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CONTEXTUALIZATION IN HYPERMEDIA NEWS REPORT: narrative and immersion

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ABSTRACT - The mobile journalism and, particularly, hypermedia stories get new possibilities for making narratives, boosted by the mobility itself, and also by the use of touchable screens, accelerometer, GPS receiver and permanent connection to the internet. Due to these potentials, tablets, smartphones and wearables reconfigure processes and journalistic narratives for the web. From this premise, the article focuses the research in hypermedia storytelling for mobile devices, aiming to observe how the hypertext resources are used in the contextualization of journalistic narratives published at mobile devices (tablets and smartphones). To achieve this aim, we realized a systematic analysis from newspaper editions of *Globo A Mais* journal for two months. This was done by selecting a case exemplifying the way the hypertext features can serve the contextualization.

Keywords: Narrative hypermedia. Contextualization. Story. Immersion. Mobile devices.

CONTEXTUALIZAÇÃO DE REPORTAGENS HIPERMÍDIA: narrativa e imersão

RESUMO - O jornalismo para dispositivos móveis, e em especial as reportagens hipermédia, ganham novas possibilidades de narrativas impulsionadas pela mobilidade, uso de telas *touchscreen*, acelerômetro, receptor de GPS e ligação permanente à rede. Graças a estas potencialidades, os tablets, smartphones e wearables reconfiguraram os processos e as narrativas webjornalísticas. Partindo dessa premissa, o artigo foca o estudo na reportagem hipermédia para dispositivos móveis, tendo como objetivo observar a forma como os recursos hipertextuais são usados na contextualização das narrativas jornalísticas destinadas a dispositivos móveis (tablets e smartphones). Para se alcançar o objetivo foi realizada uma análise sistemática das edições do jornal *Globo A Mais* durante dois meses, selecionando um caso exemplificador da forma como os recursos hipertextuais podem servir à contextualização.

Palavras-chave: Narrativa hipermédia. Contextualização. Reportagem. Imersão. Dispositivos móveis.

CONTEXTUALIZACIÓN DE LAS REPORTAJES HIPERMEDIA: narrativa y la inmersión

RESUMEN - El periodismo encaminado a los dispositivos móviles y, en particular, los reportajes hipermedia, adquieren nuevas posibilidades narrativas impulsadas por la movilidad del uso de pantallas *touchscreen*, acelerómetros, receptores de GPS y conexiones de red permanente. Gracias a estas capacidades, tanto en las tabletas como en los smartphones y los wearables se reconfiguran los procesos y narrativas webperiodísticas. A partir de esta premisa, el artículo que aquí se presenta está centrado en el estudio del reportaje hipermedia en los dispositivos móviles, siendo su objetivo el de observar cómo se utilizan los recursos hipertextuales en la contextualización de las narrativas periodísticas destinadas a estos dispositivos (*tabletas y smartphones*). Para lograr este objetivo se ha realizado un análisis sistemático de las ediciones oficiales del periódico *Globo A Mais* durante dos meses, seleccionando para ello un caso que ejemplifica la forma en que los recursos hipertextuales pueden servir a dicha contextualización.

Palabras clave: Narrativa hipermedia. Contextualización. Reportaje. Inmersión. Dispositivos móviles.

INTRODUCTION

Journalism began using the Internet even before the emergence of the Web. Services such as e-mail or FTP (File Transfer Protocol), a protocol that enables a fast transfer of files, predate the World Wide Web. With the Web development, online journalism began an evolutionary process closely linked to the technological advances of the new media, eventually establishing a whole set of characteristics. Journalism done on the Web is constantly evolving, with the news, as the main product of journalism, “at the same time shifting (oscillating, subject to changes) and mutant (ever changing)” (JORGE, 2013 p. 11).

Over almost 30 years, *web journalism*¹ went through several phases (CABRERA GONZALEZ, 2000; PAVLIK, 2001; PRYOR, 2002; PALACIOS, 2004; MIELNICZUK, 2003; BARBOSA, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2013) and developed its own characteristics (PALACIOS, 2004; SALAVERRÍA, 2005 Canavilhas, 2007, 2010, 2014; PALACIOS; CUNHA, 2012).

Technologies and social demands have change shifts that can be perceived throughout the web journalism process, from the investigation of journalistic guidelines to the distribution of media products (CANAVILHAS, 2007). Journalism has developed different ways to use the media though it is still possible to find the so-called shovelware, i.e., mere transpositions of the printed contents to the Internet, radio or TV, a common situation in the first generations of web journalism (MIELNICZUK, 2003). However, being limited to (re) transmitting on the Internet a radio or television news, as useful as it may be, is to use the Web only as an alternative distribution support, devaluing the multitude of features and expressive and communicative possibilities of the World Wide Web (ZAMITH, 2013). “The Internet not only includes all the capabilities of the old media (...) but it offers a wide range of new capabilities, including interactivity, on-demand access, control by the user and customization” (PAVLIK, 2005, p. 3).

Over the years, various studies have accompanied the development of the Web, therefore it is possible to identify the fourth (BARBOSA, 2008) and fifth (BARBOSA, 2013) web journalism generations which are respectively the database journalism (serving only as support for journalistic practices, from pre-production to post-production) and the database journalism paradigm (that meets mediality features, horizontality, multimedia continuum, mobile media, applications and local products).

The emergence of these mobile media has increased significantly in recent years, leading to the consumption of news contents on a wider range of devices such as smartphones and tablets, which entered the media ecosystem, forever transforming it (CANAVILHAS, 2012). In addition to mobility, journalistic contents gained new possibilities as a result of these new devices which are equipped with touchscreen screens, accelerometer, GPS receiver and permanent connection to Internet. Thanks to these technical features, tablets, smartphones and wearables have reconfigured journalism processes and narratives. For Barbosa, “the current situation is a joint, integrated action between the media, conforming products and processes” (2013, p.33), thus the systematization in generations does not refer to dated and watertight processes since they coexist and the dynamics simultaneously concur in the same journalistic site, portal or news application.

Since the mid-1990s, research has attempted to study the characteristics of web journalism as a discursive production space. Initially, hypertextuality, interactivity and multimodality were identified as the major new features of discursive practice in the digital environment (MACHADO; PALACIOS, 1996). With the consolidation of web journalism, other features stood out, reaching the seven elements that define it: hypertextuality, multimodality, interactivity, memory, instantaneity, personalization and ubiquity (CANAVILHAS, 2014).

According to Palacios (2004), these features do not represent breaks with previous discursive productions in the digital environment, but they are a continuity of empowered characteristics present in previous media. It can be said that web journalism continues immersed in a reconfiguration process that needs to be seen through the complexity of society and the possibilities that the environment offers for the construction of stories.

Based on this assumption, this article focuses on the study of the hypermedia news story for mobile devices, aiming to demonstrate how hypertext resources work together in the context of these journalistic narratives on mobile devices (tablets and smartphones). Thus, for two months a systematic analysis of the evening *Globo A Mais*² newspaper was conducted, selecting for this an exemplifying piece of how hypertext features can serve the context. While there are other examples of contextualization, the selection took into account the news report that used the

best features hypermedia, including dynamic and interaction resources. The report “Abstract Art - Kandinsky Media” of 27th January became the object of study.

1 THE HYPERMEDIA NEWS REPORT

By using web journalism characteristics, the news report becomes hypermedia as it makes use of the various communication modes (PAVLIK, 2005) through aggregating information that supplements the understanding of the content i.e. that contextualizes the information. Communicative modalities are seen as all the resources used to facilitate and expand the understanding of the events reported, which can be written text, audio, video, photographs, animations and infographics.

The hypertext and multimediatic structures, together with memory and customization, challenge journalists to try different ways to write stories in web journalism. “Hypermedia acts for creating narratives in which additional information to the text in itself is a key element of information online” (LONGHI, 2009, p.192). Uniting the web journalism features previously mentioned to build contextualized narratives, the journalist has new ways to produce, publish and relate to the reader, taking into account the demand for hypermultimedia content.

It is important to remember that multimediality, much in vogue in web journalism, predates digital media, as it only takes the necessary to match two types of languages in the same message for it to become multimedia. Unlike the concept of hypermedia, which is essentially linked to the web context, because “it is understood as the language that combines, besides verbal texts, sounds and images in a single information environment, with the possibility of interactive connection between its parts” (LONGHI, 2014, p. 11).

The news report on web journalism has the possibility of using, in an innovative way, the media resources to narrate the events. Convergence of languages, interactivity, immersion and engagement with the reader are potentials that allow language hybridization provided by the digital and hypermedia environment. According to Larrondo Ureta, hypermedia news “demonstrate variable resources, but also other constants that indicate that we are facing a hypertext narrative form of great wealth, one multimediatic genre with vast

expressive richness and a polymorphic form of great stylistic wealth “ (2009, p. 78-79).

The news report is a major experimental stage for journalism, remaining as a central expressive mode for differentiated, deep and open information.

1.1 THE MOBILITY

The so-called mobile devices, which include smartphones and tablets, are digital devices equipped with ubiquitous connectivity and designed for everyday portability. As platforms for news consumption, these devices have their particular grammar, adapted production practices, dynamics of individual consumption and specific business models (BARBOSA; SEIXAS, 2013).

However, smartphones and tablets have differences regarding screen size, weight and connection speed, that can influence the writing techniques, building narrative and discursive formats. The tablets portability and screen dimensions make it “a hybrid environment advantageous to the emergence of informative models of fusion between these two realities” (CANAVILHAS; SATUF, 2013, p. 40).

Tablets are considered by Paulino a media “immersive and interactive” (2013, p.17). In addition to the legacy inherit from the print and online media, the author points out other features inherent to tablets that influence in the presentation format and interaction with content. These are: double orientation (allows horizontal and vertical viewing) and screen tap (touchscreen) (PAULINO, 2013).

With tablets, journalism gains a new support bearing journal and magazine references, but also has marks of media convergence, referring in this particular case to radio or television. Despite being a digital medium with the possibility of ubiquitous connection, content consumption does not require permanent connection, as it can be downloaded and consumed later, regardless of whether there is internet connection or not.

Besides touch and interactivity of contents, immersion (MIELNICZUK *et al.*, 2014) comes as a recent element to be computed in journalistic narrative formats in the times of mobile devices, especially in tablets. This immersion, an evolution of the readers involvement which Pavlik (2005) states as an essential condition to contextualization

in journalism, is similarly important in smartphones, particularly in tablets because they are individual use devices that accompany the consumer daily and have a screen with good dimensions favourable for a smooth interaction (5 to 6.9 inches).

1.2 THE HYPERTEXTUAL NARRATIVE IN THE HYPERMEDIA NEWS REPORT

In the 1960's, Theodor Nelson defined "hypertext" as a non-sequential writing, with different nodes connected by nexus that create different itineraries (various reading options that allow the readers to choose). The majority of authors working with digital media choose the definition of George Landow that defines hypertext as:

[...] text composed of blocks of text - what Barthes terms a *lexia* - and the electronic links that join them. [...] Electronic links connect lexias «external» to a work - say, commentary on it by another author or parallel or contrasting texts - as well as within it and thereby create text that is experienced as nonlinear, or, more properly, as multilinear or multisequential³. (LANDOW, 1995, p. 15-16)

The potential of multiple textual sequences, provided by electronic connections, enables hypertextuality (CANAVILHAS, 2014). By highlighting the hypertext features and the changes it causes in relation to the idea of text, Landow (1997) shows that hypertext writing emphasizes the links between the information blocks, building the intertextuality of contents. The potential of this interlacing information blocks through hyperlinks leads to hypertextuality.

In this way, the hypertext narrative is configured as an "unfinished structure composed of multiple lexias which multiply the production of meaning and introduces elements of rupture in the textual unit established by the author" (LARRONDO URETA, 2009, p. 71). The hypertext theory (Landow, 1997) addresses the need for narratives to abandon concepts like center, hierarchy and linearity, and adopt the multilinearity, nodes, links and networks. This non-sequential narration is used in web journalism because it facilitates the relationship of the facts being narrated with previous information (memory).

Hypertextuality and multimediality in web journalism news report allow increasing the documentary character of its form and

to value the elements that give meaning to the material based on two basic principles: the informative consistency and informational density. Thus, hypertext and the communicative modalities enrich the form, expanding their uses to report on issues and/or complex events and strengthen journalistic discourses deepening the information, expansion and contextualization of the events. Hypertextuality can also improve the reader's experience with content through the construction of different reading paths and the exploitation of hypertext resources (customization).

1.3 THE HYPERTEXTUALITY NARRATIVE'S CONTEXTUALIZATION

Contextualizing in the traditional media has always been a difficult task. Context can be accomplished in two ways: diachronic, when the journalist refers to previous events related to the fact; and synchronic, when he/she explains the environment (social, geographic etc.) where the incident occurred. In both cases, context requires the inclusion of more information in the news.

By including this information, the journalist is forced to “spend” space (press) or time (radio and television), thereby preventing the inclusion of other news into the newspaper, radio or television news. Zelizer (2008) points out that journalists are “memory agents” and journalism cannot work without context, but the need to provide various information and the spatiotemporal limitations mentioned above, are equally important variables in this dispute between context and space/time. The increase provided by the Web ended this dispute and assembled in one space, not only all possible media, but also an increasingly active audience in the information process. The Web therefore offers more possibilities for contextualization and reinforces the nature of this activity because there is no journalism without contextualization (ZAMITH, 2008).

For Pavlik (2005), the potential of contextualization can be observed through five aspects: the expansion of communication modalities (text, audio, video, photos, graphics, animation); hypermedia (which allows placing the news in a wider historical, political and cultural context); the increasing participation of readers, who need to interact with the machine - “one of the ways of increasing participation is the immersive story”⁴ - (PAVLIK, 2005, p.48); most dynamic contents (more fluid information contents)

and personalization of information (each reader can filter the information he/she wants and can also expand the information that the news offers).

Pavlik clearly states that hypertextuality, multimodality, interactivity, personalization and memory are essential in the process of Web contextualization. To a greater or lesser degree, the contents should enable the reader to immerse themselves in the content, using the potentials of the Web and receiving devices.

2 CASE STUDY: ABSTRACT ART – MULTIMEDIA KADINSKY

2.1 AIMS AND HYPOTHESIS

The main goal of this article is to demonstrate that hypertext features have a strong potential in the contextualization of news for mobile devices. To achieve this goal we chose a qualitative approach - a case-study - a type of research that requires observation, analysis and interpretation of events or phenomena. The variables analysed are the type of communication modalities and hypertext resources used to contextualize the information. Combined with the reader's interaction, these features provide a hypermediatic narrative experience.

The case study were the *Globo A Mais* editions of December 2015 and January 2015, with the news report "Abstract Art- Kandinsky Multimedia" chosen as the one that better uses hypermedia, explores the readers interaction with the info more intensely and presents dynamic and more immersive contents. This work piece was cover of the edition of 27 January 2015.

2.2 STUDY

The work, which deals with the life and work of the Russian painter Wassily Kandinsky provides the reader with a 360° tour of the exhibition "Everything starts at in a point", which was exhibited at the Centro Cultural Banco do Brazil in Rio de Janeiro. In the opening of the news report, geometric shapes are superimposed on the image of the painter, inviting the reader to go directly to the information displayed: Shows 360°, Trivia, Quiz and Inside work (as shown by the arrows in Figure 1).

Fig. 1 Opening of the news



Source: Application *Globo A Mais*

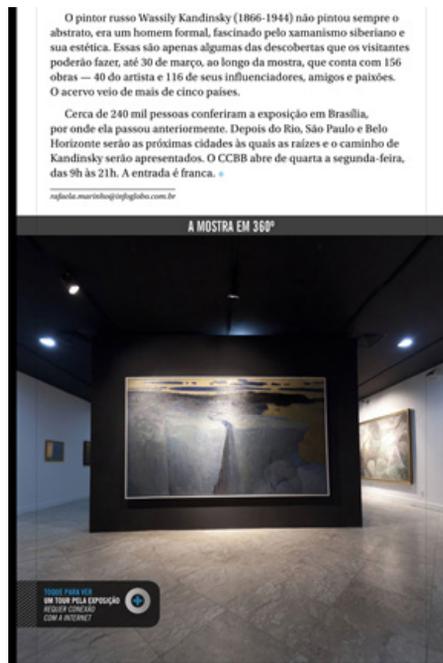
Web news report should take advantage of hypertext to streamline and contextualize the information, linking the issue with their background (memory), making multilinear reading, one of the many models proposed by various authors (SALAVERRÍA, 2005; CANAVILHAS, 2007; MARTINEZ; FERREIRA, 2010). Hypertextuality should be seen not only as a content segmentation tool, but as a possibility of linking information and communication modalities and thus increase the capacity of readers to make multilinear cross-readings. (SALAVERRÍA, 2014). The Web has given a strong boost to image as a constituent element of hypermedia narrative. The images, mostly photographic, take many forms such as “panoramic 360°”, megaphotos, geolocation photos with special navigation effects and high definition zoom etc. These photography variants are modalities that can be used advantageously by a communicator to compose multimedia content “(SALAVERRÍA, 2014, p. 34).

The 360° video enables an immersive experience and delivers at least two of the five aspects pointed out by Pavlik (2005)

as contextualized journalism since it gives impetus to the informative content, making it more fluid and representative of events and processes of real life. In addition, the immersive features also help to hold the reader's attention to the narrative, providing a richer environment than that offered in traditional media (PAVLIK, 2014).

The 360° tour of the news report transports the reader to the exhibition room, allowing a view of the layout of the works, its size and even the coloring of the works resulting from artificial lighting (Figure 2). The reader is immersed in the space to where he/she is transported; being able to experience the information and thus achieve and even better understanding of the message.

Fig. 2 360° Tour of the exhibition room



Source: Application *Globo A Mais*

Immersion is important in digital narrative because it allows transporting the reader to the represented space and understand it from several points of view. It also allows to overcome some of the physical world locks (RYAN, 2004) since the reader is not aware of the existence of the support / data generator, be it a computer or mobile devices.

The news report studied presents other textual features that contextualize the story, contributing to a better understanding of relevant episodes of Kandinsky's life. To address this information, the narrator uses images that act as hypertext resources because the reader can simply click on the image and expand and open a table with information superimposed on the image that contextualize the painter's life stretches (Figure 3).

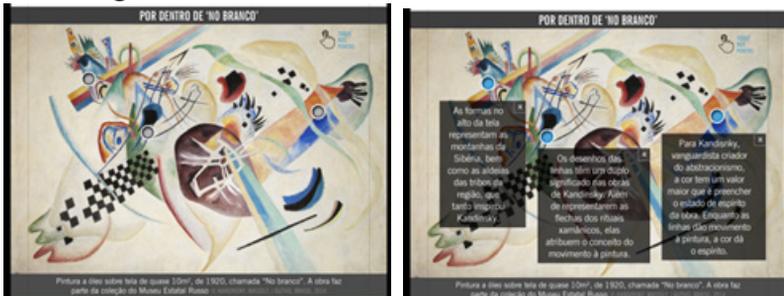
Fig. 3 Curious facts about Kandinsky's life



Source: Application *Globo A Mais*

Continuing the reading of the story, the reader can access the work “On white” of Kandinsky, where three points are arranged that can be clicked and reveal information about the painter's work with abstract shapes, colors and lines that characterize it. Each point adds important information about the works of the painter (Figure 4).

Fig. 4 inside the work “On white”



Source: Application *Globo A Mais*

Communicative modalities (written texts and images) become integrated in interpretative resources of great value in the narrative, since combined with interactivity and hypertextuality, complement and contextualize the information about the life and the work of the painter, expanding the narrative.

Another interactive feature that expands the reader's participation and involvement with this report is the Quiz. Through this feature, readers have access to more information that enlarges the context of the report (Figure 5).

Fig. 5 Quiz – What do you know about Kandinsky?



Source: Aplication *Globo A Mais*

Hypermedia pieces seek to connect contents, link and explain them, forming a meaningful unit, regardless of the reader's reading options. The events that make up a story do not unfold in isolation and therefore require contextualized narratives, linking backgrounds, crossing perspectives on the facts, broadening the understanding of events, anticipating consequences, allowing access to rigorous expanded and contrasted information. In web journalism, hypertext features, interactivity and the communicative modalities play an important role in the contextualization of information, as they allow deeper and more creative hypertext narrative. The hypertext narrative should include the necessary inter-relationships so that the broad and heterogeneous public, characteristic of web, can understand the information reported in hypermedia pieces.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The hypertext narrative characteristic of hypermedia news report can provide a multidimensional view of events and topics, offering the reader more opportunities to understand the significance of the reported facts. In this multidimensional vision, hypertext resources are part of the reporting news, providing the context of the story. When combined with communication modes and the reader's interaction, these features also provide a hypermediality narrative experience.

Each communication mode added in the news report should aggregate information that other modalities and resources did not meet. Otherwise, there is an overlap of information that fragments the narrative making it redundant and less interesting. If to make the multimedia language effective it is necessary the integration of the media that makes up the piece, to enrich the narrative with information it is important that the communication modalities and hypertext features are integrated.

Web journalism on mobile devices can offer readers contextualized and elaborate information, far beyond the "news pills" features most common in instant journalism. Although these devices have the ideal characteristics to receive the so-called "alert" (BRADSHAW, 2007), the first short information about the event, they are also a fertile space for web journalism to narrate creative, innovative and engaging stories that conquer the interest of avid readers for quality information.

Hypermedia news report, in its various facets, is a genre that allows the construction of these hypertext narrative models and can motivate the reader to interpret what's happening in contemporary complex societies, interacting with the narrative and 'experiencing' events. Immersion is one of the resources that enables experimentation of information and can simplify the understanding of events and a different level of interpretation.

In the hypermedia news report, the integration of communication modalities and of hypertext and immersive resources in the narration of the stories can expand the possibilities of comprehension and interpretation of the facts and is therefore the appropriate genre for the development of the expressive resources that each medium offers. Not constrained by content and format, it is better able to encourage experimentation with new narrative techniques in mobile devices

Notes

- 1 In this article we will always use this term for journalism that is done on the Web and for the Web. Other names used by various authors are Cyberjournalism, Online Journalism and Journalism in Line (CANAVILHAS, 2014, p. 3).
- 2 *O Globo* was the Brazilian pioneer newspaper in the afternoon editions. On January 30, 2012 was born the *Globo A Mais*, edited the 18 hours, Monday to Friday. The evening came "in response to a study commissioned by Infoglobo, owner of the newspaper, which found that these devices are used in three times of the day: 'in the morning, to have access to information first at home, in the afternoon, after lunch, but in a less intense way, and at night, when people begin to get home or are on the street and seek leisure information', says Thiago Bispo, digital sales manager "(CANAVILHAS; SATUF, 2013, p. 43).
- 3 "un texto compuesto de fragmentos de texto – lo que Barthes denomina *lexias* – y los nexos electrónicos que los conectan entre sí. (...) Los nexos electrónicos unen *lexias* tanto 'externas' a una obra, por ejemplo un comentario de ésta por otro autor, o textos paralelos o comparativos, como internas y así crean un texto que El lector experimenta como no lineal o, mejor dicho, como multilineal o multiseccional." (LANDOW, 1997, p. 15-16)

- 4 “Una de las maneras para aumentar la participación es el relato inmersivo”. (PAVLIK, 2001, p.48)

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