

TWO NEWSROOMS AND THE DAILY REINVENTION OF JOURNALISM

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ABSTRACT – This paper is the result of an ethnographic study conducted on one of the most important Spanish newspapers, the *La Vanguardia* in its digital version, the lavanguardia.com, and on diariodepernambuco.com, the digital version of the oldest circulation newspaper in Latin America, the *Diario de Pernambuco*, in Recife (PE). This article aims to analyze how the relationship between journalists and what we call the potent audience has caused complex changes to the way journalism is conducted, affecting both the professionals and the news production. It also reflects on new roles taken on by journalists who now perform both journalistic and marketing assignments, which has changed the routine in newsrooms and raised important questions about what the values are that guide journalists in selection processes, news gathering and editing in a post-social media world.

Keywords: Journalism. Journalist. Changes. Potent Audience. Routine.

DUAS REDAÇÕES E A REINVENÇÃO COTIDIANA DO JORNALISMO

RESUMO – O trabalho é fruto de uma pesquisa de cunho etnográfico em um dos mais importantes diários espanhóis, o *La Vanguardia* em sua versão digital, lavanguardia.com, e no diariodepernambuco.com, versão digital do jornal mais antigo em circulação da América Latina, o *Diario de Pernambuco*, sediado no Recife (PE). O artigo busca analisar como a relação entre jornalistas e o que denominamos audiência potente tem provocado complexas alterações no mundo do trabalho do jornalismo, afetando o profissional e a produção noticiosa. Também se propõe a refletir sobre novas funções assumidas pelos jornalistas que reúnem atribuições do campo jornalístico e do marketing, mudando a rotina nas redações e levando a questionamentos importantes sobre quais são os valores que norteiam os jornalistas nos processos de seleção, apuração e edição pós redes sociais.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo. Jornalista. Mudanças. Audiência Potente. Rotina.

DOS REDACCIONES Y LA REINVENCIÓN COTIDIANA DEL PERIODISMO

RESUMEN – El trabajo es fruto de una investigación de cuño etnográfico realizada en uno de los más importantes diarios españoles, el *La Vanguardia* en su versión digital, el *lavanguardia.com*, y en el *diariodepernambuco.com*, versión digital del periódico más antiguo en circulación de América Latina, el *Diario de Pernambuco*, con sede en Recife (PE). El artículo busca analizar cómo la relación entre periodistas y lo que denominamos Audiencia Potente ha provocado complejas alteraciones en el mundo del trabajo del periodismo, afectando al profesional y la producción noticiosa. También se propone reflexionar sobre nuevas funciones asumidas por los periodistas que reúnen atribuciones del campo periodístico y del marketing, cambiando la rutina en las redacciones y llevando a cuestionamientos importantes sobre cuáles son los valores que orientan a los periodistas en los procesos de selección, recopilación y edición post-redes sociales.

Palabras Clave: Periodismo. Periodista. Cambios. Audiencia Potente. Rutina.

1. Introduction

Since the end of the twentieth century, journalism has had to deal with changes to the production and distribution processes, including access to news. Not only has journalism had to deal with these changes, but since the advent of Web 2.0, journalists have also had to reinvent themselves as professionals in order to provide answers to an audience who dialogue with vehicles in real time.

With well-defined roles, the audience, of today is an interactive one; it is involved in and by journalism in many forms and is one of the most significant changes to occur in the field of journalism.

This article aims to analyze how the relationship between journalists and what we call the potent audience has caused complex changes to the way journalism is conducted, affecting both the professionals and the news production.

It also reflects on new roles taken on by journalists who now perform both journalistic and marketing assignments, which has changed the routine in newsrooms and raised important questions about what the values are that guide journalists in their selection processes, news gathering and editing in a post-social media world.

This paper is the result of an ethnographic study conducted

on one of the most important Spanish newspapers, *lavanguardia.com*, the digital version of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, and on *diariodepernambuco.com*, the digital version of the oldest circulation newspaper in Latin America, the *Diario de Pernambuco*, in Recife (PE). Both outlets are pioneers in this new relationship between influential vehicles and the potent audience.

2. Methodology

We chose *diariodepernambuco.com* and *lavanguardia.com* (LV) as our objects of study. *diariodepernambuco.com* is the digital version of the *Diario de Pernambuco* (DP), a newspaper originally founded by Antonino Falcão in 1825 as a daily newsletter in the city of Recife. In the 1930s, this newspaper was included in the *Diários Associados*, which was owned by Assis Chateaubriand. In 2000, the newspaper was moved from the central region of Recife (where it was founded) to the northern part of the city, bringing all of the conglomerate's vehicles (radio, TV, printed newspaper and Internet) together in one physical space.

Lavanguardia.com is the digital version of the newspaper *La Vanguardia*, one of the most important newspapers in Barcelona. This online medium provides live information, 24 hours a day, and is part of the Spanish group Godó, which has owned the printed newspaper *La Vanguardia* and other communication companies since 1881. The digital version of *La Vanguardia* was launched in 1995.

The two newspapers were pioneers in their cities in opening up participatory spaces and creating new publications, such as Social Media (DP) and Social Networks (LV), with the aim of having the audience participate in the construction of news.

We chose these two important newspapers because we believe they can answer our research questions: Do the influential media vehicles engage the audience (after the advent of Web 2.0), and is this audience able to intervene in the process of news production? Does this audience participation bring about changes to journalism?

Since our study focuses on audience participation in influential journalism vehicles, we observed and described the routines of editors and reporters working in spaces identified as audience "participation", and in the newly-created editorial sections of the Social Network and Social Media companies, which are the object of our study.

After presenting our object, we describe how the field research was conducted (participant observation). We were in the newsroom at *Diário de Pernambuco* from October 24 to November 1, 2013. This time period was chosen because it fell outside of festive dates such as Christmas, New Year's, Carnival, and São João as they might have an effect on what we consider to be a normal newsroom environment; its production routines, basically, its day to day work.

With respect to participant observation, we used the method proposed by Casetti & Chio (1999), who understand that the main objective of this type of observation is to capture the reality live, eliminating the mediations that can contaminate the data. We adopted some of the strategies proposed by these researchers such as: to negotiate how the observation would be carried out, to respect the rules, and to not hide the purpose of the investigation.

Like other researchers, we understood that newsroom environments, with their journalistic practices, could provide several answers that would shed light on the research problem. Some advantages of participant observation, as Masip & Palomo (2010) point out, is that it is a methodology that allows for studying the phenomena in their natural context, providing access to data in a direct way, and avoiding distortions by intermediaries.

Wolf (2001), however, highlights some difficulties with this kind of research. One difficulty is the possibility that the researcher, during the course of the investigation, might act and think like the journalists they are observing. Another is access to the work environment, which is often restricted by companies. We understand that a company might feel uncomfortable opening its doors to a "stranger". And however cordial the professionals might be, there is always a level of mistrust about what the researcher will actually be doing in the newsroom.

In *Diário de Pernambuco*, the professionals were always very kind and available, but we did detect some discomfort among them with our investigative presence. A mistake made by a professional provoked a few laughs, but for us this can give us some insight into how that observed-observer relationship is. When they were told that the observation would continue the following day, the journalist casually responded: "you can disturb at will."

This discomfort is understandable. We were observing newly-emerging editorial sections. So, no matter how much the newspaper "endorsed" our being in the newsroom (without permission, no one

can go beyond the lobby or meeting room, as is the case with some national vehicles), we realized that the journalists were unsure as to the extent to which we would be allowed to see what they were, or were not, doing. One such situation occurred while a report on the newspaper's presence on social networks was being prepared. A journalist from the Social Networking editorial section advised us that she was writing the report, but that if we wanted details we would have to ask her immediate supervisor.

Our presence in the newsroom observing the routines of these professionals was geared toward investigating the interaction between the communication vehicle and the audience. We did this in order to determine the construction of news is affected by this new agent (the audience) that, in many ways, is involved in the production of informative content. Our investigation consisted mainly of monitoring the activities of the editorial section of Social Media, observing its relationship with the audience we call "potent" and with some other editorial sections of the newspaper, trying to understand the formal and informal interactions and recording everything in the field notebook, which for Hammersley & Atkinson (1994, p. 20) consists of "more or less concrete descriptions of social processes and their contexts. The purpose is to capture social processes in their integrity, highlighting the characteristics and properties, always according to a certain common sense about what is relevant to their problems raised in the research".

As part of the observation, we also conducted in-depth interviews with journalists from the Pernambuco Newspaper: an executive editor, an editor of the digital version, a web portal editor, a Social Media editor, a Front Page editor and a reporter from the Social Networking team. All interviews were conducted at the newspaper itself, some in the boardroom and others in the newsroom.

According to Bauer & Gaskell (2002), qualitative interviews provide the basic data for the development and understanding of social relations between social actors and their situations. The goal is to obtain a detailed understanding of the beliefs, attitudes, values and motivations behind people's behaviors in specific social contexts.

This technique almost always produces a better sample of the population of interest and has the advantage of covering certain subjects in-depth, beyond the interaction between the interviewer and the respondent, which favors spontaneous responses and thus more complex and delicate subjects are able to be touched on, which

might raise unexpected questions for the interviewer that could greatly benefit the research.

For the interviews conducted in the *Diario de Pernambuco*, which we also repeated in *lavanguardia.com*, we raised questions like what would the changes be once the audience has access to channels and are able to interact with newspapers such as social networks? Do ordinary people, or non-institutionalized sources, have the power to interfere in the news? Is the audience a protagonist of the *Diario de Pernambuco* in the news production after Web 2.0? Does the audience, with access to the Internet, mobile devices and various publishing channels put a strain on the news production process, ultimately forcing journalists to rethink their role?

After presenting *diariodepernambuco.com*, we then look at how the investigation was conducted at *lavanguardia.com*. We contacted the newspaper in December because in the previous months (September, October, and November) there was a discussion about the independence movement of Catalonia, strongly reported by the newspaper which could have made it difficult for me to get into *La Vanguardia*. So, we scheduled the interview with the editor-in-chief of the print version, and deputy web director of *La Vanguardia*, Enric Sierra, for the beginning of December.

The interview, conducted at the company's headquarters in an important commercial avenue in Barcelona, was quite spontaneous, and was recorded with the interviewee's permission and, despite the language, flowed well, lasting almost two hours. The observation of the routines in the essay, however, only began on February 4 and continued until February 13, 2013. This period was requested by the deputy director of *La Vanguardia* because it was far enough away from the Christmas and New Year holidays. There was also a request not to conduct the interview in January as it is a month in which many journalists at the vehicle go on vacation.

Just as we did for the *Diario de Pernambuco*, we used the method proposed by Casetti & Chio (1999) for the participant observations, who understand that the main objective of this type of observation is to capture the reality live, eliminating mediations that can contaminate the data.

Unlike the *Diario de Pernambuco*, in Spain we did not know a single member of the newsroom. They were kind, but we could detect the discomfort of always having an observer around no matter how much we tried to not be invasive. Very politely, the researched

journalists asked us “if we were not going to have lunch”, “what time we were going to leave the newsroom”, “how long we would be there”. One journalist even insinuated that “we should become friends with the newspaper’s deputy director so he would let us get to know the writing routine more thoroughly.” So, we were very mindful not to disturb their work, but we also continued to gather the data we needed. We stayed in the newspaper for nine days. For Peruzzo (2005, p. 143) “there is no ideal time that can be prefixed in participant observation. It depends on the type of object, how quickly or how long it is revealed to the researcher, on the conditions in which the internal mechanisms of the “object” are made known to the researcher and on the researcher’s ability to grasp its implicit and explicit manifestations.”

The journalists initially chosen for observation, an editor and two reporters, work on the Participation section of *lavanguardia.com*. We asked to observe them and the deputy director, Enric Sierra, gave us permission. But after the immersion in the day-to-day of the newsroom and observing its operation, we felt the need to also observe the work in the Social Networks section; a team composed of a community manager and a trainee. The negotiation to observe the Social Networks section was mediated by the editor of Participation, Toni Rubies. Our investigation consisted essentially of monitoring these journalists’ activities, observing their relations with the audience that we call potent. All of our notes were recorded in the field notebook.

As part of the observation, we also conducted in-depth interviews with *La Vanguardia* journalists: the deputy director of *lavanguardia.com*, Enric Sierra; the head of the Participation section, Toni Rubies; the head of the section of Social Networks and community manager of *La Vanguardia*, Patrícia Ventura and the editors of the Participation section, Mônica Cébrian and Patrícia Plaza.

The purpose of the interviews, similar to those at *Diário de Pernambuco*, was to understand the relationship of journalists with the potent audience and the changes to news production resulting from this relationship.

We saw that opening these so-called collaborative or participatory channels, as well as using material produced by the audience as a complement to the work of the newsroom, did not exhaust the audience-journalism relationship. Our research hypothesis was that the change in news production arises from the new relationships that vehicles establish with the audience and which are mediated by social networks (Twitter and Facebook).

3. Who is this potent audience that produces changes in journalism?

Even though there has always been a relationship between the audience and journalism, Madureira points out (2010, p. 42) that this relationship maintained “journalist and audience in their original functions - the first with absolute control over what will be, or not be, published; the second in a posture merely reactive to the journalist’s work”.

In digital environments marked by the dilution of the roles of consumers and producers, by the personalization of content, by the asynchronous consumption, and by many exchanges, it became more evident that the concept of audience elaborated by mass communication theories lost some of their meaning (Scolari, 2008).

Audience involvement in communication after the advent of Web 2.0 varied greatly depending on their needs and basic motivations. In the role of producer and receiver of information, the audience, according to some theorists, threatened journalistic activity in the sense that it had access to producing and shaping reality. But despite the many discussions at that time, the authors were only able to agree on the understanding that there was a change in the relationship between the media and the audience, since the latter, apart from being active (Barker, 2003), now has access to produce content. It is worth mentioning the theoretical contributions of Singer et al. (2011) on participation in the media and the role of social networks.

Authors such as Bowman & Willis (2003), Madureira (2010), and Espiritusanto & Rodriguez (2011) cataloged some levels of audience involvement within the information ecosystem, and some of these levels are important to the characterization of what we define as potent audience.

For Bowman & Willis (2003) there are different possibilities of audience involvement in the construction of the news. They state that the audience “participates” in fact checking, in the recording of events, and in verifying journalistic information and open source news production with peer review and complementation. Bowman & Willis (2003) also include live audio and video broadcast models, collaborative advertising, and knowledge management in this process of audience involvement.

Espiritusanto & Rodriguez (2011) highlight some levels of “participation” within the information ecosystem that are relevant to building our concept of potent audience. One of these levels

(Espiritusanto & Rodriguez, 2011, p. 15) concerns the performance of the audience in social networks:

When users “like” news they are participating; they can comment on it and this participation increases and expands. But they can also vote on the different media in which there is hierarchy of news (Digg, Menéame (...)). If we take into account that the hierarchy of information is (or was) one of the jobs of the media and journalists, here we find that users are currently performing a job that, up to now, used to be that of the traditional journalist.

The audience, for Espiritusanto & Rodriguez (2011, pp. 15-16), can also “bring material to a medium, create own media or share content with other people”; in addition, it can become “citizen journalists”. In what they consider a greater degree of implication, Espiritusanto & Rodriguez (2011) affirm that the audience can become watchmen of the governments and of communication mediums. Finally, in their typology of “participation,” Espiritusanto & Rodriguez (2011, p. 16) consider that there are “citizen journalists who know how to get information from a concrete situation to the international agenda” and those who “decide to report on the small and great daily events that have arisen in their community to their neighbors and to those who live within the community” (Espiritusanto & Rodriguez, 2011, p. 16).

We share Espiritusanto & Rodriguez’s (2011) idea that the audience can, thanks to the technology it has at its disposal, take photos, write text and record video or audio as well as offer an enormous contribution to democracy, insofar as acting like a watchdog of power or the media. Despite this we do not consider that it plays the role of journalist. Thus, one of the first statements regarding the potent audience is that, although it is increasingly integrated into the journalistic field and does contribute to journalism, it is not a journalist. This brief review on audience involvement, far from exhausting the research on the subject, was intended to clarify why earlier studies, while bringing important contributions, do not address our hypothesis of a potent audience.

4. A Potent audience and its capabilities

We use the term potent audience to refer to this new agent who engages in or is involved in processes, practices and journalistic routines and who has the capacity to transform, the power to disseminate information, the capacity for action, and the capability of amplification (Mesquita, 2014).

The capacity for transformation can be observed in the performance of the potent audience, when it brings new agents to the media universe, in a clash so that other glances can be conveyed by influential media. In other words, the potent audience has been changing not only news, radio and television stations by placing new issues in the media sphere and breaking the hegemony of institutionalized voices that are sources for journalism, but also the relations between vehicles and consumers of information as well. The capacity for transformation is also shown when the audience changes its form of action and its behavior over time. It is important to note that the audience can always use one or more of its capabilities. The audience might be reactive one time and expand at another, or even combine these features. However, the potent audience can modify its characteristics and capabilities over time depending on cultural, economic, social, technological and other conditions.

But all this change that the powerful audience has been producing in the relationship with the media is only magnified by three aspects that we consider in our premise: the capacity to propagate information (not necessarily news), the capacity for action made possible by access to the means of production, and the capacity for amplification.

With the Internet, new technology devices (cell phones, tablets), and social networks, the potent audience can spread more information in less time without giving any judgment on that information. What might have taken years to do in the past now depends on clicking a key and sending information from a computer or any mobile device connected to the Internet.

Most social networks, as highlighted by Telles (2010), contain the concept of a “group” - a set of people united with a common interest. The members of the group interact by sharing information, discussing or sending private messages to a particular member and can also promote mobilizations both face-to-face and by forming a pressure group that does not necessarily take to the streets, but which in the network itself exerts an influence on institutions or companies. This leads us to our second argument for the conceptualization of the potent audience: its capacity for amplification.

Essentially conversational spaces, social networks have the possibility to amplify the voices of the audience. Therefore, by using the amplification capability, the audience gives the content new meaning through comments, opinions and new views on the

particular issue that is circulating across the networks, offering an extract on what these citizens, who engage with media companies, want and think. The capacity for amplification can be an expression of collective intelligence and consciousness.

Finally, the capacity for action can be understood as the ability of the potent audience to witness and co-produce content that goes beyond watching (reporting illegal, abusive or unsatisfactory activities, either public or private) and reacting to news that violates social and / or cultural values. There is in this capacity a mixture of public interest and the interest of the audience.

5. New routines, new challenges

Although instantaneousness is not a feature exclusive to the Internet (radio and television, as Morethzohn (2002) points out, have always pursued it in the name of competition), in the “real-time age” news production is virtually instantaneous. Journalists, especially those working in integrated newsrooms, are literally in a race against time. The consequences of this frenetic routine, which still includes the relationship with the audience in real time, is that journalists, in addition to stress, the pressure and the race for the “scoop”, see themselves, as Sierra (2012, p. 81):

In an effort to respond and getting it wrong more times. Because we must recognize that we make more mistakes now than ever before because of this pressure of needing to be the first and the public to be demanding explanations, information ... All this has changed the journalistic work to the extent that someone is making the news and tweets something, and he leaves what he's doing and follows this clue. That is the last, the urgent and often the urgent slows down the important. And this is a reflection that we must do, because it is often urgent, but in the end it does not lead to anything and we waste time there, but this is explained because the public is waiting for more information from us about this which everyone already knows. That has changed radically. Then there is more stress, more mistakes and the journalist's obligation to always be connected. It's more dangerous!

Figuroa (2013, p. 81) of the *Diário de Pernambuco* speaks about this “dictatorship of the connection” to which the professional is subjected:

Social networks are the last thing I look at before I go to bed and

the first thing I look at when I wake up. (...) I've never worked so much unofficially ... At eight o'clock in the morning I already have a little message from someone ... I already have something to resolve ... Because it's constant right? Social networks do not have a moment.

In addition to being connected, the journalist has an “autonomy” that is regulated not only by the media organizations, but also by the potent audience, which has several channels to present its versions of the facts and / or opinions. Figueroa's speech (2013, p. 82) gives us some insight into this regulation:

The journalist is one of the professionals who breathes social networks, who cares about what is projected on the social network. So no doubt the journalist of today, when he writes any material, he thinks about his story the next day on the social network. I have no doubt of that. Unless it is an issue of little importance. But he knows that the first place he's going to have to defend himself is on social networks.

Nowadays, it is not just telephoning and checking e-mails or letters that are part of the routine of journalists. Monitoring what happens in social networks is integrated to the professional activity as well. In this work, each journalist builds a network formed by what they consider “credibility profiles”. Ventura (2013, p. 82) explains how he acts:

I follow journalists, agencies, international media, and national media. Also profiles of institutions, sportsmen and politicians. I said that I see things on Twitter, but it is also true that a lot of people tell us many things here on the *La Vanguardia* account (Twitter). People here say that this and that happened! I believe every journalist should follow his sources and the people who interest him for his section. That's what a large media company can really do on social networks, if every journalist understands the value of that. For example, for the journalist covering International, Twitter is a great source. The journalist covering International has to be on Twitter. When Gaddafi fell, the first news we got came from Twitter. This means that social networks are very valuable in their ability to bring us news from far away.

In the *Diário de Pernambuco*, Figuerôa (2013, p. 82) also has a whole methodology to work with social networks:

People function as news funnels, do they not? So there are always people who will read. There you have profiles of journalists, like the guy from the Media World who analyzes newspaper covers ... So you have people who are going to get information and already bring the filter for me. So I will not have to go to the Folha de São Paulo website every day. I practically do not go onto any site anymore. My runway to the news is Twitter and

Facebook. I am there, I know that what matters is there. So, I open Folha de São Paulo through a link that someone else has given me. Then I'm sure that what interests me is there. Also because I'll also take a look at the Trending Topic. If you have something out of the ordinary, I'll click to find out what it is.

Casero and Marzal (2011) recognize that journalism has changed and, consequently, so has the way it is done. Thus, for a certain event to be transformed into news, according to these authors, it is not enough to follow the formula and be satisfied to answer only some basic questions of the old journalistic manuals. For us, one important change we observed during research is that if journalists in news production used to presume an audience, today companies are also run on what is said in social networks, like Twitter and Facebook, for producing news. As Sierra reports (2012, p. 151):

In web newsrooms, we meet every three hours. On the web there are four journalists responsible for information, participation, multimedia and social networks. They get together and see how the information is flowing, if there is news, if the readers are "trending" one topic over another, if they have more interest in one topic than another. I'm in those meetings, too. And from there we make the decisions, constantly. And that temperature we constantly take from the Web is taken to paper. And then it says: alert, there is a theme that is hot online and maybe we should treat it on paper. And then, on paper, there are two meetings in the day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; in addition to the bilateral meetings because on paper there are three sub-directors who have several sections below them. The subdirectors dispatch with these sections and in these meetings also the indications are given from those temperatures that are taken from the environment. Then the contents are channeled (...). Therefore, we are always monitoring and observing what happens on social networks.

Figuroa (2013, p. 86), from the *Diario de Pernambuco*, understands that social networks are a "thermometer" on which one can measure the image of the newspaper next to the audience, which hinders more conservative positions of the communication vehicle. Figuroa believes that "social networks are not the voice of the country. But they scream. They greatly influence our more conservative stance. "

This voice of the audience redefines how journalists choose what will be reported on and which framing will be privileged. If before Web 2.0 the journalist presumed an audience, bringing contents that, in their intuition, were of interest of her, today the companies base their actions on what is commented on in social networks, like Twitter and Facebook, to produce news. As Figuroa (2013, p. 87) reports from the *Diario of Pernambuco*:

If something we do not have is blown, then we'll go after it and ask, "Look, do we have this on the site? No?". So I'll call my team here if I'm home, and the team will ask the site to do it. And it happens a lot. (...) There has recently been a story that is still unfolding to this day. It is the question of Sony having launched the Playstation at a cost of four thousand reais. This came from social networks and went straight to the cover of the newspaper.

This explicit expression of what interests the audience, no more in a presumed form by journalists, makes it possible for the newsroom to have a better idea of what issues to "bet" on.

Because of the power of audiences on social networks, companies are adding new criteria. Among these criteria is Trending Topics. Sierra (2012, p. 151) exemplifies:

Yesterday they arrested the ex-president of the patrons of Spain. This generated much debate and when we were making the cover, at night, we took into account that this topic had been very relevant, it was on Trending Topics. So we said: we have to put it on the cover. This did not used to happen before, before it was an intuition, it was other criteria. Now, it wasn't the only criterion, but it did have a strong influence and we are very grateful because it used to be a crapshoot. You might have guessed it or not. It was a crapshoot. You would say: my intuition tells me that this topic matters a lot. Not now! Now we know for sure that this topic matters. There's no doubt about it, and you'll decide later whether you're going to run that theme or not, but you certainly know that it is interesting.

Ventura (2013, p. 152) confirmed during our interview that during daily staff meetings between 12 and 12:30 p.m. (suspended during the observation period) she "enters with Trending Topics" to decide on which topics the newspaper will focus on. According to Ventura (2013, p. 152), due to this relationship with social networks news may also arise from:

A very controversial statement from a politician will always generate a later conversation on social networks. I observe this and, (...) when I can, I write a news report based on the reactions on social media. For example, this news (Vert's words cause massive reaction on social networks) went viral, many likes, many tweets, many shares. So I wrote this news report based on the reactions of important people such as politicians, columnists, journalists and others.

Figuroa (2013, p. 87) points out that the *Diário de Pernambuco* "dedicated much more news coverage to issues of adoption, violence against animals, and other things related to animals because of social networks". He explains that these themes guarantee a good audience and, on top of that, they are good for the newspaper's image.

On the other hand, the audience's dissatisfaction with the newspaper's coverage leads to breaking its "reading agreement". Through this "contract" it was implied that the audience agreed with – or at least accepted – the selective filter performed daily by the journalists and that produces a way of reading social reality. Travancas (2007) recalls that with the "reading contract", the public does not realize what was left out of the newscast and how the news that made it was selected. They give the journalist *carte blanche* to select the information that they, the readers, need or want to know. However, with the popularization of the Internet and the emergence of Web 2.0, the audience can not only question the "reading contract" (which could also be done at another time) but can also offer a different point of view from that of the media and journalists.

In *lavanguardia.com*, the monitoring of social networks is expanded to observe the extent to which the vehicle "hits" with the framing, as Sierra (2012, p. 86) points out when stating that: "if we have an approach that our audience does not like, we consider it and say: our audience has a point! We change and make new content, but always through careful consideration, not by impulse. First we reflect internally and then we correct it and change the orientation".

The reaction to coverage from influential vehicles is one of the important characteristics of what we call potent audience.

6. New functions: the editor of Social Media in the *Diario de Pernambuco*

Following a worldwide trend of relationship with the audience which goes beyond letters to the newsroom or opinion articles, *Diario de Pernambuco* released, in 2007, a forum they called Citizen Reporter, in which the people could discuss topics on citizenship, transportation, traffic, culture, health, public safety, and others, with space to include photos and videos taken by the audience.

The Citizen Reporter initiated a more interactive relationship between the audience and the *Diario de Pernambuco*, but it was the creation of the Social Media section that inaugurated a new production routine in the newspaper, and led to the search for a number of strategies to engage the audience.

Since the last decade of the twentieth century, journalists have been faced with at least two new requirements: managing the

collaborative spaces opened by influential vehicles, and talking to an audience that is capable of intervening in the production of news.

Professionals at the *Diário de Pernambuco* had to reinvent themselves in the face of new technological, media, thematic and relational demands. There are some functions that ceased to exist and new ones that emerged, such as Social Media editor, which for Berghella (2009, p. 1):

It is the person who deals with transmitting the virtues and possibilities offered by the social tools of the web within the newsroom. Basically this person will work on the literacy of the tools among journalists and editors, but also plan strategies for using these applications to improve communication and interaction between users and the media.

The editor of Digital Media was incorporated into the *Diário de Pernambuco* in 2013 to coordinate a new editorial section composed of seven journalists. Its function was: “(...) at least 60% towards promoting our product (news) and 40% towards news capturing on Facebook” (Figueirôa, 2013, p. 108).

Much more than promoting the news at *Diário de Pernambuco*, the new editor had this to say about audience questions: “there may be some questions and we do try to answer most of them. For example, traffic. We call the Transit and Urban Transportation Company of Recife (CTTU) and try to answer as many remarks and comments as possible ... (Souza, 2013, p. 108).

Among the many relationship strategies between the audience and the *Diário de Pernambuco*, one of them is using social networks to ask: “(...) some people say: this is happening, have you heard about it? Do you have any pictures to send us? (...) If someone asks something, we answer “(Souza, 2013, p. 109).

Journalists in the editorial section start working early and continue until midnight. Their routine consists of listening, identifying trends and discovering topics that are of interest to the audience. One of the journalists who was part of the editorial, Kézia Souza (2013, p. 110), explains that when writing a post, her team is always thinking about how to “choose what will reach many people, or things that matter a lot. What is making news today is politics. The election campaign is a strong one, but we also do *posts* about jobs, government entrance exams that people are interested in, as well as news from the local soccer teams. “

This clear manifestation of what is important to the audience

enables the newsroom to better understand the issues on which to “bet” on. *Diário de Pernambuco*, like other companies with social networks, aims to achieve the highest audience “engagement” percentage possible. The “engagement” is measured by the number of ‘likes’ and ‘discussions’ which are representative of the number of people that are interacting with the page at one particular time (this data is available on Facebook). In the quest for greater “engagement” it is important to engage “friends” on Facebook; to find ways to get them to “enjoy”, “share” and “comment” on the post. In the *Diário de Pernambuco*, the Social Media editor uses some “strategies” to engage the audience:

Sometimes we come up with some questions. For example, what I put here (dummy test with 180 questions from the Enem). Here I put it: vestibular test, answer the questions. People were sharing, one marking another friend who liked the post. But we try not to give all the information, because otherwise they will not access the *Diário de Pernambuco* ... (Souza, 2013, p. 111).

Social networks also work for the vehicle as a gauge for what:

(...) people are commenting on, for what people are talking about today for which we still do not have any material. So there are these two sides: (...) getting material from the printed version and going to social networks, or, I do not know, there’s going to be a mobilization that’s on the net, but we do not have any material, so we go after it. Look, this is a hit!!! (...) If you see that you have a subject that is bothering people, that is exciting people, of course they have to be highlighted, even being a headline. It is a fantastic return for us, an immediate feedback (Losada, 2013, p. 105).

Abreu (2002, p. 35) points out that “it is the competitiveness of the various types of media and the competition for the market that are responsible for the behavior of journalists today.” And in this market dispute, “journalism is losing space to companies in the commercial, marketing and distribution areas” (Abreu, 2002, 32). In other words, the journalistic agenda and the framing of the news are subject to the demands of the company’s business sector (Figaro, 2013).

Despite the strength of the commercial and marketing sectors, some content is incorporated into daily editions because of the strength of audience opinions on social networks:

The social networks have a lot of crap, but there’s a lot of interesting stuff. So you can not disregard it or be judgmental. For example, if there is a movement group that likes Anita, we have to evaluate this, put a culture specialist to work on it and say it’s a phenomenon either way. We have to do away with our

preconceptions. If people are listening, if they are enjoying it, we have to see what is happening. What is this phenomenon? Let's show you what it is, and both criticize and praise it. I think we have to get rid of prejudices. On social networks I think journalists are no longer in a position to say "ah, it's on the networks, but I'm not going to publish it." I think because the newsroom is young, everyone is following it (Losada, 2013, p. 105).

This speed of information on social networks, which facilitates the propagation of stories, has become a deciding factor in what influential vehicles will or will not transform into news. The executive editor of *diariodepernambuco.com* speaks about this movement:

Sometimes you're on someone's page and this person is talking about a subject, maybe a show for example, and then you go onto someone else's page and they're talking about it, too. You realize that there is a movement in this story. So let's see what's happening. There is this movement. You are not there passive, looking ... There is no such thing as an unintentional search. We are connected to the news ... For example, that story about the Ponte d'Uchoa, nobody would have expected that it would have had the repercussion it did on the networks (Losada, 2013, p. 106).

7. Looking at social networks and the impact of news production: the strategy of *lavanguardia.com*

The space that *La Vanguardia* gives to its audience is larger than that at *Diario de Pernambuco*. There are two forms of audience involvement: one that appears explicitly on the page of the Barcelona newspaper, and another which is made without the audience noticing. The Participation editor represents the visible side of the relationship between *La Vanguardia* and its audience.

On this visible side, the audience is invited and has space to offer opinions about reality, manifested in diverse textual formats (chronicles, letters, opinions, personal reports, blogs, photos, drawings, videos), in addition to providing information on events in their region and/or country, pointing out any errors, or complementing the news with additional information. There are also other forms of involvement such as answering surveys, suggesting topics (which can be turned into news) and commenting.

The second form of involvement at *La Vanguardia* (the unpublicized one) is implemented through strategies designed to attract social network audiences towards the newspaper. The company's manual entitled "The Ten Commandments of the influencer

on social networks – a manual for attracting and relating to them” is one of the indicators that the vehicle-audience relationship is not an amateur one. With guidelines for journalists ranging from “how to gain the trust of the influencer” to the “suggestion” that journalists analyze what hours and days audiences are more active on networks, the manual shows that the relationship with the audience is a commercial one. The very term “attract them” already gives us a clue as to the type of relationship here. With the manual instructing all journalists on how the newspaper wants their audience to be treated, a new professional profile in the newsroom is now modifying the modes of relationship between the vehicle and its audience.

8. The community manager between marketing and journalism

Palacios (2003), in the preface to the book *Cyberspace as a source for journalists*, points out that different from “(...) a time - not too distant - in which one learned a trade for all life. (...), nowadays a trade involves (re)inventing itself constantly, interpreting continuities, seeking potentials, glimpsing and proposing ruptures”.

(Re)inventing the profession is one of the many challenges that journalism has faced, especially after the experience of incorporating social networks into daily work. Having a presence on networks today requires more than just a simple conversation; it requires professionalization, and communication companies such as *La Vanguardia* have included the role of community manager into their staff. A community manager is a professional who brings together skills from different areas of knowledge, such as information technology and marketing, which add to his experience as a journalist.

For Martínez (2012, pp. 84-85), who defines this new professional from an advertising perspective, the community manager appears in the United States as:

In charge of listening to the online community, interacting with it on behalf of the company, making his company aware of what the digital world is saying about it, to identify threats or opportunities and integrate these aspects into the company's business strategies. (...) all of this is immediate and transparent, using an intimate language and offering relevant content.

Community managers in newsrooms are recent. It was more common to see them in large companies such as Nike and

Ford, planning out strategies for consumer loyalty and increasing the company's reputation in order to increase sales. The community manager's role in the newsroom is very similar to the role of community manager in companies, as mentioned above, the difference being that instead of cars or sneakers, they work with news.

In *La Vanguardia*, which has had a Social Networks editorial section since 2010, the community manager's job is to integrate audience participation into the journalist's own information.

One of the responsibilities of the community manager is to choose the topics and issues that agencies or ordinary people are discussing on social networks and bring them to the online newspaper. In order for the information to be transmitted as quickly as possible, the journalist works in conjunction with the "Final Hour" section:

In order to provide "Final hour", we learned more from Twitter than from the traditional systems that agencies use to transmit information. Because agencies often release information on Twitter first and then make the news available on the traditional forms for newsrooms (Ventura, 2013, p. 150).

On Twitter, a community manager pays attention to what the people are saying on the streets and to what can generate news. This was how the newsroom learned about a bomb warning at a school in Barcelona. While the newsroom searched official sources, *La Vanguardia's* community manager was searching for information:

(...) I ask the follower: "do you have more details"? And he tells me that they closed the area ... So I tweet to everyone saying: if you're in the ESADE area, send us a tweet or photos @infolvlocal. A number of people tweeted back saying: they are evacuating, look at this photo ... When we looked at the photos we saw police cars. So we posted the first photo that came from Twitter. We published the news with very little information, only with confirmation of the police evacuation and without the position of ESADE, but of course something was happening there (Ventura, 2013, p. 150).

With the Internet, influential vehicles have also pursued different forms of distributing news: by e-mail, publishing content in RSS or, as Cobo (2012, p. 191) points out, "promoting content on social networks and in communities of interest".

This last task has gained so much importance in *La Vanguardia* that, in addition to all the previously mentioned actions taken to involve the audience, it is still the community manager's job to come up with strategies for distributing content and to make some of its news reports go "viral".

“Viral” is a well-known advertising term and is used to explain the action of transmitting content in many formats (videos, games, texts, etc), that makes a direct or indirect reference to the sponsoring brand, reaching the largest amount of people possible through a large number of channels. However, it is not enough that the advertising reaches its audience, it should encourage them to spontaneously share the content, particularly video. The strength of propagation is essential towards its success. The more people involved in a shorter period of time, the greater the “epidemic”, because what companies are looking to do with “viral” news is create a greater interest in the issue.

The community manager at *La Vanguardia* is incorporating what we call “viral marketing of the news” into journalism. Just as in advertising, journalism strategies are being promoted to “viralize” the news. The community manager says that the responsibility of choosing the themes for “viralization” belongs to him or her. It is not a company decision. The choice is made about news that:

can generate an opinion that can bring something to a new informative product. It should be a topic that makes people want to express their opinions because there are some things that people do not care about. It is also necessary that the theme be in accordance with the context that we are living (Ventura, 2013, p. 164).

Just like advertising, “viral marketing of the news” takes into account what content is of interest to a particular audience, whether it reaches people who will share the subject (opinion formers), and on what social network this content should be worked on and at what time. The community manager also emphasizes that, in order to produce the “viral” effect, it is important to highlight “positive themes, that people want to talk about, share, and that stimulate conversation in such a way that the newspaper creates another product” (Ventura, 2013, p. 165).

With this movement, *La Vanguardia*’s community manager believes that he “can get the reader involved, the reader sees that the newspaper is incorporating his or her opinion, and feels a sense of satisfaction with this participatory experience” (Ventura, 2013, p. 165). Therefore, when a reader is heard, “he or she spreads the news to their friends, generating a “viralization”. Readers may also recommend *La Vanguardia*, and when they do, they say: “*La Vanguardia* listened to me” (Ventura, 2013, p. 165).

Cobo (2012, p. 192) observes that with these strategies for greater content distribution, influential vehicles are thinking “if the audience redistributes our content, and shares it with their contacts, we win: it means the value of our content will be recognized”.

Involving the audience “attracts more attention to the newspaper and thus, in theory, gets more followers because it has been recommended” (Ventura, 2013, p. 165). So, the community manager sees the relationship with newspaper followers improving while creating an image on social networks that this newspaper is a place the audience can converse and share, and not only a space for publishing the newspaper.

The community manager does not hide the fact that *La Vanguardia* is on social media “to talk and at the same time to achieve its objectives: to increase the community and to attract more people to the newspaper” (Ventura, 2013, p. 165).

9. Final remarks

Social networks have brought changes to social organization and, consequently, to journalism. These changes bring challenges which force us to think about new and old concepts that become entangled in this web of information.

For journalists, these changes have led them to become multi-tasking producers and managers of information across different media and formats (Scolari, 2008). This polyvalence often represents a deterioration of work conditions.

A professional no longer has to just be able to deal with instantaneity, with looking for a “scoop”, but now has to be able to deal with an increasingly active audience. Having access to and the ability to use technological devices gives the potent audience the ability to not only give new meaning to the messages they receive, but also to become involved with communication vehicles in a wide variety of ways. The capacity for propagation of this potent audience has led journalists not only to incorporate the content in these conversational networks, but to move or activate these networks to “have” the “glances” of this new agent, which is not necessarily an institutionalized source of journalism. Adghirni (2012, p. 66) says that “it is an unprecedented situation in the history of interactivity and

reflexivity, which forces content producers to quickly adjust their production to readers and competitors.”

Faced with this potent audience, journalists are under a “connection dictatorship” which extrapolates the time for their activity in the communication company. When dealing with conversational spaces, journalists are permanently in contact with an audience that demands answers, that wants to have its doubts clarified, and wants to correct mistakes. And all of this needs to happen instantly, wherever the journalist may be.

These are new scenarios being built and they require journalism, as Chaparro (2007) points out, to discover, to become aware, to prepare itself to play the new roles in a society driven by the energies of information and by the discursive clashes of institutions and people who know what to say, how to say it and when to say it.

Within this relationship with the audience there are still many issues that pose challenges for professionals, for businesses, and for journalism schools; all of which are involved in many reflections on how to be a journalist. The ethical issue and the need for attention must be considered in this relationship so that the public agenda is not compromised or the boundary between journalism and publicity is not blurred.

As Fíguro (2013, p. 14) points out, “these questions derive from the type of journalism that citizens want and from which professional engagement is required. The kind of democracy one wishes to build is at stake here, for the right to information is the foundation of a democratic society.”

*Translated by Lee Sharp

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