

Public Perceptions, sport ideologies and journalism.

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2.3.10 • A comunicação mundializada • Utilizações e manipulações da informação e da comunicação

Public perceptions, sports ideologies and journalism (I)

Sergio Ricardo Quiroga

TRADITIONAL MEDIA have been thoroughly studied from the most varied perspectives and theories. Traditionally, journalism studies has supported that ambiguous and conventional premise stating that the radio has to report events, the television has to show them and newspapers have to explain them lately. The media influence our life in many different ways, they produce 'ideas of reality' and they are mediators between the different social groups and publics created or that 'are created' by their own action.

Maria Cristina Mata (2003) has pointed out that we live in a 'society of publics'. Today we speak of active audiences, the power of the audience and their ability to participate in emerging media – online – from their mobile devices by Internet.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the influence of image of audience and the influence of sports ideologies in the construction and contents of their sport agendas.

Here we report as the public images of sports journalists in San Luis, Argentina and how sport ideologies influence the agenda of programs and news sources.

We were working with qualitative tools interviewing a small group of sport journalist (twenty five) of the central region of Argentina: we examine how influences the construction of the news and on the other hand the public image of sports journalists seek to establish what the ideas of local journalism sport as adjunctive ingredient in news processing.

The idea of knowing who believe that journalists are directed – learn about their perceptions of the public, in contexts where public are not fully known and consider which are the imaginary and sports beliefs, is novel in the literature on communication and contributes to studies news production, sociology of issuers.

News and social construction of reality

Information can be defined as a way to construct social reality made up of different factors according to the paradigms adopted by reporters.

The news is a social construction and is imbricated by newsworthiness condiments and productive routines even when journalists have stubbornly resisted this idea.

The construction of social reality has been defined by several specialists like the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987:149).

Newsworthiness, productive routines and sources have been recurrently pointed out by the specialized bibliography like the elements deserving the attention of journalism specialists and communication researchers to learn how news is built.

The construction of social reality has also been defined like the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987: 149) and Luckman (1979:75) have highlighted that the habituation comes before any institutionalization, and institutionalization itself is made when a reciprocal classification of habitual actions done by social actors takes place. Habits, institutionalization and classification of actions combine themselves to elaborate the news.

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Nevertheless, there exists an unsteady relation between the journalists' professional culture and the elements of newsworthiness and the sources activity where the organization of work in the media and the elements of professional culture are linked and they exhibit the set of qualities necessary for the events to be presented by journalists as mediators between reality and the news.

But, what is newsworthiness? Newsworthiness is established by the set of qualities demanded to the events to be transformed into current public occurrences; that is to say, to appear in the public agenda through the media like "news events".

Nevertheless, many years ago, Lazarsfeld and Merton (1948) talked about the functions of the media: status, restatement of social norms and their narcotic malfunction. The media confer categories on people, organizations, public subjects or subjects belonging to the community and social movements.

They also restate social norms and display information flows doping rather that quickening their audiences (Lazarsfeld y Merton, 1948; Moragas Spa 1982:177-180). Besides, they have enlightened us about how the transformations of the time and space of organizations origi-

nate unknown ways to exercise the power and new forms of action and interaction produced by the use of the media (Thompson, 1998:17).

The study of news

According to Saperas (1987), the study of the news was originated in phenomenological sociology created by Alfred Shutz during 1940 and 1950. These studies gave birth to various developments like Peter Berger and Tomas Luckman's socio-phenomenology and Aaron V. Cicourel's (Saperas 1987:145) ethnomethodology carried out in communicative research.

Gaye Tuchman (1983) write the incredible *Making News: a study in the construction of reality* as of interesting study and contributions of journalist sociologist and a pioneer study of the news in the American context. Tuchman (1983) has studied those elements that are characteristic of the events lately transformed in news and analyses the work that establishes the journalists' productive routines, the relation between the different media, communication companies and the market of information and more recently, the image of the public had by the journalists. Tuchman (1983) saw the news as a window on the world, news a frame and stressing news as knowledge.

Giorgio Grossi is known as a remarkable investigator on the studies about cognitive effects, the role played by journalists and the news as a means of everyday knowledge, and identifies causes motivating the development of these studies:

- a) the study of the cognitive dimension of the mass media expressed in a higher interest towards the observation of the professionals' activity and their behavior in the presence of current events;

NEWSMAKING

The journalistic work and the elaboration of reality done by the media have been subjected to several analyses from the framework known as sociology of transmitters and the newsmaking. The newsmaking is the generic name given to a set of contemporary studies joining two tendencies of analysis: the sociologic one and a tendency called communicative.

The newsmaking essentially proposes to study about transmitters and productive processes of mass communication.

It examines the journalists' professional culture, the organization of work and the productive processes giving rise to the study of these phenomena to produce a wide number of investigations beginning from the trend of investigation named sociology of transmitters that examines the news production in the media.

- b) the media events, happenings, have a reference function and an own collective symbolism due to the presence of the media and its journalistic treatment determining the events known publicly;
- c) the investigation about the journalist and his or her social function integrated to the study of the effects where the theories dealing with social construction of reality contributes with new views to solve the duality reality-information as well as debating the subject of objectivity within the framework of the contributions of socio-phenomenology and ethnomethodology (Grossi, 1985: 37; Saperas 1987: 48).

The most outstanding investigators in this field are Tuchman (1983), Golding & Elliot (1979), Golding & Murdock (1978), Gans (1970, 1979), Fishman (1980) and Grossi (1985). Wolf (1996: 203) states that the communicational informational model placing the attention on the study of the message and its effects neglected studying the communicators. According to the author this shift in acknowledgement is due to the recognition of social centrality of the media and to the shift of the communicative theory with two basic perspectives: on one hand a perspective where the producer is perceived as a middleman moving between different and continuous negotiations, and on the other, a perspective referred by the studies analyzing the logic of the processes with the organization of work where "the construction of messages" takes place.

In addition, the conception of journalists as mediators and speakers of 'the reality': they perceive and the publics to whom they address have become a subject of attention and investigation for the specialists in communication.

Journalists are perceived as makers of reality because they choose which events will be included in the media agenda.

This construction of social reality done by the media and the journalists has been distinguished as the production of sense by means of the action of productive practices, the organization routines of the journalistic production and professional specialized in the production of fiction (Saperas, 1987:149).

We also recognize as antecedents within this trend of study, the analyses about gatekeeper (a controller). Within this field we find the studies about filter zones under the control of rules codes of the gatekeepers themselves.

The studies done by Kurt Lewin (1947) and White (1950) are taken as paradigms within this line of investigation. These studies linked the media to the news selection work done by the news controller.

The studies about "involuntary distortion" where the investigative attention is placed "on the image of the social reality provided by the media with an organization and an everyday production of the journalistic devices" (Wolf, 1996: 208) have resulted in a minority line in this trend of analyses.

Generally speaking, the mentioned points of view above have been transformed from a merely quantitative vision to the development of a qualitative vision where the media and the journalists are seen from this investigative frame that provides another view about the phenomena previously examined and contributes to enrich the object of study.

Rosa Martín Sabarís (1999:196) posed a qualitative study about news production examining the relations between the image of the world shown by the information services belonging to the Spanish television, the daily demands of the journalistic organization and the journalists' professional culture.

Other studies about the news from another trend of investigation have shown a treatment from different perspectives; for example, the news has been studied as discourse (Van Dijk, 1996).

Van Dijk has warned about the different theoretical and ideological points of view employed that provide a critical evaluation of the media and the news production in general but place the accent on the ideological nature of the reconstruction medias makes of social reality.

The previously mentioned points of view function as reproductive patterns of dominant forces and current ideologies. ■

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