

# USER X NEWSPAPER INTERACTION ON A SOCIAL NETWORK SITE:

## evidence of change

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**ABSTRACT** - This paper aims to establish a discussion of the relationship between users x newspapers in cyberspace or, more specifically, in a Computer Mediated Communication Tool (CMC), the social networking site (SNS) Facebook. To establish the discussion proposed, this paper broke for exploration of interactions between users of Facebook and a newspaper of national expression, the Folha de São Paulo (FSP), through methodological procedures advocated by Grounded Theory (TF). Thus, there was the manual collection of a news report published by FSP on Facebook and of the 207 comments that followed. The analysis and systematization of data served to consolidate the intended debate and the social changes that shift the journalism position as the organizer legitimate of human experience.

**Keywords:** Grounded Theory. Social networking. Cyberspace. Webjournalism.

### A INTERAÇÃO USUÁRIO X JORNAL EM UM SITE DE REDE SOCIAL: indícios de uma mudança

**RESUMO** - O presente artigo visa estabelecer uma discussão acerca da relação entre usuário x jornal no ciberespaço ou, mais especificamente, na ferramenta de Comunicação Mediada por Computador (CMC), o site de rede social (SRS) Facebook. Para estabelecer tal discussão, este trabalho partiu à exploração das interações entre usuários do Facebook e um veículo jornalístico de expressão nacional, a Folha de São Paulo (FSP), através dos procedimentos metodológicos defendidos pela Teoria Fundamentada ou Fundada (TF). Sendo assim, realizou-se a coleta manual de uma notícia divulgada pela FSP no Facebook e dos 207 comentários que a seguiram. A análise e sistematização dos dados serviu à consolidação do debate pretendido e à indicação de mudanças sociais que deslocam o jornalismo de sua posição de como organizador legitimado da própria experiência humana.

**Palavras-chave:** Teoria Fundamentada. Sites de rede social. Ciberespaço. Webjornalismo.

### LA INTERACCIÓN USUARIO X PERIÓDICO EN UN SITIO DE REDES SOCIALES: evidencia de un posible cambio en la relación

**RESUMEN** - Este artículo tiene como objetivo establecer una discusión sobre la relación entre usuario x periódico en el ciberespacio o, más específicamente, en la herramienta de comunicación mediada por computadora (CMC), el sitio de redes sociales (SNS) Facebook. Para establecer este debate, el presente trabajo se rompió la exploración de las interacciones entre los usuarios de Facebook y un periódico nacional, la Folha de São Paulo (FSP), a través de procedimientos metodológicos defendidos por la Teoría Fundamentada (TF). Por lo tanto, siguieron la recolección manual de un informe de noticias de FSP en Facebook y sus 207 comentarios. Análisis y sistematización de los datos sirvieron para consolidar el debate indicación prevista y los cambios sociales que desplazan el periodismo legitimó su puesto como organizadora de la experiencia humana.

**Palabras clave:** Teoría Fundamentada. Redes sociales. Ciberespacio. Webjournalism.

## **METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION: AN APPROACH TO THE FIELD**

The objective of this article is to investigate interactions between users of a social network site (SNS)<sup>1</sup> and a journalistic channel of communication. In order to do so, the grounded theory approach (GT) has been used, since it has proved to be effective in the recent advances of social research into cyberspace. According to Recuero (2011), GT is “[...] particularly interesting for the data obtained in a field in which there is a multitude of data for collection, and yet a very small theoretical body, as is the case with cyberspace phenomena” (p.87).

Suggested by Glasser and Strauss in their work *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, from 1967, GT aims at systematic data gathering that allows the researcher to constantly compare and analyze the data obtained. In this way, the method ensures the centrality of the researcher during the research process since it is through their subjective perception that the data should be extracted and signified. In short, it can be argued that the GT’s main characteristic lies on the fact that it subverts the traditional scientific order. According to its approach, “[...] it is the field and its observation which will provide hypotheses and help define the problem and build the theorization. The data, thus, act in a fundamental way in the process “(RECUERO, 2011, p.84).

Having established that, this study will not be initiated by introducing a theoretical framework alienated to the field work. On the contrary, it will begin by presenting and exploring the environment from which data is extracted, which also represents the conceptual universe surrounding the object to be observed, ensuring its contextualization. Therefore, this article is going to be focused on observation, systematization and analysis of data collected from the research object selected. There is no intention of imposing any type of generalization regarding the relationships among Facebook users and the media. All the observations hereafter drawn rely solely on the corpus of analysis and, thus, do not necessarily represent the predominant nature of the interactions among users and the selected media.

Aside from these reservations, it should be observed that the article will analyze data collected from a popular social network site, Facebook, or, more specifically a piece published by the newspaper Folha de São Paulo (FSP), from the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 2012, in

its profile<sup>2</sup> on the system. It should be stressed that the exposure of only one publication accounts for space limitations, however, it can be highlighted that the article selected is part of a corpus comprised of 50 FSP publications, all extracted during the months between January and September 2012. These posts<sup>3</sup> are part of the corpus of a broader study which will gather the analysis of each one of the 50 publications in order to deepen the discussion carried out in this present work.

Launched in 2004, Facebook is currently the SNS with the highest number of registered users, surpassing 1 billion active profiles, according to data released by the website UOL in August 2012. The growing number of users of SNSs and the current transformation of these environments into real circles of interaction aiming at the establishment and maintenance of social ties<sup>4</sup> are indicative of the changes which stem from the constant technological mediation. By definition, a social network site is a space which allows for: the creation of profiles by individuals, interaction among all the individuals that comprise the network (users) and publicizing the contact list of each, rendering the connections established among users visible (BOYD & ELISSON, 2007). Therefore, SNSs should not be understood as the social network itself, but rather as the systems which support such network. A social network can, therefore, be comprehended as a set of social actors and their connections. The content of such connections consists of the interactions established among the actors, thus the dynamic aspect of social networks mirrors the inherent volatility of human interactions (RECUERO, 2009). In that light, the SNSs represent:

[...] leisure spaces, virtual spaces in which social practices start to happen, be that due to physical space limitations, due to constraints of modern life or yet only due to the convenience of faceless interaction. These are new ways of "being" social that have varied impact on contemporary society emerging from practices established in cyberspace. [...] The features of social network sites, within this context, lead to a new conversational "form", more public, more collective, which will be called the networked conversation (2012, p.16-17).

The growth of systems which support such conversation, enabled by the emergence of the Web<sup>5</sup>, represent the current prevalence of many-to-many communications (LÉVY, 1999) and shows a tendency for democratization of the virtual spaces of publicization and the means of content production, triggering an unceasing reverberation of the networked conversation (TEIXEIRA, 2011; LEMOS, 2004; RECUERO,

2012). This conversation is, therefore, a reflection of the rupture of the emission pole (LEMOS, 2004) and a key element in the emergence of the typical cultural phenomena from the current society, such as memes<sup>6</sup>, flash mobs<sup>7</sup>, online protests, etc. By discussing the processes occurring in a SNS, does not mean waging a battle regarding the technical possibilities that arise with the electronic and digital equipment, but instead, making room for discussion of the sociocultural processes that shape the so-called “information era” (CASTELLS, 2010) and “convergence culture” (JENKINS, 2009).

The scope of this work – the SNS Facebook – works based on the “circle of friends model, developed by the British scientist Jonathan Bishop (BOYD, 2007). The aim of that model is to create profiles which can be interconnected giving rise to a social network which will be maintained by the system itself. Each user or actor within the network is able to access a vast number of resources devoted to interaction with others: comments, posts, likes, creation of events and the possibility of joining application modules (tools, social games, etc.) which can be created by the users themselves.

Corresponding to 62.06% of Brazilian users of SNSs, according to a research launched by Experian Hitwise<sup>8</sup>, Facebook has caught the attention of major national news organizations which now use the tool both for promotion actions, publishing and circulating content, and for interacting more directly with their audience (ZAGO, 2011; TEIXEIRA, 2011). As previously noted, an article from the newspaper Folha de São Paulo (FSP) was selected and this choice is justified not only by the expressiveness of FSP in the Brazilian journalistic scene<sup>9</sup>, but mainly due to its vanguard nature within cyberspace being the first national media outlet to launch a news site in real time, in 1995. Fifteen years later, Folha would be one of the first newspapers to join Facebook. Currently, the importance of the FSP page in the system can be measured by the large number of “likes” received, which exceed 1 million, and by estimating the reverberations<sup>10</sup> of its contents, about 155,433 interactions recorded.

It should be noted that, since the selected interactions are from a CMC tool, the specific characteristics of cyberspace environment and its influence on the relationships within the network cannot be ignored. Thus, as suggested by the analysis method adopted, the connections and theoretical approaches will be made following the dictates of the observation and systematization of the corpus. Therefore, it should be emphasized that the immersion in the field was the first step of this

research, followed by the collection, organization and discussion of the universe revealed through the data. However, this research was not started without a preconceived notion since the objective of the work was previously determined, prior to the understanding of the relationship user x newspaper in an SNS. That being said, the following section will consider the presentation and systematization of data.

## 1 (RE)ACKNOWLEDGING THE DATA: DEFINITION OF CORPUS

Data collection undertaken on February 19, 2012, was made by manual selection of a piece of news published in the FSP Facebook page on January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The article selected for this study focuses on exploring the ramifications of factual news widely covered by the Brazilian media: a fire which broke out at dawn at a nightclub called “Kiss” on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012, in Santa Maria (RS). Thus, it must be pointed out that the sample selected for this study was defined on the day of its publication, January 30, 2012, but its monitoring only ceased on February 19; a total of 21 days between the posting of the news and the end of its monitoring. During this period, all comments added to the publication of FSP on Facebook were collected, amounting to 207 interactions.

Each comment added to the publication of the FSP is considered as data for analysis, as well as the text and the image of which the post consists. The comments made by users were understood to be mechanisms of interaction due to the dialogical character established with the actual fact, with the news itself, with its author (the FSP newspaper), with characters who revolve around the event and, at the same time, with other users.

**Figure 1** News



Source: FSP page on Facebook

As shown in Figure 1, the piece of news published by Folha appears below the identification details of the originator of the message – its picture (the logo of the FSP newspaper) and its username (Folha de S. Paulo) – the element of temporal indication (January 30<sup>th</sup>) and, finally, the element which indicates the restriction of the publication<sup>11</sup>, in this case, the globe icon indicating that the message is public<sup>12</sup>, that is, it can be read by any other Facebook user.

**Figure 2** Note illustrating the news and the mechanisms of interaction



Source: FSP page on Facebook

As observed in Figures 1 and 2, the selected piece of news for this research has three basic dimensions which must be observed, namely: text, image and interactions. The first dimension, the text of the FSP (Figure 1), is divided into an initial sentence, which is almost an appeal to the observation of the image of the note, and a final phrase, which seems to act as the caption to the image. The link leads to the text in the Folha de São Paulo webpage (Folha.com) and probably induces a more detailed exploration of the fact. However, the content of the FSP page is restricted and exclusive to subscribers of the newspaper. Thus, it can be argued that the publication of the newspaper on Facebook seems to work as a synthesis able to instigate readers not to merely follow the link which leads to the website Folha.com, but, due to its restriction of access to content, to become subscribers of the newspaper. The second dimension, namely, the image (picture of the note), is the journalistic information itself. It is understood, therefore, that the subject explored by the article is the very existence of the note given that its author is a

survivor of the tragedy at the Kiss Nightclub. The relevance of the note presented is not, therefore, linked to its content, but essentially to the authorship and to the circumstances in which it was drafted.

Finally, the third basic element of the analyzed publication, that is, the interactions, proved to be the most fruitful aspect for the purposes of this study. As shown in Figure 2, the post led to 71 shares (others users shared the content on their own pages in the system), 372 likes and a total of 207 comments. These particular 207 comments will be at the core of the discussion proposed next, because they represent more clearly the content and the type of interaction that is established between news material for a consolidated media channel (FSP) and the users of the SNS Facebook.

Prior to the analysis and the systematization of data, it should be noted that, with the recent incorporation of SNSs to the routine of the major media outlets and, consequently, the complex process of production, distribution and circulation of news – journalists began to look for ways to familiarize themselves with the environment and the processes which shape the social networking sites (ZAGO, 2011; TEIXEIRA, 2011). The main aspect to be considered in the context of SNSs is that the performance of users has significant impact on the dissemination of information, for “spreading the news and reading the news content depend directly on the activity of these interconnected anonymous users” (Bastos; ZAGO 2013, p.118). Thus, when using social networks to deliver their news, newspapers not only provide access to their content but also enable the contribution of other users to pass on the material (ZAGO, 2011), be it through shares, or through likes and / or comments about the events. Given this reality, users of SNSs become (co) responsible for the spread of information (JENKINS; FORD, GREEN, 2013) both within the source system, and beyond, in other environments. As Bastos and Zago (2013) indicated,

[...] The activities of users who “like” or “re-tweet” particular news enable the content to be displayed to the contacts of those users. This replication raises the visibility to the news, which receives more attention and a wider audience, reflected in terms of the number of readings and accesses (p.119).

In this way, it can be argued that the participatory and collaborative nature (LÉVY; Lemos, 2010) of SNSs promotes the distribution of information between users, networks and subnets in a ripple effect (RECUERO, 2009), i.e., the contents are disseminated in a “viral” manner, from one group to another. In the light of the influence

of SNSs on contemporary journalistic activity, recent studies have analyzed with some frequency the relationship between journalism and social networking sites (Bruno, 2011; BRUNS; HIGHFIELD 2012; ZAGO, 2011; Dalmaso 2012; TEIXEIRA, 2011; HERMIDA 2012; JR, 2013; VIS 2012, PRIMO, 2011). However, much of the research focuses on the type of journalistic content shared or on the subject of social networks, which through the SNSs, blogs, forums etc., provide alternative sources of information, imprinting a more horizontal nature on the communication process. There are few studies focused on the direct relationship between newspapers and users of SNSs and their possible significances. This phenomenon, covering the relationship between newspapers and users, as yet little explored and widely present in SNS, is what the present study aims to reflect on through the assessment and organization of data.

## 2 ASSESSMENT AND ORGANIZATION OF COLLECTED DATA

After an initial observation of the 207 comments collected, due to the methodological orientation adopted, it was necessary to systematize / categorize them according to the content presented. Thus, similarities in selected comments were drawn by analyzing what was said by the users and the manner in which it was expressed. Such analysis resulted in a classification that can be observed in Table 1.

**Table 1** Classification and occurrence of categories

<b>Nature of Comments</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>
Criticism of the newspaper and / or news reporting	61
Support for the newspaper and / or legitimacy of the news	04
Criticism among users	84
Collaboration	12
Solidarity	38
Satire	11
Others	09

Source: elaborated by the author

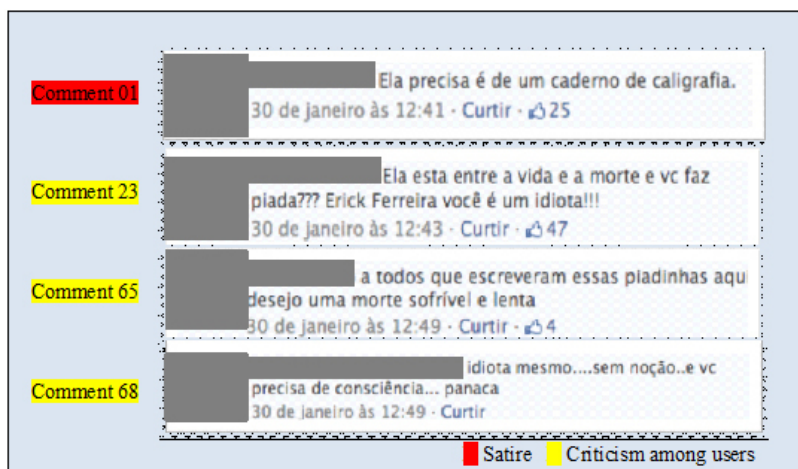
It should be explained that the sum of the number of occurrences of the categories shown in Table 1 exceeds the total of 207 comments since some are allocated to more than one category. The content of the messages and the attitude assumed by the users through their speeches, led, as indicated, to the distinction of 7



categories, namely: (1) criticism of the newspaper and / or news reporting, (2) support for the newspaper and / or legitimacy of news, (3) criticism among users, (4) collaboration, (5) solidarity, (6) satire, and (7) others. The first category to be described will be the one with the highest number of occurrences, that is, user criticisms. There were 84 comments focused on the depreciation of another comment and / or its author. It is important to stress that comments are displayed by the Facebook system itself, immediately below the original publication, following the chronological order of their publications. The system also allows each user to receive a notification when a new comment is added to a topic with which they have already interacted and / or when another user mentioned it in a post.

Figure 3 provides examples of **criticism** (yellow) **directed at the author and at the content** of the comment 1 (red), the first interaction between a user and the material of FSP. It is observed that there is no reference in comments 23, 65 and 68, set forth as examples, to the information material. They cease to act as comments of the topic of origin to become a parallel dialogue between users. Through this category, it is perceived that the comment tool fails to work according to what the system had anticipated and, because of the appropriation of the users, starts to assume the function of a conversation.

**Figure 3** Picture of the news and the mechanisms of interaction with the publications on Facebook



Source: FSP page on Facebook

According to Recuero (2012), it is exactly this type of conversation which represents the primary form of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which in turn is a product of social appropriation of CMC tools such as SNSs. The appropriation is, thus, the result of resignifications assigned by actors when they make such tools relevant in their daily lives. Therefore, CMC,

[...] comprises conversational practices marked by exchanges between social actors. Its features derive, hence, also from the appropriation of digital tools such as conversational environments. Examining these conversations is essential to understand the changes in language and social groups which emerge in these spaces (RECUERO 2012, p.27).

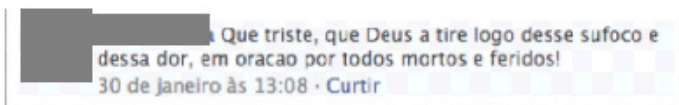
That being said, this section will analyze the first comment (Figure 3) which, in turn, has been allocated into a second category, namely **satire**. Although this category has added up to only 11 comments, it proved to have great influence on the production and content of subsequent ones. The humorous and satirical observations about the note presented as factual news and / or about other users and their statements were considered as examples of this type of interaction. It is clear the aggressive tone of the comments aimed at rebuking the authors of this type of comment, such reaction which seem to delimit the invisible boundary of what may or may not be said in that space due to the full context of social upheaval that orbits the fact in question. It is important to highlight that there is not, in the corpus, any reprimand or interference by the FSP, all possible orderings and constraints are defined and exposed by other users who comment on the newspaper's profile. André Lemos and Pierre Lévy (2010) claim that the insult and contempt are usually frowned upon in networked conversations,

Each person is expected to know what is talked about and how to behave well. The slightest motion of humor is apparent in our way, as our way of addressing the interlocutors. Whatever our status may be, we no longer have the right to disqualify the problem or the issue of another. The Internet civilizes us: the other is drawn nearer to us through language (Lemos; LÉVY 2010, p.232-233).

In agreement with the observations of Lemos and Lévy, the third category extracted from the analyzed comments was the **messages of solidarity**. In this group were gathered comments whose contents revolve around the expression of feelings of shock and sympathy for the situation of the author of the note, the victims' families and / or the occurrence of the tragedy. It is noteworthy that, out of the 38 representatives of

this category, the majority aims at conveying messages of hope to the families and survivors of the tragedy, as can be seen in Figure 4. These messages show the atmosphere of public outcry that has been extended to cyberspace and consequently to social networking sites.

**Figure 4** Comments of solidarity (sample 114)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

The fourth category observed, **others**, consists of 9 comments whose contents fluctuate between dissemination of external links<sup>13</sup> and record of emotional expressions through the use of emoticons<sup>14</sup> which are part of some moments of the discussion among users, while in others, they are related to the content of the news. It is evident that the samples of such category could, if the space were not so restricted, be analyzed in more detail as they indicate an interesting phenomenon whereby users of the network benefit from the social capital<sup>15</sup> of a vastly connected member, FSP, to publicize personal material such as the address to their websites, blogs or profiles on other networks.

Another category detected during analysis, **collaboration**<sup>16</sup>, gathers the comments aimed at a collaborative action, be that geared to another user or focused on the news content itself. This work also considered questions about the news fact as collaborative actions. With 12 samples of this category detected in the corpus, it could be noted that on Facebook, there appears to be greater freedom of interference and contribution to the news reporting and to the process of understanding / signification of fact. A great number of the samples of this category aim at transcribing the contents of the note or presenting the context of their production. Figure 5 shows examples of collaboration:

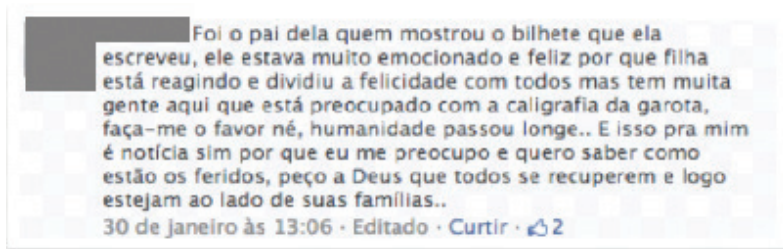
**Figure 5** Comments of collaboration (respectively samples 170 and 195)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

The fifth category to be mentioned consists of **comments of support or legitimacy** of the factual news. This category draws particular attention by showing a position assumed by the users through which they take upon themselves the power / knowledge of what should be considered news and the boundaries between newsworthy and non-newsworthy facts. In the following example, Figure 6, it is seen that the user understands their interest in the condition of the victims of the fire as a legitimizing factor to the publication and nomination of the story as a piece of news.

**Figure 6** Comments of support/legitimacy (sample 97)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

It should be highlighted that this legitimizing stance, detected in 4 objects, is a response to criticism from other users to the material posted by the newspaper. These, in turn, comprise the last category detected during analysis and the second most numerous, namely: **criticism of the newspaper and / or factual news report**. Certainly these last two categories are the most fruitful to the proposed analysis of the relationship between users and the channels of communication - in this case, the FSP newspaper - through SNS Facebook, once their contents demonstrate more clearly the interaction of users with the means / content. Therefore, this study will focus with greater diligence, on the subsequent discussion, the exposure of the idiosyncrasies of the category “comments of support or legitimacy” and especially the category “criticism to the newspaper and / or factual news report”.

Prior to that, it is necessary to submit the reorganization of categories, which following a second consideration, were divided into groups that differ in the dynamics of interaction. The result can be appreciated, briefly, by observing Table 2:

**Table 2** Classification of the categories according to the type of interaction and its occurrence

<b>Interaction</b>	<b>Occurrence</b>	<b>Categories of the Comments</b>
User x Newspaper	65	Criticism of the newspaper and/or of the factual news, legitimizing of the news Support for the newspaper
User x User	84	Criticism of others
Varied	70	Collaboration, Solidarity, Satire and Others

Source: Elaborated by the author based on the analysis of the data

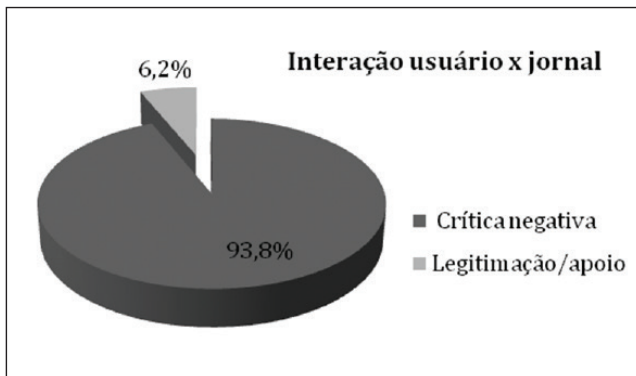
The distribution of categories, as suggested by Table 2, is relevant since it indicates which categories consist of comments aimed, particularly, at the newspaper or at the content published by it. It is believed, therefore, that the 65 comments directed at FSP prove to be more useful data for the understanding of the relationship between user x newspaper. Thus, the following section will discuss the data indicated and the theoretical contextualization needed for the recognition of the phenomenon that may be gradually changing the relationship of “social network” users with journalism.

### **3 ARGUING WITH THE DATA: THE INTERACTION USER x NEWSPAPER**

With the emergence of the CMC tools and especially of cyberspace, there was a gradual democratization of speech spaces and, at the same time, the increasing establishment of spaces consisting of a continuous flow of information exchange between people connected, such as the SNSs (Lévy, 1999; Lemos, 2004). Such tools change the processes of communication, production, creation and circulation of goods and services at the beginning of XXI century, resulting in a new configuration of the entire cultural system (Lemos, 2005). A key feature of this new format is, according to Lemos, the rupture of the emission pole, factor which directly affects the journalistic sphere since, on the web, users can become “[...] an information producer (a journalist in the essential sense of the word), a journalist of themselves, but also all that is possible to witness with smartphones, laptop or palm at hand.”(Lemos; LÉVY 2010, p.82).

Thus, when observing the group of comments directed at interacting with the newspaper, the chasm between the number of comments aimed at legitimizing the news report of FSP (04) and number of those criticizing the same (61), represented by Figure 7, it should be borne in mind that the current social context does not seem so welcoming to mediation of the channels of communication and the homogenizing dynamics of the so-called Means of Mass Communication (MMC). In short, it can be argued that “the phenomenon of social media and content generation by the users reconfigures the relationship between amateurs and the media industry and its official institutions” (DOMINGUES, 2010, p.68).

**Figure 7** Graph: occurrence of the categories of comments in the interaction user x newspaper

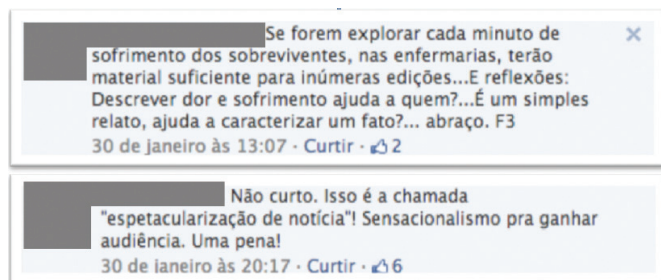


Source: Elaborated by the author based on the analysis of the data

On Figure 8, displayed below, a critical and provocative attitude in the speech of the users can be observed. That fact corroborates the aforementioned enquiring minds of users with respect to what should or should not be considered news and therefore published by a media outlet. Although the comments may not draw immediate attention, they reveal a social phenomenon that is potentially affecting the way to do journalism. It is usually been claimed, from the perspective of democratic theory, that journalism is recognized as a field or sphere of specific activity consisting of “specialized agents”, the journalists, who hold the monopoly of idiosyncratic expertise/knowledge (what the news are and how to produce them) (TRAQUINA, 2005, 2008). However, such monopoly

can only be sustained through the social legitimacy of journalism as an “organizer” activity of the informational chaos and of the human experience itself (Schudson, 1988, 1995).

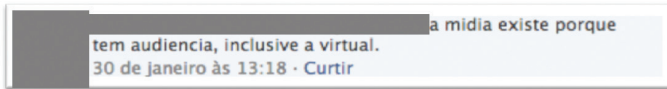
**Figure 8** Criticism of the newspaper and /or of the factual news report (respectively samples 113, 202)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

The comments made indicate the sense of uncertainty from the users in relation to the ability of the “specialized agents” to filter the events which should be delivered as a piece of news. It is known that, over the historical process, the understanding of what is or is not news has changed due to social and cultural changes in a given community (PEN, 2006). Nevertheless, from its consolidation as a professional field, in the late nineteenth century, threats to the privileged role of journalism have been rare. Journalism held not only the knowledge, but also the necessary means for production and distribution of information (O’Boyle, 1968; TRAQUINA 2005).

Currently, one can no longer consider the public/reader as a mere receiver of information produced by large media outlets. In addition to the easy access to alternative content and to the possibility to create, edit and publish the information they want, the “public” today feels comfortable to take the position of the critic of the news content, filtering and setting limits to the role of journalism. The example below (Figure 9) makes it evident that users of SNSs appear to have awareness of their bargaining power over traditional media outlets. If, in the cultural system of MMC, society needed journalism to get to know its own reality (PEN, 2006), today, with the CMC tools, journalism has become just one of many other sources of information.

**Figure 9** Criticism of the newspaper and/or factual news report (sample 131)

Source: FSP page on Facebook

It can be stated that the SNSs have broadened the system of diffusion and circulation of information, resulting in traditional media companies losing their absolute control over the process of production and circulation of information. “Digital networks have come to be characterized by a non-linear flow, which significantly alters the shape of what is called the global news sphere” (PRIMO, 2011, p.3). Today, individuals do not consider traditional means as the sole source of information anymore and do not fully trust official media reports; users are creating new strategies to interact and search for content on the internet without requiring the constant mediation of media outlets (PRIMO, 2008). Users search the different perspectives present in blogs, forums or SNSs. Thus the worldview of those users emerges from the crossing-referencing of all this information which formulates their “media informational compound” (PRIMO, 2011, p.12).

The aggressive tone of the users – observed, especially, in the criticism of the newspaper category – seems to point to a sense of “competitiveness” between users and journalistic media in the network. The observation of such behavior leads to the conclusion that this “aggression” is, roughly, an expression of the recent taking over of the emission pole and, at the same time, a provocation to those who for so long were “immune” to review and / or contestation of the public. It should be noted that, once done and materialized on Facebook, this provocative behavior and sometimes the rejection of journalistic vehicles is potentially represented by a network of people.

This is argued because each actor has a certain level of influence on the other members of the group and may thereby stimulate and transmit the emergence of ideas, behaviors, actions, etc. Below there is an example (Figure 10) of this attempt to mobilize a network towards a goal. In the case mentioned, the user stimulates others to denounce the FSP page, given that the material published has been considered inappropriate, according to him, by a large number of users. It can be said that the message conveys, to some extent, the potential reversal in the traditional hierarchy in which the paper defines what news is and, as such, defines what society



needs to know. In this example, the user does not legitimize the fact reported as news and, thus, seeks to exercise his/her power by denouncing the newspaper content with the prospect of removing it from the network and / or from its feed<sup>17</sup>.

**Figure 10** Criticism of the newspaper and/or of the factual news report (respectively samples 188, 189)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

Some of the 65 comments classified as criticizing the newspaper show (Figure 11) how the incitement to rejection can reach the effective exclusion of the connection to the media profile from the contacts network of a particular actor or the negligence of the news content published by newspaper. Whether those actions are rendered effective or not, expressions such as those cited indicate a degree of animosity between users and the newspaper.

**Figure 11** Criticism of the newspaper and/or of the factual news report (respectively samples 187, 166)



Source: FSP page on Facebook

According to Recuero (2009), the discussion concerning journalistic activity includes, nowadays, the recognition and discussion of journalists attitudes towards social networking sites which, the author indicates, can produce, filter and reverberate information based on specific perceptions of its members. Thus, the author highlights that networks can be complementary in journalism, as in the role of gatewaching. Networks can, thus, operate with a dual informational role defined by the relationship between social networks and news content published in CMC tools, that is: as sources, as filters or as the space for the reverberation of the information.

The analysis of the comments originating from the interaction user x newspaper, presented here seems, in turn, to provide clues to the investigation of social networks as a form of critical surveillance of the mediums of communication and the journalistic products. It is said thereby that users, in exercising their power of speech within the SNS, are, according to examples extracted from the corpus, acting somehow as the ombudsman of journalistic activity linked to the network. If this is confirmed by future studies, the role of ombudsman<sup>18</sup> can also be understood not only as the third informational role of social networks, but as a strong evidence that the typical user x newspaper relationship is being transformed, mainly due to the rupture of the emission pole (Lemos, 2004) and the subsequent dissipation of the power of speech (GOMES, 2000).

It is noteworthy that the evidence presented here cannot be seen as incontestable evidence of a shift in the relationship between social actors and journalistic media. This work represents only a small excerpt of a comprehensive phenomenon that is not yet solidified, but in progress. By this, it is suggested that the examples presented throughout this discussion should be understood as small clues to a potential transformation in the configuration of the user x journalism relationship. If, as seen, the CMC tools, especially SNSs, collaborate with and demonstrate deep cultural transformations which alter the behavior and relationships of actors / users, it seems logical that, being an essentially social activity, the journalistic field will not be immune to changes that emerge from networks.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout this article, the intention has been to outline a path capable of providing clues as to how users are relating to journalism within an SNS. It is clear that the limitations imposed by the corpus do not enable one to elaborate comprehensive considerations, but the data presented here can serve as indicators of a latent change if compared to the theoretical approaches that permeated the discussion. It was seen that, from the 207 comments related to the post of Folha, 65 were focused on the interaction user x newspaper. From these, 93.8% have content geared to negatively criticizing the newspaper and / or news material and only 6.2% seem to try to legitimize the story of the FSP. Table 3 briefly presents the systematization imposed on the corpus throughout this work.

**Table 3** Systematization of research

Interaction		Category of Comments	
User x Newspaper	65	Criticism of the newspaper	61
		and/or of the factual news report	04
		Support for the newspaper and/or legitimacy of the news	
User x User	84	Criticism of others	84
Varied	70	Collaboration	12
		Solidarity	38
		Satire	11
		Others	09

Source: Elaborated by the author based on data analysis

The disparity between the number of comments intended to legitimize and the number of comments intended to criticize seems to point to the distress of the traditional relationship newspaper x user or at least to some changes in the public positioning and behavior formerly considered passive. It was seen through the theoretical support by Lemos and Lévy (2010) that users have gained speech by rupturing the emission pole, made possible by the emergence of the web and the mechanisms of CMC. This means that, currently, users of tools such as Facebook share the power which was previously restricted to the professional journalistic field. The minor changes in the relationship between the network public and the journalistic sphere may lead to gradual dissolution of the hierarchy (TEIXEIRA, 2012) which formerly postulated journalism as the fourth estate (TRAQUINA, 2005, 2008) as the absolute word bearer (GOMES, 2000) and as unquestionable expert on true facts.

Therefore, the analysis of the data presented appear to corroborate the idea that the rupture of emission pole shifts the journalistic field's traditional role as **the** organizer of informational chaos and **the** transmitter/legitimate reporter of social reality. This idea permeates, explicitly or implicitly, the work of authors such as André Lemos (2004), Pierre Lévy (1999), Alex Primo (2011), Teasing Nelson (2008) and Gabriela Zago (2011), since all discuss the (re) structuring of the social body (society, institutions and processes) due to new practices (more collaborative, proactive, interactive and plural) set by users from the network on their environments of exchange. It can be said that, in the information era (Castells, 2010), what is seen is the consolidation of a "post-media system" supported by "a

non-pyramidal logic [as in the era of MMC], but with a more matrix-type or asymmetric structure, in which multiple actors are part of the communication process “(Cádima, 2012, p.237). This new system,

[...][...] appeals, in fact, to a new type of journalism which is highly collaborative, asymmetrical - between sources, journalists and producers - but whose hybridism must necessarily reject the compromise engineering that have shackled the media, returning them now to the social experience, to folksonomies, to the network culture and to new emerging forms of producing, editing and distributing information, which is already an irreversible reality (CÁDIMA, 2012, p.251).

It is seen from the results obtained by the analysis and their cross-checking with the references given that the post-media citizen does not accept, at least not without reluctance, the vertically integrated hierarchies to journalism that guaranteed some immunity to questioning and criticism. The current public of journalism is increasingly familiarized with the horizontal aspects of the relations, public discussion, collaborative action, collective construction of knowledge and the assumption of a critical position, especially, with respect to spheres of power, such as media. In this context, social networks do not seem to understand the news story as undeniable truth, but only as one of the versions floating in a network of stories that intersect, collide and sometimes complement each other. If journalism was once regarded as the social supervisor of the powers, currently it has come to be – as a grounded institution – potentially monitored by the cyber social networking and confronted by the flow of information they produce, edit and articulate through the CMC tools.

## NOTES

- 1 We consider social networking sites the digital tools which provide the construction of a profile or persona that present the individual in the network, the publication of the social network of each user of the system and, finally, the interaction between the actors (BOYD; ELLISON 2007). Contrary to what many believe, SNSs do not consist of the social network itself; they are just systems supporting the actors and connections of which the network is constituted (RECUERO, 2009).
- 2 The profile of the Folha de São Paulo on Facebook can be accessed through the following address: <https://www.facebook.com/folhadesp?fref=ts>

- 3 Post is the term by which the publications of Facebook users tend to be referred.
- 4 The idea of social ties is the actual connection between actors who are involved in interactions. The tie thus can be considered as the “result of sedimentation of relations between agents” (RECUERO 2009, p.38).
- 5 The World Wide Web, also known as WWW, is a hypermedia document system that is executed over the Internet.
- 6 Meme is a term that indicates a unit of information with the ability to multiply, either by transmission from one person to another or from sites where it is stored. The idea of meme emerged in 1976, in the work of Richard Dawkins called “The Selfish Gene”. For the author, the meme would be to memory analogous to what the gene is to genetics. Thus, Dawkins considers that the meme is a unit of cultural evolution which can self-propagate functioning as a replicators of behavior. Ideas, languages, sounds, drawings, values or anything else easily understandable and autonomously transmissible can be configured as a meme.
- 7 Flash mobs are instant gatherings of people in a particular place previously determined to perform some unusual action, and quickly disperse. The actions are usually organized through the exchange of messages over the Internet.
- 8 Experian Hitwise is the leading global digital intelligence tool for Experian Marketing Services.
- 9 According to figures released by the group Folha and audited by Instituto Verificador de Circulação (IVC) in October 2012, Folha is the Brazilian newspaper with the largest production and circulation among the publications of general interest. Data are available on the Folha website ([www.folha.uol.com.br/institucional](http://www.folha.uol.com.br/institucional)).
- 10 On Facebook there is an indicator called the “talking about this.” This is intended to indicate how much a user and their contents are “discussed” through the rest of the network. The metric that comprises such indicator takes into account any story (post) on Facebook involving the brand or the profile in question. Anything that is shared in another person’s wall is considered.
- 11 The system of Facebook allows its users to create lists or groups of people and share their publications restricted to one of these groups

- or publicly, making the content accessible to any user of the site.
- 12 The system of Facebook allows its users to create lists or groups of people and share their publications restricted to one of these groups or publicly, making the content accessible to any user of the site.
  - 13 External links are links that lead to any material stored outside the system in which it was published.
  - 14 Emoticons are paralinguistic forms of communication which are designed by a sequence of typefaces, such as: :), or ^ - ^, and also an image that conveys the psychological emotional state of those who employs them. The word derives from the junction of the terms emotion + icon.
  - 15 According to Raquel Recuero (2009), Social Capital is the set of features of a certain group that can be enjoyed by all members of the group, even if individually, and that is based on reciprocity. It is embedded in social relations and is determined by their contents. Also according to that author, SNSs are able to build and facilitate the emergence of types of capital that are not easily accessible to social actors in an offline space.
  - 16 It is worth noting that when talking about collaboration one does not necessarily mean a positive action. Thus, it is considered as collaborative behavior that which adds and / or corrects, clarifies information regardless of the tone that the message assumes within the context.
  - 17 The so-called News Feed - the center column of the homepage of every Facebook user – is a constantly updated list of history of people and pages that each user follows. The stories include status updates, photos, videos, links, activity in applications and options “like”.
  - 18 Ombudsman is the name given to the professional who, when hired by a media outlet, criticizes, exposes weaknesses and points out the mistakes made by the company and its professionals. He may also suggest changes and point out possible solutions to the problems identified. By the nature of their work, the ombudsman has pre-fixed employment contract and thus can act with total freedom.

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