

WHATSAPP IN THE PRODUCTION ROUTINE IN THE INLAND: A Study on the Perspectives of Journalists from Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO)

WHATSAPP NA ROTINA PRODUTIVA DO INTERIOR: Um Estudo a partir das Perspectivas dos Jornalistas de Imperatriz (MA) e Araguaína (TO)

WHATSAPP EN LA RUTINA PRODUCTIVA DEL CAMPO: Un Estudio desde La Perspectiva de Periodistas de Imperatriz (MA) Y Araguaína (TO)

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ABSTRACT

This work seeks to understand how journalists, who work in newsrooms in the cities of Imperatriz (Maranhão – Brazil) and Araguaína (Tocantins - Brazil), use WhatsApp in their routine, and how this application affects their working conditions. The scope of the research included 14 communication vehicles. Methodologically, this study is divided into three stages: exploratory survey, semi-structured interviews, and comparative analysis. Among the conclusions, we point out that the use of the WhatsApp application is part of the production routine of journalists in the cities of Imperatriz and Araguaína. However, they are not critical of this fact implications for their production routines. Most of them adopt a subservient role as a category.

KEYWORDS: Production routine; Journalism; WhatsApp.

Introduction

This article aims to understand how journalists working in traditional media newsrooms in two medium-sized cities¹ in the Brazilian interior, Imperatriz in Maranhão (MA), and Araguaína in Tocantins (TO), use WhatsApp in their routine, and how this

¹ Geography studies consider the population, as defined by IBGE, to classify medium cities and their intermediary role. According to the geographer and professor at UNESP, Maria Encarnação Beltrão Sposito, the middle city "is thought of as a kind of link between what is the command of the urban hierarchy and the base, that is, small cities, due to their size, they do not present a great diversity of goods and services, so they will be served, their inhabitants will also be served of these goods and services in these intermediate cities, since this population is far from the metropolis and will not be able to ascend to the metropolis for services, such as services in health, higher education, and so on" (SPOSITO, 2017, Online).

application affects their work conditions. The proposal is to identify how the insertion of this tool contributes to the reconfiguration of routines in times of crisis in journalism (CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2019).

We used the population ranking of IBGE Cidades (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – Cities) (2010) to select the two locations. Data from this ranking indicates that Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO) are the second-largest cities in their States, Maranhão, and Tocantins, respectively. The population of Imperatriz is 247,505, and the population of Araguaína (TO) is 150,484. The two cities are distant 248 km, and they are two medium-sized cities, which most influence the micro-regions where they are located.

Despite the significant difference in population, the two cities are similar in economic and social aspects, and they have a long tradition in commerce and greatly influence agribusiness (FERREIRA, 2012). Besides, these two locations had grown on riverbanks: Imperatriz (MA) on the bank of the Tocantins River and near more than ten streams; Araguaína (TO) on the banks of the Lontra and Andorinha rivers. The construction of Transbrasiliana and BR-010 highways, in 1960, under Juscelino Kubitschek's government, has enabled the urban progress of these cities. These roads eased land transportation, previously hampered by the lack of paved roads, and promoted migration, thus favoring infrastructure improvement, as well as businesses, industries, public services, and transport development (MORAIS, 2014; MARTINS & KAMIMURA, 2012; BARROS ET AL., 2012).

Moreover, we understand that journalism in smaller urban centers, which present regional particularities, encompasses specific characteristics to adopt and use digital tools in its routine. So, this study seeks to see, from the professional's perspective, how newsrooms have organized their work adopting WhatsApp in their daily routine and how journalists perceive the impact of this change in their practice. The scope of the research includes fourteen communication vehicles, in which there is local news production, including TV, radio, website, and newspaper.

WhatsApp and journalism

WhatsApp was launched in 2009, and it has become a frequent tool for professional use since then. In the journalistic sphere, various studies usually confirm that journalists have experience using it and, most of the time, present results that emphasize the positive characteristics of this insertion in the labor market. They highlight the application potentiality to streamline and facilitate the professionals' routine because it is a popular, practical, and available tool that facilitates contact with sources and the public (SILVA, 2019; FERREIRA, LUZ & MACIEL, 2015; SOUSA, ARAÚJO & PAULA, 2015).

Historically, in Brazil, it was the *Extra Newspaper* that pioneered the use of the application to receive information from the audience in 2013 (SPECHT, 2017). Nowadays, it has a team exclusively dedicated to screening messages received via WhatsApp. In their analysis of the relationship between technologies and journalism, Pereira and Adghirni (2011) consider that this is not a mere change in posture because these small interferences generate structural transformations. For the authors, these changes directly affect three aspects of journalism production: 1. multiplication of products, content, and professional profiles, which are put together with historically consolidated practices; 2. the redefinition of journalists and media companies status, providing new forms of participation to the public, due to the crisis in the economic model and credibility; 3. the integration process between writing and practice, mediated by new technologies, given the investments in convergence processes that have been occurring in different sectors of communication, which increasingly guide a more participative and demanding audience.

For all these reasons, being online became an obligation due to the large flow of information, and this represents a competitive advantage that has altered the journalism business model (AGNEZ, 2011), mainly with the popularization of cell phones and, consequently, of mobile technology. In this context, journalism companies began to establish the use of digital platforms by journalists, often in a non-systematized way, and it has contributed to the current crisis in journalism expansion, with the precariousness of working conditions and loss/emergence of functions (GUEDES, 2018; AGNEZ, 2011; CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2019).

Journalism in the inland

Journalism in the inland consists of presswork done in medium and small cities, decentralized from capitals and metropolitan regions (ASSIS, 2013), considered regional centers with potential for investment in the media business (MOREIRA & DEOLINDO, 2013). Media companies have an interest in the interior because of its market value (PERUZZO, 2005). But, beyond its financial potential, the inland media is relevant because it allows the population to recognize their locality and themselves since vehicles in metropolises and capitals generally broadcast national issues (ASSIS, 2013; DORNELLES, 2010; PERUZZO, 2005; MOREIRA & DEOLINDO, 2013). Thus, journalism in the inland collaborates to fill identity gaps when “it talks about its own place and territory where it operates and, thus, constitutes the channel par excellence in these cities” (MOREIRA & DEOLINDO, 2013, p. 22).

Furthermore, the inland media deals with routine peculiarities that differ from the model experienced in large cities. One of them is related to the journalist's proximity to that reality that allows him to recognize and reproduce the events of that location, evidencing both an interest in people and their interests. "Professionals of the inland press must be citizen assistant journalists and have as one of their characteristics the excessive taste for people" (DORNELLES, 2011, p. 241).

The structure of staff and equipment is another peculiarity of this media since these vehicles work with less advertising budget, reduced staff, lack of equipment, and low investments in technology (ASSIS, 2013). This reality entails the requirement that professionals "find solutions for their maintenance and permanence in the media market that covers only one city or, at most, a region. However, this is linked to the characteristics of the place where he is" (ASSIS, 2013, p. 05).

Methodology

Methodologically, these are the stages of this study: an exploratory survey to identify the universe of journalistic vehicles in the two cities and to allow the object of analysis delimitation (communication vehicles and interviewees); semi-structured interviews, applied to journalists who work in the newsroom and often use WhatsApp, to understand how this application was inserted into their routine, and its contributions to them; and informal interviews (SILVA, 2019) to identify structural and historical aspects of some of the vehicles selected for the study.

In the first stage, we used mapping to identify the communication vehicles from the two cities. In Imperatriz (MA), we identified 14 communication vehicles (MA), in television (4), online (03), radio (06), and printed (01) media; while in Araguaína (TO), we mapped 15 communication vehicles, in television (05), online (03) and radio (07) media. But we need to highlight that a printed newspaper has not been distributed in Araguaína since 2010². Thus, the mapping totaled 29 vehicles in the two cities, 14 from Imperatriz (MA) and 15 from Araguaína (TO).

For this study, we selected those communication vehicles whose journalistic production routine is local and authorial and produce news, not entertainment. Thus, the scope of this research includes 14 different media outlets, 7 in Imperatriz (*TV Mirante*, *TV Difusora Sul*, *TVI Imperatriz*, *O Progresso*, *Imirante*, *Imperatriz Online* and *Correio*

² The exploratory study evidenced that magazines and blogs in both cities differed from other supports regarding the regularity of production and type of content. Magazines have social column aspects, and they are not published daily. Blogs, on the other hand, do not have a fixed update routine and are opinionated. Therefore, they did not meet the criteria proposed in this study. The last printed newspaper circulating in Araguaína (TO) was *O Norte*, and currently, it works online.

Popular) and 7 in Araguaína (*TV Anhanguera*, *TV Líder*, *TV Araguaína*, *TV Amazônia*, *Rádio CBN*, *Site Araguaína Notícias*, and *Site Fatos e Notícias*). We have identified, in these outlets, 83 communication professionals who work in the newsroom, from news-gathering to reports composition, 29 of them are from Araguaína (TO) and 44 from Imperatriz (MA).

In Imperatriz (MA), the research proved the strength of TV, where more journalists are working, ranging from 10 to 7 professionals in each outlet. Moreover, in this city, online and print media work with a smaller staff. Only three professionals work for *O Progresso* in its newsroom. Probably, this is the reason for its weakening in the city and its absence of social networks, which, consequently, could generate greater demand for news. Currently, the printed version and the website are updated only once a day and through content reproduction. The online media have an even smaller staff that is usually composed of only one journalist responsible for news production for both the website and social networks.

In Araguaína (TO,) the scenario is also precarious. There is a minimal team working at the TV stations. Only TV Anhanguera has a structured staff with a clear division of functions, composed of 10 professionals. The others work with as little as possible, and in some of them, only one journalist is responsible for the entire production. For example, only one journalist works for *TV Araguaína* with the support of a cameraman and an outsourced image agency. A curious case in the city is the *TV Líder*, which currently does not produce its programs and rents its space to two independent journalists, who share equipment and technical professionals' support. The site's staff numbers are balanced, and the owners are directly involved in the routine. That is different from what happens in Imperatriz (MA), where the owners of the outlets do not produce journalistic content just taking care of its administration, and journalists are employees hired to work on the sites.

Based on the profile of these vehicles that provide local coverage and the understanding that, even with particularities, television is the most influential media in both cities, where there are few and less structured initiatives in the other outlets, we sought a better understanding of the relationships of these professionals' relationships and their WhatsApp-mediated routines. Thus, we conducted the interviews following a thematic script organized as follows:

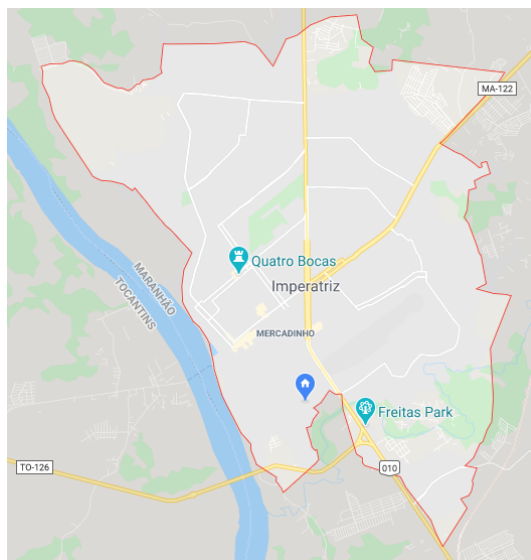
- I. **Usage Guidelines:** This category sought the guidelines given for journalists on how the tool should be used and their strategies to organize their performance using the device. The proposal was to see both the

company's and the professional's commitment degree to the daily use of the application;

- II. **Advantages and disadvantages:** This category aimed to know how professionals interact with the tool and find out what they believe has become better or worse in their professional routine; and
- III. **Quality of the content produced through the tool:** This category aimed to understand the journalist's opinion about the interference of WhatsApp in the quality of their content and to comprehend whether, under the conditions they have adopted it, it results in products they evaluate as adequate.

Universe of the research

Picture 1 Imperatriz (MA).



Source: Screen Printed from Google Maps (2020).

1.1 Imperatriz (MA)

Imperatriz is the second-largest city in Maranhão, and it is approximately 700 kilometers distant from the capital. Television media is very influential because there are four TV stations with local news programs that produce authorial information. When we concluded the research, the news production in the city included newspaper with limited authorial writing – *O Progresso*; six radio stations, which focus on music and entertainment transmission; and three commercial news sites, *Imirante*, part of *Rede Globo's* affiliate channel, *Imperatriz Online* and *Correio Popular*, which have undergone several changes during their history.

From the vehicles we describe below, only four use the application under an institutional number. We can also verify that some of them use newsgroups in the application, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Institutional WhatsApp at communication vehicles in Imperatriz (MA).

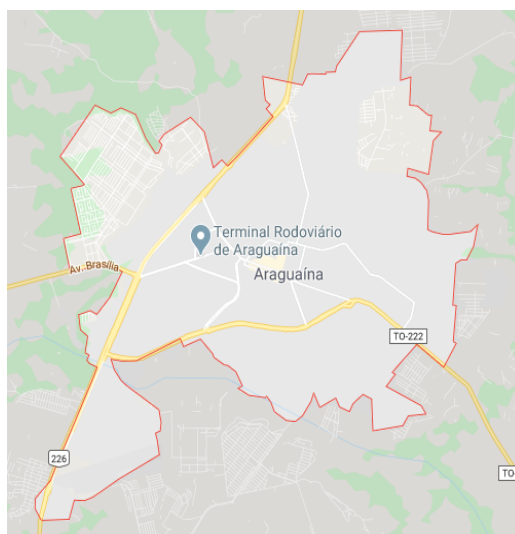
VEHICLE	WHATSAPP	GROUP
TV Mirante	Personal	No
TV Difusora Sul	Institutional	No
TVI Imperatriz	Institutional	No
Imperatriz Online	Institutional	Yes
Correio	Institutional	No
O Progresso	Personal	No
Imirante	Personal	Yes

Source: The authors (2020).

1.2 Araguaína (TO)

Araguaína is the second-largest city in the state of Tocantins and the main city in Araguaína Region, which houses about 12.04% of the statewide online media (ROCHA, 2018), which uses hyperlocalism as a characteristic for news dissemination (ROCHA, 2015).

Picture 2 Araguaína (TO).



Source: Screen Printed from Google Maps (2020).

It is approximately 380 kilometers distant from the capital, Palmas. The city's media production is considerably expressive. There are five television channels with local coverage and seven local radio stations - one of them is All News, i.e., its programming is entirely focused on news production as the others focus on music and entertainment. There are three websites on the online media – one of them works as an image and information agency for nightly events, which transmits its content to other vehicles in Araguaína and neighboring cities. There is not a daily newspaper in Araguaína. However, *Jornal do Tocantins* began its trajectory in Araguaína, but currently, its headquarters are only in the capital. Besides this, the website *O Norte* had operated until 2010 as a printed medium.

Among the vehicles we identified in Araguaína, six use commercial WhatsApp numbers. They disclose this contact for the audience to make agenda suggestions. Only in *TV Líder*, the newscaster is responsible for the WhatsApp contact and publishes the number the audience should use to make agenda suggestions for each program. The other vehicles, such as *TV Anhanguera*, *CBN*, *Araguaína Notícias* and *Fatos e Notícias*, the network's team is responsible for the WhatsApp. Inclusive, *Fatos e Notícias* news website was created through a WhatsApp group.

Table 2 Institutional WhatsApp in communication vehicles in Araguaína (TO).

VEHICLE	WHATSAPP	GROUP
TV Anhanguera	Institutional	No
TV Líder	Institutional	No
TVI Amazônia	Personal	No
TV Araguaína	Institutional	No
CBN	Institutional	No
Araguaína Notícias	Institutional	Yes
Fatos e Notícias	Institutional	Yes

Source: The authors (2020).

Usage Guidelines

The purpose of this category was to verify if the inland media companies provided any guidelines using WhatsApp. We confirmed the existence of an institutional number/device and norms regarding language and image, for example, to use the vehicles' official contact or the personal number of the professionals.

In Imperatriz (MA), from the seven mapped vehicles, four have a commercial account in the application (*Difusora Sul, Imperatriz Online, TVI Imperatriz, and Correio Popular*), one has had it (TV Mirante), and two have never used an official number in the application (*Imirante* and *O Progresso*). At first glance, this information demonstrates companies' interest in professionalizing and ordering the use of the tool in their routine. However, the communicators' answers show that this is an inefficient and exhausting proposal that it is even a hindrance sometimes.

For example, *TV Mirante* had had a commercial contact. However, it has proved to be inefficient because they received an overflow of messages. Besides this, they did not have professionals available for filtering the information.

This WhatsApp takes a lot of time because pieces of information for all kinds of stories were always arriving. So, you know, you had to be there filtering. In an hour, about five thousand messages arrived. And there were the groups in which they added us, which had a lot of random chat that was not interesting to us. So, the production ended up feeling that it wasn't so useful, since we had other ways to get the information as it took a lot of time and didn't help in the way we thought (COMMUNICATOR IMPERATRIZ 1, 2019 - Oral Data).

The reporter of the *Imirante* website, which belongs to the group of *TV Mirante*, has always used her contact and argues that a professional number would only make the journalist's job more difficult. She tells a workmate's experience to prove her argument.

I don't have a corporate phone; I don't miss it. Those who have it here don't even like it because it's getting in the way instead of helping. My workmate, for example, chose not to have it because it was a headache. Everyone already knows her number and another number that nobody knows... Anyway! I don't miss it, only my phone is fine, indeed. (COMMUNICATOR IMPERATRIZ 6, 2020 – Oral Data)³.

TVI Imperatriz does not provide a device for its staff but a chip with internet access and unlimited calls. However, it is not a standard action for all the professionals working for the vehicle.

Correio Popular reporter had an atypical position, different from her workmates. When we were conducting the interviews, *Correio Popular* had an official account in the app, which was the director's responsibility who transmitted the information to the team according to the demands, as reported to the journalist and the research by Reino et al (2018). Even so, the journalist adopted a professional contact, by personal choice, to control the use of the platform at work, and she was the only one that has demonstrated,

³ Interview with the researchers conducted on February 28, 2020, in Imperatriz (MA).

more explicitly, the existence of a systematization of the tool use, even though it was the result from her initiative.

In Araguaína (TO), at first glance, the scenario is relatively more systematized since six of the seven mapped vehicles use a commercial contact. But like the vehicles from Imperatriz (MA), many professionals in Araguaína (TO) consider this an inefficient attempt or do not make full use of it.

The reporter of *TV Amazônia* (the only vehicle in Araguaína without an institutional account) acknowledged that she already has considered the possibility of using a corporate number but admitted she would end up not being able to manage the two numbers. So, she controls the communication in the private account according to the flow of demands.

On the other hand, some research participants use a device of the company. *The CBN* reporter stated that he rarely uses it in his routine, even though this implies spending money on an internet provider. In his perception, using the corporate contact to communicate with the source is cold, and hinders the formation of his network of contacts. He also points out that when using only the corporate number, the source can send a demand outside his working hours, so he will not answer it. That reveals that she shows no concern about working work outside office hours.

I use my number. I even have the corporate one, but I think using the corporate one is quite cold because the person doesn't look at our photo, they think they're talking just to the company, and I like to have this personal aspect because when I leave this company, I'll take the sources with me... The person does not have only the radio station's contact, he will have professional's contact, and I even leave with my sources, OK? (COMMUNICATOR ARAGUAÍNA 5, 2020 – Oral Data)⁴.

Contact between journalists and sources and journalists' list of contacts are results of their career, do not belong to the company. That is nothing new and integrates the practice of professionals, regardless of large or small companies or whether they have a digital tool or a paper notebook. But the journalists, at least not spontaneously, do not claim or think about the costs of this for them.

From all the outlets studied, *TV Araguaína* portrays the worst scenario regarding disorganization in using the institutional tool. The TV station proposes a WhatsApp contact and publishes it every day in the local newscast as a contact for the journalism sector. However, an employee of the administrative sector, who volunteered to carry out the activity, is responsible for controlling it. Thus, this contact is used sporadically by the

⁴ Interview with the authors carried out on March 10, 2020, in Araguaína – TO.

only journalist working for this outlet, although they broadcast it to viewers as a communication channel between the audience and the newsroom.

Fatos e Notícias news website and *Araguaína Notícias* website use the institutional account to systematize the content shared by the platform, either to facilitate contact with sources, establish the length of service, or to publicize links. *Fatos e Notícias* news website works as a website and an image agency, and it has a TV show. So, the professional WhatsApp emerged after difficulties in managing these three activities in a single number that belonged to the owner. This scenario is similar to the *Araguaína Notícias* website, which has adopted the new to organize the sending of links and times but still publicizes the owner's number as the vehicle's number. Journalist of *Imirante* website, from Imperatriz (MA), has already stated the necessary time for adaptation to use the institutional number.

We are part of an average of 68 groups. Then, the time came when people sent us messages, but we couldn't follow up, you know! Something important could not be followed up. There was a time when my partner had to call back, asking for information, some detail, some complement. Then, following this, this new number came up, and this new number is to answer partners and also the companies that sponsor the Website and the TV. (COMMUNICATOR ARAGUAÍNA 7, 2020 – Oral Data)⁵.

We have the corporate number, which is under the responsibility of my partner. And my personal number is also in the contacts on the site, as it was already well known, and many people prefer to know who they are talking to when suggesting an agenda issue. (COMMUNICATOR ARAGUAÍNA 6, 2020 – Verbal Data)⁶.

Thus, in the two vehicles from Araguaína that use the application in a quite systematized way, it occurred because they are interested in sharing a link, which is an online journalism feature (GUEDES, 2018). Furthermore, the contact said to be the vehicles' official one is not easily found. In Araguaína (TO), despite the expressiveness of commercial numbers, they are not found on the vehicles' websites or social networks. Of the six communication outlets with an institutional number, four were not found on any online platform, such as *TV Anhanguera*, *TV Líder*, *TV Araguaína*, and *Fatos e Notícias*. All of them only disclose their contacts during the programs broadcast on TV. Although there are fewer communication media in Imperatriz, they were more concerned about making WhatsApp contact accessible. All of them – except *Correio Popular* that

⁵ Interview with the researchers carried out on February 27, 2020, on WhatsApp.

⁶ Interview with the researchers carried out on February 16, 2020, on WhatsApp.

deactivated its WhatsApp account - make their contact number available online, either on websites or social networks.

In short, in none of the two cities, WhatsApp use is organized or follows standardized guidelines. In the case approached in this study, most vehicles, even those with a commercial number for the application, are not concerned with working hours or language. None, for example, guides their employees through choosing the image they use as a profile. In such a scenario, each journalist ends up opting for what many of them described as good judgment. But precisely a lack of common sense that we identified among those interviewed in this research. When we asked them about some possible embarrassments caused by dealing with sources outside working hours, as consequence of the lack of systematization, *CBN* and *TV Imperatriz* journalists admitted that this does not bother them and that, possibly, they are those who cause embarrassment to the sources especially if it is a closer one.

In fact, on weekends, I send a message to my sources to anticipate the agenda issues from Monday. I've already sent a message to a source at 11 p.m., and she replied to me. [...] So, I've never had this problem of time restrictions. When it ok, we schedule it. (COMMUNICATOR IMPERATRIZ 4, 2020 – Oral Data).

No, I don't feel embarrassed maybe I can embarrass someone. But I look for, you know, if it's a very close source, I send a message. I feel that the person likes it, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. I send it normal. I text. If the person replies, that's fine. (COMMUNICATOR ARAGUAÍNA 5, 2020 – Oral Data).

Furthermore, even without any guidelines established by the vehicles, some professionals claimed to be concerned with language, whether using abbreviations or emoticons. According to them, this practice maintains a more professional relationship.

In Imperatriz (MA), four of the seven interviewees (*TV Mirante*, *TV Difusora Sul*, *Imirante* and *Correio Popular*) prioritize the use of formal language. The editor and former producer of *TV Mirante* also stressed that it is difficult to think of a common way of using it if the company does show interest.

Journalists of *Imperatriz Online* website, *TV Imperatriz*, and *O Progresso* newspaper are not concerned with the language. For the first two ones, the use of abbreviations or emotions is also an appropriate expression modality. It depends on the closeness in the journalist-source relationship. We can justify this easy adaptation by the fact that they are the youngest and less experienced ones. The journalist of the newspaper outlet is the oldest participant in the study. He thinks this language can be used, even though it is better understood by young people.

In Araguaína, we also found this concern with language, but less expressively. Only three of the seven communicators claimed they do not use “internet slang” artifices (*TV Araguaína, TV Amazônia e CBM*). They believe that this type of language impoverishes the text and causes deviations. It can also generate losses of credibility. The other professionals from Araguaína (TO) said they do not have any restrictions about abbreviations. They understand that the platform allows it and believe this language has already been accepted.

Another aspect that shows the lack of professionalism in using the tool is the choice of profile photography. As most of them use their cell phones – even with the possibility of using an institutional contact number – and the company does not provide any guidance through this, they choose by themselves which photo to use. But, in Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO), there was a consensus among professionals on using a professional photo – one with a visible face, which does not show parties, drinks, or the body.

None of the professionals adopted a critical discourse about this lack of guidance of the company. Respondents also trivialize the lack of financial support, even for a device or chip to use WhatsApp. The app is recognized as an essential tool in their routine but requires minimal investment, such as mobile internet plans or access to wi-fi connection.

The number of professionals indifferent about the inexistence of separation between work and personnel life is also noticeable. Journalists do not see this scenario as precariousness or poor working conditions.

Advantages and disadvantages of using the application in professional routine

This category objective is to understand the positive and negative aspects of the platform, as understood by the professionals. In both cities, the main advantages of the application are its practicality and instantaneity, characteristics of communication via technological devices provided mainly by internet use.

The journalist of *TVI Imperatriz*, one of the youngest participants in the study, highlighted that she does not know how to work with journalism without WhatsApp. She emphasizes how the app has become an essential part of the routine of the journalist. “I don't even know what it would be like to produce an agenda issue without WhatsApp. [...] People are very busy and have lost the habit of talking on the phone, so I always had a lot of difficulty in setting the agenda and producing by phone” (COMMUNICATOR IMPERATRIZ 4, 2020 – Oral Data).

Moreover, other reports reaffirm the practicality and agility provided by the application, both in Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO). The journalists also highlighted how this agile contact helps communication between the production and the reporter. Because they can get location information or new data regarding their agenda issue, and they can easily share documents. It also gives them access to the population.

I'm in the car and the other person is sending (on WhatsApp) the information, the correct address [...] and that helps a lot" (COMMUNICATOR EMPRETRIZ 1, 2019 – Oral Data).

It has facilitated access to more sources, documents, and agenda suggestions in less time. We also receive feedback from the public, who interact with the website. (COMMUNICATOR ARAGUAÍNA 6, 2020 - Oral Data).

They also mentioned that its agility improves the response time of sources compared to more traditional means, such as telephone and e-mail. Only the journalist from *Correio Popular* newspaper did not agree that the application is faster than traditional means, such as the telephone. She stated that they do not receive immediate answers. Another advantage pointed out only by reporters from Imperatriz, from *Correio Popular* newspaper and *Imperatriz Online* website, is the possibility of storing information, which safeguards professionals from doubts on the veracity of the content they publish. Regarding the disadvantages, professionals from the two cities were not so congruent, as two of the seven interviewees from Araguaína (TO) did not indicate any disadvantages in using the application. That indicates they are not critical regarding the use of the tool. However, Professionals from both municipalities agree that the negative aspects regarding the application use involve the amount of information, the risks of Fake News and the loss of credibility, and the pressure for agility.

Araguaína Notícias website journalist also adds how demand in excess can prejudice the emotional, especially in a small team that works under pressure to meet several requests. Another aspect pointed out by the professionals from *Correio Popular*, *TV Difusora Sul*, and *TV Mirante* regards the hours of work that became longer due to WhatsApp use in their professional routine. Journalists highlight this is a less formal tool used to contact sources and its number easily shared, so sources often do not understand some limits, such as journalists' working hours, and generate uncomfortable situations. That may be an effect of the lack of use systematization and the need for information in real-time. The journalist from *Correio Popular*, as previously mentioned, has two telephone contacts, one that he uses at work. The reporter stated

that the decision to have two numbers came after several invasive and uncomfortable situations.

I realized throughout this that it would be more advantageous for me to have this number. I make it clear that it is a professional number. I say that I'm online from such time to such time. I settle with the source correctly, precisely so that this invasion doesn't happen. Because WhatsApp is an informal tool, sometimes people believe there is intimacy that doesn't exist. So, I like to keep this professional number precisely to avoid this type of situation (COMMUNICATOR IMPERATRIZ 7, 2019 – Oral Data).

The professional of *TV Leader*, in Araguaína (TO), made a similar decision, and she also has two phone numbers because of the uncomfortable situation to be contacted outside working hours ⁷.

Thus, we can state that WhatsApp is an essential part of the routines of journalists in both cities. However, despite the application's promise of practicality, these advantages reflect directly on the professional's daily life because it encourages big amounts of information and more pressure for the constant pace of news updates.

Table 3 WhatsApp Advantages and Disadvantages.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practicality • Instantaneity • Storage • Portability • Agility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data overflow • Fake News • Loss of credibility • Stress

Source: The authors (2020).

In general, the interviewed journalists point out more advantages over the use of WhatsApp since the application's portability and multimediality are effective gains brought by the tool. On the other hand, no one spontaneously noticed the precariousness of this insertion, and they had difficulties understanding or indicating disadvantages.

⁷ Communicator Araguaína 2 works as an independent journalist and leases space on *TV Líder*, the outlet that does not have its own tv show.

Quality of content produced through the tool

This category sought to understand journalists' opinions about the implications of WhatsApp on the quality of journalism produced by professionals from both cities. It also sought to comprehend if they consider this production adequate.

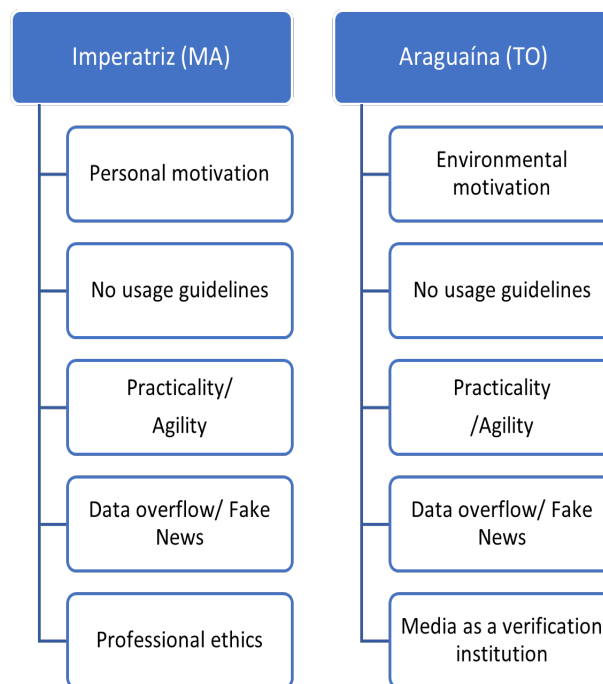
In Imperatriz (MA), the professionals agreed that WhatsApp positively interferes in their work due to the practicality and easy access to information made possible by the chat app, such as videos and images sent by viewers. In their perception, the application does not greatly affect the production of the journalists. But it impacts the communication market in general, which deals with depth lack, sensationalism, and Fake News. Most of the time, the professional's ethics is the guide to manage and control the application's interference in the production routine.

The debate on this interference in quality proved to be grounded, albeit subtly. The *TV Mirante* journalist claimed that the newsroom discusses the precautions to avoid self-indulgence and the necessity of not producing content based only on data received via the application. Reporters of *Mirante* and *Imperatriz Online* websites, because of their medium, are the ones who frequently deal with the instantaneous nature of the digital age, taking positions that reveal how this issue is not addressed naturally among the professionals. The first one claimed that the content loses quality due to the charge for agility and text shortening. However, he recognized he is dependent on the application on his current work routine, demonstrating how his position is antagonistic. The second one also cited self-indulgence as one of WhatsApp's problems. But he acknowledged that he had never seriously thought on the subject. That happens even though he is an undergraduate journalist student who naturally discusses the subject, albeit indirectly.

Professionals from Araguaína (TO) had a divergent point of view since only the communicators from *TV Líder* and *Fatos e Notícias* pointed out the interference of WhatsApp in the quality of journalism. But they argue it does not impact the quality of the content they produce, like journalists from Imperatriz (MA). *TV Líder* journalist has worked for over 15 years in the field and believes that WhatsApp and the possibilities of accessing the information it offers have eliminated the opportunity for journalists to secure a "scoop". In his perception, there is a more detailed production about the facts nowadays, but that needs the journalist to report and complement the information following the journalistic medium patterns. The other communicators only pointed out benefits in the quality of journalism produced using the app. They highlighted it as an agile and practical tool that allows access to data, information, and sources.

Thus, we noticed a general disagreement on the positive or negative aspects of the quality of journalism produced via WhatsApp. But the professionals from Imperatriz and Araguaína agree that the application does not interfere with the quality of the produced content. They do not even consider it a competitor, as the media and journalists have credibility and are the population's verification institution, even if WhatsApp groups broadcast the facts in advance, for example. None of them has included as an impact of the tool the reduction of outdoor work, conducting face-to-face interviews, and ascertaining information. Furthermore, the need for agile and practical production outweighs the questions of quality. That is evidenced by some participants who have mentioned self-indulgence, Fake News, and overflow of information. On the other hand, many of them highlighted the benefits of the tool for the routine, regardless of the possible disruptions they cause in the quality of journalistic products, as it meets the need for intermittent updating and camouflages the lack of staff.

Figure 4 Congruences and divergences between Imperatriz (MA) e Araguaína (TO).



Source: The authors (2020).

Figure 4 shows how most journalists from both cities position themselves in relation to the four categories proposed in this study.

Conclusion

From the research data, we can state that WhatsApp application use is part of the production routine of journalists in the cities of Imperatriz-MA and Araguaína-TO. However, they are not critical of this fact implication in their work routines. Most of them demonstrate subservience as a category.

We also found out that media companies in Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO) are not concerned with systematizing WhatsApp use among their professionals and do not provide any guidance or afford its maintenance.

Not having a commercial WhatsApp, own business phones, or even professional lines paid for by the media outlets generates a financial cost for the professional who does not receive any direct benefit. But even so, the journalist is forced to have a compatible device and internet provider plan to meet the demands.

We also noticed that the media outlets in both states work with reduced staff, and their professionals work simultaneously in several functions. Although there are more media outlets in Araguaína (TO) than in Imperatriz (MA), the former has fewer professionals as newsrooms workers. According to a survey carried out in this study, 29 professionals work in the seven vehicles mapped in Araguaína (TO), while in Imperatriz (MA) 49 professionals are distributed in seven newsrooms. However, this does not mean that the city is not experiencing a crisis scenario.

Despite the specific aspects about the use and impacts of WhatsApp in the routine of these professionals, the media in Imperatriz (MA) and Araguaína (TO) similarly deal with the tool and consider it indispensable even with the negative impacts it causes, like endless working hours through the application and using their own device. Journalists do not generally include the precariousness and poor working conditions caused by the application and journalism business issues. But WhatsApp has emerged in the newsroom to camouflage the work conditions' precariousness and low quality of life of these professionals in these two inland cities.

We cannot declare this is the scenario in all media outlets in the interior. But we can certainly state that it can be found in most Brazilian media currently dealing with a crisis in journalism.

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RESUMO:

Este trabalho busca entender como os jornalistas, que atuam em redações nas cidades de Imperatriz (MA) e Araguaína (TO), utilizam o *WhatsApp* na sua rotina, e de que maneira este aplicativo interfere nas suas condições de trabalho. O escopo da pesquisa selecionou 14 veículos de comunicação. Metodologicamente este estudo está dividido em três etapas: um levantamento exploratório, entrevistas de caráter semiestruturado, e, a análise comparada. Dentre as conclusões pontua-se que o uso do aplicativo *WhatsApp* está inserido na rotina produtiva dos jornalistas das cidades de Imperatriz- MA e Araguaína – TO. Porém, não há criticidade dos mesmos em relação a implicação desse fato nas rotinas produtivas. Em sua maioria, demonstra subserviência como categoria.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Rotina produtiva; Jornalismo; *WhatsApp*.

RESUMEN:

Este trabajo busca comprender cómo los periodistas, que laboran en redacciones de las ciudades de Imperatriz (MA) y Araguaína (TO), utilizan *WhatsApp* en su rutina, y cómo esta aplicación interfiere en sus condiciones de trabajo. El alcance de la investigación seleccionó 14 medios de comunicación. Metodológicamente, este estudio se divide en tres etapas: encuesta exploratoria, entrevistas semiestructuradas y análisis comparativo. Entre las conclusiones, se señala que el uso de la aplicación *WhatsApp* es parte de la rutina productiva de los periodistas en las ciudades de Imperatriz-MA y Araguaína - TO. Sin embargo, no hay criticidad de ellos en relación a la implicación de este hecho en las rutinas productivas. La mayoría de ellos muestran el servilismo como categoría.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Rotina productiva; Periodismo; *WhatsApp*.