THE DESIGN OF THE COVERS OF ZERO HORA NEWSPAPER FROM 1990 TO 2010

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ABSTRACT

The article investigates the reformulations of the graphic presentation undergone by the *Zero Hora* (ZH) newspaper from 1990 to 2010, focusing on its covers. It analyzes how this publication revamped its design in this period, in order to discuss how such changes could be related to technological changes pertaining to the circulation of editions in other media as well. It questions relationships between visual elements and principles of journalistic editing, considering the history of the vehicle. The significant change in the layouts perceived in the years taken into consideration seems to be associated with the growing amount of information available in the graphic space that is permeated by the intense usage of graphic resources and images that often undermine the hierarchy of what is being reported.

Key words: Print Journalism. Zero Hora. Design. Covers. Graphic Design.

INTRODUCTION

Print journalism has been changing in the past few years, mainly due to the presence of the Internet, which with its innumerous services offers different forms of access to information. On the World Wide Web, online versions of newspapers have been gradually becoming standalone products, leaving behind the pioneer innovation of duplicating the print editions in *Portable Document Format* (PDF) and making them available online (STRELOW; GRUSZYNSKI; NECCHI, 2010; QUADROS; QUADROS JR; MASIP, 2010). From the predictions that attributed a life span of just a few more years for print newspapers to the commercial and alternative editions that articulate possibilities of permanence of these vehicles in the media system, we examined, during the research, a territory of great reformulations.

In this context, where tensions between new media and those already consolidated are established, concepts such as *remediation* (BOLTER; GRUSIN, 2000; BOLTER, 2001) and *mediamorfosis* (FIDLER,

1998) mobilize questions that are central to the issue in the theoretical field. Considering the digital matrix as a fundamental characteristic of the new media, Bolter and Grusin (2000) argue that remediation comprehends the formal logic through which they refashion the forms of its predecessors, improving them. The expressions *hypermediacy* and *imediacy* refer to remediation strategies, in which the first indicates a visual representation style that aims at the greatest possible proximity to our everyday visual experience, in such a manner that we abstract the presence of the medium and feel that we are facing the object of representation, thereby evoking transparency. The second is associated with the notion of opacity and refers to the presentation of various acts of representation that become visible and perceptible to the observer. Fidler (1998), in turn, through the notion of mediamorphosis, argues that perceived needs, political and competitive pressures, social and technological innovations play a fundamental role in the transformations of the media. To the author, new means of communication, upon being influenced by conventional ones, adapt and reformulate themselves in distinct environments.

Considering the link between theoretical perspectives and empirical data that may contribute to the debate concerning the hybridization of means and languages, the present article deals with *Zero Hora* (ZH) newspaper, published for the first time in 1964, launching its online version in 1996. In December 2009, it also became available through Kindle, and the debut of its *iPad* application in February 2011 marked yet another initiative of this periodical in providing its content in various platforms.

This study focuses on the design of the covers of the print newspaper, analyzing the reformulations of its graphic presentation in the last twenty years, in order to infer how such changes may be associated with technological changes, especially regarding the circulation of editions in other media. While in the first days of the Internet, the print newspaper was the main reference guiding the production, edition and design processes of the online versions, it seems that nowadays this tendency is reversed.

The subject of this study comprises March 1st covers from 1990 to 2010, prioritizing an assessment of the overall structure of the graphic design along that time line. Based on bibliographical research, concepts and categories were established, defining the study subject and guiding the systematization of a table of graphic resources, which was used for a first quantitative analysis. From the results obtained in this

stage, a qualitative analysis was conducted, prioritizing the relationships between the elements, their connection with principles of journalistic editing and with the history of the institution itself.[1]

The form of the newspaper and the processes of journalistic editing

The mosaic of news which is composed on paper or on screen reaches its final form through the design work that develops in the connection point between the abstract level (conceive/project) and the concrete level (register/configure), giving material form to intellectual concepts (CARDOSO, 2000). The physical form of a text and the way in which elements are arranged on the page are factors that determine the historical relation between authors, texts and readers. The physical and visual field that is defined from the technological resources of writing constitutes a limiting space from which different possibilities of articulating typographical rhetoric are responsible for shaping a text. With this in mind, different editions of the same content allow the proposal of new meanings that can meet the expectations of different audiences, thus underlining the role of design in the shaping of communicational pieces.

The newspaper under consideration has a distinct graphic characteristic that comprises a stylistic continuity in which a base grid ensures the variability of layouts based on a common scheme. In the adjustments between form and content, the editorial project establishes itself as a reference point for decision making during the editorial process. Among the principles that determine the professional practice in the field, there is the time factor, in which immediacy and speed – the short lapse between the fact and its transmissions – are sovereign (WOLF, 2006; TRAQUINA, 2005).

However, if the visual composition plays an important role in guiding the readers through the pages and consolidates several decisions made along the editorial stages, the readers usually focus on the story, i. e., on what is narrated, on the fact being reported. The mediation carried out by design seems to possess a sense of transparency. Considering that fact and journalistic fact are not equivalents, we notice that the graphic planning fundamentally contributes to the disposition of facts in a contextual frame. The report aims to develop a meaning, revealing causes, people involved, consequences, etc., thus, changing the fact into a journalistic fact. Design, to this extent, responds to the news-value and news-making process.

The dissemination of the usage of graphic projects in newspapers gradually established itself based more on the notion of predictability

of events and less on the idea of rupture that we usually associate with periodical journalistic production. Its division in sections and the presence of special supplements are fundamental axes that frame the thematic variety present in the publications. To arrange pictures and texts, to enlarge, to crop, to insert subtitles, etc., are actions performed not only to embellish the composition, but also to establish hierarchy and contrasts that aim to inform above all. Therefore, we understand the newspaper as a printed device (MOUILLAUD, 2002) – a form which structures space and time, thus constituting a content-articulating matrix.

Form the historical point of view, its graphic conformation begins with a distinction from the book and comprises the enlarging of the pages, the introduction of the title on the heading of the cover, emphasis on the periodicity and text distribution in multiple columns. Considering that the material characteristics gradually establish themselves through the improvement of printing and composition techniques, we can also underline other fundamental points in the transformation of its visuality. Thus the introduction of photography leads to the progressive placing of information in a hierarchy since it graphically anchors the layouts, outlining the foundations to the conception of the modern newspaper regarding its graphic design. The photocomposition and the offset printing, on the other hand, allow modular layout, embracing new strategies of content classification, bigger images and typographical experimentation that aim to define the identity of the publications. Color printing and the introduction of digital technologies of pagination and graphic development, on the other hand, consolidate the role of design in news production, where infographics are representative of the amalgamation of texts and images to reveal various aspects of a story (GRUSZYNSKI, 2010). Contemporary graphic experiences underline that newspaper design cannot be understood only as the final stage of a process, since it is strongly connected to the profile of the organization publishing it, as well as the body of professionals and their productive routines, which are mediated by technological resources increasingly managed by the members of the editorial staff and integrated in media networks.

In broad terms, the fundamental elements of the graphic design comprehend the format – associated with the medium specifications – and the graphic space that derives from it, which is organized according to a grid. On this grid, texts, images and support resources, such as lines and textures, are laid, and their most fundamental characteristic is their color. Compositional criteria, in turn, rule the articulation of these elements based on perceptive principles that guide the syntax of

the visual language (DONIS, 1997). These, however, are determined by specific values of the journalistic field, in which aesthetic appeal and informative commitment impact the possible choices that often are also subordinated to the commercial modulation of the periodical.

Emphasis should also be given to the distinction between the different sections of a newspaper, in which the cover plays a singular role, since its main goal is to gather the attention of the reader, especially when the facts of the day are unheard-of or unusual, informing and enunciating what is available inside the periodical. It is also on the cover where we find the name of the newspaper, which indicates the existence of a reference that aims to be recognized and known by the readers in a symbolic space: among many, this is "the" newspaper.

Zero Hora and its covers

Zero Hora was created in May 1964, during the beginnings of the Brazilian military dictatorship (Figure 1). Today it circulates in the whole state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) and it is the flagship of eight periodicals owned by the RBS Group – Rede Brasil Sul –, a company with activities in several areas related to information and entertainment. According to the 2009 data of the *Instituto Verificador de Circulação* (IVC), the circulation of this newspaper was the sixth largest in the country and the largest in Rio Grande do Sul.

Figure 1: Covers of ZH from May 1, 1964, March 1, 1970 and March 1. 1990

Technological advances characterized and transformed the newspaper in a very accentuated way. Recchia (2010) identifies periods which she calls analogical newsroom, computerized newsroom

and integrated newsroom. The first embraces the launching of the periodical until the year 1988, when typewriters were retired and analogical photography, using film and chemicals for processing, was still dominant. Computerized editing comprehends the introduction of computers in the reporters' work routine, which also brought on the first big graphic reform of the newspaper in 1989. In this period, there is also the complete adaptation process to the use of computers and the beginning of digital photography. In 2007, the integrated newsroom takes shape. In September of the same year, RBS launched the zerohora. com website, which brought together online journalists and journalists that used to work exclusively on the print version of the newspaper.

The time frame chosen for the analysis reveals the changes that occurred in the newsroom regarding the introduction of computers. Considering the exploratory quality of this study, one cover of each year was analyzed so that a general view of the changes in the design of the first page of the newspaper during the selected period could be obtained. March 1st was chosen for it is a date when the year has already properly begun, after the year-end holidays and vacation period.

Based on the theoretical framework – which analyzed the historical constitution of the newspaper regarding its graphical project; the understanding of the relationships between the editorial project, the journalistic editing processes and the graphic production; as well as the detailing of the formal aspects that comprehend the design of newspapers – and on a preliminary assessment of the issues that were part of this study, we developed a table that was used for a first quantitative analysis that took into consideration the area (editorial and commercial), grid, text levels (typographic characteristics and hierarchy), images and other elements (rules, cutoff rules, boxes).[2]

After the survey of all quantitative data, we noticed some circumstances in which the graphic characteristics of the covers were similar. Based on this observation, we grouped them in four periods which aggregated the qualitative analysis of the twenty covers, which considered the connections between the graphic elements, their relation to principles of journalistic editing and the history of the vehicle itself. Let us briefly examine some illustrative aspects of this work[3] in order to discuss the research results.

The covers from **1990 to 1994** were identified as the **pioneer period** – **employment of new resources**. The beginning of the 1990s marks the definitive entrance of the computer into the newsroom, with the typing of texts seen on green screens, still analogical pictures and incipient

Internet communication. This period is characterized by the first graphic reform undergone by the newspaper – in 1989, conducted by Marcio Garcia – which increased the font size, forcing journalists to diminish the texts, and recommended a more widespread usage of images (as well as bigger ones).

Figure 2: Covers of ZH from March 1, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993 and 1994, respectively

On the covers (Figure 2), the images play a meaningful role. The size difference between the main picture and the others deserves to be emphasized – in 1994, however, photomontage and illustration compete, if we disregard the distinction evinced by the box area. In the gap, the logo is squared, black and in sans-serif fonts, occupying 5.18% of the cover area, and it constantly changes its position. We could not find advertisements occupying more than 4% of the total area of the cover in any editions.

The use of cutoff rules of various thicknesses in content demarcation is meaningful, even though the spacing between elements and the use of the white does not always favor this distinction. There are different appropriations of a five-column grid, without the establishment of a clear visual identity. It can be observed that there is a column devoted to headlines, perhaps the most constant element, yet still flexible. The covers are predominantly black and white, and there is color in the images, except for a light yellow that fills the background of the box in 1994. In typographical terms, text levels are established predominantly through alterations in size, weight and slant serif types. A sans-serif font is used on the standing head. The amount of elements and their disposition do not always favor the pregnancy of the layout, in which clarity, simplicity and regularity favor the perception of information.

The covers from **1995 to 1998** (Figure 3) were called **conformation period – color and image appreciation**. Due to the more widespread familiarity of journalists with the computer and the advance of digital technologies, an Internet expansion occurred. There was an increase in the usage of e-mail as a means of communication and Brazilian newspapers

began their first experiments on the web. In this period, the first section to become available on the Internet was the informatics section and in the next year – 1996 – digital *Zero Hora* was created, updated every 24 hours.

Figure 3: Covers of ZH from March 1, 1995, 1996, 1997 and 1998, respectively

In the period that embraces these issues, there was a recast of *Zero Hora*'s logo (Figure 4) to a model that is still used nowadays: *Zero Hora* written in capitals with serif font and a colorful bar above the name of the newspaper (Figure 5). The area it occupies on the covers increased to 12.21% of the page, giving it much more emphasis and visibility. Another graphic characteristic of the period is the absence of standing heads. The vertical bar with smaller headlines – sometimes on the left, sometimes on the right – also disappeared.

Figure 4: The squared logo on the issue of March 1, 1992, created by Hans Donner,
used until its recast in 1994

Figure 5: The horizontal logo on the issue of March 1, 1996, used from 1994 onwards

There is still the presence of many cutoff rules separating elements. One can perceive a more widespread use of color and an increase in the size of images. The typographic styles cast aside the italic used in the image's subtitles, keep the weight distinctions (regular/bold) and introduce sans-serif types in some of the headlines. There is not much coherence on the choice of fonts for the titles, which highlights the lack of continuity in the covers, for the fonts changed in each issue analyzed: sometimes the same font is used for every title, sometimes each element uses a different one.

The 1997 issue is an example of a completely symmetrical page. All the main stories are arranged in the same way with the same font, exactly in the same size. The pictures below the secondary headlines even give the impression that the pictures are appended to these headlines. Those, however, are tertiary headlines within boxes with lines. What allows the reader to differentiate the main headline from the other headlines is its central position and the use of an illustration that is bigger than all the other elements of the cover. The use of the box as a means to enclose the space of each story was not enough to create a visual distinction, making it hard to locate the most important element. Even the advertisement on the bottom left corner has a graphic treatment significantly similar to the story in the box in the bottom right. At a first glance, one has the impression that both boxes, which have red as the predominant color, deal with advertisements.

From **1999 to 2005** there is the **consolidation period – greater uniformity in the graphic design**. In the beginning of the 2000s, *Zero Hora* is marked by distinct visual characteristics. In this period, one can notice a strong division of the cover into two main spaces: the left side, reserved for the headline, main picture – always on the bottom – and a few smaller headlines; and the right side, where there are other headlines – which sometimes receive so much graphic highlight that they can be considered headlines as well. This division is created by the insertion of a thick blue vertical cutoff rule on every cover (Figure 6).

The columns with headlines from the 1990s that were once abolished are now back. The division of the cover into two distinct areas gives *Zero Hora* a more clear graphic design. We can see the return of standing heads that are used in the stories in the right column and the use of red coloring in titles and in its standing heads. The fonts do not change as much as in the previous periods and the arrangement of data was kept practically the same during the years, which makes the covers of the period somehow monotonous, without much graphic experimentation.

Figure 6: Covers of ZH from March 1, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005, respectively

The horizontal logo was consolidated during this period, but not before going through a slight recast that was not kept. We can notice on the covers from 1999 and 2000 that there was a change of font in the logo. In these two years (Figure 7), the logo is seen with a type in which the serif is more prominent and with its extremities in a more squared shape form than what was used until then and on the issues published after 2001 (Figure 8). From 2002 onwards, beside the logo, there is the constant presence of RBS's logo, close to the name of the newspaper on its left side.

Figure 7: Reproduction of the logo used in 1999 and 2000

Figure 8: Reproduction of the logo used from 1995 to 1998 and after the year 2000

The design of the first page of the issues from **2006 to 2010** (Figure 9) was identified as the **innovation period – diverse strategies of visual attraction**, which embraces several meaningful changes. A graphic recasting in September 2005 drew much more attention to the sections' announcements on the cover, creating a horizontal cutoff rule of headlines under the logo. The design began to favor more open pictures, and on the horizontal cutoff rule there are always at least two images. The recasting standardized the size and the font of the headlines in the right column, which also received a thin black cutoff rule. The standing heads now have a lavender background and a thick blue cutoff rule above them. The same color is also used on boxes and other elements of the page.

Figure 9: Covers of ZH from March 1, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, respectively

In 2007, the professionals that used to work exclusively on the online version joined the newsroom of the print version of the newspaper, allowing materials produced by the online media to be published in the print version. Another reform[4] in 2009 increased the area of the logo, now occupying 23.91% of the page, since the page also had jump lines to

the newspaper's sections. Pictures and titles added a colored background to the logo and, on some occasions, even invaded its space.

The first cover of the period, the one from 2006, presents a new right column now with two fine cutoff rules. The standardized standing heads with uppercase and sans-serif types are now above all the headlines in the area. The cutoff rule beneath the logo contains jump lines to the newspaper's sections. There are three different boxes, each one with a different color and each color referring to a different supplement, in which the sections' flags follow the jump lines. With this, a horizontal axis that is connected to the right column is created, framing the content in the center of the page. The amount of graphic elements in both areas, however, results in damage to the visual organization, not on account of an unordered arrangement, but due to the excess of information in a small space. The headline received a sans-serif support cutoff rule. The pictures lost their borders which were being used since the 1990s. On the secondary headline, appearing within a lavender box, arrow-shaped markers are used to separate each of the four titles connected to the main story. However, each one of these stories is in a different section of the newspaper, breaking the linearity suggested by the arrangement of the graphic elements, since the use of arrow-shaped icons suggests the idea of a flux. The graphic innovation attempt ended up confusing the reader.

The first page of 2007 follows the standard adopted in the new design: headline, support cutoff rule, secondary headline with pictures within a lavender box and smaller headlines on the right column with standing heads and superior cutoff rule with jump lines to the sections. The elements are indeed more organized. However, on stories that go beyond the designated space in the right column, the fact that the same repeating standard was employed – as the one used in the column – gave those stories the same hierarchic value of the jump lines. Pastel shades accompany the design's lavender. However, there is still a great number of informational items and colors. The 2008 issue is a good example of this: the headline is inside the lavender box, delineated by a thick black cutoff rule, with six colorful pictures. In it, the spacing between images and margins of the box itself varies greatly. The warm colors of the pictures from the first cutoff rule contrast with the would-be "sobriety" of the graphic design's colors. The secondary headline comprehends two titles with the exact same size and both receive the same treatment as the headlines in the right column, only broader, suggesting the low hierarchy between the elements. The standing heads are still on the previous

standard with a thick blue cutoff rule above them. The superior cutoff rule of the page still has jump lines to the sections of the newspaper.

The innovation is a jump line to the zerohora.com website. As well as other jump lines, it is in a dark blue box, but in a white sans-serif font, along with a mouse pointer next to the title in an attempt to get closer to the visual elements of the Internet. On this top row, there are section flags that receive a jump line. All the titles are in a box with a picture of the stories. The pictures and the section flags are in color. The page is the one that brings more images than all the other pages analyzed, with ten pictorial elements of various colors. The visual aspect turns out to be too loaded and damaged, for there are almost no white spaces and different groups take shape without any connection among them. In addition, there is still the lavender from the boxes and from the standing heads followed by the thick blue cutoff rule. Next to the *Zero Hora* logo, there is a seal of the campaign "*violência no trânsito, isso tem que ter fim*" (traffic violence, this has to end) increasing even more the amount of elements on the page.

In 2010, an increase in the area of the logo can be perceived. The logo itself did not increase in size, but the heading area doubled and now, in it, there were also jump lines to the sections, which used to have a bar below the logo. From this modification onwards, the logo was taken as image, which, in this case, even overlaps it. Close to the image, there is a green background and the section flag. The appropriation of the header area by other elements deprives it of its solemnity and of its importance as an identification characteristic of the newspaper. Another modification is the removal of the headline's support cutoff rule. There is also a decrease in the usage of cutoff rules.

Discussion of results

The analyses conducted suggest the existence of a graphic identity on *Zero Hora* covers, which was formed and consolidated with the passage of time. This identity assumes that the reader today can easily recognize the newspaper because of its appearance. However this does not mean that the newspaper is easily readable – regarding the perception of its types as well as the precision with which its composition leads to the intellectual understanding of the text – or that its layout leads to arrangements in which the visual organization contributes to the understanding and reading speed or interpretation (pregnancy).

Regarding the typography, the surveyed data shows the predominance of black regular lower case serif fonts. Italics as a means of highlighting were put aside since the beginning of the consolidation period

and upper case titles were found on rare occasions. Within the scope of the headlines, this is justified in an attempt to differentiate the newspaper from the tabloid models with popular appeal. However, it seems that the use of color, which has grown over the years, does not always contribute to the readability or informational quality. The acquisition of new equipment – for the printing as well as the editing of the newspaper – may justify the presence of a growing number of hues on the first page.

Since *Zero Hora*'s last graphic reform, one can perceive a decrease in the use of cutoff rules. However, the habit of separating content with colorful backgrounds continues, a recurrent technique in the samples analyzed. Broadly speaking, we can infer that the available technology increased the number of different elements with which the designer must deal when it is time to assemble the page. However, before advancing to the analysis of how these elements are organized on the page, it is important to highlight which items of information they are and how often they appear.

From the cross-checking of the data from the analysis boards, it was established that the first page, as is expected from a newspaper, has predominantly editorial content. The advertisements appear in more than half of the samples, but, on most cases, they occupy an area smaller than 10% of the page (Chart 1). The area available for text prevails in most cases, but there has been a decrease in this area since the years 2000. Only in 1998, 2003 and 2010, we can see a predominance of images on the first page. There are other covers, however, in which images prevail, even if the pictures and/or illustrations are not big enough to become visible in the present chart.
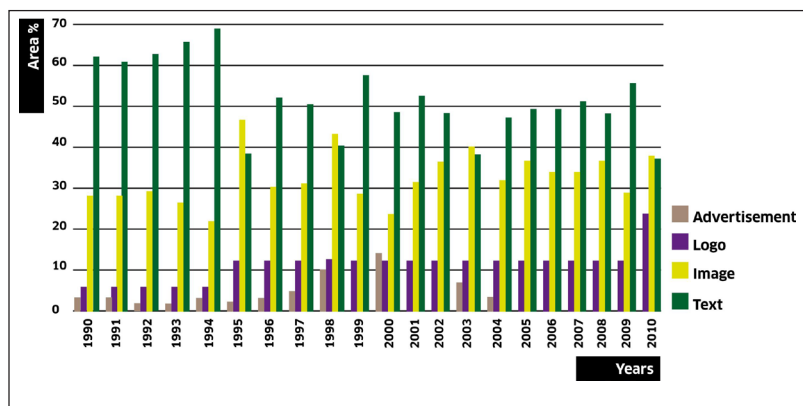

Chart 1: Area distribution (%) of the covers from 1990 to 2010

The amount of stories on the cover varies greatly from one year to the other (Chart 2). Since the graphic reform of 2005, one can perceive a considerable increase in the content announced on the first page, culminating in the year 2006, when there were 13 different stories illustrating the cover. The results of the last graphic reformulation in 2009 can be perceived in 2010. The proposed changes aimed giving even more importance to the image. The cover in 2010 has big pictures and colorful backgrounds accompanied by a small number of headlines: only five headlines, half of the average from the previous 5 years.
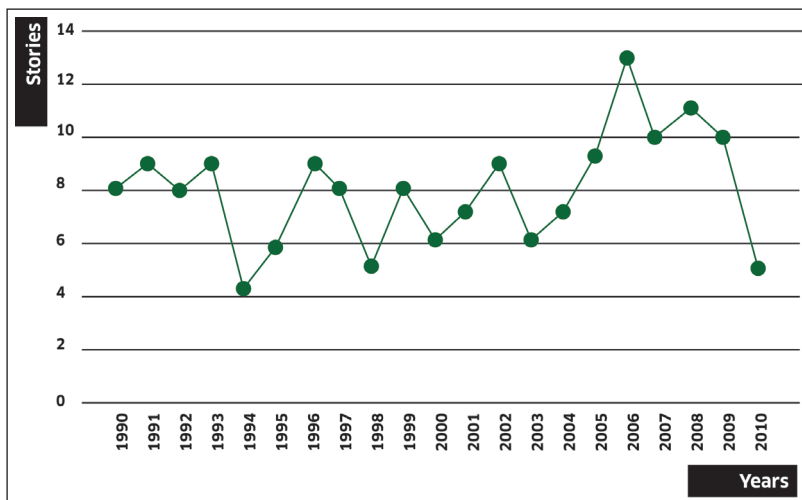

Chart 2: Number of stories announced on the cover for each year

It is not interesting for a tabloid to have a great number of headlines due to its reduced size. Also, as much as there may be – on some days – a lot of interesting stories, even when one takes into consideration that many of the design principles of standard newspapers and tabloids are the same, the cover design of the latter cannot simply be transformed into what Finberg and Itule (1989) call a "shrunken standard newspaper". The space limits must be respected and few striking elements should be used so that they might have the desired effect.

Exaggerations in the use of images create a struggle for the attention of the reader who ends up not knowing which the dominant visual element is. The sports box on the cover of the issue of 2004 (Figure 10) is an example of this problem. Instead of choosing a main story of the section to be announced on the cover, the editor chose to highlight

three relevant sports news items. The three pictures in the box end up competing with each other and not highlighting any one of the three events. There is even an attempt to compensate for the size difference among them by using a darker shade of yellow and a black cutoff rule on the background of the last picture that ends up polluting even more the small area that has already been divided into two columns. Another box model that attracts the attention of the reader for the wrong reasons is the one used on the cover from 2001 (Figure 10). The cutoff rule, the background, the border and the picture create an excess of information that is completely unnecessary in such a reduced space.

Figure 10: Box used on the covers of 2004 and 2001, respectively

There is a noticeable recurrent attempt to offset the excess of information with an abundant presence of graphic resources, creating a generalized disorganization. This can be visually exemplified in the case of the cover from 2008 (Figure 11). At first glance, one can promptly tell that there is too much content on the page. One might think that this happens because the main story is accompanied by six different pictures in which warm colors prevail, contrasting with the sobriety of the lavender of the graphic design.

Figure 11: Cover of ZH from 2008

One notices that the main story has, in addition to a lot of pictures, three frames: the lavender box, the thick black cutoff rule enveloping it and ten announcements around it. These elements, used to separate and to highlight the content, could be abolished without any damage to the cover. In addition, there are almost no empty spaces. The excess of elements makes it harder to read the cover quickly and attributes to the page a low pregnancy due to its opposition to the concept of visual simplicity.

In contrast, we can highlight the cover from 1997 (Figure 12) which contains fewer elements, fewer colors and fewer lines, making it allegedly simpler. On this cover, the main item is highlighted in the center and its size allows us to perceive it as the most important in the composition. The other titles, however, have exactly the same size as the main story; as a consequence they can only be considered secondary due to the size of the picture associated with the former. Besides, the arrangement of the elements in an extremely vertical grid with three columns creates a boring symmetry. Thus, everything that was gained from simplicity in this issue is lost due to the absolute monotony and the lack of a clear hierarchy. The repetition is so intense that when we observe the advertisement in the bottom right corner, we expect the bottom left box to contain an advertisement too. In the editorial content the design uses similar colors to the ones used in the advertisement, making it even more confusing.

Figure 12: Cover of ZH from March 1, 1997

Figure 13: Box on the cover on March 1, 2006

Another example of how the design might damage the readability is the box on the cover from the year 2006 (Figure 13), which deals with several stories regarding the end of the summer school vacation. The highlighting of four smaller headlines is made with a red arrow next to each text. Since arrows are symbols used to indicate direction or sense, they create a certain notion of movement in the lines of the title, allowing the assumption that one block follows the other. However, the subjects are not linked in a continuous way, neither regarding the structure – because they are not in consecutive pages – nor regarding the theme – because they are in different sections.

During the period analyzed, one can notice that the newspaper uses a great amount of elements on its cover. The last graphic reform from 2009 decreased the number of items referred to on the first page. However, the

increase of the head area, which abolished the horizontal cutoff rule with colored jump lines to the newspaper's sections during the consolidation period, made the area of the logo the new place for these announcements. Nowadays, colors, text, other flags and images share the space with the *Zero Hora* logo. In many cases, pictures overlap the newspaper name, as in the example (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Head area from *Zero Hora* nowadays

The colors and pictures used in this space share the reader's attention with the newspaper logo, reducing its highlighting. Considering that this is an important area for the identity of the periodical, since it blends in with the content, there is a significant change compared to the newspaper tradition as a device. When the name of the newspaper, which has a meaningful role in establishing its credibility, loses importance, it is resized.

The newspaper itself displays its attempt at graphic reform by trying to affirm "the new editing model as compared with the strength of other media in this century of information in every second, in every place" (ZH May 27, 2009). In view of the historical journey that developed the visuality of the newspaper as time passed, and after having analyzed issues of *Zero Hora* over 20 years, it seems clear that the introduction and the appropriation of digital technologies had a significant influence on the graphic design and on the design of the covers of the periodical. Today we have a larger number of composition graphic resources that can be reproduced faster with good printing quality. Thus, it should be emphasized that the RBS Group built and equipped – with rotating Wifag printers and Ferag dispatch system – a new printing plant with an area of 12 thousand square meters, increasing the limit of colored pages to include the entire edition. This was inaugurated in 2009.

Regarding the editorial processes, the digitalizing made the production and editing of texts and images more agile and integrated with the pagination program. In the specific case of *Zero Hora*, the software that manages the commercial operation of the company indicates to the designers the amount of space dedicated to advertising.

The development of various master-page design models helps to minimize tensions that inherently rise between the preparation of the editorial matter and time. On the other hand, one of the factors that could have influenced the detected increase in the average number of stories on the cover over the last few years is the fact that with only a few clicks the entire layout can be modified or more news articles can be introduced, even in the last few minutes before printing. It can also be inferred that the integrated newsroom propitiates negotiations among the editors that decide what information will be published in each media as well as how and when such information will be published.

Considering the cover as the space that guides the reader, a space that clearly aims to inform them about the important facts of the day, we see in the covers analyzed that this effort to establish a hierarchy is sometimes damaged. The excess of visual elements, specifically images and colors, reminds us of the more popular tabloid-like pages. ZH, however, aims to be a serious newspaper with 49% of its readers from classes A and B[5].

Final comments

Analyzing and comparing the covers of *Zero Hora* during the last 20 years, it is possible to establish a connection between graphic elements of the print version that refer to the visuality of newspapers designed to be published on the web. We could state that the thick bars separating the content on the paper page recall the navigation bars found on most websites; the content separation which is always present in newspapers – as the section jump lines, for instance – in upper horizontal axes, recreate the website frames. However, unlike what we see on screen, we do not have a scroll bar to provide access to the content between these frames, hence the importance of choosing carefully what will be highlighted on the print cover, a bi-dimensional space with space restrictions distinct from those of digital documents.

If we state that the print pages have been undergoing adaptation, becoming more similar to what we see on the Internet – in a movement contrary to what happened at the beginning of the presence of newspapers on the web – we will still be in line with the first impressions that mobilized our initial research question. The theoretical framework that has been developed around the graphic culture shows the richness and complexity that enables it to deal with several factors that permeate it. If the ingredients seem to be basically the same – texts and images with colors arranged in a determined space with the support of lines and empty spaces – the analysis revealed the various layout alternatives that emerge from the editorial decisions. The configuration of the newspaper as a device challenges us nowadays to think

about an intricate fabric stretched between tradition and innovation in a historical horizon that has the book as its primeval graphic reference and moves towards the modern newspaper in light of its graphic design.

It is also necessary to discuss the aspects regarding specific practices and journalistic values, which in this study were only alluded to. Moreover, the concept of remediation (BOLTER; GUSIN, 2000; BOLTER, 2001) allows us to further discuss the visual strategies mobilized by design – at times transparency, at other times opacity – in the configuration of information. In a visual culture distinctly characterized by media, in which our reading proficiency encompasses the ability to deal with different media on a day-to-day basis and even simultaneously, it is a simplification to state that the print newspaper looks like the digital newspaper, either to be read by means of an Internet browser or an *iPad* application. Conventional means and new means of communication are reformulating their paradigms according to unique characteristics and environment in an environment of rapid technological innovations.

In the specific case of the subject analyzed, considering that the paper media is not infinite or extendable as is the digital media on the web, the need to select the cover content in a newspaper becomes even clearer. On the selected covers considered in this study, we see an increase in the amount of data and graphic resources. This increase in the amount of elements without a solid strategy to coherently organize and arrange the stories on the first page does not always result in editorial improvements. Simplicity during the designing does not mean poor visual content; it shows instead a concern for the comprehension and assimilation of the content. After all, it is crucial that a medium with bi-dimensional and restricted space arranges the news hierarchically and strategically, assuming its potentialities consolidated down through centuries of history and recreated at every new edition.

| NOTES

1   The empirical study here presented was developed as a senior thesis of undergraduate studies in Journalism by Bruna Amaral, advised by Ana Gruszynski. The theoretical frame and the perspective adopted is related to the research entitled *Between the pixel and the paper: visual communication in cultural supplements of print newspapers in the contemporary era - a study about the newspapers Folha de São Paulo and Zero Hora* (Entre o pixel e o papel: a comunicação visual nos suplementos culturais de jornais impressos na contemporaneidade - Um estudo sobre os jornais Folha de São Paulo e Zero Hora) presently being

developed by the Electronic Laboratory of Art & Design (LEAD) in the School of Library Sciences and Communication (FABICO) of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), which has the support of the National Research Council (CNPq). Its goal is to identify trends in the graphic design of contemporary Brazilian newspapers, focusing on the culture segment of the periodicals *Zero Hora* and *Folha de S. Paulo*.

2   The methodological procedures were described in detail in: AMARAL, B. *Entre papéis e pixels*: o design das capas do jornal Zero Hora de 1990 a 2010. Monografia (Graduada em Jornalismo) - Faculdade de Biblioteconomia e Comunicação da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, 2010.

3   The qualitative analysis focused on the evaluation of the elements that here are only described due to space issues. Each one of the covers was studied with regard to grid, images, typography and graphic resources.

4   The recasting paid special attention to the Sunday issue, in which the newspaper invested in a highlight area that often contained an illustration or a photomontage drawing attention to a story or a special series. The Sunday sections are announced in a larger area close to the logo. There is a space for the Classified Advertisements section and its offerings, which is fundamental for the single sales on Sundays.

5   Data from Zero Hora Mídia Kit, available at: http://publicidade.clicrbs. com.br/zh/about?uf=1. Accessed on October 15, 2010.

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