Media Activism in Religious Groups of Facebook in Brazil: Abadiânia, Irmãos Verdadeiros and Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida E À Igreja CATÓLica

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This work aims to investigate the phenomenon of media activism in the social network of Facebook with organized religious groups. The three groups indicated keep the participation system closed and, for this, they need the approval of the respective administrators. Three groups were chosen, they are: Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica, Irmãos Verdadeiros e Abadiânia. For the elaboration of this research was used as method the content analysis of the posts of the religious groups of Facebook and, through this research, the contents were categorized and classified according to the approach of each one. The period of analysis was between January 1, 2017 and January 15, 2017.

Keywords: media activism, religion, cyberculture

Introduction

The last census conducted in Brazil by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) was in 2010 to research the religions practiced in the country. In the research, the Institute obtained the following data: 1st Roman Catholic - 123,280,172; 2nd Evangelicals or Protestants - 42,275,440; 3rd Spiritist - 3,848,876; 4th Umbanda, Candomblé and Afro-Brazilian religions - 588,797; 5th Other religions - 5,185,065; 6th No religion - 15,335,510. Based on these data, we can conclude that the predominant religions in Brazil are of Christian origin, an inheritance of the Portuguese colonizers.

The religious question in Brazil is of great interest for the researches in several areas, mainly Human Sciences. In communication, a whole new environment that is being researched in the country is the Internet. Various religious groups, from different religious denominations are participating in this space, is what happens with Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica, Irmãos Verdadeiros e Abadiânia, the three religious groups that are on Facebook and are objects of analysis of this research.

In the group Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica he is described as:

> We love the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church and the Mother of God, of men and of the Church. Brothers in Christ, in this Group we accept only publications of interest from the Roman Catholic Church. All other posts will be deleted, so be kind enough not to post them. If they insist they will be excluded from the Group. The Peace of Christ and the love of

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the Blessed Virgin! (group information)[1].

The Irmãos Verdadeiros page: "my page (Roberto Barbosa - the moderator) is about the defense of the gospel of grace and biblical knowledge against the doctrine of prosperity and all sorts of heresies that confuse the Christian faith and all those who share the same sentiment".[2]

And finally, the group Faith Love Charity - Abadiânia, or the abbreviated form, Abadiânia, says:

> Dear Sisters, Dear Brothers, All are welcome! Add who you want. This is a community of all the goers, admirers, children of the House of Dom Inácio de Loyola - Abadiânia / Goiás, who share the same feeling of affection, faith and gratitude for all involved with a great work that is carried out in Abadiânia. A small corner where people share their blessings, prayers and information with other members. WARNING: This group has no official connection with Casa de Dom Inácio de Loyola. The Casa Dom Inácio de Loyola was the place to fulfill the mission of the medium João de Deus, through a letter psychographed by the medium Chico Xavier, who was very close to him through the spirit of Dr. Bezerra de Menezes. The place was built in a very special place, and prepared by the spiritual plane. FAITH, LOVE and CHARITY: this is the motto of the House. For Prayer Request, Energy and Balance, send an email to Casa de Dom Inácio, with all the information of the person in need. Your e-mail will be printed immediately and placed next to the Entity.[3]

In the group Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica there are currently 6,182 members; About members of Irmãos Verdadeiros 4,637; and Abadiânia 15,830. If compare the data from the three groups with the IBGE census, the participation of the representatives of each religion would, in some cases, be inverted, because, by the order of the Institute in Brazil, we have the largest number of Catholics, followed by Evangelicals and Spiritists. However, this study will not look at the amount of members, but the content posted on Facebook groups.

The Problem

How does the ideological diffusion of religion - religious activism - occur in the three main religions of Brazil, in closed groups of Facebook? Do all activist actions on the pages converge with each other, or are there differences of position in subjects related to religion?

Theoretical Foundation

The world's computer network, or the Internet, originates in the period of the Cold War (strategic disputes between the Soviet Union and the United States). It was first used by the United States for transmission of communication on military bases. In the 1970s and 1980s the Internet gained space in university centers as a way of exchanging messages and ideas between teachers and students.

From 1990 onwards, the Internet can be used by the general population. Tim Bernes-Lee developed the World Wide Web, or www, still in 1990. This invention provided the creation of more dynamic websites, graphical interface and the accelerated growth of the computer network. After launch it was the turn of the emergence of browsers, as for example the Microsoft Internet Explorer.

In Brazil, only from 2002 onwards started a new stage of the Internet for users. The first social networks begin to be used, they are: Fotolog, Frendster, LinkedIn, and Myspace. But it is only in 2004 that the social networks is accepted by several internauts in the country, with great relevance to Orkut. The social network operated in Brazil from 2004 to 2014, reaching more than 30 million Brazilian profiles.

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[1] Group Link Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1382260065344050/.
[2] Group Link Irmãos Verdadeiros: https://www.facebook.com/groups/644080699061538/.
[3] Group Link Fé Amor Caridade - Abadiânia: https://www.facebook.com/groups/1616381565289884/.

Currently Facebook is the most used social network in the country, corresponds to the equivalent 50% of the Brazilian population. This was the main factor to analyze the content of religious groups, since, is the place of cyberspace that they use most to announce the precepts of faith.

Table 1 shows the main social networks in Brazil.

Table 1

The Main Social Networks in Brazil

Redes Sociais	Informações sobre a rede no Brasil
1. Facebook	Most used in Brazil - 103 million users.
2. Whatsapp	30% of the population uses daily.
3. Messenger	In the Play Store loses only to for Whatsapp as the most searched application for the Android system.
4. Youtube	21% of the population accesses daily.
5. Instagram	Of the more than 300 million active users, Brazil corresponds to 6.55% of total network traffic.
6. Google$^+$	6% of total users are Brazilian.
7. Skype	15% of the Brazilian population use the service (domestic and company).
8. Twitter	From 2013 onwards the network lost 63% in the volume of active users, but is still the fifth most used by Brazilian companies.
9. LinkedIn	Average of 25 million active users in Brazil.
10. Snapchat	Only 9% of the Brazilian population is active in the network.
11. Pinterest	8% of the population uses this social network.

Note. [*] Population of Brazil: 207,656,899 (IBGE).

Cyberculture

The evolutionary process to arrive at what we call cyberculture, began in the 1980s with the commercialization of portable personal computers, causing in this way a great change in human behavior - from mere spectators to content-producing users (Santaella, 2003).

For the production of content in this new apparatus and environment, the user has adapted to the use of the screens, as well as learned the language of each medium. If previously the user consumed all the material that was offered to him automatically, in this new reality the process became more autonomous and of active participation (santaella, 2003).

This path traveled by the media did not happen overnight, there was a gradual maturation, primarily the big media - newspapers, radio and television and later the emergence of the Internet. The Internet moreover is considered the network of networks, since it amplifies, modifies and transforms the *modus operandi*[4] of communication and human relations in the process called interconnection of the place with the global.

> A Internet penetra em todos os domínios da vida social e os transforma. Assim é uma nova configuração, a sociedade em rede, que está em gestação em todo o planeta, ainda que sob formas muito diversas entre um ponto e outro e com efeitos muito diferentes sobre a vida das populações, devido à sua história, sua cultura, suas instituições. Como as mutações estruturais anteriores, essa reviravolta traz consigo tantas possibilidades quanto problemas novos. O resultado que daí surgirá é indeterminado: dependerá de uma dinâmica contraditória, da eterna luta entre os esforços sempre renovados para dominar, para explorar, e a defesa do direito de viver e de procurar dar um sentido à própria vida (CASTELLS *apud* RUDIGER, 2011, p.132)

According to Santaella (2003, p. 89) "uma rede acontece quando os agentes, suas ligações e trocas constituem os nós e elos de rede caracterizada pelo paralelismo e simultaneidade das múltiplas operações que aí se desenrolam".

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[4] Latin term: means a way to act, operate or perform an activity following generally the same procedures.

Computer networks differ from television networks in the direction of the signal flow of the generator in relation to the final receivers. While the television signal follows the unidirectional flow (source - signal recipients), networks form a tangle of connections in which each user can be sources or recipients of the content.

> Os meios de comunicação e suas relações com vários contextos históricos, culturais e sociais latino-americanos, percebem a existência e a importância dos modos de comunicação vindos desses grupos populares que se espalham pelas redes cotidianas. Também percebem que as mensagens midiáticas, no percurso da emissão à audiência, são perpassadas por várias instâncias das redes de comunicação cotidiana onde são resignificadas. (TRIGUEIRO, 2008, p. 43).

The connection between computers and networks is called "cyberspace" through the interface. The interface is seen as a delimiter (invisible barrier) between the physical parts of the machine and the activity performed by the users through the screen (Santaella, 2003).

Cyberspace, according to Pierre Lévy (1999), allows the combination of several modes of communication, as well as the notion of communication through the shared virtual world. The characteristic genealogy of cyberspace derives from the cybernetic theory of Nobert Wiener (1948) in which it consisted in describing a new science that unites the theory of communication with the theory of control (Santaella, 2003, p. 97).

Currently, it is generally called cyberspace to refer to a set of distinct technologies, some of which are known, others that are still being made available gradually, and finally, those that have not yet been completed (Santaella, 2003).

After this analysis of the relationship between machine and human being, we finally entered the field of cyberculture. Kerckhove apud Santaella (2003, p. 104) states that cyberculture is the result of mass multiplication by velocity.

> Enquanto a televisão e o rádio nos trazem notícias e informação em massa de todo o mundo, as tecnologias sondadoras, como o telefone ou as redes de computadores, permitem-nos ir instantaneamente a qualquer ponto e interagir com esse ponto. Essa é a qualidade da profundidade, a possibilidade de tocar aquele ponto e ter um efeito demonstrável sobre ele através das nossas extensões eletrônicas. [...] Já não nos contentamos com superfícies. Estamos mesmo tentando penetrar o impenetrável: a tela do vídeo. [...] Expressão literal da cibercultura é a florescente indústria de máquinas de realidade virtual que nos permitem entrar na tela do vídeo e do computador e sondar a interminável profundidade da criatividade humana na ciência, arte e tecnologia. (Kerckhove *apud* Santaella, 2003, p.104)

In the conception of Lemos (2010, p. 258), cyberculture enhances one of the "magic phase" of technology - generalized connection, ubiquity, telepresence dematerialization, and complexifying the notion of the society of the spectacle[5]. In the sense of society of the spectacle, cyberculture comes to overcome it, taking the idea of industrial capitalism production and turning it into a social attitude. This attitude is demonstrated in this work by presenting religious media activism in the cyberculture environment. It is understood as mediatic activism, a phenomenon characterized by cognitive intermediation between culture producers (activists) and their consumers. In the case of religious activism presented here is the engagement of the Organizations / Movements of representatives of the three main religions of Brazil through the Social Network Facebook.

Objectives

Categorize and classify the content of the posts of three religious communities: Abadiânia, Irmãos Verdadeiros e Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica, Between January 1, 2017 and January 15,

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[5] Society of the Spectacle - Guy Debord (1931-1994): Fierce criticism of contemporary society, that is, the society of consumption, the culture of image and the invasion of the economy in all spheres of life.

2017; analyze the posting rules and whether post content follows a standardization imposed by the moderator (s). At the end of the categorization of the posts, a comparison was made between the contents to conclude if activist action between the pages converge or if there are differences of position in matters related to the religion.

Methodology

We used the content analysis[6] as a method of the postings of the religious groups of Facebook, and, through this survey the contents were categorized and classified according to the approach of each one. The categories created according to the content posted were: Prayers, Greeting, Sharing Religious Items, Religious Images, Religious Videos, Religious Articles Sale, Bible Passages, Religious Denunciation (practices that don't go according to the religious precepts of the group), Religious Recommendations, Meeting Invitations and Posts without religious character. Each post during the search period was framed in one of these categories.

Results

The content analysis of the three groups between January 1, 2017 and January 15, 2017 were carried out in the linguistic and iconic codes published during the period and have the following result, according to the Table 2.

Table 2

Analysis of Results

	Abadiânia	Irmãos Verdadeiros	Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica	Total
Prayers	16	3	8	27
Greeting	5	12	8	25
Sharing Religious Items	0	30	8	38
Religious Images	0	6	10	16
Religious Videos	1	17	20	38
Religious Articles Sale	1	0	1	2
Bible Passages	0	26	19	45
Religious Denunciation (practices that don't go according to the religious precepts of the group)	0	56	2	58
Religious Recommendations	11	36	7	54
Meeting Invitations	0	1	3	4
Posts without religious character	0	30	0	30
Total Posts	34	217	86	337

Final Considerations

The Abadiânia group, representing the Spiritist religion, is less active if compared to the other two groups (Protestants and Catholics). In the period from January 1, 2017 to January 15, 2017, 34 posts were made. Different from the other groups, most of the posts were made by a user, named Margôo Luuzz (this is the spelling of the nickname), a user that is not identified by the gender, age and place of residence. This user uses the group for postings of spiritual prayers and religious recommendations that follow the spiritist precepts. Other users also participate, but not actively as Margôo Luuzz.

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[6] Bardin, L. "Content analysis is a set of communication analysis techniques" (2011, p. 37).

The Irmãos Verdadeiros group is the most active among the three. The "owner" of the group, Roberto Barbosa, makes several posts a day, as well as other users actively participate. From January 1, 2017 to January 15, 2017, 217 posts were made, with a predominance of religious denunciations concerning Protestantism and Catholicism. Activism among users has a high degree, since religious extortion practices by religious representatives are not accepted, but there are recommendations to be a Christian by following the rules of God (according to the bible). Users always seek to denounce the practices of "charlatans" leaders and some moments ask the opinions of other users to support or refute the idea of that post. Among the three groups, it is the only one that has posts that are not religious and the only one that has not had any religious articles for sale.

The third and final group, Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica, is the most diversified in relation to the activists who produce and share content. Posts are made by several different users: The contents only involve the Catholic religion and there are no references to other religious denominations; The images and videos have great predominance to Nossa Senhora (Aparecida, Fátima, da Rosa Mística e das Dores), as well as Jesus Christ; Another important point is the sharing of Christian Bible passages. This group is the second most active, with 86 posts in the period from January 1, 2017 to January 15, 2017.

Therefore, it is concluded that the groups have proposals totally different from each other. It is noted the concern of just convey to other users what is according to religion. The interests and rules for those who want to participate are explicit in the description of each group and by the analysis in the chosen period, all follow this order. Regarding the comparison between the groups, it is noted that the Abadiânia group is focused on spiritual messages and messages linked to the precepts of the Spiritist religion. The Irmãos Verdadeiros in counterpart act by denouncing all forms of extortion by faith and accuse the false prophets of deceiving the faithful, even calling themselves the a Evangélico / Protestant group, the postings also denounce actions of the religious denomination itself. Amor a Nossa Senhora Aparecida e à Igreja Católica is the typical group that works the iconography in the posts, all geared mainly to reaffirmation of the catholic faith and of sharing messages considered holy.

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