



ISSN: 2230-9926

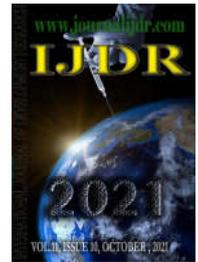
Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 11, Issue, 10, pp. 50998-51001, October, 2021

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.22867.10.2021>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

OPEN ACCESS

QUEER COMMUNICATION TO THE YOUTUBE AUDIENCE IN THE SHOW BLOGGER'S RACE

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th August, 2021
Received in revised form
11th September, 2021
Accepted 24th October, 2021
Published online 30th October, 2021

Key Words:

Youtube, Web-reality.
Queer, Folkcommunication.

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ABSTRACT

The YouTube© streaming platform ranks second in the number of users worldwide. Diva Depressão™ is one of the Youtube channels that has been conquering the Brazilian public. One of its attractions is the Bloggers' Race program. The Case Study methodology is used in this paper to analyze the show Bloggers' Race in its dimension of highlighting and bringing the discussions of the Queer universe to the media in a balanced and coherent way within the reality show format. Folkcommunication Theory helps in analyzing this program due to its view that non-hegemonic and marginalized groups in society can find alternative channels of expression. Furthermore, the program had the participation of heterosexual women, gay men, and DragQueens. As a result, it is possible to conclude that the significant brands sponsoring this type of program demonstrate their more diverse view on the many consumer audiences of their products.

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Citation: Marcelo Pires de Oliveira and Beatriz Corrêa Pires Dornelles. "Queer communication to the YouTube audience in the show Blogger's Race", *International Journal of Development Research*, 11, (10), 50998-51001.

INTRODUCTION

Youtube© is the second streaming¹ digital video platform in terms of global users. It achieved 1.5 billion subscribers in 2018 (Kemp, 2018, p. 59). Since 2005 (Kleina, 2017), Youtube© has had a user-friendly system that anyone from a professional to an amateur can use. Its advantage is the facility to post audiovisuals and search and watch any material produced by anyone. Since 2007, Youtube© has had a system where producers can obtain financial resources with advertisements on their channels in a very similar way as television broadcasters know (Kleina, 2017). With this system, many producers are undergoing professionalization, generating income from the audience, and expanding audiovisual production with the emergence of a new and more appropriate language for this means of communication.

All over the world, Youtube© has a massive audience. In Brazil, users spend a little more than 11 minutes a day to see the contents of their favorite channels (Alexa, 2019). Diva Depressão™ (2021) is one of Youtube's channels that won Brazilian audience. It has 2.98 million subscribers. Subscription is a strategy created by Youtube© to check the capacity of each channel to generate an audience. The subscription is free and aims to provide the user warnings of new videos and information about their chosen programs. Additionally, subscription works for producers to present quantitative proof of their audience, thus ensuring better negotiations in receiving advertising funds collected by the monetization system. One of the contents of the Diva Depressão™ channel that reached the mark of 661,000 views was the Web-Reality: Corrida das Blogueiras©. The program hosts are a gay couple, Eduardo Camargo and Filipe Oliveira. Its audience goes beyond gender boundaries and presents a Queer²

¹It is the flow of audio and video data over the world wide web. It is a technology that enables the transmission of audio and audiovisual programs over the internet. Youtube is one of the best-known and most used audiovisual dissemination platforms today.

²It was a pejorative term to identify people who were not socially accepted or lived outside the law (such as prostitutes, lechers, or unemployed). However, the Queer Theory emerged in the 1980s, and the book *Problems of Gender* by Judith Butler (1999)¹ is considered a breaking point. From there, the word us

(Low, 2016)¹ look at the universe of traditional media celebrities, as well as new Cyber-celebrities. The program is categorized as a reality show broadcast on the Web, therefore a Web-Reality. The contestants have to complete tasks in which their skills as bloggers have to be evaluated by judges. The judges are either fixed or guests to specific tasks. Finally, the judges select the task winner that will remain in the program like many competition reality genres such as Project RunawayTM (Holzman, 2009). This paper about the show *Corrida das Blogueiras*² aims to describe and identify the digital communication tools used by a still marginalized group to express their ideas. The ground theory at use is the Folkcommunication Theory (Beltrão, 2014). It serves to analyze the content of the Youtube[©] program. This Theory says that non-hegemonic groups, marginalized by the normative society (Green & Polito, 2004), have alternative expression channels. These groups use alternative media to propagate ideas and speeches, either to a specific audience or to a larger and more dispersed audience. That is the case of the program under analysis. An expressive audience within the Brazilian Youtube[©] serves a heterogeneous audience, which is not restricted to LGBTQ, as verified in the selection of the research corpus, the eight web-reality episodes, and a show on September 26, 2019, on the Diva Depression TM Channel. In this show, the presenters read comments from their audience³. Visiting the channel's website and reading the written comments demonstrate many posts made by heterosexual and gay and women.

I am Fejão, straight, married to Hellen and Joaquim's father for almost two years! I met you guys by chance when I was unemployed last year! I marathon session showed it to my wife, and since then, I have been watching your videos whenever possible! NostalDiva is the best show. Please make more! PS: is it a shame to say that I found out you guys are boyfriends through these videos? (Adriano Fejão, 2019).

Haaaaa! I love my divos so much. You are my company between one routine and another. I feel for you what my followers say they feel for me, and that is pretty crazy. You guys help me a lot when I am down. May God always bless your life!!! my crystals Ps.: The race of bloggers will take a flight that you do not even imagine. It's Ru paul Drag Race from Brazil, and I would say from the world. When they are celebrating Season 10, all worked on glamor in a very high production, I'll say, "I've watched it since season one " I love kisses boys (Batom Atravido, 2019)

In the web reality, the heterosexual women talk about their partners in the testimonies during the show. These testimonies about how much they like and follow the channel allow us to deduce that many heterosexual men and women not only watch the show but are also affected by its discourse (Ramalho & Resende, 2011)⁴. The web-reality analyzed is part of the Diva Depression channel. In 2019, "Corrida das Blogueiras[©]" had its second edition with a large audience and quite eclectic participation, with heterosexual women, gay men, and Drag Queens among those enrolled. This representation of the program is the basis of the Queer discourse. Presenters try to express in their content the universe of Queer fashion and performance, trying to overcome the barriers of prejudice and stereotypes. In Brazil, as in much of Latin America, the media culture of Radio, TV, and Cinema prevails in society. These hegemonic vehicles continue to propagate heteronormative discourse despite the many advances of modern society towards greater acceptance of diversity, whether of gender or ethnicity. Digital media, with expressive growth (Newman, Fletcher, Kalageropoulos, Levy, & Nielsen, 2018)⁵, are today a space of struggle and resistance against the oppression of hegemonic media groups. Folkcommunication Theory privileges the studies of marginalized and non-hegemonic groups. It serves as a theoretical basis for the discussion we carry out when analyzing our research corpus. Beltrão (2014) calls the components of the social group to which the presenters belong as the sexually marginalized group. Within this scope, realizing that the

program presented is also a vehicle of resistance and folk media militancy (Luyten, 2006), we can carry out a folk communicational analysis of its content and understand the messages according to its theoretical matrix. I'm 51 years old, and I follow you guys. You guys are fun. Ah, I'm a religious person. kkkkk Bjs (Adriana Capelloza, 2019). I am a mother, grandmother and I am 62 years old. You guys make me feel young. I laugh a lot. When you present lighter videos, I let my grandchildren watch with me. God bless you, dear ones (Eunice Oliveira, 2019)

The rise of gender minorities: In recent years, the LGBTQ theme has gained media visibility. Digital media became a space for the massive spread of LGBTQ messages. It was the place for new propositions of gender diversity, Queer culture, and the fight against social stereotypes. After years of struggle for feminism and against racism, important fights for social rights in the recent history of humanity, many scholars understand that the next social battle is against fatphobia, homophobia, and transphobia. These movements have many activists that use digital media as means of communication and dissemination of new social practices with gender valorization, visibility, and tolerance. The first step to make these themes relevant is to combat the invisibility in the traditional mainstream media and at the same time fight intolerance and violence towards these social groups. The LGBTQ group is among the most combative and suffers all kinds of discrimination and violence. Brazil is one of the countries with high rates of LGBTQ killings. Among these crimes, crossdressers and transgender people are the most brutal victims (Oliveira & Mott, 2020)⁶. The Bahia Gay Group's report on violence against LGBTQs points out that in 2019, in Brazil, there were 329 murders. Male gay, with 174 deaths, are the majority, followed by murders of transvestites, with 89 dead. According to the report, heteronormativity cultural issues arise all this homophobic violence. Traditional culture determines the estrangement concerning LGBTQ's and their discrimination, reaching extreme attitudes such as expulsion from social life. Because of this, it is crucial to have different ways to fight this intolerance. LGBTQ groups have found that to make their participation in society more visible and active, they have to use the Queer concept. The word that emerged as a curse became a banner for the gay community in recent years. It has been the foundation of a new social psychology theory, called Queer Theory, and according to Louro (2013), Queer

[...] it is weird, rare, odd. Queer is also the subject of deviant sexuality – homosexuals, bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, and drags. It is the eccentric who does not want to be 'integrated' let alone 'tolerated.' Queer is a way of thinking and being that does not aspire to the center or want it as a reference, a way of thinking and being that challenges the regulatory norms of society, which assumes the discomfort of ambiguity, the 'between places,' the undecidable. Queer is a strange body that bothers, disturbs, provokes, and fascinates. (Louro, 2013, p. 7-8)⁷

The Queer Theory holds that gender binarism, imposed by heteronormative society, should not be supported. States that the other sexualities must be naturally part of people's daily life. Authors who employ Queer concepts consider that educational and pedagogical actions are the way to break the binary logic and its most harmful effects such as hierarchy, classification, influence, exclusion, and inequality. To them (Cossi, Ingo, Dunker, & Cossi Rafael Kalaf, 2017; Lima & Vorcaro, 2017; Prado, 2019), it is through Queer education that new generations will leave prejudice and violence behind.

The most efficient educational process of the 21st century is social media. 42% of global internet users access social media daily (Kemp, 2018)⁸. Its reach is even more impactful on Youtube[©], where more than one and a half million people worldwide access the audiovisual platform monthly. It is the second most accessed social media service on the planet. The first one is Facebook. Within this perspective, a Youtube[©] program can be a viable and primary channel about Queer Theory to new generations, aiming to build a bridge for a more harmonious world in the issue of sexualities. To this end, this paper

now understood as a strange person, outside social standards.

³To watch the episode go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kut-6lXNN24> – The testimonials reproduced in this article are from this page.

conducts a case study analyzing a specific program in which Queer elements are present and shown within ludic content.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this survey, we used the Case Study methodology. We watched the eight episodes of the second season of the web reality "Corrida das Blogueiras©." Through this process, it was possible to understand the program format, follow the performances of the presenters, judges, and competitors. In addition, we can understand how the show displays its sponsors and include them in the competition dynamics. According to Yin (2005), the case study methodology is a survey about a contemporary phenomenon within the real-life environment. Therefore, this methodology is applied, especially when the boundaries between phenomena and real-life are not clear. Case study investigation is a technically unique situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points and, as a result, is based on multiple sources of evidence, with the data needing to converge towards a particular objective (Yin, 2017) . The case study as a research strategy comprises an all-encompassing method with a planning logic, incorporating specific data collection and analysis approaches. In this sense, the case study is not a tactic for data collection and is not a planning feature in itself but a broader research strategy (Ruiz, 2002) . We apply the case study methodology in this survey to study real-life situations with no clearly defined limits. We aim to retain the object's unity. We intend to describe the situation context in which the investigation occurs, formulate hypotheses or develop theories, explain the existing variables in the study with complex situations that quantitative surveys or experiments are not allowed (Gil, 2002) .

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

“Corrida das Blogueiras©”

The YouTube© Diva Depression™ channel has been in existence since September 4, 2013. The hosts are a gay couple. The presenters, Eduardo Camargo and Filipe Oliveira present themselves in a living room scenario with props that seek to represent the decoration of an elegant and sophisticated environment, often Kitsch⁴, the stereotype of an environment in which a celebrity should dwell.

Table 1. Contestants in the Corrida das Blogueiras© show

Contestant's Name	City of Origin	Gender	Feature
Andressah Catty	Brasília/DF	Female(cis ¹)	Women Cosmetology
Ego Oliver	Americana/SP	Male(gay)	Male Fashion
Ju Haendchen	Camburiú/SC	Female(cis)	Self-esteem
Kenya Borges	Santos/SP	Female(cis)	Racial Self-acceptance
Palloma Tamirys	Jandira/SP	Female(cis)	Women Cosmetology
Tabatha Cuzziol	Pelotas/RS	Female(cis)	Women Cosmetology
Vini Freire	Guarulhos/SP	Male(gay)	Men Cosmetology
Lea Muller	Suzano/SP	Male(drag)	Drag Cosmetology

Source: the authors (2021)

Diva comes precisely from this allusion to female deities (Michaelis, 2020) to the Muses of cinema and the arts. The word Depression, which is part of the channel name, connotes the depressive state of mind that Divas must feel after hearing the criticisms made by the presenters. The channel slogan represents this intention: The gossip is hot (Diva Depression, 2019), explaining that the channel's comments aim to observe details and not spare anyone from critics. After almost seven years, the show has four weekly programs (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday). A spin off of the channel is the “Corrida das Blogueiras©”. This show, which in 2019 had its second edition, with eight episodes, aired weekly on Tuesdays, at 7 pm (GMT), as defined by its creators as an Internet-based Reality show, called Web-Reality. The program follows the model of many

competition programs. In which one candidate, at each program, has to go home until there are only two competitors left to compete for a grand prize. This program model is old and began on North American and European television, with varied formats. The most striking being: Big Brother, which has a Brazilian version, Project Runway (Holzman, 2009) , among many others in the genre of a Reality talent competition. In the “Corrida das Blogueiras©” talent competition show, the main goal is the ability of each candidate to meet the requirements to be considered a blogger and digital influencer. The qualities requested range from makeup knowledge, product promotion, use of hot glue to make props and clothing, and the capacity to make videos to show on YouTube©. The Cinemark movie theater at the Eldorado shopping mall in the city of São Paulo also presented the show premiere. The well-executed production and the reach of the YouTube© resulted in the show's partnership with major national and international brands, such as Avon, Tim, and Leroy Merlin. It indicates that the marketing departments of major companies have already noticed the show's influence. The program started with eight contestants, five straight women, two gay men, and a Drag Queen. The program's presenters use the feminine as a form of treatment for all participants, including themselves. This self-referencing treatment is a Queer characteristic (Bertolotti & Medeiros, 2019) , in which the change in the language helps with the rupture of biological determinism. The eight episodes have the contestants' dialogues, individual statements for the camera, evidence, and judgment of the results of each task.

Then, a panel of judges, with the program's presenters, accompanied by fixed and special guests, give their opinion according to each test to be evaluated. The makeup test is the most awaited and has a technical judge. In this test happens the evaluation of the self makeup skills of each contestant by choosing a specific type of product with emphasis on the makeup process. The episode ends with the makeup photoshoot stamped on the cover of a makeup magazine by one of the program's sponsors (Avon). The core statement of this test upraised by contestants and judges is the representativeness and the break of paradigms about who can or should use makeup and which products are more related to each gender. In addition, there is clear Queer discourse in this episode with the quest to normalize makeup as a non-binary and non-gender-specific habit. Another commented episode and with great attention by the organizers is when the participants have to make an advertising video with odd products, such as a toilet paper roll or a caution barricade tape. Each participant receives information about the product and the minimum elements that should compose the video add. In the end, two participants, considered to be the ones that failed to attend the briefing, have to perform a second elimination test. They have to record a new video to advertise one of the program's sponsors (TIM) in this test. As there were errors in conducting the recording, the two participants had to record a second time. After the evaluation by the panel of judges happens the elimination of one of the contestants. It is possible to see that the program follows a technical and careful evaluation of the test results as the episodes unfold. The presenters do not favor affirmative speeches. In the final episode, the two finalists were women who, throughout the program, managed to show their abilities and surpass the other candidates. In many moments of elimination, when there was a woman competitor against a gay competitor, the difference pointed out by the judges was never the gender but the skills and abilities to attend the proposed test with better quality. This positioning of the program's organization highlights that, even with Queer content, there is no discrimination concerning the competitors' abilities, with justice and equity, in the judgment. That is also a feature of Queer Theory. The deconstruction of binarism and certain sectarian discourses (Prado, 2019) .

CONCLUSION

A program in which heterosexuals and gays work in partnership and harmony seeks to build a better understanding and comprehension bridge. The discourse is the proposition of a more affectionate look towards others, regardless of their gender, affection, or physical shape.

⁴It is a German noun that describes something in bad taste in the realm of aesthetics. It is content created to appeal to popular taste.

The search for the deconstruction of a binary and stereotyped heteronormative thought is the flag of the presenters of the "Corrida das Blogueiras©" show and the contestants. It is necessary to say that the presenters hardly would have space in traditional media. In their interventions, they express concern with the struggle for more tolerance by those who do not fit into stereotyped standards such as gender binarism, ethnocentric beauty models, and sexist behavior patterns. Both "Corrida das Blogueiras©" show, and the Diva Depression™ channel, go beyond the category of a niche communication and attract the eyes of large corporations as expressed by the three sponsors (Avon, Tim, and Leroy Merlin), who demonstrate the perception of audience penetration achieved by the program.

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