

Portuguese cultural journalism in transition: results from a content analysis study raging from 2000 to 2010

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Abstract

News are the life blood of democracy and news journalism is often seen as contributing vital resources for processes of information gathering, deliberation and action (Fenton, 2010). At the same time, the traditional business model for delivering news is in crisis. National newspapers readership is declining in every country and this steady tendency led to various predictions about the “end of journalism”. The exploding multi-channel environment and the internet with its endless options and direct sources, combined with the cost-cutting strategies adopted by every newspaper to face the binomial thread of “less readers/less advertising” (Freedman, 2010) are particularly harsh on cultural journalism. Independent bloggers and twitters can radically impact everything from a Hollywood blockbuster to a local theatre performance, challenging the traditional role of cultural journalists as the firsts readers, viewers, listeners and critics of artistic productions. As revenue models of traditional media come under threat, the result has been an ever-diminishing space for cultural journalism and criticism. Subjected to contemporary forms of bureaucratization and marketization fostered by ICT’s, increasing time pressures and changing patterns of news consumption, cultural journalists are driven to fit the requirements of mainstream news agendas. Since reviews and cultural commentary have traditionally played a much greater role than simply marketing and promoting the Arts, cultural journalism is in peril.

This paper is part of a broader research project, centred on how the main portuguese newspapers are covering cultural issues during the first decade of the XXI century. We are analyzing the front pages of 5 selected newspapers (*Público*, *Diário de Notícias*, *Jornal de Notícias*, *Correio da Manhã*, *Expresso*) and one newsmagazine (*Visão*), in order to find visual and textual patterns in journalistic cultural coverage. The exploding multi-channel environment and the internet with its endless options and direct sources, combined with the cost-cutting strategies adopted by every newspaper to face the binomial thread of “less readers/less advertising” are harsh on cultural journalism. As revenue models of traditional media come under threat, the result has been an ever-diminishing space for cultural journalism and criticism. Subjected to contemporary forms of bureaucratization and marketization fostered by ICT’s, increasing time pressures and changing patterns of news consumption, cultural journalists are driven to fit the requirements of mainstream news agendas. The diachronic dimension of our ten years analysis is more related to the broader historical context

of Portugal between 2000 and 2010, while the synchronic and comparative dimension between newspapers will focus on the professional strategies and news values applied by journalists and reflecting different newsroom cultures and editorial orientations, since our press sample includes a variety of titles, ranging from popular to quality, daily and weekly.