirming and maintaining racism. Combined with the theoretical discussion, the numbers are important indicators of a scenario in which structures remain immobile due to ideologies practiced over centuries, affecting the recognition of Black identity as something desirable.

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Em busca do match: dinâmicas interacionais no Tinder em contexto pandêmico

Looking for the "match": interactional dynamics in Tinder during the pandemic context

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Resumo: *Neste artigo, discutimos sobre as alterações nas formas de relacionamento mediadas pelo Tinder, tendo como objetivo compreender as implicações do contexto pandêmico de covid-19 nas interações. Para isso, nossas reflexões avançam em torno de dois eixos centrais: (1) os enredamentos das textualidades, as relações temporais e a contextualização; (2) os processos de plataformização e de midiatização. Metodologicamente, ancoramos nossas análises com base em uma interpretação sistemática à luz da rede textual mobilizada. De tal forma que conseguimos apreender como as dinâmicas da plataforma e como a pandemia potencializaram modificações nos relacionamentos interpessoais.*

Palavras-chave: *Tinder; pandemia; plataformização; midiatização; textualidades.*

Abstract: *In this article, we discuss the changes in the forms of relationship mediated by Tinder, aiming to understand the implications of the pandemic context of covid-19 in interactions. For this, our reflections move around two central axes: (1) the entanglement of textualities, temporal relations and context; (2) platformisation and mediatization processes. Methodologically, we anchor our analyzes based on a systematic interpretation in the light of the mobilized textual net. In such a way that we were able to understand how the dynamics of the platform and how the pandemic potentiated changes in interpersonal relationships.*

Keywords: *Tinder; pandemic; platformisation; mediatization; textualities*

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Introduction

The dissemination of apps for smartphones and other gadgets designed for different purposes, from new and precarious work forms to choosing what to eat and how to commute, and even establishing contact with people in opposite geolocations, changes substantially how we constitute ourselves as subjects and how we relate to the world. We also observe such changes in bonds of affection created by apps that constitute devices of specific subjectivization (DELEUZE, 1996; BRAGA, 2020), enunciation, and visibility. After all, various apps available on Google Play Store and Apple App Store aim to turn their interfaces into bridges for subjects with similar goals to meet and flirt (FERNANDES; PRIMO, 2020; PRIMO, 2020). Even if constituting their own space with well-delimited use rules, these apps, and the relationship dynamics they enable, are not a world apart, isolated from other forms of association.

In this sense, this article proposes to reflect on some changes implemented by Tinder since the onset of the public health emergency. As known, in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of Covid-19, caused by the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), was a pandemic. Hence, diverse health organisms established physical distancing protocols attempting to control the virus' spread so that the contact between subjects abruptly suffered a series of reconfigurations in everyday life. Consequently, social isolation measures also affected app relationship configurations, including those intended to make people "meet." Here, we intend to discuss changes in the proposition of Tinder-mediated relationships in the first seven months of the pandemic (therefore, between March and August 2020), observing modifications in the platform, its autoreferential discourses, and other textual relationship dynamics. To do so, we explore changes in the app's interaction propositions, interpreting them and engaging with signification forms and social processes implicated in platformization (MINTZ, 2019; D'ANDRÉA, 2020).

Tinder's textual entanglements in the pandemic: the new meanings of 'match'

"Dating, making friends, relationships, and much more. Come meet new people!"[3] Tinder's welcome sentence on app stores establishes a kind of antechamber for users to envision the possibilities offered by the company. Firmly based on providing new interactions, the app also works as a meaning production machine: for seeing and being seen. In this sense, there is an invitation for different people to produce an identity based on choices of profile information, integration with other platforms, geolocation possibilities, and relationship filtering based on specific interests. It is considered that the app's look suggests how its users should use it, for what purposes, and by whom. However, its use can be increased for other purposes or even diverted to unforeseen appropriations (LIGHT et al., 2018). Hence, actions, experiences, and meanings are also established based on each user's agency but mediated by the platform, which involves a series of algorithmic mechanisms, advertising schemes, the release of features, privacy policy, and terms of use.

However, it should be clarified that this type of media flirtation is not exclusive to the digital environment. On balance, if we briefly look back, we notice that the offer of encounters in romantic love-based relationships has permeated even television programs in Brazil over the last few decades. The old MTV Brasil channel presented shows whose purpose was to match couples, like "Fica Comigo" (2000-2003), "Beija Sapo" (2005-2007), "A Fila Anda" (2006-2008), and "LUV" (2011-2012). We also observe the insertion of television formats into entertainment shows, such as "Rola ou Enrola" (since 2011) and "Xaveco" (from 1997 to 2004 and back in 2019) on SBT and "Vai dar Namoro (since 2005) on Record TV. To participate, candidates had to send letters to the television channels describing what they intended by joining the show

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3   The excerpt is available in the app's description on the Google Play store. Available at: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.tinder&hl=pt_BR&gl=US. Accessed on October 15, 2020.

or segment. Today, with the internet, requests are received online. In these examples, it is essential to note that meetings or dates on television had the presence of spectators as a fundamental "third element" of the relationship in so far as interactions were shown to an audience who desired this kind of spectacle mediated by sociotechnical apparatus. On Tinder, the relationship does not necessarily involve a "spectator," and dates can also happen in "secret" or "confidentially," allowing other forms of flirting and relationships.

A long path preceded smartphone apps as these examples of television shows, which emerged in the 1980s, attest or the classified ads in print newspapers that have, for decades, presented people looking for love, dates, marriage, and other relationships in square-shaped notices amidst products and services for sale. If, as Leal (2018) points out, textualities are communication processes in which texts manifest themselves in historically situated socio-discursive practices, we see that Tinder is constituted from a long tangle of platform structures and subjects' agencies. For textualities to emerge, users must establish bonds between themselves and the platform. In the app, texts are fluid and dynamic spaces. However, this implies that textual networks are volatile in culture's time, history, and spaces, resulting from power relations. Above all, they necessarily involve the agency of human and non-human factors, be they mechanical or other kinds of organisms.

In this sense, we can consider Tinder and the Covid-19 contagion crisis as contexts for instituting interactions. These are not simply scenarios but *constitutive exteriorities* (RIBEIRO et al., 2017) amidst a polyphonic and dialogic reality, which stimulate interactions in different temporalities and online spaces whose logics are related to prescriptions and rules that are part of the internet. In this way, all textualities that emerge on these platforms and in these contexts constitute a feedback process in which one shapes the other, turning into "something that not only permeates discourses but gives them life, that dynamizes their materiality, that makes them precisely a practice." (RIBEIRO et al., 2017, p. 3).

Thus, reflecting on Tinder and its logic for establishing bonds in a specific temporality is a meaningful gesture. As we explained, starting any form of bonding on the platform changes according to the goal or success of getting a "match." The platform's logic is to make such meetings last longer, thus allowing the user to spend more time using the app and "collecting" matches. On Tinder, even if the intention is to start and maintain an app-mediated relationship, a relevant aspect is that meetings can also take place offline, outside this virtual environment. If physical meetings are unrecommended by health authorities and start to be perceived as a public health threat, what happens then? At the start of the pandemic, Tinder's official blog posted a message positioning the platform as space for staying together despite the distance: "And while it is not a moment to be meeting matches in person, we recognize that Tinder - a platform that is about connection - can play an important role as people navigate the uncertainty that COVID-19 has introduced into our everyday lives."[4] Since that emergency, the app has moved its platform structures to continue recruiting users.

We understand a specific form of categorizing certain mediators within the internet by platform. That is, "(re-)programmable digital infrastructures that facilitate and shape personalized interactions among end-users and complementors, organized through the systematic collection, algorithmic processing, monetization, and circulation of data" (POELL et al., 2020, p. 4). D'Andréa (2020) carefully works a set of concepts and methods in Platform Studies, encompassing broad perspectives for different areas. The researcher ponders that "[…] platforms are not mere intermediaries in which society makes itself visible and through which social interactions can be studied but environments that condition the emergence of a social." (D'ANDRÉA, 2020, p. 19). Hence, Facebook, Uber, and Netflix institute specific social arrangements and are the result of the diverse and often contradictory superimposed agencies they accommodate. Similarly, Tinder conditions

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4   Fragment of "A Message from our CEO: Connecting in the Time of COVID-19," published on March 24, 2020, the month when the pandemic was declared. Available at: https://www.tinderpressroom.com/Connecting-in-the-time-of-COVID-19. Accessed on October 10, 2020.

certain social organizations and involves various agencies that shape it in a constant feedback loop. The walkthrough method indicates that in order to analyze apps, we must pay attention "to its embedded sociocultural representations as much as its technological features or data outputs, which also have social and cultural influences." (LIGHT et al., 2018, p. 885). By applying this method, we see how technological processes configure and are configurated by cultural, economic, political, and social processes involving the app. Tinder undergoes different (re) modeling processes while mediating relationships, just as the app itself modifies relationships; in other words, it is a two-way street in constant influence. Therefore, it is interesting to turn to the apprehension of layers - governance, business models, infrastructures, datafication, and algorithms - that make up the platforms and associate them with Tinder.

By this gesture, we recognize in "business models" D'ANDRÉA, 2020, p. 36) that "one of the most evident aspects of platforms' commercial dimension is the increasing stimulus toward paid subscriptions that give access to exclusive contents without the interruption of ads and with extra features." According to Light et al. (2018), this scheme constitutes what they call an operating model. The premise is the same on business strategies and revenue sources. In a brief example about Tinder, the researchers observe that charging for extra features, like "rewind/redo," which lets the user go back to the profile they had passed on by tapping the screen, is a means to generate revenue for the platform. During the pandemic, Tinder made features available to give users a taste. The "passport" function, which we will explain in the next section, is a feature for subscribers but was offered to all users for a limited period.

Furthermore, Light et al. (2018) highlight that revenue generation may not be monetary but through data collection. The app collects data from the moment users register to the permissions they give, such as tracking their location. The advertising scheme also composes this complex layer. Tinder has online ads, which is an intriguing point for this discussion since, between screen swipes, there are moments

when users are invited to like or discard offers of products and services, meaning they will open the ad or not.

Amidst data collection, the datafication layer (D'ANDRÉA, 2020, p. 26), since Van Dijck's studies, considers "monitoring, prediction, and ranking processes" that connect to processing through algorithms. This layer represents a methodological challenge for analyzing apps (LIGHT et al., 2018). Big corporations behind platforms' development protect the algorithms' architecture and the means of collecting their users' information. Often, these are only revealed when organizations or some other factor pressures companies.

Turning to Tinder, the platform's *Algorithm 101* was explained, indicating that users frequently online have more opportunities to be shown on other people's screens. This scheme involves the interests signaled in the profile's construction, including age, geographic distance, gender identity, etc. According to the platform, its previous algorithm comprised a score system *Elo*, which graded each user based on how others interacted with their profile. However, as Tinder points out, such an arrangement is no longer used. This Elo configuration recalls different kinds of criticisms regarding the use of social networking apps and the popularity logic attached to such metrics as "likes," "comments," "reactions," "engagements," "flopping" – an emerging expression referring to someone's fails in platforms –, which can be damaging to subjects' health and behavior.

"Infrastructures" (D'ANDRÉA, 2020, p. 33) participate in the "articulations of communication flows and practices in digital environments." We observe how Google, one of the infrastructure platforms that form the Big Five, participates in Tinder, allowing users to create their app registration with their Google account, speeding up the entire entrance procedure. This points to the continual effervescence of the five companies that dominate different services and the crisscrossing between platforms as well.

One point worth stressing is the "Technological architecture" (LIGHT et al., 2018) that integrates the infrastructure layer. Even

ignored elements, meaning those that go unnoticed by users, like icons, colors, fonts, screen layout, etc., are part of the composition. The allusion to flame in the iconic representation of Tinder is not unpretentious, let alone using "tinder" (combustible substance or something that incites flames) as the brand name and the word "match," which refers both to exact counterpart and flammable material.

Finally, as D'Andréa (2020, p. 42) puts it, thinking about governance is realizing how "two governance documents are present, albeit in different formats, on all platforms: the 'terms of service' and the 'community guidelines.'" Users are made aware of such regulations on Tinder (Terms, Privacy Policies, and Cookies Policies) when installing the app. To create their account, they must accept and consent to these guidelines, which are also available on the platform's website and the app's settings. In short, rules and guidelines are intended to regulate users' actions (LIGHT et al., 2018), meaning regulatory relations of knowledge and power permeate these platforms. Therefore, we may reflect with Deleuze (1996) on how devices are regimes of visibility and enunciation, which include dimensions of power and lines of subjectivization. This thread of arrangements makes it possible to note certain disciplinary and control processes. These relations are, thus, crossed by various devices that form an endless plurality of textualities.

Hence, we understand this effervescent movement mediated by platforms designed for people to meet or establish bonds as a phenomenon of platformization of relationships. The mobilization of these applications during the pandemic seems to have swelled and gained an immensurable volume. It is worth pointing out that the main gestural movement made in interactions on the Tinder platform, swiping left or right to choose between subjects offered on the screen, reached a record of 3 billion daily actions on March 29, 2020. From this perspective, our analysis of Tinder during the pandemic observes what resources were provided to its users, internal logic, and changes in communication.

Pandemic Tinder: changes in interaction structures

We have seen that romantic relationships are surrounded by platformization processes that are socially transformed and changed by media. Firstly, like other media, the Tinder platform broadens spatial and temporal possibilities. Its specificities extend human reach. To exemplify, we can identify app settings that allow users to choose the maximum distance of their possible contacts up to a 161 km radius. In other words, the app mediates the longitudinal transit. Users can also select the "International" option to allow their profiles to be seen by people anywhere and vice-versa without the location-specific domain.

For those who want to control the distance and decide which city to find a "match," the platform has the "Passport" navigation feature, which is included in paid subscription plans called *Plus*, *Gold,* or *Premium*. In other words, individuals would be broadening their geographic possibilities, connecting with people from even more distant places. After the pandemic outbreak, between March 26 and April 30, the app released the "passport" as a tool to make contact anywhere. The following statement was sent as an alert:

> Social distancing doesn't have to mean disconnecting. And that's why we're making our Passport feature, which allows you to connect with anyone, anywhere in the world, free for all of our member through April 30. Now more than ever, having someone to talk to makes a world of difference. (*The Verge*, online, March 20, 2020)

The impossibility of physical movement imposed by Covid-19 is circumvented inside the platform through the dynamics of the function that allows users to select any location without border barriers. In such a case, we notice how relations are crossed by a media form, which continues to re-signify, constitute, and modify modes of interaction, temporalities, and spatialities. When health authorities discouraged or even prohibited physical meetings, the platform's initiative to release this tool to all users shows its attempt to continue offering a relevant service, offering other forms of affective bonds that would not necessarily unfold

in person in the same territory. The intense adaptation between social uses and platforms, typical of a media society, is noteworthy.

In an interview for the DigiLabour newsletter, Hepp (2020) states we are living in a *deep mediatization* stage "(…) in which all elements of our social world are intricately related to digital media and underlying infrastructures." Therefore, Tinder and many other platforms in the lifestyle category in app stores and that aim to create relationships show the results of how a society initiates encounters between its subjects. It is worth briefly mentioning that Poell et al. (2020) analyze platformization processes and exemplify the data infrastructure, the market, and the governance of the Play Store and App Store, which belong, respectively, to the duopoly Google and Apple, two of the five so-called Big Five companies centralizing many activities (D'ANDRÉA, 2020; VAN DIJCK, 2019).

In the same interview, Hepp (2020) exposes the phenomenon of "platform collectivities," which would be related to shared connections of similar interests that form a "common we," such as music playlists on the Spotify platform that unite users. Bearing that in mind, the collectivity on Tinder seems based on users' search for relationships, which, at first glance and in a reductive way, would be their unifying bond on the platform. However, more specifically, collectivities emerge based on mutual interests between their members, something strongly marked by the definition of preferences related to age, gender identity, location, and distance, besides personal taste information that appears in the biography of the user's public profile. Using algorithms, this delimitation of interests makes the suggestions that appear on the screen, also called "Discovery," show certain users and not others. Such delimitation of interests based on the abovementioned markers allows the emergence of this phenomenon of platform collectivity described by Hepp (2020). Strictly speaking, the selection of "likes" is based on subjective criteria regarding physical attributes, appearance, beauty, and mutual desires, which form and define other possible collectivities.

During this pandemic period, Tinder created two functions related to the desire to find similitudes between subjects and their wants. The platform launched the new features in August 2020 close to Single's Day. One tool called "interests" allows users to choose three to five pre-established categories: parties, e-sports, vegetarian, writer, world traveler, culture, military, photography, hyperactive, Apple fan, barbecue, sports, *sertanejo*, *caipirinha*, happy hour, blogs, new in town, samba, vegan, spirituality, musician, environment, gamer, skateboarder, snowboard, Netflix, tracking, sailing, tarot, tattoos, chat to avoid boredom, Disney, volunteer work, DJ, dog lover, TGIF, do it yourself, music, museum, quiz game, running, NBA, karaoke, hiking, football, golf, açai, films, podcasts, partygoer, painter, baking breads and cakes, tea, nightlife, drinks liquor, startups, student, cooking, swimming, wine, American football, composer, cat lover, surf, exhibitions, comedy, craft beer, astrology, nature, fashion, making friends, stand-up comedy, open hearted, reading, travel, street food, athlete, having a drink, yoga, walks, amateur chef, chef, singer, Big Brother Brazil, physical activity, arts, Instagram, actor/actress, introvert, musician, skiing, experimenting new things, artist, politics, foodie, gardening, vlogs, funk, camping, bored, futsal, brunch, gin and tonic, witch, cars, single parent, bars, model, cycling, dancing, outdoors, language exchange, CrossFit, picnic, coffee. We consider relevant to list the options Tinder grants users to show what the platform defines as interest criteria and how that definition relates to the discussion about creating a "collective we" based on affinities. These categories listed on the "interests" tool were available on October 12, 2020, on version 11.23.0 (11230094). It is possible to notice how the list keeps changing according to social conversations that generate themes and topics of interest for a pandemic match. Certainly, in the examined period, BBB would be a recurring theme, but it would lose strength in other moments and could be replaced by another.

The other feature, "Tell me More," has the purpose of presenting, on the same screen where all the user's photos are, a response to random questions suggested by the platform. More precisely, the user must

complete a sentence initiated by the platform. The sentence appears in image format. Below, we present the suggested phrases.

Figure 1 - Screenshot of the "Tell me More" feature

Source: Tinder (version 11.23.0 (11230094)).

We agree that these categorizations implemented by Tinder work as intermediaries in forming this collectivity. When users categorize themselves, for example, under "astrology," other users can choose to "like" and possibly "match" them based on their similarity. Hence, produced textualities can comprise this interest, promoting the start of conversations or the (dis)continuity of bonds. However, these layers function also as a narrative identity that joins subjects, platforms, and social agenda themes.

Video conferencing is another Tinder feature developed during the pandemic. The "Face to Face" feature, launched on July 8, 2020, in some locations around the world, allows users to consent to video calls with their match and deactivate it if they do not want it. The feature has rules of use, splits the screen equally between both users, and requests them to evaluate the quality of the call at the end.

In emergency times of conferences, meetings, and different sorts of encounters mediated by video call platforms, the new feature seems to be a strategy to keep users for longer periods on Tinder. However, as Zizek (2020) indicates, this is a growing phenomenon since our lives are becoming ever more digital. Such considerations resonate with Preciado's (2020) observations that closely compile the changes on the planet that had begun much prior to the pandemic.

> Today, we are going from a written society to a cyber-oral society, from an organic society to a digital society, from an industrial economy to an immaterial economy, from a disciplinary and architectural form of control to micro-poetic and media-cybernetic forms of control. In other texts, I called pharmaco-pornographic the type of management and production of the body and sexual subjectivity within this new political configuration. The contemporary body and subjectivity are no longer solely regulated by their passage through disciplinary institutions (the school, the factory, the military headquarters, the hospital, etc.), but also, and above all, by a set of biomolecular, micro-prosthetic, digital, and data transmission technologies. (PRECIADO, 2020, p. 6-7)

In line with this quote, this article's analysis of a fragment of multiple textualities developed in relations mediated by Tinder in pandemic times indicates that the platform constitutes a form of managing bodies, regulating modes of interaction and appearance through a range of digital technologies. Tinder's logic relies on the exposure of subjects in a kind of menu. Through selecting criteria, which resemble "ingredients," a vast range of options of subjects is presented for "likes." As we showed, collectivities emerge among users based on specific interests and similar searches.

It is worth considering that we are dealing with a platform with capitalist interests that surround it. This app is just one of the products of the Match Group organization, of which it is a part, but the most popular on a worldwide scale. It involves data collection at all stages of use, advertising, algorithms, and a series of elements, as we have underlined in the layers of the platform.

Final considerations

Since the pandemic emergency, Tinder implemented new features and released existing ones to all subscribers as a way of attracting users and making them stay longer on the platform. Focusing on the first seven months of the Covid-19 outbreak and grounded in a reflection about media textualities, we show interpersonal relationships mediated by the platform suffered changes through the implementation of features up to that moment restricted or inexistent and, fundamentally, by restrictive public health measures, such as social isolation, to contain the spread of the coronavirus. The discussions we resort to show the platformization of relationships expanded in this context, while new modes of interaction joined existing ones on Tinder to boost the search for "matches." However, both axes in discussions point to considerations about market strategies carried out on the app, which took different forms to involve people and attract attention.

If we go back to Hepp's (2020) final considerations on the interview, the researcher states that "The crises of recent years – from "fake news" to the Coronavirus and the false information about it propagated digital platforms – have shown us that these companies are much more profit-driven than they are oriented to the common good." This statement potently resonates with the reflection on the reasons that led Tinder to make paid features, which are a source of financial revenues, freely available throughout the world. We regard this as a market and marketing strategy to attract users and capture them more intensely through possibilities for spending more time logged on the app. It is also like a game in which users can become paid subscribers if they enjoy the extra

appetizers during a gratuity period, which is a sales success for a company. Connected to the capitalist logic, we observe the "Face to Face" feature was one of the platform's strategic moves to consolidate itself amidst the steep rise of videoconferencing communication during the pandemic. The user thus stays in the app longer, which results in economic benefits for the company. Furthermore, it is essential to consider that we are facing a platform formed by layers of governance, data, algorithms, business models, and infrastructures (D'ANDRÉA, 2020), creating a deep complexity. In pandemic times, with the considerable increase in the use of platforms, as three billion screen swipes for "like" attest, it is necessary to pay attention to uses and incorporations in each of these spaces.

We consider it is possible to read this phenomenon through the works of various authors (MATTOS; JANOTTI; JACKS, 2012) who approach the concept of mediatization insofar as "social institutions and cultural processes have changed character, function and structure in response to the omnipresence of media," even in a pandemic context (HJARVARD, 2012, p. 54). On the other hand, platforms have also looked for ways to continue capturing the attention of users by adapting and creating alternative means of connection. This way, it is worth highlighting how platforms and relationships, less than static categories, can be observed through the lens of mediatization as articulated instances in permanent negotiation.

Hence, online platforms may be a way for us to deal with pandemic restrictions. We are social beings in constant and infinite interactions. We produce textualities and immerse ourselves in so many textual networks that continue to constitute our experiences as much as we constitute these networks. Social distancing has led to a profusion of adaptations and rearrangements of our daily lives. Regulating health bodies suggested recommendations that involve distancing, lack of in-person contact, and preventive measures to inhibit the spread of Covid-19. Having said that, we observe movements that, through platforms, outwitted the geographic distance in online ways. Hence, the context for establishing

bonds intensified the use of digital media to mediate contact. We reassert that, in a world where textualities intertwine in so many media spaces, the pandemic contributed to strengthening the platformization of the social and boosting the development of more resources in the platforms. The contexts of pandemic and platformization stimulate each other, in the sense that each one constitutes action movements in the other.

> There is no way to separate texts from communication forms, complexities, and cadence with other texts. The fabric is on the loom; from the loom it goes to the hands; from the hands to the counter; from the counter to the client; from the client to the dress; from the dress to the party; from the party to the kiss, and so forth. The fabric explains itself in the weaving relationship. (ANTUNES et al., 2018, p. 43)

While the textualities of relationships mediated by Tinder may or may not extend as far as the researchers' metaphor, they have taken other paths. Flirts, conversations, and meetings changed. The pandemic may have caused changes in the forms of interaction between subjects and the world. However, this means reconfiguring, reweaving, and remodeling. There are many gaps and fissures on Tinder and in this pandemic context since we are amidst processes of platformization that involve everyday life, experiences, and the possibility and fear of death. In this article, we aimed to explore some of the changes implemented by this specific app, looking to understand possible new rationales for matches in a new and unpredictable context.

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Práticas de consumo de smartphones no contexto de pandemia de Covid-19: um olhar etnográfico para as apropriações das mulheres de Maputo – Moçambique

Smartphone consumption practices in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic: an ethnographic look at women's appropriations in Maputo – Mozambique

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Resumo: *O presente artigo é resultado de uma pesquisa etnográfica realizada com mulheres moçambicanas moradoras da cidade de Maputo. Como objetivo, buscamos compreender algumas mudanças nas práticas de consumo de smartphones no contexto de pandemia de Covid-19. Ao longo da pesquisa, que iniciou com trabalho de campo presencial, em 2019, e passou para um segundo momento de etnografia para a internet (HINE, 2015), foram realizadas observação participante, observação nas mídias sociais e entrevistas em profundidade. Nossa análise compreende que, em um cenário de pandemia, os smartphones tornaram--se possibilitadores do ensino remoto para as estudantes universitárias – mesmo com a desigualdade de acesso – e auxiliaram as interlocutoras da pesquisa na construção de novas fontes de renda.*

Palavras-chave: *consumo; smartphones; Moçambique; pandemia; Covid-19.*

Abstract: *The article is the result of an ethnographic research carried out with Mozambican women living in the city of Maputo. As an objective, we seek to*

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understand some changes in smartphone consumption practices in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the research, which began with face-to-face fieldwork, in 2019, and moved to a second stage of ethnography for the internet (HINE, 2015), participant observation, observation in social media and in-depth interviews were carried out. Our analysis understands that in a pandemic scenario, smartphones became the enablers of remote learning for university students – despite the inequality of access – and that they helped the research interlocutors to build new sources of income.

Keywords: *Consumption; Smartphones; Mozambique; Pandemic; Covid-19*

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to understand some changes in smartphone consumption practices in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic through the accounts of Mozambican women, who reside in the city of Maputo, the country's capital. This work results from ethnographic research that began in 2019 with a six-month internship in Mozambique at the Pedagogical University of Maputo through the Projeto Educomunicação Intercultural, sponsored by the Programa Abdias Nascimento – Capes. The research, which started with in-person fieldwork in 2019 and then, in a second ethnography moment, moved to the internet (HINE, 2015), involved participant observation, observation through social media, and in-depth interviews (in-person and remote over Google Meet and WhatsApp). This article presents the accounts of eight research interlocutors whose names are changed here to preserve their image and privacy. Five of them are university students, who live at the student residence hall, and three are workers: a cleaning assistant, a secretary, and a residential concierge guard. Contact with students began at the university residence hall during the research internship, and communication with the other interlocutors happened through referral.

Studies on smartphone and social media consumption are emerging research themes, especially at the interface between the areas of Communication and Anthropology (SILVA; MACHADO, 2020). Comprehending the different uses of smartphones and the distinct forms of social media appropriation is a path to increasingly understand our world's cultural diversity since contents shared on these media (MILLER et al., 2019) and the way people transform smartphones' functionalities (MILLER et al., 2021) reflect our society and show how the world can subvert programmed features of devices.

We understand consumption as a cultural process (SLATER, 2002) responsible for establishing and maintaining social relationships and giving expression to people, their localities, families, and cultures (DOUGLAS; ISHERWOOD, 2013). We live in a society of consumption (BARBOSA, 2004) where consuming goods is crucial not

to satisfying our physiological needs and fulfilling everyday demands but to communicating with others, maintaining relationships, and defining and sustaining our identities (ROCHA, 2009).

Archambault (2017), when writing about cell phone consumption in Inhambane, Mozambique, highlights that the feeling of everyday uncertainty is very present among young research interlocutors – material uncertainty, related to subsistence and the future, and uncertainty related to doubts concerning everyday relationships, culturally and historically shaped by the marginal position the region occupies in the global economy. In many cases, this uncertainty arouses improvisation in subsistence practices and new ways of being and relating through cell phones.

In the present research's case, the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic increased uncertainties among youths, though not exclusively so, related to health and sociability issues, especially regarding the continuation of studies and finding income sources. The first recorded case of Covid-19 in Mozambique was on March 22, 2020. After a few days, on March 31, President John decreed the country was in a state of emergency, even though there were only eight confirmed cases of the disease. With this decree, schools, universities, some businesses, and other services shut down, and people's circulation and social contact became restricted. Decisions in the country were swift as a form of prevention since Mozambique's health system has many limitations. There are few hospitals and even less equipment, like ventilators that patients who reach the disease's severe stage need.

Mozambique is in the South of the African continent and has borders with South Africa, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, and Tanzania. In many moments during the period of the pandemic, borders were closed. The country's capital, Maputo, is in the extreme south of Mozambique and has 1,122,607 inhabitants, according to demographic indicators in the Boletim de Indicadores Demográficos da Cidade de Maputo (2019).

In Mozambique, like in many other countries, people's lives had to change suddenly. They had to reconfigure traditional forms of social interaction, adopting social distancing and mask use (CAMBRÃO; JULIÃO, 2020). Without classes in schools, Mozambican television channels began airing educational content in the mornings to assist in children's learning. In some higher education courses, university lecturers sent readings and exercises over WhatsApp and in class groups created on social media. With churches' doors shut, some ministers began holding their service online, while some religious organizations acquired space on television. However, implementing online activities and work-from-home in the country is hard because less than 7% of the population have access to the internet, and only 4.4% to a computer (CENSO MOÇAMBIQUE, 2017). Access to the internet and social media is unequal. Telecom companies charge high prices, and connectivity is still a reality accessible to few.

During the period of social isolation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, the smartphone became, for many people around the world, the entirety of their social communication (MILLER et al., 2021) and a school, a home, the place where we live and learn. Moreover, we highlight that, to the Mozambican women who participated in this research, the pandemic meant changing their smartphones to models with more storage capacity, an increase in internet use and spending, besides needing to make extra income through their own enterprises, having the smartphone as a collaborator.

The present article has three sections, besides the introduction and final considerations. In the first section, we approach perceptions of another time, interlocutors' smartphone uses in 2019, before the arrival of the new virus, and the first changes in the context of the pandemic. In the second, we point to the smartphone's relationship as an enabler of remote learning during the isolation period caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. And in the last section, we approach the new enterprises and ways of learning and making money thought by research participants during the pandemic.

Perceptions from another time: smartphone uses before and at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic

In 2019, the streets of Maputo had crowds, its collective transports (called "*chapas*") were full, and schools and universities had plenty of children, adolescents, and adults studying. Smartphone users were, in part, concerned about getting internet megabytes to communicate with friends and family, especially on WhatsApp and Facebook, and worried if megabytes would be enough to listen to music and watch some videos on YouTube. Though the last Mozambique Census (2017) indicates that only a small portion of the population has access to the internet, the number of people connected has been increasing in recent years, above all, in the province of Maputo.

The university students who were our research interlocutors used the internet relatively little, accessing it for only a few hours per week. They dedicated a good deal of their days to college, commitments related to church, their university residence, and everyday activities like going to the supermarket, cooking, meeting friends, and so forth. Smartphones were used more for entertainment and communication, for listening to music on YouTube, looking at and exchanging photos, and chatting with friends and relatives, especially those living in other provinces of the country.

Most research participants did not feel the need to be constantly present on social media. Some interlocutors spent days without internet on their cell phones either because they did not have metical (Mozambican currency) to "feed" their phones or because they did not feel the need to be connected. They had other work routines that occupied their days, during which smartphones emerged as a complement for limited communications, leisure, and finding specific information.

Eugenia, a 23-year-old university student, used just WhatsApp on her smartphone to chat only with friends (many of them living in the province of Zambezia) because it was more economical. According to her, she did not make audio or video calls: "In these conversations, we used just texts or shared images. I could go days without using

it and without worrying about the news I'd find as soon as I opened [WhatsApp]."

WhatsApp is one of the most used social media in the country because it requires less mobile data. Some telecom companies even create special offers that allow consumers to use the app even after their internet megabytes are over. The second social media research participants most use is Facebook. Few of them had Instagram, reporting they would need too much internet to use it.

Before the pandemic, interlocutors who worked, like Alima, 38 years old, would often connect to their workplace's Wi-Fi network, which allowed them to access social media without spending their data plan. Not many establishments have a Wi-Fi connection in Mozambique, and it is not common among most of the population, especially lower-income people, to access wireless internet at home. Since there are few Wi-Fi networks in the country, most users access the internet through mobile data usually offered by telecom companies such as Movitel, Mcel, and Vodacom.

In the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, many working women had their routines changed, and many lost their jobs. Barbosa and Paiva (2020), researching working women during the pandemic, identified that, in this world scenario, social inequalities intensified, and work insecurity increased. Moreover, the authors also point to a loss in sociability and an increase in domestic work on the part of women (BARBOSA; PAIVA, 2020). In the present research case, we lost contact on WhatsApp with some of our interlocutors in determined moments after the arrival of the pandemic.

Other research participants who worked before the beginning of the pandemic - like Genifa, a 33-year-old concierge at a private security company, and Soninha, a 43-year-old cleaning assistant and secretary - also used smartphones to exercise maternal care and control (NICOLACI-DA-COSTA, 2006; SILVA, 2011; MADIANOU; MILLER, 2012) when they could not be home with their kids. Genifa worked in shifts of 24 hours and took 24 hours off. This workload made

her stay away from home and her kids for very long. In this case, she used the smartphone to be present in her family's everyday life even when she was physically distant.

For some Mozambican women, the arrival of the pandemic meant losing their jobs, lack of metical for subsistence, and, therefore, less internet and social media use. Other women, like the university students, had to use their smartphones more, especially to take classes. They reported changing cell phone carriers or buying extra chips from different carriers: "I changed my carrier. I saw that the one I was using, Vodacom, had expensive offers and that Movitel, the one I'm using now, has better offers that last longer." "Vodacom offered me free text messages on WhatsApp." "I use more or less three [chips]. But lately, I use Movitel more for the internet and Vodacom for communicating."

Rosália, a 22-year-old student, believes that, at the start of the pandemic, phone carriers changed their prices significantly, providing special offers to unburden their clients' pockets so that consumers could balance their economic life and continue using the internet. However, after a year of pandemic, companies began to triple their prices. For that reason, the interlocutor started to use the services of two carriers: "For the internet, I use Movitel. Vodacom is too expensive currently. Especially for the internet, one is more accessible than the other."

Caila, a 24-year-old university student, says that scams on social media and cell phone thefts increased a lot with the pandemic: "People now stick at nothing to get money." Her cell phone was stolen in January 2021, but she had to create the conditions to get a new one in three days since, "without a cell phone, I could not do my things or even continue to take the online classes I was having. Everything stopped."

"No cell phone, no classes": smartphones as enablers of distance education

With the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shutting of the collective spaces of schools and universities, smartphones acquired

extreme importance and served as allies of distance education. In Mozambique, according to research participants' accounts, WhatsApp was the most important social media for the continuity of undergraduate studies. Lecturers created WhatsApp groups for each class in each discipline. Everyone joined the group at the scheduled time and started interacting about the content, "like a normal conversation in a group of friends," as a research participant described. Contents, books, and class themes were previously sent to the WhatsApp group and over email. Students had to read the text beforehand to discuss the theme during class in the group. Sometimes lecturers also sent audio messages with instructions, but that required students to have more internet megabytes to access the recording.

Telecom companies, like the previously mentioned Vodacom, created special offers with free text messages on WhatsApp, which allowed consumers to use the media, sending and receiving texts, even after their credits were over. For this reason, many lecturers agreed that communication should be mainly through text to guarantee more participation. However, according to a student, groups sometimes became messy: "It was a mess, because [students'] comments sometimes were the same, so many messages that entered had the same content." Video lessons had little acceptance because of costs and were regarded, according to a research participant, as non-inclusive.

Caila says online classes differed according to each lecturer. Many preferred using WhatsApp and sending PDF files to groups, but some used Zoom or Google Meet. However, these video and audio platforms, which all students were supposed to access at the scheduled time, ended up excluding many of them. According to Caila, besides internet expenses, some cell phones did not support Zoom and Google Meet due to storage space. Some students gave up on these disciplines, and others tried to borrow cell phones from neighbors, friends, and relatives to follow classes.

WhatsApp's ally was email, which lecturers and students also used for sending and receiving materials. Sometimes, lecturers sent a book, a text,

or an activity on WhatsApp but asked students to send their assignments – which varied between summaries, tests, and other forms of evaluation – over email. Even if assignments were sent over email, a student says lecturers always chose to make the material available on WhatsApp too because every student could have access to it on the app.

Eugênia highlights she had trouble adapting to online education at the beginning of the pandemic since she was not used to staying "connected to the internet." Her smartphone used to remain off or without internet access for days. She used to credit 80 meticals per month on her device's account. With the need to be online, especially for college classes, she started recharging her smartphone with about 400 meticals per month, spending five times more on internet costs. Furthermore, Eugenia had to buy a new smartphone because her old model did not let her follow classes in real-time, even on WhatsApp.

> Since classes were online, because of the slowness of my old cell phone, I lost some of the things that teachers said. I got messages from groups, friends, and also messages from the class. So, because of the high number of messages that my cell phone received at the same time, it could not take it, and it got slower and slower. So, when I read it, my colleagues were already in other questions. Once, in one of the classes, the teacher asked me to answer a question, she directed it to me, and I only read it after she had passed it on to three other colleagues, and they had answered it. It looked like ignorance on my part, but it was because I really hadn't seen it. And there were many other times when my cell phone turned off in the middle of class. (Eugênia, 23 years old, June 2021)

In the second semester of 2020, Eugênia says some lecturers had already started using university platforms to make materials and activities available, seen as students had become more acquainted with online education and more responsible to look for content on their own in the platform without needing the constant interaction with the lecturer.

Dayara, a 26-year-old student, says that what most changed for her during the pandemic was her relationship with her college and studies. "Before the pandemic, we didn't use these apps [Zoom and Google

Classroom] I mentioned to study. Classes were only in-person." At the beginning of the pandemic, Dayara says it was quite hard to use apps; it took her some time to learn how to use them, and she is still learning. Her lack of technology skills was a negative aspect of distance education. Nevertheless, the student sees some positive aspects of online studies: "We saved the money from making photocopies, printing assignments, and transportation." Miller et al. (2021) understand this ambivalence between negative and positive aspects in the use of technologies exists since accounts generally point out that smartphones simultaneously create benefits and problems.

Susilawati and Supriyatno (2020), researchers in the city of Malang, Indonesia, carried out a study with university students in the context of the pandemic and confirmed that WhatsApp groups gathering students and teachers during that period brought pedagogical benefits. Besides supporting online discussions (and, as in the present research case, enabling them), authors examined how WhatsApp groups are capable of increasing students' motivation in the online learning process and accelerating knowledge construction through collaborative learning. Some of the principal motivators for using this social media to pedagogical ends, as examined by Susilawati and Supriyatno (2020), were that most students could download class materials since downloading is free; WhatsApp can be used to share comments, texts, images, videos, audios, and documents; and it allows the easy creation and dissemination of information and knowledge through multiple resources.

Research in Brazil in the pandemic scenario, like Stevanim's (2020) and Santos and Santos' (2021) works, points to social and digital inequalities that ended up causing even more exclusion in education for many youths in the period of distance learning. Though a larger portion of the population in Brazil (74% according to the 2019 TIC Domicílios survey) has internet access compared to the reality in Mozambique, millions of children and youths still live in households that have no internet access, no computer or smartphone, and in areas with no cell phone connection.

Moreover, some students do not have an appropriate space to study or need to share mobile devices with other people in the family (STEVANIM, 2020). Therefore, even if smartphones are essential to enable education or the only way available to meet this emergency demand, we must stress this form of teaching should not be seen as a "savior solution" (STEVANIM, 2020) as it remains exclusionary and unequal.

Santos and Santos (2021) analyzed the implications of teachers and students using WhatsApp as an education and communication tool during the pandemic in Brazil and, in their results, pointed to the benefits and disadvantages of using the app. Among the pros are increased student engagement, the app's easy accessibility in financial and technical terms, students' quick access, and convenience in the exchange of pedagogical materials, topics, and assignments, among other things. Among the disadvantages they mentioned are the negative impact on teachers' quality of life – overburdened by work – and access inequality because some of the students still do not have any device connected to the internet or do not have mobile data and Wi-Fi available (SANTOS; SANTOS, 2020).

When there were fewer Covid-19 cases in Mozambique in the first semester of 2021, in-person classes at universities returned interspersed, for a limited number of students, and for shorter hours. Nura, a 21-year-old student, says, "According to preventive measures, we cannot spend much time in classrooms." So, most teaching continued to be remote. Students had to study at home, and classes were more objective, with limited-time sessions for questions and answers.

However, with the arrival of the Covid-19 Delta variant in the country, confirmed in June 2021, cases increased alarmingly, and universities once again suspended in-person classes. In July 2021, Mozambique had a record number of confirmed Covid-19 cases and hospitalizations, according to news reported by DW[3]. Furthermore, a study carried out

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3   News published on July 11, 2021, by DW. Available at: https://www.dw.com/pt-002/covid-19-mo%C3%A7ambique-com-n%C3%BAmero-recorde-de-infe%C3%A7%C3%B5es-e-internamentos/a-58230399. Access in July 2021.

by the Tony Blair Institute (also reported by DW), published on July 6, 2021, showed that Mozambique was the African country with the highest growth in Covid-19 cases in the last two weeks of June, with an increase of 172%. This reality made uncertainty about classes take on a new proportion, returning smartphones to the role of enabling education in the pandemic (without losing sight of the exclusion they also entail).

"The internet is the basis of my business:" learning and selling through social media in Covid-19 times

When Mozambique declared a state of emergency for the first time in March 2020, and diverse sectors drastically stopped, many people had to create different forms of making money, supplementing their incoming, and supporting themselves. In this scenario, smartphones and social media access also allowed them to learn new services, as research interlocutors described.

Despite being a university student and living in a student residence hall, Caila used to make Mozambican sweets to sell since 2019 (I tried her *gulabos* and *malambe* yogurt while in Maputo). However, after March 2020, Caila expanded her sales, moved on to making sweets and savories on demand, began thinking about a career as a pastry chef, and even started selling clothes, shoes, and accessories via WhatsApp and Facebook.

> As they say, "every cloud has a silver lining!" The pandemic had a significant impact, but I'll look at the positive part. Thanks to the pandemic, I realized I have a talent for business. I realized that "yes, I can be an entrepreneur." I realized that I could use WhatsApp and Facebook to publicize my business. Thanks to the pandemic, I started thinking about becoming a pastry chef. I started spending more time on WhatsApp to assist my clients, and it has been like that till today. (Caila, 24 years old, July 2021)

Because of her sales, Caila started using her smartphone and social media more. She said her clients sometimes call her early in the

morning, around 7 a.m., asking her to log on to WhatsApp because they want to order something or need information. During the pandemic, internet expenses increased to up to 300 meticals per month (excluding expenses with phone calls and text messages). In the interlocutors' words, "I started using the internet more. The internet is the basis of my business. That's why I must have megabytes always."

Rosália, 22 years old, also felt the need to create a business after the onset of the pandemic.

> Without a doubt, it was a result of the pandemic. The first time our country had a state of emergency, it was a radical stop. I did nothing for a long time. Schools and churches were closed (and these were the places that kept me busy the most). That made me see the need to do something to occupy myself and, at the same time, earn some money. (Rosália, 22 years old, July 2021)

The business Rosália created offers services like flower bouquets, sweet bouquets, sweet trays, and the so-called "party in a box," which is a gift basket with fruits, sweets, cakes, champagne bottles, and wine glasses for birthdays or other special occasions. According to the interlocutor, she had always had the desire to make handiworks involving things like scissors, glue, paper, and so forth. Given her wish to create this business, Rosália resorted to YouTube to learn and perfect skills to assemble her products. On YouTube, she typed "how to make boxes with recycled material" or "how to make artificial flowers" to search for inspiration. Most videos were on Brazilian and Asian channels, which she believed were Korean. She advertised her products mostly on Facebook and WhatsApp. Hence, her smartphone and social media use increased significantly. Before the pandemic, the interlocutor did not like social media and only used them in cases of "extreme necessity."

Currently, she must stay online to see peoples' reactions to posts on her products and to attend to clients. Her expenses acquiring megabytes also increased considerably: "Previously, a 20-metical recharge [per week] was enough for me, and I also didn't mind if I didn't have megabytes. Now, getting 50 MT for just one day is pretty normal."

Studies by Guimarães et al. (2020), Santos (2020), and Abreu et al. (2021) analyzed the Brazilian entrepreneurial scenario in the pandemic context, pointing to the steep growth of the so-called "entrepreneurs by need" and "subsistence entrepreneurship." Amidst a scenario of health and economic crisis, poverty, and unemployment, many people had to start their own businesses to try to cope with financial difficulties and have a source of income for their subsistence.

In turning to entrepreneurship as a possibility to overcome and solve problems (GUIMARÃES et al., 2020) during a moment of social distancing, smartphones, the internet, and social media became essential for communicating, advertising, reaching consumers, and selling. Based on Grohmann (2020), Santos (2020) stresses mobile technologies are at the center of transformations in the organization of work, especially in the sphere of services, since the number of app deliverers and drivers grew significantly during the first year of the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the precarity that characterizes activities in this sector of the informal economy, this was the only form of subsistence for many.

Abreu et al. (2021) underline the fact that the increase in poverty, unemployment, and the impact of Covid-19 was even bigger among the Black population in Brazil. Black entrepreneurs, according to a survey by Sebrae (2020), also had a lower digitization level in their companies and used social media and the internet in their sales less than White entrepreneurs. In a society where platforms produce the social structures we live in (VAN DIJCK; POELL; DE WALL, 2018), we must understand the social inequalities, racial injustices, discrimination, and racism related to technologies and that racialized codes and algorithms permeate many of the difficulties that Black entrepreneurs face (BENJAMIN, 2019).

Silva (2011), researching the impacts of the incorporation of cell phones by women in poverty in a city in the south of Brazil, found that the cell phone was essential for self-employed women to obtain new jobs and generate the necessary income to support their families. At the time of that study, there were no smartphones, and social media use on cell

phones was scarce. But Silva's interlocutors, who worked sewing or re-selling lingerie and beauty products, used phone calls and text messages to inform prices, handle orders, and schedule deliveries. In a distinct way, but also concerning the use of cell phones to obtain income, Horst and Miller (2006) observed that economically underprivileged Jamaicans occasionally used their cell phones as income generators by requesting financial support from friends and relatives in a better economic situation.

Turning back to Maputo, Eugênia, also during the pandemic, used Google and YouTube to learn to make natural oils to sell – coconut, moringa, eucalyptus, and ginger oil, among others. With the help of friends, she created a brand and a logo, took pictures, and started posting images of her products on her WhatsApp status. Moreover, Eugênia also started posting on her status videos and photos of braids because client demand for getting braids done at home increased due to the pandemic situation and social distancing. So, she applied her knowledge and experience braiding, something she has done ever since she was little and that is so cultural, to supplement her income.

The YouTube videos she used for learning were all from Brazil. In fact, Eugênia watched a channel from Angola, but it did not please her because "the lady doing it had a daughter, and, while she was explaining, the daughter kept calling for her and screaming. That bothered me. And I didn't finish it." The student considers that videos from Brazilian YouTube channels are more didactic and teach better.

Hartley's (2009) and Miller et al.'s (2019) studies show a type of YouTube consumption for learning and expanding knowledge. Hartley (2009) understands that YouTube, with all its uncommitted content, often focused on fun and entertainment, "is simultaneously the complex system in which digital literacy can find new purposes, new publishers, and new knowledge" (HARTLEY, 2009, p. 172). The author writes that, in times of YouTube, "we can do it ourselves." Since the number of people publishing content on the platform increased (HARTLEY, 2009), the number of people using YouTube to learn various types of

content increased as well. According to the researcher, now it is possible to have an enabling social technology that can be accessed by a big part of the population, in which individuals can navigate through broad networks, moved by personal reasons and preferences, at the same time as contributing for the expansion of knowledge and possibilities, as was the case with our research interlocutors.

Spyer (2018) and Miller et al. (2019) state that, in their research fields, educational videos on YouTube were routinely used as sources of tutorials for different demands and taught professional skills, especially for low-income youths and workers. This form of learning proved to be quite effective for these populations and sufficient for youths to find jobs and achieve some social mobility. In various countries researched by Miller et al. (2019), YouTube appeared as an important and growing mode of informal education, a fact that we also identified among women in Maputo, especially in the pandemic scenario.

We can also consider research interlocutors' accounts at the interface between creative work and precariousness. In writing about the relationship between work, creativity, and platform capitalism in conversation with Van Dijck, Poell and De Wall (2018), Costa (2020) comprehends that current work modalities have ever more flexible, informal, and precarious categories. During the pandemic, the number of informal, self-employed, freelance, digital, and remote workers increased. Costa's (2020) research shows that digital and communication technologies, like smartphones and laptops, can help "in the solitary enterprise of merit and success" because, through them, we connect and communicate to make our work operational in the internet space, while also increasing informality, making services precarious, and reducing work fees.

However, Costa (2020) indicates the importance of avoiding reductionisms, since the emergence of new technologies and systems is not directly related to precariousness. According to the author, scientific, technological, and communicational advances, in many cases, collaborate to the development of new professions amidst a context of

unemployment, potentializing activities and facilitating joint actions in different spaces. Informal work, learning, and sales on social media become relevant alternatives in a country that has a high unemployment rate and where access to formal education is difficult for women. Over the last years, from 2014 to 2020, Mozambique's unemployment rate varied between 20.7% and 17.5% (INE, 2020). The country's National Institute of Statistics (INE) acknowledges the limitation of its research data, seen as most of the Mozambican population lives off the informal economy and subsistence activities.

Final considerations

Amidst uncertainties, losses, grief, distancing, and growing social and digital inequalities brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, the accounts of research interlocutors show us there are forms of resisting and using smartphones for subsistence and to stay in college. With this work, we looked to understand some of the changes in smartphone consumption practices in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic among women residing in the city of Maputo, Mozambique. Ethnographic findings point to an increase in smartphone consumption caused, above all, by the need to use the device for distance education and obtaining new sources of income.

Furthermore, the internet proved to be, in the pandemic, a basic necessity in our interlocutors' social context, for, without the internet, they do not have access to education nor to sources for generating alternative income. However, even though we understand that technologies can be used in our favor and as our allies in the pandemic scenario, we must mention digital exclusion, which intensified during this period. We also understand smartphone consumption is ambivalent (MILLER et al., 2021) and that algorithmic systems integrate these uses. These themes did not emerge in our research field, but we consider them as possible issues for future studies.

Finally, albeit the internet is a reality for few people in Mozambique, smartphones and social media were (and continue to be) very important

in the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, for those who can pay for it, for the continuance of studies and the building of new income sources by learning skills and advertising and selling products and services. The women from Maputo participating in this research engage in other smartphone consumption practices. However, this paper focuses on analyzing aspects that they considered that changed the most in the context of the pandemic. In this sense, we hope our work can contribute to a broader discussion related to the consumption of technologies in Southern Africa and the appropriations of mobile devices in the years marked by the coronavirus disease.

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A R T I G O

Confiança e consumo de conteúdos de comunicação. A dependência dos meios digitais e de comunicação social

Trust and consumption of communication contents. Dependence on digital and social media.

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Resumo: *A teoria da dependência dos media sugere que as pessoas usam os meios de comunicação para tomarem decisões quotidianas, sobretudo em tempos de incerteza (BALL-ROKEACH; DEFLEUR, 1976). Este estudo avalia a relação entre a confiança e a frequência do uso dos meios de comunicação social por comparação com o uso dos meios digitais. Os dados foram recolhidos antes da pandemia através de um questionário, numa amostra de conveniência (n = 223). Os resultados sugerem a existência de diferenças significativas das medidas de confiança e da frequência no uso dos diferentes tipos de meios de comunicação em função de algumas variáveis sociodemográficas. No final, apresentam-se conclusões e sugestões para a eventual replicação do estudo num momento posterior ao da declaração do fim do estado de pandemia.*

Palavras-chave: *Teoria da dependência do sistema dos media; frequência do uso dos meios de comunicação; confiança; comunicação social; social media;*

Abstract: *Media dependency theory suggests that people use the media to make decisions in everyday life, especially in times of uncertainty (BALL-ROKEACH; DeFLEUR, 1976). This study assesses the relationship between trust and frequency of use of social media compared to the use of digital media.*

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Data were collected before pandemic state, through a questionnaire, with a convenience sample (n=223). The results suggest the existence of significant differences in trust and frequency measures in the use of different types of media due to some sociodemographic variables. At the end, conclusions and suggestions are presented for the possible replication of the study at a time after the declaration of the end of the pandemic state.

Key-words: *Theory of dependence on the media system; Frequency of use of the media; Trust; digital media;*

Introduction

There are many theories to think about the relationship between news consumers – in Couto's (2015) broad sense – and social communication media (newspapers, radio, television), which distinguish themselves by the amount given to different variables in the modeling of the communication process and by the weight attributed to the determinants and consequences of information consumption. However, since information and communication technologies created more opportunities for communicating (with more flexible instruments and new potentialities), understanding how digital media compete for the attention of citizens and how they assess their trust in so-called traditional and social media is crucial. This issue is relevant because the quality of everyday decisions and the quality of citizens' participation in the public (democratic) space can vary according to the trust they deposit in different production means of communication content (LUHMANN, 2000), especially in moments of instability and crisis (BALL-ROKEACH; DEFLEUR, 1976).

This study aims to assess the relationship between trust in different media and the frequency with which people use them, starting from the overall hypothesis that people tend to prefer using those they trust the most (FLETCHER; PARK, 2017), especially when they need to make decisions about important life matters (BALL-ROKEACH, 2008; JAKOB 2010). To do so, we used two theoretical framings: on the one hand, studies on trust in social communication developed under the perspective of trust in social institutions (TSFATI; ARIELY, 2013) or trust in news producing organizations (KALOGEROPOULOS et al., 2019); on the other, the media dependency theory, above all with respect to the micro-level of analysis centered on the individual.

Trust in media

Every behavior is future-oriented because every person is motivated to reach goals, which they meet through the mobilization of contingent

resources. That means that people need references to lead their actions in the direction they desire, and that requires trustworthy information. However, results may come from intentional or chance actions, be immediate or not, be contingent on the person's action or strangers' actions or fortuitous events, and even derive from the intervention of social institutions, for what they are associated with some degree of unpredictability. Such relations of dependency results in excessive complexity for people who need reliable references to make decisions.

In the case of new contexts where change is predominant or events depend on multiple uncertain factors, achieving desired results or fulfilling goals can vary according to the mobilization of resources not always understandable to the regular citizen. For that reason, people need to trust strangers and organizations or institutions in situations of complex interpretation. Without trust, they are unable to face adversities, nor are they able to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill to carry out their objectives through their means and resources (SZTOMPKA, 1999).

In this sense, trust reduces the complexity of social life, being indispensable for community life itself (LUHMANN, 2020). When people trust a stranger or organization, they relieve themselves from scrutinizing the less comprehensible side of reality or even surveilling potential threats related to others' actions. Trust allows people to save their efforts and enables them to focus their resources toward fulfilling more pressing goals and obtaining more relevant gains (HARDIN, 2004). Correlatedly, the absence of trust shrinks initiative and the appetite for taking risks, reduces the rationality of decisions, generates alienation, stimulates people's isolation in small family groups, and decreases interactions among strangers, making more selfish, cynical, and conservative attitudes emerge because people do not believe in the possibility of having their efforts reciprocated (LUHMANN, 2000).

From another perspective, trust also influences the quality of decision-making processes in risk situations, especially when there is a possibility of significant losses, which makes it more important the greater the risk

or the perception of risk (MAYER et al., 1995). Trust is essential when people are part of networks of interdependence or when they are in positions of vulnerability relative to strangers (WILIAMS, 2001). When people trust others, they feel more confident about themselves, calmer, and better prepared to face complex situations, so they take more risks. Hence, they need to be adequately informed, and they need to trust the information they access.

In this process, the media play a fundamental role, as they are often the instrument that provides information for the construction of a perception of reality. If news consumers perceive the media as trustworthy, they tend to accept its content as correct and use it to support individual and collective decision-making processes.

However, despite the recognition of this instrumental value, studies continue to suggest the gradual erosion of trust in the media (CARDOSO et al., 2019), which follows the erosion of trust in other social institutions, such as parliaments, governments, the health system, etc. (HARDIN, 2004). This erosion encourages consumers of conventional media news (newspapers, radio, and television) to look for information in alternative but not necessarily reliable media available (STERRET et al., 2019; PARK et al., 2020; STUBENVOLL et al., 2021), creating delicate problems that deserve to be studied.

The media system dependency theory

According to the media dependency theory (BALL-ROKEACH; DEFLEUR, 1976), people use social communication when they must decide on relevant matters for their lives (KATZ et al., 1973), tending to use media with more frequency in moments of crisis, anxiety, or uncertainty (LOWREY, 2004). The intensity of use can vary according to sociodemographic and circumstantial factors and psychosocial variables associated, for example, with group norms and the perception of threats or needs and related, for instance, to the understanding of social phenomena, the orientation toward action, decisions, entertainment, etc. (BALL-ROKEACH, 1985, 1998). More specifically,

the theory establishes two different levels for the analysis of dependency regarding media: a macro and micro level. The macrolevel analyzes the relationship between information access enabled by the media system and the dynamics of industrial societies from the overall premise that the media system has the functions of promoting the integration of other social systems, constructing social cohesion, and socializing citizens in the practices of community life. Institutions and citizens depend on the media system for these reasons. And this dependency intensifies when institutions are unstable or go through periods of change, especially because media information allows citizens to understand the dynamics at play and their possibilities to participate (BALL-ROKEACH; DEFLEUR, 1976).

On the microlevel, the theory of individual media dependency considers dependency relative to specific media and the creation of dependency patterns related to how much the news satisfies individual needs (CARILLO; SCORNAVACCA; ZA, 2017). From people's point of view, media dependency can produce different kinds of effects: a) Cognitive effects, for example, in acquiring values and beliefs, capturing attention, and the way people build a vision of reality. b) Affective effects in inciting states of anxiety and fear or expressing feelings of alienation, or in desensitization related to prolonged exposure to certain phenomena. c) Behavioral effects in activating or deactivating dispositions to act in specific ways and relative to a determined event (BALL-ROKEACH, 1998; KATZ et al., 1973).

The theory also suggests the degree of dependency in relation to media can be doubly determined, on the one hand, by the social system's global need to make decisions in ambiguous and broad situations with strong social implications and, on the other hand, by the individual need to make decisions related to, for example, managing everyday actions, which usually have low individual and social impact (BALL-ROKEACH, 2008). In this framing, Ball-Rokeach suggests two general hypotheses for the investigation: a) The greater the number of functions performed by the media, the greater the dependency of people on

the media; that is, the greater the instrumentality of communication content for the achievement of people's goals (or for the functions of institutions), the greater the dependency on the media. b) The greater the social instability, the greater the impact of media and dependency on them; that is, the media's function becomes more important for organizing people's relationship with social institutions in contexts of complexity, ambiguity, and change (BALL-ROKEACH, 2008).

Media consumption frequency

Media's influence becomes effective through the power to publicize information in the form of news in conventional media or content in social media formats, such as podcasts or social networking services. However, consumers of communication content are not always aware of how much the exposure to structured information, whether in news form or others, influences the production of judgments, the acquisition of values and norms of conduct, or the alteration of beliefs, which can also determine attitudes, behaviors, and decisions (LEVY, 2021).

To this extent, the media dependency theory provides a good heuristic framework to understand consumers' relationship with the various media and the determinants of the frequency of their use (ZHANG; GEARHART, 2015). Studies identify several patterns (or repertoires) for information consumption on platforms, which can increase the frequency of consumption (and, eventually, induce greater dependence) in specific contexts (for example, working on the computer, watching television, and accessing online content on smartphones), strengthening the media's influence power depending on the consumption pattern (TANEJA et al., 2012).

Since people use media to understand the world, fulfill their goals, and entertain themselves, frequent consumption of communication content can influence decisions and individual and collective choices (YANG; HA; WANG; ABULJADAIL, 2015), besides stimulating addiction to social media or specific applications (KIRCABURUN; KUSS; GRIFFITHS, 2017; YOUNG, 1999). For example, in the case

of entertainment needs, the excessive use of certain media has been associated with Facebook addictions, translated by degrees of individual dependency on one or multiple specific media, distortions in the cognitive perception of reality, social isolation, anxiety, stress, feelings of alienation, and emotional distress of various orders (CARILLO; SCORNAVACCA; ZA, 2017; FIRTH et al., 2019; HERRERO et al., 2019).

For all those reasons, trust has a fundamental role in the moment of media use, and there are multiple factors capable of determining it, like age, sex, civil status, academic qualifications, etc. We should note that some studies suggest trust varies according to the type of media. More traditional media tend to generate higher trust than media associated with new formats, especially online ones (FERNANDEZ-PLANELLS, 2015). Nevertheless, people also tend to resort to alternative means of information during periods of change or social conflicts (JACKOB, 2010).

Aim

As this is an exploratory study based on a survey, the essential purpose was to characterize the time spent using the most usual media and to assess whether the frequency of use of different media may or may not be associated with greater or lesser trust in a particular media depending, for example, on the need to gather information to make a relevant decision.

Sample

The study used a convenience sample (Table 1) consisting of 223 higher education students from Coimbra – 180 of them are enrolled in undergraduate courses (80.7%) and 43 in master's programs (19.3%). One hundred and seventy students attend the daytime regime (76.2%) and 53 the after-workhour regime (23.8%). Most of them are female (127, 57.0% of the sample) and single (190, 85.2%). Ages range from 18 to 51 years old, with a mean of 22.27 (SD 3.27).

Table 1: Sample characterization (N = 223)

	n	%
Gender		
Male	96	43.0
Female	127	57.0
Marital status		
Single	190	85.2
Couple	33	14.8
Higher education		
Undergraduate	180	80.7
Master	43	19.3
Study regime		
Daytime	170	76.2
After work	53	23.8

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Procedures

We gathered data between April and May 2019 through a Google Forms online survey. Invitations to participants were sent over email, including a reference to the study's aim, a request for voluntary collaboration, and a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality.

We divided the questionnaire into two parts. The first part included sociodemographic questions (gender, age, marital status) and the characterization of students' relationship with the higher education institution (study cycle – undergraduate or master's course, frequency regime – daytime or after-workhour). The second part contained 20 questions, 10 of them concerning time spent (in the previous seven days) in different types of media (print newspapers, radio, public TV channels, private TV channels, cable TV channels, online newspapers, websites, blogs, etc.), including social networking services, especially the most used ones: Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The other ten questions assess participants' degree of trust in each media through their answers to the following question: "When you need to seek information to make a relevant person decision, indicate the degree of trust you have in each of the following media…". They had to mark their answers on a scale from one to seven, in which (1) corresponds to "I don't trust it at all" and (7) corresponds to "I trust it completely."

After putting the answers in an Excel spreadsheet, we eliminated six respondents for leaving questions unanswered (2.6%). We used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences program to perform data analysis.

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for the number of hours spent using different types of media seven days prior to the questionnaire administration. The four most used media were Facebook with a weekly mean of 18.09 hours (SD = 12.79), followed by WhatsApp (M = 6.82, SD = 7.88), webpages (M = 5.70, SD = 7.19), and finally Twitter (M = 5.22, SD = 7.90). Considering that the values of several standard deviations are higher than the respective means, it appears that the frequency distribution of the duration of use of these new media does not follow a normal distribution, meaning that there are users who use Facebook, WhatsApp, webpages, and Twitter and others that don't even use them, which the minimum and maximum usage values also prove.

Table 2: Values for the means and standard deviations of hours of media consumption (last 7 days) (n = 223)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Hours_printed newspapers	0	20	1.46	3.00
Hours_radio	0	56	4.57	8.18
Hours_public TV channel	0	30	2.45	4.18
Hours_private TV channel	0	45	3.58	5.43
Hours_cable TV channel	0	50	4.62	6.49
Hours_online newspapers	0	32	2.54	3.92
Hours_web pages (*blogs*, *websites*, etc)	0	40	5.70	7.19
Hours_Twitter	0	40	5.22	7.90
Hours_Facebook	0	60	18.09	12.79
Hours_WhatsApp	0	40	6.82	7.88

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Regarding the remaining media, cable TV channels were the most used (M = 4.62 hours per week, SD = 6.49) and radio (M = 4.57, SD = 8.18). Print newspapers were used for 1.46 hours (SD = 3.00), with the online editions of newspapers having a slightly higher average value of weekly use (M = 2.54, SD = 3.92), although clearly below the usage values of any of the social media.

Again, we found high standard deviation values, higher than the mean, suggesting very different consumption habits. The mean value of weekly hours on Facebook (M = 18.09, SD = 12.79) is far higher than the average value of hours spent in the most used conventional media, TV cable channels (M = 4.62, SD = 6.49).

Table 3 shows the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values of the answers to the question: "When you need to seek information to make a relevant person decision, indicate the degree of trust you have in each of the following media...". On the 7-point Likert scale, the highest average was recorded in the evaluation of trust in conventional media, namely: radio (M = 5.10, SD = 1.33), print newspapers (M = 5.04, SD = 1.26), cable TV channels (M = 4.88, SD = 1.26), and public TV channels (M = 4.77, SD = 1.51). Trust in private TV channels is a little lower compared to public channels or cable channels but higher compared to trust values in any of the social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, websites).

Table 3: Values of means and standard deviations for the assessment of trust in media (n = 223)

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Trust in printed newspapers	1	7	5.04	1.26
Trust in radio	1	7	5.10	1.33
Trust in public TV channel	1	7	4.77	1.51
Trust in private TV channel	1	7	4.36	1.56
Trust in cable TV channel	1	7	4.88	1.26
Trust in online newspapers	1	7	4.70	1.30
Trust in webpages (blogs, websites, etc)	1	7	3.97	1.40
Trust in Twitter	1	7	3.17	1.46
Trust in Facebook	1	7	3.52	1.39
Trust in WhatsApp	1	7	3.37	1.64

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

It is worth noting that the mean value of trust in online newspaper editions (M = 4.70, SD = 1.30) ranks higher than the trust in private TV channels and the trust in all social media. We should also note that standard deviation values are below the respective average values in all cases, which indicates that answers are less dispersed around the mean and the frequency curve is closer to a normal distribution.

Statistical analysis of the meaning of differences between means and standard deviations

To assess the statistical meaning of differences between means and standard deviations as a function of criteria variables (sex, civil status, study cycle, frequency regime), we used the Student's t test for independent samples.

As we can see on Table 4, significant differences were identified in the consumption of different media, for example, in the sense that females spend more hours on Facebook (t(221) = -4.102, p < .01) and on WhatsApp (t(221) = -7.198, p < .01), after-work students spend more hours on cable TV channels (t(221) = -2.175, p < .05), while daytime students spend more time on Facebook (t(221) = 1.992, p < .05), as do undergraduate students compared to master's students (t(221) = 2.099, p < .05). Print newspapers are read more by married subjects compared to single subjects (t(221) = -1.984, p < .05), although the difference is slim (the associated probability value approaches the critical limit).

Table 5 presents the results of the evaluation of the statistical meaning of differences between the means and the standard deviations associated with the evaluation of the degree of trust in each media when it comes to obtaining information to make relevant decisions.

Table 4: Comparison of the values of means and standard deviations in answers related to the number of hours spent on the media according to the criterion of different variables (n = 223)

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Hours_Facebook	Male	96	14.19	11.91		
	Female	127	21.04	12.69	-4.102	.000*
Hours_WhatsApp	Male	96	2.88	3.70		
	Female	127	9.80	8.85	-7.198	.000*
	Marital Status					
Hours_printed newspapers	Single	190	1.29	2.66		
	Couple	33	2.41	4.41	-1.984	.049**
	Study Regime					
Hours_cable TV channel	Daytime	170	4.10	5.01		
	After-work	53	6.30	9.73	-2.175	.031**
Hours_Facebook	Daytime	170	19.04	12.45		
	After-work	53	15.06	13.50	1.992	.048**
	Higher education					
Hours_Facebook	Undergraduate	180	18.96	12.40		
	Master	43	14.44	13.87	2.099	.037**

*$p < .01$, **$p < .05$

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 5: Comparison of means and standard deviations in answers to the assessment of trust in media as a function of different variables (n = 223)

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p
Trust in radio	Male	96	4.48	1.41		
	Female	127	5.29	1.24	-2.514	.013*
Trust in private TV channels	Male	96	4.10	1.65		
	Female	127	4.56	1.46	-2.176	.031*
	Marital status					
Trust in private TV channels	Single	190	4.45	1.55		
	Couple	33	3.85	1.56	2.070	.040*
	Study Regime					
Trust in Twitter	Daytime	170	3.05	1.40		
	After-work	53	3.53	1.58	-2.090	.038*
	Higher education					
Trust in Twitter	Undergraduate	180	3.07	1.44		
	Master	43	3.58	1.45	-2.098	.037*

*$p < .05$

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Female subjects trust radios (t(221) = -2.514, p < .05) and private TV channels (t(221) = -2.176, p < .05) more than males, as do single subjects regarding trust in private television communication companies (t(221) = 2.070, p < .05).

Concerning trust in the so-called new media, Twitter is the depositary of a higher trust from the subjects of the after-work education regime (t(221) = -2,090, p < .05) and students of the master's degree study cycle (t(221) = -2.098, p < .05) compared to, respectively, students from daytime courses and undergraduate courses.

Correlations

To assess eventual correlations between different media consumption measures and trust measures or between both types of measures and age, we did a bivariate Pearson correlation analysis (Table 6). The analysis identified only statistically significant correlation values between age and the measure of the number of hours spent in the last seven days on Twitter (r = -.15, p < .05) and Facebook (r = -.20, p < . 01), which suggests the existence of negative associations between the pairs of variables in the sense that older age is associated with a lower number of hours on Twitter and Facebook. All other correlations between pairs of measures of consumption time and trust assessment for each of the different types of media proved to be non-significant; that is, the analysis found no significant co-variation between the pairs of variables.

Table 6 - Pearson correlations between age and consumption and trust measures for Twitter and Facebook (n = 223)

	1	2	3	4	5
1) Age					
2) Twitter hours	-.15*				
3) Facebook hours	-.20**	.42**			
4) Trust in Twitter	-.01	.08	.08		
5) Trust in Facebook	.07	-.04	-.03	.49**	

* p < .05, **p < .01
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Conclusions

Taking a broad understanding of the concept of information consumer (COUTO, 2015), the individual media dependency theory suggests that regular citizens' need to acquire a comprehensive view of reality to guide their decision-making constrains them to the development of a relationship of dependency with the media, which can be situated on the individual and group levels but also on the organizational and social levels or on all four simultaneously. The theory also suggests dependency may be greater or smaller in function of the degree of asymmetry in the control of (information) resources, the perception of the communication contents' usefulness, the type of needs the relationship with the media satisfies (understanding reality – personal and social –, orientation towards participation – action and interaction –, and entertainment), and references used, which can be a set of repertoires (TANEJA et al., 2012) or the diversity of media used (BALL-ROKEACH, 1998).

Thus, considering the complexity of relationships with the media, trust is a fundamental variable feeding the dynamics of dependence and dictating the type of use of communication content in decision-making processes, particularly in new, unknown, and ambiguous situations where the risk may be significant. From a psychological point of view, this means trust reduces perceived complexity (LUHMANN, 2000), allowing regular citizens to manage relationships of dependency with different media better when they need to make decisions on relevant matters based on reliable information (LOWREY, 2004).

Given the above, this study aimed to assess a possible relationship between trust in the media (including social communication media and social media) and the intensity of frequency of use, especially when consumers need information to make important decisions. Considering the results, we suggest the following conclusions.

First, in convergence with other studies that indicate this trend (KUSS; GRIFFITHS, 2017; SIDDIQ; SCHERER, 2019; TWENGE et al., 2019), social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, webpages, and Twitter) are the most used by youths and younger adults, especially women – in

the case of Facebook and WhatsApp – and undergraduate students in daytime courses – specifically in the case of Facebook. Overall, the social network Facebook continues to have a higher weekly average hour of consumption, around 18 hours per week in this study.

Second, the frequency of consumption of more conventional media (print newspapers, radio, television) did not reveal any significant association with the variables (for example, sex, age, academic qualifications), although, in general, average consumption values were significantly lower than social media's average values. We must note that married consumers spend more time with print newspapers and that after-work students are the ones who spend more hours consuming content broadcast by cable TV channels, agreeing with the conclusions of other studies (LADD, 2011; TWENGE et al., 2019).

Third, regarding the two types of media consumption profiles, the frequency distributions of consumption do not follow a normal distribution, which indicates considerably disparate consumption variations. Therefore, it will be worth exploring other dimensions of the individual media dependency theory in future studies on the relationship of these profiles with other relevant variables, for example, types of needs or types of repertoires or contexts of information consumption (MOURÃO et al., 2018).

Fourth, in general, trust in conventional media tends to be greater than in social media, which the conclusions of other authors reaffirm (FLETCHER; PARK, 2017; KALOGEROPOULOS et al., 2019), varying significantly as a function of some of the variables in this study. Specifically, females tend to trust radio and private TV channels more (as do single participants – in this latter case). Regarding social media, it is the students in After-work and master's courses who trust Twitter the most. Regarding the remaining media, we identified no significant differences between the values of the means and standard deviations.

Fifth, no significant association was found between the frequency of use of any of the media and the trust in them, which means this study did not find empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that more

frequent use of a media is associated with trust in that media, particularly when making a relevant personal decision.

Sixth, in light of this last conclusion (which is relative because it was drawn from a study with a small sample), we may suggest that it will be worthwhile to carry out further studies focused on the relationship between the intensity and frequency of media consumption and the satisfaction of needs through consumption, as consumers can use some media to satisfy entertainment needs and others as instruments for building a more comprehensive view of the world (CABRERA et al., 2018), which, thus, support their decision-making processes based on trust (LOGES; BALL-ROKEACH, 1993; STRÖMBÄCK ET AL., 2020). In other words, the heuristic interest of the individual media dependency theory for understanding the phenomenon of information consumption is justified, although in a more specific study context for decision-making processes. For example, it is necessary to include motivational and consumption repertoire variables in the analysis of the problem (CRISTÓBAL et al., 2017).

Finally, considering we collected data from a relatively small (n=223) and young (M=22.27 years, SD=3.27) convenience sample, considering the responses are from April and May 2019 in the early days of confinement at home (Covid-19 pandemic), we must admit this contextual constraint may limit the conclusions drawn.

In other words, it may be interesting to replicate this study with a broader sample, higher age averages, and after confinement has ended to assess how much of the trust in different types of media during this two-year period served entertainment needs, especially for younger people accessing social media, and the need to understand reality through safe information for decision-making, particularly for adults accessing traditional media. Probably the data and conclusions would be different…

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