DIGITAL SOCIAL NETWORKS AS A SPACE FOR DEBATE ON THE LGBT+ PARADE IN SÃO PAULO

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to develop the Network Analysis for Social Media of the interactions on Twitter/X during the LGBT+ Parade in São Paulo, in 2023, of the network actors who used the official hashtag of the event's organization. The theoretical-methodological support to support the analysis of the data and discussion of the results was focused on the theoretical study of networks (Castells, 2013; Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018) of mediatization processes (Braga, 2006) and media propagation (Jenkins, Green and Ford, 2014). Based on the data collected and the basis of the research, it was also sought to understand how the flow of communication in a network can provide a reaction in society that motivates more freedom to groups that have historically been violated. Data collection was carried out with the Gephi software, from which the metrics and graph visualization were generated, allowing the analysis of this research. With the results, it was possible to observe that the claims and celebrations could be heard and disseminated organically and massively, from the perspective of mass self-communication, by Castells (2013). The users who criticized the mobilization were tiny to the point of being irrelevant on the network and did not interfere in the digital mobilization. Some brands also proved to be relevant on the network, showing a positioning consistent with the objectives of the event.

Keywords: Mediatization. Network Analysis for Social Media. LGBT+ Parade.

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INTRODUCTION

By freedom, the Oxford Languages dictionary (2023) defines it as a "set of rights recognized to the individual, alone or in a group, in the face of political authority and before the State; power that the citizen has to exercise his will within the limits that the law allows him". The struggle for freedom follows different levels, depending on the situation or position in which individuals find themselves, in some cases the confrontation is for basic rights. In the historical process of achieving human rights, the LGBTQIA+ community faced discrimination and social exclusion. Consequently, the persecution of this group was followed by rebellions that would lay the foundations for the movement for their rights, such as the LGBT+ Parade in the city of São Paulo, the largest event that brings together citizens annually to protest against discrimination and violence and express themselves without prejudice (Trindade, 2011).

In the list of instruments for publicizing their demands, the use of the media as an ally has become important as a promoter of discourses that aim to generate a debate in society that lead to changes in culture and legislation that guarantee more security and freedom to this public. In this sense, the concept of mediatization becomes important as a process from which the content that emerges from the media enters society and its discourses circulate in order to produce different meanings and deconstruct truths that were absolute until that moment.

In addition to the use of well-known personalities, some brands also position themselves, collaborating for this circulation of discourses. Sacchitiello and Monteiro (2019) highlight the importance of agency advertisers in dealing with representativeness as part of the brand's business and, in addition, creating concrete goals to achieve it. In the view of Casaqui (2011, p. 149), "corporate culture moves in search of another place, in which its production is placed in social circulation at the intersection with contemporary ideas, with debates and themes in evidence at a given moment, with the transformations of consumer roles".

Considering these aspects, the research seeks to answer the following problem: Through Network Analysis for Social Media (ARS), how does the interaction on Twitter/X take place during the 2023 LGBT+ Parade in São Paulo, which allows the circulation of discourses in favor of the rights of this community? This question is linked to the objective of understanding how the interactions between the social actors of Twitter/X users who

appropriate the #ParadaSP during the São Paulo LGBT+ Parade, in 2023, based on the Analysis of Networks for Social Media.

To this end, the discussion of this article focused on theoretically understanding the flow of communication in the networks, the processes of mediatization and the Analysis of Networks for Social Media (ARS) in order to bring elements of apprehension about the collection and analysis of data. Understanding the functioning of the network can bring more concrete data about the interactions on the social networking site and provide relevant information to understand the interactions between the interlocutors and possible practices that collaborate to the achievement of these rights that lead to more freedom.

FLOW OF COMMUNICATION THROUGH NETWORKS, MEDIATIZATION AND (POSSIBLE) PRACTICES OF FREEDOM

The flow of information mediated by the computer and the formation of networks collaborate for a collective construction of knowledge (Levy, 2003) and for a more horizontal communication (Castells, 1999), according to different researches. These were central reflections that dominated the debate on the interface between communication and the internet over the last few years, from different perspectives. This debate has been expanded and often refuted due to the proliferation of *haters* and the sharing of false information that has taken over, especially in political and/or ideological discussions. The formation of political bubbles is also a phenomenon that deserves attention in research, caused especially by algorithmic calculations that "privilege the connection between actors with strong ties" (Peres-Neto and Pereira, 2019, p. 15).

Reflecting on network communication, Castells (2013) defines this interaction as *mass self-communication* , in which, through the legacy of mass communication, a user can reach thousands of others by publishing any other type of content on the internet. Social movements, says Castells (2013), are formed by individuals who connect through collective action, who stimulate the participation of other subjects, forming networks of resistance, largely managed from a cognitive empathy and fortified by ideas, ideologies and programmatic proposals. Digital social networks have made this process even greater due to the propagation (Jenkins, Ford and Green, 2014) of the media, which have enhanced any form of manifestation.

In this sense, although all research involving criticism of data breaches and proliferation of *fake news is not disregarded*, there is no way to discard the important role

of digital social networks in promoting relevant debates and collaborating for access to information that enables the construction of a well-founded and collectively articulated movement.

To this extent, this process is based on the logic of mediatization, because the media cross social relations, interfering in the identity processes of the subjects as a result of their mediatized interactions (Peres-Neto and Pereira, 2019). The mediatization of society is a phenomenon that goes beyond the limits of a media society, because the echoes of publicized discourses can be perceived within cultures that constantly feed each other. Socialities are impacted and impact the communication processes of the media, and can be perceived in the forms and content of interactions between family, friends, acquaintances or any other type of relationship (SILVA, 2017). The ways in which society interacts with each other and with the media have been diversified and, as Braga (2012, p.36) states, "what strongly attracts our attention are these processes whose actions are not restricted to the object 'means' or to the object 'receptors and their mediations', but include both in highly diversified formations and still articulated with other affirmations". This process, however, is part of a much broader context. The mediatized society feeds and is the result of the culture of connection and convergence processes (SILVA, 2017), marked to a large extent by the expansion of social media platforms.

Thus, as Braga (2006, p. 27) states, "the meanings produced in the media reach society and begin to circulate in it, among people, groups and institutions, impregnating and partially directing culture". Understanding that the continuous process of cultural modifications happens due to tensions in a complex game of forces in which the result is shown in a negotiation work (Curran, 1998), it is important to create a media environment of important debates for society in order to collaborate for the circulation of a more inclusive discourse and, henceforth, to build new social practices that promote more reception and protection of vulnerable groups. A mediatized discourse of peace with justice favors the construction of a fruitful public debate for the reelaboration of (pre)concepts and fostering more harmonious and egalitarian environments. It is in this sense that we work from the point of view of freedom in this research, that is, to understand how the flow and communication in a network can provide a reaction in society that motivates more freedom to historically violated groups.

Although more access and availability to the discourse, as well as organization and media visibility to LGBTQIA+ narratives, are needed, as Oliveira (2019) points out, we

know that there is a network of individuals active in the cause that cannot be made invisible and mischaracterized. In this study, for example, we observed a network that demonstrated strong activism and productive discursive circulation, with little margin for *haters* and discrediting the movement.

METHODOLOGICAL PATH: ANALYSIS OF NETWORKS FOR SOCIAL MEDIA (ARS)

Social media can be conceptualized as the complex ecosystem (Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018) that emerges from the amount of attention received by a given publication and, consequently, its importance in the network, producing thousands of nodes built by the interaction between interlocutors. In this sense, for social media to exist, it is necessary for the individual to appropriate a social network platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and the communication processes to flow in order to form the nodes. The connection (the node) is the defining unit of the network (Giglio, 2011).

Figure 01: Example Network
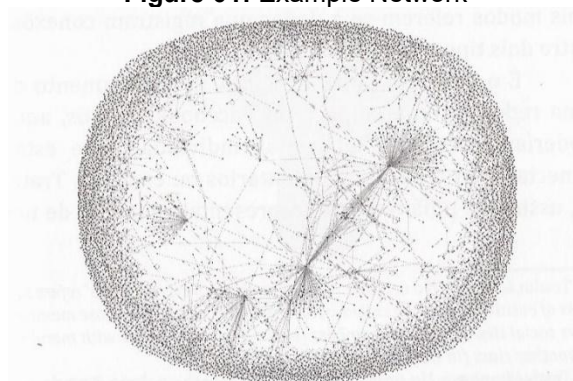
Source: Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018, p.61

Networks are sociological and allow us to observe the ways in which individuals engage in webs of relationships and/or institutions. The internet, due to the amount of data it provides us, makes it possible to study social patterns in a more evident way. In this regard, Recuero, Bastos and Zago (2018, p. 23) point out that:

> Social networks are metaphors for the structure of social groupings. They are constituted by the relationships between individuals and will serve as a fundamental structure for society. They are, therefore, a way of looking at social groups, where social relations and ties are perceived as connections and individuals as actors who are united by these connections, forming the social fabric.

Through this complex ecosystem known as social media, we look at how a user can determine a lineage from other posts, and it may have been determined by thousands of other nodes that communicated before them. This tangle is a feedback system that can serve as an object of study by researchers from various areas, especially related to communication. Thus, several methodologies have been thought of for data analysis and the ARS is one of them that can be understood as "a structuralist approach to the relationships between the actors and their function in the constitution of society. The ARS thus comprises a theoretical and epistemological set focused on understanding these social structures and their role" (Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018, p. 28). The construction of visualization maps contributes to the analysis and makes it more didactic for the interlocutors to observe the phenomena.

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is, therefore, a set of "metrics and research techniques used to describe the relationship between nodes (actors, vertices) and their connections (edges) [...]. Thus, the ARS focuses on the studies of connections and the attributes that these connections promote" (Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018, p. 39). In this sense, it aims to identify how propagable a publication on the theme of the São Paulo LGBT Pride Parade is through the connections between people. This system will be analyzed through the graphic representation of the moment of collection, called graphs, that is, "as a representation of a complex system such as a society, the graph is often a photograph of the structure at a given moment and not a film of it" (Recuero, Bastos and Zago, 2018, p. 50).

Among the metrics to be used, we highlight *Indegree* and PageRank. The *indegree value* corresponds to the number of connections that a node (Twitter profile in this case) receives from other nodes, either through a mention, citation or *retweet*, making it possible to understand above all how relevant the publications of this actor are to the other members of the network. *PageRank* aims to understand how relevant the node is in the network based on the quality of connections made with other relevant nodes. During the analysis, these indicators will direct which were the most relevant profiles that used the *hashtags* used in this work during the São Paulo LGBT+ Parade, in 2023. Modularity is another important feature, because it can identify nearby groups and organize the data for better visualization in the graph. Thus, the network is divided into modules or communities, in other words, they are groups of nodes interconnected in a dense way and linked to the rest of the network.

The propagation of a publication can be greater or lesser depending on some factors, as cited by Jenkins, Green and Ford (2014), namely: the ease/availability of the content; the portability of the publication, that is, how much the content can direct the reader/interlocutor to other texts; when the content can be used for multiple roles or groups; its relevance to the public; and the "viral" mentality of brands regarding their publications. In this sense, after analyzing the data, it is possible to draw some hypotheses about how propagable the brand's advertising pieces are at the event.

LGBT+ PARADE IN SÃO PAULO

The milestone that started the first LGBT+ Parade in São Paulo was the Stonewall uprising, which took place in New York, on June 28, 1969. It was an initiative of the patrons of the Stonewall bar, a large part of the LGBTQIA+ community, who rebelled against the constant oppression and police violence they suffered (Andrade, 2022). On the day of the rebellion itself, the bar was invaded by the police force, which resulted in threats to the employees and arrests of customers due to the clothing considered inappropriate. This action resulted in a violent reaction from the public, who as a result chose as a defense to go to the streets for the first time to show themselves (Fernandes, 2019). The protests that followed contributed to the growth of the movement, which increased public awareness and led to the organization of parades in several cities and countries, making the struggle of minorities noticed. In the opinion of James Green:

> There have been dramatic changes in Latin America in the last two decades. Gay, lesbian and transgender political movements have emerged in every country on the continent. A social movement that, at the time, was inspired by the massive gay and lesbian movement in the United States, undertook national political debates on sexuality, discrimination, and the meanings of full democratic participation of all sectors in the political process (2003, p. 17).

Brazil, through foreign influence, began to develop its LGBTQIA+ movement in the 1970s, in the midst of the military dictatorship (Botelho, 2020). According to Quinalha (2019 apud BBC, 2022) "Stonewall founds a new type of LGBT movement. It created this idea of pride, of LGBT people occupying public space, assuming their identities and being proud of these identities." However, it was only in 1995 in Rio de Janeiro that the first act of the community took place, a small march in Copacabana after the Conference of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) (Botelho, 2020). Only on June 28, 1997 was the first Gay Parade held on Avenida Paulista, with

approximately two thousand people, raising the theme "We are everywhere and in all professions", in order to bring visibility, combat homophobia and protest against violence, from this the Parade continues to use political themes, social or cultural to communicate with the public each year (Lynniker, 2023). In 1999 this event was officially established in the calendar of the city of São Paulo, with the name of LGBT Pride Parade became the largest in the world.

Since then, the São Paulo City Parade has remained the largest concentration movement of the LGBTQIA+ community, given that the 10th Pride Parade was included in the Guinness Book of Records, accounting for 2.5 million participants (Alonso, 2019). It is an event of enormous social, political and economic proportions, providing a space where everyone is free, shows themselves and expresses themselves as they really are. LGBT+ Pride parades deliver dignity, autonomy and freedom, encourage a new dialogue with society about sexual differences and resize the standardized conceptions of coexistence in society (Sales, 2018).

Organized by the São Paulo LGBT Pride Parade Association, the 27th Parade took place on June 11, 2023 on Avenida Paulista, tracing a 6-hour route, which began at 10 am, this event takes place with the objective of promoting visibility, celebrating diversity and seeking to claim the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community. Over the years, the parade has had themes for the theme "We want social policies for LGBT, in whole and not in half" greater reflection and strengthening of their struggle, this year people took to the streets demanding social assistance policies for the community (Martins, 2023).

This year, the Parade brought together 19 brands, with sponsors, co-sponsors and supporters. The master sponsor of the event was the beverage brand Smirnoff, the brands Terra, Vivo and Amstel entered as sponsors, Mercado Libre, L'Óreal Group and Burger King as co-sponsors, Philip Morris, 3M, Kellogg, Accor, Banco do Brasil, Pantene and Microsoft were supporters, thus enhancing the voices and struggles for the cause (Farias, 2023). The São Paulo Parade, being the largest in the world today, brought together about 3 million people in total on the way to Praça Roosevelt and had 19 electric trios as attractions, (Guide of the week, 2023) following the schedule:

- o Trio 1 Opening: Juan Guiã, Paulo Pringles;
- o Trio 2 LGBT+ Families;
- o Trio 3 Aristela;
- o Trio 4 Megam Scott;

- o   Trio 5 Márcia Pantera;

- o   Trio 6 Xênia Star, Luh Marinatti, Lorran Ciriaco;

- o   Trio 7 Filipe Catto;

- o   Trio 8 Kauan Russell;

- o   Trio 9 Brunelli, Juan Nym and Dj Zuba;

- o   Trio 10 Ana Dutra and Laura Finochiaro;

- o   Trio 11 Pabllo Vittar, Salete Campari and Dj Transalien;

- o   Trio 12 Fiakra, Tiago Cardoso, Gustavo Vianna and Douglas Penido;

- o   Trio 13 Daniela Mercury, Agrada Gregos and Paulete Pink;

- o   Trio 14 PC and Litta;

- o   Trio 15 Majur, Thiago Pantaleão and Cris Negrini;

- o   Trio 16 Boombeat, Lorenzo Zimon and Nick Cruz;

- o   Trio 17 Urias, Grag Queen, Minhoqueens and Mama Darling;

- o   Trio 18 Pocah, WD, DJ Heey Cat and Batekoo;

- o   Trio 19 Closing: Bixarte, Luana Hansen and Tico Malagueta.

Before the opening of the trios elétricos, the public was welcomed with political speeches, featuring names such as Silvio Almeida, Minister of Human Rights and Citizenship, and federal deputy Erika Hilton, representative of the trans community in the National Congress (Poder, 2023).

In short, the grandeur of the event and its future results is clear, since, in addition to the celebrations, the Parade is historically responsible for many social achievements for the LGBTQIA+ public, also contributing to the economy, moving more than R$ 500 million to the city of São Paulo (Martins, 2023). In this way, the LGBT+ Pride Parade continues to be the largest in the world, bringing together thousands of people from different places, moved by the constant struggle to claim the rights of the community, conquering more and more sponsors and brands that show enormous support for this very important event.

DATA ANALYSIS

The city of São Paulo hosts the largest LGBT Parade in Brazil, this year, on June 11, the 27th LGBT+ Pride Parade took place on Avenida Paulista. The event brings several agendas and visibility to the struggle of the LGBTQIA+ community, being commented on throughout Brazil on social media. The objective of this research is to analyze the interactions made on the social network Twitter/X during the event, collecting

the interactions of profiles that proved to be more active, understand how they happen and the objectives of the authors.

The data presented below were collected using the *Gephi* software, on June 11, between 10 am and 10 pm. The logic for the formation of networks chosen was the "*user network*", that is, the interactions made by network users based on the *hashtag* #ParadaSP. For a better visualization of the graph, the following actions were carried out: a) modularities were generated (formation of communities shown by the different colors); b) application of the *Force Atlas 2 algorithm* to approximate the nodes that interacted with each other, helping the visualization of the communities; c) application of a filter to increase the size of the nodes, according to their degree of importance in the network; d) application of a filter to remove nodes that have not interacted with anyone. Next, we present the general graph and, subsequently, we bring the largest communities together for better visualization.

Figure 02: Full network graph on Twitter #ParadaSP
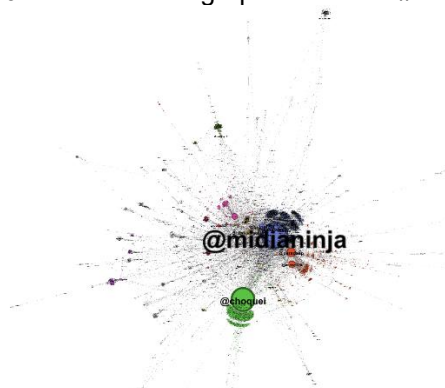
Source: Twitter/Gephi

Table 1: PageRank Values

Label	PageRank
@choquei	0,028042
@midianinja	0,02636
@paradasp	0,016275
@erikakhilton	0,007893
@silviolual	0,006392
@planetafoda	0,006388
@minsaude	0,005496
@pedrolopes1444	0,003791
@pabllovittar	0,003578

Source: Research authors

Table 2: Eigenvector centrality values

Label	Eigen-centrality
@midianinja	1
@choquei	0,875324
@paradasp	0,369974
@minsaude	0,249266
@erikakhilton	0,221855
@silviolual	0,198329
@planetafoda	0,194468
@hibridamagazine	0,159748

Source: Research authors

Table 3: Indegree Values

Label	Indegree
@midianinja	3287
@choquei	2978
@paradasp	1095
@minsaude	826
@erikakhilton	720
@silviolual	570
@hibridamagazine	548
@planetafoda	534
@fernandapsol	345

Source*:* Research authors

Figure 03: Approximation of some relevant modules in the network
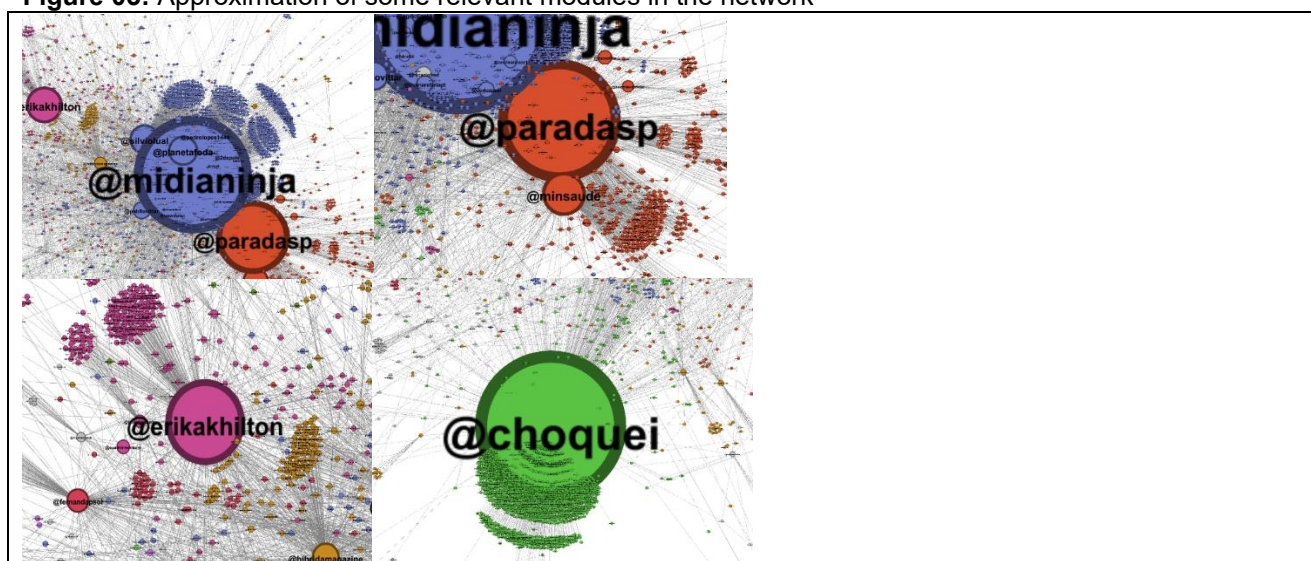
Source: Twitter/Gephi

The profiles chosen were those that stood out significantly in terms of data collection, namely: @choquei, @midianinja, @paradasp, @erikahilton, @minsaude, @planetafoda, @silviolual, @fernandapsol.

With more than 3,000 connections with other Twitter/X users during the course of the coverage, @midianinja is a media network that has independent narratives, journalism and action, with the main focus of building alternative coverage to that of the traditional press. It was created by a group of journalists and gained notoriety during the demonstrations of June 2013 that brought together millions of people in the streets of Brazil. On this occasion, Mídia Ninja carried out live coverage from inside the protests, with different points of view that were not presented in traditional media. This profile was very active throughout the Parade and was considered the most relevant in the formation of networks with #ParadaSP, showing an alignment between the followers of the @midianinja and the users of the network who followed the event. The @planetafoda is the LGBTQIA+ content page of Mídia Ninja, which has great influence making this profile also relevant.

One of the images of this journalistic coverage of Midia Ninja was with the Minister of State for Human Rights and Citizenship, at the time of the event, Silvio Almeida, who was also very active in the network and stood out above all for his participation in the event.

His profile, @silviolual, was active in practically the entire period of the Parade, being, therefore, another means of following information about the event and became the fifth most relevant in the network and a total of 570 connections with other profiles during the event.

The @choquei profile is the profile of a company specializing in news, focused on entertainment news and gossip, with more than 6 million followers. On the day of the event, the profile was very active throughout the day, publicizing the main events in support of the Parade. People who followed the profile were interested in covering the event, with majority support in the publications. The posts showed images of the trios, the participating audience and, above all, informed the interlocutors about the attraction of the moment, live. It is possible to observe in image 03 a very significant cluster around the @choquei profile.

The @paradasp is the official profile of the NGO responsible for the LGBT Parade in São Paulo. The hashtag searched for in this research was created by the NGO linked to

this profile, which is the organizer and, therefore, the official spokesperson for the Parade. In this sense, it was also very influential, receiving several tags from other users, as well as sharing the published content. From the @paradasp it was possible to follow all the information prior to the day of the event and his followers follow him mainly for the updates of the LGBT+ Parade. With the theme "We want LGBT+ Social Policies in full and not in half", it is observed that the main debate dealt with public policy actions, which were observed by Minister Silvio de Almeida, as mentioned above. This debate is important because it makes the interlocutors reflect on deeper actions regarding the rights of the community, which are essential when thinking about individual and collective freedoms.

The @erikahilton belongs to Federal Deputy Erika Hilton, the first black and trans deputy elected in Brazil. Its representativeness at the congress and at the event is important for the visibility of the discussions that were being debated in the Parade, as was effective in the formation of networks presented in the graph. Erika is affiliated with the Socialism and Freedom Party, and is always active in causes focused on the rights of black and LGBT+ people. The deputy was present on the day of the Parade, and made an opening speech in one of the trios elétricos, in which she celebrated the history of the movement and encouraged its struggle. In his publications, he showed his interaction with the public, in addition to posts that asked for the active participation of everyone who is interested in the LGBT+ rights agenda. Their profile was among the five most relevant of all the others who used the #ParadaSP.

The @minsaude is the official profile of the Ministry of Health, used to disseminate information and services offered to the population. On the day of the event, the profile highlighted above all the importance of health and safety for all. The @hibridamagazine is the profile of the digital magazine Híbrida Magazine, which was created by and for the LGBT+ audience, with posts aimed at this audience. The magazine published several videos of important moments of the Parade and also received many connections with other users of the network. The @fernandapsol, profile of Federal Deputy Fernanda Melchionna, was also relevant in the graph and all dedicated to posts about event updates and celebration of community achievements.

In addition to these profiles, some brands have also engaged in digital social networks using #ParadaSP, especially in terms of connections between users and publications, Burger King, which has already been a master sponsor of the event in other editions and in 2023 participated as a co-sponsor. The history of support for this cause and

the event make the brand an ally and its name is highly remembered by network users during the event. The participation of brands in the dissemination of the event and the community's agendas also contributes to the publicity of important topics for society.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research aimed to develop Network Analysis for Social Media (ARS) on Twitter, hereinafter X, from the hashtags of the LGBT/SP Pride Parade, in order to investigate the interactions carried out on the network on the day of the event, especially to observe the most relevant actors on the network and whether the brands are important on this platform. Through these metrics, we identified the following profiles as the main influencers on the networks: @mídianinja; @choquei; @paradasp. It is important to note that the first two profiles mentioned are news and the third refers to the official one of the event. In addition to these nodes, other personalities stood out on social networks, such as: Erika Hilton, black and trans federal deputy; and Silvio Almeida, Minister of State for Human Rights and Citizenship. Both actively participated in the event and were active on the platform. Regarding the brands, the ones that stood out the most were Burger King Brasil (37th position), Panete Brasil (73rd position) and L'oréal Paris (112th position). It is important to mention that Burger King has been a sponsor for a few years, including as a master sponsor in recent editions, which shows a coherence of brand positioning and the network's users, therefore, already relate it to the event.

In addition to the most relevant profiles, we cannot fail to highlight the hundreds of other *smaller clusters* of profiles that supported the event and engaged other interlocutors in a discussion of the struggle for rights and the visibility of the event. The users who criticized the mobilization were so small that they did not appear with relevance on the network and did not interfere in the digital mobilization. The demands and celebrations could be heard and disseminated organically and massively, from the perspective of *mass self-communication*, by Castells (2013). Although several *clusters* were formed in the graph (Image 02), they were closer to each other, which means greater cohesion between discussions and common interests.

Not discarding the research that shows hate speech practices on the internet, we must also highlight positive results of an articulated struggle in favor of human rights that can lead to the (re)elaboration of public policies and individual actions that provide more freedom to historically violated publics. The participation of government ministries and

parliamentarians contributes to the inclusion of the agenda in a political debate. The engagement of influencers and micro influencers makes the support network even larger and makes the mediatization processes gain even more strength with regard to cultural changes.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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