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Music celebrities, fans and politics: Swiftie activism in Argentina's 2023 presidential elections

Celebridades musicais, fãs e política: o ativismo swiftie nas eleições presidenciais da Argentina em 2023

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ABSTRACT: *In this article, the political engagement of Taylor Swift's fandom — the "Swifties" — is analyzed in the context of the 2023 Argentine presidential elections, with a focus on the digital campaign "Swiftie no vota Milei" ("Swiftie doesn't vote for Milei"). Through a case study, the author investigates how cultural manifestations related to musical performance and the celebrity can spill over into the realm of political action, especially in contexts marked by the rise of the far-right and the weakening of traditional feminist movements. The analysis suggests that Swifties' actions demonstrate new forms of political participation, mediated by pop culture and symbolic consumption, challenging dominant narratives about youth depoliticization. The article contributes to the fields of fandom studies, celebrity culture, and political participation by highlighting the capacity of fan collectives to operate as active political subjects in electoral disputes and contemporary public debate.*

Keywords: *fandom; digital activism; pop culture; elections; feminism; Taylor Swift.*

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ARTICLE

RESUMO: *Este artigo analisa o engajamento político do fandom de Taylor Swift — os "swifties" — no contexto das eleições presidenciais argentinas de 2023, com foco na campanha digital "Swiftie no vota Milei". A partir de um estudo de caso, a autora investiga como manifestações culturais relacionadas ao espetáculo musical e à celebridade podem transbordar para o campo da ação política, especialmente em contextos marcados pelo avanço da extrema-direita e pelo enfraquecimento dos movimentos feministas tradicionais. A análise propõe que as práticas dos swifties revelam novas formas de participação política, mediadas pela cultura pop e pelo consumo simbólico, desafiando os discursos sobre a despolitização da juventude. O trabalho contribui para os estudos sobre fanatismo, cultura de celebridades e participação política, ao evidenciar a capacidade de coletivos de fãs em atuar como sujeitos políticos ativos em disputas eleitorais e no debate público contemporâneo.*

Palavras-chave: *fandom; ativismo digital; cultura pop; eleições; feminismo; Taylor Swift.*

Introduction: an electoral-political activism arises from fandom

The visit of the American singer Taylor Swift to Argentina unexpectedly became one of the social stages of the political strife that took place in the country amid the 2023 presidential elections, which would take place a few days after the three shows she performed in the city of Buenos Aires. Taylor Swift performed at the Monumental Stadium during her *Eras Tour* on November 9, 10 and 11, 2023. The second round of the presidential elections would take place a week later, on November 19.

The depth and intensity of the "Swiftie" universe progressively became visible in the media. It began months before the event, when a camp was set up near the stadium where the concerts would take place. That is, the starting point of the media cycle was the concern with the occupation of public space and culminated with the impactful news of the Swiftie fandom's campaign against the far-right party, summarized in the slogan *Swiftie no vota Milei* ["Swiftie doesn't vote for Milei"]. The campaign was debated through the publication of a document that went viral on social media and was resumed as news by the local press. The manifestation of different groups of fans who tried to exert political influence in their community, with greater or lesser relevance, reached its peak between the primary elections and the second round between the two most voted candidates: Sergio Massa, of Peronism, and Javier Milei, leader of a new pro-USA libertarian neoliberal political party, linked to and identified with Donald Trump. The context between the two elections in October and November coincided with Taylor Swift's visit to the country for the first time in her career.

We present a paradigmatic case study on the contemporary role of the performing arts and its celebrities in the public debate (BULLONI *et al.*, 2022) from a gender perspective. Faced with the growth of international proto-fascist political projects, whose leaders share a hypermasculinity style (ILLOUZ, 2022, p. 25) that even takes, as in the case of Milei, openly anti-feminist positions. If this case allows us to reaffirm

the cultural criticism of the fruitless representation of fandoms, questioned by fandom studies (BORDA, 2012; SPATARO, 2013; BORDA; GANDOLFI, 2021; among others), it also allows us to observe modes of action and political collectivization in the youth layers of society in close relation to the musical experience and its celebrities.

Subsequently, we describe and analyze Taylor Swift's artistic and political trajectory, highlighting her connections with the Me Too movement and considerations of the American pop feminism. Later, we analyze the activist and artivist material produced by the Argentine fandom and relate it to the bibliography, according to which there have been recent changes in fan activity, its connection with different social movements, and feminist activism.

Taylor Swift: from singer to political celebrity

It is worth mentioning that Taylor Swift is considered one of the most internationally transcendent music artists in recent years (SKINNER, 2022). She has gathered an audience among those who began to listen to her in adolescence and still maintain their admiration for the artist, besides winning new fans among the younger generations. The core of her audience is mainly composed of women, people with self-perceived gender identities, and men.

In 2020, Taylor Swift became a political celebrity by challenging the commercial mandate of the mass culture of non-political involvement. Earlier that year, the singer publicly spoke against Donald Trump's presidential reelection, pointing out his denialist politics regarding women's rights and sexual diversity. In fact, Swift's *political coming out*, in the words of Simone Driessen (2022), did not begin with this fact, but rather in 2018, when Swift wrote a statement about Republican Senator Marsha Blackburn's candidacy for the state of Tennessee, where Taylor Swift was born, questioning her political platform against abortion legalization.

Feminist activism in the performing arts was manifested in the United States through the mass accusations of harassment and assault in the

artistic sphere that took place between 2017 and 2018. The mediatization of individual experiences of sexual violence was involved in the processes of contemporary popularization of many artists. Swift's image as a feminist reference intensified in 2017, when she joined the Me Too movement — initiated in response to sexual assaults committed by US film producer Harvey Weinstein —, as well as her personal accusation of DJ David Mueller for sexual assault when both artists posed for a photo, a blatant fact widely covered by the media and criticized by public opinion. *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker* published the results of an investigation conducted by Ronan Farrow about the assaults committed for decades against more than sixty female performers in the show business in the United States, among whom were well-known actresses and singers, such as Taylor Swift, who appeared on the cover with other whistleblowers who attended the Golden Globes ceremony wearing black in a sign of protest.

Since then, the singer has used her artistic platform to defend historical struggles of women, such as sexual freedom or the right to abortion, gender equality and consent. What happened alongside the musical performance was crystallized in her album titled *Reputation*, of 2017. Swift recorded this album a few years after distancing herself from artistic work and the media, after having gone through a crisis due to personal exposure and criticism of all kinds since the beginning of her career (GENTO DE CELIS, 2017).

This album served as a poetic anticipation of what was the Me Too and Time's up campaigns, while having an impact on her trajectory with a striking character of personal agency identified with contemporary social struggles. The album was nourished by new musical influences: electro-pop and rap, genres closer to the musical aesthetics identified with feminism in recent years (LISKA, 2024)[1]. The key song of this album is

1   Taylor Swift's artistic trajectory began with the release of her first album in 2006, of contemporary country music. She approached a more pop style in the album *Red*, of 2012 — the moment of her release on the international market — without losing reference to country (GENTO DE CELIS, 2017).

dedicated to her haters through satire and irony, whose title is *Look What You Made Me Do.* The video clip (2018) contains indirect references to specific moments of her life and her media biography that only fans can understand, that is, a content designed to be unraveled by her loyal, most knowledgeable audience, who at the same time appreciates recognizing these references — or rather, these Easter eggs[2].

The idea of agency is manifested at the beginning of the video clip, by showing Taylor rising from her grave in a cemetery. One of the artistic-biographical data also present in this video is the MTV Awards 2009 event, in which American rapper Kanye West ripped the microphone from her hand to express his disappointment with the award given to her and stating that Beyoncé was the one who deserved the award among the three nominees. This public event of violence against Swift, the young Barbie representative of the American white countryside spoiled by the industry, took a mundane turn not present in her origins, a public victim of violence that exposed the hostile side of the world of cultural industry and that strengthened ties with her fans. Later, West composed a song dedicated to her: *I Made that Bitch Famous*[3].

In 2020, amid the social confinement, the Swift phenomenon reached its peak. Apparently, several factors contributed to this. In essence, there is an aspect related to the confessional narrative of her songs (MONTES HERRERA, 2022) as well as to mental health and self-esteem (GIMÉNEZ, 2023), but there was also a concrete fact: the release of the documentary *Miss Americana* (WILSON, 2020) on January 31. This documentary, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and

2   "Easter eggs" as a general concept first emerged with Atari's "Adventure" game in 1980. One of the executives did not want to include the names of the people who worked on the game, but designer Warren Robinett hid his name in one of the game's pixels, which could be found by clicking on that area. Since then, there is a tradition of leaving Easter eggs in video games, movies, series, etc., that fans can find and thus get a little more information about what they are consuming (LAKIER; VOGEL, 2022 in MONTES HERRERA, 2022, p. 2).

3   On the content created for fans, we can see an example in the video clip of *Look What You Made Me Do*. The snakes that appear in the video refer to the snake emojis that flooded Taylor Swift's social media by their haters when, in the 2016 MTV Awards, she defended herself from the song West dedicated to her, although the singer has given him permission to edit it.

later in theaters and on the Netflix platform, represented a contemporary landmark of the relationship between the world of musical celebrities and the spectacle of politics.

The documentary *Miss Americana* revisits Taylor's career, addressing important events in her life: her fight against a food disorder, her mother's cancer diagnosis, the judicial process for sexual assault, among others, and her present moment, the decision to make public her political position against Trump's candidacy in the presidential elections in November 2020. The Netflix's documentary synopsis is as follows: "*Miss Americana* offers an intimate and emotional look at Swift as she learns to accept her role not only as a songwriter and performer, but also as a woman harnessing the full power of her voice." Thus, the possibility of a singer being able to significantly influence the elections of a country — and not any country — becomes an innovative cultural and commercial commodity. The fact is that the singer became an anti-Trump public reference with influence on the US vote in the 2020 elections (TORRES, 2023).

The documentary shows, in parallel with these events, the process of making her new album, *Lover*, of 2019. That same year, the single *You Need to Calm Down* was released, a song dedicated to Donald Trump, then president, released on his birthday and during the LGBTQ+ Pride month. The media argued that such a statement by the artist could influence elections in the United States, considering that, as recorded in the documentary, on the days following her political statement, the number of entries to vote — as per the American system — exponentially grew among young women.

In addition to the global public millionaire, Taylor Swift is, as aforementioned, the preferred target of numerous criticisms. Based on research on social media and the media, criticism is distinguished between aesthetic and symbolic criticism of her music, associated with banality, her delicate and romantic style. Conversely, there is a certain ethnic and class indignation based on disqualifying the singer for being an upper-class woman, representative of the successful white

American nation. This, in turn, turns into an intellectual criticism: Taylor Swift is representative of white feminism from a pop perspective. This can be easily perceived in an article published in the Argentine news website *Infobae* titled *"El feminismo de Taylor Swift bajo la lupa en un debate sobre inclusividad"* [Taylor Swift's feminism challenged in inclusion debate]. The piece focuses on the opinion of American academics:

> Swift's business facet and the fact that she had accumulated a great fortune with her musical career fueled her image as a feminist and empowered woman: "She is considered a reference for her economic power, but that's 'white' feminism, really" says Paola Zamperini, a professor of the Gender and Sexuality Studies program at Evanston University, Illinois. [...] "Swift is an example of how feminism in America is linked to capitalism. Financial success is equal to women's empowerment, in other words," says Lee Pierce, an adjunct professor of Rhetoric Communication at the State University of New York (SUNY) and a researcher specializing in American rhetoric, race, and political culture (SÁNCHEZ GÓMEZ, 2024, free translation).

It turns out that during the Fourth Wave, musical stars who raised the flag of feminism were criticized for the insufficiency of their political proposals (MARTÍNEZ, 2019; LISKA, 2024), and not just Taylor Swift. Meanwhile, the singer's fandom often argues, from a gender perspective, that society does not accept the economic success of a woman and that, wherever she goes, the singer drives local economies. In addition to these criticisms, what kind of social and cultural experiences can arise from the public's relationship with a musical celebrity and international politics?

Fans in the representation of social discourse: the swiftie experience in the media

According to the definition established in the dissertation of Paloma Gento de Celis (2017) "Swiftie" is a person who is a fan of and knows

everything about Taylor Swift, from biographical anecdotes to demos. Initially, it refers to followers of the artist since her pre-massive era of contemporary country music, a genre that remains present in her repertoire in a more mixed, stylized, and spaced way. Other considerations refer to the degree of affective closeness of a fan audience that constitutes a global community very "loyal" to the artist (EL DESTAPE, 2023). *Loyal* is the most used word to refer to the characteristics of this fandom.

The first report on Swifties and their preparation for the concerts in Buenos Aires demonstrates the persistence of historical judgment in relation to the fan audience in its dominant representations: useless energy expenditure, sacrifice by the artist, and public nuisance. With the title *"Insólito acampe en River para el recital de Taylor Swift… ¡dentro de cinco meses"* [Unusual camping outside River for Taylor Swift's concert… five months from now], the sports newspaper *Diario Olé* (2023) reported that, although there were still 158 days left for the event, some fanatics were already camping in the vicinity of the River Plate football stadium, warning that, as more people started camping, it would be impossible to access the football matches.

As the concert approached, media attention to the camp has increased, with the presence of mobile television stations. From brief interviews with the campers, the negative representation began to change and reveal a whole system of rotation of people in the camp, the organization of care, and a certain state of predominant communitarianism. An individual case propagated by various media outlets that illustrates this gradual change in the acceptance of the Swiftie phenomenon, which became a crowd on the streets, was that of a medical student who, identified by her hospital uniform, was studying to take her last tests in one of the tents (MARÍN, 2023). However, this ambiguous representation of fandom is not such a new finding. In 2000, Argentine expert Libertad Borda (2012) observed gradual changes in the representations, more relaxed and everyday-based, outside the figure of

the inrush in public space. For at least two decades, there is a dualism of the term "fan": a sense that applies to a stigmatized minority and a "neutral" sense, an affection for some exhaustive knowledge. In recent decades, the meaning of fan or fanatic has been taking on neutrality and semantic expansion.

After a few days, it was announced that tickets sold out within eight hours of sales opening. Later, more detailed news was published, going from the sections of general or cultural topics to the columns of politics. These publications were divided into two moments: the publication and viralization of the Swiftie Statement released by the media on October 26 and 27 and, later, the performance of the first concert and the various events that occurred in the public gathering during the hours leading up to the concert of November 9 in the vicinity of the Stadium.

Based on some journalistic columns, in October, the *"Agrupación Swifties Contra Milei"* [Swiftie Collective against Milei] (PÁGINA 12, 2023) or *"Swifties contra LLA" — La Libertad Avanza —* [Swifties against LLA (Argentine political coalition and party)] (SIETECASE, 2023) was created. This organized group of Argentine followers of the artist posted a document on the X social media on October 26, calling fans to vote against the libertarian candidate, leader of a new political party in a strong rise, which surpassed the liberal party in the primary elections, remaining in the dispute for the presidency with the Peronist front. The *Comunicado a la comunidad swiftie* [Statement to the Swiftie community], which quickly went viral, asked the fandom to stay "on the right side of the story," a sentence uttered by Taylor Swift in 2018 when she spoke against Donald Trump's Tennessee candidate: "One of the candidates, Javier Milei, leader of a wrongly-called liberal party, is actually the representative of the anti-democratic right who comes to take from us all the rights we have won. Why should this summon us as a fandom?"[4].

4   Posted on the X account: @swiftAGAINSTLLA.

The manifesto referred to a political issue: Javier Milei's similarity to the politics of his great idol, Donald Trump, a candidate to whom the singer actively opposed the reelection in 2020, becoming a political celebrity. In particular, the argument of similarity between the candidates of each country focused on the statement against state gender-based politics, the advances in women's rights, and sexual diversity, achievements accomplished thanks to the intense struggles of the LGBTQ+ and feminist movements in the country. In turn, we can resume this political question from the Swifties' statement as a sociological questioning: how did a fandom community get involved in the presidential elections? In other words, understanding the process by which part of the Argentine public of an American pop singer developed political content in opposition to Javier Milei's candidacy, resorting to Taylor Swift's figure.

According to what some Swifties reported to the media, the conflict between Swifties and Milei began years before, in 2019, when Milei was merely an aspiring political leader. This was explained by journalist and fan Ana Correa and by Swiftie Malena Valladares in an interview published in the news portal Filo.News (GIMÉNEZ, 2023). Questioning gender equality policies, Javier Milei spoke about Taylor Swift in his Twitter account to deny the pay gap between men and women, considering Swift's accumulated fortune as a result of her success as a music artist (Figure 1).

After the publication of the statement, Swiftie activists were interviewed by several printed and radio media outlets. Journalist Reynaldo Sietecase (2023) conducted a radio interview with one of the members of *"Swifties contra LLA"* on social media, the campaign of fans who asked other fans not to vote for Milei. Among other things, the interviewee pointed out that she has been a fan of Taylor Swift for over a decade and that she does not participate in any political militancy, but carries out feminist activism linked to independent organizations. However, she emphasizes that, just as the singer took a partisan stance

Figure 1 – Javier Milei's post on the wage gap between genders.

when it was necessary, the Swifties that followed Taylor's process must actively manifest in Argentine politics. She did not expect Swift to engage in political issues in a country that is not her own, but rather that those who performed the action yearned for the singer to become aware of the Swiftie activism against the candidate and give a "sign" during the show, including performing a song she composed urging her audience to politically take sides, which was not in the set list she had been presenting on the *Eras* tour. The composition of the song *Only The Young* appears in the documentary *Miss Americana*, inviting young people to

abandon the state of political disillusionment and become agents of change. In the words of Abel Gilbert (2023), the song became an anti-Trump musical symbol.

In turn, in the interview to Filo.News portal, participants of the Swiftie campaign stated that women in the country could determine the presidential election, as occurred in the 1983 elections in the return to democracy, and hoped that Taylor's visit to Argentina a week before the second round would lead to awareness by fans who would listen to her (GIMÉNEZ, 2023).

As Noelia Torres (2023) points out in her note after the statement, this fact unveils new electoral territories. In a recent study on *feminism in fan communities*, Marta Prego Nieto (2023), from the Universidad de Murcia, states that fans currently use the Internet to create content from media products that offer political-themed discourses or related to social movements. In this sense, it resumes a work by María del Mar Grandío (2016), who identifies a new profile of "participative-activist" fans. These are fans who organize themselves to collaborate in the develop-ment of social or political movements that, later, are contextualized in a concrete sphere[5]. According to Prego Nieto (2023), fan communities, which have always had a significant presence of women, have driven feminist resignification processes on — or based on — the transmedia content of mass culture and the celebrity system. Likewise, according to the demand of the fan audience to exert influence on the cultural ob-jects they consume, the feminist activism of the Fourth Wave resonated with these demands, claiming, for example, the protagonism of fictional female characters and non-hegemonic gender identities, among others (PREGO NIETO, 2023, p. 11). In this sense, the popular mass culture offers ideas and discourses that are reproduced in social struggles.

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5   Grandío (2016) describes four types of fans: (1) extratextual-seeker fans, who distance themselves from the "raw" media product to get more information; (2) participatory-talkative fans, who talk about it on different digital platforms; (3) participatory-creator fans, from which new content arises; and (4) participatory-activist fans, who perform actions organized among themselves.

Among the actions carried out during the days of the concert, posters were put up at the stadium fence with the sentence published on social media — *Swiftie no vota Milei* —, which the public used as a background to take pictures and post them (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Photograph by Agência de Notícias Télam [Télam News Agency].

Source: Torres (2023).

The artivist creation is organically related to Taylor Swift's discursive and artistic production in 2018 and, fundamentally, in 2020, from the launch of the *Miss Americana* documentary to the American elections in November. The strategy aimed to bring Swift's thought of that time to the present, with coded messages to the fandom. In the *Comunicado a la Comunidad Swiftie*, phrases coined by the artist at specific moments, such as "Being on the right side of the story" and "Cheers for the resistance," were used. One of the posters that was put up on the walls of the stadium shows a portrait of

Swift holding a cookie tray with the sentence "Sergio Massa 2023." Swifties know that the poster refers to a famous photo of the singer campaigning in favor of Joe Biden's candidacy for 2020 (Figures 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 3 – Natalia Pizarenko's photograph for the website Tampa.
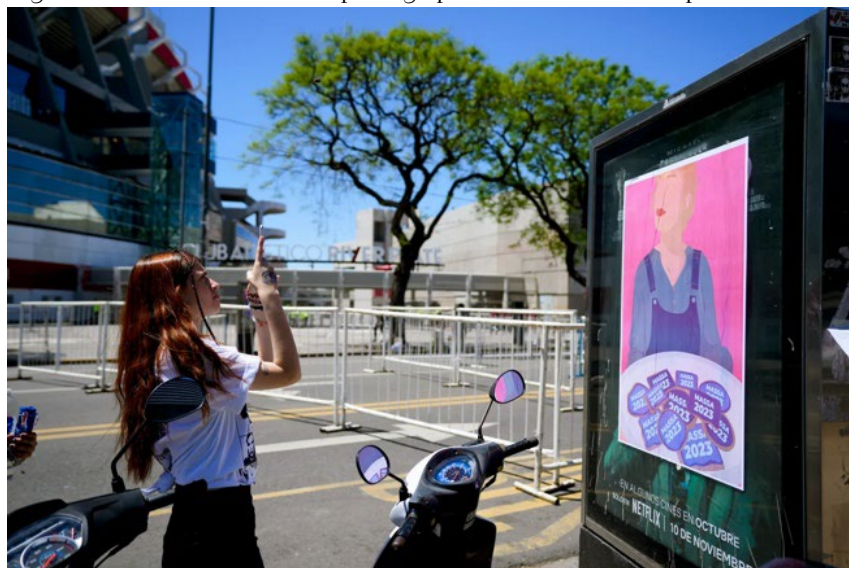
Source: Politi and Pisarenko (2023).

If personal posters are increasingly abundant in social protests, in Swiftie activism this has resulted in numerous accessories. At the concerts in Buenos Aires, the "friendship bracelets" and the practice of exchanging them among Swifties as a gesture of sisterhood took on a situational meaning. Several visual and audiovisual records documented the making of bracelets with the initials "UXP" — *Unión por la Patria, Frente de Coalición Peronista* [Union for the Nation, Peronist Coalition Front], among other initials alluding to the election. There was also the collective singing of songs with political symbolism. In the immediate vicinity of the stadium, before the concert, fans sang *Only the Young* and *You Need to Calm Down*.

Figure 4 – Joe Biden's post with Taylor Swift's image campaigning for his candidacy. October 7, 2020.

Figure 5 – Photograph by Agência de Notícias Télam.

Source: Torres (2023).

The *Agencia de Noticias Télam* and *La Nación* media outlets, among others, collected spontaneous testimonies during the hours leading up to the Thursday concert to ask about the relationship between Swift and the Argentine elections (MARCUZZI, 2023). *La Nación* stated that most of the interviewees would vote in favor of the Peronist candidate, Sergio Massa. The dissident voices of the Swiftie electoral campaign that were gathered shared an argument, which is to reject the artist's excessive politicization by Swiftie activism, and asked that the artistic event be separated from political issues. "Either you don't know Taylor well or you don't know Milei well" (GILBERT, 2023), as per another testimony

that pierces the Swiftie heart: the audience cannot ignore the political position of their favorite artist. "Because Taylor has done everything for the right not to win in her country" LA NACIÓN, 2023); "As young people and Swifties, it is important to have a consistency with what Taylor stands for: her feminism, the need for women's rights and diversity to be preserved" (TORRES, 2023). One of the reports indicated that fan activism had effects on the fandom. A young woman told the press that she changed her vote when she saw the message "*Swifties contra Milei*" on Twitter and on television, a vote that she confirmed that day by feeling the impact of posters and graffiti in the vicinity of the stadium (LA NACIÓN, 2023).

Final considerations: derivatives of Taylor Swift's "impure" feminism

In this study, we analyzed the active role of the Swiftie culture and identity in the presidential elections of Argentina. At the same time, we described social processes in the field of music production and consumption that exceed the limits of what has been known so far. The situational use of Taylor Swift's media biography at the time of the massive congregation of her audience, a week before the elections, led the Swiftie fandom to a prominent place that established precedents. Swift's visit generated the conditions for such relevance, and the *Comunicado* encouraged other statements: from the local ARMY — fans of the South Korean K-pop band BTS — to *Las nenas de Sandro* — fans of the well-known Argentine singer Roberto Sánchez —, showing fan collectives as political agents beyond the eventual fact.

After the concert of November 9, there were reactions on social media by voters of the candidate Massa out of the Swiftie universe. One of the most publicized memes showed Swiftie political density compared to the neutrality of some left-wing parties in the face of the advance of market neo-fascism. What is worth highlighting in this example is the comparison between a fan organization and a political-party organization (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Viral post titled *"Las Swifties demostraron más responsabilidad histórica que la izquierda de Bregman y del Caño"* [Swifties have shown more historical responsibility than Bregman's and del Caño's left].

Source: Twitter account: @wakundamm.

Through the case study, we can verify the continuity of the fan audience, as supported by John Fiske (1992), as a highly-productive and participatory audience, which generates a popular cultural capital that is semiotic and enunciative. According to Henry Jenkins (2007), Swifties build the reception of the artist with emotional closeness while exercising the criticism and conceptual interpretation of her music, constituting themselves as consumers with rights and creating a social community. In turn, Argentine expert Libertad Borda argues that fandom has become a true source of resources that integrates practices, attitudes, expectations, and modes of relationship and communication available for the creation of collective and individual identities, both lasting and ephemeral (BORDA, 2012)[6]. More than a set of characteristics attributable to an individual or social group, fandom can be considered a stance. According to Borda and Álvarez Gandolfi (2021), recent research perspectives have ceased to insist on a strict definition of fan and fandom, as it is a field of cultural struggle in which not only the academy participates, but also the subjects themselves who claim this condition. In this sense, fandom is

6   Definition elaborated based on the definition of culture by Edward Palmer Thompson (1990).

conceived as a performative identity capable of being simultaneously out-side and within the process of commodification. In the midst of the crisis of democratic ideals that assume the great electoral support received by the *La Libertad Avanza* party in the elections, the depoliticization of the youth was discussed. Surely, this is a broad and complex subject, but perhaps this case of fan-activism and its repercussions will help to observe those territories of culture that invigorate social organization and democratic political participation.

Conversely, we highlight that, through the musical and political expe-rience analyzed, we can consider that the feminist struggle in Argentina has continued in the most recent political processes, considering that popular music is a prominent discursive support in contemporary gender policies and public debate. We can contextualize the Swiftie effect in relation to the weakening status of the feminist movement in Argentina during the period of electoral debate that preceded the elections. If the feminist movement was the main social strength of resistance during Mauricio Macri's neoliberal presidency (2015–2019), the inauguration of a Peronist President, Alberto Fernandez, has reached a new stage. The nationalization of gender policies and the legalization of abortion, fundamental achievements that, coupled with the general social dis-articulation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the activist initiative showed a clear weakening from 2021 onward. Thus, we can see that the celebrity world and pop culture have served as support for feminism in an adverse context, bringing new forms of public intervention. Similarly, the feminist movement in the streets persists in other ways, following the university protests or resisting from an anti-fascist cultural position.

It should be noted that this electoral campaign included a particular analysis of the gender-based voting trend: the transversal inclination of the female vote to Peronism because it assumed, based on the State, the task of advancing in obtaining rights, such as support for the Law of Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy, among many others (CAVAL-LERO; GAGO, 2023). Authors of different studies denied and corrobo-rated this trend through research and fieldwork prior to the electoral

moment (CHÁVEZ MOLINA; DE LA FUENTE, 2021; SEMÁN *et al.*, 2023). Possibly, the worsening of the economic crisis during the months prior to the vote has interrupted this trend. Perhaps it was a longing to revive something similar to the presidential reelection of Juan Domingo Perón, in which the approval of the female vote in 1947 was decisive for obtaining the support of Argentine women. However, it was not possible to effectively know whether a certain gender-based voting trend has remained, as, since 2011, electoral rolls have been alphabetic.

The positive and festive reaction of the anti-Mileist Swiftie spectacle by the media also demonstrates the ambiguous position that the country's power sectors had in those days. After the fall of the liberal party's candidacy in the first round of the elections, irreconcilable with the Peronist party and still afraid to support the uncontrolled libertarian candidate, the Swiftie campaign freely reverberated.

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The impact of political brand activism on corporate reputation: the case of Portuguese brand activism in a war context

O impacto do ativismo de marca político na reputação empresarial: o caso do ativismo de marca português em um contexto de guerra

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ABSTRACT: The phenomenon of brand activism (BA) has been attracting the attention of scholars and businesses as a new and powerful strategy for brands to take a stand on sociopolitical topics and highlight their values, with high potential corporate gains. However, research on this topic is still at an exploratory stage and there are several companies and academics considering BA too risky for brands, especially on sensitive political topics such as war issues. Based on the theoretical perspectives of BA and its corporate impacts, notably in terms of corporate reputation, this article aims to study the impact of political brand activism on corporate reputation, analyzing the political activism of a retail company operating in Portugal—Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP), at the start of a particular war. A quantitative study was carried out, through the application of a questionnaire survey to 1,152 consumers of ARP, with the aim of analyzing the impact of Auchan's political BA actions regarding a specific war context on its corporate reputation. The results showed that BA has a significant positive impact on the corporate reputation of ARP, thus contributing to a better perception of the potential of this strategy to improve corporate performance, by generating competitive advantages for brands.

Keywords: brand activism; political brand activism; corporate reputation; retail sector; war; sustainable development.

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RESUMO: *O fenômeno de ativismo de marca (AM) tem atraído a atenção de acadêmicos e empresas como uma nova e poderosa estratégia para as marcas se posicionarem em relação a tópicos sociopolíticos, além de evidenciarem seus valores, com elevado potencial de retornos corporativos. No entanto, a investigação sobre esse tema ainda se encontra numa fase exploratória, e existem várias empresas e acadêmicos que consideram o AM muito arriscado para as marcas, especialmente no que concerne a temas políticos sensíveis, como questões de guerra. Com base nas perspectivas teóricas sobre AM e nos seus impactos corporativos, nomeadamente a nível da reputação corporativa, este artigo pretende estudar o impacto do ativismo de marca política na reputação corporativa, analisando o ativismo político de uma empresa de retalho que opera em Portugal — Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP), no início de uma guerra específica. Foi realizado um estudo quantitativo, através da aplicação de um questionário a 1.152 consumidores da ARP, com o objetivo de analisar, em um contexto específico de guerra, o impacto das ações políticas de AM da Auchan na sua reputação corporativa. Os resultados indicam que o AM tem um impacto positivo significativo na reputação corporativa da ARP, contribuindo para uma melhor percepção do potencial dessa estratégia para aprimorar o desempenho corporativo e gerar vantagens competitivas para as marcas.*

Palavras-chave: *ativismo de marca; ativismo de marca político; reputação corporativa; setor do retalho; guerra; desenvolvimento sustentável.*

INTRODUCTION

From the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century, several social processes and evolutions have occurred, which forced companies to rapidly adapt to new scenarios and take a leading role in the defense of relevant sociopolitical issues. Brands' better perception about the need to get involved in the defense of sociopolitical causes is indeed largely related to the increased polarization of society, which pushes companies to participate in the political debate, as well as to the new ways of consumption (e.g., SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013) and the growing stakeholder's demands for a primary role of brands in addressing social issues, often greater than that attributed to the State (KORSCHUN, 2021). Thus, a new paradigm of brand-stakeholder relationships has been evolving, in which brands are now increasingly understood in terms of the connection between subjectivities, values and personalities, and evaluated and judged markedly by their sociopolitical stances (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

In this sense, a new trend has emerged in the markets, in which brands declare their concerns and stances about polarized public issues through communication campaigns and effective actions to promote social change and sustainable development (e.g., SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018). In the literature, this phenomenon is often defined as brand activism (BA), which differs from traditional corporate social responsibility (CSR) models and cause-related marketing by being a values-based strategy—it emphasizes the inherent company values relative to the issue addressed, which can be either human rights, environmental issues, political interests, trade policies, workplace problems, among others (e.g., EYADA, 2020).

Though only recently studied, the fact that it involves addressing contested topics, as in the case of war issues, has already led certain scholars to consider BA as a risky strategy (e.g., JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022), highlighting the potential negative effects it may have on companies, such as backlashes or boycotts (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). This is

especially true when stakeholders do not agree with the brand's stance or consider the brand's support for the cause as a marketing strategy to make a profit (EYADA, 2020). However, there is also plenty of evidence that BA can bring several positive outcomes for brands that demonstrate a sincere responsibility for improving or resolving important causes, which includes financial and corporate gains such as greater purchase intention (e.g., SHETTY *et al.*, 2019) and greater corporate reputation (e.g., MARTINS; BATISTA, 2020). In fact, corporate reputation is one of the most recognized strategic assets of an organization, given the impact it has on the choices and perceptions of stakeholders in relation to the brand (e.g., RAITHEL; SCHWAIGER, 2014).

Given that BA can have positive but also negative results for brands, it is important to continue studying the impacts of BA on corporate performance, so that companies understand how they can meet the sociopolitical demands of their stakeholders while achieving specific corporate goals, thus justifying the investments in activism campaigns (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021).

In this way, this article aims to contribute to a better understanding of the strategic impacts of BA, bringing together some Portuguese empirical research that demonstrates how political BA campaigns can impact corporate reputation. Specifically, this research analyzes the extent to which the BA of a high-consumption retail company operating in Portugal—Auchan Retail Portugal (ARP)—influenced the company's reputation at the start of a specific war. By conducting a quantitative study in which questionnaires were administered to 1,152 consumers, political BA was analyzed, namely regarding their perception of activism, congruence, authenticity, and decision-making, also analyzing Auchan's reputation through five analytical dimensions (emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance) and testing the direct impact of BA on corporate reputation through linear regression analysis.

Theoretical foundations

Brand activism

Contemporary society is facing significant social and environmental challenges that have led people to demand a response from all organizations, including companies (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, factors such as globalization, technological developments, greater market competition and the growing thought on the responsibility of companies towards society have also led to changes in the way stakeholders perceive and evaluate brands, which now depends more on brand values and conduct than on market or economic factors (EYADA, 2020). In particular, consumers from younger generations, such as generations Y and Z, have undergone a transformation in consumption practices, in which the act of consumption goes beyond its utilitarian function to take on symbolic, identity-based and even political meanings (BAUMAN, 2007). In this context, consumption becomes a central sociocultural practice in mediating relationships between individuals, organizations and public issues, reflecting values, beliefs and ethical-political positions and reinforcing the role of the consumer as a political and cultural subject (SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013). Thus, today's consumers have demonstrated a growing sensitivity to the social and environmental consequences of consumerism, expressing greater concern for the sustainability and ethics of the brands they interact with (FRANCIS; HOEFEL, 2018), and tend to value conscious consumption practices, in which considerations about social justice, environmental impact and organizational authenticity significantly influence purchasing decisions (WHITE *et al.*, 2019).

The first conceptualization of BA was provided by Sarkar and Kotler (2018, p. 547), who outlined the phenomenon as "the business efforts to promote, impede, or direct social, political, economic and/or environmental reform with the desire to improve society", conceptualizing it as a values-driven strategy with a fundamental concern for the biggest and most urgent problems facing society. For their part, Jungblut and Johnen (2022) define this strategy as a brand's public expression of a stance toward

a political issue that is not directly related to the brand's business models. BA thus emerged as an intersection between politics and marketing (JUNG; MITTAL, 2020), where brands take a clear stand on the most varied issues and problems affecting current societies (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). In this type of strategy, as advocated by Moorman (2020), brands become not only activists, but also educators, contributing to trigger social changes essential for the creation of a more egalitarian and sustainable society. Likewise, by incorporating social and political causes into its communication and actions, brands can help to reconfigure their relationship with consumers, encouraging consumption practices aligned with ideologies and worldviews (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

Given the range of sociopolitical issues that a brand can address, the progressive or regressive positions it can adopt in relation to the cause, and the disparate public opinion around controversial problems and events, BA is characterized as a risky and uncertain strategy (CAMMAROTA *et al.*, 2021). This is exactly one of the crucial factors that distinguishes the concept of BA from other social brand strategies, such as CSR, as BA is linked to controversial and debate issues while CSR is primarily concerned with well-accepted prosocial issues that tend to be non-divisive (HOFFMANN *et al.*, 2020). As such, CSR tends to be perceived as a positive strategy, while the response to BA can vary greatly and be extremely polarized, even within the various stakeholder segments (JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022).

Therefore, the reasons driving a brand's activist actions are doubly scrutinized to identify whether these actions stem from authentic motives or are a marketing move to increase products/services sales and generate profits (EYADA, 2020). If it is not adequately implemented, BA can generate harsh negative corporate effects (MOORMAN, 2020) and financial and economic damage (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020), especially when they are the target of discontent from stakeholders, who can initiate anti-brand actions such as backlashes or boycotts (JUNGBLUT; JOHNEN, 2022). At the same time, when effectively managed, BA can also have major gains for the brand, both financial (e.g., SHETTY *et al.*, 2019) and corporate (e.g., MARTINS; BATISTA, 2020).

Political brand activism

Nowadays brands already carry out activist actions on multiple issues, including social, environmental, legal, economic, workplace, as well as political issues (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

The growing economic power of companies has brought them increased responsibilities towards society, especially in scenarios where governments fail in their duty to protect aspects of citizenship or civil rights, assuming an increasingly political role (MATOS *et al.*, 2017). From an early age, companies began to use their power to lobby or apply other pressure tactics to defend their interests, as well as funding campaigns or allying with political parties with common political interests/visions (EYADA, 2020). Political BA places these political pressure actions at the service of society's interests and political consumerism, covering issues such as lobbying, privatization, voting, voting rights, partisanship, policy (gerrymandering, campaign finance, etc.), or political conflicts, with companies using marketing strategies and their economic power to exert political pressure (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018).

An example of political BA occurred in 2022, after the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, when several brands, such as Adidas, IKEA, Airbnb, Jerónimo Martins, Lego, H&M, Google, Microsoft, Volkswagen, Netflix, Apple, Spotify, and Nike decided to stop selling their products/services in Russia, stop selling Russian products or even to withdraw their stores or factories from Russian territory as a form of protest against the invasion and economic pressure on the Russian government to retreat (CNN BRASIL BUSINESS, 2022). In the Portuguese context, companies such as Jerónimo Martins, Sonae SGPS and PRIO also demonstrated their support for Ukraine with political activist communications on their digital platforms, and created several actions to support the Ukrainian people and the Portuguese located in Ukraine at the beginning of the conflict (MARKETEER, 2022).

Corporate reputation

Corporate reputation (CR) is considered one of the most strategic assets of a company's value, given its relevance for a firm to gain competitive advantage

and sustain superior financial performance (QUINTANA-GARCÍA *et al.*, 2021). CR can be defined as the synthesis of stakeholders' perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about a company (POST; GRIFFIN, 1997). For Gotsi and Wilson (2001), this synthesis can be evaluated in a general or specific way, resulting from the stakeholder's direct experiences with the company and other forms of communication and symbolism that lead to an evaluation of the set of organizational attributes conquered over time and compared to those of competitors in the market. Likewise, Lee (2020) adds that, in addition to being the cumulative result of past activities, CR also represents stakeholder perspectives about the organization's current and future positions.

The stakeholders' views of a company's reputation are influenced by a number of factors, related not only to the company's financial and tactical performance, but also to intangible aspects that concern the way the company fulfills the stakeholders' expectations and rights, as well as its obligations to society (e.g., GALLARDO-VÁZQUEZ *et al.*, 2019; SARSTEDT *et al.*, 2023). In the commercial area, for example, Walsh *et al.* (2009) found consumer satisfaction and trust in the company as important antecedents of an organization's reputation. For their part, Abratt and Kleyn (2012) argued that the dimensions affecting CR include product/service quality, corporate performance, citizenship activities, management model, the workplace, innovation, and corporate ethics. In fact, several empirical studies have proven a positive nexus between corporate social actions, such as CSR and BA, and CR, since social actions help stakeholders to create more positive perceptions about how companies are oriented towards stakeholders and respond to societal challenges (e.g., CADEZ *et al.*, 2019; VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

On the other hand, by promoting a good CR, companies can also achieve very favorable results at a financial and corporate level. A positive reputation has strategic value for organizations, as it attracts investors (FELDMAN *et al.*, 2014), motivates employees (DAWIT *et al.*, 2020), and contributes to consumer satisfaction and retention (RAITHEL; SCHWAIGER, 2014). For these reasons, several studies have already determined the great contribution of CR to generating sustained higher

income over time (e.g., CORNELISSEN, 2008). Since CR is sensitive and vulnerable to any shortcomings of an organization, including irresponsible or unethical behaviors, it becomes extremely important for companies to manage and sustain a good reputation, proactively adopting corporate strategies that aim to improve the engagement of stakeholders with the company and to take advantage of the opportunities provided by a favorable reputation (XIANGYU *et al.*, 2020).

The impact of brand activism on corporate reputation

From an early age, corporate social responsibility actions were a factor associated with building a favorable CR (e.g., ABRATT; KLEYN, 2012). This is related to the fact that a company's social and environmental responsibility activities balance the businesses' interests with stakeholders' concerns and expectations, giving stakeholders a better perception of the way the company operates and cares about their needs (SHETTY *et al.*, 2019). Through social activities, businesses are oriented towards their various stakeholders (e.g., customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, society, or the environment), fulfilling their economic, social, and environmental responsibilities and showing a commitment to ethical principles and to the interests of all stakeholders (XIANGYU *et al.*, 2020).

Existing literature suggests that corporate social actions, such as BA, may serve as strategic resources for enhancing intangible assets like CR. While some scholars have raised concerns regarding the risks of engaging in social strategies (KEINERT, 2008; MOORMAN, 2020), a growing body of research (e.g., EILERT; CHERUP, 2020; DIRUSSO *et al.*, 2022) contends that, when such actions are strategically managed, they can not only address societal and environmental demands but also provide a source of competitive advantage. Empirical evidence (e.g., BRAMMER; MILLINGTON, 2005; GALLARDO-VÁZQUEZ *et al.*, 2019; MIRANDA; MIGUEL, 2022) supports a positive association between socially responsible corporate behavior and CR, particularly when companies demonstrate a genuine commitment to societal well-being. In the context of BA specifically, scholars argue that

its reputational benefits are contingent on the perceived authenticity and altruistic motivation of the campaigns (KOTLER *et al.*, 2021; JOHNSON *et al.*, 2022), reinforcing positive brand-cause associations. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that BA, even when addressing politically sensitive issues such as armed conflict, can exert a positive influence on corporate reputation.

H1 – Political brand activism has a positive influence on corporate reputation.

Materials and Methods

To assess the impact of its political BA actions regarding a specific war context on the reputation of a major retail company operating in Portugal (ARP), a quantitative study was conducted. ARP is a French multinational retail group operating in Portugal for over 50 years by selling food products, hygiene and beauty products, home and garden products, technology, clothing, among others. The brand is governed by values of trust, open mind, and excellence, focusing on product quality, selected offerings, discounted prices and excellent customer experience. ARP also has a vast history of policies and actions in terms of social responsibility and activism, notably related to its main business area (food sector) and the field of sustainability (AUCHAN RETAIL PORTUGAL, 2025).

Questionnaire surveys were administered to ARP's consumers. The evaluation of BA was based on the scales of Eilert and Cherup (2020) and Lim and Young (2021), measuring dimensions such as perception of activism, perception of congruence, perception of authenticity, and decision-making. Items related to CR were assessed using the Fombrun *et al.* (2000) Reputation Quotient, grouped into five analytical dimensions: emotional appeal, products and services, workplace environment, social responsibility, and financial performance.

The questionnaire consists of 42 questions. Response options are based on a five-point agreement scale (1—completely disagree; 5—completely agree). Surveys were conducted online through a snowball sampling method, utilizing the social media platforms Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. The surveys were in circulation from May 1st to June 30th,

2023. Ethical criteria were considered during the questionnaire administration, including the application of informed consent and the assurance of data confidentiality.

The sample consists of 1,152 subjects who are consumers of the brand under study, ARP. The majority are female (53%), with the remaining participants being male. Regarding age distribution, 45% are between 18 and 34 years old, 41% are between 35 and 54 years old, and 14% are 54 years old or older. A considerable portion of the sample has up to secondary education (45%), and 55% have completed undergraduate or postgraduate studies.

Results

Brand activism

By observing Table 1, it is concluded that, in general, individuals have a positive perception of ARP's BA, with an average (m) of 3.48 and a standard deviation (s.d.) of 1.10. The question that had the highest mean was "ARP is attentive to social issues" (m = 4.10; s.d. = 0.83). On the other hand, the question that obtained the lowest value was "ARP advocates for social issues by exerting pressure on institutional actors" (m = 2.81; s.d. = 1.19), where individuals showed some indifference in their responses, placing themselves in the midpoint of the response scale— "neither agree nor disagree."

Regarding the dimension of stance, it is observed that the perception of ARP's stance on the analyzed war context is positive, with an average of 3.72 (s.d. = 1.21).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis: Brand Activism (Auchan Retail Portugal).

Dimensions	Mean	SD
Activism	3.48	1.10
Stance	3.72	1.21
Perception of Congruence	3.40	1.09
Perception of Authenticity	3.62	1.05

SD: standard deviation.

Concerning the dimension "perception of congruence", the average is 3.40 (s.d. = 1.09), indicating that respondents generally have a positive perception of the congruence of ARP's BA actions. The highest average was obtained with the proposition "It is common for organizations like ARP to advocate for issues such as the analyzed war" (m = 3.81; s.d. = 0.99), with respondents agreeing with this statement. The item "The issue of the analyzed war is logically connected to ARP" had the lowest mean (m = 2.50; s.d. = 1.26).

With regard to the perception of authenticity, the mean of the grouped variable is 3.62, and the standard deviation is 1.05. Overall, respondents demonstrated a positive perception of the authenticity of ARP brand activism actions and messages. The highest-rated question is "ARP is staying true to itself with the stance taken on the analyzed war" (m = 3.85; s.d. = 1.08). On the other hand, the less highly rated options (m = 3.28) relate to the consistency of actions and communication by ARP.

Corporate reputation

Regarding the analysis and evaluation of CR, the scale used encompasses five dimensions: emotional appeal, products and services, vision and leadership, social and environmental responsibility, and financial performance.

Table 2 presents the variable "corporate reputation", which aggregates the five aforementioned dimensions. The mean is 3.61, and the standard

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis: Corporate Reputation (Auchan Retail Portugal).

	Mean	SD
Corporate Reputation	3.61	0.90
Emotional Appeal	3.60	1.03
Products and Services	3.91	0.84
Vision and Leadership	3.59	0.87
Social and Environmental Responsibility	3.52	0.88
Financial Performance	3.45	0.90

deviation is 0.90. In a general overview, respondents demonstrated a positive perception of ARP corporate reputation after being informed about the actions taken by the organization in response to the analyzed war context.

Apropos the emotional appeal dimension, the mean is 3.60 (s.d. = 1.03), indicating that the majority of respondents have a positive emotional appeal towards the organization. Particularly noteworthy is the item "I have a positive feeling about ARP" (m = 3.76; s.d. = 0.98).

In the case of the products and services dimension, the mean is 3.91, and the standard deviation is 0.84, indicating a positive perception among respondents regarding the products and services offered by the organization. Particularly noteworthy is the item "ARP offers products and services with a good quality-price ratio" (m = 4.14; s.d. = 0.83).

As for the variable vision and leadership, the mean obtained (m = 3.59; s.d. = 0.87) is slightly lower than the dimensions presented earlier. There is a positive perception that ARP has a clear vision for the future and seizes market opportunities (m = 3.72).

In the case of the social and environmental responsibility dimension, the obtained mean was 3.52 (s.d. = 0.88), indicating an overall positive perception among respondents. The item that had the lowest mean and differed from the others was "ARP is environmentally responsible" (m = 3.06; s.d. = 0.91), with the majority of individuals expressing a "neither agree nor disagree" stance. The remaining questions had a higher mean, indicating agreement with the responses. The highest mean was obtained for "ARP supports good causes" (m = 3.95; s.d. = 0.84).

Regarding financial performance, the mean is 3.45 (s.d. = 0.90), indicating a positive perception among respondents regarding the organization's financial performance. Notably, respondents highlighted the strong profit track record (m = 3.69; s.d. = 0.81) and the robust prospects for the company's future growth (m = 3.65; s.d. = 0.81). The least pronounced value (m = 2.97; s.d. = 1.05), revealing respondent indifference, pertains to whether ARP tends to outperform the competition.

Brand activism vs. corporate reputation

It can be concluded that the independent variable, BA, also exhibits a linear relationship with the dependent variable, corporate reputation (sig < 0.001 < 0.05). The relationship between the variables is considered strong (r = 0.73), indicating that 53% of ARP corporate reputation is explained by its brand activism (r2 = 0.53), thus validating the theoretical working hypothesis—political BA has a positive influence on corporate reputation.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results suggest that surveyed consumers have a positive perception of ARP's BA, particularly highlighting the company's attention to social and political issues and the expressed intention to support marginalized groups. However, participants believe that, despite the company's interest in social and political matters, it could play a more active role in exerting pressure on institutional and political actors and have a more pronounced impact beyond organizational boundaries. These findings align with the discussions in the literature, as argued by Sibai et al. (2021) and Howarth (2022), emphasizing the growing demand for organizations to play a more active and interventionist role in public affairs and socio--political causes.

   Specifically, regarding ARP's stance on the war context, the perception of this position is positive, indicating that consumers value the company's decision to take a stand on a politically and socially divisive issue. Consumers validate the congruence between the company's values, actions, and the authenticity of the messages communicated in this regard, which contributes to the positive assessment they make regarding ARP activism. This highlights the fact that consumers not only expect companies to take stances on sociopolitical issues but also evaluate these actions based on their authenticity, transparency, and effectiveness, with BA communications and actions being understood as a form of symbolic power which depends on altruistic motivations and an alignment with the values

defended by the brand over time to be able to positively impact the brand's relationship with consumers, for example in terms of corporate reputation (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020). In this case, Auchan Retail's action, based on the slogan "every bit of support counts," involved the collection of vouchers and monetary donations to associations directly providing humanitarian aid in the context of the war, as well as the integration of refugees into the Portuguese job market. Despite being consistent and valid, consumer responses suggest that the communication of these actions and activities could have been more effective, highlighting an area with potential for improvement in Auchan Portugal's BA management. It is essential for an organization's involvement in BA to be based on its basic assumptions and intrinsic values for it to be positively perceived by its audiences (SARKAR; KOTLER, 2018). Additionally, the organization must develop planned strategic communication (DIRUSSO *et al.*, 2022), emphasizing authenticity and alignment between the organization's beliefs, statements, and concrete actions (VREDENBURG *et al.*, 2020).

The corporate reputation, assessed in its different dimensions, received an overall positive evaluation, particularly emphasizing emotional appeal and a clear vision for the future. This indicates that respondents harbor positive feelings toward ARP and that the company can establish a positive emotional connection with them—a crucial aspect for building a solid reputation. This is underscored by the strong correlation established between BA and corporate reputation, suggesting that BA significantly influences how the company is perceived, felt, and experienced by consumers. The importance of this variable in Auchan Portugal's image construction is highlighted. From a consumption studies perspective, this connection is particularly relevant, as corporate reputation shapes not only consumer trust (SAFDAR *et al.*, 2020) but also the symbolic and emotional value attributed to brands that distinguish them from its competitors (DAWIT *et al.*, 2020). In contemporary consumer culture, in which the perceived ethical and political stance of a company becomes a key criterion in purchase decisions (SCARABOTO; FISCHER, 2013), BA can be a differentiator, enhancing brand reputation in an increasingly

value-driven market. The findings are in line with those obtained by Miranda and Miguel (2022), who concluded that CSR and BA could be recognized as significant predictors of corporate reputation.

In conclusion, the results of the present article reinforce the growing importance of BA as a communicative and strategic practice capable of shaping corporate reputation in a meaningful way. In the case of ARP, consumers evaluated the company's activism positively, recognizing its willingness to engage with politically and socially divisive issues, particularly in the context of war and humanitarian crisis. The findings also highlighted the value consumers place on authenticity and congruence between corporate values, actions, and communication, factors that foster emotional connection and contribute to increasing corporate reputation.

Several implications and avenues for further research emerge from this. On one hand, the perceived congruence, especially regarding the war, is noteworthy, indicating that Auchan's actions are perceived as relevant and acceptable by consumers. However, consistency between actions and their communication can be enhanced to strengthen the company's position in the market and improve its public perception. On the other hand, the knowledge generated indicates that organizations should strategically plan and act on social and political issues, recognizing that such positions can positively influence their corporate reputation.

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A R T I C L E

Between politics, media, and health: How Jornal Nacional and Jornal da Record mediated the politicization of the COVID-19 pandemic

Entre política, mídia e saúde: a mediação da politização da pandemia de covid-19 pelo *Jornal Nacional* e *Jornal da Record*

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Abstract: *From the outset, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a public health and political issue, impacting population attitudes and behaviors. In Brazil, its politicization by former President Bolsonaro exacerbated this dynamic, influencing both information consumption and individual actions regarding the disease. This study analyzes the mediation of media exposure, highlighting the role of the country's main television news programs, Jornal Nacional and Jornal da Record, in shaping perceptions and behaviors towards COVID-19. The results indicate that part of the political influence on the pandemic was mediated by exposure to the newscasts, underscoring the need for a comprehensive understanding of the interactions between health, politics, and media.*

Keywords: *COVID-19; politicization; TV news; mediation.*

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Resumo: Desde o início, a pandemia de covid-19 se configurou como um problema de saúde pública e político que impactou atitudes e comportamentos da população. No Brasil, a sua politização pelo ex-presidente Jair Bolsonaro exacerbou essa dinâmica, influenciando tanto o consumo de informações quanto as ações individuais em relação à doença. O estudo analisa a mediação da exposição midiática, destacando o papel dos principais telejornais do país, Jornal Nacional e Jornal da Record, na formação de percepções e comportamentos em relação à covid-19. Os resultados indicam que parte da influência política na pandemia foi mediada pela exposição aos telejornais, sublinhando a necessidade de uma compreensão abrangente das interações entre saúde, política e mídia.

Palavras-chave: COVID-19; politização; telejornais; mediação.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic emerged simultaneously as a public health and political problem (YAMEY; GONSALVES, 2020). In 2020, studies demonstrated how speeches by national leaders affected the perception of the disease (BAEKGAARD et al., 2020; BOL et al., 2020) and how political polarization influenced behaviors in response to the virus, such as refusal to social distancing and resistance to vaccination (GOLLWIT-ZER et al., 2020; LEVIN et al., 2022; TUNG; CHANG; LIN, 2022).

This political dimension also manifested from a communicational perspective. The current polarized environment has brought back a scenario of selective exposure to media outlets (IYENGAR; HAHN, 2009; STROUD, 2011; LEVENDUSKY, 2013). It was therefore no surprise that many news outlets provided coverage of COVID-19 aligned with their audiences' political preferences (ALLCOTT et al., 2020; PEREIRA; NUNES, 2020; ROMER; JAMIESON, 2021; ARAÚJO; GUAZINA, 2024).

In Brazil, former president Jair Bolsonaro downplayed the severity of the pandemic, politicized its response, and encouraged the public to interpret a public health issue through ideological lenses (ABRUCIO et al., 2020; BARBERIA; GÓMEZ, 2020; BURNI; STOCKEMER; HACKENESCH, 2023). This impacted both the pursuit of information (PEREIRA; NUNES, 2020; ROSSINI; KALOGEROPOULOS, 2025) and behaviors, reducing cooperation with mitigation measures (GRAMACHO; TURGEON, 2021; AJZENMAN; CAVALCANTI; DA MATA, 2023; GRAMACHO et al., 2024).

All these studies highlight the political dimension of COVID-19, emphasizing how attitudes and behaviors regarding the pandemic were influenced by the positions of political elites. Research such as that by Araújo and Guazina (2024) focuses on media coverage. This article aims to connect these two dimensions by analyzing the significant role of the media in shaping public opinion during this public health crisis. We argue that part of the effects of political variables, such as ideology and party

preference, regarding the pandemic were mediated by the media sources people used. In other words, media outlets had a direct and indirect effect by reinforcing certain political beliefs, which in turn led people to reject methods of combating COVID-19.

Theoretically, the article discusses two models that help to understand the effects of political mediation in public health: the Reinforcement Spiral Model (RSM) (SLATER, 2007; 2015; SLATER; SHEHATA; STRÖMBÄCK, 2020) and the Ideological Spiral Model in Health (IHSM) (YOUNG; BLEAKLEY, 2020). The RSM demonstrates how the interaction between media and political attitudes shapes social identities, ideologies, and behaviors, also affecting media consumption. The IHSM follows the reinforcement spiral model and explores the connection between political communication and health in crisis contexts, such as a pandemic. It links the actions of former President Bolsonaro in politicizing the disease, which encouraged the population to associate their political-affective loyalties with processing information about the public health crisis.

The article analyzes data from a national survey with 2,771 internet users in Brazil, conducted between September and November 2020. The results confirm the influence of politicization on attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19, but go beyond that: through structural equation modeling and mediation analysis, they reveal that a significant portion of this influence was caused by exposure to the country's two main television news programs — *Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Record*. These findings broaden the understanding of the dynamics between health, politics, and media during health crises, highlighting the important role of the media in shaping collective attitudes, both directly and as a mediator.

The reinforcement spiral model

The Reinforcement Spiral Model (RSM), developed by Slater (2007; 2015; SLATER; SHEHATA; STRÖMBÄCK, 2020), analyzes how the media maintain and reinforce attitudes and behaviors, integrating social

identity theory (TAJFEL; TURNER, 1979) into discussions on selective exposure (HART et al., 2013; 2019).

According to social identity theory, individuals identify with a group due to the psychological, emotional, and social benefits of orientation, protection, and social differentiation (TAJFEL; TURNER, 1979), valuing the "ingroup" in opposition to the "outgroup" (FERNANDES; PEREIRA, 2018). This preserves a positive social identity and distances threatening elements from group beliefs (HUDDY, 2001; 2013). Selective exposure is used in this process. Since the media are the primary source of information for individuals and an important factor in the development and maintenance of social and political identities (STROUD, 2011; LEVENDUSKY, 2013), this mechanism allows us to consume content and information that align with our beliefs, maintaining and psychologically reinforcing individual and group cohesion (SLATER, 2007).

Slater (2007) highlights that selective content choices help make attitudes more accessible and maintain group identity. People seek in the media content and experiences that reflect and validate their identities, preferences, and values. This continuous search feeds a persistent spiral, in which social identification is strengthened, leading to a cycle of interaction that solidifies both group identity and individual attitudes over time.

Initially, RSM studies explored impacts on public health. Slater et al. (2003) linked exposure to violent content with aggressive behavior. Bleakley et al. (2008) demonstrated that exposure to sexual content increases the likelihood of early sexual activity, a higher number of sexual partners, and less use of contraceptives. Slater and Hayes (2010) identified that exposure to programs that normalize the consumption of substances like tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol predisposes individuals to their use.

Subsequently, the RSM was used to understand political issues. Feldman et al. (2014) found a relationship between the use of conservative media and skepticism about global warming. Song and Boomgaarden (2017) analyzed how interpersonal networks affect media selectivity. Hoewe et al. (2020) demonstrated lower support for refugee entry among conservative

Fox News consumers. Hutchens, Hmielowski, and Beam (2019) observed that discussions among similar individuals generate positive feelings, while debates with opponents provoke adverse emotions, suggesting a connection between political discussions and polarization spirals.

Reinforcement spirals and public health

Gollust, Nagler, and Fowler (2020) stated that the pandemic was both a public health crisis and a political-communicational issue. During this period, conflicting messages about COVID-19 response from political elites led media outlets to cover the public health crisis through partisan lenses (HART; CHINN; SOROKA, 2020; JAMIESON; ALBARRACÍN, 2020; MOTTA; STECUŁA; FARHART, 2020), causing people to adopt different beliefs and protective actions against the disease.

This situation exemplifies what Fowler and Gollust (2015) termed the politicization of health: when a political actor extends a health issue into the political realm, leading the public to interpret health matters from a partisan perspective. Studies demonstrate their practical effects. Kiviniemi et al. (2022), for example, found that Democrats perceived a higher risk regarding the virus and engaged in more preventive behaviors than Republicans. Clinton et al. (2021), in turn, indicated that partisan considerations outweighed public health concerns, resulting in criticism of social distancing, especially among Republicans. Partisan patterns affected mask usage (HOWARD, 2022; YOUNG et al., 2022) and support for policies restricting commerce and borders (GADARIAN; GOODMAN; PEPINSKY, 2021).

In this context, Young and Bleakley (2020) applied the RSM within a model of ideological spirals in health (IHSM) to interpret behaviors during the pandemic. With the politicization of COVID-19, political identities influenced sources of information and shaped how people interpreted data, creating a spiral where these identities led to selective exposure — further reinforcing those same identities. This cycle resulted in different levels of understanding of the disease, polarized opinions, and

made coordinated actions more difficult (ROOIJ; STECUŁA; PICKUP, 2022; YOUNG et al., 2022).

Cohen (2015) demonstrated that presidents can adopt divisive rhetoric among groups to influence public opinion. In the realm of public health, this is what Lasco and Curato (2019) called "medical populism": a political style that polarizes, sensationalizes, and simplifies complex issues of public health during health crises. In pandemic situations, leaders and political elites may amplify threat perceptions, which could increase the effects of the reinforcement spiral.

These characteristics are evident in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Bolsonaro fostered a polarizing stance between "us" and "them," challenged trust in scientists and experts (LASCO; CURATO, 2019; LASCO, 2020), spread conspiracy theories by making false statements (CAPONI et al., 2021), questioned vaccines (LARSON et al., 2018; DANIELS, 2021; SABAHELZAIN; HARTIGAN-GO; LARSON, 2021), and promoted divisive narratives (RENNÓ; AVRITZER; DELGADO, 2021).

According to Pereira and Nunes (2020), the preference for online information explains how Bolsonaro was able to influence the opinions of his supporters in favor of his negationist positions. Other studies show that his supporters watch *Jornal da Record* — aligned with Bolsonaroism (PORTO; NEVES; LIMA, 2020) and Evangelicals (NICOLAU, 2020) — which covered the pandemic favorably toward the former president's views (ARAÚJO; GUAZINA, 2024). This resulted in a cycle where choices reinforced media behaviors and attitudes, strengthening identities and patterns of media selection (YOUNG et al., 2022).

The IHSM helps to understand this complex scenario, in which the pandemic amplified ideological-party influence on public health issues (ROOZENBEEK et al., 2020; STECULA; PICKUP, 2021; FALCONE et al., 2022; FREEMAN et al., 2022). Based on these discussions, we analyze the impact of exposure to *Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Record* on adherence to preventive measures, prioritization of economic versus health concerns, and support for government management during the

crisis, investigating the mediating effect of media exposure on political identities and their behavioral impacts during the pandemic.

Data description

The analyzed data come from a nationwide online opinion survey conducted with 2,771 Brazilian internet users[1] between September 23 and October 2, 2020[2].

Dependent variables[3]

Measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. The respondents evaluated statements about the COVID-19 pandemic on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)[4]. To summarize these responses into a single indicator, we used polychoric factor analysis — an appropriate technique for ordinal variables, such as agreement scales[5]. The extracted factor explained 81% of the variance among the items. The sum of the responses to the statements resulted in an index (M = 25.3; SD = 4.5; min = 6; max = 30; α = 0.84) that summarizes overall agreement with prevention measures.

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1   The sample followed quotas for age, gender, region, and social class based on data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). The survey was conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Research and Data Analysis (IBPAD), using participants from Netquest's online panel. Netquest is the only research company in Brazil certified with ISO 26362 for online panels.

2   The data were kindly provided by the Center for Research in Political Communication and Public Health (Survey on Information and the COVID-19 pademic, CPS - UnB) at the University of Brasília (UnB), headed by Prof. Wladimir Gramacho, to whom we are immensely grateful. The research was funded with resources from the COPEI-DPI/DEX Call No. 01/2020, from UnB and IBPAD.

3   A detailed description of the data as well as the complete estimates of the statistical models can be requested from the first author of the article via email: <inserir>.

4   The included statements were: "I am bothered by going to crowded places" (M = 4.25; SD = 0.92), "avoiding public transportation reduces infections" (M = 4.16; SD = 0.91), "closing schools was a correct measure" (M = 4.39; SD = 0.93), "closing businesses was a correct measure" (M = 3.91; SD = 1.15), "without quarantine, it would have been much worse" (M = 4.36; SD = 0.99), and "I have disinfected my hands more frequently" (M = 4.40; SD = 0.82).

5   Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to combine many related variables into a single factor, reducing the amount of information analyzed. In our case, it allowed us to transform six statements about the pandemic into a single index of preventive attitudes.

Social distancing or economic prioritization. The participants indicated their position on a scale from 1 (prioritize life with distancing) to 7 (prioritize the economy and avoid restrictions) (M = 3.4; SD = 2.18).

Evaluation of the government in combating the pandemic. Assessment of Bolsonaro's government in handling COVID-19 on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) (M = 2.72; SD = 1.47).

Independent variables

Media exposure. The participants indicated how frequently they sought information about the pandemic from *Jornal Nacional* (M = 3.17; SD = 1.51) and *Jornal da Record* (M = 2.86; SD = 1.40).

Party preference. Participants were asked which political party they preferred. Only two responses exceeded 2%: PT (Labors Party) (8.14%) and "Bolsonaro's party" (8.45%).

Level of concern about COVID-19. Participants were asked about their level of concern regarding COVID-19: not concerned at all (4.2%), somewhat concerned (23.5%), quite concerned (38.6%), and very concerned (33.6%).

Level of information about COVID-19. The variable format from Gramacho et al. (2021) was used, and a knowledge index was created based on 15 true or false questions, such as "Taking chloroquine cures COVID-19" (false). The total score (0 to 15) had a mean of 10.9 (SD = 2.3; α = 0.63).

Political awareness. Participants were asked about their knowledge of mayoral candidates in the 2020 elections: 27.3% did not know any; 15.5% knew of one candidate; 20.6% knew of two candidates; and 36.6% knew of three or more.

Sociodemographics. The following variables were incorporated: gender, age, education level, and religion.

Data analysis

To examine the mediating role of watching TV news, we adopted a three-step mediation approach, as proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986)

and Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010). This method allows decomposing the total effects into direct and indirect components, and is particularly suitable for investigating how communication variables, such as exposure to TV news, function as intermediary mechanisms in political influence processes.

First, we needed to confirm whether political preferences truly influenced how people viewed the pandemic. This is the starting point of the analysis, as without this initial relationship, it would not make sense to explore a mediating effect. To do this, we estimated cross-sectional models using linear regression with ordinary least squares, a more robust technique for identifying the correlations between variables. The graphs in Figure 1 show the estimation results for the variables of party preferences and TV news. All variables were normalized to the range of 0 to 1 to enable direct comparison of effects.

Figure 1 – Effects of party preferences and media exposure on support for measures, actions, and assessments in combating the pandemic
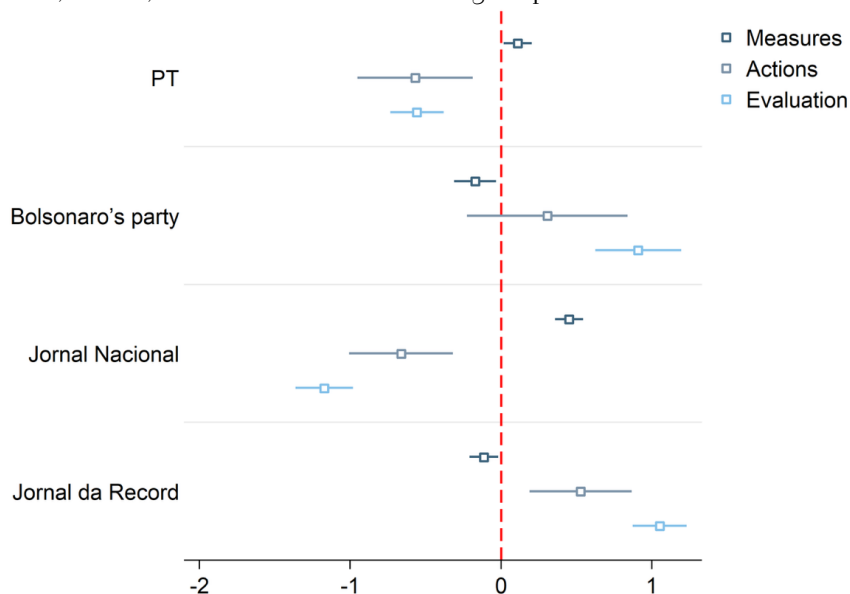
Source: CPS - UnB (2020).

The estimated coefficients follow the expected direction in all models (except for the "Bolsonaro party" variable in the measures model) and demonstrate statistical correlation between the indicators of interest. The results confirm previous research showing that left-wing individuals were more likely to adhere to pandemic mitigation measures than right-wing individuals (BARBIERI; BONINI, 2021) and conservatives (BROSOWSKY et al., 2021; NEWMAN; SCHNEIDER; STONE, 2022). PT supporters prioritized public health and critically evaluated the government's management, while Bolsonarists did the opposite. Viewers of *Jornal Nacional* were more supportive of the measures to combat the pandemic, prioritized health over the economy, and assessed Bolsonaro negatively, whereas the audience of *Jornal da Record* displayed an opposite stance.

The second step tested the association between independent variables and potential mediators: the TV news programs. We verified whether respondents' political preferences predicted their media consumption patterns — a key assumption for mediation, since a mediator only transmits effects if it is influenced by the independent variable. In other words, for TV news programs to function as mediators, they need to be influenced by a political variable. It would not make sense to claim that they explain attitudes and behaviors if the audience watched them regardless of their ideology.

To examine the potential mediating effects of *Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Record*, we used the medsem package in Stata 14, developed by Mehmetoglu (2018) for structural equation modeling and mediation analysis. Its routine employs both the criteria established by Baron and Kenny (1986), following the recommendations of Iacobucci, Saldanha, and Deng (2007), and the methods developed by Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010) for more precise testing of indirect effects.

Thus, we demonstrated the relationship between causal variables (PT and Bolsonaro's party) and mediating variables (*Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Record*). This link was evidenced by <author> using the same dataset as this article: PT supporters tend to consume more *Jornal*

Nacional, which offered a critical coverage of Bolsonaro's government, while Bolsonarists prefer *Jornal da Record*, which had a more favorable editorial line toward the former president. Next, we examined how the media variables affected the results of the dependent variables in each model, which can again be seen in the results of Figure 1.

Finally, in the third step, we investigated whether TV news consumption maintained a significant association with attitudes toward the pandemic, even after controlling for the direct influence of political variables. This is the crucial step to demonstrate that part of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable occurs indirectly through the mediator. We wanted to verify whether, in addition to the direct political influence, TV news consumption still explained attitudes — that is, whether part of the effect of the political variables "passed through" the media. The results of the mediation analysis are presented in Table 1. Since the preference for Bolsonaro's party did not reach statistical significance in the measures model, we did not estimate its effect.

The results of the mediation models demonstrate that the effects of party preferences were indeed mediated by exposure to TV news programs. In other words, part of the effects of political variables were caused by media variables or only occurred through them. The results also reveal that the main Brazilian TV news programs exercised differential influence on the relationship between political preferences and attitudes during the pandemic, with *Jornal Nacional* acting as a significantly stronger mediator of effects among PT supporters than *Jornal da Record* among Bolsonarists.

The mediation percentages varied depending on the dimension analyzed. In the case of adherence to health measures, 38% of the effect of PT preference was mediated by exposure to *Jornal Nacional* — a substantial value compared to the 11% mediation exerted by *Jornal da Record* among Bolsonarists. In the assessment of government performance, the mediation by *Jornal Nacional* was 24%, compared to 18% for *Jornal da Record*.

Table 1 – Mediation effects of the media variables Jornal Nacional and Jornal da Record on party preferences

	Indirect effect	% Mediation effect
Measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic		
Jornal Nacional → PT	0.024***	38
	[0.012–0.037]	
Jornal da Record → Bolsonaro's party	-0.008**	11
	[-0.014 to -0.001]	
Social distancing or economic prioritization?		
Jornal Nacional → PT	-0.012	15
	[-0.021 to -0.003]	
Jornal da Record → Bolsonaro's party	-	-
	-	-
Evaluation of the government in fighting the pandemic		
Jornal Nacional → PT	-0.033***	24
	[-0.049 to -0.016]	
Jornal da Record → Bolsonaro's party	0.036***	18
	[0.022–0.050]	
Notes: Mediator → Measure		
95%CI in brackets **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01.		

Source: CPS - UnB (2020).

This asymmetry can be interpreted in light of three main factors: the more consistent alignment of *Jornal Nacional* with scientific recommendations during the pandemic; its higher perceived credibility as a source of public health information, possibly influenced by different framing strategies of the crisis; and its reach and penetration among the audience. The strong mediation of *Jornal Nacional* among PT supporters is intriguing, as it contrasts with the well-known historical tensions between PT and *Globo* network, suggesting that in the context of a health crisis, informational needs may override traditional ideological alignments.

These findings offer significant advances in understanding the relationship between media, politics, and public health. First, they confirm the spiral of reinforcement model, demonstrating how political preferences and media consumption mutually reinforce each other. PT supporters who watched *Jornal Nacional* had their pro-health attitudes strengthened, which in turn kept them loyal to the newscast — a cycle of mutual influence. Second, they reveal that the strength of mediation varies depending on the type of attitude: it is higher for concrete behaviors (38% for adherence to measures) than for political assessments (24%), suggesting that the media has a greater impact on practical actions, whereas political judgments are more affected by party loyalty. Third, they highlight how health crises alter media consumption patterns. Despite historical tensions with *Globo*, PT supporters turned to *Jornal Nacional* as a trusted source during the pandemic, indicating that risk contexts can override traditional ideological alignments in the realm of information needs.

Conclusion

Several studies have been published on the political dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly focusing on the controversial stance of political leaders. This article aimed to add a media perspective to this discussion. The results presented indicate that part of the effect of party preferences on the attitudes and opinions of Brazilians regarding COVID-19 was shaped by exposure to TV news programs. This shows how the impact of political variables on people's behavior is not disconnected from their communication ecosystem.

Finally, the limitations of our article must be acknowledged:

- the data are cross-sectional, while most studies using the reinforcement spiral model employ panel data — but there are exceptions (ZHAO, 2009);
- we are confident in the robustness of the results, but there are other techniques and statistical packages for mediation analysis (IMAI; KEELE; TINGLEY, 2010);

- after the data collection, the pandemic scenario changed, with an increase in deaths; adjustments in health policies based on new evidence; advances in vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 and its variants; and improvements in risk communication, which limit the generalizability of the results outside the 2020 context;
- the on-line collection excluded those who had no access to the internet.

Despite this, we believe that the article contributes to the literature on reinforcement spirals and media effects; provides a critical perspective on the interactions between politics, media, and health during the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil; and offers a broader understanding of the complex social, political, and media dynamics surrounding the pandemic.

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Caminhada da Seca in memory gestures: notes with the audiovisual narratives of Uzina Films

Caminhada da Seca em gestos de memórias: notas com as narrativas audiovisuais de Uzina Films

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ABSTRACT: *Caminhada da Seca is an annual pilgrimage that, in addition to involving the faithful and promise keepers, is established as a gesture of memory of the 1932 drought concentration camps in Senador Pompeu, state of Ceará, Brazil. Based on it, other memory gestures are also carried out, giving contours to the events and conferring political participation to the symbolic disputes over the ways of accepting and refusing coexistence with the stories involved in this case. In this article, focusing on the proposals made by Uzina Films in two audiovisual productions, we seek to discuss the political dimensions of the memories that are acted out with the works.*

Keywords: *Caminhada da Seca; gesture of memory; concentration camp; Uzina Films; Senador Pompeu.*

RESUMO: *A Caminhada da Seca é uma peregrinação anual que, para além de fiéis e de pagadores de promessas, firma-se como um gesto de memória sobre a presença dos campos de concentração da seca de 1932 em Senador Pompeu, no Ceará. Com base nela, outros gestos de memórias também são praticados, propondo contornos aos acontecimentos e constituindo participações políticas*

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nas disputas simbólicas sobre os modos de admitir e de recusar convivialidades com as histórias envoltas por esse caso. Neste artigo, com atenção às proposições realizadas por Uzina Films em duas produções audiovisuais, buscamos discutir as dimensões políticas das memórias que são agenciadas com as obras.

Palavras-chave: *Caminhada da Seca; gesto de memória; campo de concentração; Uzina Films; Senador Pompeu.*

Introduction

In the Brazilian historiography, the year 1932 was marked by, among other things, a period of water drought and state measures to deal with the flow of migrants arriving in the cities. In the state of Ceará, Brazil, in 1932, as specified by Neves (2000), the State imposed confinement to returnees in decentralized concentration camps along the railway line, located in the municipalities of Crato, Cariús, Ipu, Senador Pompeu, Quixeramobim, and Fortaleza — being two in the latter. In addition to the "enclosures" (MACÊDO, 2024a), as called by the citizens who attributed to confined individuals the incivility that would approximate them to bestial figures, we are interested in the concentration camps as a necropolitical process (MACÊDO, 2024b). It is a policy of control of those who see themselves as "others," structured by the referentiality to the Campo de Concentração do Matadouro [Matadouro Concentration Camp] — created in the drought of 1915, in Fortaleza (capital of the state of Ceará).

It is uncertain how many people went through the concentration camps, established by the government of Getúlio Vargas and operated by Instituto Federal de Obras de Combate à Seca [Federal Institute of Works to Combat Drought], in 1932. The total numbers, estimated in the hundreds of thousands, and the mortality records, increasing each month of confinement, vary between different documents and research — and, therefore, there is no precision on how many people have been submitted to this regime and how many have lost their lives to it. With the release of survivors in 1933, concentration spaces became, over time, other places. In many of them, initiatives were carried out to wash away the aspects of this story, in such a way that, nowadays, we can hardly identify for sure where the confinements took place. Nevertheless, this was not case in Senador Pompeu, where the ruins of the concentration camps and the testimonies of the survivors insist on mobilizing this story.

The memories of this case are permeated by modulations between remembering and forgetting, as proposed by Paul Ricoeur (2007), when

formulating that one dimension no longer succumbs to the other so that they can be articulated in imprecise processes that bring out the stances taken, constituting tensions by which we confer vivacity to the events. In this sense, corroborating Luciana Amormino (2024, p. 29, free translation), "considering memory experiences that are intended to account for a common ground, but are not reduced to a totalizing concept and cannot be understood in a relatively stable way," as they are elaborated "through disputes," in which different agencies constitute "the sharing of the common ground" in which we operate and exercise multiplicities in a given space-time.

Hence, it is from this perspective that we can consider both the multiplicity of memories and the conflicts between the propositions that coexist in the imageries about the concentration camps in Senador Pompeu. Considered as a "gesture" by Amormino (2024), memory is exercised as a performing work that, in its multidimensionalities, mobilizes a shared act. In this act, we propose dimensions to events and experiences that, along with others, become unstable and consist themselves in fickle elaborations entangled by tensions. Likewise, we can observe the different gestures of memory that are carried out around the event. Throughout his PhD research, Daniel Macêdo (2025b) has been interested in gestures that are carried out together with the montage of audiovisual productions based on events that mobilize a public conversation about the 1932 confinements.

Among these events is the *Caminhada da Seca* [Drought Walk], which was constituted as a pilgrimage and that, since 1982, has been mobilized by popular congregations of the Catholic Church as an act for contesting the silencing promoted by the State. It is also understood as an act of control of the rites of faith that confers holiness to the confined dead — deviating from the dictates institutionalized by Catholicism. Furthermore, investigated with greater detail in Macêdo (2025a), we can acknowledge that the Drought Walk was constituted under gestures of memory based on the institutionalized intentions of parish agents who, based on it, develop a way of remembering and forgetting the historical event.

However, if there are gestures of memory that constitute the Walk, we should acknowledge that they do not settle the ways of remembering and forgetting the concentration camp and its dead. With the multiplicity of those involved in making the pilgrimage, there are a diverse set of agents who become attached to it to carry out other gestures of quite particular memories through the performances and relationships that are possible to them. In this study, we devote our attention to the achievements of Uzina Films, an audiovisual collective operating in Senador Pompeu and other municipalities of the Sertão Central region, Ceará. Among the productions based on the Drought Walk, we mention the documentaries *As almas do povo é o santo do povo* [The souls of the people are the saints of the people] (2007) and *Caminhando ao campo santo* [Walking to the holy field] (2012), which, here, are constituted as materialities with which we intend to think about the events based on gestures of memory that involve the narrative proposition of these audiovisual products.

To this end, we consider these audiovisual productions as texts, in order to take them as propositions of meanings to the events and, corroborating Leal (2022), as productions permeated by textualities that make the context of production a dynamic of agency and tension. Thus, this article is written considering an investigation of the textualities of these documentaries, seeking to interpret the gestures of memories that are made by Uzina Films and that are proposed to us by the audiovisual productions when experiencing them. As a theoretical-methodological experiment, these perceptions gain contours through the relationships that are made possible between montages and mirages of texts that, as per Macêdo (2025b), encourage us *to look at montages* carried out by the collective based on textualities, to elaborate filmic works. Meanwhile, with the films, we are also *putting mirages together*, reshaping inaccurate contours to the events based on our agency with the audiovisual productions.

This exercise, between montages and mirages with films, allows us, consequently, to consider both the memories that are proposed to us with

the works and our singular processes by embracing and refusing certain narrative aspects and building other imaginary and memorable domes for the case. Thus, considering the biases configured in the face of an exercise marked by the experience with the audiovisual productions, we assume the narratives as heuristic operators, as proposed by Leal (2022; 2023), when resuming Paul Ricoeur (2010), to think about what is contextual and relational in the perception of narratives. Hence, we consider the specificity of our experiences with the audiovisual productions to share them and, subsequently, we notice the connections and discuss what we identified about the montages that constitute memories, through the mirages that are possible to us — which we present next.

"It was the worst suffering in the world"

These are the first words of the older woman who, in front of the camera and based on the montage of a documentary by Uzina Films, carries out a gesture of memory by proposing an image to the concentration camps in the documentary *As almas do povo é o santo do povo*. This narrative construction reverberates throughout the production that, in the initial subtitles, presents itself as a result of a learning journey in audiovisual workshops held in 2007, within the scope of the *Ponto de Cultura Arte Sobre Rodas* [Arts on Wheals Cultural Spot], linked to the *Programa Cultura Viva* [Living Culture Program] of the Brazilian Ministry of Culture. The documentary, in addition to the direction and script by Fram Paulo, is constituted based on the cinematography of Washington Paulo, Fram Paulo, and Lucas de Sousa, the direct sound exercises of Thamires Fernandes and Natanael Alves, and counts on the participation of actors and actresses as agents of the scenes.

The cast is particularly important in this work due to the development of scenes with scripted lines that are mixed with the images of the 25th edition of the Drought Walk and the collected reports to, with this articulation, assemble the audiovisual production. Thus, as an artifice for articulating the narratives experienced and affirmed in — or about — the

Pilgrimage, the actors and actresses appear amid surrealistic images, produced by the overlapping of images (Figure 1). These compositions take place as gestures to visually affirm the presence of holy souls in one of the abandoned mansions that once was a concentration camp.

Figure 1 – Visual montage of ghosts.

The montage made by Fram Paulo and Polianne Lima when editing the material takes these figures as narrators of the work. This elaboration is related to the propositions of Martins (2016) regarding a surrealistic aesthetic in visual narratives, with which it becomes possible to make the experience complex, through dimensions of meaning that extrapolate the realistic ordinary. These constructions, in the montage of the film, take on the place of transition between testimonies and agendas, configuring a certain gap, marked by the lines uttered in repetition by the actors and actresses — when present in the scene — or by the sound branding that constitute the sound effects carried out by Carlos Ney. The holy souls, more than a topic of interest to the film, play this role as articulators of the stories, as announcers of the scenes and the testimonies that will be presented.

Thus, the holy souls pave the way for the stories they mobilize and for the people who are called to speak and participate in the audiovisual production. In the work, people who speak before the cameras are not identified by a name or by belonging to an organization. They are simply there, a person among so many others. In their specificities mobilized by the words they say, there is also a homogenizing gesture of montage by denying them their identity and, thus, producing the deceiving feeling that the shared stories could belong to anyone.

The absence of names, however, is not the only homogenizing aspect, considering that, with the curation of narratives and the selected excerpts of the interviews, the similarity of the presented testimonies converges in such a way to nullify the divergences, particularities, and heterogeneity of each perspective. There is the feeling that, apart from the nuances of the voices and the differences between the bodies, the perspective vocalized throughout the audiovisual production is of a single person — in this case, the director.

With regard to narrative constructions, the work is articulated in three affirmations: in the first, by mobilizing the testimony of an older woman, it proposes the dimensions of the horrors experienced in the Patu Concentration Camp; in the second, through statements of participants of the Walk (walkers), motivations for doing the walk are pointed out; in the third, with testimonies about the achieved blessings, the miracle character of the dead who died in confinement is advocated.

Mobilizing the memories of a survivor of the Patu Concentration Camp, the first narrative construction is articulated in affirmations about everyday life in the spaces of confinement, based on the narratives of the woman who give testimonies before the camera. We know, considering how recurrently this woman appears in narrative productions, that it is Mrs. Luiza Lô; although this identification is denied to her in the audiovisual montage. As she appears with no name, sharing a narrative about a life tainted by pain, hunger, and misery, the woman is presented in the work in order to encourage us to think that this story could be any survivor's story, that it does not matter to whom this body belongs and

the marks it carries, given the common character of this story shared by so many people — which, as aforementioned, is very problematic from our point of view.

The survivor's testimony is assembled, amid the narrative flow of the work, by overlapping images referring to places ruined by the concentration camp (Figure 2). This combination — given its use, in this audiovisual production, to constitute ghosts — attributes such characteristics to the woman. The overlapping of images, throughout the work, is used as a way of articulating spatialities, temporalities, and corporeities, validating a dynamic of correlation between them. That is, by looking at the experiences in the concentration camps, we also focus on the spatial and temporal dynamics that are entangled in these stories and that enable them not as elaborations of a distant past and enclosed in a timeline, but as emerging in the present, made possible through narration.

Figure 2 – Interviewee of the first narrative construction.

Unlike historiographical progressiveness, the work proposes to us to accept the vivacity of the concentration camps — which, once they have happened, they do not cease to happen when we endeavor to narrate

them. The montage, by mobilizing testimonies about what was experienced in the confinement zones, with the overlapping of images of the spaces, invites us to look at the concentration camp that is reassembled in the present in which the woman elaborates gestures of memories. They are blurred, inaccurate, and unstable elaborations, in the midst of the words uttered by the survivor, and which invite us to imagine such events — also in perennial formulations.

The camps that take place in our experience with the production are mobilized as deadly spaces. The survivor tells us that "people died every day... every day people died, children died... all of that! All of that!", and with that, she makes her emotional features a gesture of memory that reveals, with the pain emerging from the memory, the possibility of remembering the dead who died before her. She tells us that she survived because her father was able to flee to "run some errands," which provided them some money to feed her family, in which "my mother just gave birth, had nothing to eat, was starving," demanding special care that was not provided by the precarious health care of Patu Concentration Camp. When discovered for his infraction, upon leaving the confinement zones, the father was arrested and raped: "There was a guard to arrest my father [...] The next day, my father went the other way, to the woods... Poor thing! Starving, beaten up, wearing no clothes."

The precariousness of living conditions structures the narrative created with the testimonies. Here, it denounces the improper quality of the meals — "which made us feel sick"; the absence of suitable places for resting, as people "slept on the floor" in crowded spaces, "full of mistreated poor things everywhere you'd go"; and to whom no goods were allowed: "There was no hammock, no clothes, nothing." No wonder, she is categorical in stating that she lived "a year of suffering." The suffering, materialized in the smallpox epidemic and in the pestilences of a place "full of lice," is mobilized by the woman through the death of a brother, who was buried in a random place. "We escaped [from it]," she stated referring to death and the concentration camp, which, in these statements, were manifested together.

These statements are reinforced by the narrators who repeatedly state that they are "surrounded by suffering, hunger, and pain"; that "the concentration camp, [was] pointed out as a solution, turned into oppression"; that "we ate candle melts not to starve," unraveling their place as ghosts of the confined individuals — who, unlike the woman, died. The highlight of these statements is when the narrators, by raising their voices, state: "The souls of the People cry out for justice! Suffering has taught the way: the way of prayer that brings the hope of a life without oppression" and, in doing so, produce a turning point in the narrative of the work.

With this last statement, there is a transition between the survivor's testimony and the presence of walkers who, in addition to changes in sound effects, start to display sharp images with scenes from the 25th edition of the Drought Walk in the montage (Figure 3), while the overlapping of images is presented at particular moments, when the narrators are called to speak.

Figure 3 – Images of people in the 25th edition of the Drought Walk.

These transition elements are, therefore, marks for us to look at the second narrative construction, which mobilizes statements about "the importance of the Drought Walk" for the city and for its residents — for us to remain in an element commonly affirmed in the first words of the different people to whom the montage calls to speak. To articulate this narrative, three people without identification are invited to speak (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Interviewees of the second narrative construction.

Here, the snippets of the montage are very objective, and each person appears only once, sharing their perspective on the walk. The first person is an adult man who, apparently involved in the organization of the Drought Walk, states that: "From my point of view, the Drought Walk has two purposes: the first is for people not to forget their history [...] the second is popular religiosity itself", and states that: "Faith was what really... kept the flame of this story alive. It was faith that made us not forget about here," by legitimizing the relationship of the Catholic Church and its agents throughout the 25 editions of the Walk.

The second person to speak is an adult woman, who mobilizes the political dimensions of that act by stating that

> This walk reminds us of a past of misery, political neglect, destruction of nature itself... and today we want to relive that moment from the perspective of building citizenship, in which people, based on their past, their history, can build a better, more dignified and more humane future... and that drought, hunger, political neglect, and everything that still prevails in our everyday life be a reason for organization and struggle! (AS ALMAS DO POVO É O SANTO DO POVO, 2007, free translation).

She stresses the proposition of the Walk as a political act, by pointing out that "the Patu dam was built, but there is a huge social debt with this population: both the population of the past and the population of the present." In doing so, she demands for reparation measures both to those who have died and to those who have survived and still deal with water scarcity, hunger, and misery, under the dismay of the State that should support them. The third walker to speak is, unlike the others, very brief. He states that "the importance [of the Drought Walk] is resuming the

history of the people [...] the history of the struggle for water, for life," pointing out the Walk in terms of what is interesting to us, to think of it as a gesture of memory, to the extent that it is carried out in mobilizations of events, in entanglements between remembering and forgetting, permeated by the political agency that supports them.

Subsequently, the transition to the third narrative construction is marked by the narrators' statements: "the people who suffered became miracle-working saints who intervene on behalf of the people who suffer" and, thus, they provide the perspective of the documentary by sharing the popular sanctification attributed to the confined individuals who, here, emerge as "holy souls" or as "souls of the dam." There is no demarcated sound transition to the third part; nor a change in the aesthetic composition of the images. What changes, in addition to narrative perspective, are the visual surroundings in which statements with the camera take place. In the third construction (Figure 5), only a dialogue takes place during the Walk; the other interviews are carried out in domestic spaces, and all the people called to speak are women who narrate their promises and the achieved blessings by the advent of faith in the souls of the dam.

Figure 5 – Interviewees of the third narrative construction.

Similar to the previous construction, there is no intersection in the montage of the interviews, and each women's entry into the scene is constituted as the space for them to narrate their stories to the others. In spite of the particularity of the accounts, they all follow in same direction by attributing their faiths to the holy souls and the achieved blessings, to the latter.

The first woman, in the middle of the Walk, plays the role of presenting the Souls of the dam, and tells us that they were "healthy creatures who suffered a lot, who struggled a lot, who starved, were casted aside, abandoned… they've been through it all here" and, in redemption, they protect those who, like these women, still suffer and make life in the city a legacy of suffering. Hence, in domestic environments, the following two women play a minor role in acknowledging their faith and achieved blessings, without providing details. The latter, in turn, takes up more space and shares detailed accounts of promises and how she kept these promises through lunches for the confined: "I'm sure that the souls are holy, 'cause they were the ones who suffered the most in this life." These are the last words from the interviews present in the montage.

Based on these words, reverberating the acknowledgment of the confined people who died in the concentration camps as suffering and benevolent figures, the documentary mobilizes images of the Walk, amid the statements of their ghost-narrators, to demarcate that "the people who suffered no longer want to witness suffering," to claim that "enough of misery in the backlands!", to advocate that "God is not guilty of the drought, nature is not guilty! The misery of the backlands is the fault of the man himself who does not understand the nature of the backlands," and, therefore, advocate for policies of coexistence with the semi-arid that are no longer based on "handouts," because they recognize that "the backlands lack the following: books, education, dignity, and respect!"

"In honor of the souls of the suffering people"

Among the images of the pilgrimage, the rhythmic sound of the Benedictus — popular canticle of Catholic prayer —, which considers the

Drought Walk a tribute to holy souls, leads the first narrative propositions of the work. This production was directed by Karla Samara, produced by Uzina Films and carried out in 2012, based on the project presented by the Audiovisual Production Center of Instituto Casarão de Cultura e Cidadania, and promoted by the state notice of the VIII Film and Video Award of the State of Ceará. The affirmation of the subtitle, in turn, is developed throughout the work that, as well as the previous one, takes on the social and epistemic place of the director, as a walker, as a way of relating to the confined dead to whom one seeks to honor.

The soundtrack of this production, created by Carlos Ney, is the same as that of the previous production, as well as some images and interviews of the production company's archive, which are resumed in this work — duly disclosed and identified in the credits and insertions of the images. When presenting the archive images of the Walk or when choosing to propose an experience of previous records, a monochrome aesthetic is adopted (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Monochrome scenes.

In addition to archive footage, there is a coverage in images and interviews, conducted by Washington Alves and Fram Paulo during the 29th edition of the Drought Walk, in 2011, which underpins the montage of the work. Unlike the previous one, in which the overlapping of images mobilizes a surrealistic aesthetic, this production is mobilized by sharp images with clear focus in order to confer a realistic aesthetic to the documentary (Figure 7).

Figure 7 – Images of the 29th edition of the Drought Walk.

The images in the documentary vary between detail shots, close-ups on walkers' faces and on general shots, emphasizing the path of the walk. Throughout the work, the images are organized to substantiate the narrative constructions that are assembled based on the curation of excerpts from the testimonies, which, articulated, are guided by three affirmations that qualify: the daily life of the concentration camps, the performance of the Walk, and the walkers' faith in the holy souls. Unlike the previous production, the participants are identified, thus conferring particularity and locality to the experiences that are shared in the documentary.

In the first construction, the work proposes imageries about the drought of 1932, based on the testimonies of women who are presented

to us as "survivors" of the concentration camps (Figure 8). The interviews are part of the collection of Uzina Films archives and, in this work, they resume the accounts of Luiza Lô — which were also used in the previous work — and Maria de Jesus.

Figure 8 – Interviewees of the first narrative construction.

The testimonies of the two women resume experiences about the everyday life in the concentration camps, highlighting social inequality in the use of government resources, in the words of Maria de Jesus, according to whom "the rich had access to the best and the poor, standing right there in the sun, the sun right in their faces, 'cause they didn't have some sticks or leaves to make a tent. We lived right there, exposed to the sun, and the people who died near our tent, [they were] eating the candle melts... dying of hunger". The mortality experienced there is also highlighted in the statements of Luiza Lô, saying that "many people are buried there, good lord! A number of people here, another there... They were all threw there, old ladies, old folks, children... all mixed up on top of each other... and the vultures on top, eager to eat the dead."

In both cases, the testimonies are mobilized in the work to substantiate the argument that the concentration camps were created by the Government as a way to avoid "invasions" of migrants in large cities, thus being established as a place of population control. Unlike the previous work, narrative investments in the case are reduced in order to pay greater attention to the Drought Walk.

After the survivors' testimonies, the narrator states that, in 1933, there was the release of those who were resilient to the scarce living conditions and, hence, "each survivor took with themselves the sad memory of the of camp of pain and suffering." Thus, the Drought Walk is presented in the work as an act carried out under gestures of memory, with which a city seeks to remember what happened there, in tribute to those who died there. The second construction, in this sense, mobilizes political statements by lawyer Valdecy Alves and Father Carlos Roberto, priest of Senador Pompeu (Figure 9).

Figure 9 – Interviewees of the second narrative construction.

In this montage, the Drought Walk is proposed as an initiative of the Catholic Church, which renews each year as a sacred ritual of popular faith. In spite of both acknowledging that the Walk is a way of remembering the events of 1932, it is by accepting the sanctification of the souls, which are part of those places, that the political incidence and popular mobilization of the pilgrimage are sustained. For Valdecy, "the feeling of piety and that suffering purifies and elevates the spirit to the plan of salvation" is the element that mobilizes devotion to the souls of the dam, who went through a "collective torment" during the drought and under the abuses of the State. This perspective is also shared by Father Carlos, who, each year, observes the gestures of people who bring bread and water as offerings to the souls and penance for the achieved blessings.

There is, in the Father's statements, an acknowledgment that "the souls of the dam intertwine with our saints by the faith of the people," as devotional practices mobilize elements of Catholic rites, such as

Benediction, prayers, ex-votos, and images of saints associated with the intervention and devotion of the souls of that place. Although the confined individuals are not deemed saints by the Catholic Church, there is a dynamic of popular sanctification, claimed by the audiovisual work and legitimized by the statements of the priest and the faithful. "There's only one mysticism," says the priest when thinking about these sacred confluences between the institutional and popular dimensions.

It is in this dimension of the walkers' devotional practices that the third narrative construction of the documentary is structured, mobilizing testimonies of men and women in order to highlight experiences of faith in holy souls (Figure 10). Taken as examples, the cases of Maria Rodrigues, Helena dos Santos, Francisco Bezerra, and Antônio de Souza demonstrate the popular belief and syncretic aspect that involve the rites of penance in the walk.

Figure 10 – Interviewees of the third narrative construction.

Maria and Helena narrate their experiences of achieved blessings because of the healing of their children, and participation in the Walk is a penitent rite in keeping the promise. Francisco, in turn, talks about

achieving a personal blessing and the promise to go on the walk carrying a cross. In these three cases, in addition to the testimonies of healing achieved by the intervention of holy souls, there are statements of gratitude for their benevolent nature. Antônio, on the other hand, reports no blessing. What mobilizes him, in his words, is the importance of the ritual: "I have been following this Drought Walk since Father Albino Donatti's time [...] Today, I still continue on this pilgrimage to dig a little of the history of those who have gone through the great tragedy of the drought of 32."

Notes for mobilizing memories with audiovisual productions

As we engage with the audiovisual works presented here, we can notice how narrative flows resemble and constitute similar structures. After all, as we have observed, they are structured around constructions about the experiences embodied by survivors in 1932, the foundations that locate the Drought Walk, and the testimonies that claim achieved blessings to justify the rites that dynamize the pilgrimage. Although the qualities of the statements that constitute these three constructions are similar, we can notice that they differ with the reconfiguration of the audiovisual elements and the involved agents.

With regard to the visual montage, the first video makes use of surrealistic elaborations that, in turn, lose prominence in the face of the realistic option adopted by the second. The option for realism is one of the elements that has been established, over time, as characteristic of Brazilian documentaries, as pointed out by Consuelo Lins and Cláudia Mesquita (2008), when discussing that this choice operates in order to legitimize the narratives that are assembled with the audiovisual productions. By using the same recording of Mrs. Luiza Lô, these audiovisual works differ in the way she is presented, by transitioning these aesthetic references. Thus, they combine different qualities of the survivor's presence and the stories she tells in the audiovisual work.

Although the witness bias is presented as a basis to legitimize the narratives that are assembled, it is worth noting that the second documentary differs both in identifying the interviewees and in constituting elements that justify their statements, such as the spaces where they speak, which begin to characterize and qualify what they say. Noticing this difference brings us closer to Selligmann-Silva (2022), by updating his work and valuing what is adaptable in the testimonies due to what is performative, which repositions them. On the one hand, by resuming the archive recordings of survivors in distinct compositions each work; on the other hand, by using different arrangements and perspectives to mobilize testimonies that meet the narrative flow of the documentary, both dynamics evidence a testimonial duality. In such duality, both the peculiar implications of the moment people are called to witness before the cameras and the montages that are made based on these records are considered to constitute another testimony: the one concerning the political action exercised during the audiovisual montage to propose a memory about the historical event based on the pilgrimage.

In this study, we do not intend to define the memories that are re-elaborated based on these audiovisual productions, nor to undertake efforts aimed at delimiting or classifying the "impacts" of these works on the disputes of memory. After all, as our focus lies on reflecting, there is a constant instability due to the contexts of the experiences, with which different perspectives — including ours, during this exercise — engage with the documentaries in inaccurate contexts that no longer fit in the logic of structuring. What matters here is noticing that, as audiovisual productions circulate, perceptions about the events are tensioned in movements of different audiences, which are fomented through their repertoires.

In the face of the unstable context of the consumption of audiovisual productions and the repertoires of those who relate to it, we should note that its elaboration takes place as a gesture of memory, with which a perspective to the event is presented, without, however, confining it — even

if endeavoring oneself to such a thing. The transitions in the ways of operating a similar narrative show, in witnessing the contexts in which they are carried out, the process of audiovisual montage as a dynamic marked by gestures of memories. That is, as an act that operates dimensions between remembering and forgetting, and that uses the specificities of the audiovisual work — and, here, the documentary — to legitimize the propositions of memory presented with it.

By assuming this relationship, we are led to think that changes in the ethical and aesthetic processes of making documentaries are not mere operative processes of audiovisual forms, but complex dynamics that handle propositions of memories not only with what is said in verbalizations, but also with what is (not) established as visual and sonorous elements. Each of these audiovisual works is marked by gestures of memories made possible in a given space-time and, therefore, our movement is not of comparison, but of approximation, so that we can notice the transience around the ways of acting and, thus, observe the changes in the gestures of memory.

The documentaries, made at different times and conducted by different directors, can be approximated when we consider the collective dimensions that permeate their making, when they are assembled within the scope of Uzina Films. This, in turn, is characterized by a dynamic of audiovisual creation marked by sharing functions between the team, and the alternation of roles and processes between directors. It is in this collective dimension that, despite the variation in roles played by each agent in creation, we can think of the montage process, consisting and constitutive of gestures of memory in the face of the event, which are put into practice through the bonds and alliances between these agents.

Uzina Films is a collective that works in Senador Pompeu and that, formed by residents of the municipality, positions such audiovisual creations as a way of relating to stories that integrate the everyday life of the place where they live. Therefore, when we take these audiovisual creations as gestures of memories, we shift the documentaries

from presumptions in which realism can reify the authoritarianism of the sociological model — extensively discussed by Jean-Claude Bernardet (1985) — to take them as testimonies of the relations of those involved with the Drought Walk, of the roles they play when calling us to remember and forget the concentration camp, through certain relationships with the confined dead. In this sense, we can corroborate Didi-Huberman (2017), according to whom the audiovisual creation, in its montage and products, is constituted by the political affirmations and the exercises of powers that nourish it, distancing itself from a "document of truth" of events to be made as a record of the processes, actions, and positions that underpin it.

Thus, we must characterize the Drought Walk as a complex dynamic, in which different gestures of memory are constituted by the agents who, with it, intend to narrate the case while mobilizing the event in particular ways, under the tensions of present moments in which the documentaries are produced. Therefore, the idea of the concentration camp's lack of representativeness is no longer appropriate, because, as discussed in the dissertation of Macêdo (2025b), corroborating the formulations of Didi-Huberman (2020), the Drought Walk and the audiovisual productions resulting from it point to the exact opposite, as they constitute possible, blurred, inaccurate — and, therefore, very powerful — images about the historical event and the way its presence, its reverberations, are witnessed. It is an invitation to memories, without the pretension to define them, that these works are established as a call to see the case from a political perspective mobilized with the audiovisual work.

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ARTICLE

Reflections on ethnocommunication: an audiovisual produced from a perspective

Reflexões sobre a etnocomunicação: um audiovisual realizado de forma perspectivada

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ABSTRACT: *In this article, we propose reflections on the ways in which ethnocommunication is conceived and developed by Indigenous communities, highlighting specific features in contrast with the hegemonic audiovisual model of Westernized society. Based on a theoretical-conceptual approach and the analysis of the work carried out by the Ororubá Filmes collective — a communication vehicle of the Xukuru do Ororubá people — supported by participant observation within an ethnographic context, it was possible to identify, describe, and analyze the specificities of the audiovisual process within this ethnic group. The concept of perspectivized communication is proposed, articulated with Indigenous worldviews and Latin American decolonial thought. It refers to a mode of communication realized through each people's worldview, becoming singular in its conception and execution, and acting as a tool for resistance, identity affirmation, and the decolonization of the imaginary.*

Keywords: *ethnocommunication; Indigenous; perspectivist; worldview; decoloniality.*

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ARTICLE

RESUMO: Neste artigo propomos reflexões sobre as formas pelas quais a etnocomunicação é concebida e desenvolvida por comunidades indígenas, evidenciando particularidades em contraste com o modelo audiovisual hegemônico da sociedade ocidentalizada. A partir de uma abordagem teórico-conceitual e da análise do trabalho do coletivo Ororubá Filmes — veículo de comunicação do povo Xukuru do Ororubá —, com base em observação participante no contexto de uma etnografia, foi possível identificar, descrever e analisar as especificidades do processo audiovisual na etnia. Propõe-se o conceito de comunicação perspectivada, articulado às cosmovisões indígenas e ao pensamento decolonial latino-americano. Trata-se de uma forma de comunicação que se realiza por meio da visão de mundo de cada povo, tornando-se singular em sua concepção e execução e atuando como ferramenta de resistência, afirmação identitária e descolonização do imaginário.

Palavras-chave: etnocomunicação; indígena; perspectivada; cosmovisão; decolonialidade.

Introduction

The communication practices of Indigenous peoples have gained increasing visibility in recent decades, particularly through audiovisual productions that articulate distinctive modes of narrating, existing, and resisting. These productions do not merely reflect the adoption of Western technological tools; they also embody singular forms of thought and expression, deeply rooted in ancestral worldviews, territorial connections, spirituality, and community. As these narratives emerge in the media, they not only compete for symbolic space but also challenge the hegemonic structures of modern communication and its presumed universality.

This article proposes a reflection on these forms of communication through an analysis of the work produced by the collective *Ororubá Filmes*, belonging to the *Xukuru do Ororubá* people, located in the Agreste region of Pernambuco. The research adopts a theoretical-conceptual framework that engages with community communication, ethnocommunication, and Latin American decolonial thought, combined with participant observation in an ethnographic context. Its objective is to examine how audiovisual media conceived and practiced within this community highlight elements that diverge from Western logics of image production and circulation.

Based on this approach, the concept of perspectival communication is proposed, defined as a form of communication constructed from each people's worldview and characterized by its uniqueness in conception and execution. This practice integrates multiple dimensions (spiritual, ancestral, political, and aesthetic) and functions as a tool for identity affirmation, cultural resistance, and the decolonization of both image and imagination.

Community communication: crucial for the visibility of indigenous communication

According to professor and researcher Cicilia Peruzzo (2009a, p. 2), community communication is "developed democratically by subordinate

groups in communities, neighborhoods, and online spaces, for example, according to their interests, needs, and capabilities. It is done by and for the community." Community communication has been strategically employed by various categories of social movements to demand rights, promote citizenship, and foster social transformation. In addition, it "plays an important role in the democratization of communication and society" (PERUZZO, 2009b, p. 41). This form of communication encompasses political, educational, popular, and participatory dimensions, establishing a genuine contest of meanings with mainstream media. Cicilia Peruzzo (2009b, p. 42) underscores the importance of exercising the right to communication in advancing citizenship: "Citizenship advances in proportion to the awareness of the right to communication and the capacity for action and articulation of those for whom it is intended."

Because production is self-managed and carried out by the community itself, it can be regarded as an active expression of communication. In this sense, subjects participate directly in the communicative processes that surround them, producing new meanings and reclaiming their own identities. This mode of communication also encompasses a socio-educational dimension that fosters a sense of belonging and enables the development of skills capable of influencing the world. Such characteristics point to political theses that challenge the maintenance of collective norms and promote profound social transformations. In agreement with these observations, the author states:

> Active citizen participation in communication, that is, in the creation, systematization, and dissemination of content, as well as in other mechanisms inherent to the communicative process is also educational because it allows individuals to feel like agents, and, as such, to develop intellectually, learn to better understand the world, and become capable of influencing their surroundings and society as a whole, aiming to ensure respect for human rights (PERUZZO, 2009b, p. 42).

Radio Sutatenza, founded in 1948 in Colombia, is regarded as a pioneer of the community radio model in Latin America and perhaps the

earliest example of its kind. Created by Father José Joaquín Salcedo, the station promoted popular education in rural areas, addressing topics such as literacy, health, agriculture, and citizenship. It formed part of the Popular Cultural Action (*Acción Cultural Popular* – ACPO) project, which sought to improve the lives of rural populations through accessible communication. By employing simple language, Radio Sutatenza became a reference in the use of media for inclusion and social transformation. Community communication, however, only began to gain momentum in the 1970s with the emergence of social movements.

Cicilia Peruzzo (2009b, p. 38) argues that the right to communication "is placed as a third-generation right, as it moves from the notion of an individual right to a collective right." The recognition of communication as a human right represents a significant advance in the conception of citizenship, given that it was previously imperceptible within the classical dimensions of citizenship.

The debate on the right to communication gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century. In 1976, the First Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America was held in Costa Rica, while newly independent African and Asian countries also engaged in discussions centered on human dignity and diversity. These developments, however, occurred within a context marked by control over international information flows and by the social and technological inequalities exacerbated by globalization. In this scenario, the worldview and lifestyle of the United States and European countries were disseminated as a form of cultural domination, while the global circulation of information from Latin American, African, and Asian sources — and even exchanges among countries within these regions — was simultaneously hindered (PERUZZO, 2009b, p. 37).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, had already guaranteed the right to communication in Article 19. However, it was not until 1980 that the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (Unesco) established the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems, chaired by Sean

MacBride. The commission's three-year work culminated in *Informe MacBride* (1980), or *Um mundo, muitas vozes*[1]. The document promotes reflection on the principles of democracy in communication through reciprocity, while emphasizing that true democratization cannot be achieved without active participation and dialogue in decision-making related to media programming.

From the 1990s onward, the right to communication officially became a demand of Indigenous peoples (MÁRQUEZ, 2019, p. 165), who increasingly recognized alternative and community media as a means of circumventing the invisibility imposed by hegemonic media. These outlets provided a tangible and effective opportunity to communicate their demands while simultaneously advancing their citizenship. Such media have also been employed to strengthen the cultural identity of these communities.

Discussions on Indigenous communication predate by several decades the visibility gained in the 1990s through United Nations (UN) negotiations on the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Although the debate achieved international prominence during this period, these demands had already been expressed more subtly within sacred territories. Indigenous peoples in Brazil developed their own forms of communication to convey struggles, identities, and grievances, often with the support of organizations such as the Indigenous Missionary Council (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário* – CIMI). The 1988 Constitution marked a milestone in recognizing Indigenous rights and expanding the space for their voices. The emergence of Indigenous media as political actors reflects a process that began at the grassroots level, long before achieving global recognition.

Indigenous communication thus gains visibility through community communication, recognizing the specific need for contextualized audiovisual media. In line with the objectives of community communication,

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1   Document titled in Brazil as *Um mundo e muitas vozes: comunicação e informação em nossa época*, published by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation Press in 1983.

such as demanding rights, promoting democratization, and serving as a tool of struggle, decolonial and ancestral forms of communication require particular attention in both their conception and execution. This approach emphasizes the importance of autonomy: speaking in one's own language, representing the world on one's own terms, addressing one's own needs, and shaping one's own image, rather than being depicted through the lens of the colonizer. As Indigenous sociologist Elisa Garcia Mingo (2016, p. 125, our translation) observes, "Indigenous peoples, like social movements, have challenged the forms of social organization, thought, and sensibility of mestizo modernity."

Fundamentals of ethnocommunication

The history of Indigenous communication in Abya Yala[2] is one of decolonizing images, audiovisual language, and the communicative processes themselves. Its task, directly or indirectly, is to gradually dismantle the regime of audiovisual domination imposed by colonization, a regime shaped by unilateral voices and perspectives — that are now being deconstructed by the very subjects once represented. This history has unfolded through the progressive consolidation of rights and communicative spaces, built upon episodes of popular struggle and resistance — efforts aimed at sustaining resilience in the face of adversity and preventing setbacks.

This type of communication can occur and achieve its objectives through the unique ethnic processes of each people, processes grounded in the category of *ethnicity*. Gersem Baniwa (2006) defines this category as a historically and socially constructed process that involves the affirmation of collective Indigenous identity in dialogue with ancestral memory, cultural values, and relationships with the surrounding society. According to the author, Indigenous ethnicity is not limited to fixed cultural traits; rather, it is expressed in the capacity of Indigenous peoples to recognize

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2   *Abya Yala* is an expression from the Guna (or Kuna) people, one of the Indigenous peoples of Panama/Colombia, meaning "Living Land" or "Mature Land," and is used to refer to the American continent as a whole.

themselves, and to be recognized, as distinct collective subjects, particularly in the context of struggles for territorial, linguistic, educational, and political rights. Ethnicity is therefore understood as a dynamic construction, characterized by strategies of resistance, identity reaffirmation, and the pursuit of autonomy in the face of the hegemonic and colonizing structures of the State and national society.

Among the multiplicity of Indigenous peoples, *ethnogenesis* is understood to occur when shared interests, a history of resistance, and the ongoing struggle for recognition are identified in one another (BARTOLOMÉ, 2006). It is a process of recognizing common cultural, historical, and social elements among different Indigenous peoples, which enables the construction of a shared collective identity.

The recognition of a shared collective identity can be observed, for example, in the Brazilian Indigenous Movement through Indigenous Assemblies (historical gatherings held in different regions of the country since the 1970s) that bring together diverse peoples in the struggle for rights. Initially centered on territorial issues, these assemblies gradually broadened their discourse to encompass the distinct interests that constitute this diversity. Such initiatives contributed to the consolidation of the largest Indigenous mobilization in Brazil and Latin America: the Free Land Camp (*Acampamento Terra Livre* – ATL), held annually in Brasília since 2004, which brings together leaders from multiple ethnicities around a national agenda of struggle and rights advocacy.

Ethnocommunication refers to the application of these ethnic processes in an integrated and coordinated manner. Anápuáka Tupinambá, one of the founders of Rádio Yandê[3] (*apud* ITAÚ CULTURAL, 2017), defines ethnocommunication as a practice that goes beyond the technical use of media, encompassing the production of content rooted in ancestral knowledge, original languages, and Indigenous cosmologies.

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3   Founded on November 13, 2013, by Renata Tupinambá, Anápuáka Tupinambá, and Denilson Baniwa, it is Brazil's first Indigenous streaming radio station. Available from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HfekM1zoq5E. Accessed on: Apr. 04, 2025.

In this sense, ethnocommunication constitutes an instrument of identity affirmation, cultural resistance, and political self-determination, as it enables Indigenous peoples to occupy the media with their own voices and perspectives.

According to Bryan da Costa and Vilso Santi (2019, p. 16), the concept of ethnocommunication is defined by the "general principles of ethnocommunication practiced by the Indigenous Peoples Movement through three pillars: a) Ethnicity as an essential component; b) Territoriality as a regulatory element; and c) Recognition as an end."

> From this perspective, ethnocommunication emerges as a foundation for the process of building not only an identity but also a shared framework of identification, based on preexisting or (re)constructed cultural traditions — essential for supporting collective actions. The communication practiced by Indigenous Peoples and their Movement is, therefore, philosophically guided, geographically situated, and politically purposeful — aimed at establishing a new individual, willing to assert themselves as Indigenous and be recognized as such (COSTA; SANTI, 2019, p. 16).

Therefore, by employing an epistemological framework detached from the Western imagination, it is possible to identify a distinctive communication model within the cultural practices of Indigenous peoples: ethnocommunication. Such productions contribute to dismantling the extractivist mentality, thereby reducing the risk of appropriation and erasure of traditional knowledge by both academia and mainstream media, which often decontextualize and depoliticize this knowledge.

From this delimitation of ethnocommunication, the concept of *perspectival communication* can be introduced, as will be discussed later.

Decoloniality and communication

The connection between the decolonial debate and the field of communication is not new; in this article, the analysis adopts a primarily Latin American approach as its starting point.

Colonialism, as defined by sociologist Aníbal Quijano (1992, p. 12) — one of the foremost exponents of decolonial thought —, is characterized by European territorial expansion through violent military domination beginning in the 15th century. The concept of *coloniality*, also proposed by Quijano, refers to the "colonization of the imaginary of the dominated" (QUIJANO, 1992, p. 12). Building on this argument, Quijano (2020) underscores the persistence of the *coloniality of power*, a central concept in his work, which designates the structures of domination and social classification imposed during colonization and still operative in contemporary societies, even after the formal processes of independence. According to Quijano (2020), modernity cannot be dissociated from coloniality, as the latter constitutes its hidden and constitutive dimension. Coloniality organizes the world through racial, epistemic, and economic hierarchies that legitimize the supremacy of European thought while marginalizing the knowledge systems and ways of existence of non-Western peoples. From this perspective, racism, labor exploitation, and cultural inferiority are not merely remnants of colonialism but structuring mechanisms of capitalist modernity. This is perhaps the first pattern of global power (QUIJANO, 2020).

Decoloniality, in turn, is proposed as an epistemological and political rupture with this hegemonic logic. Quijano (2020) advocates for the *decolonization of knowledge*, that is, the overcoming of the *coloniality of knowledge*, a key concept that exposes the imposition of Eurocentrism as the sole criterion for validating knowledge. He calls for the reexistence of alternative ways of knowing, being, and living, grounded in ancestral, Indigenous, Afro-descendant, and popular knowledge.

Thus, decoloniality seeks not only to denounce persistent colonial structures but also to construct multi-epistemic alternatives that recognize and value the diversity of human experiences. While Quijano (2020) remains primarily in the theoretical domain, focusing on the macrostructural aspects of global relations, Brazilian anthropologist Jose Jorge de Carvalho (2018) similarly emphasizes the need to challenge and dismantle colonial structures that perpetuate inequalities, particularly in

the Latin American context. Carvalho seeks to apply these concepts in practice — especially within academia — by promoting the inclusion of diverse and traditionally marginalized epistemologies through initiatives such as *Encontro de Saberes*.

> We can, therefore, qualify the current movement of the *Encontro de Saberes* as epistemic quotas, as it promotes the inclusion of the masters and teachers of our traditional peoples — Indigenous, Quilombola, Afro-Brazilian communities, and other traditional popular cultures — as university instructors in regular courses, with the same authority as PhD faculty. Thus, we currently operate with a dual form of inclusion: that of young Black, Indigenous, and *Quilombola* students, enabling them to enter public higher education; and that of the masters and teachers from these communities, granting them the right to teach their traditional knowledge to all university students, serving as professors in our universities (CARVALHO, 2018, p. 89).

Latin American decolonial thought differs from other movements in an important way: intellectuals simultaneously act as social activists, and their concepts are shaped and applied by the politicians who embrace them. This dual engagement distinguishes the movement, situating it within a generation of individuals who both theorize processes and participate in them. In the field of communication, theoretical and practical dimensions have progressed along parallel paths. Erick Torrico (2019), a sociologist and decolonial communicator, describes the concept of *centered communication* as a framework that has become the *dominant paradigm*, continuously taught, learned, applied, and reproduced both in communication schools and in research, arguing that

> theorization was initially structured based on the conditions, concerns, and needs of the social, economic, political, and technological realities of the United States, as well as Western Europe, since these two geocultural spaces were its places of origin (TORRICO, 2019, p. 94).

This logic of knowledge production has a universalist character, valuing the maintenance of colonial hierarchies among individuals

and peoples and legitimizing only the knowledge produced in countries that have traditionally dominated the sphere of knowledge production. In response, the author proposes "thinking from the margins," bringing to communication a meaning "related to the creation of social fabric and the building of community and consensus" (TORRICO, 2019, p. 96). At this juncture, the participation and democratization of the media, attention to the public interest, and engagement with development demands become more pressing. In the academic field, *liberation communicology* (TORRICO, 2019, p. 98), which combines "*la protesta con la propuesta*" (the protest with the proposal), addresses the latent need to examine epistemological foundations and "to deconstruct the logic of the historical and epistemological mechanism whose core is subalternity" (TORRICO, 2019, p. 100).

An idea introduced in 2021 by Luciana Oliveira, Julio Figueroa, and Bárbara Altivo (2021), which has evolved into a practice that extends beyond critique to constitute a political-epistemic project, is *interworld communication*. The authors propose a concept of communication that transcends message transmission or interaction between isolated subjects, emphasizing instead an encounter between distinct epistemic worlds, that is, between different ways of knowing, existing, and relating to the world. Interworld communication is grounded in the notion of *interepistemic dialogue*, facilitated through *cosmopolitical forums* as privileged spaces for such exchange. These forums recognize the existence of multiple rationalities (not only Western scientific) such as those of Indigenous peoples, Afro-diasporic communities, *quilombolas*, and other historically subalternized groups. From this perspective, communication entails connecting heterogeneous worlds without allowing one to dominate the other. Listening, hospitality, and openness to the unknown therefore become central elements. This approach challenges the colonial logic of universality and proposes a plural, situated, and ethical communication practice committed to pluriversality and epistemic justice.

Perspective communication

In post-colonial social relations, particularly in the relations of production, the superstructure that shapes the collective imagination — the so-called common sense — of prevailing social organizations is reinforced through contracts imposed by the interests of the ruling classes on subordinate groups. Capitalism, a legacy of European colonialism, established dynamics of predatory exploitation of both nature and humanity. Centuries of cyclical crises and unsustainable resource exploitation have generated an increasingly urgent need to rethink development paradigms, a need that continues to be deferred by the major bourgeois powers that benefit from these abuses.

Amid contemporary social and climate crises, characterized by conflicts over scarce resources and irresponsible exploitation, the voices of Indigenous peoples, particularly in Latin America, and their demands for respect for nature cannot be ignored. Brazil exhibits extensive ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity, with more than 305 Indigenous peoples and 274 languages, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística* – IBGE, 2022). This plurality reflects not only cultural richness but also diverse and complex ways of knowing and interpreting the world. Although their worldviews are not homogeneous, they share elements preserved through a history of struggle, resistance, and reverence for nature as a sacred entity, an expression of ethnogenesis.

Indigenous worldviews are distinguished by the absence of colonial ideologies that originated in modern Europe. Modernity was characterized by an ethical framework centered on a rationality focused on the "self," giving little consideration to the relationships that this "egoic self" establishes with others. In contrast, the elements that constitute the worldviews of Indigenous nations express a language of solidarity between peoples and nature, in which the human subject is understood as merely one component of the earth as a vast living organism.

This set of elements, inseparable from Indigenous worldviews, manifests across the diverse spheres of daily life. These perspectives permeate all decision-making processes, both objective and subjective; material and spiritual; economic and political; philosophical and social; and, crucially for this work, communicative. They represent the fullest expression of Indigenous models of "engagement" (KRENAK, 2020)[4], operating in intrinsic convergence with nature. A sustainable model.

In this context, perspective-based communication is constructed upon the understanding that the worldviews of different peoples are inseparable from their audiovisual production models and the diverse manifestations of these elements in their communicative practices. The entire decision-making process for producing images and sounds is informed by these perspectives. Standards derived from this approach are often considered unfeasible, or even inconceivable, within media outlets that adhere to Westernized audiovisual production norms.

The reflections that informed the discussion of perspectival communication emerged from ethnographic research conducted between 2021 and 2023 in collaboration with *Ororubá Filmes*, an audiovisual collective of the *Xukuru do Ororubá* Indigenous people. This research aimed to understand the processes influenced by communication through this medium within the community. Participatory observation, employed throughout the ethnography, enabled direct engagement with specific situations in which community members produced images and sounds for particular purposes, including practices deeply intertwined with their culture and characterized by religious, spiritual, and sacred elements.

The *Xukuru do Ororubá* Indigenous people reside in the rural Agreste region of Pernambuco, within the municipalities of Pesqueira and part of Poção. Their sacred territory, the Serra do Ororubá, is located 215 km from Recife, the state capital. According to the National Health

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4   From Ailton Krenak's perspective (2020) on the concept of development, (dis)developing is to distance people from natural values, making them perceive economic advantages in everything around them. Striving for people's engagement with their surroundings is the most effective way of ensuring preservation.

Foundation (BRASIL, 2025), the ethnic group comprises approximately 12,000 individuals distributed across 24 villages, in addition to urban residents in Pesqueira, primarily in the *"Xukurus"* neighborhood, and in other cities.

Chief Francisco de Assis Araújo, known as "Chief Xikão," became the principal leader of the *Xukuru* people, overseeing their political organization and national recognition. His work gained prominence during the 1980 constitutional campaign, in which he advocated for the inclusion of Indigenous peoples' rights. On May 20, 1998, following numerous threats from landowners opposed to the reoccupation movement, Chief Xikão was assassinated in Pesqueira. His death provoked international attention due to his leadership in Indigenous struggles. He was planted[5] in Pedra D'Água village, leaving a legacy of mobilization alongside Shaman Zequinha, a legacy now continued by Chief Marquinhos.

From this generation of young people who lived alongside Xikão and witnessed territorial conflicts, the audiovisual collective *Ororubá Filmes* emerged. Since 2008, the group has functioned as a communication channel for the *Xukuru* people, involving individuals such as Diego, Micaele, Kleber, Ruan, Guila, Mirellyane, Everton, and others, who assume various organizational roles within the community. The initiative aims to engage youth and promote a distinctive form of communication aligned with the social and cultural concerns of the people.

Ororubá Filmes maintains a YouTube channel (5.6 thousand subscribers); a Facebook page (8.8 thousand likes); an Instagram profile (13.4 thousand followers); and the podcast "Ororubá Cast: Smoke Signals from the Xukuru People" (*Ororubá Cast: um sinal de fumaça do povo Xukuru*), a metaphorical adaptation of the traditional smoke signal as a symbol of Indigenous communication. The community's objective is to construct its own narrative, strengthen its culture, and decolonize representations

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5   For the *Xukuru do Ororubá*, Chief "Xikão" is planted, not buried, so that new warriors may arise from him. This expression was used by Dona Zenilda, the leader's wife, during the funeral (ARAÚJO, 2021, p. 78).

of itself. Its motto encapsulates this mission: "using what is modern to strengthen what is ancestral."

In the methodological details of the field study conducted by Quintero (2023), the use of participant observation is highlighted, including the description of a ritual "where it is customary, out of respect, at the beginning of any activity that expresses their spirituality, be it written, auditory, or visual, to ask for strength and good guidance from Father Tupã and Mother Tamaín, protectors of the *Xukuru*, as well as the enchanted ones[6]" (QUINTERO, 2023, p. 43). Observing this specific practice of the *Xukuru* people during the production of images and sounds reveals a process deeply permeated by the community's culture, encompassing elements that can be identified as religious, spiritual, and sacred.

We reflect on how negotiation manifests differently in Western audiovisual production and ethnocommunication. The discussion begins with the notion of perspectival communication to identify where, in practice, the differences between these models emerge. In the Western format, the primary focus is efficiency, understood as the ability to achieve objectives within defined deadlines and budgets, which directs the entire production process. For instance, in a film shoot, a pre-established number of scenes is planned per day, and any deviation from the schedule is regarded as a loss.

In the Indigenous context, the process is guided by a relationship of permission, shaped by worldviews, spirituality, leadership, and the forces of nature. The pace of production is not determined by financial logic but by respect for the community's time and knowledge. Recording occurs only with spiritual and collective authorization, revealing a distinctive model of organization and meaning in audiovisual production.

This is why the concept under discussion aligns with perspectival communication in the context of ethnocommunication, as it is guided by a worldview and manifests uniquely in audiovisual production.

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6   Sacred spirits that inhabit the forest and watch over the sacred territory. Every person who dies becomes enchanted and returns to the territory to grant strength to their siblings.

But what does this "perspective" signify in the construction of the concept? The notion of perspectival communication presented in this paper is grounded in and developed through a form of communication that seeks the decolonization of words and images. It fosters media productions based on one or more Indigenous worldviews, attentive to their particularities, and capable of addressing the ethnicity of communication in the collective formulation of media discourses.

The implementation of perspectival communication presupposes the incorporation of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos[7] (2019) describes as "own artisanal knowledge," that is, the use of ancestral knowledge in service of the objectives of the struggle.

> The trust placed in this knowledge stems from its potential, real or imagined, to strengthen the struggle at hand. This radical potential generally involves two ideas. On one hand, the knowledge in question belongs to the groups themselves; it is part of their respective past-as-present. Through this knowledge, groups in struggle become cognitive subjects rather than objects of external knowledge that has been used to justify their subjugation and oppression. From subjugation to subjectivity — this is the path of hope against fear that their own knowledge allows them to follow. On the other hand, this knowledge is often reinvented to refer to a past time of dignified life, a life that can now be recovered under new conditions; it is therefore crucial for claims to dignity. Ancestral knowledge has a performative dimension; it entails imagining a past that asserts itself as a project. Knowledge that is ours means representing the world as our own. In other words, the authorship of knowledge is a prerequisite for the authorship of the world (SANTOS, 2019, p. 197).

Within this framework, Indigenous peoples develop ways of thinking, producing, and presenting audiovisual material based on structural processes that would likely never have been conceived outside their cultural contexts, as certain communication practices may appear alien

7   Note: We express our repudiation of the allegations of harassment and abuse of power involving the sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, made public in April 2023, which contradict the principles he advocates in his work. We believe that forgetting deepens violence by denying justice and transformation. We continue to use his texts selectively, while seeking other references.

to non-Indigenous cultures. João Paulo Lima Barreto (2023), an Indigenous anthropologist from the *Yepamahsã* (*Tukano*) people, provides an example through the *Tukano* understanding of the relationship between humans and fish. He introduces the concept of *wai-mahsã*, the "invisible humans" who inhabit natural environments such as rivers and lakes and are considered the true owners of fish and aquatic territories. For the *Tukano*, fish (*wai*) are not merely a source of food but entities with which social and spiritual relationships are maintained. Consequently, any audiovisual recording conducted in water must be approached with extreme respect, care, and attention.

These experiences highlight the need to reconsider Western paradigms. As Mingo (2016) notes, the emergence of non-Western audiovisual cultures provides a unique opportunity to deconstruct hegemonic perspectives and foster epistemological reorientations in the handling of audiovisual materials. The concept of perspectival communication thus arises as a proposal grounded in Indigenous worldviews: a distinctive approach to thinking, producing, and presenting audiovisual content, structured around symbolic and sociocultural principles that challenge conventional logics.

This formulation aligns with the notion of cultivating a unique epistemology, grounded in the history and needs of each people, as advocated by Latin American decolonial thinkers. The purpose of disseminating this proposal is precisely to stimulate critical reflection, allowing it to emerge through the encounter of diverse worldviews.

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Revisiting the social rules of Christmas gift-giving: a study in southern Brazil

Revisitando as regras sociais do presentear no Natal: um estudo no sul do Brasil

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ABSTRACT: *Based on the nine rules of American Christmas gift-giving, this study revisits them 40 years later and in another culture. A qualitative approach was used, through interviews, documentary research and participant observation, with thematic analysis. Changes were observed in Americans' gift-giving rules, assumed by the subjects during the Christmas period, regarding distribution and decoration. New rituals were also identified in the rules of reciprocity, tree, packaging and scale. The rules of dinner, selection and adequacy supported the original context.*

Keywords: *gift-giving; Christmas; social rules.*

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A R T I C L E

RESUMO: Com base nas nove regras de presentear no Natal americano, este estudo as revisita 40 anos mais tarde e em outra cultura. Utilizou-se a abordagem qualitativa, por meio de entrevistas, pesquisa documental e observação participante, com análise temática. Verificou-se mudanças nas regras de presentear dos norte-americanos, assumidas pelos sujeitos no período natalino, sobre a distribuição e a decoração. Também se identificou novos rituais nas regras de reciprocidade, árvore, embalagem e escala. Já as regras de jantar, seleção e adequação sustentaram o contexto original.

Palavras-chave: ato de presentear; Natal; regras sociais.

Introduction

The act of giving presents constitutes a representation of relationships built through meanings that encompass identities, messages, experiences, reactions, positions, status, and intimacies (BELK, 1979). Christmas is one of the few most intense and well-defined ceremonies around the world (ROOK, 2007), celebrated even in countries that do not have a Christian tradition (MCKECHNIE; TYNAN, 2006), and one of its most distinctive features is the exchange of gifts.

Gift exchanges can trigger social rules that represent regulatory modes of interaction among individuals, focusing on specific attitudes toward acting in a given context (GIDDENS, 1976). These rules are informal and predictable mechanisms of behavior that come into play on particular occasions and govern the offering of gifts (CAPLOW, 1984; MORTELMANS; SINARDET, 2004). Such rules may include: to whom to give, what to give, when to give, or how to give gifts.

At Christmas, Caplow (1984) identified premises related to gift exchanges in the city of Middletown during the 1980s, observing a family context. The author attributed the terminology of socially produced "rules", which are: reciprocity, tree, decoration, packaging, scale, selection, appropriateness, dinner, and distribution. The rule of reciprocity says that participants in this gift-giving system must give at least one Christmas present every year to their mothers, fathers, children, daughters; to the spouses of these people; and to their own spouses (CAPLOW, 1984).

The tree rule is a major symbol of the Christmas ceremony. Couples with children of any age must set up Christmas trees in their homes; single people without children are not required to set up trees; and single parents may set up trees. The decoration rule indicates that any room or environment where Christmas presents are distributed must be decorated with Christmas emblems (CAPLOW, 1984). Caplow (1984) also shows that the rule of Christmas-themed packaging gives these items individuality and sociability.

The scale rule establishes that the amount to be spent on the acquisition of an item depends on the emotional distance of the relationship between the dyad (CAPLOW, 1984). Christmas gifts should also demonstrate the giver's familiarity with the recipient and surprise them by expressing affection through the aesthetic or practical value of the gift, forming the selection rule (CAPLOW, 1984).

Consequently, the rule of appropriateness of gifts, in relation to monetary offers, suggests that some relationships become unsuitable for this type of offering. Twenty years after Caplow's (1984) work, Mortelmans and Sinardet (2004) indicated that this rule was spread by the market movement through the creation of colored envelopes or cards that could better justify such offers.

Finally, Caplow (1984) addresses the rules of dinner and distribution, which systematize that gifts should be exchanged and distributed at gatherings where meals are served, with the presence of family being essential, and that each person who gives a gift should receive another in return.

What motivates the investigation of the rules involved in the act of gift-giving related to Christmas is the fact that market actions also participate as structuring elements of consumption, learned through sociocultural patterns. When contexts and structures become unstable due to new realities over time, it leads to changes in behaviors, practices, and meanings (ARNOULD; THOMPSON, 2005). Although some studies have shown the ritual and exchange of Christmas gifts in Brazil (CASOTTI; CAMPOS; WALTHER, 2008; OLIVEIRA; VIEIRA, 2010; PINTO; CRUZ, 2014), none of them have depicted the rules that govern the act of gift-giving in other cultures.

Revisiting Caplow's (1984) rules, 40 years later, is essential to recognize the traditions of the act of gift-giving that are widely spread in the West but are also intrinsic to the culture of specific spaces and ways of life. Customs and typologies of presents may be lost — or their practices may fade — yet the act of giving remains intense, universal, and present in societies (SHERRY, 1983; PILLAI; KRISHNAKUMAR, 2019), as consumers re-signify artifacts and symbols (ARNOULD; THOMPSON, 2005).

Ritualistic consumption at christmas

The literature addresses consumption rituals through different lenses: rituals expressed as aspects of the sacred (BELK; WALLENDORF; SHERRY, 1989), rituals viewed as behavioral traits (TETREAULT; KLEINE III, 1990; ROOK, 2007), and rituals constituted by symbolic actions (MCCRACKEN, 1986; ARNOULD; THOMPSON, 2005; 2007). Celebrating Christmas in different regions of the world involves artifacts influenced by local culture, such as the American Santa Claus, the British Christmas card, the Dutch Christmas cookie, and the German Christmas tree (BELK, 1989). This cultural appropriation of elements is heavily shaped by cultural globalization.

Christmas provides one of the most widespread ritualistic consumption practices in the world. The ceremony expresses consumers' self-concept, connecting them and strengthening their social relationships (WALLENDORF; ARNOULD, 1991) through sharing joy, peace, and kindness as valuable feelings (HIRSCHMAN; LABARBERA, 1989). In this context, consumers value a flow of fantasies, emotions, entertainment, and triggers of memories (HOLBROOK; HIRSCHMAN, 1982). These emotions accentuate the symbolic attributes of the act of giving, in which some individuals find pleasure in giving many presents (CAPLOW, 1984).

There is a significant relationship between religious values and commercial intent (CLARKE, 2006), in which the predominance of spiritual and social meanings is the central foundations for aspects of consumption and their particularities in various contexts. In this context, the process of meaning transfer during Christmas identified by McKechnie and Tynan (2006) encompasses both collective and individual ritualistic behaviors. Generally, consumers' collective behaviors include participation in nativity scenes, concerts, church visits, and social activities, as well as gatherings for family dinners. Individual consumption behaviors are related to routine household

cleaning, decoration and redecorating, purchasing Christmas trees, installing outdoor and indoor lighting, and buying presents — acts heavily influenced by advertising and fashion systems (MCKECHNIE; TYNAN, 2006).

Consumption at Christmas has shown relatively significant aspects, particularly in the increased consumption of food, beverages, and gifts. In Brazil, researchers like Pinto and Cruz (2014) highlight the association with positive attitudes and values connected to religious ideologies, especially Christian ones, viewing it as an opportunity to practice acts of solidarity, fraternity, and benevolence. These feelings are more common among consumers of older ages (PINTO; CRUZ, 2014).

The presence of the celebration of the "midnight mass", the setting up of nativity scenes depicting the birth of Jesus, and the novenas emphasize a significant part of the religious culture in Brazilian Christmas, involving a whole array of symbols that allow for the construction of meanings through decorations, lights, Santa Claus, Christmas trees, traditional foods served at the Christmas meal with family, Christmas songs, and more (PINTO; CRUZ, 2014). This multisensory experience enhances an anthropomorphizing process, attributing individuality and symbolic universes to consumers.

When Caplow and Williamson (1980) compare gift exchanges between Easter and Christmas, they observe that Christmas presents greater complexity, as there is not a single type of gift or modes of giving and consuming them. Instead, it involves criteria such as age group, gender, status, social class, identity, lifestyle, and intimacy between givers and receivers (CAPLOW, WILLIAMSON, 1980; SHERRY, 1983; CARRIER, 2005; AUNG; ZHANG; TENG, 2017).

Therefore, buying Christmas presents is almost a social obligation for close family members, although consumers may encode how broad their groups can be (MCKECHNIE; TYNAN, 2006). Caplow (1982) emphasizes that the main goal of giving Christmas gifts is to build solidarity and kinship bonds.

Gift-giving rules system

Gifts symbolize a kind of "photograph" in which people invoke in their minds the other person, aiming to convey messages or meanings (SCHWARTZ, 1967), in rituals that emphasize symbolic exchange, such as Christmas (CAPLOW, 1982; 1984). Thus, "gifts are not as sacred as the connections between the people they usually signify" (BELK, 1979, p. 18, our translation).

The processes involved in the procedures of gift-giving are detected by invisible rules that function as a kind of governance (etiquette) of consumer behaviors within the ritual (CAPLOW, 1984). Thus, Caplow (1984) demonstrated that the gift exchange system during Christmas is heavily based on practices supported by rules, whose behaviors are grounded in a dialect of sedimented meanings. Evaluating the system of gift rules, Caplow (1984) understands that rules are not recognized by the system's participants, although they may be observed in use, since instructions for giving Christmas presents are not found in regulations or etiquette books but are tacitly embedded in society.

The loosening of social rules would turn everyday life into chaos regarding the (in)adequacies of different situations encountered. Therefore, a minimum level of regulation is necessary, not only for the functioning of society as a whole but also for various areas of social life (MORTELMANS; SINARDET, 2004), among which gift-giving is one, coercing consumers to act with a sense of collectivity.

Caplow (1984) interprets that every culture has a language of gift-giving to express important interpersonal relationships on special occasions. However, these rules are socially internalized through families, actively participating in the socialization process (MORTELMANS; SINARDET, 2004), whose structure of meanings associated with gifts is accumulated over time but also subject to change as these gifts — and their meanings — circulate among different consumers. Hendry (2008) urges that every gift exchange should be carefully examined, as rules and conventions are always involved, such as knowing when it is appropriate to give presents and to whom, as well as understanding how valuable

these gifts should be and how they should be received — along with how and when they should be reciprocated.

Thus, the invisible rules governing the gift system (CAPLOW, 1984; REITSMA; HOVEN, 2017) reconcile an inherently programmed network of actions among consumers, as the configurations of these rules are aligned with a ritual occasion that includes specific elements and promotes mutual coherence between givers and recipients. That said, at least three macro rules can be identified in the ritual: the social agents involved, the artifacts such as gifts, and the exchange environment (MORTELMANS; SINARDET, 2004).

Methodological design

This research was conducted using a qualitative and descriptive approach. The data sources were characterized as primary. The selection of participants was based on recommendations and three criteria: a) being Brazilian and residing in Southern Brazil; b) celebrating Christmas; and c) having the habit of giving gifts. Thus, 12 participants were selected, including 7 women and 5 men, aged between 25 and 60 years, belonging to the lower middle class, with a predominantly Christian religion. Data collection was performed through triangulation: in-depth interviews, documentary research, and participant observation.

The interviews were conducted using semi-structured guides in two phases, totaling 24 interviews. The interviews were carried out online due to the COVID-19 pandemic context. The two-phase approach aimed to identify practices that could be considered atypical due to the pandemic. The first phase included questions related to participants' experiences during Christmas in the last three years (2018, 2019, and 2020), whereas the second phase investigated the more recent Christmas of 2021.

Between both phases of interviews, the researcher asked participants to take photographs and videos of certain aspects of their Christmas 2021. Additionally, they provided some guidelines to help facilitate access to specific materials.

Participant observation was also conducted within the researcher's family context. This method had the advantage of being highly specific to the researcher's culture and the individuals present, providing an opportunity for in-depth data collection because the researcher is not a "stranger". As a record-keeping tool, field diaries were maintained to document observations made at the sites, along with photographs and videos. The researcher spent 21 days in the field observing the practices of a group of 30 family members, following a participant observation guide.

For the interpretation and analysis of the data, thematic analysis was used. This method allowed for classifying and categorizing the content, highlighting key elements so they could be compared with other elements (BARDIN, 2016; CARLOMAGNO; ROCHA, 2016). According to Cavalcante, Calixto, and Pinheiro (2014), this technique involves breaking down texts into units (categories) and reassembling them through analytical re-groupings, with the purpose of discovering the core meanings that make up the messages, which in turn were already pre-established by theory, namely, Caplow's nine rules.

The researcher used 266 pages of transcribed texts from in-depth interviews, with a total duration of 21 hours and 37 minutes, along with 143 photographs and 21 videos. Additionally, 28 pages were written in the field diary as a result of participant observation; moreover, the researcher collected 306 photographs and 17 videos during the observation period. Finally, a comparative analysis was conducted by juxtaposing the analytical categories, highlighting aspects considered similar and those deemed different, based on the theoretical framework of the study, involving inferences and interpretations.

Christmas gift-giving rules system

The environment

Subjects do not participate in gift exchanges during Christmas celebration gatherings, practicing this act more privately and with less exposure

to public observation. The individuals involved in these gatherings mainly fall into three core groups: the primary (parents, children, siblings, spouses); the secondary (grandparents, uncles, cousins, godparents, and godchildren); and the non-family (friends and colleagues). The non-family group is rarely present at the ceremony, as celebrating Christmas is predominantly a family ritual.

The premise that "Christmas presents are primarily distributed at gatherings where each person gives and receives gifts" is not practiced, as such gatherings are usually centered around meal consumption and socialization. This is justified by the financial resource limitations for purchasing gifts (FALDETTA, 2018; CORDEIRO; WONG; PONCHIO, 2019), which influence decisions about who should receive gifts or not, forcing individuals to make choices based on the closeness or distance of kinship in their relationships (WARD; CHAN, 2018).

Motives for exchanging gifts at different times during the Christmas celebration occur because people do not celebrate together in person, either because they do not live nearby or because they are not part of the subjects' family (friends). The practice of exchanging gifts before or after the Christmas date is an emerging ritual that is becoming increasingly more casual, making the exchange more random than ritualistic. For these individuals, only those who are close are perceived as "worthy" of receiving gifts, while those who are not nearby must wait for other opportunities to be gifted. This premise is quite different from what Caplow (1984) identified, as many American gift-givers sent presents via mail to their relatives.

Women play a prominent role in the involvement with Christmas decorations (CAPLOW, 1982). Although there are various types of decorations appreciated by the participants, some are emphasized: Christmas tree; tableware (napkins, tablecloths, glasses, plates, candles, etc.); fruit displays; and additionally, lights and nativity scenes stand out.

According to the arrangement of the decorations throughout the rooms of the households, the Christmas tree and the decorated table

are the most dispersed. As such, they are moved to different locations, often placed very close to where the family members will gather. More specifically, the decorated table set with meals is the focal point of the family gathering.

The statement that "Any environment where gifts are distributed is generally decorated" is uncharacteristic, as there are frequent gift exchanges outside of this scenario. Similarly, "singles, without children, living alone, usually decorate their homes, even if they do not have Christmas trees", indicates that this profile has not been behaving in this way — and the same applies to tree decoration. Thus, it was observed that the stimuli to decorate and set up Christmas trees are intrinsic to family units — spouses and children living together — confirming Caplow's (1982; 1984) findings.

Couples with young children set up Christmas trees. For parents, transferring Christian values through involvement in decorating the Christmas trees with their young children is a way to formalize traditions and religious beliefs, thereby psychologically preparing people to enjoy the holiday season.

Single individuals without children, when living with their parents, showed a greater propensity to set up Christmas trees; however, single individuals without children living alone are less likely to do so. Thus, individuals living alone are less motivated to decorate trees because this activity has culturally been rooted as something performed within a family group, since putting up Christmas trees is part of the larger ritual that is the Christmas celebration — which, like any ritual, also has a script and defined roles (ROOK, 2007).

Christmas presents are not distributed under or around Christmas trees and have been absent in the researched context. Displaying presents on the trees is a way to attract attention and generate curiosity among those who might receive one, which can create issues in relationships, since many recipients may not receive them due to factors such as insufficient money, lack of attention to certain relationships, or embarrassment (RUTH; BRUNEL; OTNES, 2004).

Thus, Christmas presents are stored in cabinets, wardrobes, bedrooms, cars, etc. — to prevent individuals from developing expectations of receiving gifts — and are offered only at appropriate moments and when the dyad is isolated (MORTELMANS; SINARDET, 2004). In the case of displaying fake presents with empty shoe boxes wrapped solely as a form of room decoration, this is well represented in homes, re-signifying that presents can also serve as Christmas decorations.

Social relationships

The relationships involved in gift exchanges are characterized by three aspects: the price of the gift, the type of gift, and the degree of kinship. There is a rule that nuclear kinship relations tend to involve larger monetary amounts in gifts, while secondary or extrafamilial relationships are exchanged with lower prices; therefore, financial efforts are greater among close family members. This fact aligns with the contributions of Mortelmans and Sinardet (2004) and Pillai and Krishnakumar (2019), since close kinship relations form the fundamental basis of the scale rule, as the core is in the importance and intensity of the relationship (KOMTER; VOLLEBERGH, 1997).

Gifts with relatively high prices were given to spouses, boyfriends/girlfriends, and siblings. These valued gifts may indicate that the relationship holds importance and appreciation; however, there are also more moralistic relationship priorities (such as parents and young children) associated with higher gift prices. Spouses tend to reduce the price levels of their own gifts to allocate greater values to their children and, when applicable, to their godchildren, given limited financial resources. Another observed point is that individuals without children are more likely to give more expensive gifts to their parents than to their partners (LOURENÇO; REZENDE, 2012).

Cheap gifts are mostly items given to relationships outside of immediate family, such as friends and colleagues. It is very common to offer "generic" gifts to this group, such as cosmetics, chocolates, and beverages, which require minimal information about the recipients.

The scale rule influences the studied context; however, the hierarchy regarding the monetary valuation of relationships through gifts has undergone modifications, such as the inversion of the relationship between spouses and parents-children, with the latter being identified as more valued. Thus, the premise that "a conjugal relationship is more valuable than a parent-child relationship for gift-giving" proved to be contradictory.

Even though young children are still more valued than children who are already financially independent, parents' attitudes remain similar. This logic is based on the affective and emotional responsibility to provide more valued artifacts to their heirs (FLYNN; ADAMS, 2009). Thus, the act of procreation takes the place that would originally belong to the couple, which tends to pay more attention to these relationships when giving gifts.

Descendant relationships (parents-children) are more highly valued monetarily than symmetrical kinship relationships (spouses) or ascending relationships. Another factor that may have influenced this shift is the number of children in households, since, according to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 1980), the average number of children per household was 4.12, whereas today it is 1.86 children per household (IBGE, 2010).

In terms of gifts offered, kinship relations such as young children and nieces/nephews did not give presents in return to their parents or uncles, which was expected, based on Caplow's (1982) findings, since financial dependence, along with age, can impact reciprocity (BELK, 1976; 1979; BREDEWOLD; TONKENS; TRAPPENBURG, 2016; PILLAI; KRISHNAKUMAR, 2019).

The kinship relationships that showed the greatest reciprocity were: parent-child (adults), followed by relationships between siblings, spouses, and in-laws (parents-in-law and children-in-law). On the other hand, less reciprocal gift exchanges were observed in relationships such as grandparents-grandchildren (with grandchildren not reciprocating), uncles-nephews (with nephews not reciprocating), and among friends. In this sense, Caplow (1984) noted that there is little to no reciprocity

among non-relatives, as confirmed in this study, such as between employers and employees, and teachers and students.

Again, women are the most involved in giving gifts, receiving more presents compared to men — confirming the studies by Caplow (1982), Mortelmans and Sinardet (2004), and Sinardet and Mortelmans (2009). According to Yan (2005), this occurs due to the effect of the ideology of love, as women are much more responsible for the preparations of Christmas tasks and have greater involvement in symbolic networks of relationships (SINARDET; MORTELMANS, 2009). Among the men who gave presents at Christmas, those who were married did so jointly with their wives. Single men primarily gave presents to women, especially mothers, sisters, aunts, and grandmothers.

Participants felt more compelled to reciprocate with their closer kinship ties in exchange for the greater symbolism in these relationships (LOURENÇO; REZENDE, 2012). Supporting these findings, Komter and Vollebergh (1997) suggest that giving gifts within family bonds involves a certain moral obligation, whereas friends are chosen not out of obligation or tradition but based on mutual affection, with the prices of these gifts being more "free" to be practiced.

Nuclear relationships are common for reciprocity with unequal gift prices. Early stages of romantic relationships consider that gifts represent artifacts that materialize social bonds, and balanced reciprocity in gift exchanges indicates that, possibly, these relationships are not viewed as very close, as the individuals are still getting to know each other.

The premise that "there is usually no equivalence in the value of exchanged gifts between spouses, parents, and adult children, except among siblings" may be more accepted in nuclear relationships; however, the imbalance found in gift reciprocity among siblings contradicts Caplow's (1984) premise.

The artifacts

Participants do not give presents without wrapping, unlike what Mortelmans and Sinardet (2004) identified in European culture. They see

wrapping as a means of bringing appreciation, which may reflect the value Brazilians place on aesthetic considerations — that is, it being one of their core values (TAMAYO, 2007). Everything that Brazilians can "beautify", they will do so.

Packaging adds an element of surprise and curiosity, extending until the recipient views and assesses the content of the packages (HENDRY, 2008). Even though the packaging is evaluated as part of the satisfaction with a gift, Caddah (2008) reveals that it is not an isolated factor, as people also tend to assess a set of attributes such as price and quality, which makes the packaging diminish the idea of a commodity (CARRIER, 2005). Therefore, this rule is faithfully followed by subjects; when violated, they do not associate it with being a gift, nor do they generate expectations or emotions.

The aesthetic judgment of packaging is made before opening, as predicted by Raghubir and Greenleaf (2006) and Deng and Kahn (2009). Participants pay attention to the packages in an attempt to understand their content, even inciting whether they are "good" or "bad" gifts, through colors, size, type of paper, and shapes of the presents. Wrappings with visible commercial brands already anticipate what will be found inside. This finding suggests that commercial brands can be either loved or repudiated within the realm of gifts.

The premise that "Christmas presents are usually wrapped with emblematic and iconographic elements of Christmas" has been disrupted by marketing and branding actions of companies, as retailers act as orchestrators of the gift-giving act. Wrappings have shown considerable dispersion of these Christmas symbols, as many packages featured brands of products and companies. The most prominent brands were from the hygiene and cosmetics categories, followed by brands from clothing and footwear categories.

As a result, the packaging dynamics began to communicate their brands within a nostalgic and emotional context, penetrating the rituals and homes of families during the holiday season.

Thus, the wrapping did not ensure themes that illustrate the colors of Christmas (red and green) or that recall Santa Claus, Christmas trees, bells,

etc., since participants showed little concern for maintaining these practices. Instead, colors such as gold, silver, and shades that emphasize gender differences (blue and pink) were present, and the wrappings had fewer details. This practice was abandoned, and participants began to use and appreciate the wraps provided by stores themselves, reducing time spent searching for ideal packaging, contrary to what Hendry (2008) pointed out.

Final considerations

The objective of this study was to revisit the rules of the act of gift-giving during Christmas, proposed by Caplow (1984), and to redirect them to a new context by identifying such scenarios. The effort of this study was not to bring aspects of Brazilian culture for comparative analysis, but rather to identify and empirically describe behaviors. It can be understood that the systems of rules governing gift-giving are not static; they are socially and culturally shaped, molded within specific periods and spaces, and continuously constructed and reconstructed over time.

While the least perceived similarity in the study is in the rules of distribution and decoration, the rules of the tree, scale, reciprocity, and packaging showed a certain re-signification of behaviors based on the premises established by Caplow (1984). Meanwhile, the rules of dinner, selection, and appropriateness appeared to be "intact" in this study.

Despite the well-known importance of gift-giving in society as an essential function of sociability, and the creation and maintenance of individual or collective relationships (SHERRY, 1983), the rules that govern it change depending on how these processes are culturally constructed, creating symbols of social "etiquette" in the act of giving.

Theoretically, the study advanced by understanding how the rules identified within one culture can behave in another context, providing a systemic view of how the functioning of these rules influences the Christmas gift-giving ritual. Thus, it was possible to highlight the cultural importance that gift exchanges play in family sociability, particularly regarding the maintenance of relationships.

The study also progressed by providing practical insights into the consumption of Christmas items, aiming to relate gifts to various types of relationships during Christmas, as well as aspects that are appreciated or avoided in the celebration. Furthermore, the study offers valuable insights into elements of Brazilian culture within a widely celebrated ritual.

As limitations of the study, the variation in the profiles of the interviewees could have been more diverse. Brazil is a continental and multicultural country; therefore, the research was limited to consumers from the South, which could also have presented an opportunity to compare other Brazilian regions. The gift-giving rules studied were guided by Caplow's (1984) premises, which may have "concealed" the emergence of new rules.

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Cultural-sensory synesthesia: creating a mythical space-time as a tool for brand expression

Sinestesia cultural-sensorial: criação de um espaço-tempo mítico como ferramenta de expressividade da marca

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ABSTRACT: *This article aims to analyse how the sensory-cultural creation of heterotopias and heterochrony by Magnum's ice cream brand campaign "Find your Summer" favours a cultural branding strategy. Through a semiotic analysis and an approach focused on Michel Serres's rambling (randonnée) and the exploration of the five senses, the campaign's aesthetic and metaphorical languages are discussed: their contrapositions, sensations, parallels, inflexions, and displacements. The conclusions point to the creation of a mythical time-space that is experienced synesthetically by consumers, strengthening the brand's cultural identity.*

Keywords: *cultural branding; heterotopy; advertising; semiotics; five senses.*

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ARTICLE

RESUMO: Este artigo tem por objetivo analisar como a criação sensorial-cultural de heterotopias e heterocronias pela campanha "Find your Summer", da marca de sorvetes Magnum, favorece uma estratégia de branding cultural. Por meio de uma análise semiótica e de uma abordagem voltada para o rodeio e a exploração dos cinco sentidos de Michel Serres, são discutidas as linguagens estéticas e metafóricas da campanha: suas contraposições, sensações, paralelismos, inflexões e deslocamentos. As conclusões apontam para a criação de um tempo-espaço mítico que é experienciado sinestesicamente pelos consumidores, fortalecendo a identidade cultural da marca.

Palavras-chave: branding cultural; heterotopia; publicidade; semiótica; cinco sentidos.

Introduction

Communicative speeches can be considered dynamic and with transcendental capacity to change the world, relying on a rationale that does not exclude the pathos (PARRET, 1997). According to Parret (1997), every speech, even if logical, has intensity and passion, even if it is tamed by a grammar that restricts it. Therefore, the communication of people and the media occurs through affections and feelings.

In this sense, other thinkers also discussed aspects that transcend and extrapolate verbal or written communication. In other words, they refute the claim that there is no world outside language or that it can be independent of human beings (MARCONDES FILHO, 2005). It is from this perspective, according to which we communicate beyond words and writing, that Serres (2001) investigates the five senses in the communication process, understanding that the centrality of spelling is nothing but another form of racism (MARCONDES FILHO, 2005). Barthes (1980), in turn, argues that there should be as many languages as there are desires, making it possible to cheat and play with the signs instead of destroying them.

Similarly, Derrida (1998) considers writing as a violence, as a form of exploitation of man by man, which reduces people without writing and conditions those who possess it. On the other hand, the author also develops the concept of deconstruction, which is a way of leaving things (texts, traditions, or beliefs) open, in such a way as to exceed the borders that confine them (CAPUTO, 1997). Thus, the term *différance* is coined, something that differs from other things, while representing a postponement of meanings, which follow indefinitely, favouring polysemy (DERRIDA, 1982; NUYEN, 1989).

Besides the communicative aspects that transcend words and writing, there are spaces and times that extrapolate those existing in reality: heterotopia and heterochrony, which are concepts of the philosopher Michel Foucault (1986). The first is related to idealised places or staged utopias; that is, they represent real places, but are opposed to them,

challenging and reversing them (FOUCAULT, 1986). In addition, heterotopias juxtapose several spaces that can be incompatible, work differently according to culture, isolate themselves by an opening and closing system, and operate differently from what is real, but always in comparison to reality. In turn, heterochrony is part of heterotopia, being an absolute rupture of the traditional notion of time (FOUCAULT, 1986). Therefore, both are extrapolations of space-time, even though they are shaped by reality.

Thus, taking into account the forms of communication beyond verbal or written language, this article will explore ways to understand space-time through the conceptualisations of heterotopia and heterochrony. Furthermore, it will investigate ways of communicating through reasonable pathos, senses, the semiological system of myth, and polysemy. As a corpus of our research, we will analyse the Magnum brand campaign, aiming at understanding how the sensory-cultural creation of heterotopias and heterochronias favours a cultural branding strategy, which involves the incorporation of cultural codes, ideologies, and myths in communication actions of a brand (HOLT; CAMERON, 2010; FOURNIER; ALVAREZ, 2019).

This study was motivated by a gap found in the literature. Previous research focused on the meanings of advertisement and its relation to life projects (MICK; BUHL, 1992), the authenticity of advertising texts (STERN, 1994), the visual rhetoric of advertising pieces (PHILLIPS; MCQUARRIE, 2004), the narrative persuasion of advertisement (PHILLIPS; MCQUARRIE, 2010), brand storytelling (DELGADO-BALLESTER; FERNÁNDEZ-SABIOTE, 2016), or the semiotic analysis of brand communication (GURZKI; SCHLATTER; WOISETSCHLÄGER, 2019) and its relation to diversity and ethnicity (FERNANDES, 2024). Although authors have analysed, from the semiotic perspective, brands (PEREZ, 2016), advertisements (FERNANDES, 2024; GRUNFELD; GOMES, 2024; BRANDÃO; HEMAIS; PESSÔA, 2025), and consumer behaviours (MICK, 1986; MICK *et al.*, 2004), there is a lack of studies whose authors adopt a

semiotic analysis of advertisements considering languages that surpass the verbal and the written as well as a transcendent space-time.

Not quite as methodical as it seems

First, to analyse the corpus of the present study, we will make an analysis based on the semiological system of myths. According to Barthes (1991), the myth is a particular system because it is of second order, created by previous signifiers and signifieds. To differentiate it from the first order, the author calls the signifier form, and the signified, concept. Therefore, there is a constant hide-and-seek play between forms and concepts, which end up defining what a myth is. Moreover, its meanings are confusing, unstable, and open, having at its disposal an unlimited number of signifiers (BARTHES, 1991).

According to Barthes (1977), the mythological system has some characteristics. First, it can be found and propagated in collective representations, such as in consumer goods advertisements. Second, myth transforms cultural, social, and ideological aspects into something natural, making them common sense or general opinion. Third, the myth is discontinuous, no longer needing to be expressed through long narratives, as it did in the past. Lastly, its message is separated into two semantic systems: connotation and denotation.

Therefore, we will use the semiological system of the myth proposed by Barthes (1977, 1991) to analyse the Magnum brand campaign. However, we do not intend to be too attached to the method, nor its restrictions and assurances. Therefore, we will also adopt what Serres (2001) calls *randonnée* (rambling), which will allow us to explore the space, wander, improvise, and navigate the landscape. Therefore, instead of a rigid method, we rather focus on wandering and randomness (MARCONDES FILHO, 2005). In the words of Serres (2016, p. 273):

> Wander as free as a cloud, cast your gaze in every direction, improvise. Improvisation is a source of wonder for the eye. Think of anxiety as good fortune, self-assurance as poverty. Lose your balance, leave the beaten

track, chase birds out of the hedges. *Débrouillez-vous*, muddle through, a perfect popular expression meaning literally to unscramble yourself. It supposes a tangled skein, a certain disorder and that vital confidence in the impromptu event that characterizes healthy innocents, lovers, aesthetes and the lonely.

After all, our rambling through the Magnum campaign will be both by the mythological system and the synesthetic contact of an affective consumer-in-community (PARRET, 1997). Thus, the theatricalisation and the simulacra of this community life will be evaluated as well as its metaphorical and figurative nature (PARRET, 1997).

Cultural-sensorY synesthesia in a mythical space-time

The Magnum's ice cream brand was created in 1989 in Europe, aimed at adult consumers seeking indulgence and sophistication (UNILEVER, 2024). The brand values the quality of its ingredients, relying on a Belgian chocolate coating that provides, when consumed, its signature cracking sensation (UNILEVER, 2024). In 2024, Magnum launched the *Find your Summer* campaign in the markets of England and Turkey to encourage consumers to have ice creams in winter, as sales are usually lower at this time of the year (NELSON, 2024). In addition to driving consumption, the advertising pieces allude to an application with real information about the weather, so that people can know where it is sunny (NELSON, 2024). The campaign featured a 90-second film and printed materials, winning the CLIO Awards in the cinematography category (CLIO AWARDS, 2024).

First, we will analyse the printed materials of the campaign, which present everyday scenes of a city. These are urban places where consumers appear holding an ice cream while enjoying the sunshine (Figure 1). The extreme contrast between black and white reinforces the light of the sun, directing the reader's gaze and highlighting the act of consumption. At the bottom, it is possible to read the campaign slogan, "Find your Summer," associating summer with the representations of the advertising piece.

Figure 1 – Posters of the Magnum campaign
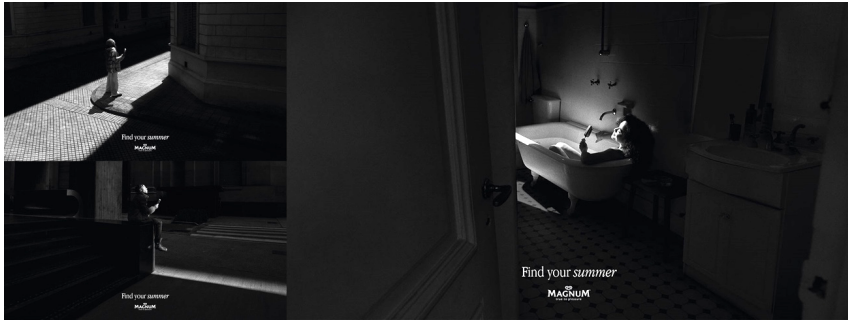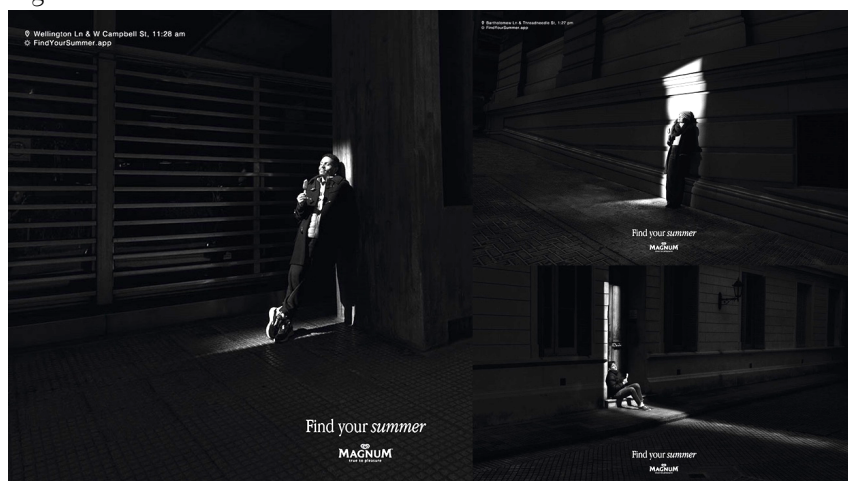

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

As it is a campaign run in winter, "find your summer" is a way to draw people's attention to seek a moment of joy, warmth, and pause in their everyday life. As many people go on vacation and look for warmer places in the summer, the advertisement seeks to associate these cultural meanings with the act of consuming the Magnum brand. This magical moment of pleasure, of warm sunshine amid the cold, is a form of catharsis for the consumer, who can momentarily forget their daily life.

Thus, the characters represented in the pieces have a contemplative gaze; some of them have their eyes closed, appreciating the tactile sensation of heat provided by the sun (Figures 1 and 2). It is a moment for taking a break, suspending time, of heterochrony, in which people lean against the wall to rest (Figure 2) or relax in a bathtub (Figure 1). Therefore, of the five senses, taste and smell are evoked by the presence of ice cream; touch is felt by the heat of the sun or the hot water; hearing is present in the slow music of the advertisement (of which we will talk later); and sight is selective and directed, standing out from the dark surroundings of the scenes.

The printed material also features a location indicator (always on a street corner), in the upper left corner of the page (Figure 2), supposedly marking where the people who appear in the pieces are, as well as indicating the mobile app needed to "find your summer." That is, the spatiality registered in the pictures works as a form of legitimation of

the advertisement, anchoring it in reality. However, at the same time, it transports the consumer to an idealised space that challenges and reverses what is real, constituting itself as a heterotopia (FOUCAULT, 1986). It is no coincidence that there is a conjunction between a virtual space (the mobile app), a real space (topia), and a mythical space (heterotopia), which are amalgamated into a single advertising piece, reinforcing the brand's cryptic message.

Figure 2 – Posters with indication of location
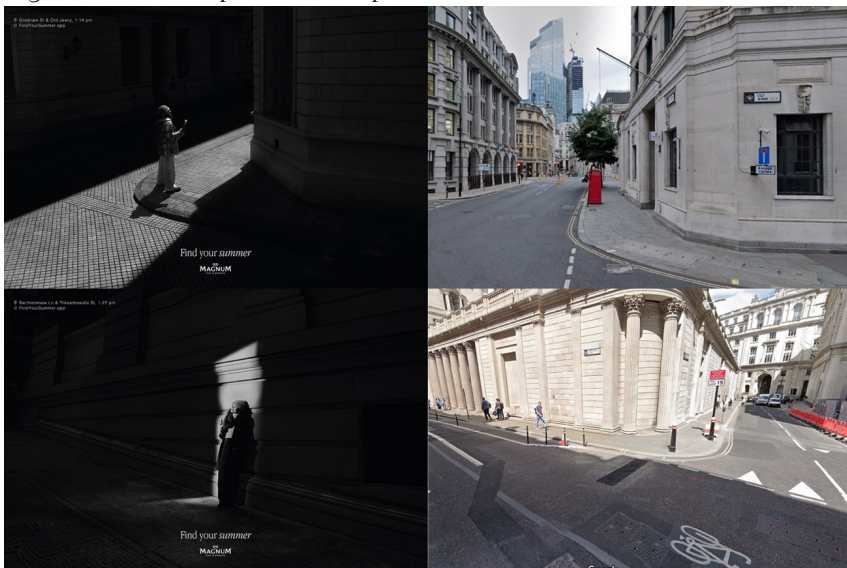

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

The campaign deliberately chose a street corner to be represented in the ads, rather than a single street or avenue. This choice can be interpreted as a form of reality displacement, of choosing a space that does not belong to one path or the other. It is a junction, an ambiguity that displaces and withdraws people from everyday life, or a non-place without symbology and anonymised (AUGÉ, 1995). Non-places, according to Augé (1995), are those in which people remain anonymous (such as on roads, supermarkets, or airports) and cannot be considered places in the anthropological conception, with historical, relational, and identity meanings.

However, by carrying out this displacement, the advertisement culturally transforms the non-place into something personalised, mythical,

heterotopic, and heterochronic. That is, it brings something of one's home, of its cosy and familiar nature, to the cold and impersonal space of the street. In the street, there is impersonality, hierarchy, exclusion, and the cold power of the law. While in one's home, there is hospitality, affection, friendship, calmness, rest, personality, and a harmonious relationship (DAMATTA, 1997).

The creation of the mythical space can be better understood when comparing the pictures of the idealised street corners with those that actually exist (Figure 3), captured by the Google Street View cameras. Some elements of reality are preserved for the sake of anchoring, such as parts of the walls and windows. Nevertheless, heterotopia takes place by modifying the non-place to transform it into a mythical place. This happens, for instance, with the change of the pavement of the streets, which becomes more geometric and flawless, or with the absence of traffic signs and road identification. Making the place quite anonymised was the solution to sublimate it and approximate it to a utopian, romantic, and time-suspended city.

Figure 3 – Heterotopias and real spaces

Source: Clio Awards (2024) and Google Maps.

As for the campaign film, we are invited to participate in its setting from the first scene, in which people wearing coats walk through the streets of a city in the winter, full of ice and snow. What city are we talking about? One cannot know for sure, as it could be New York, Buenos Aires, or London, reinforcing the mythical and mysterious aspect that the ad intends to create. Thus, the movements of pedestrians and the city are opposed to those of the clouds and the sky (Figure 4). At a distant glance, we see the city from above, in perspective, from a distance, as if it were possible to escape from it. At the same time, however, its citizens, those who are below, look up, as if they wanted to achieve something higher.

Figure 4 – City x sky

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

These contrasts show two opposing views, two levels of cultural meaning: the ground floor, which settles people in reality, and the sky, which moves freely and disorderly, allowing the sunshine to appear. Thus, the sense of sight is sharpened both horizontally (on the sidewalk, on the streets, or when a woman appears lying on the bed) and vertically (in the clouds, in the aerial shot, or in the buildings, which are seen from the bottom up). On the ground level, people are stuck in reality, in domestic or professional affairs, bored and eager to escape the routine. On the ethereal level, what is sought is the freedom of clouds' composition, the random movement of the wind, and the calming force of the sun.

The differences between the two worlds are also explored through the contrast between work and pleasure. Scenes of people working or waiting anxiously for a moment of pause in the routine are shown. Therefore, when the clock marks precisely three hours and fourteen minutes (Figure 5), the same as pi's value (π), a space-time suspension takes place so that the person can enjoy their Magnum and the heat of the sun. After all, π is an infinite number, the result of the perimeter of a circle divided by its diameter. Therefore, when one tastes an ice cream, one experiences an infinite psychological time that, like a circle, one does not know where it starts or ends, until a new cycle begins.

Figure 5 – Work x leisure

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

Another turning point in the advertisement is represented by a man walking his dog, as they are the only ones who observe the camera throughout the film (Figure 6). It is as if their gazes are inviting us, waiting for us to join them to enjoy a moment of indulgence. Likewise, an open window breaks the stiffness of an office building, reinforced by the tactile and auditory sensation of the wind, which swings a curtain. It represents an opening to something different, sensitive, which breaks the mould of the buildings' geometric plane and the routine. All these turning points are signs that heterotopia has settled, and time has been frozen.

Figure 6 – Turning point

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

Thus, people are invited to experience new sensations, using their taste and smell in the act of consumption, transporting themselves to a mythical place. The key that opens the way to this other space-time is the ice cream, which is firmly held in one hand, as if the consumer were holding it in a sign of victory. Numbed, people look up at the sunshine, calmed by its light (Figure 7). Through the consumption of ice cream and the sun, consumers experience a sensory sublimation that makes them smile and paralyse, becoming happier. Even if the instant persists only for a moment, it gives the impression of being infinite while it lasts. This sensation is reinforced by careful, slow-motion movements, as if aware that it is necessary to slowly savour everything Magnum and its products have to offer.

Figure 7 – Sublimation gazes

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

The advertisement also makes a parallel between images created on the street, such as those of surfaces full of ice and the steam coming out of a manhole, with the chocolate cracking and the heat of a bathtub. These sensitive metaphors (Figure 8) invite the consumer to play with the sensations and replace them with more pleasant ones. Thus, the grim cold of the street is exchanged for the icy ice cream, and the bland steam of the manholes turns into the inviting warmth of the bathtub. Similarly, parallelism also takes place in the comparison between the floating bits of ice cream and the clouds in the sky, urging people to imagine them as sublimated, higher, and sophisticated objects.

Figure 8 – Sensitive metaphors

Source: Clio Awards (2024).

Concerning the sense of hearing, it is possible to hear, throughout the advertisement, a slow and almost hypnotising song, entitled *In the rain*. It is a soul music hit by the 1970s band The Dramatics. The lyrics reinforce the ad message, chanting "once the sun comes out / and the rain is gone away / I know I'm gonna see / a better day." This auditory sensation composes the atmosphere of the advertisement, appealing to the soul of the consumer and preparing them for a hypnotic state enabled by soul music.

Finally, the film ends with the ad's protagonist in a cathartic state, savouring her ice cream in her home's bathtub (Figure 9). This scene consolidates and summarises all of Magnum's efforts to create a cultural

and sensory synesthesia, as the consumer represents the state of mind that the brand promises to make possible. As if, when having the ice cream, everyone felt like they were in a warm bathtub, in the comfort of their homes, numb, ecstatic, warmed by the sun, calm, and happy.

Figure 9 – The consumer's final catharsis
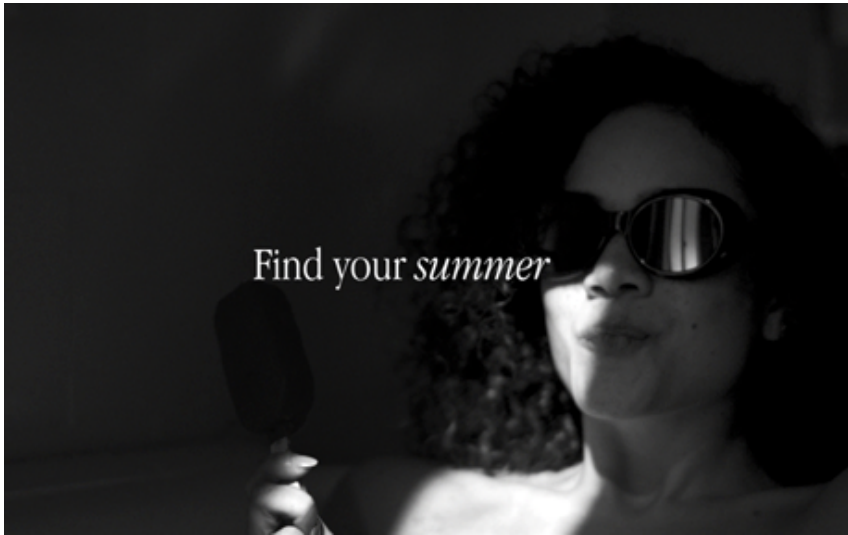
Source: Clio Awards (2024).

Therefore, it is a magical rite that isolates the consumer, as if it were something almost forbidden, secret. In this sense, the brand's advertisement approaches the elements of magic listed by Marcel Mauss (1972, p. 27): "The magician falls into a state of ecstasy, often naturally induced but more usually feigned. Then he often believes, and it seems to the onlookers, that he has been transported out of this world." The brand turns a banal rite into something extraordinary, rare, and loaded with symbolism that is incorporated by consumers when they consume the ice cream, as if it were a magic potion, just as Asterix acquires his strength to fight the Romans.

Thus, hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste are merged into a unique sensory experience, being part of an affective community (PARRET, 1997). "The five or six senses are entwined and attached,

above and below the fabric that they form by weaving or splicing, plaits, balls, joins, planes, loops and bindings, slip or fixed knots" (SERRES, 2016, p. 59). All these sensations are communicated in the advertisement, forming a sensory network that meets Serres' argument for a communication that goes beyond linguistic representation (MARCONDES FILHO, 2005). There is a brand effort to create a sensitive and sensory narrative, even if its pathos is reasonable (PARRET, 1997). It is reasonable because there is a logical construction behind the advertisement, an argumentative rhetoric that stimulates the consumption of Magnum ice cream in winter. The created simulacra and metaphors make the speech staged, with a well-defined objective (PARRET, 1997).

Through the films and posters, the campaign transforms a non-place, which is devoid of symbolisms (AUGÉ, 1995), into a unique and idealised space-time. This space of heterotopia (FOUCAULT, 1986) is loaded with meanings, but remains open, postponed, active and passive, polysemous and deconstructed (DERRIDA, 1981; 1982). That is, its meanings must be deciphered and completed by the consumers. The final appeal is for everyone to find their summer and the meanings that the brand provides. For this to be possible, the consumer must incorporate what is constituted in culture and society through advertising (MCCRACKEN, 1986), using rituals that resemble magical ones (MAUSS, 2003).

Finally, the advertisement moves away from the violence of writing, leaving the meanings up in the air, cheating with the senses and language: "But for us, who are neither knights of faith nor supermen, the only remaining alternative is, if I may say so, to cheat with speech, to cheat speech" (BARTHES, 1979, p. 34). Although there is communication language in the ads, graphism is left aside to privilege the five senses, considering that "We must either feel or be named. Choose. Language or skin, aesthesia or anaesthesia. Language solidifies meanings" (SERRES, 2016, p. 72). In conclusion, Magnum's brand identity is strengthened by the ad campaign, as it appeals to a cultural and sensory synesthesia that involves the consumer.

Final considerations

In this article, we aimed to analyse whether the sensory-cultural creation of heterotopias and heterochronias would contribute to the development of a cultural branding strategy. According to our reflections and analyses, campaigns that develop a mythical narrative, based on a transcendental and idealised space-time, can connect more deeply with the consumer. Heterotopias and heterochronias, experienced through a cultural and sensory synesthesia, positively benefit the brand identity.

As we have seen throughout this article, Magnum's campaign creates this synesthesia by transporting the consumer to a mythical place, in which heterotopia and heterochrony prevail (FOUCAULT, 1986). The mythological system, which was carefully created by the brand, steals the meanings and senses associated with the sun, with the pleasure of spare time, and with small pleasures, deforming them (BARTHES, 1991). These staged, mixed places of reality and fantasy make people sublimate their thoughts, reversing the logic of everyday life and suspending the dictatorship of the clock, even if only for a moment.

As implications for brand strategists, this study shows how a campaign based on synesthetic-cultural connections can deepen its connection with consumers, going beyond functional or utilitarian aspects. Throughout the narrative created by Magnum, the brand is established as a cultural icon with which consumers can identify (HOLT, 2004). This brand expression is composed of myth, cultural codes, and ideology, which are integral parts of a cultural branding strategy (HOLT; CAMERON, 2010). In this sense, Magnum associations were incorporated into a cultural model, forming cognitive networks shared with the same social group (FOURNIER; ALVAREZ, 2019). Thus, through the *Find your Summer* campaign, the brand transferred cultural meanings that are constituted in the world to its products (MCCRACKEN, 1986).

In conclusion, it is possible, therefore, to escape simplified and unstructured communication, prioritising those focused on reflection and

transporting people to a mythical and idealised space-time. By leveraging heterotopia, heterochrony, cultural connections, and synesthesia, marketing and advertising professionals enable brands to gain greater symbolic depth and desirability.

Finally, one of the limitations of this research is the fact that it was based on an interpretative and semiotic approach of an advertising campaign exclusively from the perspective of the broadcaster. Future studies should evaluate whether campaigns using mythical constructions are understood in the same way by consumers. In-depth interviews, focus groups, and netnography will be necessary to complement and corroborate the conclusions of this article.

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Analysis of platforms used by management students for information access and consumption

Análise das plataformas utilizadas por estudantes de gestão para acesso e consumo de informações

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ABSTRACT: *The current environment for searching for and using information is agile, and the emergence of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) challenges traditional research methods. In this study, we aim to identify the platforms and media chosen by management students to search for and consume information. In addition, we seek to understand the reasons for these choices, providing insights into data access and consumption by future managers. A survey was used, answered by 112 students of the Market Research discipline in 2022 and 2023, with content analysis based on Bardin's method. We observed that the choice for certain platforms or media is justified by their ability to provide quick and practical information. Ease of access, variety of available content, and time savings are the main benefits perceived by students, aspects that satisfy the need for immediate information consumption that facilitates decision-making.*

Keywords: *information consumption; information behavior; digital platformization; generative artificial intelligence; social media.*

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RESUMO: O ambiente atual de procura e utilização de informação é ágil, sendo que o surgimento da GenAI desafia os métodos tradicionais de pesquisa. Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar as plataformas e mídias escolhidas pelos estudantes de gestão para busca e consumo de informações. Além disso, busca compreender as razões dessas escolhas, fornecendo insights sobre acesso e consumo de dados por futuros gestores. Utilizou-se um survey, respondido por 112 estudantes da disciplina Pesquisa Mercadológica em 2022 e 2023, com análise de conteúdo baseada no método de Bardin. Observa-se que a escolha por determinadas plataformas ou mídias é justificada pela sua capacidade de fornecer informações rápidas e práticas. A facilidade de acesso, a variedade de conteúdos disponíveis e a economia de tempo são os principais benefícios percebidos pelos estudantes, aspectos que satisfazem a necessidade de consumo de informação imediata, que facilita a tomada de decisão.

Palavras-chave: consumo de informação; comportamento informacional; plataformização digital; inteligência artificial generativa; redes sociais.

Introduction

The contemporary scenario of searching for and consuming information is under constant transformation, reflecting the "Network Society" (CASTELLS, 2005) and the "Platform Society" (GILLESPIE, 2010; VAN DIJCK; POELL; WAAL, 2018). In this dynamic context, the rise of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and tools, such as ChatGPT, challenge traditional research methods. By 2026, GenAI is estimated to reduce the use of conventional search engines — such as Google and Bing — by 25%, boosting the growth of chatbots and virtual assistants (GARTNER, 2024).

Although Google currently monopolizes about 90% of the global search engine market (SOLLITTO; ALEJANDRO, 2022), there is a significant change in search behavior, especially among the youngest. Social media platforms, such as TikTok, gained popularity, being used by 40% of Generation Z as the main search tool (SOLLITTO; ALEJANDRO, 2022; MORENO, 2023), including career guidance and job opportunities (SERRANO, 2024). These platforms are no longer limited to entertainment; they have become essential sources of information and consultation (SACCHITIELLO, 2024). The growing preference for TikTok can be attributed to the features of the platform because, while Google offers text- and link-based responses, TikTok provides short, direct videos (SOLLITTO; ALEJANDRO, 2022; SERRANO, 2024).

According to Monteiro (2024), search engines are the first wave of online marketing actions and lead investments in this dynamic environment. Social media platforms, considered the second wave, also have an influence on searches for information. Conversely, marketplaces emerge as the third digital wave, gaining popularity by offering quick searches for products that meet the economic interests of consumers and facilitating comparisons of prices, offers, and evaluations, as well as considering the searcher's location.

This preference for marketplaces is strengthened by companies' investment in technology and the use of primary data to customize and segment their markets (MONTEIRO, 2024). However, with the

advancement of GenAI, a fundamental change arises: users are released from the active curation of information in search engines, marketplaces, and social media platforms, as the responses are generated by applications such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Siri, and Alexa (GARTNER, 2024; MONTEIRO, 2024).

About one year after ChatGPT gained international prominence, 34% of Brazilians have already used the service. Clarifying doubts is the most common use of ChatGPT among Brazilians (MOBILE TIME; OPINION BOX, 2024). Nevertheless, artificial intelligence (AI) does not pose a threat to traditional search engines. Google, for example, since 2016, has integrated AI into its algorithm (TILIA, 2024); in turn, Bing integrates AI into Copilot results (MONTEIRO, 2024), which highlights the adaptation of traditional search platforms to emerging technologies.

These changes not only reflect an evolution in information consumption habits, but also pose new challenges to organizational strategies (GARTNER, 2024). This context raises the following questions: what forms of digital platformization are most used in the field of management for information consumption? What are the main factors in choosing information consumption platforms and media? Thus, in the present study, we aim to identify the platforms and media chosen by management students to search for and consume information. In addition, we seek to understand the reasons for these choices, providing insights into data access and consumption by future managers.

We consider that such insights are, firstly, crucial to understand the information preferences and behaviors of future professionals in the management field, mapping the trends of information consumption and the specific needs of this public. For Martínez-Silveira and Oddone (2007), information behavior refers to the process of locating, using, and managing information and resources in order to comply with informational requirements. Secondly, such insights can provide subsidies for developing more effective informational strategies, indicating reliable and relevant sources of information, as well as assisting in the search for quality content that contributes to learning and decision-making.

Moreover, there is a gap of studies on this topic in the academic literature. In a survey conducted on Scopus database, we found six articles in the last 10 years (2014-2024) with the descriptor "information behavior" AND "university," limited to the area of "Business, Management and Accounting." Of these articles, Mathupayas (2022) investigates the search for and verification of information by students and staff in Thailand and demographic impacts. Pongrac, Zorica and Domović (2022) analyze the information behavior of Croatian academics and the use of technology to obtain information in the areas of teaching, research, and administrative activities.

Bawack and Kamdjoug (2020) describe a model to explain the changes in students' information behavior and the effect it has on their learning outcomes. Salubi, Ondari-Okemwa and Nekhwevha (2018) and Silva and Cavalcante (2019) analyze the process of searching for and obtaining information by users of the library of their respective universities. Lastly, Keiser (2016) conducted a self-assessment of informational literacy skills with 21 students of a Competitive Intelligence course, before and after taking the course. From this perspective, we can state that the aim of this study is innovative.

This article is organized into five sections. After this introduction, in the second section, we detail the theoretical framework. In the third section, the adopted methodology is described. In the fourth section, we present the obtained results, discussed in the light of the literature review. Finally, in the fifth section, we summarize the findings and present suggestions for future research.

Theoretical framework

Canclini (2010) and Rocha and Pereira (2009) argue that consumption goes beyond the mere purchase of goods, covering sociocultural aspects that emerge both from the interactions between consumers and from their relationship with the environment in which they live. In spite of disparities in access, it is a fact that consumption is increasingly mediated

by digital platforms (VAN DIJCK, 2013), "creating a global web of information, knowledge, and sharing" (OLIVEIRA; ALMEIDA, 2016, p. 418, free translation).

The choice of digital platforms for information consumption is a complex phenomenon, influenced by several factors (MARTÍNEZ-SILVEIRA; ODDONE, 2007). According to Wilson (2000), information search can range from formal systems to direct communication with other people. Within this context, information mediators, both human and organizational systems, play a crucial role in facilitating the access and effective use of information by users (SALUBI; ONDARI-OKEM-WA; NEKHWEVHA, 2018; PONGRAC; ZORICA; DOMOVIĆ, 2022; SILVA; CAVALCANTE, 2019).

Specifically, regarding the organizational context, which is the focus of management students' work, information plays an essential role in decision-making, contributing to operational efficiency and the development of innovative business processes (SADOWSKI, 2019; TREDIN-NICK, 2023). According to Viana and Ferreira (2020), in the corporate sphere, precise and clear information is essential. It must be transmitted in such a way that the content is understood unambiguously, ensuring that the initial message is preserved in its integrity as it is passed on. To do so, the sources from which managers seek information must be reliable and up-to-date, providing verifiable data that can sustain decisions.

Viana and Mariano (2022) note that, despite being fundamental instruments for access to information, the actual efficiency of digital platforms is only achieved with the effective integration of different communication channels. This ensures that individual needs and expectations are met by promoting a convergence of content through the variety of platforms (JACKS *et al.*, 2011; JENKINS, 2009). Adikari *et al.* (2021) add that information has evolved into a dynamic state, which makes it essential for organizations to use these data to stand out in the market and drive innovation. However, Santos (2020, p. 429, free translation) warns that "the Internet has increased the availability of information, but has allowed the emergence of new ways of manipulating it."

The effective use of data in an organization is not only limited to the accuracy and reliability of data, but also to the way they are integrated into decision-making processes (WALKER, 2015). Considering social and behavioral aspects that influence the use of information in the business environment significantly contributes to decision-making based on solid data and healthy informational practices (TREDINNICK, 2023). After all, according to Castells (2005), the current dialogue is contextualized in the era of the society of information and network connectivity, which are responsible for the generation, processing, and distribution of knowledge stored in the interconnected points of the networks.

The conception of organization as a network is not recent (CASTELLS, 2005). However, as described by Rossini *et al.* (2021), there is a "paradox" in the engagement in social media platforms and messaging applications, because although they can promote democratic discussions, they are also associated with the dissemination of unreliable information. The authors emphasize that it is common for individuals who disseminate false data to be corrected by members of their social media, although the effectiveness of these social corrections in changing erroneous beliefs cannot be quantified.

WhatsApp is an example of a dysfunctional information-sharing platform, in which users can pass on messages from one conversation to another, including to groups. The absence of a public feed, as found in other platforms, implies that tracking the content to its original source is not so straightforward, considering that the forwarded data do not contain metadata to identify where they came from (ROSSINI *et al.*, 2021). Nonetheless, the authors believe that closer relationships can be crucial to combating misinformation.

Furthermore, within this context of dysfunctional sharing of information, GenAI has the ability to create content in response to prompts, depending on deep-learning models, which is challenging in terms of governance due to its dynamic and evolutionary nature (FERRARI; VAN DIJCK; VAN DEN BOSCH, 2023). In this sense, the implementation

of control structures, policies, and clear guidelines is essential to ensure that AI is developed and used responsibly and ethically (FERRARI; VAN DIJCK; VAN DEN BOSCH, 2023; SANTAELLA, 2023). AI offers a wide range of features, including new strategies for optimizing the user experience (LESSA; BRESSAN JÚNIOR, 2024).

The user experience is an essential resource for analyzing information interactions on the Internet, as it provides an insight into how people interact with information and how these interactions are evaluated (O'BRIEN; LEBOW, 2013). In addition, Tubachi (2018) highlights the influence of the principle of least effort, that is, when searching for information, people tend to opt for the path that requires the least effort. Thus, even if they have skills to perform complex technical searches, users often prefer to use search methods and tools with which they are more familiar and that are easier to handle, aiming to obtain the desired results faster and with the least effort.

In the "era of instant and effortless connection" (BAUMAN, 2008, p. 135, free translation), algorithms are employed to customize and prioritize content according to users' interests, select, and sort relevant information, as opposed to the manual method of data management (VETTEHEN; SCHAAP, 2023). Taking this into consideration, we refer to the studies of Canclini (2021) on the relevance of agile information and the ability of instant connection, and of Bauman and Raud (2018) on the strategy of "multitasking," which allows individuals, through a smartphone, to quickly access information wherever they are, optimizing their time (SORJ, 2003; ROCHA; PEREIRA; BARROS, 2014).

In short, it is noteworthy that technology facilitates diverse experiences, such as mobility, learning, communication, and interaction, transcending geographical and cultural boundaries. Informational choices and information consumption are multidimensional phenomena influenced by a complex interaction between technological, social, behavioral, and organizational factors, shaping both access and effective use of information in contemporary societies.

Methodology

In this study, exploratory and descriptive research was used, with a qualitative approach, and, as a research technique, the survey was defined, following the indications of Prodanov and Freitas (2013) and Malhotra (2019). The questionnaire applied to the students of the Business Administration program of a College in the state of Rio Grande do Sul (Brazil) was adopted as a data collection method, with four questions being asked.

The first two close-ended questions aimed to characterize the respondent and, in these questions, it was possible to choose only one answer option. In the first question about age, the definitions adopted by UNESCO (ABRAMOVAY; CASTRO, 2006) and the Brazilian Youth Statute (BRASIL, 2013) were considered as the basis for the scale, according to which young people are those aged 15 to 29 years, and the Elderly Statute (BRASIL, 2003), which ensures special rights to people aged 60 years or over. Therefore, individuals from 30 to 59 years old were deemed adults, and those under 15 years old, children.

The second question addressed the gender of the respondent, with the options: Female, Male, Other. The following two questions were open-ended, and long answers were enabled in one or more paragraphs. The open-ended questions concerned: "1. Where and how do you search for and consume information/news?; 2. Justify the choice for this platform/medium."

The non-probability sampling was defined by convenience (MALHOTRA, 2019), and students of the Market Research discipline were the sample factor. Data collection took place in the first and second half of 2022 and 2023, using the Google Forms tool. Data collection took place anonymously to ensure the privacy of the participants. In this period, 112 students answered the survey, 64% of whom aged from 15 to 29 years, and 36%, from 30 to 59 years. No responses were obtained from individuals under 15 years of age and those over 60 years of age. Regarding gender, 53% identified as female and 47%, male. These students belong to the "urban middle layers" (VELHO, 1988).
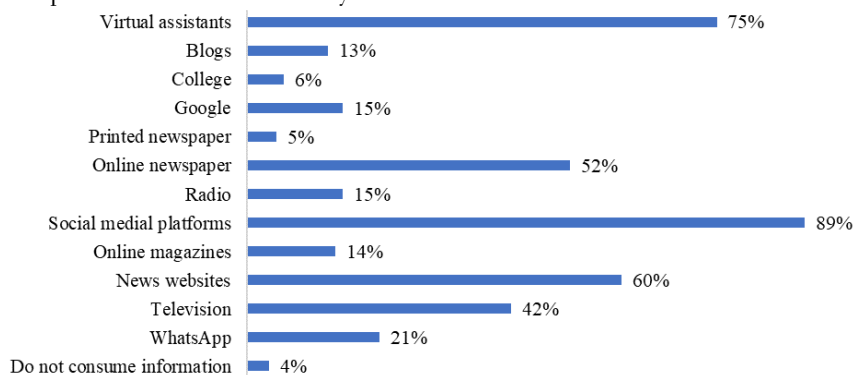
For the qualitative analysis of the collected data, the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2004) was adopted. This approach included the stages of pre-analysis, exploration of the material, and treatment and interpretation of the results, ensuring a deep and contextualized understanding of the participants' responses. The choice for this methodology allowed analyzing textual data, identifying emerging patterns and categories in the students' perceptions of the search for information.

Analysis and discussion of the results

According to the results, there was no difference in the provided answers between the demographic groups studied. Both young students (15-29 years old) and adults (30-59 years old) presented similar response patterns in the questions addressed in the questionnaire. Likewise, there were no variations in the responses according to the participants' gender identity. The absence of statistically significant differences in the participants' responses suggests that, in this specific study, age group and gender identity did not influence the opinions. This result can be attributed to the specific nature of the questions in the questionnaire, the university context shared between the participants, or other factors not investigated in this study.

Regarding the open-ended questions, as shown in Graph 1, we evidenced a wide variety of information platforms and media being used, which include both traditional media (television, 42%; radio, 15%; and printed newspaper, 5%) and online media. Among the latter, social media platforms emerge as the main medium, with 89% of respondents resorting to them to inform themselves, and 8% exclusively using them. The high frequency of mentions to social media platforms suggests that they play an increasingly important role in forming opinions and disseminating information (MONTEIRO, 2024).

Graph 1 – Where and how do you search for and consume information/news?

Platform	Percentage
Virtual assistants	75%
Blogs	13%
College	6%
Google	15%
Printed newspaper	5%
Online newspaper	52%
Radio	15%
Social medial platforms	89%
Online magazines	14%
News websites	60%
Television	42%
WhatsApp	21%
Do not consume information	4%

Regarding search engines, only Google was mentioned by 15% of respondents, which still monopolizes the global market of search engines (SOLLITTO; ALEJANDRO, 2022). Websites specialized in news (60%), online newspapers (52%), online magazines (14%), and specific blogs (13%), that is, platforms that can offer relevant and up-to-date information on specific topics, were also mentioned. In addition, 75% of the research participants identify virtual assistants as information sources; of these, 85% mentioned OK Google; 45%, Siri; 35%, Alexa; 31%, Lu Magalu (the virtual assistant of the Brazilian department store Magazine Luiza); 16%, ChatGPT; and 10%, Cortana.

It is worth noting that ChatGPT was mentioned only from 2023 onward, but has already achieved significant adherence. Ferrari, Van Dijck and Van Den Bosch (2023) and Santaella (2023) note that the effects resulting from the use of ChatGPT for obtaining information will certainly be felt. "The veneer of objectivity and language fluency can be appealing and strengthen the individualized interaction with information, creating the false idea that knowledge is made available completely" (SANTAELLA, 2023, p. 8, free translation).

The WhatsApp messaging application was mentioned by 21% of the student respondents, although it is not a news platform. Its presence in the research suggests that this platform plays a prominent role in the dissemination of news and in the formation of opinions. However,

according to Rossini *et al.* (2021), the dissemination of inappropriate information is a common phenomenon in WhatsApp. When specifically analyzing participants who mentioned WhatsApp, we verified that they also selected other platforms, demonstrating a preference for multiple information channels.

The college itself was mentioned by 6% of the respondents. Nevertheless, no one responded to the choice for the consumption of academic repositories (SciELO, Google Scholar, CAPES Journals Portal, etc.) and did not specifically mention the college library or e-books as well. As these students are not seniors, it can be inferred, as Pongrac, Zorica and Domović (2022) suggest, that libraries and databases are incorporated in order to meet only the demands of scientific research, being less used for other activities. However, the possible need to install specific readers to access some databases and e-books can influence the students' preference for other information resources that are more convenient and free of charge (SALUBI; ONDARI-OKEMWA; NEKHWEVHA, 2018).

In short, students are not limited to a single source, but access and consume a variety of channels, including social media platforms, conventional media outlets, and other forms of communication, corroborating studies conducted by Jenkins (2009), Jacks *et al.* (2011) and Viana and Mariano (2022). This consumption of information, as Canclini (2010) and Rocha and Pereira (2009) argue, goes beyond the simple search for data, encompassing sociocultural aspects that arise both in the interactions between consumers themselves and in their relationship with the digital environment in which they are inserted. In other words, as highlighted by Van Dijck (2013) and Oliveira and Almeida (2016), the choice of digital platforms creates a global network of knowledge consumption and sharing.

Thus, the emphasis on the consumption of information is maintained and strengthened from the sociocultural and digital perspective proposed by the aforementioned authors.

Nonetheless, 4% of respondents pointed out that they do not seek information, justifying this choice based on the saturation of news in other

means of access, ideological distrust in information channels, and mere disinterest, according to the following reports:

> *Because, from my point of view, there's no need for some news to be reported several times, this ends up making me anxious, 'cause I've already heard it somewhere else. As for the TV, I can't stand still for a long time doing the same thing for several days at the same time.*

> *I rarely watch the news, I think that every information channel is ideologically contaminated, so I try to filter it as much as I can, searching for primary sources, to better know the facts themselves.*

> *I don't like the news.*

For the remaining 96% of the respondents of the question "Justify the choice for this platform/medium," the attributes of speed, ease of use, and efficiency were mentioned as justifications for the choice of platforms/media, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1 – Justify the choice for this platform/medium.
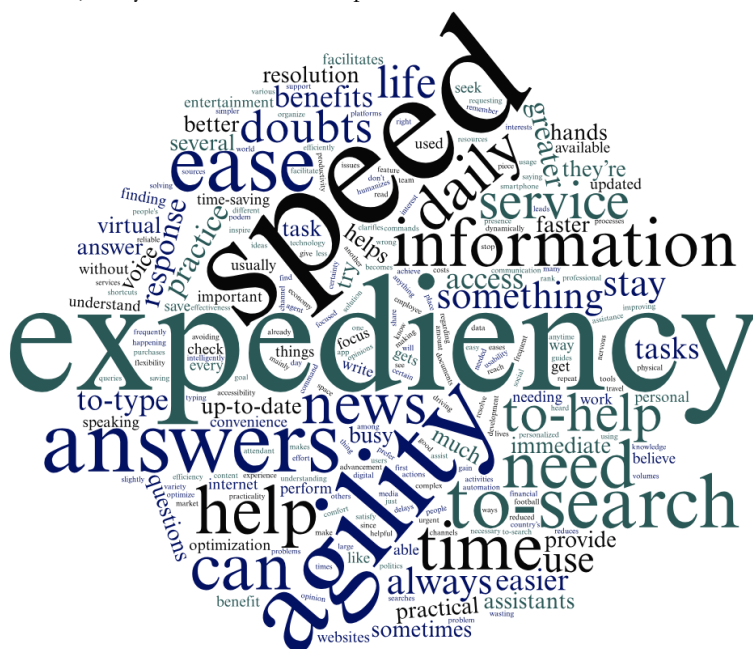
The reasons most mentioned by students include agility and expediency in obtaining information, accessibility and convenience provided by mobile devices, greater amount of information available, and saving time and effort in searching for information:

- Agility and expediency: students value the speed in obtaining information and the ease of use of the platforms. They often mention the ability to do quick searches, get immediate answers, and use voice commands. The search for quick and convenient information is related to the network society (CASTELLS, 2005), fluidity (BAUMAN, 2008), and the relevance of agile information (CANCLINI, 2021). We can also mention Van Dijck, Poell and Waal (2018), who address the culture of connectivity and the platform society, in which expediency and agility of access and consumption are essential to integrate digital media into everyday life;

- Accessibility and convenience: the availability of information on mobile devices and the ability to access platforms anytime and anywhere are deemed important for the students. These factors connect with the idea of liquid life (BAUMAN, 2008), characterized by fluidity and constant connectivity (VAN DIJCK, 2013). This resonates with the answers that highlight the use of voice commands and accessibility via smartphones, facilitating constant interaction with information;

- Greater amount of information: the possibility of consuming a wide range of content and different sources is valued. In this sense, digital platforms are seen as a comprehensive source of information, allowing students to find a variety of perspectives and relevant content. They provide instant and easy access to a large amount of data. The search for various perspectives and relevant content is related to information inequality (CANCLINI, 2010) and the need to navigate in a complex informational environment;

- Saving time and effort: digital platforms are described as tools that optimize daily tasks, save time and effort in searching for information, for example, avoiding the need to type or search across

multiple sources. The search for efficiency in the consumption of information is related to the optimization of time in a fast-paced world (SORJ, 2003; ROCHA; PEREIRA; BARROS, 2014; BAUMAN, 2008; BAUMAN; RAUD, 2018; TUBACHI, 2018). Platforms that offer quick answers and save time are valued not only for their convenience, but also for aligning with the efficiency expectations of contemporary consumers (O'BRIEN; LEBOW, 2013; LESSA; BRESSAN JÚNIOR, 2024).

However, the reliability of the obtained information was not mentioned by the respondents, despite the importance of choosing reliable platforms and media to ensure the accuracy and veracity of the information (MARTÍNEZ-SILVEIRA; ODDONE, 2007; ROSSINI *et al.*, 2021; TREDINNICK, 2023). It is worth mentioning that the search for and consumption of information should be done responsibly, focusing on verifying the reliability of the sources and searching for different perspectives.

Finally, we verified the complexity of information choice and the influence of various behavioral, social, and technological factors in choosing platforms and media for the consumption of information (WILSON, 2000; MARTÍNEZ-SILVEIRA; ODDONE, 2007). Among these factors, the tendency not to restrict oneself to a single platform, evidencing a diversified behavior in the search for information (JENKINS, 2009; JACKS *et al.*, 2011; ROSSINI *et al.*, 2021; VIANA; MARIANO, 2022). The search for immediate and easily-accessible answers is related to the need to stay informed and updated in a complex and constantly-changing world (VAN DIJCK, 2013; OLIVEIRA; ALMEIDA, 2016; TUBACHI, 2018).

In addition, it is essential that (future) managers can discern the relevance and accuracy of the information they receive. This includes a solid understanding of the principles of data analysis and the ability to critically question sources and data. Effective communication also depends on the ability to present complex information in a simplified way, without

losing the essence of the content (WALKER, 2015; SADOWSKI, 2019; VIANA; FERREIRA, 2020; ROSSINI *et al.*, 2021; TREDINNICK, 2023; VETTEHEN; SCHAAP, 2023).

Final considerations

In the constantly evolving business world, professional updating is crucial to excel in career and achieve professional goals. Staying informed about the latest trends, technologies, and market practices not only extends technical knowledge, but also strengthens interpersonal skills, critical eye, and strategic thinking. These are key elements for professional success, shaping managers prepared for the dynamic challenges of today's business environment.

In this study, we identified which platforms and media are chosen by management students to search for and consume information. In addition, we sought to understand the reasons for these choices, providing insights into data access and consumption by future managers. According to the results, digital platforms play a crucial role in the process of knowledge acquisition and professional updating of future managers. As per the theoretical analysis, we corroborate that the choice of information platforms and media is related to social, cultural, and technological factors that permeate contemporary society. Understanding these factors is paramount to understand how students search for and consume information, and how digital platforms influence this process.

Based on the analyses carried out, we conclude that the choice for certain platforms or media is mainly justified by their ability to provide quick and practical information. Ease of access, variety of content available, and time savings are the main benefits perceived by students. These aspects not only meet the need for immediate information, but also facilitate learning and decision-making. In short, in this study, we showed that there were no significant differences in the responses provided among the 112 participating university students, regardless of age or gender identity.

Unfortunately, students did not take into account the credibility and timeliness of information from the consumed sources. The importance of having access to current, relevant, and truthful data is undeniable. Therefore, we recommend that the search for and consumption of information be carried out responsibly, focusing on verifying the reliability of sources and searching for different perspectives. Diversifying information sources is essential for a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the studied topics, while GenAI tools should be used with caution, without replacing critical sense and individual data analysis.

For future studies, it is suggested to investigate the specific functionalities of the platforms and how they influence the process of searching for and consuming information in different contexts. Investigating how these platforms can be used to improve teaching and learning in management also represents a promising research topic. By understanding the methods of searching for and consuming information of managers in training, we can improve the tools and resources that are provided to them, ensuring that they remain well-informed and able to face the complexities of the business environment.

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