

Marketing strategies of regional journalism: the changes undertaken by the Jaime Câmara Group¹

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Abstract

This research describes the main changes in journalistic practices of the main private communication enterprise in the Brazilian Midwest region – the Jaime Câmara Group (GJC – acronym in Portuguese). It is a case study that analysed three products of this organization: the TV news report *Anhanguera 1st Edition*, the tabloid newspaper *Daqui* and the reference newspaper *O Popular*, conducted between August 2016 and April 2017. The research was based on data collected from interviews with journalists and editors of the company, as well as content analysis of material published by GJC. The results confirm the impact of the Internet on the reconfiguration of journalistic work and the system of competition that has been installed in the face of so many informational offers to society, but point out singularities in terms of the effects of certain marketing strategies.

Keywords: Regional journalism. Journalism on TV. Printed journalism. Changes in journalism. Marketing strategies.

Introduction

It is well-known that reference journalism, which starts with a legitimizing discourse based on the principles of pluralism, independence and commitment to citizens, commanded by the great communications companies, undergoes major transformations, especially after the arrival of the new technologies of communication and information that relativized the centrality and importance of the press as a mediator of public debate.

These changes also affect journalism produced outside the Rio-São Paulo axis, which in the last decade has adapted to changes in the consumption habits of the regional

¹ This research was partially presented at the Communication and Regional and Local Development Research Group in 2017, during the XVII Meeting of Research Groups in Communication, a session of the 40th Brazilian Congress of Communication Sciences. In that event, the title of the paper was “The changes in reference journalism in Goiás: a case study of the Jaime Câmara Group” and, after that, some contributions and new data collections were added to this text.

populations. There has been a tension between local news production and the ability of media companies to survive among increasingly globalized consumption, which is easily replicated and circulated, in most cases free of charge.

The traditional economic model of journalism sustaining cannot maintain the same levels of profitability that the private communications companies had in the past. Audiences and readers are increasingly dispersed, generating a new policy of advertising investments that is also more decentralized. This has particularly affected regional companies, obliging them to reposition their businesses in order to remain in the information market.

In recent years, great editorial changes have been implemented in the companies headquartered in Goiás. We will deal here with the Jaime Câmara Group (GJC – acronym in Portuguese)², the largest communication conglomerate in the Brazilian Midwest region, which gathers print, broadcast and Internet outlets and whose history dates back to the 1930s, becoming one of the main communication enterprises in the country in the contemporary world.

This is a case study in the sense of Martins (2006). A research strategy that proposes to make an empirical investigation, valuing phenomena in real contexts, using different techniques of data collection. In this work, it has a descriptive character, and intends to contribute with other similar studies, in order to detect trends, especially in the local and regional news market.

The research sought to identify the direction of the current journalistic practices of the GJC, considering samples of the contents of the journalistic products offered by the company and the perception of the professionals who followed these changes through seven semi-structured interviews. These respondents are editors and reporters who work on the GJC's surveyed vehicles. The research period was from August 2016 to April 2017.

Part of the data collection had the collaboration of students from the Brazilian universities *Universidade Federal de Goiás* (UFG) and *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Goiás* (PUC-GO) and was part of a research program on the transformations in regional journalism and its impacts on citizenship. In this article, we will comment on the results obtained in three companies of the group: *Daqui* and *O Popular* newspapers and the *Anhanguera* television newscast.

The crisis in reference journalism

Duarte (2013) points out that the main factor that puts reference journalism in crisis is the loss of readers for the Internet and other means of communication that provide free consultation of information. In addition, the instantaneous diffusion of the Internet causes,

2 The Jaime Câmara Group is formed by 24 communication vehicles that operate in the states of Goiás, Tocantins and the Federal District. Its activities begin in 1935 in the city of Goiás, the first capital of the state and, in 1938, are transferred to Goiânia, current capital. The company's first vehicle was the newspaper *O Popular*, with later investments in radio stations. The TV started in 1966, becoming then affiliated to Rede Globo.

in the current culture, certain problems of valuing qualified information, lack of analysis and lack of contrast. For that author, the network determines that the news presents an unthinkable degree of expiration in the written press, but also affects radio and television somehow. The rapidity and immediacy of the Internet require a reinterpretation of the elements that define the traditional concept of journalism.

For Lopes (2004, apud DUARTE, 2013), newspapers no longer have the money to employ a large number of professionals needed to deliver quality journalism to the standards of a functional democracy, despite its role as public inspector and protector of the public interest. With less budget, the newspapers are in a dilemma that is the delivery of a product with the same quality, but with fewer resources.

Karan and Christofoletti (2011) argue that the challenge of the 21st century is to defend an authentic and credible journalistic specificity. In a scenario with an abundance of information, journalism needs to offer society a differential. For them, it is necessary to preserve a sphere with the issuance of arguments, judgments and analysis of circumstances, plus a debate that refers to the controversy. In addition, the field must adopt transparency in its procedures and be faithful to the narration of the facts.

The authors add that despite the competition with new actors, protagonists and sources providing information, it is good for journalism to reaffirm or recover commitments with core values of its social legitimacy, such as authenticity, credibility and ethical, aesthetic, technical and theoretical foundations as distinctive elements of his discourse. “If journalism proves to be irrelevant or not fundamental, it can simply be replaced by other forms of updating and connection with daily life” (KARAN; CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2011, p.96 – Our translation).

Meyer (2007), in his famous work *The Vanishing Newspaper*, had already signalled that the emergence of the commercial Internet would launch printed journalism in the worst crisis in its history. The reason for this is that teenagers and young adults read much less newspapers than they read. It is at this age that the habit of reading is created, but this has been done priority on the Internet.

According to the author, the newspapers that enjoyed a natural monopoly in their respective local markets, particularly the small and medium-sized ones, began to face the diversification of the media, forcing them to increasingly compete for finite and dispersed attention the public. For Meyer (2007), the best way to secure the future of newspapers would be to retain their influence and credibility and pay the cost of the radical experiments necessary to learn what new forms of media will be viable in a much more complex market than in the past.

In Brazil, the main model of development of reference journalism is based on private enterprise. In this sense, the ethical foundations of the profession on which the legitimizing discourse rests are almost always confronted with the imperatives of market laws. This

uncomfortable contradiction for the idealists, but also important for journalism committed to citizenship, motivated a series of editorial bets different from those that the important newspapers inaugurated in Brazil and throughout the world.

In the context of traditional media companies, one of the outputs projected at the beginning of the crisis was the identification of niches and formulation of specific products for segmented audiences. In the case of print newspapers, supplements and interpretive journalism would enable readers' confidence and continue to exert influence in building public opinion.

But can this trend be verified in today's regional journalism? This question will guide the analysis of the following journalistic products, in an attempt to perceive the outputs of reformulation in terms of language, formats and audience visions adopted by the empirical object in question. The analysis will enable the specificity of the symptoms of the crisis mentioned by the aforementioned authors regarding the communication market in central Brazil.

Anhanguera newscast

The Anhanguera Network now has 11 television stations (8 in Goiás and 3 in Tocantins), all affiliated to Rede Globo. The *Anhanguera* newscast started in 1987 and aired at lunchtime, with its content focused on a very generic audience, however, attracting more viewers of classes A and B, since pay-TV and the Internet did not compete with television.

In 2010, however, the station adopts the new standard of local television news proposed by Globo, investing in what its professionals call community journalism. This type of journalism, which should not be confused with the definitions of genuine community communication in the sense of Peruzzo (2004b), because it is not carried out by the citizen himself, is close to what Pena (2005) proposes as a practice of some vehicles of a massive nature:

Community journalism meets the demands of citizenship and serves as an instrument of social mobilization. (...) Another important characteristic is the distance from ethnocentric feelings. The journalist of a community media must see with the eyes of the community. Even if it already belongs to it, it must make an effort to verify a real appropriation of the mediation processes by the group (PENA, 2005, p.185 – Our translation).

Peruzzo (2004b) recalls that the contents of popular communication have been incorporated by mass traditional media as a symptom of the process of democratization and valorisation of citizenship as a global discourse. Until 1980, the flags raised by social movements and neighbourhood communities were unique to the communication they carried out. Today, these themes are reinforced and complemented by hegemonic commercial media.

In the case of TV Anhanguera, this change was commanded by the head of the network and was due to the migration of much of the public coming from the higher classes to the Internet and pay-TV, which were beginning to become favourites. Classes C, D and E, which did not yet have access to these new forms of audio-visual consumption, established themselves as the main public of free-to-air TV.

This made the *Anhanguera* newscast choose to have a direct link with the audience, entering the suburban neighbourhoods, covering infrastructure demands, and acting as a “collector” and “inspector” of public power. This image, however, is not new, and is part of the legitimating discourse of journalism, with the difference that it is now exalted with recurring expressions throughout the television news: “*Anhanguera* goes after your interests”, “Let’s get an answer for you, citizen”, or “We will search for answers”.

One of the reporters interviewed for this research admitted that this change was not just about content, but also about language, to reach people with little education, but that did not happen easily. “I confess that at the time I even had a rejection”, he said, whose preference has always been investigative journalism. However, he realized that community journalism is also important for the construction of citizenship. “I had the opportunity to see, for instance, how much a paved street changes in the dignity of a person”, he adds.

For 17 years in the network, the executive editor corroborates this new identity: “The most qualified public has practically left free-to-air TV, and local journalism has had to invest in the interest of the public in classes C, D and E”. According to her, the team has invested in reception surveys and applications that make the newscast closer to that audience.

A study conducted by Peruzzo (2005) already identified the historical tendency that the investments of networks’ main broadcasters in the local media are more for the marketing bias, than for the interest in the production of regionalised content. “Television, for example, exploits local differentiation as a niche market, interested in capturing the resources coming from domestic advertising” (p.71 – Our translation). In this sense, we can understand that the visibility of an audience that was once excluded from the screens is possible thanks to the guarantee of remaining audience, and not to respect legitimate citizenship.

Interactivity is also highlighted by the editor-in-chief. In this sense, she clarifies that the overvaluation of the technique was on the background:

The concern with aesthetics also changed. Before the concern with what was going to be broadcast was very great, but not today. Today almost everyone has a camera in hand and manages to be a reporter of something. Until recently there would not have been an image made on phone that is blurred or was not so focused. Today the concern is with the news (Editor-in-chief, *Anhanguera* newscast).

The QVT application (Portuguese acronym for “I want to see on TV”) is responsible for up to 80% of the news story, according to the editor-in-chief. This instrument puts viewers in direct contact with the editorial department. They send in suggestions for reporting, videos and denunciations. In addition to it, the well-known WhatsApp application is also available to the public who wants to contact the newscast.

Figure 1 – QVT application interface – Anhanguera TV



Source: Rede Globo/Anhanguera TV (2017)³.

In the Figure 1, we can check the different options available to users so that they can interact, with relative ease of handling. Analysis conducted by Moraes (2013), shortly after the implementation of the QVT, found that there are fifteen to twenty suggestions sent daily by viewers. The suggestions for the staff are varied, but much refers to problems of the city, such as asphalt, lighting, security, traffic, transport and health.

This type of participation is found in the first two levels studied by Peruzzo (2004a): a) the messages (which includes citizen participation in interviews and testimonies), and b) the production of messages (content production by citizens themselves, by sending videos, for example). More relevant levels of participation such as the inclusion of citizens in the planning and management of the news are not seen in this case study.

The executive editor of the newscast reckoned in a positive way this redirection of the local journalism on TV. But despite this measure of survival of broadcasters, she resents the absence of other important news that does not fit in the menu of this audience, given the complexity and distance of its immediate reality.

The fact is that the audience of the *Anhanguera* newscast oscillates between the first and second position in Ibope (an audience registration institute) in Goiânia. The main

³ Available at: <<http://redeglobo.globo.com/tvanhanguera/noticia/2015/09/atualize-seu-aplicativo-qvt-e-fique-mais-pertinho-da-tv-anhanguera.html>>. Accessed on: May 28, 2017.

competitor, *Jornal do Meio Dia* (TV Serra Dourada / SBT), the former absolute leader in the C, D and E classes, faces a fierce competition. The average is of 15 to 12 points for one or the other broadcaster.

Daqui newspaper

The search for consumers of economically limited social classes was a perceived departure, already in 2007, by another group company, the tabloid *Daqui*. The venture was so successful that the newspaper currently ranks 5th in national circulation, ahead of “its older brother” *O Popular*, the main and most prestigious printed product of the GJC, which is in 47th place in this ranking.

Table 1 – Ranking of newspapers with the highest circulation in Brazil

Position	Newspaper	State	Circulation average (Printed)
1	Super Notícia	MG	249.297
2	O Globo	RJ	193.079
3	Folha de S. Paulo	SP	189.254
4	O Estado de S.Paulo	SP	157.761
5	Daqui	GO	153.049
47	O Popular	GO	17.685

Source: ANJ (2017)⁴.

Daqui newspaper follows the popular Football/Celebrities/Violence triad as key news, and without major investments by the company. The staff is small (an average of 5 journalists), whose basic activity is to re-adjust the language of the news and reports produced by *O Popular*. Therefore, the news gathering and production are on behalf of other professionals, whose names are hidden in this popular version and visible in the most prestigious newspaper.

This journalism practiced by *Daqui* does not reach what academia commonly calls “sensationalist”. Shocking images and foul language are not seen, for example. It approaches to what Amaral (2006) has analysed in relation to the new popular journalism:

Class B, C and D publications are part of a new market to be analysed, characterized by an audience that does not only want incredible and unbelievable stories, but also purchases newspapers in search of service and entertainment. They are newspapers that serve the metropolitan regions, bet on the editorials

⁴ Portuguese acronym for National Newspapers Association – Available at: <<http://www.anj.org.br/maiores-jornais-do-brasil/>>. There is no most recent research on this website until the moment this paper was written>. Accessed on: May 28, 2017.

of “Cities” and do not intend to become national. They use as strategy of seduction of the reading public and the coverage of the ineffectiveness of the State, of the life of celebrities and the daily life of townspeople. The subjects of interest are those that immediately affect the life of the population (AMARAL, 2006, p.2 – Our translation).

One of the strategies of approximation between the newspaper and the popular layers is the language. It is highlighted in the table below three samples collected during the research of the publications between 09/29/2016 to 10/14/2016. For the sake of space, we reproduce only the titles of the news.

Chart 1 – Textual differences between the newspapers *Daqui* and *O Popular*

Subject	<i>Daqui</i> newspaper	<i>O Popular</i> newspaper
Attack on politicians in the city of Itumbiara	“Feeling of fear in Itumbiara”	“Rumors take over social networks and whatsapp”
Plane crash	“Pain that never ends”	“Families say as they seek to overcome losses”
Vila Nova – soccer team in Goiás	“Tiger wants the Olympic”	“Vila wants to move house”
Challenges of the next mayor of Goiânia	“A pineapple to peel”	“What future the next mayor will face”

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

This attitude, however, does not mean prejudice against the “younger brother”, according to the editor’s perception:

The public of *O Popular* has a purchasing power, it is more schooled. It does not mean that it is more important, it is simply a matter of language. You adapt the news in a way that the person can have some contact. But the *Daqui* newspaper does not invest only in frivolities, like television gossip and sports. It also brings metropolitan issues, but we try to get people to see themselves there. Readers of *O Popular* works with a concept of idea, a debate that has not yet been materialised. In the newspaper *Daqui*, we try to show the impact on people’s lives, basically due to schooling (Editor, *Daqui* newspaper).

The content of the newspaper tends to simplify and reduce the approach to news. That is, historical contextualization and the questioning of certain issues are not offered to readers due to the low level of education and the presumption that this segment of the public is more interested in entertainment (especially television), service journalism, (job offers, for example), and the immediate impact that some news generates on its life (increase in fares of the bus tickets).

For one of the interviewed reporters, the reader of the newspaper *Daqui* is not very concerned about politics. As she said: “They are not readers who are interested in what happens in the Congress or other political institutions. With this concerned, I think politics has little space in the newspaper”. In this sense, the journalistic contribution to the politicization of society is secondary in this analysed media.

To reach these conclusions, the professionals say GJC hires researchers and consultants to better understand the public. However, they do not have access to the data, only to the conclusions of the researches that are presented in the form of results and targeting of journalistic products.

The newspaper costs only R\$ 1,00 (about \$ 0,29). Besides being affordable, it carries out promotional campaigns that distribute gifts. The reader collects printed coupons in the newspaper and exchanges them for containers and other household utensils. This is the same strategy perceived by Amaral in an earlier study involving other Brazilian newspapers:

They often choose to add value to news and reporting and fully surrender to marketing strategies such as the distribution of free gifts and the emphasis on entertainment and television gossip. Some newspapers are also characterized by their assistance approach, the idea that the popular reader is not interested in political and economic issues and a somewhat demagogic relationship with the reader. In addition, they incorporate the television world creating a constant self-reference. (AMARAL, 2006, p.3 – Our translation).

In the following figure, we reproduce one of the ads of the promotional campaign of the *Daqui* newspaper in commemoration of the 10th anniversary of the newspaper:

Figure 2 – Promotional advertisement from the *Daqui* newspaper



Source: *Daqui* newspaper (2017)⁵.

5 Available at: <<http://daqui.opopular.com.br/editorias/promocoes>>. Accessed on: April 2, 2018. Translation: “The 10-year anniversary of *Daqui* continues. And now, with your card, you’re competing for 10 awards”.

At the moment of this analysis, we find that the investment in popular journalism is the main change observed in these two companies of the Jaime Câmara Group. The study then focus in a recent graphic and editorial reform implemented by the *O Popular* newspaper, founded in 1938, which fits the standards of reference journalism.

O Popular newspaper

At its 78th anniversary, on April 4, 2016, the newspaper *O Popular*, the first journalistic product of the GJC, underwent its major transformation from the standard format (52.5x29.7 cm) to the Berliner (47.0x31.5 cm), reducing the number of pages and dismissing journalists. The new newspaper reduced the size of the texts and increased the number of infographics and photos. All this is due to a decrease of circulation that boasted 30.389 copies daily in 2014 to 17.685 in 2015.

The change process was implemented by the Spanish consulting firm Innovation Media Consulting, which had already been contracted for similar projects in Portugal, Italy and Colombia. At the time, the group's president, Cristiano Câmara, said the company's desire was to increase the readership base and reach a younger audience through design innovation and more investments in digital platforms (O POPULAR, 2016).

These consultants have launched themselves as experts in reinventing strategies, products and editorial models tuned in to the digital age. On the official website of the company there are positive comments of its services made by the New York Times and The Economist, in addition to mentions of projects developed in Le Mond and Corriere de La Sera. This curriculum convinced GJC to make a bold bet on their most prestigious newspaper in the state.

But a year after the initiative, contrary to expectations, the circulation of the newspaper declined further, as the number of copies dropped to 15,233 in 2017, according to the IVC – *Instituto Verificador de Comunicação*⁶ (2017). The desired young public seems not to have adhered to the new proposal and the changes displeased the traditional reader of *O Popular*, belonging to the classes A and B, with higher education and age. This is what the general editor, from Rio Grande do Sul, hired by the Group at the request of the consultants, admits:

We promote the emptying of some contents following world trends. When the consultancy left, and we stayed here with the “child on our lap”⁷, we saw that we could not keep certain changes due to lack of harmony with the readers. I remember that we drained politics coverage too much (...) and people from

6 Communication Checker Institute.

7 This expression means: “let us with the problem”.

Goiás love it. I was surprised that they follow the election of OAB⁸. So, we have to respect these things (Editor, *O Popular* newspaper).

Although the consultancy has presented several researches to the GJC, including qualitative ones, the solutions did not please. In relation to the political news, according to the editor, the interpretation was flawed. Readers showed to be dissatisfied with the politics coverage in the surveys, but the team of consultants understood as saturation, opting for emptying it.

The editor continues analysing:

Part of the readers thinks the newspaper became superficial. But in some things, there is no return. The new size of the newspaper costs less. We have the same number of informative units in the previous format, the standard one, around 110 per day. The texts really decreased (Editor, *O Popular* newspaper).

Other changes proposed initially neither were successful. One of them was the excessive use of infographics and charts. Professionals did not were able to contextualize the information well enough, and the editor says that, today, those resources are used more sparingly in order to increase text. The other was the downsizing of the cultural coverage that ended up giving audience to specialized blogs. In this sense, the newspaper returned with the cultural agenda and rehired former journalists from the Magazine editorial to fill that gap.

Despite the recognition of unsuccessful bets and subsequent “return to origins”, the editor does not feel that regional print journalism has stabilized. He believes that companies should look for new products and seek to establish a greater identity with the reading public. It also considers it important to work with less perishable stories and to increase space for events that are local, “just around the corner”, rather than overestimating national and international issues.

But the valuing of local news is not an easy equation. The editor said to this research that leaner newsrooms do not allow for larger investments, and reliance on news agencies ends up prevailing. This is the case of *O Popular*. Although the cover story favours local matters, inside there is predominantly national news.

Another challenge is the migration to the digital sphere. The new generations no longer access the paper. For this reason, the newspaper, instead of doing an “imitation” of the Internet on paper, improved the digital version, which is the natural space of young readers. “In the 1990s the printed newspaper was the best business in the world, today it is not anymore”, says the editor, but not sure how to best to make the digital means profitable for journalism. This reality is also analysed by two reporters from *O Popular*:

8 In Portuguese, *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* (Brazil’s Bar Association).

The biggest challenge is keeping the reader. We only work to have people who read our stories. If these people are migrating from paper news to the digital model, we have to figure out how to keep that reader. But the digital reader has another characteristic different from the print reader (Reporter 1, *O Popular* newspaper).

We are preparing for a change that we do not know where it will flow to. We know that the habit of news consumption is changing, readers of the future will not necessarily subscribe to a paper newspaper. We are in a transition time. It is important to keep *O Popular* as a reference for serious journalism in Goiás, so that it can be consumed on any platform (Reporter 2, *O Popular* newspaper).

The executives of the Jaime Câmara Group informed the editor that, despite market uncertainties, there is a balance between revenue and expenditure. “That gives us peace of mind, and now the problem is management. We are working with not too risky attitudes and getting closer to the reader. We have to seek new forms of revenue without abandoning credibility” (Editor, *O Popular* newspaper).

An example, in this sense, was the formalization of a seminar on direct sales promoted by the newspaper. Individual entrepreneurs, judges and labour inspectors were invited, as well as companies in the field. An eight-page booklet was printed, sponsored by these companies. The content was journalistic and proved to be profitable, according to the editor.

Final considerations

The journalism practiced by the largest media company in the Brazilian Midwest region has been undergoing reformulations since 2007, with the perception that social classes C, D and E could represent the priority public for the consumption of printed news, due to the increase in average income of the population and consumption in the country due to the good economic results in that period. *Daqui* newspaper emerges from this good moment, and even though it is in the printed format, it has continued to be profitable thanks to its low cost of production (the editorial department is practically held up by the other newspaper in the same group) and the affordable price to readers, putting it among the highest circulation newspapers in the country, according to ANJ (Portuguese acronym for National Newspapers Association).

The turn of the *Anhanguera* television newscast toward the same public was for another reason. The decision was made by Rede Globo, to which the broadcaster is affiliated, in 2010. Realizing that classes A and B migrated to pay-TV and to the Internet, it gave instructions for regional TVs to preferentially invest in other social classes. This implied change in content and language, making it compete with other broadcasters who already worked with this audience. The result was positive.

However, the relative entrepreneurial success verified by the changes implemented by GJC in these two products was not the same in its traditional newspaper *O Popular*. Although an outside consultant suggested restatements approaching the Internet, especially by adopting shorter texts and more visual elements, traditional readers rejected the proposal. As the newspaper's public remained the same, and the young people (as a new target audience) were not willing to consume news on paper, the newspaper had to back off some decisions. The larger texts have returned, and the politics and culture editorials have resumed their evidence, although the Berliner format remains economical.

These movements in regional journalism show that, although market research offers some security for decision-making in relation to new offers of journalistic products, in a scenario of crisis and major cultural transformations, they do not guarantee success, especially if the data are not well interpreted and the audiences are well known. In this specific study, the changes towards new audiences seem to have been successful, but with regard to the changes involving the same public, there was a lack of projection.

Global trends should also be seen with some caution by regional media companies. Not always what applies to the reality of other countries, taking into account only the newspapers of national circulation, is an absolute parameter. Knowing the singularities of the news consumer is fundamental when starting any process of change.

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