



UNIVERSIDADE  
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PORTUGUESA

READERS' NEEDS AND ENGAGEMENT:  
HOW *MENSAGEM DE LISBOA* IS CONNECTING WITH ITS  
READERS

Internship Report submitted to Universidade Católica  
Portuguesa to obtain a Master's Degree in  
Communication Studies—Journalism

By

Daniela Soares Sequeira de Oliveira

Faculdade de Ciências Humanas

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## **Resumo**

O presente relatório é o resultado de um estágio curricular no jornal *Mensagem de Lisboa* e tem como objetivo compreender como o jornal interage com os seus leitores e como os leitores se envolvem com o jornal, tendo como foco as necessidades dos leitores. A *Mensagem de Lisboa* é um novo jornal digital, comunitário e local sobre Lisboa que nunca foi objeto de investigação académica, numa altura em que o jornalismo local parece estar a perder relevância. Além disso, existe pouca pesquisa sobre o jornalismo local em Portugal, bem como estudos sobre as necessidades da audiência. Este estudo tem como objetivo analisar as estratégias de *engagement* online e offline, bem como compreender a perspetiva dos leitores da *Mensagem*. Foi feito um inquérito aos leitores da *Mensagem* no qual se aplicou o *User Needs Model*, bem como entrevistas à diretora, editora e gestora de redes sociais do jornal.

Os resultados mostram que o jornal tem uma estratégia clara para se conectar com os seus leitores, quer seja online ou offline. Os leitores veem as suas necessidades satisfeitas e, embora a maioria dos consumidores da *Mensagem* partilhe e discuta o conteúdo que lê com alguém, a participação no processo de produção de notícias ou em eventos é mínima. No entanto, a maioria dos leitores já fez algo com base em algum artigo que leu na *Mensagem*, muitos definem o jornal como um bom *media* que promove o espírito de comunidade em Lisboa, o que demonstra que, desta perspetiva, o jornal está a desenvolver uma relação *offline* com os leitores. Estes resultados indicam que, embora o jornal esteja a satisfazer as necessidades dos leitores e possa estar a ter algum impacto neles, deve melhorar a sua estratégia *online*, bem como a sua presença na comunidade, para ter leitores mais envolvidos.

**Palavras-chave:** jornalismo local, jornalismo comunitário, engagement, necessidades da audiência, User Needs Model

## **Abstract**

This report is the result of an internship at *Mensagem de Lisboa*, and it aims to understand how the newspaper interacts with its readers and how the readers engage with the newspaper, focusing on readers' needs. *Mensagem de Lisboa* is a new online local community newspaper about Lisbon with a new journalistic approach that has not been academically studied, at a time when local journalism appears to be losing relevance. Furthermore, in Portugal, there is a lack of research on local journalism, as well as studies on audience needs. This study aims to study online and offline strategies of engagement as well as understand *Mensagem* readers' perspective. The data for this report was collected through a survey of readers that applied the User Needs Model, as well as through semi-structured interviews with the director, editor, and social media manager of the newspaper.

Results indicate that the newspaper has a clear strategy to connect with its readers whether is online or offline. Readers see their needs fulfilled and although most *Mensagem* consumers share and discuss its content with someone, engagement in news production process and participation in events is minimal. Nevertheless, most readers have done something based on *Mensagem* stories, calling it a "good" publication for fostering community spirit in Lisbon, which shows that from this perspective the newspaper is engaging offline with its audience. These findings indicate that although the newspaper is meeting readers' needs and perhaps having some impact on them, it should improve its online strategy as well as its presence in the community to have more engaged readers.

**Keywords:** local media, community media, engagement, audience needs, User Needs Model

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## Table of Contents

Resumo .....	3
Abstract .....	4
Introduction .....	7
Chapter 1: Local and Community Journalism.....	11
1.1 Defining Local and Community Journalism.....	11
1.2. The Role of Local Journalism .....	14
1.3 Decline of Local Media and News Deserts.....	17
1.4 Local Media in Portugal.....	21
1.5 Local Media in the Digital Age.....	25
1.5.1 News Forms of Local Media: Hyperlocal Media and News Startups .....	25
1.5.2 Business Models.....	31
Chapter 2: Audience Needs and Engagement .....	34
2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory.....	34
2.2 Audience needs and the User Needs Model.....	36
2.3 Audience Engagement .....	44
2.3.1 Defining Engagement and Engagement practices.....	44
2.3.2. Increasing engagement through Solutions Journalism .....	53
Chapter 3: Descriptive account of the Internship .....	58
3.1 Mensagem de Lisboa characterization.....	58
3.2 Internship Description.....	60
Chapter 4: Methodology .....	64
4.1 Research Relevance, Research Question and Objectives.....	64
4.2 Research Design .....	64
4.2.1 Survey .....	64
4.2.2 Semi structured Interviews.....	68
Chapter 5: Results.....	73
5.1. Survey Results.....	73
5.2 Interview Results .....	90
Chapter 6: Discussion .....	100
Limitations of the Study .....	107
Conclusion.....	109
Bibliography.....	112
Appendices .....	128

## **Introduction**

The current report is the culmination of a curricular internship at the newspaper, and it is about the engagement strategies of *Mensagem de Lisboa* (Mensagem) as well as readers' needs and engagement. It was a logical decision to complete the curricular internship at Mensagem because there was already a collaboration with the newspaper before the internship as well as a growing interest in local media. Mensagem is a local, Lisbon-focused, digital, and community newspaper founded in February 2021.

Throughout the internship period, it was evident that the team often discussed what Mensagem's readers could expect of the newspaper and what strategies they could apply to reach the readers. These debates showed the team clearly wanted to foster a closer relationship with readers.

In this way, it was decided to look at the strategies Mensagem uses to reach its readers, whether through articles or initiatives outside the editorial scope, and to understand if the newspaper considers the needs of its readers. Additionally, it also aimed to consider the readers' perspective to determine whether the direction Mensagem has been taking fulfills the needs of the readers. In essence, a double perspective is the goal of this study.

Local or community media is seen as the roots of journalism, and it plays an important role in fostering a close relationship the community (Reader & Hatcher, 2012). Although there are different terms, or the use of both terms, for this type of journalism, research converges on the idea that these media outlets cover a specific geographic area and/or foster close relationships with their audiences. Local journalism is seen a way to keep a sense of belonging and foster community values in the communities it covers (Ardia et al., 2020; Park et al., 2022; Radcliffe & Ali, 2017), to promote civic engagement (Firmstone, 2016; Nielsen, 2015) and thus a tool to strengthen democracies.

However, local journalism is undergoing changes due to the digitalization of journalism. According to the International Press Institute (Park, 2021), local news media is the most disrupted sector of the media, and it faces disruption, which allows experimentation and innovation, with potential to create a stronger media ecosystem. The International Press Institute's report found that as information scarcity in many local communities has led to economic disadvantage, journalists and media-builders are mobilizing to address this gap by engaging local communities, to commit to serving the needs of their communities with a mission by offering new narratives and new voices. The report also showed that

sustainability requires local media outlets to demonstrate its value to communities, focusing on inclusion and building new audiences and thus these strategies can be allies to fight against disinformation and misinformation.

To make journalism relevant, the public must acknowledge its worth, and journalists must keep it engaging so that the public remains interested. Promoting participation from the public in news production (Broersma, 2019; Ha et al., 2018; Lee & Tandoc Jr, 2017) or organizing community events (Radcliffe & Ali, 2017) can be some strategies to have more engaged audiences. However, this becomes a challenge in a time in which publishers face a complex platform environment, fragmented attention, low trust, and less open participation, as shown in the Reuters Institute's Digital News Report from 2023.

Regarding the Portuguese media landscape, most media outlets are based on Lisbon but are of national scope. Following an international trend (Abernathy, 2018; da Silva & Pimenta, 2020), Portuguese cities are losing their media and becoming news deserts (Ramos, 2021). Because of this, Mensagem's emergence as a local community media in Lisbon might be considered an originality in the Portuguese media landscape.

Research shows (Schröder, 2019; Shishkin et al., 2023) there is a relationship between media considering what public may need and more engaged audiences. In this study, the User Needs Model from Dmitry Shishkin (a former BBC editor and an expert in content strategy, digital transformation, and innovation in publishing) is explained. This model includes different needs of media consumers that, if followed by media producers in their content, can lead to more engaged audiences. These needs can be met if the articles focus on diverse aspects (the needs) rather than simply updating the media consumers. Shishkin et al. (2023) formulated eight needs: update me, give me perspective, educate me, divert me, inspire me, keep me engaged, help me and connect me. This model is applied and adapted in this study.

No research has been conducted on a local community media outlet in Portugal with a focus on audience perspective. Given the lack of research regarding local media in Portugal (Jerónimo, 2017), focusing on audience needs, this study aimed to (1) understand what strategies Mensagem uses to reach readers, (2) assess if Mensagem content and activities meet the needs and expectations of its readers, (3) understand why readers consume Mensagem's content, and (4) examine how readers engage with

Mensagem. In this sense, the research question of this study was: how does Mensagem reach its readers and how do readers engage with Mensagem?

A mixed methods strategy was used to answer the research question and achieve these objectives. Interviews with the director, editor, and social media manager were conducted to better understand the newspaper editorial choices and strategies to reach its readers. A survey was done to better comprehend the views of the readers including its needs and engagement.

In Chapter One, the existing literature about local and community journalism will be reviewed. Throughout this chapter, the different definitions of this type of journalism will be laid out and the role of local journalism will be approached. Local media in Portugal will also be examined. Lastly, local media's challenges due to digitalization and advertisement decline and new forms of local media will be explained.

In Chapter Two, audience needs, and engagement will be discussed. This chapter begins by laying out the Uses and Gratifications Theory and the User Needs Model. Different definitions of engagement will be detailed as well as engagement practices. Solutions Journalism as an engagement practice will be highlighted.

The internship at Mensagem is discussed in the third chapter. The newspaper is described first, followed by a full account of the internship experience, highlighting the knowledge gained and tasks completed.

In Chapter Four, the research question and objectives are presented, and the methodological choices will be explored. This chapter also discusses the research design, the method of data collection and analysis.

Results from the survey and interviews are presented in detail in the fifth Chapter. In Chapter Six, the results are analyzed and discussed. The viewpoints of the journalists gathered from the interviews will be combined with the survey results. A critical analysis of the data collected is provided, comparing and putting into context with the theoretical framework.

It should be noted that generalizing the findings for other Portuguese media is outside the scope of this study because they are only applicable to Mensagem since the engagement strategies, patterns, and reader needs are only from the people participating in this study.

This study investigates Mensagem for the first time, offering significant insight into readers' needs and engagement. Understanding the relationship between the newspaper's strategies and reader views helps to identify Mensagem's editorial approach and relationship with the community. It also provides knowledge about community media in Portugal as well as the perspectives of media users.

## **Chapter 1: Local and Community Journalism**

### **1.1 Defining Local and Community Journalism**

There is not a universal consensus about the definition of local and community journalism or how to define small media outlets (Hanusch, 2015; Hess, 2013; Hume, 2012), even though the most used terms are community or local (Hess, 2013). There is an agreement that local, or community media concepts are defined by two key characteristics: the geographical scope where the media operates and the closeness to the community it serves.

It is believed that Kenneth R. Byerly (1961) was the first to use the term “community journalism”, though this type of journalism has had other labels. When Byerly was a journalism professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, he changed the name of the course he was teaching, “Country Weekly Newspaper Production.” To him, the course’s name did not match reality as there were suburban newspapers and others, so he decided to change the name to “Community Journalism.” In his book of the same name, he distinguished community journalism from major media outlets. Community newspapers have a “friendly neighbour relationship with readers” (Byerly, 1961, p. 5) and “have something that city dailies lack—a nearness to people” (p. 25). Although Byerly was the first to use the term “community journalism”, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Alexis Tocqueville had already recognized the relevance of local and community journalism. He wrote in “Democracy in America”, that a newspaper is an “adviser” that “comments briefly upon community business” (Tocqueville, 2004, as cited in Reader & Hatcher, 2012).

The overlap of the community and local concepts can often lead to confusion. It is important to understand the role small town newspapers played in the past and to consider that until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, community journalism was associated with small-town newspapers. Russo (1980) analysed the history of American country press in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and he stated that “newspapers in America—rural and urban—became, in effect, ‘community journals’, that is, papers whose contents bore a significant relationship to the communities where they were printed” (p. 35, as cited in Hume, 2012). City dailies used local news to help urban populations that had moved to cities to learn about what was happening in their communities, since oral communication was not efficient. The same happened with rural communities, and so local news became a way to connect with places

(Cheng, 2005) and the content served local communities. Pawley (2001, as cited in Hume, 2012) explained that most towns in the United States of America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had a media outlet that contributed to defining the community. In her words, local newspapers “occupied a central place in the cultural construction of American communities” (p. 169).

The idea that small-town media outlets have a proximity to their public is a perspective shared by many scholars. To Chavis and Newbrough (1986), a sense of community is “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (p. 9).

McNair (2006) also argues that local journalism “binds communities together and is widely and rightly viewed as an essential element in the construction of local identity” (p. 37). Besides, as Nielsen (2015) asserts, it has played a role “in defining and tying together local communities, and many local media have been as attuned as any social scientist to the intimate connection between communication and community” (p. xx). As Hess and Waller (2017) argue, “we develop affinities with some places where we come to consider ourselves ‘local’, part of a ‘community’ or feel a ‘sense of place’” (p. 7).

Beyond the role these media play in communities, local or community journalism is also linked to “the idea of place” which “is fundamental to the local newspaper” (Mersey (2009, p. 347). Lauterer’s (2006) definition of a community newspaper also reflects the territorial perspective as he defines it as a “publication with a circulation under 50,000, serving people who live together in a distinct geographical space with a clear local-first emphasis on news, features, sports, and advertising” (p. 1) and refers to it as “journalism in its natural state.” Reader (2006) says community journalism has been seen as a “specific practice of gathering, packaging, and distributing news in predominantly small, distinct geographic markets, with an emphasis on local news and information about community life” (p. 3). This is a perspective also shared by Hess and Waller (2017), who assert that small media “have traditionally constructed geographic boundaries...that are evident by mapping a newspaper’s circulation footprint: where a newspaper is distributed and sold, and advertisers and readers are attracted” (p. 38). According to Buchanan (2009), local newspapers structure a “sense of place”, as they create for their readers a “sense of their locality and its place in the wider world” (p. 63). In a study in Maricopa

County (in the state of Arizona, USA), Mersey (2009) found that geography played an important role to journalists and citizens as the geographic sense of community was stronger than the online one.

There is no clear consensus in academic literature about the term local journalism, especially in the digital age. Cheng (2005) sets out the two possible perspectives (community or local) of this journalism. Some discussions about the local “refer to a territorial space. In other words, one dimension of local is place oriented. However, the other meaning of local is more people oriented, referring to the people of a community rather than a specific geographical territory” (p. 143). Digital affordances make it more difficult to define, as it is equally challenging to identify boundaries that in the past separated communities physically. The National Newspaper Association Foundation (About community newspapers, n.d.) an American association, defines a community newspaper as one that has a

commitment to serving the information needs of a particular community. The community is defined by the community’s members and a shared sense of belonging. A community may be geographic, political, social, or religious. A community newspaper may be published once a week or daily. Some community newspapers exist only in cyberspace. Any newspaper that defines itself as committed to serving a particular community may be defined as a “community newspaper.

Community can have multiple dimensions other than the geographical or local ones, as previously mentioned. Chavis and Newbrough (1986) define community as “any set of social relations that are bound together by a sense of community” (p. 335). Although this quote is from the last century, it exemplifies how broad the term community is when it comes to media studies. In other words, online communities or others that are not linked by geography can be the audience of a community newspaper. Reader (2006) gives two example of community media that are not local but help bring together different communities: “Shambhala Sun, a bimonthly magazine for devotees of Western style engaged Buddhism” and “Small Farmer’s Journal”, a magazine that reaches “like-minded readers around the globe.” Reader (2006) notes, “such publications have no ‘local’ to serve, but their content is focused entirely on their communities” (p. 15). As Meyer and Daniels (2012) argue “community instead becomes more about shared interests than

shared locations, as the Internet has greater power to bring geographically dispersed people together than any other medium” (p. 199).

To look at local or community journalism beyond the geographic scope is an increasingly common trend in the digital age. Hess (2013) suggest examining these media with a “geo-social” perspective, since it is not assumed that media audiences are in the same physical place. The scholar define the geo-social concept as,

news outlets that have a solid link to geographic territory while acknowledging the wider social space in which these publications play a role, both in holding an influential position in certain social flows and movements and as a node to the wider global news media network (p. 37).

In other words, this concept refers to the idea that local media can serve more than the audience or readers from their region. The idea of geography is linked to the proximity news value of journalism since events that are geographically close to readers tend to get more attention from journalists. In Reader and Hatcher (2020) words, “truly local news involves a range of content that all has ‘proximity’ as the principal news value” (p. 205).

## **1.2. The Role of Local Journalism**

Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) wrote that one of the journalist’s roles is to give the people the information they need to self-govern. When it comes to the local level, journalism plays a crucial role in informing people and holding local power accountable. Whatever term one may choose to define this type of journalism, local news is “vital for sharing reliable and accurate information; serving as watchdogs for elites; and representing communities to themselves and the outside world” (Jenkins & Nielsen, 2020, p. 230). Besides, strong local news has the role of promoting more civically engaged communities as they become “more aware of shared problems, interests, and opportunities” (Shaker, 2014, p. 134). Firmstone (2016) argues that local news plays an important role in the public space as “it is considered vital to the functioning of local communities and the engagement of citizens in local democracies” (p. 928). Moreover, local news “help to shape community views around common values and beliefs, creating a sense of shared purpose that can be a powerful uniting force within a town or county” (Ardia et al., 2020, p. 2).

According to Nielsen (2015), “surveys suggest that local newspapers in most places still represent the most widely used sources and the most important source of independently produced information about local public affairs” (p. 9). The researcher mentions three aspects of the relevance of local journalism. In terms of “accountability and information”, local news “offers some degree of critical debate and scrutiny, especially in those communities where local elites disagree amongst themselves” (p. 14). Regarding “civic and political engagement”, Nielsen mentions that “local journalism significantly increases people’s civic and political engagement” (p. 15). About “community integration”, he argues that “having local media helps mark the identity of the place where you live as somewhere and helps mark people there as someone” (p. 16).

Abernathy (2014) mentions three democratic functions of local journalism: setting the agenda for public-policy debate (by defining what appears on the first page or dedicating more effort and resources to certain topics); encouraging economic growth and commerce (“by providing a marketplace for readers and advertisers to connect” (p. 25)), and by promoting discussions about some issues that can promote or prevent economic growth; and fostering a sense of geographic community by helping communities know the impact of each one’s actions since “newspapers...help us understand what our vote means to the larger community, or why we should be concerned about a certain issue that especially affects our town or zip code” (p. 29).

Radcliffe and Ali (2017) state three reasons local news add value to American life, which can be applicable to other societies. First, the value to democracy, in other words, the watchdog role that journalists play, holding local power accountable. Local media outlets also have a responsibility to help the community define their vote by fulfilling the “information needs of communities” which means,

forms of information that are necessary for citizens and community members to live safe and healthy lives; have full access to educational, employment, and business opportunities; and to fully participate in the civic and democratic lives of their communities should they choose (p. 14).

The second one is the “value to the community.” Regarding this topic, the researchers point out the previously mentioned importance of the sense of community that local media creates. The last is the “value to media ecosystems,” as many times small media are the only voice in a community and they are “the primary providers of a specific and important

kind of information and enable other media's coverage" (Nielsen, as cited in Radcliffe & Ali, 2017, p. 16).

Park et al. (2022) write that one of the roles of this kind of media is "building community identity and cohesion by keeping citizens informed about local matters, covering community events, and advocating for the community" (p. 1665). The authors also state that in these communities, media play a role of "good neighbour" rather than watch dogs as they point to solutions for community problems.

Puijk et al. (2021) argue, local media "play an important triple role in their communities as providers of information and as critical actors as well as builders of the local community" (p. 1123). Nielsen (2015) shares the same vision, as he argues that local news can "connect and empower their audiences through informing them about their communities and equipping them with the information they need to become active participants" (p. 7).

In Filla and Johnson's (2010) study about local news and political participation, they found that people "living outside of Los Angeles who have access to a daily newspaper are more likely to vote regularly than respondents living in communities without daily newspapers" (p. 686). Besides, as the scholars argue, the more citizens use the news, the more confidence they will have in the community, and the more likely they will be to "participate in community groups, engage in political discourse with neighbours, and have higher levels of social capital than those who do not consume local media" (p. 681). Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) shares the same perspective as she claims that knowing what is going on in the "backyard is central to local engagement, participation, and social life and, historically, local newspapers have played the role of sharing that information in the community" (p. 164). Skogerbø and Winsvold (2011) emphasize the "central social and cultural roles" of local newspapers (p. 215). They argue that this media is the "main information source" about events and problems in the locality; the "mediators of cultural identities", as reading the local newspaper is correlated with identification with and attachment to the place of living; and "arenas for public discourse" as local media provide a space for exchanging opinions, communication between residents and their representatives, as well as a platform for politicians to be heard.

Barnett (2009) identified four areas where local journalism makes a difference and how it contributes to a democratic life: informing, representing, campaigning, and interrogating. The first is about the need of communities to be informed, as knowledge about local courts, institutions, sports, and activities “form the basis of community knowledge, local identity and individual action” (p. 6). Local media outlets are the voices of communities and can represent them on a national level. As the author argues, local media can draw “the attention of national governments or national institutions to particular achievements, inadequacies or shortages which may result respectively in greater recognition, economic investment or remedial action” (p. 6) in local communities. Beyond information and representation criteria, Barnett also gives importance to campaigning which takes the form of call action regarding specific needs which can be a dangerous road or dissatisfaction with a closure of a local institution. As he writes, “local papers and radio...have traditionally regarded such campaigns as an integral element of their rootedness in the local community” (p. 7). The last factor is the questioning role as local media act as watchdogs, monitoring local public and private institutions.

### **1.3 Decline of Local Media and News Deserts**

The rise of digital media is changing journalism, as it is challenging the status quo in terms of business models, production, and news consumption. Journalism financial sustainability is in doubt as advertising and investors are declining (Nielsen, 2015). As Benson (2019) says, “advertising’s unchallenged reign – including its sometimes-positive role in helping fund quality news – seems to be coming to an end” (p. 146). As a result, there has been a “rapid erosion of income from sales, subscriptions, and advertising” (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, p. 163).

Wahl-Jorgensen (2019) argues that in times of crises, the media outlets not based in urban centers are the first ones to close. “While centers of power in nation states, as well as large and wealthy metropolitan areas, tend to be well served by news organizations, poorer and less densely populated areas suffer from chronic news drought” (p. 163). The lack or decrease of media location shows a “growing trend of cuts, consolidation, and closure of local titles” (p. 163). With the closure of local titles, it becomes challenging to cover what is happening in rural areas.

The decreasing number of local newspapers in certain places is raising concerns and some researchers believe that “local journalism is essentially collapsing” (Napoli et al., 2017, p. 373). Local media outlets are not able to “offer the same level of targeting [as digital media] and have been unable to attract the advertising revenue necessary to remain financially sustainable” (Ardia et al., 2020, p. 3).

In addition, the way people live nowadays is a challenge for local journalism. As Nielsen (2015) asserts, “transient populations represent a different kind of audience from long-term residents, local business news is less important for people who work and shop outside the community, and the incentive to follow local politics is reduced if power is perceived to be elsewhere” (p. 5-6). So, the scope definition of local news and its audience is more difficult to define, as well as the relevance of local journalism. With a lack of investment, the operation of local newspapers becomes more challenging, and they need to adapt to a new paradigm.

With the decline of the media business model and the closures of local news outlets, a new phenomenon has emerged: news deserts. There are multiple definitions for this concept, and all point to geographic areas without news access or media coverage. According to Miller (2018), it refers to “communities with no outlet for locally reported news” (p. 60). In Sparviero’s perspective (2021) this concept refers to “geographic areas and policy issues that lack coverage, and a problem for news media and for democracy” (p. 1330). Abernathy (2020) defines news deserts as “a community, either rural or urban, where residents have very limited access to the sort of credible and comprehensive news and information that feed democracy at the grassroots level” (p. 18). Likewise, the Center for Innovation and Sustainability in Local Media (2019) defines news deserts as a “community, either rural or urban, with limited access to the sort of credible and comprehensive news and information that feeds democracy at the grassroots level” (Center for Innovation & Sustainability in Local Media, 2020). Pickard (2019) defines this concept as “entire regions bereft of news media coverage and access to reliable information” (p. 4). Napoli et al. (2018) characterises news deserts as “communities that may find themselves completely lacking in news serving their specific information needs” (p. 5). Lastly, the Media Deserts Project (2022) uses the term “media deserts” to describe a “geographic locale without access to fresh local news and information to inform and educate the public” (n. p.).

In the report about news deserts and ghost newspapers in the United States, Abernathy (2018) concluded that since 2004, in the United States, between 1300 and 1400 communities lost journalistic coverage, 1800 local newspapers shut down, and 7100 of those that survived became “ghost newspapers” (p. 24), that is, with a small team unable to cover the whole community. In 2018, 91 counties in the south of the country had no local media outlet, making it the country’s biggest “news desert.” Abernathy (2020) asserts that most regions with local news are economically struggling which makes the need for information “on topics such as education, health and infrastructures” (p. 19) more urgent. The scholar also mentions that residents of news deserts tend to be “poorer, older and less educated than the average American” (p. 16), which means that some of the people living in a region without a newspaper also live in a food desert. Consequently, low-income residents do not have the ability to subscribe to a newspaper, so they are “less informed about key issues confronting their communities” and “they are less likely to vote” (p. 19). As Hayes and Lawless (2018) argue, “without sufficient information about community affairs, citizen engagement in local politics will wither” (p. 332).

Studying the local press in Brazil, the Atlas da Notícia (News Atlas) initiative in 2017 found news deserts “in 4,500 municipalities, home to 70 million people, some 35 per cent of the Brazilian population” (da Silva & Pimenta, 2020, p. 49). The project mentioned a relationship between the socio-economic disparities and the lack of local media. For example, Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo (three of the largest Brazilian cities) have more than 10 percent of the national population and more than 1,100 newspapers, which represent 20.7 percent of the total. On the other hand, 416 municipalities, home to more than 15 million people, have only one local media outlet. The study concluded that “the fate of democracy at the local level in Brazil—with repercussions for democracy in the entire country—is intertwined with its currently endangered local press” (da Silva & Pimenta, 2020, p. 52).

There is a great deal of evidence that the reduction of local news affects political accountability and corruption. Miller (2018) claimed that a year after a local newspaper shutdown in the United States, the “median county saw its local government wages increase by \$1.4 million” (p. 64), government employees increased, and individual taxes rose. Clearly, the lack of a local newspaper has repercussions for local power. Gao et al. (2018) argue that the loss of a local government watchdog results in bad behavior. In their

study about the financial impact of newspapers closures, they found strong data suggesting that local power became inefficient after local media outlets closed. Like Miller (2018) results, Gao et al. (2018) found that government wages rose, and the number of government employees increased, as did per capita taxes. Gao et al. (2018) conducted a study of newspaper closures and government borrowing costs in the United States between 1996 and 2015. They found that these costs “significantly increased for counties that have experienced a newspaper closure compared to geographically adjacent counties with similar demographic and economic characteristics without newspaper closures.” Besides this consequence, the scholars also concluded that the wages of employee county governments increased because of a higher tax flow going to the local government, and an increase in financial transactions by local governments.

Beyond financial and political consequences, the lack of local media can have implications for health issues. As Miller (2018) states, “real-time reporting in local newspapers of outbreaks of global infectious disease is crucial to spotting and stopping their spread” (p. 64). So, without local media, the register of diseases decreases, “lessening the amount of data that HealthMap has been gathering from undercovered regions of the country” (Miller, 2018, p. 65).

In addition, the demise of local media can lead to the decline of civic engagement and less informed voters. Pickard (2019) cites studies that demonstrate how the closure of local newspapers affected voter participation: “An analysis of newspaper coverage of the 2010 midterm elections found that people living in districts that lacked robust election coverage were less able to evaluate their choices for congressional representative and ultimately were less likely to vote” (p. 100). The author notes another study that found the lack of media coverage in a community made it difficult for their residents to recall their politicians’ names and consequently they were less able hold them responsible. The fact that “entire areas outside the metropolitan centers of the media world lack any news coverage at all” (Örnebring, 2019, p. 226) is dangerous and it “poses a far-reaching danger to civic engagement, the accountability of government, and many analysts argue, democracy itself” (Miller, 2018, p. 59).

Pickard (2019), like Abernathy (2020) and da Silva and Pimenta (2020), claims that “information scarcity and news deficits” (p. 4) harm poorer population groups. According

to Pickard (2019), this phenomenon has contributed to the “misinformation society” which is “an electorate that is increasingly served sensationalistic news coverage, clickbait, and degraded journalism instead of informative, fact-based, policy-related news” (p. 4). Without local news, “community members get most of their news from social media, leaving them vulnerable to mis- and disinformation and exacerbating political polarization” (Ardia et al., 2020, p. 3).

#### **1.4 Local Media in Portugal**

In Portugal, there is little research regarding local or regional media, the most used concept in the Portuguese context. There is more research (see Bonixe, 2006, Reis, 2014) regarding local radio stations or the so-called *rádios pirata* (illegal radio stations) in which local radio stations are given an important role as “community outreach spaces” (Bonixe, p. 9, 2019).

The Communications Observatory in 2018 stated that there is a “dearth of performance indicators that can give us a broader understanding of what is happening at the regional newsroom level” (Cardoso & Mendonça, 2018, p. 7, author’s translation). Jerónimo (2017) also mentions the lack of research regarding local press, stating that “there has been a near void of continued and consistent research” (p. 9). Godinho and Pereira (2020) also express concern with the lack of research, stating that

since 2010, a clear reduction in the number of studies on the sector, except for the study by ERC study (2010) and Jerónimo (2015), being worrisome when even the study Bareme Regional Press was discontinued by Marktest, a company of market studies. (p. 66, author’s translation)

Although Portuguese Law does not define local journalism, it has a statute for regional media. According to Decree-Law 106/88, the Statute of the Regional Press, passed in March 1988, the Portuguese regional press is characterized by:

all periodical publications of general information, in compliance with the Press Law, which are intended predominantly for their respective regional and local communities, regularly devote more than half of their editorial area to facts or issues of a cultural, social, religious, economic, and political nature concerning them and are not dependent, directly or through an intermediary, on any political power, including local government (1988, p. 1320, author’s translation).

In addition, in an excerpt from the preamble of the Regional Press Statute it is written that this press “plays a role in informing and contributing to the maintenance of ties of

authentic familiarity between the local people and the emigrant communities dispersed in the most far-flung parts of the world” (p. 1320, author’s translation). Article 14 of the Press Law defines “publications of national, regional and Portuguese communities” as being of regional scope due to the characteristics of their “content and distribution” (2013, p. 3, author’s translation). Jerónimo (2015) differentiates between regional and local media. To him, regional press are

all periodical publications of general information, which dedicate, on a regular basis, the majority of their news content to facts or issues of cultural, social, religious, economic, political or sports, concerning the communities to which they are addressed and territories that reach, at least, the size of a district; are distributed in paper media and / or digital platform; and are not dependent directly or indirectly or through an intermediary, of any political power, including local government (p. 127, author’s translation).

On the other hand, local media is “that which, from the point of view of interest and information production, focuses on a territory or territories smaller than a district (locality, parish, municipality or an agglomeration of the former territories)” (Jerónimo, 2015, p. 128, author’s translation).

The last study from the Regulatory Entity for the Media (ERC, 2010) states that at the time there were 728 local periodical newspapers in Portugal. Porto is the district with the largest number of local and regional press publications, making up 11.7% (85 titles) of the national total. It is followed by Aveiro, with 67 publications (9.2%), and the districts of Braga and Leiria, both with 56 publications (7.7%). The district of Beja has only 9 publications (1.2%), closely followed by Bragança and the Região Autónoma da Madeira, with 11 publications each (1.5%). The Lisbon district has 28 regional and local publications (3.8%). Although Lisbon is the capital, this low proportion can be due to the “strong implantation of the national press” (Jerónimo, 2015, p. 131, author’s translation). Most are monthly (37.5%), followed by weekly (29.4%), and biweekly (23.9%). There are 18 dailies in the country, which account for 2.5% of all publications. This report also mentions the perception of the regional media in the country. In the words of Azeredo Lopes, at the time, president of ERC, regional and local press are seen as “traditional...anachronic, and benefit dependent” (ERC, 2010, author’s translation). Regarding local newspapers, the report also mentions that only 46% of the respondents in the press had an “electronic edition”, and the remaining responses were divided

between having no online presence (41%) or having only a blog format (4.9%) (ERC, 2010, p. 25, author’s translation).

Jerónimo (2015) concluded the database of ERC was not up-to-date, and he conducted a survey of local media in the country that are published more frequently in their locality, that is, at least once a week. He concluded that there are 235 regional publications: “199 newspapers (84.7%), 28 digital natives (11.9%), and 8 Web TVs (3.4%)” (p. 168, author’s translation).

Finally, Jerónimo (2017, as quoted in Jerónimo et al., 2022) has done a survey of local media registered and active in Portugal by year. The researcher concluded that the country has seen a substantial decrease in the local media landscape, since in 1999, there were 1,445 local media registered, but by 2016 there were only 1,111. The Bareme Regional Press of 2009, a study that analyzes press audiences, concluded that 49.7% of the population being studied usually read or leafed through regional press titles.

**Table 1.** Local media registered and active in Portugal by year.

	1998	2004	2010	2016
Local press <sup>a</sup>	1.153	1.366	1.220	790
Local radio	292	331	334	319
Local TV	0	0	2	2
Total	1.445	1.697	1.556	1.111

Figure 1

Regarding the preferred topics in regional newspapers, Correia (2012) surveyed 1,344 readers of regional newspapers and the respondents identified the economy, urbanism, transport, and health as the topics they would most like to see covered by the newspapers they buy. In addition to their choices, readers made a point of saying that they were satisfied with the coverage of current affairs in the local newspapers they buy, but that they would advise the newspapers to give more depth and different context to the coverage.

Besides the regional press, Agência Lusa (the Portuguese news agency) plays an important role regarding regional coverage, as it has correspondents in the 18 districts and two islands, which is in line with public service regulations (Contrato de Prestação de Serviço Noticioso e Informativo de Interesse Público entre Estado Português e Lusa – Agência de Notícias de Portugal, 2022). This geographic distribution of media professionals is a way to “to ensure broad news coverage, throughout the national

territory” (Jerónimo, 2015, p. 118). In addition, some Lusa correspondents work at regional media outlets and the agency “feeds the national media with regional content” (p. 118) and the national media use Lusa regional content, which shows the importance of local press.

According to Ramos (2021), Portugal has 61 municipalities without newspapers and radio stations. There are also two regions where the news desert is most evident with municipalities in this situation: Trás-os-Montes and Alentejo. These regions are far from major centers, have less economic activity, and are very small and sparsely populated municipalities, which is a phenomenon like what happens in the U.S. and Brazil: news deserts emerge in the countryside and poorer regions.

The Digital News Report 2023 (2023) reported that

The current configuration of digital news brands seems unlikely to replace the democratic role played by existing regional and local media. A recent digital media map of Portugal shows that they are mostly located on the coastal, heavily populated areas of the country. In January 2021, 27% of municipalities have become what are known as ‘news deserts’, having no digital news brand headquartered in their territory; about a quarter of all outlets are based in Lisbon (p. 92).

In an interview with PÚBLICO newspaper (Lusa, 2017), Jerónimo mentioned that the regional press “has always been in crisis”, which has intensified in the last few years because it has faced significant changes, such as the appearance of digital journalism and the increase of the qualifications of the newsroom’s members. Jerónimo also says that the internet has brought more opportunities for journalists and media companies, although in most cases there is no strategy and companies, with rare exceptions, continue to prefer journalism in the traditional paper format.

The Portuguese state provides some support for journalism. Currently designated as an incentive to read the regional press (Jerónimo, 2015), the *porte pago* regime establishes a proportionate system of sharing the costs of postal dispatch of periodical publications to its subscribers who are residents in the national and foreign territories, at a weight not exceeding 200 grams per copy. The *ex-porte-pago* regime was instituted by the state on October 1, 1976. The most relevant portion of state support refers to paid postage/incentive to read (94%). With the internet, state support adapted to the new reality, with the reduction of the incentive to read being accompanied by the creation of the Regional Press Portal. However, in 2023, the site is not active. About the past

conjecture, Jerónimo (2015) wrote that there is “lack of attention from the regional press to this reality” (p. 146, author’s translation) and this seems to remain the same. More recently, with the pandemic, the Portuguese state decided to provide 15 million euros for the anticipated acquisition of space for institutional advertising, with 25% going to regional and local media (Resolução do Conselho de Ministros, 2020). In the 2023 state budget, support for regional and local media increased by 12.5%, something that had not happened since 2015 (Lusa, 2022).

Regarding other sources of support, Google has a program to support local media in Portugal. In November 2021, Google News Showcase allows Portuguese publications to select articles to appear in Google News and Discover and it is composed almost entirely (90%) of local or community news. The feature allows users to receive a set of news suggestions related to their location, depending on their searches. This is a way to keep internet users informed about what is happening in their immediate surroundings and, at the same time, help local publications reach more people, according to Google (Marketeer, 2022).

## **1.5 Local Media in the Digital Age**

### **1.5.1 News Forms of Local Media: Hyperlocal Media and News Startups**

The digital world is a fertile territory for new forms of local media (Nielsen, 2015), which also innovate in business models. Hyperlocal media and local media startups are starting to be part of the local media scene. These new media have a wide range of opportunities regarding entrepreneurship, interactivity, and innovation (Tenor, 2018).

The decline of local commercial media outlets and the internet creates opportunities for, “a new generation of community oriented local news outlets, often termed hyperlocal news, which has been seen by many to (at least partially) fill these gaps in news provision and meet a manifest need or desire for local news” (Williams & Harte, 2016, p. 280). In broader terms, hyperlocal definitions include references to communication platform, geographic and audience scope, and the provision of news. Previous research showed there is not a common pattern in hyperlocal news, as the norm is a “diverse range of actors in terms of scale, location, driving forces, quality ambitions, funding and sustainability” (Tenor, 2018, p. 1054).

Radcliffe (2012) defines hyperlocal media as the “online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community” (p. 9), which is a perspective shared by Kurpius et al. (2010), who declare

that hyperlocal media have a focus on certain communities or topics. Also Cook et al. (2016) define hyperlocal media, as “online news or content services pertaining to a town, village, single postcode or other small, geographically defined community” (p. 7). Similarly, Kerkhoven and Bakker (2015) state that

hyperlocals are online local initiatives that aim to produce news gathered in and focused on a designated local area...target a geographic area, have a community orientation, contain original news reporting, are indigenous to the web, fill perceived news gaps, and stimulate civic engagement (p. 285).

Kerkhoven and Bakker (2015) also say that this type of media should be cheaper, innovative, and flexible in terms of operation, production, and distribution. Parasie and Cointet (2012) find hyperlocal news a way for readers to see important issues covered in their small communities. Schaffer (2007) asserts that this media is a form of “‘bridge’ media, linking traditional forms of journalism with classic civic participation” (p. 7). Negreira-Rey and López-García (2021) associate hyperlocal media with a focus and commitment to the community, as a mission to cover gradually more neglected areas as well as audience participation in hyperlocal media, saying that “hyperlocal online media have revitalized the media ecosystem with new informational approaches close to the citizenship, new organizational and business models and new ways of conceiving their relationships with audiences” (p. 1).

Metzgar et al. (2011) propose a definition for this concept that includes various dimensions, stating that the role of this media is to fill a known gap which results from the community history and changes in the media, though this goal had not been one hundred percent achieved. For Metzgar et al. (2011), “hyperlocal media operations are geographically based, community-oriented, original-news-reporting organizations indigenous to the web and intended to fill perceived gaps in coverage of an issue or region and to promote civic engagement” (p. 774). They describe each element of this definition: the geographic elements concerns “how far afield the operation goes in seeking news and how broadly based its audience is” (p. 777); hyperlocal media is community oriented as it is another source for citizens to be informed about their community and consequently take action; original news reporting is also a requirement to be considered hyperlocal news as they aim to create new content. Metzgar et al. (2011) mention that hyperlocal news are indigenous to the web as “they did not have a previous incarnation in a more traditional media format” (p. 781), yet, they warn that having a website is not enough to engage the community and, thus, is not a sufficient element of their definition; they argue

hyperlocal media aim to fill acknowledged gaps in public affairs coverage, as they focus on certain topics or communities and, by doing so, fill gaps uncovered by legacy media. Lastly, they claim this type of media leads to civic engagement, as the technology employed facilitates audience participation in public discussion; nevertheless, they recognize that an interactive website can fall short in incentivizing public participation. Regarding this definition, Van Kerkhoven and Bakker (2014) argue that it is difficult to make that categorization since “it needs a careful examination of the goals and motives of the people who operate the sites” (p. 298).

The idea that hyperlocal media can cover gaps left by legacy media is discussed by many authors. Taking the British context into account, Barnett and Townend (2014) asserted that “the current activities and aspirations of most hyperlocal sites suggests a potentially major role in compensating for the decline of traditional local media and making a genuine contribution to local plurality” (p. 13). However, some studies do not show that. Nygren et al. (2018) studied the Swedish media and concluded that these media are partly filling these gaps in areas where traditional media is present too. Similarly, in the American context, Horning (2012) showed that most hyperlocal media was covering areas already covered by mainstream media.

There are some perspectives that look at hyperlocal journalism as a less professional practice (Borger et al., 2016). Friedland et al. (2012), consider hyperlocal media as a layer above “personal blogging and social media use, and below the metropolitan news coverage we associate with commercial newspapers” (p. 52). In a similar view, Hujanen et al. (2019) consider hyperlocal media “a product located between professional, established publications and social media” (p. 103). Although Hess and Waller (2016) do not look at hyperlocal journalism as an unprofessional practice, they describe it as “‘subculture’ of excessively local news” (p. 193).

Much like the journalism sector as whole, hyperlocal media faces many challenges. Carson et al. (2016) conducted a study of Australian hyperlocal media and identified three main challenges it faces: the first is the difficulty in dealing with many responsibilities in terms of tasks of engagement and online moderation which makes it harder to achieve sustainable practices in terms of funding and human resources. Besides, these media are often the target of trolls and internet bullying. The last challenge pointed out by the researchers is fragmentation, as it is difficult to engage with different target audiences.

Beyond hyperlocal media, more forms of local media are appearing as the structural change brought on by social media requires innovation and new forms of local media that should not only incorporate “digital technology into the production of news but about using it creatively and efficiently to renew journalistic content” (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2020, p. 70). For 2022, Newman (2022) predicted that “at a local level, we can expect to see the growth of low-cost reader-focused startups” (p. 15). Based on Ries’ (2010) definition (“a startup is a human institution designed to deliver a new product or service under conditions of extreme uncertainty” (p. 263)), Crespo et al. (2020) assert that a startup connects the media (human), innovation (new), and technology (extreme uncertainty) concepts. They highlight the innovative and youthful spirit of news startup leaders.

The emergence of a startup culture has been taking place since the beginning of this century, as well as an entrepreneurial journalism trend (Wagemans et al., 2016) and there are several reasons for this shift. One of them could be the proliferation of news deserts (Chadha & Harlow, 2019). Powers and Vera Zambrano (2016) state that

online news startups refer to organizations that are built primarily around their web presence; are unaffiliated with existing legacy news organizations; and seek to be recognized by their peers as journalistic, usually by offering news and current affairs information (p. 859).

These authors summarize the major two reasons for the development of a startup. The first is concerned with personal characteristics related to business and technology expertise and professional experience. Both skills are important and startups participants should seek new ways to engage with the audience. The former experience and knowledge in journalism field can lead to launching a news startup. Besides, the urge to be entrepreneur and innovator promoted by journalism schools and newsrooms are some factors that help to explain the trend. Another reason is related to the country or regional context that can be favorable, as countries can have economic or political incentives for the emergence of these new projects. Powers and Vera Zambrano (2016) give the example of the United States and France, as the former is an advertising-driven market with room for local and hyperlocal media due the decentralized governance model, and the latter has less investment in advertising, as well as a centralized political system, which are constraints to new forms of media. Besides, the multiple possibilities of advertising and sources of funding, less bureaucracy, more public support, and venture capital reduce the costs for new investments and help in startups’ consolidation (Naldi & Picard, 2012) and

are attractive for those who want to start a new project. In the words of Casero-Ripollés et al. (2020), “low entry and operating costs potentially allow the emergence of new local and even hyper-local media” (p. 70).

However, there are some constraints as well as the time needed for solid implementation, as it usually takes three years, and some leaders invest too much time in editorial content and neglect advertisements and future investors. Since most news startups are focused on cities or specific neighborhoods, they assess success “in terms of community and public service and survival” and not in terms of finances (Naldi & Picard, 2012, p. 72). In his predictions, Newman (2022) gave the example of *The Manchester Mill*, a British local newspaper, which is a startup. Launched during the pandemic, it has generated about a thousand paying subscriptions, it provides some free content, and it uses a slow journalism approach.

Bruno and Nielsen (2012) carried out a study for the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism of journalistic online startups in France, Italy, and Germany. They concluded that the market is equally challenging for these businesses models as it is for legacy media. Besides, journalistic startups face two significant challenges as the online market is still dominated by legacy media and by large American players which “capture much of the search and display advertising in many European countries” (p. 1). They also concluded that most startups are dependent on outside investments and other support to operate. Regarding the key to success of these new media, Bruno and Nielsen found that the most successful ones are those that have a niche target audience that has been ignored by the legacy media in a certain region. To turn a profit, it is also necessary to offer a quality product, operate with a lean organization, and have a variety of revenue sources and a niche audience.

Regarding France, although they do not explore in depth local media startups, Bruno and Nielsen (2012) concluded that, since 2005, a startup trend has been growing and has been shaking the legacy media market as there is

increasing internet access and use, a growing online advertising market, and the belief amongst some investors that these startups are well-positioned to carve out their own positions in a media system characterized by comparatively weak legacy media (p. 65).

Concerning the local scope, they mention the website of DijOnscOpe which covered the Bourgogne region, and Marsactu in Marseille, which has reached more than 100 thousand visits per month.

In the Italian context, online startups emerged very recently, which “reflects the relatively slow development of the internet in much of the country” (Bruno & Nielsen, 2012, p. 70), as internet use and access are lower than other European countries, besides the weight of legacy media, mainly television. It was only in 2010 that the first startups appeared. Another reason for this late arrival is the small audience and limited online advertising. Besides, institutional aspects, such as media ownership by companies with power in different fields are a reason for the scarce investment and entrepreneurship in startups. Regarding Italian locally oriented startups, there are very few, which can be a reflection of the weak local and regional press.

Although the German media market is the largest in Europe, very few online startups have thrived because legacy media continues to be the most powerful player on all platforms and it has dominated online news, leaving little room for innovative media outlets. “With a consolidated and diverse mix of well-established newspapers, news-magazines, and broadcasters increasingly moving online, few startups have found niches to sustain themselves” (Bruno & Nielsen, 2012, p. 37). Beyond the challenge that new players face regarding the reach and capacity to offer quality content by legacy media, niche audiences’ websites find it difficult to compete for advertisers since they “rely on visitor stats and impression hits for their investments” (p. 39). For these reasons, it is difficult to have consolidated startups but there are exceptions. The researchers highlight the development of three startups—Ruhrbarone, Regensburg Digital, and Heddesheimblog—and mention the *Perlentaucher* as an exception in the German market. *Perlentaucher* is a cultural website curator for more than a decade and has developed a niche community based on an advertising and e-commerce business model. In Bruno and Nielsen’s (2012) words

quality curation oriented towards cultural enthusiasts is the niche the site has made its own. Its longevity, stable traffic figures, and its recent success in asking for donations suggests it has managed to build and sustain a loyal community of readers (p. 31).

Regarding the Portuguese context, Crespo et al. (2020) mapped the startup panorama and highlighted five: Polígrafo, Fumaça, Sul Informação, QiNews, and Shifter. They

concluded that this is in line with the European panorama, as “digital-born news outlets in Europe constitute a diverse and growing sector of the news media, despite the challenges of building sustainable funding models in a difficult online environment” (Nicholls et al., 2018, p. 21, as cited in Crespo et al., 2020). In a general way, these startups have a niche audience. Regarding their structure, teams tend to be small with a sense of mission, with a journalistic- and audience-driven strategy and a clear business plan. About the content, Portuguese media opt for interviews and long-form reporting, and they preferred politics, society, and international affairs. They use a text format, but video is gaining importance.

Beyond hyperlocal media and news startups, there are other new formats for local journalism. Casero-Ripollés et al. (2020) proposed a categorization of new forms of local media related to social media and the production and distribution procedures. They came up with six categories which include 21 new formats. The categories are: storytelling (explanation of news different from the conventional way to generate interest; it can be Instagram videos or Tweet threads, for instance), interactivity (it can happen through liking or comment or giving to the reader the choice of how consume the news—interactive reports or questionnaires through Instagram are some examples), multimedia (combination of formats), image (infographics or 360 videos), streaming (live through social media), and transmedia (editorial content adapted to different platforms). To Casero-Ripollés et al. (2020), these formats are “a wide and varied range of options that can allow local journalism to introduce innovation in news production and, with it, to regain the confidence of the public, ensuring its survival and future in the digital scenario” (p. 82).

### **1.5.2 Business Models**

In an online media environment, business models undergo changes. The business models— “the logics, products, services, relationships, and revenue streams of a company; how customer needs are met and how value is created” (Santos-Silva, 2021, p. 97)—that have supported local journalism for years are under tension as profits, advertising and readership are in decline (Nielsen, 2015). Big platforms such as Google, and Meta offer advertisers more possibilities to reach their target audiences. Besides, the fragmented and dispersed audiences have an impact on local media and indicate that this field is passing through a challenging period in its financial sustainability (Gulyas &

Baines, 2020). With all these challenges, all media outlets must adapt to keep journalism relevant.

Before addressing local media business models, it is relevant to do a brief overview of business models in journalism. Santos-Silva (2021) explained the five revenue models that have been used: the paying model in which the user pays for the content (a model used by the British newspaper *The Times*); the advertising model, supported by advertising, which is the most used model in print media; the freemium model or the metered paywall with free and paid content or with free access to a restricted number of articles (*The New York Times* is one of the media that uses this model); the membership model gives free access to articles but offers benefits in exchange for paid subscriptions (*The Guardian* opts for this scheme); and the non-profit model, which is a trend in new media; in this last model, crowdfunding plays an important role. Besides, selling apps, data and other products and services, merchandising, coffee shops, events and micropayments are forms of revenue that go beyond the editorial basis.

Regarding local media, Hess and Waller (2017) divide the funding models into two categories: the top-down and the bottom-up approaches. Regarding the former, they argue that advertising is the major source of revenue in print and digital formats so the cuts to this funding have significant effects on profitability. They also mention the role of paywalls, which are “digital mechanism that separates free content from paid content on a website” (Chiou & Tucker, 2013, p. 62). This management of access that restricts some editorial content can have consequences other than increasing the profits of media companies. Hess and Waller (2017) mention several studies that show a decrease in website visits when paywalls are active, or they do not contribute to newsrooms achieving sustainability. One of the reasons pointed to by Felle (2016) that there is not much adherence to this method is because of the market dimension. He states that “regional and local newspapers have little or no prospect of introducing successful paywall models. Economies of scale mean their potential audiences are too small to monetize via digital advertising” (Inform, 2016). Also, in the top-down category, Hess and Waller (2017) mention social media to distribute media content and to target specific audiences or readers. However, the advantage of social media to reach a significant dimension of the public is making businesses move their advertising from local newspapers to social media, such as Facebook. The researchers advise smaller media outlets to use social media as a tool to “redirect traffic from Facebook to their websites as often as possible”

(p. 169). The scholars also mention as a top-down approach, government subsidies and fundings. These can take the form of license fee funding to public broadcasting services, support for paid print, or support for online media organizations. Cost cuts through the centralization of production and distribution news services are also top-down strategies.

Regarding the bottom-up approach, Hess and Waller (2017) refer to the role of audiences which is now more active, since anyone can gather, produce, and distribute content (user-generated content in the online space). They also mention citizen journalism that local media use as these companies take advantage of volunteer work to create more content. Crowdsourcing is also a bottom-up strategy, as it is an aggregation of information gathered by volunteers to help newsrooms manage great amounts of information for investigative reports. Newsrooms can also use crowdfunding, which is a way to ask audiences for money and it can take the form of small donations, or they can benefit from philanthropic funds. This perspective of audience-focused and audience contributions to financially model of local newsrooms is shared by Hansen et al. (2018). In a study about opportunities for finding new business models for local journalism, the researchers highlighted the importance of local newspapers being open to and working in fundraising for specific projects, sponsorships, and memberships strategies.

Radcliffe and Ali (2017) address seven ways that local newsrooms use to diversify income sources. Applying the subscriptions and single-copy sales structure and updating to paywalls and digital subscriptions, local media outlets are trying to generate revenue. Organizing events are another opportunity to engage with readers and are a chance for “sponsorship, ticket sales, and other income streams” (p. 36). Creating new projects based on their editorial knowledge and building apps and websites for small and medium-sized organizations are a solution that some newspapers are pursuing. Newsletters that cover specific topics and have advertisements are also a path followed by local media organizations. Some of them make use of and capitalize on obituaries by charging for their publication. Lastly, the researchers refer to foundations, as they are often the only way to get support for specific stories or projects.

Reader and Hatcher (2020) argue that probably the most sustainable business model for local media outlets is a varied approach: “some mixture of government funding, citizen memberships, sponsored content, philanthropic investment, NGO grants, and/or ‘Robin Hood’ profit-shifting schemes” (p. 210).

## **Chapter 2: Audience Needs and Engagement**

### **2.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory**

Ruggiero (2000) delineated the evolution of Uses and Gratifications Theory, which is considered a shift in media studies as it focuses on what people do with media, rather than media effects. In the 1950s and 1960s, media studies started to focus on media use and consumption patterns and had the audience as an object of study rather than the media itself. Later, in the 1970s, Katz et al. (1973) studied the different needs and motivations of why people consume and engage with media content and the types of content that satisfy their social and psychological needs, and presented Uses and Gratifications Theory (U&G). Considering that different people use the same media for different reasons, the researchers asserted that this approach is related with the

(1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations from (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones (Katz et al., 1973, p. 510).

This research takes into consideration five assumptions: the audience is active and selects what to consume, the media competes with other sources of need satisfaction, people are aware of their reasons and choices and can articulate them and evaluate them. Regarding the first assumption, that people are active and have goals in consuming media, McQuail et al. (1972, as cited in Ruggiero, 2000) put these goals into four categories: diversion (escape from problems and emotional release), personal relationships (replace companionship), personal identity, and surveillance.

Katz et al. (1973) argued that media, whether the content or the medium, has a functional purpose: “to match one’s wits against others, to get information and advice for daily living, to provide a framework for one’s day, to prepare oneself culturally for the demands of upward mobility, or to be reassured about the dignity and usefulness of one’s role” (Katz et al., 1973, p. 509). Rather than focusing on what media does to people or what people do with media, U&G emphasizes the active, goal-directed nature of audience behavior and the diverse range of motives that can underlie it. Besides, this theory asserts that people choose a certain media or content because they expect to see their needs fulfilled. By meeting their needs, “together media use or other behaviors produce gratification (or nongratification) that has an impact on the individual or society, thereby starting the process anew” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 6). The main purpose of this approach “is

to explain the psychological needs that shape why people use the media and that motivate them to engage in certain media-use behaviors for gratifications that fulfill those intrinsic needs” (Ko et al., 2005, p. 58). Rubin (1994 as cited in Severin & Tankard, 1997, p. 293) “has argued that audience activity—the deliberate choice by users of media content in order to satisfy their needs—is the core concept of the uses and gratifications approach.”

Herzog (1942, as cited in Dolan et al., 2016) applied the concept of gratifications to “specific types or dimensions of satisfaction reported by audience members of daytime radio programs” (p. 262). There is a distinction between gratifications sought and received. The former refers to the variety of motivations and expectations for consuming the media, and the latter is about the actual gratifications and benefits of consuming media and having needs fulfilled.

McQuail et al. (1972) conducted research in 1964 about the British election and schematized the four following categories concerning the reasons people watch political programs: (1) diversion-escape from routine and problems; emotional release, (2) personal relationships social utility; substitute of the media for companionship, (3) personal identity or individual psychology-value reinforcement or reassurance; self-understanding; reality exploration and (4) surveillance. Later, Katz et al. (1973) reorganized McQuail et al.’s categories into five basic groups of needs, specifically cognitive needs (acquiring information, knowledge, and understanding); affective needs (emotion, pleasure, feelings); personal integrative needs (credibility, stability, and status—these can be both cognitive and affective); social integrative needs (interacting with family and friends); and tension release needs (escape and diversion).

In 1976, Dependency Theory of DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach was introduced, and it is seen as an extension of U&G research. Dependency Theory “posits that media influence is determined by the interrelations between the media, its audience, and society” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 7). The theory states that people develop a “dependency on the media to satisfy a variety of their needs, which can range from a need for information on a political candidate’s policy positions (to help make a voting decision) to a need for relaxation and entertainment” (Lin, 2014).

The U&G approach has attracted some criticism, and Ruggiero (2000) summarized the early critics: it was pointed out that the theory relies on self-reports, it did not consider the social origin and context of the reasons to consume media, and it was very uncritical

of the “possible dysfunction both for self and society of certain kinds of audience satisfaction” (p. 5). Besides, it was noted that the approach was too vague, imprecise, and confused (see Elliott, 1974; Lometti et al., 1977; Swanson, 1977). The idea of people being active is also contested. Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) studied television viewing and one of their conclusions was that some respondents watch television in a passive way, by relaxing and not paying much attention.

## **2.2 Audience needs and the User Needs Model**

Schröder (2019) does not mention public’s news needs, but he delved into what people really want from the news and why they engage with news media. He took as a starting point that the data that digital media have on the most read, most commented, and most shared stories is not enough to understand the factors influencing public decision-making on news engagement and the reasons behind these choices, and the impact of news in their lives. In his words, his work is “a counterpoint to both popular and academic concerns around news decisions guided by social media metrics, such as lists of the most liked, shared, or commented articles” (p. 7). He conducted a qualitative analysis of personal news repertoires of 24 Oxford’ participants to measure audience’s preferences. The main findings show that “relevance is the key concept for explaining the decisions they make in a high-choice media environment” (p. 5). Schröder argues that “people are likely to engage with news they find relevant as long as circumstances permit” and “what makes it relevant or not is decided on an intuitive basis” (p. 12). He mentions “personal relevance” as “an indispensable gatekeeper of engagement with a news story” which “includes above all potential impact on one’s own life and family” (p. 13). He also identifies five factors that influence and determine news relevance: “news story topic”, “proximity”, “sociability”, “previous knowledge” and “brand” (p. 16). In essence,

relevance is the paramount driver of news consumption. People find those stories most relevant that affect their personal lives, as they impinge on members of their family, the place where they work, their leisure activities, and their local community (p. 5).

He developed a model of news relevance in which he drew four profiles of news interests the “news content repertoires” (p. 18). The first one is “people with political and civic interest in news” (p. 17) that ranges from local affairs, environment to education, “people with a social-humanitarian interest in news” which “are characterized by a distinctive political and civic interest” (p. 18), “people with a cultural interest in news” (p. 20) and “people who seek (political) depth stories” which “interest in democratically important

topics, from a politically neutral... or partisan... stance, goes together with a broad interest in general news” (p. 22). He concluded that this work enabled researchers

to detect how relevance works for news audiences – what news stories people really want to read – in a manner that complexifies our understanding of people’s patterned engagement with news content. The key finding is that audience news preferences are (also) driven by civic interests (p. 26).

As regards the needs of the public, Radcliffe and Ali (2017) define the information needs of communities as “forms of information that are necessary for citizens and community members to live safe and healthy lives; have full access to educational, employment, and business opportunities; and to fully participate in the civic and democratic lives of their communities should they choose” (p. 14). In an identical way, Friedland et al. (2012) define these needs as information “necessary for citizens and community members to live safe and healthy lives; have full access to educational, employment, and business opportunities; and to fully participate in the civic and democratic lives of their communities should they choose” (p. 5). These needs fit into eight categories of essential information: emergencies and safety, education, transportation, environment and planning, civic life, and political life and public health.

Starting with the premise that different people need different things from news, Dmitry Shishkin, a former BBC World Service editor, developed a model that breaks down why people consume news into six reasons. This idea of a gap between media production and what audiences want to consume was already explored by Robert Park, who stated that “the things which most of us would like to publish are not the things that most of us want to read” (as cited in Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013, p. 2). This mismatch was illustrated in Boczkowski and Mitchelstein’s research. The researchers conducted an analysis of more than 50,000 stories published on 20 news sites in seven countries and concluded that “although the news organizations disseminate news about politics, international, and economic matters, the stories that garner the most attention from the public tend to be about sports, crime, entertainment, and weather” (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013, p. 2).

Shishkin’s scheme arises from the need for newsrooms to diversify their content to keep their audiences engaged and interested. This model, as Shishkin explains in an interview, came up at the time that BBC World Service was trying to keep itself relevant in a context where it was a secondary source of information.

The user needs model was developed by the audience research team of the BBC World Service when we were looking for new ways to connect with our audiences. Being a secondary news source in most countries, it was challenging for the BBC digital team to connect with users by just doing ‘agenda’ news, or ‘hard’ news, as we say. Most readers would have seen the headlines of the day already, before seeing BBC content. There was little need to fill the website with those same headlines; a new approach was needed (Woudstra, 2020a)

This new approach is based on new storytelling forms. This model

covers six different editorial treatments of a news event. By focusing on other details of the story besides the cold, hard facts, the story can offer more value to the reader, which has been proven on many occasions in various settings” (Kuntze, 2022).

These six categories sum up the fact that people want content that is fact-driven, context-driven, emotion-driven, and action-driven.

The first category is “Update me”, which refers to the articles that state facts and give details about them by answering the traditional questions of “who, when, where, what.” These articles can take the form of a news story, summary, writeup, live blog, or news video. For instance, these pieces can be about an election, and they could include information about the winner and the loser, percentages, votes, and background. In 2016, the BBC World Service (Actionable User Needs, 2021) conducted a study of its news coverage and concluded that at one station, 70% of content fell into “Update me”, yet represented only 7% of traffic. This was a signal that there were more types of content that could be explored and consequently attract more audience, though this is the category that receives the most attention from newsrooms.

The “Keep me on trend” articles are related to what is happening on social media and online trends. According to this model, people read or watch the news to be a part of or contribute to the conversation about this topic and to “understand why a certain hashtag is trending on social media” (Woudstra & ten Teije, 2020). These pieces require social news gathering or investigation and they include embedded social media posts. With the same example of an election, these articles can be a collection of social media reactions to an election result. These types of articles tend to be shared more often and generate engagement, which creates a loop.

Regarding the “Give me perspective” articles, they usually include insights from experts and analysts and deconstruct a complex topic. With the aim to help readers form an opinion, these

articles have multiple perspectives. They can take the form of an interview, profile piece, analysis, opinion piece, or background article. About an election, a “Give me perspective” article can explain why a region has voted for a particular candidate or has a higher percentage of abstention, giving social and economic context from these places, for example.

The “Educate me” articles are content that helps audiences to learn more about a topic or event that seems complex. Usually, these articles take the form of Q&A, listicles, “how to” videos, or explanatory animations. These articles can, for example, explain how the voting process works or how a housing policy works. For this reason, these types of articles can be a source of information for a long time. Besides, articles from this category “have the highest amount of ‘reading time’—and people consuming these articles also tend to be the most the most loyal visitors” (Woudstra, 2020d).

“Inspire me” items are usually articles about people who achieve significant goals or articles that offer solutions or positive changes to specific events. Usually, these articles are long form and include several personal details. In the election example, an “Inspire me” article could be the story of an empowering election monitor or a campaigner.

Lastly, “Divert me” articles have the goal of giving readers a good feeling by telling them something funny or entertaining. These stories are the opposite of hard news and aim to take audience’s or readers’ minds off the often-negative flow of news. Usually, these articles are video formats, photograph galleries, or a surprising short story. In an election, a “Divert me” article could be about a candidate’s personal life, or remarkable funny things that happened during campaigns and debates.

Doing a five-year comparison between 2016 and 2021 of before and after the implementation of the User Needs Model, Shishkin used data to show what had changed. Taking BBC Russian as a sample, it was noted that the company made a 60% reduction in content and the metrics per story and per need grew. They also published fewer “Update me” articles and more “Keep me on trend”, “Give me perspective” and “Educate me” articles, which led to a growth of page views per article by 84%, 250% and 277%, respectively (Fabrique, n.d.-b).

After this change, more newsrooms adopted this model. The Atlantic’s newsroom was one of them, albeit with some differences (Goligoski, 2022). Calling it “readers’ & listeners’ needs”, the audience research team conducted an analysis through surveys and interviews to understand why people seek out the magazine. They concluded readers and

listeners choose The Atlantic for five reasons. The first was to give them clarity and context, which means to clarify questions they may have about a certain topic or event. The second was to help them discover new ideas by turning people into unexpected fields of interest; to look for new perspectives, even the ones which they do not agree was one of the reasons that people read the magazine. Besides, “let me take a meaningful break” was also a reason for readers to read the magazine as they sought out a break from the usual way of explaining complex issues. Lastly, The Atlantic is read by many who want to discover new writers.

Smartcocto (2023) has provided a list of the media outlets that have adopted this model—some kept the original classification and others incorporated brand-specific needs. The Wall Street Journal implemented this model, keeping the categories “Update me”, “Educate me”, and “Inspire me”, and adding three new classifications: “connect me”, “give me an edge”, and “entertain me.” Vogue magazine just used four classifications and excluded the “Keep me on trend” and “Give me perspective” and added the “Make me feel responsible.” TRT, an international news service provider in English based in Istanbul, used the six categories created by Shishkin, changing the “Keep me on trend” to “FOMO”, “Give me perspective” to “Challenge me”, and “Divert me” to “Move me.” The Conversation, an academic news website, adopted Shishkin’s model, using “Educate me”, “Keep me on trend”, and “Give me perspective”, and introducing the “Motivate me” one. Finally, Omroep Brabant, the regional television and radio broadcaster of the Dutch Public Broadcasting, used the original categories, but put two categories together: “Give me perspective” and “Educate me.” Vox (USA) created its own categories: surface something hidden, bring clarity, explore solutions, connect micro to macro, and dissect complicated issues. The New York Times also came up with its own classifications: “catch me up”, “explain this to me”, “connect me with ideas”, “make me think”, “enrich my life”, “make my life easier” and “improve my life.” Vox (Global) used “Update me”, “Educate me”, “Divert me”, “Inspire me”, and added “Make me feel responsible.” The South China Morning Post kept the original ones “Update me”, “Educate me”, “Inspire me”, and added “Help me along.”

Since the model has been widely implemented, there was a need to update it, and a new version was launched in March 2023. According to Shishkin et al. (2023), “it maps all the most important user needs on the four axes of ‘know—understand—feel—do’, but it goes further” (p. 2). They have reframed one of the needs and added two more. The drivers are

still the same (context, fact, emotion, and action) as the four axes that sum up the essential needs are: know something, understand something, feel something, and do something. With the evolution of the model, the authors acknowledged that news consumers access news to do something. Bearing this in mind, the “help me” need was added to the model. This action-driven need emerges amid large amounts of information online that can cause readers to get lost. These types of articles should start from a question and aim to help the daily lives of news consumers with practical tips. Writing helpful and updated information can be a good solution to have articles that remain useful over time. Two examples of “help me” articles given by Shishkin et al. (2023) were about information for saving money, such as “UK inflation rate calculator: how much are price rising for you?” or adopting sustainable habits, such as “how to calculate the optimum number of solar panels for your house.” These types of articles can be a way for local and regional media to become more prominent, as they can be the most valuable sources when it comes to local guides, restaurants, or festival tips.

Some stories create empathy or belonging, and it is a need that people have when it comes to media. Audiences want to feel connected around ideas and this is why the need “Connect me” was added to User Needs Model 2. It does not fulfill the “help me” need, since it is social and not personal and it is more about constructive journalism, as it gives space to initiatives that are trying to solve some problems. This type of article can arise from questions like “What can people do about this problem?”, “How are people connected to the topic?” or “What kind of ideas help to create a movement?” and be followed by an “Inspire me” article, as they can lead to action and change by readers (Shishkin et al., 2023).

The need to be always aware of what is going on and to know the trending topics was what led to have the category “Keep me on trend.” However, according to Shishkin et al. (2023) this was too vague, so the need was reformulated to “keep me engaged”, as it was assumed that the news consumer was not passive, but rather active and willing to participate in conversations about the issues beyond social media. This renamed category includes the broader context online and offline, while the previous need just considered the social media scope.

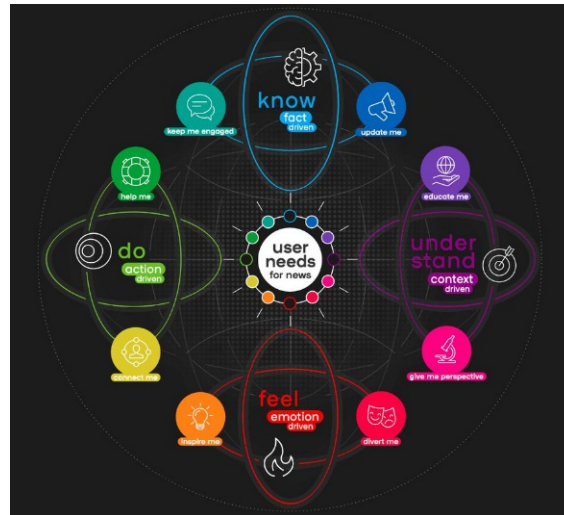


Figure 2: User Needs Model 2.0

As the model has been used by many newsrooms, this second version has considered and added brand specificities since media outlets can be consumed for many reasons and it is important that newsrooms know what readers expect from them so they can serve them better. Although brands can have their own particularities, they all fit in the eight needs, as they are related with the main axes.

In the Whitepaper (Shishkin et al., 2023) that is a guide for the new model, there is some data that shows how the option to have more articles related to certain needs can impact engagement and traffic. Studying seven brands that adopted the model, the report shows, for example, that an online business and economics media, has a low engagement score in “Update me” and “Divert me” articles, while there is a demand and a high score for “Give me perspective” and “Educate me” articles. In another national newspaper, there’s low traffic to “Update me” articles, but a great demand and low production of “help me” content. A similar trend is seen in another outlet that published more than half “Update me” articles, but account for only 8.5% of article reads. In a regional broadcaster in the Netherlands the same happens—about 60% of the content fits in “Update me” but only 9% are read.

Although the change of strategy in several newsrooms with the adoption of this model is having positive results, this approach comes with challenges. One of them, presented by Shishkin et al. (2023), is the organization of the newsroom workflow, as it needs to be consistent and effective in implementing the model and sometimes it can be hard to identify the needs and apply them to each article. Once identified, it is important to tag

them and to keep in mind what works and what are the needs the specific audience wants to be addressed. As Shishkin et al. (2023) said, “if newsroom members understand their company’s user needs key components well enough, then nine times out of ten they will assign the correct user need to a story” (p. 71).

However, it can be tricky to have only one need associated with an article because many times a story can fulfill more needs or have elements of different categories. To overcome this obstacle, the way to measure an article can be labeling it under different classifications. For instance, an article can be characterized as 30% contextual, 60% emotional, and 10% functional. Still in the field of categorization, it is essential that newsrooms agree in the interpretation of each need as what educates one can inspire another. Once there is agreement, it should be a balance in publication as the “Update me” articles should be published less, and newsrooms should decide the hierarchy and prioritization of the other needs.

Taking everything into consideration, it is expected that in the future more newsrooms will adopt this model and look for audiences with a closer eye to have more valuable and useful content, that explains complex events, inspires people, and gives them less content that is just keeping them updated. This is a trend that Newman (2023) hopes to see as in his 2023 predictions he wrote that “this year we can expect more examples of user needs models driving new product development, not just content commissioning” (p. 34) which can be a strategy to fight news avoidance.

Although Shishkin in the User Needs Model does not make any reference to U&G, there are some similarities, as both address the different reasons people consume news, and they refer to knowledge, connection, and diversion needs. The categories organized by McQuail et al. (1972) concerned the needs of connection and knowledge. Similarly, Katz et al. (1973) categorized the needs regarding the feelings and knowledge, which corresponds to the needs’ axes of the User Needs Model.

In some studies, it is possible to find more comparisons. Berelson (1949) studied the impact of a newspaper strike and asked readers why they read the newspaper. The responses included because it was an accepted social behavior, to be more informed about the world, to escape from reality and be entertained, and to get help in their lives by having useful information. In a similar study, Herzog (1942) investigated reasons for listening to radio soap operas and participants justified it with the need to be distracted from their

## **2.3 Audience Engagement**

### **2.3.1 Defining Engagement and Engagement practices**

With a lot of content being offered, an increasing news avoidance (De Bruin et al. (2021), and Skovsgaard & Andersen (2020)) and the need to attract different publics, newsrooms need to adopt strategies to keep journalism relevant and to connect with their audiences to, therefore, have a better relationship with the public (Ferrucci et al., 2020). One of these strategies can be practicing news or audience engagement by inviting the public to participate in news production process or to react to news content (Lawrence et al., 2018). Before the term “news engagement” appeared, other concepts were mentioned, and all have them alluded to the idea of audience participation in the news process. Lewis et al. (2014) use “reciprocal journalism” and describe it as “a process of audiences participating with journalists and with each other in creating news and building community around news” (p. 231). Singer et al. (2011) brings the term “participatory journalism” to the discussion and referred to “the idea of collaborative and collective—not simply parallel—action” as “people inside and outside the newsroom are engaged in communicating not only to, but also with, one another” (p. 2). Lee and Tandoc Jr (2017) state that digital news have enhance “participatory journalism, which highlights the collaborative and collective nature of news production facilitated by users’ active engagement with news via comment sections, discussion forums, recommendation systems, social media, and personal blogs” (p. 436).

Regarding scholars’ definitions of audience engagement, they all converge in the idea of exchange and interaction between audiences and journalists (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019), attention, and participation of the audience (Napoli et al., 2018). Ksiazek et al. (2014) definition can be a suitable explanation that includes the key ideas of this concept as they argue that engagement is a “broad phenomenon that describes all sorts of user attention and involvement with media” (p. 504). In a similar perspective, Malthouse, and Peck’s view (2011) of engagement is that this concept is “the collection of experiences that readers, viewers, or visitors have with a media brand” (p. 4).

Mersey et al. (2010) define engagement “as the collective experiences that readers or viewers have with a media brand”, experiences being “the thoughts and beliefs the readers

have about how it fits into their lives” (p. 40). The researchers put an emphasis on audiences’ experiences saying that media outlets play a role in audiences lives and provide different experiences as the public consumes a certain media brand to have a specific experience and these can be utilitarian, hedonic (it is related with enjoyable feelings, value, and gratifications) and social-psychological. The authors gave examples for these three types of experiences. Analyzing the travel section of *The New York Times*, some content can lead readers to think they provide useful information about destinations, others can offer pleasure and enjoyment, lastly, “a narrative story about some travel adventure could relax readers and ‘transport’ them to a different place and not provide utilitarian ‘how-to’ detail” (p. 42).

People who read a publication to relax and unwind have a timeout experience. Those who read it for things to talk about are having a social-facilitation experience. In general, an experience is a set of thoughts and beliefs that readers have about how a publication fits into their lives. Engagement is thus a qualitative, holistic feeling of readers, which we cannot measure directly; readers know about the presence of engagement via thoughts and beliefs, which we can measure more readily (Mersey et al., 2010, p. 41).

With this line of thought, “publications need not deliver the same experiences to be engaging” (p. 41) and “to the extent that readers have experiences that lead to engagement, they should have higher levels of readership” (p. 42).

Ørmen J’s (2015) conceptualization of audience engagement is that “engagement captures both how people devote attention to and interact with something” (p. 25). Besides, according to Ørmen, audience engagement with news requires understanding “how people attend to information about issues of public concern, become aware of the intricacies of these issues, and address each other about such issues” (p. 18).

According to Broersma (2019), audience engagement refers to consumers’ cognitive, emotional, or affective interactions with media. Engagement indicates an active role from the users, and it is expected they act upon what they read, listen, and watch and “this could result in them consuming more news, interacting with online content, buying certain products, or building upon the provided information to take political action in their personal life” (p. 1). Engagement is a requirement for the processes of meaning-making, creating value, and connecting to public discourses. Broersma (2019) also approaches the engagement from the newsrooms’ perspectives since the advertisement decline, less paid circulation and low revenues led media producers to be dependent on their consumers. It

is acknowledged that “listening to audiences, communicating with them, taking their needs into account, and collaborating with them” (p. 4) are the ways to come closer to their public. Taking this into account, editors and journalists rely on results and content performance metrics to seek engagement – a strategy the author considers “minimalist.” Besides, the scholar considers the audiences feedback, a “middle way” approach. Lastly, Broersma refers to the “maximalist” method in which journalists and news consumers participate together in the news process. In his words, “this would raise the level of engagement and thus create better and more valuable relationships with audiences which can also be commodified.”

Nelson (2021) describes engagement as the “marketing practices of newsrooms, the media consumption patterns of audiences” (p. 2356). The author makes a distinction between “reception-oriented” and “production-oriented” engagement. The former gives attention on the audience’s reception of news by understanding how many time people spend time consuming the news and if they have shared it on social media. Reception-oriented audience engagement is the way people give importance to the news, and it can be measured in terms of shares of news in social media and time spent consuming the news. The latter refers to news production and it evaluates the production process, its participants, and how many voices the story gave voice to. In other words, this engagement can be the ways media professionals give attention to their audience and it can be assessed by analyzing the audience participation in the news production.

Ha et al. (2018) describe news engagement as “the involvement in news content for either personal or social purposes, which can be indicated by the effort made in obtaining and utilizing the news content among the audience” (p. 720). These authors developed an engagement hierarchy in which they suggest four levels of news engagement. The first level measure is the amount of time people consume news; the second level is the search for news in different media sources based on Media Dependency Theory. This theory introduced by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur in 1976 states that “individuals tend to develop a dependency on the media to satisfy a variety of their needs” (Lin, 2014). In other words, the more dependency on the media to satisfy these needs, the more importance the media will have for that person. In the hierarchy model of Ha et al. (2018), the second level refers to the diversify in the use of news sources, which means a higher level of engagement. The third level regards the selection, process, and recommendation of news to other people which takes place as the oral exchange of news, in traditional media, or

the sharing and forwarding of news content, in an online environment. Lastly, the fourth level is the involvement in news production, in which news consumers can be seen as citizen journalists. Still in the perspective of public participation, Wenzel (2020) defines engaged journalism as “a range of practices that aim to build relationships between journalists and the public and involve the public in the process of cocreating journalism” (p. 4).

As mentioned before, digital media can be associated with more news participation from the public. However, data from the Digital News Report 2023 (2023) does not show that there is a clear relationship as it has demonstrated that there is a “rise of the passive consumer”, those who only consume the news. It states that “the proportion of what we call active participators (those who post or comment on news online) has declined by 11 points since 2018. Over the same period, we have seen the rise of passive consumers... from 42% to 47%” (p. 36). Besides, the report notes that

Smaller proportions of the public are participating with news actively (22% via posting and commenting), while growing numbers either participate reactively (31% via reading, liking, or sharing) or simply do not participate with news at all (47%). Online and offline participation is not an either/or proposition, as talking face to face about news (while also falling over time) even in an increasingly digital media environment remains, on average, the most widely reported form of news participation, at 32% (p. 36).

Analyzing those “who engage with online news actively (by posting or commenting), reactively (by reading, liking, or sharing), and passively (by consuming news but not participating at all)”, the report shows “the rise of the passive news consumer (up 5 percentage points, on average, from 42% in 2018 to 47% in 2023) and reactive participator (up 6pp, from 25% to 31%) alongside a substantial fall in active participation (down 11pp, from 33% to 22%)” (p. 36).

Lu and Luqiu (2019) argue that news engagement can be online and offline and they developed the indicator “overall news engagement, encompassing news engagement behaviors both online and offline, to indicate the capacity and maturation level of news engagement among individuals” (p. 2149). Regarding interactivity, they differentiate between user-user and user-content news engagement regarding Ksiazek et al.’s (2014) classification. The former defines user-user as “the interaction among two or more users revolving around news content, such as sharing and discussing news with friends both online and offline” and the latter is related with “interaction with news content, including users’ reaction to news stories, such as rating, liking and commenting, as well as users’

citizen journalism practices, ranging from providing news sources and witness accounts to writing news analysis and attending news-related campaigns” (Lu & Luqiu, 2019, p. 2149). In addition, the authors discuss that general access to the internet could have an impact on news engagement offline as “rich news and information carried on the Internet provides the very material for face-to-face discussion, a type of offline user-user news engagement” and “wide penetration of the Internet could create a mobilizing structure to recruit people for offline user-content news engagement, such as news groups and campaigns” (p. 2152).

Regarding the interactions between newsrooms and public, Lee and Tandoc Jr (2017) argue that in the past journalist paid little attention public’ feedback, even though some of their audiences’ reactions could led to new stories and different perspectives. However, more recently with digital media and the consequences of audiences decreasing, “journalists are increasingly turning to these new forms of audience feedback to understand better and cater to what audiences want” (p. 438). They explain that a “recurring explanation for journalists’ accommodation of audience feedback online is the pressing need to survive amid the financial strain that many news organizations are facing” (p. 442).

Nevertheless, offline engagement can have an impact to as in a comparative study of two American public media newsrooms, Belair-Gagnon et al. (2019) found that public media

journalists privilege offline modes of engagement (e.g., listening sessions and partnerships with local organizations) in hopes of building trust and strengthening ties with their community, more so than digital modes of engagement (e.g., social media) that are more directly tied to news publishing (p. 558).

In the NiemanLab Predictions Journalism for 2022, Zirulnick (2021) makes a distinction between audience engagement, which “is focused on building habit, loyalty, and audience revenue” and community engagement, which refers to “understanding voids in the local ecosystem and positioning the newsroom to help fill those” (para. 1).

Regarding engagement practices, in 2018, the News Integrity Initiative and Impact Architects conducted a survey about engaged journalism practices to shed light on what engaged journalism meant to different newsrooms. The answers had a common idea: “[Engaged journalism is] making editorial decisions based [on] a variety of community

input rather than the knowledge of the editorial team” (McKinley, 2022). So, they defined it as

an inclusive practice that prioritizes the information needs and wants of the community members it serves, creates collaborative space for the audience in all aspects of the journalistic process, and is dedicated to building and preserving trusting relationships between journalists and the public (Green-Barber, 2018).

Based on this, the researchers collected the main practices of engaged journalism which include the following categories: “listening to audiences, collaborating with audiences, connecting with communities, and audiences interacting with newsrooms through content.” These practices can take the form of stories and/or investigations that are driven by contributions from the audiences, collaboration with community organizations, collaboration with other journalism organizations and creative storytelling. This investigation also sought to understand what motivates journalism practitioners to practice engaged journalism and it concluded that they were “gaining audience trust, meeting community information needs, and revenue generation through memberships, subscriptions, and/or philanthropic support” (McKinley, 2022). Concerning the success assessment, the survey respondents said that audience reach it is not an indicator because it does not answer the questions about how engaged journalism strategies “are meeting communities’ information needs, building trust-based relationships, and contributing to organizational sustainability” (Green-Barber, 2018).

This survey also provided some insight concerning task distribution in the newsroom, as two-thirds of the survey respondents said that there was someone specific working in engagement. However, an inferior number of participants “think that the majority of the editorial staff at their organizations would say their company practices engaged journalism” which indicated that the practices were not generalized. These findings showed that “engagement work is often divorced from the everyday workflows and systems of editorial teams” (Green-Barber, 2018).

More recently, in 2021, the same institutions conducted a follow-up survey to analyze the evolution of engaged journalism and some changes are noteworthy. They claimed that there is evidence that this practice is becoming more common, though it is not dominant in newsrooms. Some respondents shared how engaged journalism was being implemented in their newsrooms: 62% said that engaged journalism had been practiced for more than three years; 54% mentioned that engaged journalism was the main part of

the whole team's job, and 31% said that engaged journalism was frequently practiced and most people do it very often in their newsrooms. The main practices of engagement are still the same, and regarding the motivations to practice engagement, these were mainly the same, which "suggests that producing useful journalism and creating relationships with audiences was and continues to be a major motivating factor for practicing engaged journalism" (McKinley, 2022, para. 7). There are also no modifications in measuring the success of engagement as the respondents continue to rely on audience reach as "analytics from Google and social media sites, membership numbers, and subscription numbers" were seen as used success indicators for engaged journalism" (McKinley, 2022). Despite all this data, the findings should be interpreted carefully, because the sample size was small, as the first survey received 37 responses, and the 2021 survey received 64 responses.

News industry is searching for new ideas that can appeal to a more dispersed and segmented audience (Batsell, 2015). Gillmor (2006, as quoted in Moore & Hatcher, 2019) defends that having a diversity of voices in media can lead to more engaged audiences. Sill (2011) wrote that if news organizations want their public to be engaged should follow what the researcher called "action steps for news people" which are based on the idea that the public is the driving force of any media. Some recommendations include asking public for content. She explains that "the key concept is recognizing that news coverage is about subject matter, issues and people's passions—not about the publication. 'Send us your photos' is an invitation to participate in a publication" (p. 40). She also advises to "make engagement part of the journalism, not just the marketing" as

Journalists who answer questions at public events, in cross-media appearances, via social media or in reader exchanges are providing service and substance. Rather than just tweeting links and one way posts ("Here's our story, discuss amongst yourselves"), newspeople can appear as their professional selves in many parts of the community by going to physical and digital spaces where others gather. We can post comments or links (if they're truly useful) on other blogs or host live chats with local experts (and knowledgeable journalists) as guests. Newsrooms can convene events... or use their websites, broadcast programming or print pages to host community discussions (p. 39).

In a work examining the impact of a community storytelling initiative created to disrupt the ties between media outlets and their audiences, Moore and Hatcher (2019) explain that this project "brought together journalists, storytellers, artists, playwrights, scientists, and activists who all expressed excitement at seeing an issue through a different lens" (p. 759). They found that participants were inspired "to step outside of their own areas of

interest and expertise, exposing them to new ideas and forming new relationships” (p. 759) and “an intentional disruption may create an opportunity for news media to experiment with both participatory and collaborative media practices” and it can be an opportunity “to help a community convene a conversation” (p. 758). They also concluded that

Projects designed to draw on shared knowledge and enthusiasm on a topic of local interest can inspire creative approaches to problem-solving. That shared interest allows for storytellers and stakeholder groups to explore collaborative opportunities that can produce unexpected results and partnerships across areas of expertise (p. 759).

Beyond interaction with the community, the type of content can lead to more engagement. In a BBC article, Radcliffe (2015) listed ten reasons why hyperlocal media can be a contribution for United Kingdom journalism – which can be applied worldwide – and argues that “human interest stories” can be one of the steps to local media gain more importance and engagement. According with the research, these stories will “generate more cross-sector partnerships, with hyperlocal stories being published—with attribution and cross-linking—by larger media players.”

Research finds that the use of individual examples – the human-interest stories or frame –has the potential to attract and engage the audience. Neuman et al. (1992) define human interest stories or frames as “describing individuals and groups who are likely to be affected by an issue” (as cited in Figenschou & Thorbjørnsrud, p. 785, 2015). Figenschou et al. (2023) assert that “human-interest narratives are journalistic tools to captivate and engage the audience, influence public opinion and bring revenue to media organizations” (p. 3) and they have the potential to engage the public, although they recognized that “regarding how human-interest stories influence audience attitudes, conclusions have been more mixed” (p. 6) depends on various elements.

Semetko and Valkenburg’s (2000) state that a human-interest article or angle “refers to an effort to personalize the news, dramatize or ‘emotionalize’ the news, in order to capture and retain audience interest” (p. 96). They argue that human interest stories can include “a human face on the issue or problem, sometimes employing personal vignettes or other characteristics (verbal, visual, or both) that may generate strong feelings on the part of the viewer or reader” (p. 101). Abbott (2019) defines a human-interest story as

people sharing their unique stories in an emotional and interesting way. Whether it be overcoming adversity, raising awareness, opening up about a condition or experience to help educate others; tales of exceptional human

achievement, acts of bravery, unsung heroes, victims, funny stories – the focus is always on the person and their experience (para 4).

According to the research “the benefit of telling a story like this is so the reader can relate to it in an emotional way” and it “allows readers to engage with the content, to feel something” (para 6). Figenschou and Thorbjørnsrud (2015) assert that “to offer a human face and a personal narrative can be a strategy to attract audience attention, evoke the public’s empathy, and provoke a political response” (p. 784). Taking a war context as a case study, Konstantinidou (2008) found that images of victims and visual human-interest framing create an emotional bond, generate empathy for suffering, and enable viewers to experience a faraway conflict firsthand.

Although research shows various perspectives on the real impact of human-interest stories, there are some studies that show a positive relationship. Hong (2013) studied the impact of human-interest framing in television of medical advances and found support for the idea that “framing of medical news stories can increase audiences’ involvement in those stories and facilitate their positive perception of medical advances” (p. 452). Brantner et al. (2011) conducted a study about the impact of visual framing and news story analyses on emotional reactions in Gaza Conflict of 2009 and concluded that “visual human-interest framing elicited stronger emotional responses, higher values concerning the communicative quality, and had an impact on the perceived actor representation” (p. 53). Parrott et al. (2019) investigated how immigrants and refugees are portrayed visually in American media and found that “participants who saw the human interest-framed” content “were significantly likely to experience more positive emotions and fewer negative emotions than were those participants who saw the political-framed” content (p. 689).

In the Digital News Report from 2023 there are some insights about positive news and news engagement for the citizens that avoid news. It stated that for news avoiders “there are no simple solutions to what a multifaceted story of disconnection and low engagement in a high-choice digital environment is” (p. 24). Although the report does not mention human interest frame, data shows that “positive” and “solutions” news are the types of news avoiders are more interested in and “less sensationalist, less negative, and more explanatory approaches might help, especially with those who have low interest in news” (p. 24). It is acknowledged that media often delivers “more negative and emotionally triggering news”, and it can leave “many people empty and less satisfied, which may be

undermining our connection with and trust in the news” (p. 24). Nevertheless, “it is not clear that audiences think much about publisher definitions of terms such as positive or solutions journalism” (p. 24). Taking this into account, it is preferable to “interpret this as an oft-stated desire for the news to be a bit less depressing and a bit easier to understand” (p. 24).

As an example of how more positive news can have changes in the mood of those who consume it, Buchanan and Sandstrom (2023), assessed whether news stories about people's goodness may counteract the negative effects of narratives about people's immorality. They found that “participants exposed to others’ immorality and then others’ kindness suffered from less aversive changes to their mood, experienced greater levels of elevation and were more inclined to believe in the goodness of others, than participants exposed only to others’ immorality” (p. 1). Thus, the scholars argue that “there is merit in adopting a balanced journalistic perspective that does not solely highlight the worst of humanity in a bid to captivate readers” as it is “powerful” show “others’ kindness in the aftermath of others’ immorality” and they recommend “news outlets to adopt this format where possible” (p. 22). Yet they recommend caution in interpreting these data as more research is necessary to see whether these are long-term effects.

### **2.3.2. Increasing engagement through Solutions Journalism**

There are more strategies to get people’s attention and to keep them engaged with the news. Solutions Journalism is one approach that focuses on successful responses to social problems and shows what is working; a solutions article explores the efforts being done to address significant problems. This concept appeared in 1998, when Benesch (as quoted in McIntyre & Lough, 2021) noted in a *Columbia Journalism Review* article the growth of stories of solutions, and she described this practice as “reporting on efforts that seem to succeed at solving particular social problems” (p. 1558). Citizens rely on the media to know what is going on and usually media portraits only the problems, “but, for audiences to have a more complete picture of global events, audiences also need the news media to report on valid responses to these serious problems” (Dahmen et al., 2021, p. 272).

There is a common confusion among journalists between Solutions Journalism and Constructive Journalism, and it is believed it “a geographical preference, where those in Europe lean toward the word ‘constructive’ and those in the U.S. prefer ‘solutions’, likely because these were the terms chosen by the respective organizations leading the efforts to promote the approaches” (Lough & McIntyre, 2021, p. 3). However, literature has

defined different scopes for these concepts. Constructive journalism is seen as a broader term and solutions journalism is one of the techniques of constructive reporting. McIntyre and Gyldensted (2018) define constructive journalism as a “form of journalism that involves applying positive psychology techniques to news processes and production in an effort to create productive and engaging coverage, while holding true to journalism’s core function” (p. 20). They assert that solutions journalism or applying a solution-oriented perspective when reporting on society’s issues, is a technique with roots in positive psychology.

According to the Solutions Journalism Network, an independent non-profit organization created in 2013, solutions journalism is “rigorous, compelling coverage of responses to social problems” (n.d.) and “by covering solutions to local and global challenges, journalists can equip people in all communities with the knowledge to envision and build a more equitable and sustainable world” (n.d.) A solutions journalism story should include, according to the organization, a response to a social problem and how has worked, evidence of results, broader insight about how a solution works, and limitations of that solution.

Loizzo et al. (2017) describe this practice as “journalism focused on reporting solutions-based stories encouraging readers and viewers to engage in making positive change” (p. 394). The idea of solutions journalism being a call to action is also shared by Thier (2016), who argued that this journalism “reframes traditional journalistic approaches to reporting on social problems as it seeks to engage readers, offer a blueprint for change, and alter the tone of public discourse” (p. 330). By highlighting the positive changes, this way of reporting can help people see the potential for creating positive change, engage with their communities, and build trust in journalism since “one reason the public might disengage with news is because stories are often framed to highlight conflict” (McIntyre & Lough, 2021, p. 1559). These authors studied the conceptualization and implementation of solutions journalism through interviews with journalists acquainted with this methodology and concluded that the professionals aim to lead readers to make a change. One of the participants said that “it is a type of journalism that gives the readers or the listeners, the audience, tools and information so that they feel like they can be part of the solution to a common problem” (p. 1567). This view being shared by most participants, McIntyre and Lough (2021) concluded that

the purpose of solutions journalism is to push an issue forward or cause change that betters society, and reporters should do that by providing mobilizing information, or information that news audiences can act on, in their stories (p. 1569).

The fact that reading stories that give insight into positive transformations can change a reader's mood and lead to action is reflected in the Solutions Journalism Network (n.d.) toolkit which states that,

stories that better reflect the whole of a community – its problems and the responses to those problems – can create a platform for more constructive discussion, which in turn can lead to corrective action and innovation. In this way, there's an organic and powerful interplay between solutions reporting and audience and community engagement (n.p.).

Research suggests that telling stories with solutions makes people more interested, engaged, and motivated to act on problems. Powers and Curry (2019) collected several studies that show the impact of solutions journalism stories and noted that the behaviors and beliefs of those who read them changed, as those readers “feel more optimistic about the subject matter”, “feel that they and society are more able to contribute to solutions”, “feel more energized and connected to their community”, and “have greater desire to seek more information on the topic” (p. 2241). This demand for solutions from the public is shown in Stroud et al. (2023) work about the media landscape in Philadelphia and the scholars found that “people felt that there weren't local media organizations that offer solutions to problems facing my community” (p. 3).

Curry and Hammonds (2014) carried out a study about the power of this practice for the Center for Media Engagement. In the experiment participants were presented with two types of articles about social problems: one just focused on the problem and the other one presented the problem but added responses and solutions. The researchers found that people that read the solution story were much more likely than the other readers to: (1) say the article seemed different from typical news articles; (2) think they learned more about the topic in the article; (3) say they felt better informed about the topic; (4) say the article piqued their interest in the topic; (5) think they could contribute to a solution to the problem; (6) think there are practical ways to deal with the problem; (7) say the article influenced their opinion about the topic; and (8) say they felt inspired after reading the story. Solutions readers were also more likely than non-solutions readers to express a willingness to become engaged in working toward a solution to the issue and to give money to an organization working on that issue. Beyond knowledge or action, the study also showed that these readers engaged with the media where the articles appeared as they

were more likely to “share the article on social media, read more articles by the unnamed author of the article they read, read more article in the unnamed newspaper in which the article appeared, and read more articles about the particular issue” (Curry & Hammonds, 2014, p. 3).

However, in a follow-up study, Curry et al. (2016) found that “although solutions journalism can bring laudable benefits to readers and newsrooms, it is not a panacea for audience engagement” (p. 1). The results indicate that readers of solutions articles spent more time on the page than readers of nonsolutions articles, and that readers of solutions articles also had higher levels of self-efficacy and optimism because they believed that, if there were practical solutions to the problems, they have the power to help. This study, however, differs from the previous one's findings in that readers of solutions articles left the website more frequently than readers of non-solutions articles did. The authors explained that “why solutions readers linger longer, yet leave more frequently, is unknown and worthy of future investigation” (p. 5). Nevertheless, “what is clear, however, is that readers of solutions stories leave the news site feeling more optimistic and more likely to believe that there are potential solutions to important social problems” (p. 5). They provide reasons why the reader may have left the page, such as looking for information about organizations that address social problems. However, they acknowledge that more research is required to determine where readers navigate to after leaving articles.

McIntyre (2019) carried out a research project on the results of solutions journalism. She concluded that readers were less pessimistic and had more positive attitudes regarding the news article and solution to the problem when there were solutions stated in the news as opposed to when there were none or ineffectual ones. Notwithstanding, “reading about an effective solution did not, however, impact on readers’ behavioral intentions or actual behaviors. This suggests that solution-based journalism might mitigate some harmful effects of negative, conflict-based news, but might not inspire action” (p. 16). Consuming a narrative about solutions had no influence on the actual actions—such as signing a petition or donating—or on the behavioral intentions to interact with the story on social media. McIntyre provides several justifications: (1) solutions stories may have the power to influence readers' thoughts and feelings but not enough to have an impact on behavior, (2) behaviors require more effort than thoughts and feelings but are also more visible (e.g., sharing a story on social media, signing a petition, etc.) and can thus be a threat to

one's public identity, (3) people who read a story that provided an effective solution might have believed that they did not need to change their intents or behaviors in order to fix the issue because it had already been fixed, therefore they did not need to be concerned about helping to find a solution.

## **Chapter 3: Descriptive account of the Internship**

### **3.1 Mensagem de Lisboa characterization**

*Mensagem de Lisboa* was launched in 2021 and is a local and community newspaper in Lisbon. The director is journalist Catarina Carvalho, and the team is made up of eight journalists. This newspaper appeared with the intention of covering the Lisbon area, since, although many media outlets are based in the city, they have a national focus, which means the city itself lacks news coverage. *Mensagem de Lisboa* (from now on called *Mensagem*) is a “communication platform focused on community journalism, people-oriented, which gives voice and tells the stories that are not usually told, listening to the people of the city and bringing to the country a new journalism, of solutions and constructive”, according to the editorial position.

*Mensagem* “will be made with the contribution of all those who make Lisbon their city, listening to them, counting on their help to tell their stories, searching for, and understanding the past, reporting on the longings. Being part of that community”, says the statement. Besides, this project aims to give new life to local journalism, following an international trend, and making Lisbon the center of the conversation. When the newspaper was launched, Carvalho, the director, said that “local journalism is going through a strange phase all over the world. It is one of the most threatened by social platforms and networks, by the loss of advertising, but it is what has led it to a renaissance, especially in the United States and Northern Europe” (*Mensagem*, 2021).

The newspaper has its “symbolic” office at *A Brasileira do Chiado*, which is a gathering point and a space for sharing ideas; two goals of *Mensagem*. In the presentation text, the director quoted Damien Radcliffe, professor of local journalism in the University of Oregon, who mentioned that “the ideals of coffee culture are the feeling of community, space for people to share and exchange ideas. All of that matters more and more to people, even on the horizon of an illness” (*Mensagem*, 2021). Carvalho also cited Jenkins to show that newspapers using cafés as a meeting point is a trend gaining new life in Germany and France, but with roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The researcher said that this indicates “a growing interest among journalists to engage with audiences more productively, ensuring that their coverage speaks to issues that matter to them. All of this, while laborious, and requiring effort, helps build trust” (*Mensagem*, 2021).

*Mensagem* is financed by the business group O Valor do Tempo, which manages A Brasileira, the Comur canned food stores in Lisbon (which includes the sub-brands O

Mundo Fantástico da Sardinha Portuguesa and Fábrica das Enguias), and the Casa Portuguesa do Pastel de Bacalhau, among other businesses of Portuguese traditional products.

For the launch, the project had two supporters: the Facebook Journalism Project, with a digital marketing grant, and participation, along with more than 60 organizations from around the world, in the Newstack project, a WordPress website platform developed with Google News Initiative for local news organizations. In addition, it has partnerships with the Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas (FCSH) from Universidade Nova de Lisboa, the Lisbon School of Design, and Nova IMS.

The editorial approach of Mensagem is to tell the stories of Lisbon, prioritizing housing, transportation, mobility, and social topics. Beyond the text format, Mensagem has video series for Instagram about housing and transportation in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon.

Mensagem has a strong proximity to the community since it often organizes meetings with neighbors where it listens to the community, the problems that residents want to see solved, and the issues they want to see reported. In addition, the newspaper has a journalism project in Criollo, in partnership with a Guinean journalist, which aims to reach a community in the city that is usually on the margins, either because they speak a different language, although they understand Portuguese, but also because, due to socioeconomic conditions, they are neglected by the media.

Aiming to reach different communities living in the city, Mensagem has a page in English since 2022 with translated articles and it sends a newsletter for the foreign community every fifteen days. With the same intention, the newspaper has a partnership with the People of Lisbon project, which consists of short interviews with foreign people in the city. There is also a partnership with the Brazilian newspaper, Folha de São Paulo, in which the two newspapers exchange articles.

With the intention to reach all communities that live in Lisbon and to promote media literacy, Mensagem has a project in a public-supported neighborhood in which they help young people to distinguish fake news as well as teach them how to report what is going on in their neighborhood. Regarding the activities of proximity with the community, the newspaper organizes events and workshops regarding the topics it covers, being urban gardens or thematic walks by the city.

One paradigmatic example of the inclusive and diversified editorial content of Mensagem was the fact that for several months it published chronicles written by a homeless person who recounted the process of being homeless, the experience of having lived on the street, and what it was like to have a home again. These chronicles written in the first person show how the newspaper managed to give a voice to those who live in Lisbon but do not have a roof over their heads. Beyond these chronicles, the newspaper accepts contributions of readers, whether articles, reports, or chronicles. This proximity to readers is also present in the weekly newsletter.

As Mensagem is a digital project, its presence on social media is quite strong. The newspaper tells stories through Instagram so that the reader is not required to visit the website. With a great focus on photography and a combination of part of the text from the site's articles, each publication on Instagram allows the reader to perfectly understand the story, even if they do not read it in its totality. The newspaper also uses the *Reels* tool, which is a way to reach a broader audience through videos. With a storytelling approach, all videos aim to tell a story, being an essential narrative of the story. With these two strategies, the newspaper has reached almost 30,000 followers on Instagram. The newspaper also uses TikTok videos to reach different target audiences and it has almost 3,000 followers. On Facebook, Mensagem shares links to articles on the website. Regarding the website, there are about 100,000 visitors per month.

Regarding offline forms of engagement, Mensagem participated in Festival Iminente, an urban art festival, in which it was a media partner and had its team work live at the festival, aside from doing interviews and debates. Also, within the festival scope, the newspaper usually participates in the traditional Lisbon party (Santos Populares) in Mouraria neighborhood and shared music about Lisbon.

### **3.2 Internship Description**

The internship for the master's degree was at the newspaper *Mensagem de Lisboa*. The internship ran from October 1, 2022, to January 30, 2023. The option to intern at this newspaper was based on the growing interest I have in local journalism. Having a closer relationship with the community, seeing the impact of reporting, and telling stories that are from the daily routine of a community are the reasons why I consider local journalism a valuable, useful, and important form of journalism.

As I had already been working with the newspaper since March 2022, the internship began with a lot of familiarity with the way the newspaper works, the back-office system, and the whole newspaper team. The internship was completed by remote work and every Monday there was an editorial meeting in the newsroom with the whole team for distribution of work assignments and discussion of issues that the newspaper should cover. In addition to this and the reporting done in the field, all the work was done at home. Each day of the internship was different, and I had freedom to set my own schedule if I completed my work.

Since I had worked with the newspaper, some of the functions that I previously had continued during the internship. In November 2022, *Mensagem de Lisboa* launched a website with content in English and I was the project manager of this initiative. Regarding the preparation for the launch, I collected the selected Portuguese editorial content for the website as well as gathered a database of foreign contacts to create an audience for a future newsletter. After the website was online, I was responsible for choosing and curating the website with the editorial content translated from Portuguese to English. I established a partnership with a translator to have between two and four articles per week to publish on the English page. Besides, I was the person in charge of writing the newsletter for the foreign community every fifteen days. Moreover, I often had meetings with the partners of this project (*New Locals Organization*) to define the track to follow, in which it was decided to produce articles with profiles of foreigners living in Lisbon as well as events specific to this community. These last ideas started to take form during the internship, but they were not finished due to other work I had.

Beyond the tasks regarding the English page, I also wrote news articles and reports. All this work was suggested by me in the editorial meetings or requested by the director or editor. As I had some experience in journalism because I had completed other internships and worked with the newspaper, I did my work independently. Regarding the reporting routines, all the articles required going to the place, so I did it always accompanied by the photographer. The writing of articles was done at home, as well as uploading the article in the newspaper's back office. In this step, I would put the article in the backoffice with the associated photographs, links, categorizations, and appropriate tags. After this, the editor would review the article and contact me if changes were needed. I wrote ten articles during the internship, although not all of them were published during the internship period. At the time of writing, all articles have been published (see Appendix A). The fact

that the newspaper is not mostly about current affairs means the pace of publication is slower than a hard news media, which explains the number of articles I produced.

On balance, my internship was extremely positive since I was able to continue writing about Lisbon and I was able to contribute to the English site. This contribution was very enriching since it made me think about the specific needs of an audience and define the editorial content that could meet their needs regarding knowledge about the city. In addition, writing the newsletter was a very important task that showed me how important it is for a newsroom to have several suitable products consistently available for its different readers.

Participation in all the editorial meetings was extremely valuable, since it allowed me to gain skills and critical thinking about the best way to proceed in reporting. The fact that the newsroom is a small team with journalists of diverse ages was also a very positive aspect that allowed me to see different perspectives on journalism, welcoming the experience and listening to the voices of younger journalists who brought new ideas that contribute to the growth of the newspaper. In addition, all the debates that took place in the meetings about the various issues of the city were an excellent contribution to my growth as a journalist. The writing of articles and contact with sources about the city allowed me to gain a deep knowledge about Lisbon that will be extremely useful if I pursue a career in local journalism.

It must be said that the fact that I already knew the organization well was a great advantage. On the one hand, the team already knew me and therefore gave me important tasks, such as managing the project in English, including the newsletter. On the other hand, I was always free to propose articles, as well as give my opinion in every meeting, something that was encouraged.

Although the experience was extremely enriching, the fact that it was done from home was a major disadvantage. The newspaper was launched during the pandemic and therefore its modus operandi has always been remote, but I think that this is not necessary anymore. Journalistic work is very much based on the newsroom environment and therefore Mensagem would benefit if the whole team worked in the same place and discussed the various directions to be followed or tasks to be done daily. Furthermore, for someone who is taking their first steps in this media field, working alone from home makes it more difficult, because questions arise that sometimes a phone call would not

solve or that make the work take longer. Nevertheless, the experience was extremely beneficial and significantly helped my career and personal development.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Relevance, Research Question and Objectives**

During the internship, it was understood that one of the great concerns of Mensagem was to understand why readers read its content, if the news stories met what the readers wanted to read, if it was what they expected the newspaper to publish, and if it was what they really needed. It was often discussed at editorial meetings which path the newspaper should take: should they publish more curious stories about the history of Lisbon, more stories that inspire readers, more content about urbanism?

Taking these questions and concerns into consideration, it is relevant to identify and to describe the needs and expectations of Mensagem's readers, their engagement and to analyze how Mensagem is working to reach its audience. Mensagem has never been studied academically, it is a recent online news project and the topics studied are of the team's interest. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: "How does Mensagem reach its readers and how do readers engage with Mensagem?"

To further clarify the purpose of this study, its objectives can be stated as follows:

1. Understand what strategies Mensagem uses to reach readers.
2. Assess if Mensagem content and activities meet the needs and expectations of its readers.
3. Understand why readers consume Mensagem's content.
4. Examine how readers engage with Mensagem.

### **4.2 Research Design**

To better understand the strategies Mensagem employs to connect and engage with its readers, as well as to examine why readers read the newspaper and how they engage with it, one needs to collect information from both sides: the news producers and the news receivers. Therefore, the current investigation employed a mixed methods approach divided into two parts: a reader survey and interviews with the director, editor, and social media manager of Mensagem. These data collection techniques occurred simultaneously.

#### **4.2.1 Survey**

To assess the engagement of Mensagem's readers and to understand if they see their news needs satisfied by the newspaper, an online survey was conducted, as this research technique provides a "quantitative description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a

population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2009, p. 145) which allows the researcher to generalize and make claims about the population universe under study. Wright (2006) summarized several advantages of using online surveys: they allow the researcher to reach to people who would be difficult to reach through other means, they enable access to a great number of participants in a short amount of time, they allow researchers to work on other tasks while the data is being collected, and they allow researchers to rapidly access the responses and conduct data analysis and interpretation.

As it is intended to achieve a high number of answers, the survey is an appropriate tool, as it enables the researcher “to quantify a multitude of data and therefore to carry out numerous correlation analyses” (Quivy et al., 2019, p. 257). As Glasow (2005) asserts, surveys “can also elicit information about attitudes that are otherwise difficult to measure using observational techniques” (p. 1). It was chosen to conduct an online survey as it is the most suitable technique to reach readers with online presence. This technique is “ideal for sending out a short questionnaire, charting the results or exporting them for analysis to a spreadsheet” (Nayak & Narayan, 2019, p. 33).

#### **4.2.2 Population and Sample**

Firstly, the population defined for this research was all readers who receive Mensagem’s newsletter. It was decided to survey the newsletter’s subscribers as they represent a close, reliable, and loyal way of following and reading Mensagem. Besides, sending the survey through the newsletter is an easier way to reach these readers.

Later, it was decided to post the survey in Mensagem’s Instagram to have more responses. The population size was 45,619 (15,019 newsletter subscribers and 30,600 Instagram followers).

The sample was the readers who receive the newsletter or follow Mensagem in social media and participated in the study by responding to the questionnaire. 272 participants were needed to take part in this study to achieve a confidence level of 90% and a margin of error of 5%. The survey was closed when 320 responses were received.

#### **4.2.3 Survey procedure**

The survey (see Appendix B) was created in Google Forms, and it was sent by email in the Mensagem newsletter, and the answers were gathered using the Google Forms platform. As the Mensagem team also wanted to do a survey of its readers, the structure

of the questionnaire was a combination of questions written by the editorial team and questions written by the researcher. At the beginning of the questionnaire, a short description of the study goal was written by the Mensagem team and at the end, the researcher's goal was written.

The structure of the survey was based on the goals of this research paper, to gather specific data to reach accurate conclusions to answer the research question. To assess how readers engage with the newspaper, they were first asked about their consumption patterns in terms of knowledge of Mensagem, how they access it, and about their memory regarding any of the newspaper's articles. In the first eight questions, knowledge, ways of access and memory were measured.

Questions 9 to 24 measured engagement in multiple ways: online, offline interactions with Mensagem, content participation and participation in events. Questions 40 and 41 were also about engagement but focused on the readers' donations. These questions were made based on the previous literature about engagement (Ksiazek et al., 2016; Lewis et al., 2014; Lu & Luqiu, 2019; Mersey et al., 2010; Singer et al., 2011).

Questions 25 to 31 were intended to understand the impact of Mensagem on the readers in terms of knowledge about the city and their neighborhood, the newspaper as a source of information about Lisbon, if they would recommend the newspaper to a friend, and if reading Mensagem has ever led the readers to do something. Question 43 also focused on impact by asking the participants to numerically assess the importance of Mensagem to be aware of what is going on in Lisbon.

From question 32 to 39, the User Needs Model (Shishkin et al., 2023) was adapted in eight statements with which the readers had to indicate agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale. The aim of these questions was to understand the needs of the readers and to see if Mensagem is meeting them. Question 42 was an open-ended question that asked for the readers' perspective of how Mensagem is contributing to community spirit in Lisbon.

In a study, it is important to understand some sociodemographic characteristics of the sample, so the variables included in this questionnaire were the following:

- age (17 or younger; 18-20; 21-29; 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, +70)

- Parish of residence (all parishes of the city of Lisbon or the option of being outside Lisbon)
- gender (female, male or other)
- Academic qualifications: Elementary School, Middle School, High School diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, PhD, and Technological/Professional Course.

The questionnaire had different response models: multiple choice, 5-point Likert scale, and open-ended questions. Although responses to open-ended questions are more difficult to analyze, they encourage more honest answers and are an opportunity for feedback (Singer & Couper, 2017), which were some of the goals of the survey as it was intended to get readers' insights. In the open-ended questions, the answers were organized into categories according to the repetition of a topic in each question to be more manageable to analyze.

To find any problems in the questionnaire and correct them as soon as possible, Walliman (2011) underlines the value of pre-testing the questionnaire as a screening tool. Thus, a pilot test was carried out after the survey was designed to detect possible errors or misinterpretations. The goal was to check the reliability of the procedure and determine if the sample correctly understood and responded to each question. It was checked by six volunteers and after examining the responses and suggestions, adjustments were made to the questions and the structure.

The survey was sent in the newsletter twice to guarantee a high response rate. It was first sent on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May, posted on Instagram on the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, sent again in the newsletter on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May, and it was closed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June.

#### **4.2.4. Ethical Considerations**

There may be concerns about the protection of respondents' privacy as well as the data and responses gathered. As a result, an informative note was included in the initial questionnaire describing the purpose and expected duration of it, the use of the questionnaire solely for academic and editorial purposes, a commitment to the protection of participants and their privacy, and the anonymity and confidentiality of the information shared.

#### **4.2.2 Semi structured Interviews**

To understand what strategies Mensagem applies to reach and engage with readers, three interviews were conducted, with the director, editor, and social media manager. These three professionals were selected because it was intended to have a full and detailed picture of: (1) the actions, projects and events in which Mensagem is involved (the offline strategies), (2) the editorial process from the beginning of the choice of the topic to address, the approach of the different topics, and the writing process, and (3) the online presence of the newspaper and its digital strategies.

In this part of the research was opted to employ qualitative methods as this technique offers an effective way of “produce in-depth and illustrative information in order to understand the various dimensions of the problem under analysis” (Queirós et al., 2017, p. 370). The goal was to have clear, accurate, and detailed information as well as professional perspectives about the path Mensagem has taken in its relationship with readers. To gather these insights, qualitative research was the most suitable method because this type of information can only be obtained using qualitative methods since it cannot be quantified.

Maxwell (2012) outlines five objectives that qualitative studies are particularly well-suited for: (1) understanding the significance experiences, beliefs and behaviors that participants take part in or undertake and these viewpoints, in his view, are a part of the reality that researcher are attempting to comprehend; (2) the focus of the qualitative studies is on the processes than on outcomes even though he emphasizes that a key strength of qualitative research is in understanding the processes that gave rise to these conclusions, (3) studying the procedure by which events happen, (4) flexibility as it enables the rearrangement of the focus of the research that lead to new discoveries, and (5) developing causal explanations. As research has shown (see Alshenqeeti, 2014, Maxwell, 2012; Queirós et al., 2017) this method is particularly useful in studying events, actions, meanings, contexts, values, and attitudes of participants which is the goal of this part of the research. Following this logic, it was decided to move towards qualitative research specifically semi-structured interviews. The decision to do interviews arises from the fact that this approach allows a “degree of depth and perfection of the elements of analysis” (Quivy et al., 2019, p. 263, author’s translation). There are three types of interviews: structured, unstructured, and semi structured (Lune & Berg, 2017), and it was

decided to employ semi-structured interviews. In this kind of interview, several questions are previously prepared, “but the interviewers are allowed freedom to digress; that is, the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared standardized questions” (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 69). Interviewers and interviewees can diverge from the script and elaborate, adding valuable insights, and thus deeper levels of reasoning may be explored (Quivy et al., 2019). As the authors explain, if the interviewees diverge too much, the script enables the researcher to change the focus of the interview to the topics intended to be addressed. As Lune and Berg (2017) explain sometimes the “subject gives an answer that indicates that there are unanticipated directions to go in” (p. 70).

By applying the concepts in the literature review and having in mind the research goals, a script (see Appendix D) was developed. The topics addressed were based on User Needs Model (Shishkin et al., 2023), ways of engagement (Ksiazek et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Mersey et al., 2010; Singer et al., 2011), online strategy and the relationship between Mensagem and readers.

As mentioned before, unexpected topics or different directions of the conversation not previously written emerged and added value to the research. The interviews (see Appendix E, F and G) took place on the 18<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of May. The interview with the director lasted 22 minutes, the interview with the editor lasted 36 minutes, and the interview with the social media manager was 42 minutes long. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese and the excerpts included in the “Results” and “Discussion” sections were translated to English.

#### **4.2.2 Coding and Categorization**

Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, it was necessary to code them, in other words, “to organize that text into data of a form that is useful to our research questions” (Lune & Berg, 2017, p. 90). To do a content analysis of the data, it is common to look for classes of items that have major similarities and contrasts in the data collected as a starting point. These categories might be developed inductively, appearing during the analysis of the data, or they can be based on relevant themes selected by the researcher to address the study objective. As Gibbs (2007, p. 38) explains “coding is a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it.”

Thematic coding was used, as it is a type of qualitative analysis in which sections of text or images are recorded or identified that are related by a common subject or idea, allowing researchers to classify the content into categories and therefore construct a framework (Gibbs, 2007). In this study, the categories defined to group the information and answer the research question emerged from the analysis of the interviews but were also the result of the collection of information from the literature review. To understand the points of convergence and divergence identified in the answers of the participants, and to identify trends, themes and subthemes were created. The data analysis started with the thematic categorization of the content. A theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). Subthemes were also created to comprehend specific insights of the interviewees as “thematic hierarchies provide a visual tool with which to articulate how themes are subordinate or superordinate to each other” (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 809).

The categories and subcategories established to organize the data are summarized in the table below, but it is necessary to explain the decision-making process for each of them. It was decided to have a category for editorial choices as they reflect the newspaper’s strategy to reach the readers with their content and topic decisions, with their topic approach by applying the Solutions Journalism practice (Solutions Journalism Network, n.d.), for instance.

The option to create a stand-alone category for “Reader’s Needs” was aimed at understanding whether the newspaper is applying the User Needs Model (Shishkin et al., 2023) and is aware of what readers expect the newspaper to do or publish. This category includes text excerpts about the type of content or the topic approach, but they are clearly in the sequence or in the context of the needs of Mensagem’s public. Although this category could fit in “Editorial Choices” as they are connected, it was intended to understand Mensagem’s perception of the audience’s needs separately.

As an online digital newspaper, Mensagem has a strong online presence, and it is relevant to understand how it engages with its audience by interacting with the readers and to assess its online strategy. These subcategories were created based on the engagement’s definitions developed previously. Although they have differences, most of them converge in the idea of readers’ participation in the news process and in the way the media interacts with its (Ksiazek et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2014; Mersey et al., 2010; Singer et al., 2011).

Although Mensagem is an online newspaper, it develops offline activities and therefore a category was created to evaluate offline engagement and offline relationship with readers (Lu & Luqiu, 2019).

Lastly, a category to assess “community” in different dimensions was created. This theme may seem broad, but its subtopics can narrow its scope as it was created a label for the sense of community (Lauterer, 2006) and to include the expectations the team has that their work will have some impact on the community (Abernathy, 2014), and a category for the business model. This last label could have been a main category, but it was decided to include it in “community” as the context in which the business model was mentioned was in its relationship with the community.

MAIN THEME	DEFINITION	SUB THEME	DEFINITION
EDITORIAL CHOICES	explaining the process and discussion of the editorial content and strategy	Content Decisions	explaining the criteria/strategy of topic selection
		Topic Approaches	explaining the process of how approach a certain topic or not, explaining the use of solutions journalism
READERS' NEEDS	referencing to what readers could need or expect from Mensagem (it can refer to topics but in reader's context)	-	-
OFFLINE ENGAGEMENT	discussing the offline relationship with readers and its involvement with Mensagem initiatives, relationship with readers, organizing or presence in the city's activities, partnerships with companies, neighborhood meetings and how they measure offline engagement	-	-
ONLINE ENGAGEMENT	discussing the relationship with the readers and its involvement with Mensagem initiatives, engagement measurement	Readers participation	participation and content from readers (sending/asking for suggestions email/via social media)
		Engagement Measurement	ways of measuring online engagement
		Online Strategy	online interaction with readers and content communication in different platforms
COMMUNITY	discussing the scope of community, sense of community, different communities, the desire of the team having an impact and the relationship between donate to Mensagem and feeling part of the community	Community Spirit and Impact	how Mensagem is contributing to Lisbon's community spirit and the desire of Mensagem having an impact on the community
		Business Model	impact of the business model on the editorial strategy
		Different communities	expressing desire of reaching more Lisbon's communities

### **4.2.3 Researcher's Role**

As my collaboration with Mensagem started before the internship and continued after its end, I have a close relationship with the team which could lead to bias in the analysis of the data collected. However, throughout this study, a posture of impartiality and objectivity was adopted.

## **Chapter 5: Results**

### **5.1. Survey Results**

The data set of 320 responses was checked for invalid responses and all responses were considered valid. In case of any doubt, the answers given in the open-ended questions were checked to determine whether the response data should be excluded from the sample.

As this survey was created with Mensagem's team, some questions were not mandatory. To work around this issue, in the questions where there were not 320 responses, the blank answers were named "No Answer." In this way, uniformity was achieved throughout the entire collection of responses. In addition, as it is common with open-ended questions, all the answers were different. However, in some (which will be properly identified) there was repetition of answers, which led to the creation of categories when processing and filtering the data. In multiple choice questions, respondents were always given the option to select "Other." Again, if there was sufficient repetition of answers, a new category was created. Otherwise, "Other" was considered a category.

#### **5.1.1 Mensagem's consumption**

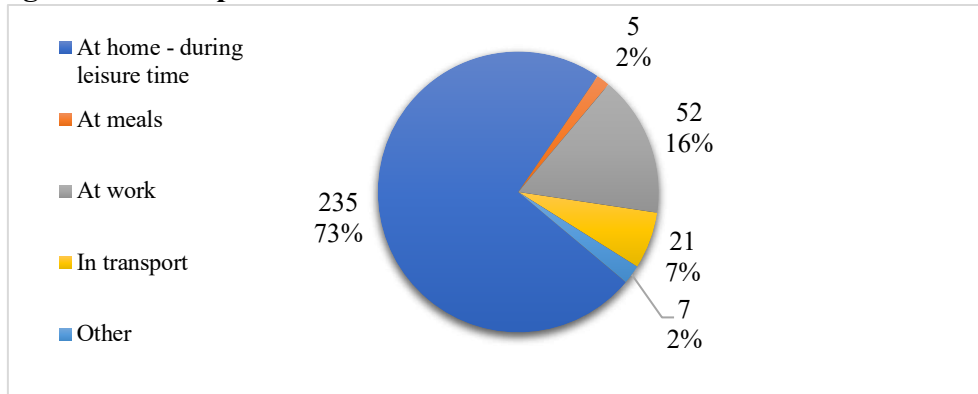
##### **Mensagem's discovery**

In the first question (How did you come across Mensagem?), the goal was to learn how readers came across the newspaper. Just over half (52%) of readers got in touch with Mensagem through social media, 20% heard about the project through the media, 18% through friends, and 10% of the readers learned about the project in several different ways. In this question, since there was "other" as an option, 32 different answers were given. In the data analysis, these answers were grouped together, and they appear in the same label.

##### **Mensagem's access**

To understand how content reaches people, the readers were asked how they usually access it. More than half of the readers surveyed (61%) get to it through the newsletter, while 15% access it through social media, 13% reach Mensagem in various ways, 6% through the website, 3% through search engines and 2% in other ways.

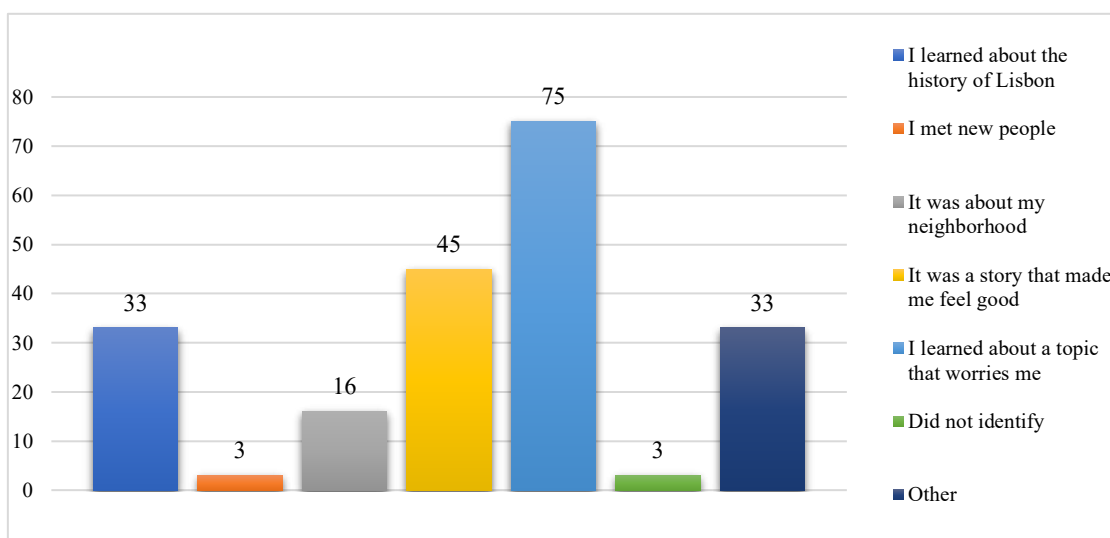
### Mensagem's consumption habits



To understand the readers' consumption habits, they were asked what they usually do when they are reading the newspaper. 73% are at home in leisure time, 16% are at work, 7% are in transport, 2% are doing other things and the same percentage of the participants read Mensagem during meals.

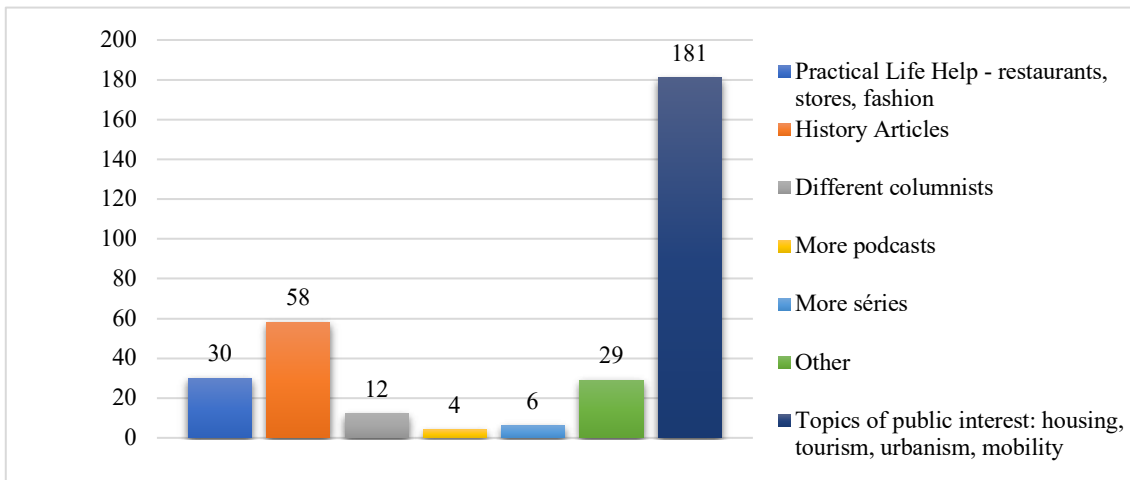
### Memory regarding Mensagem's article

The question about which articles or stories come to mind when they think about Mensagem, was not mandatory and it was open ended. In processing the data, the question was split into two. When asked whether any article or story comes to mind, 23% people did not answer, 12% do not remember any article, but 65% (208) does. Of the 208 people who said they remembered an article and mentioned one, 36% said they remembered it because they learned about an issue that worries them, 22% said that article made them feel good, 16% said they learned about the city's history, the same percentage answered different reasons, 8% said it was an article about their neighborhood, 1% said that through that article they met new people, and 3 people did not identify any reason.



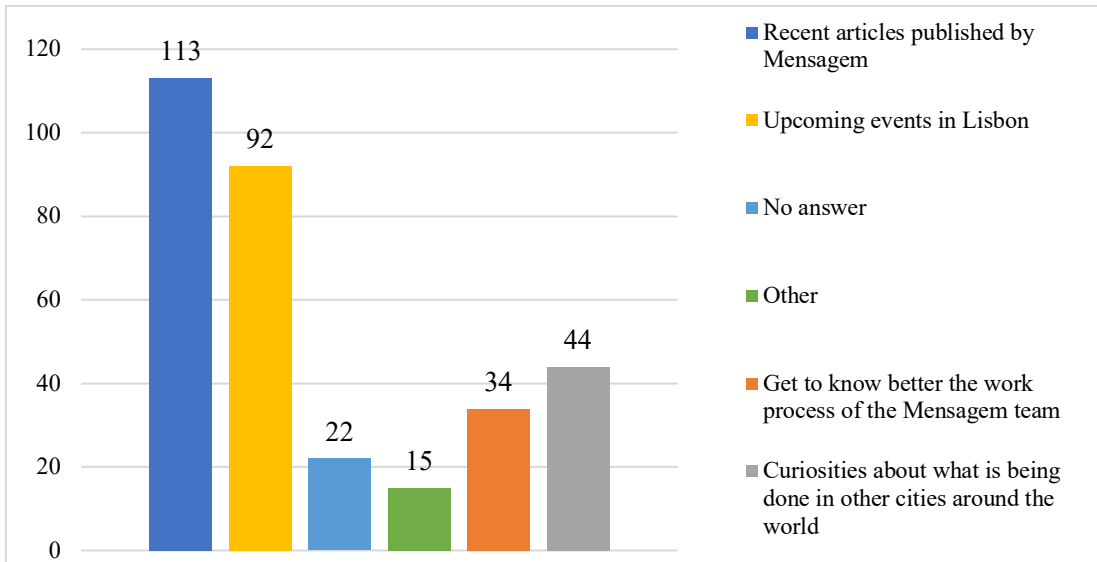
### Content topic

This question (What would you like Mensagem to bring more of?) was meant to identify what readers would like to consume or read more about in Mensagem or what topics they would like the newspaper to cover more. 57% prefer topics about housing, tourism, urbanism, and mobility, 18% respondents would like to read more about History, 9% (30) would prefer more topics about Restaurants, Stores and Fashion, 9% (29) would like other different topics, 4% would be interested in different columnists, 2% would like to watch more Mensagem’s series, and 1% would appreciate to have more Mensagem’s podcasts to listen to.



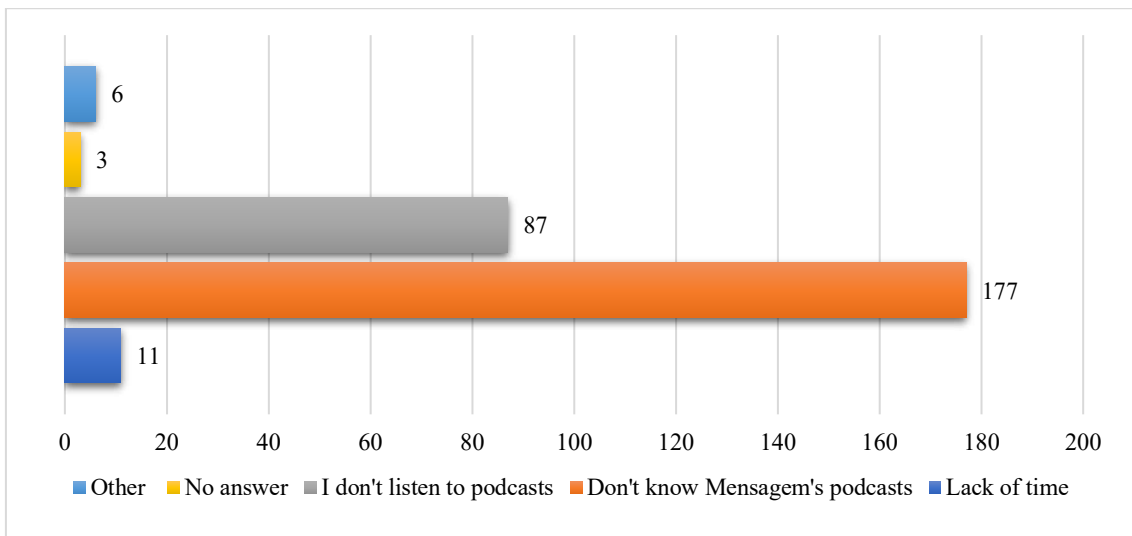
### Mensagem’s newsletter

Although the survey was sent by newsletter, many people may receive the newsletter despite not subscribing to it, and since the survey was also later posted on social media, the participants were asked whether they subscribe to and receive the newsletter. 80% said they do, while 20% said they do not. Readers were also asked what kind of content they would like to see in the newsletter. 35% would like to see more Mensagem’s articles, 29% would like to know about upcoming events in Lisbon, 14% would like to know about events in other cities around the world, 11% would like to know Mensagem’s work process, 7% did not answer, and 5% had different answers.



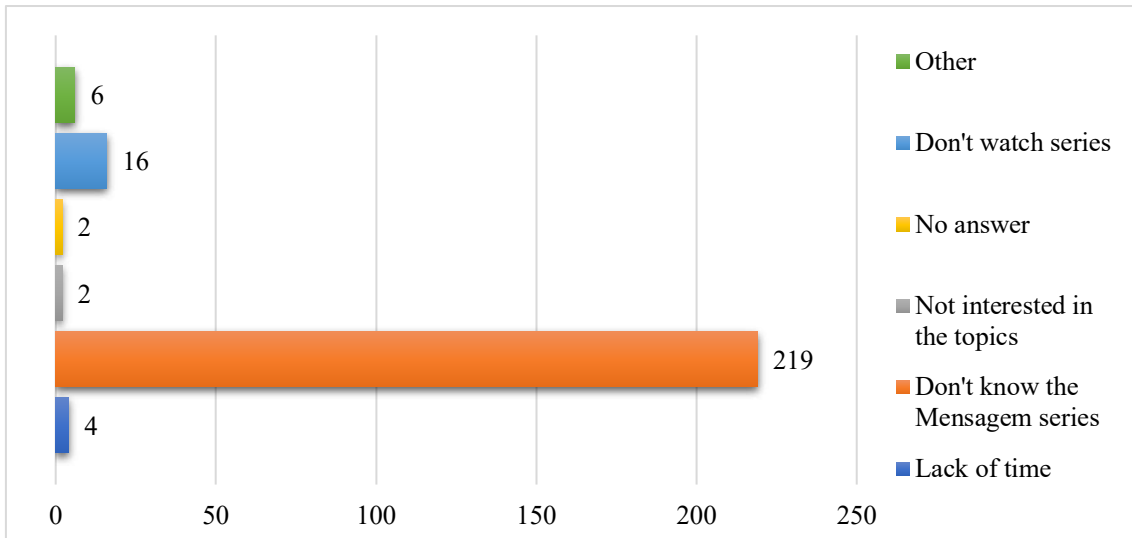
### Mensagem's series and podcasts

When asked whether they listen to the newspaper's podcasts, 89% (284) said they do not usually listen, while 11% (36) said they do.



This was not a mandatory question. Of those who do not listen (284), 62% said it is because they do not know about Mensagem's podcasts, 31% said they do not usually listen to podcasts, 4% said they do not have time, 2% answer "other", and 1% did not respond to this question.

When asked whether they watch the newspaper's series, 78% said they do not usually watch, while 22% said they do.

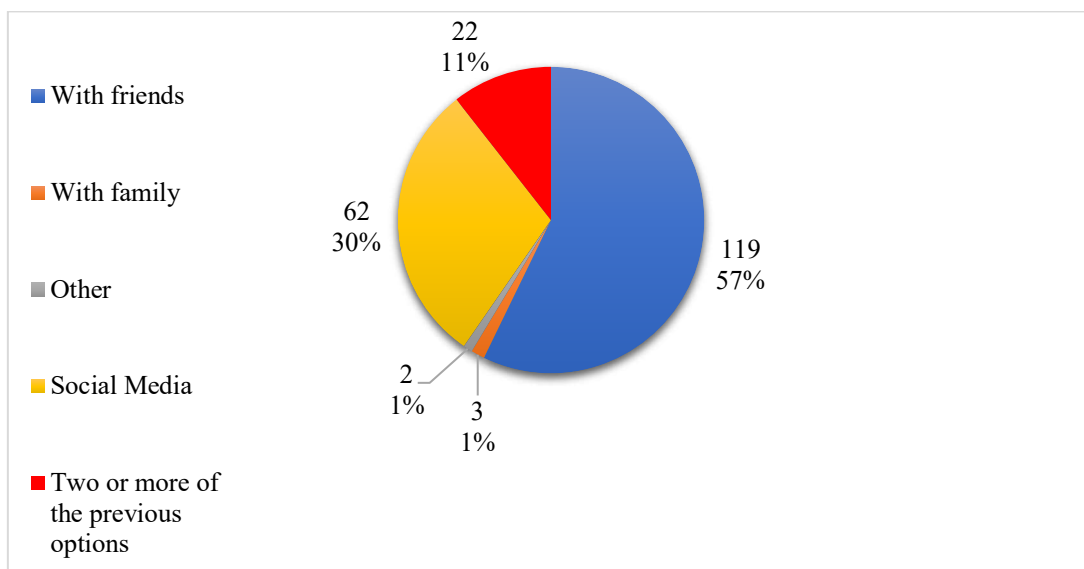


This was not a mandatory question. Of those who do not watch the series (249), 88% said it was because they do not know about this type of content, 6% said they do not watch series, 2% gave different reasons, 2% said they did not have time, 2 answered they are not interested in the topics and also 2 did not respond to the question.

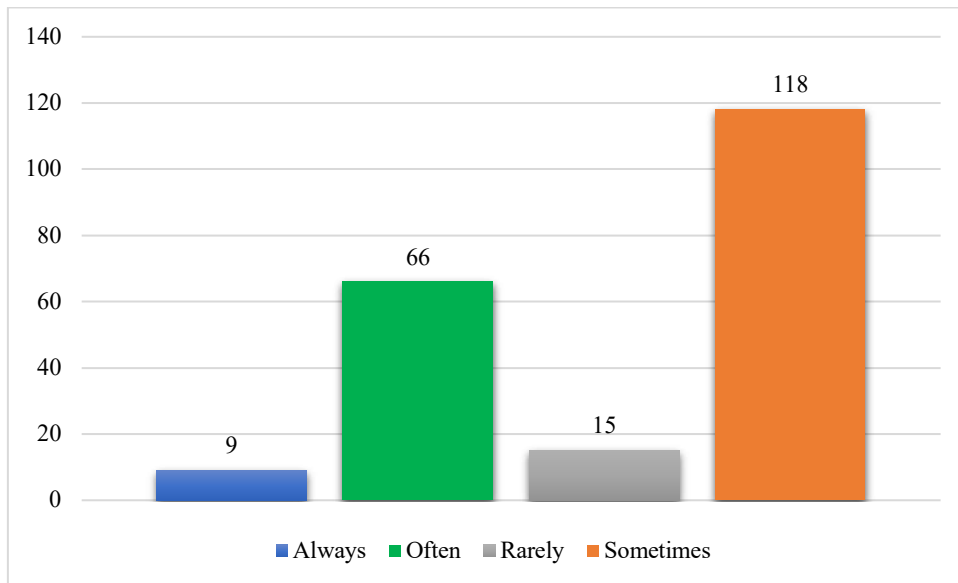
### 5.1.2 Engagement

#### Sharing Mensagem

The question about whether people usually share Mensagem articles after reading them was made to assess engagement. 65% usually shares an article after reading it and 35% does not do it. From those who share (208), 57% do it with friends, 30% share it via social media, 11% do so in two or more of the ways mentioned, 3 readers share with family, and 2 do it in different ways.

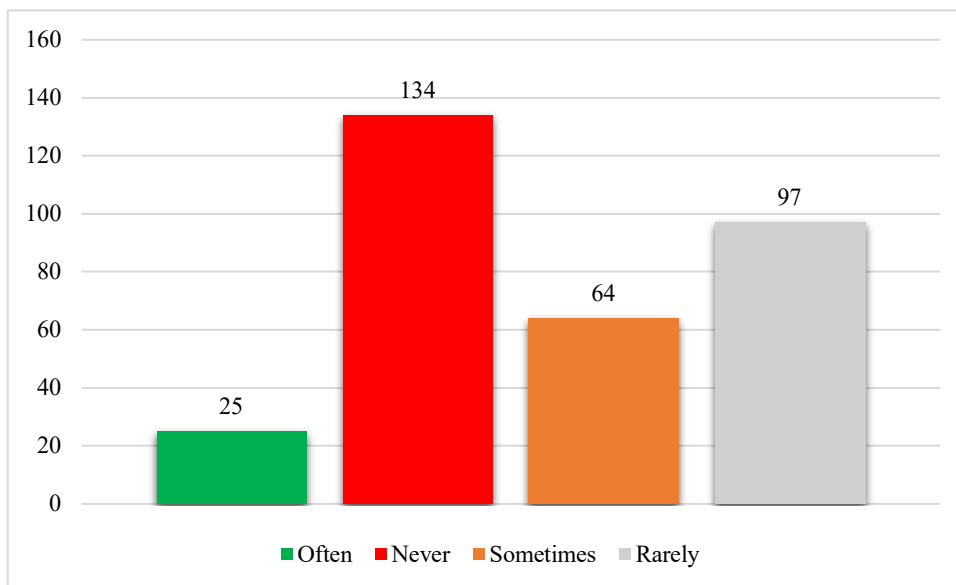


57% of the readers sometimes share Mensagem articles, 32% do it often, 7% do it rarely and 4% do it always.



### Online interaction with Mensagem

To understand the readers' online interaction with Mensagem, it was questioned how often they comment on the articles both on the website and on social media. 42% said it never does that, 30% does it rarely, 20% does it sometimes and 8% does it often.

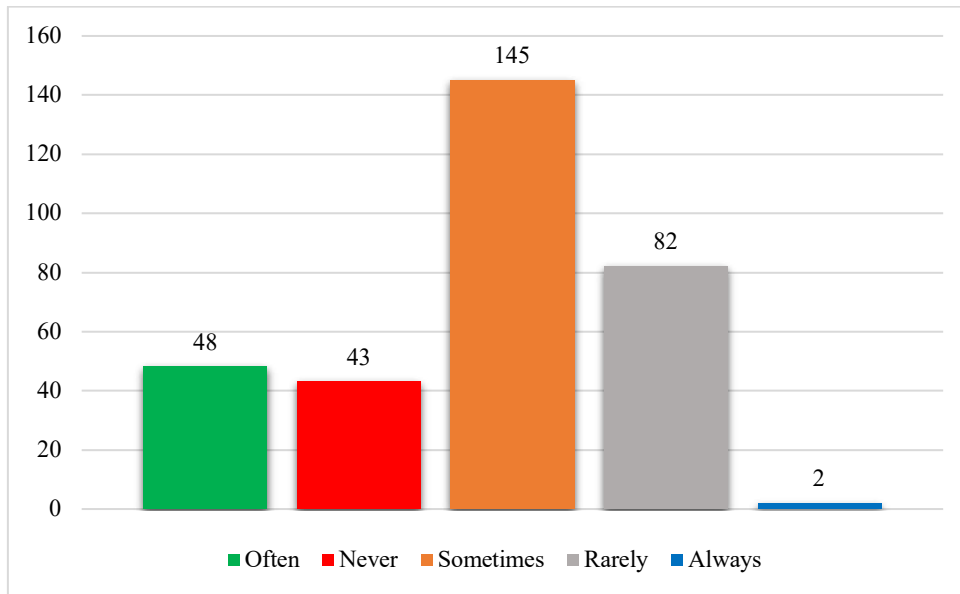


### Participation in Mensagem's content

Along the same line of thinking, to understand the readers' involvement and participation in the newspaper, they were asked whether they have ever suggested topics or sent something written by them. Almost all (92%) said they never suggested anything while 8% have sent suggestions, articles, or opinion columns.

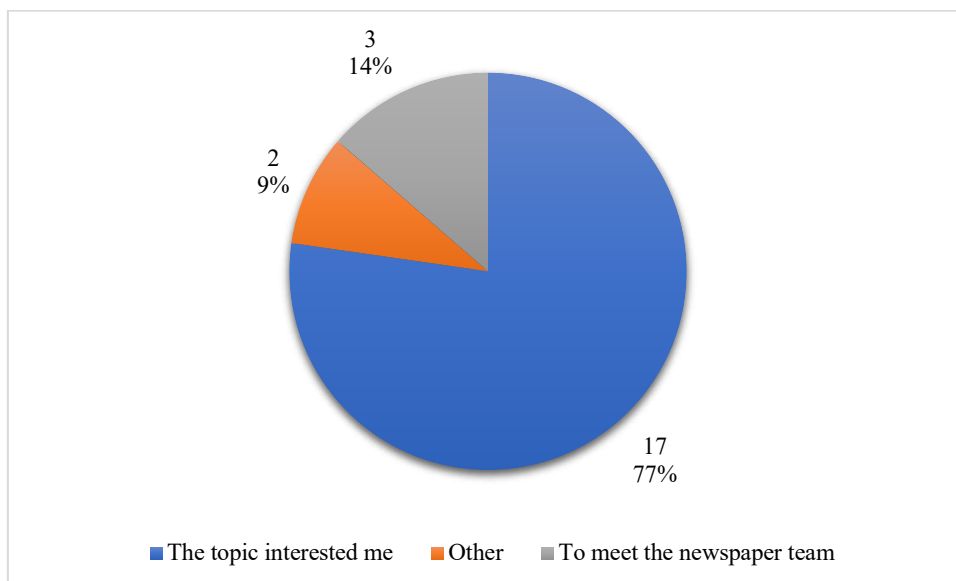
### Discussing Mensagem with someone

To understand if what readers read has such an impact that they would discuss it with someone else, they were asked how often they do so. 45% said they do it sometimes, 26% said they do it rarely, 15% said they do often, 13% said they never do it and 1% said they always do it.

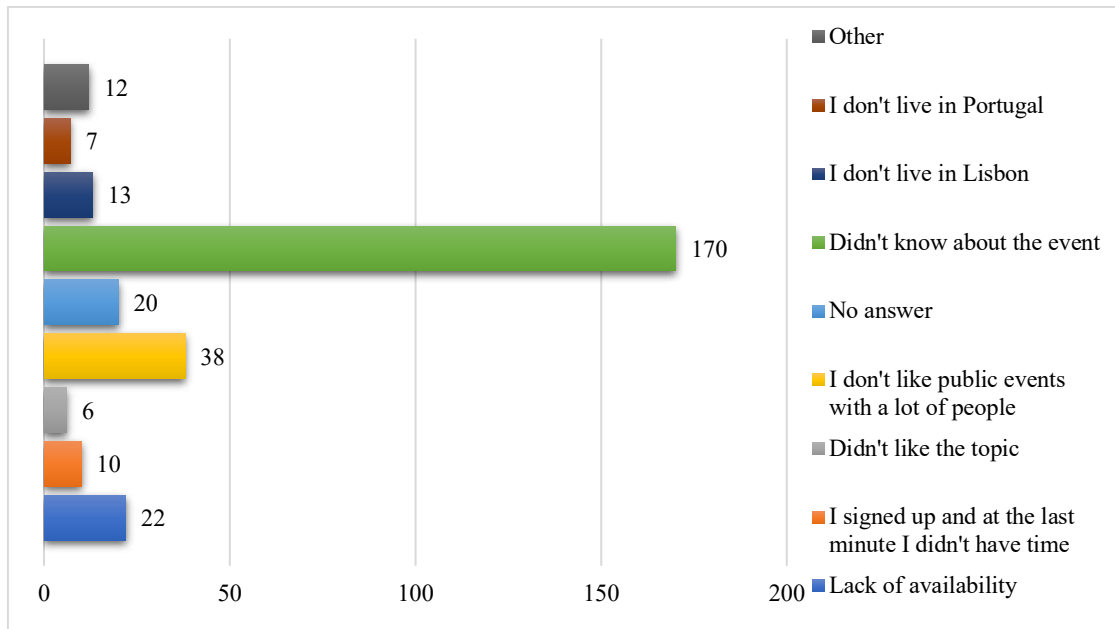


### Participation in Mensagem events

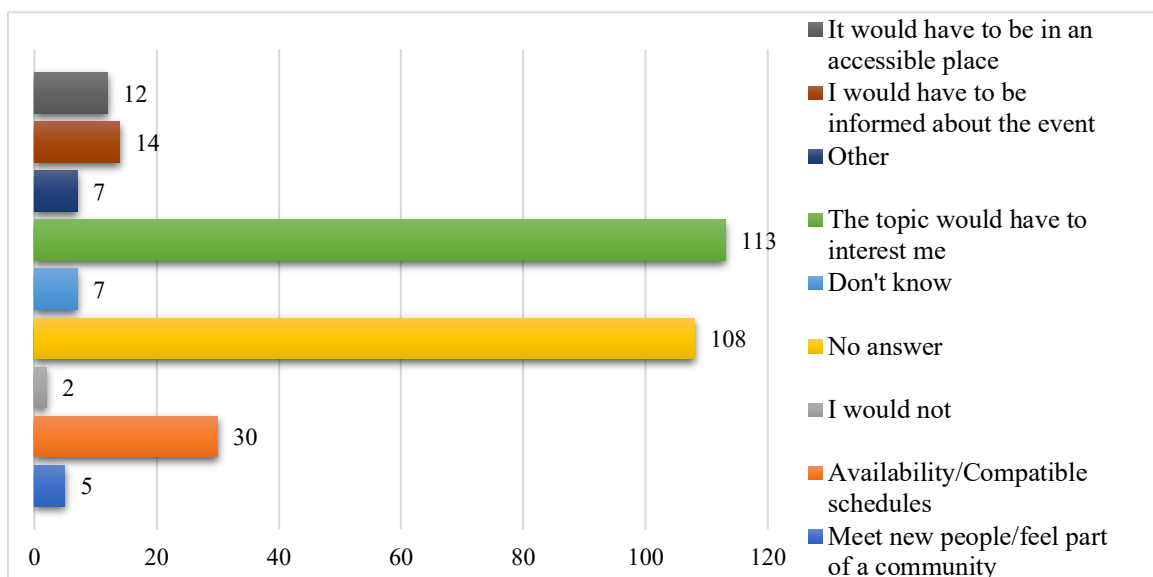
About participation in events organized by Mensagem, 93% of respondents have never participated and 7% have. Of those 22 who have participated, 17 did so because they were interested in the topic, 3 went to meet the newspaper team, and 2 went for other reasons.



Of those who did not participate (298), 57% said they did not know about the event, 13% do not like crowded events, 11% answered different reasons, 7% said it was because of lack of availability, 7% did not answer this question, 3% signed up at the last minute and did not have time to go and 2% did not like the event's topic.



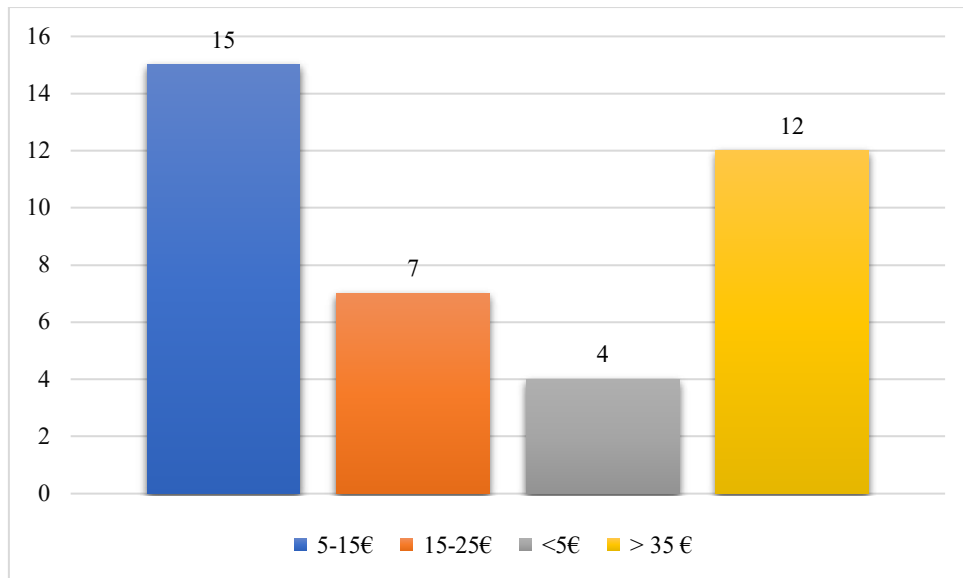
Of those who did not participate (298), 38% would participate if the topic interested them, 36% did not answer this question, 10% said the event would have to be at a place and time they could attend, 5% (14) said they would have to be informed about the event, 4% (12) said the event would have to be at an accessible place, 2% (7) said they did not know, the same percentage of readers did not answer or said they would participate to meet new people and 1% said they would not participate.



To understand if the participants are civically involved or have such a predisposition, they were asked if they have ever been involved in a movement. 59% of the participants have never been involved in a citizenship movement, while 41% has.

**Donations to Mensagem**

88% have never donated and 12% have. Of those who have donated (38), 15 donated between 5-15 euros, 12 more than 35 euros, 7 between 15-25 euros and 4 donated less than 5 euros.

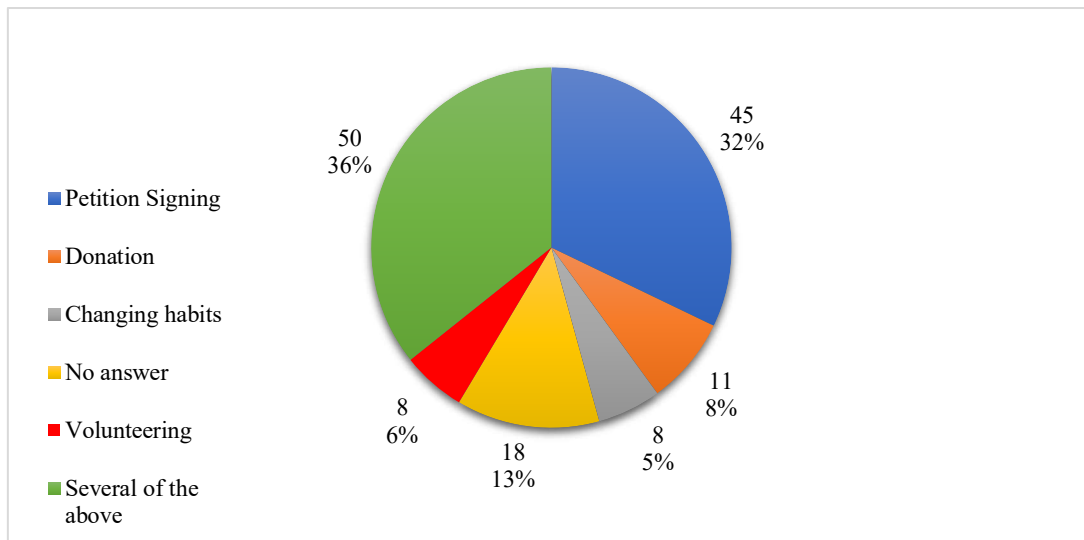


**5.1.3 Impact**

**Mensagem’s impact**

The purpose of the question “Have you ever done anything based on an article you read? (Volunteering, donating, changing habits, signing a petition)” was to find out if readers had been impacted by any article to the point that they had already done something because of it. 56% said they did not do anything based on some article they read, while 44% said they did.

Of those respondents who have done something based on an article they read (140), 36% have done several things including signing a petition, donating, changing habits, or volunteering. 32% have signed a petition, 13% did not responded, 8% have donated, 6% have volunteered, and 5% have changed habits.



### Recommending Mensagem to Someone

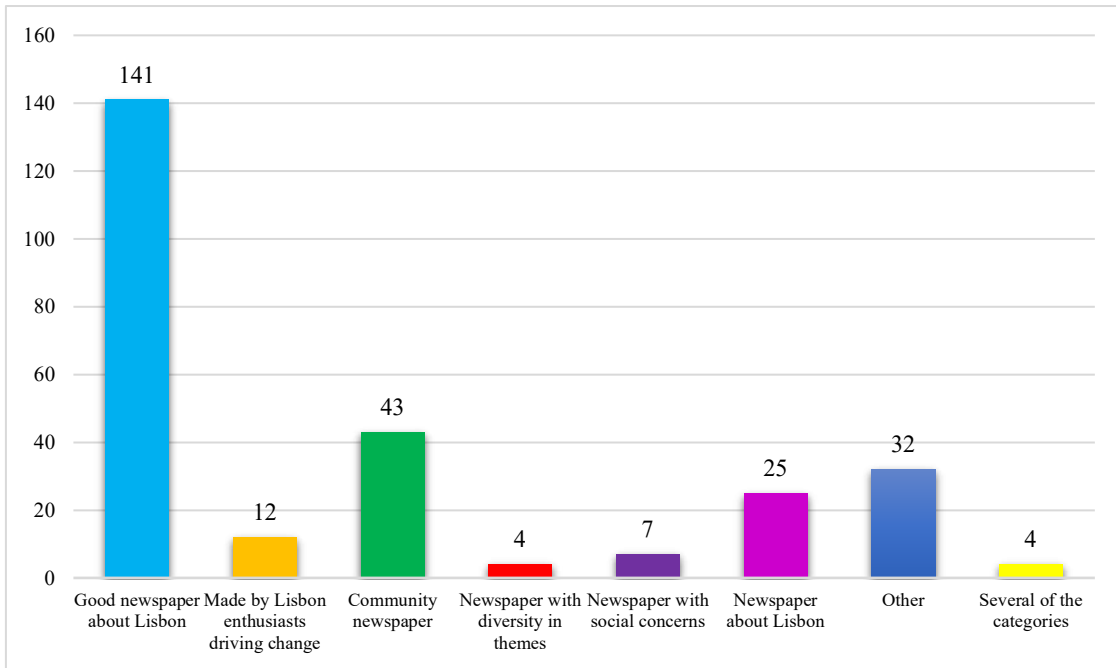
The goal of asking it readers would recommend Mensagem to a friend was to find out whether readers were satisfied with the newspaper to the point where they would suggest it to someone else. 99% of those surveyed would recommend Mensagem to a friend while only 1% would not.

### Defining Mensagem

Participants were asked how they would define Mensagem. This was a non-mandatory, opened question, and the answers were organized into categories. There are two similar categories: “good newspaper about Lisbon” and “newspaper about the Lisbon.” Answers with clearly compliments to Mensagem were grouped into the first category and answers defining the newspapers with a media function were labeled with the second category.

From those who answered this question (269), more than half (53%) of the participants defined Mensagem as “good newspaper about Lisbon”, 16% said this media is a “community newspaper”, 12% answered different definitions, 9% said it is a “newspaper about Lisbon”, 4% said the newspaper is “made by Lisbon enthusiasts driving change”<sup>1</sup>, 3% said the newspaper has social concerns, 2% answered Mensagem diversifies its topics and 1% answered various of these categories.

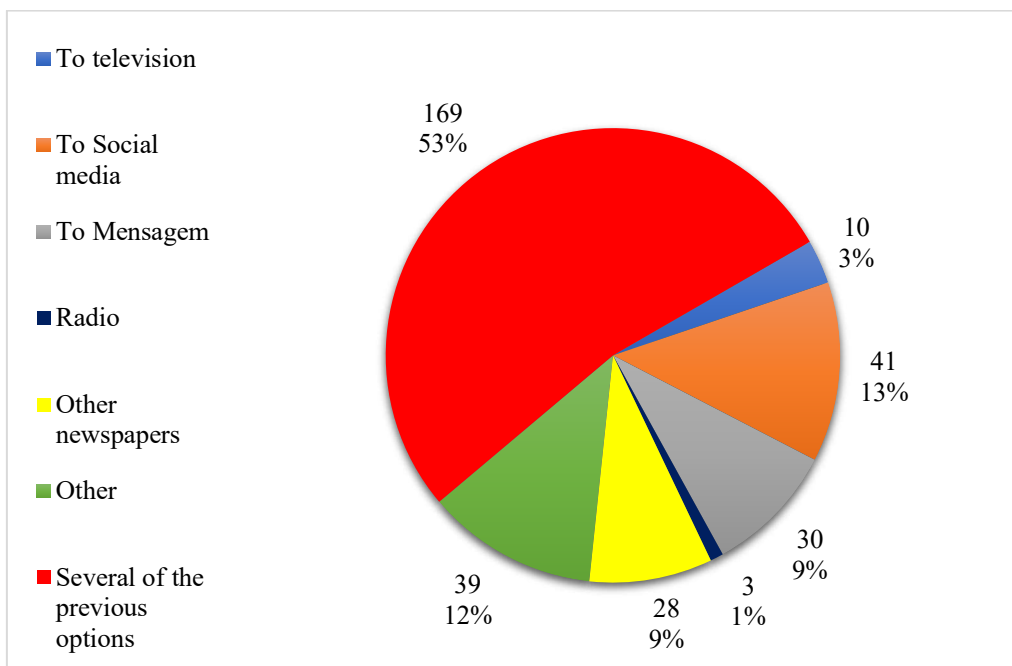
<sup>1</sup> “Articles by people who live the city and want to improve its weak points” and “a website of people who are looking forward to the Lisbon of our contentment” are example of the answers labeled in this category.



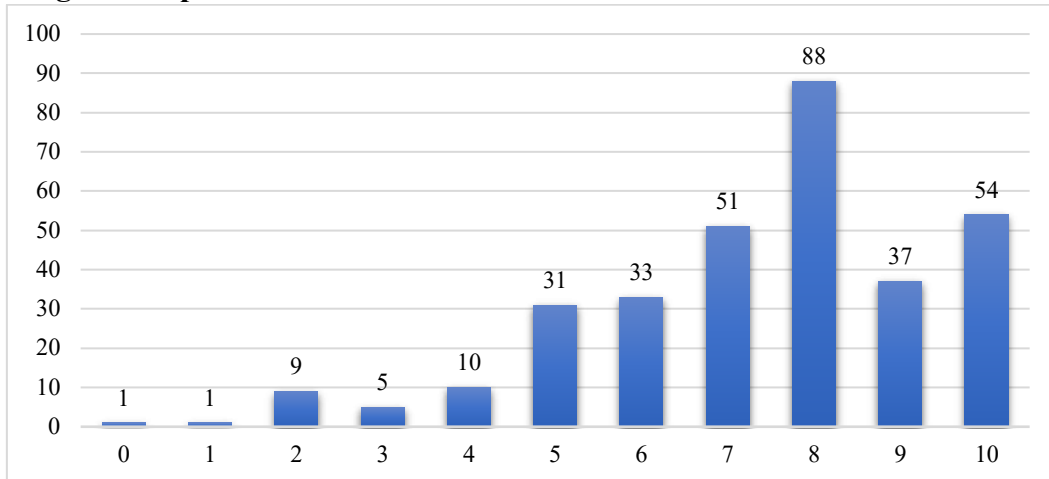
### Mensagem as an information source of Lisbon

Regarding whether the respondents feel informed about Lisbon, 59% say they feel informed and 41% say they do not. Regarding whether the respondents feel informed about their neighborhood, 49% say they feel informed and 51% say they do not.

53% of the participants get information about Lisbon from various sources, 12% get information from sources other than the ones presented, 13% from social media, 9% (30) from Mensagem, 9% (28) from other newspapers, 3% from television and 1% from radio.



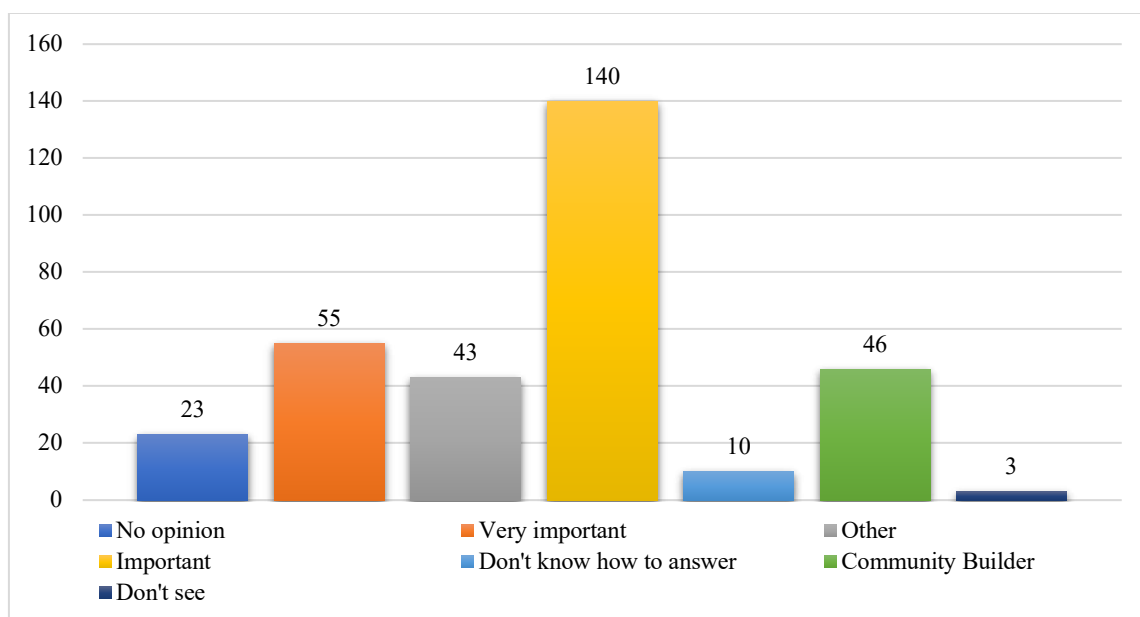
### Mensagem's importance



27% consider Mensagem very important (8) to be up to date about what is going on in the city, 17% answered that Mensagem is absolutely important (10) to be up to date about the city, 16% see Mensagem as an important medium (7), 12% see Mensagem as extremely important (9) to be up to date.

### Building a community spirit

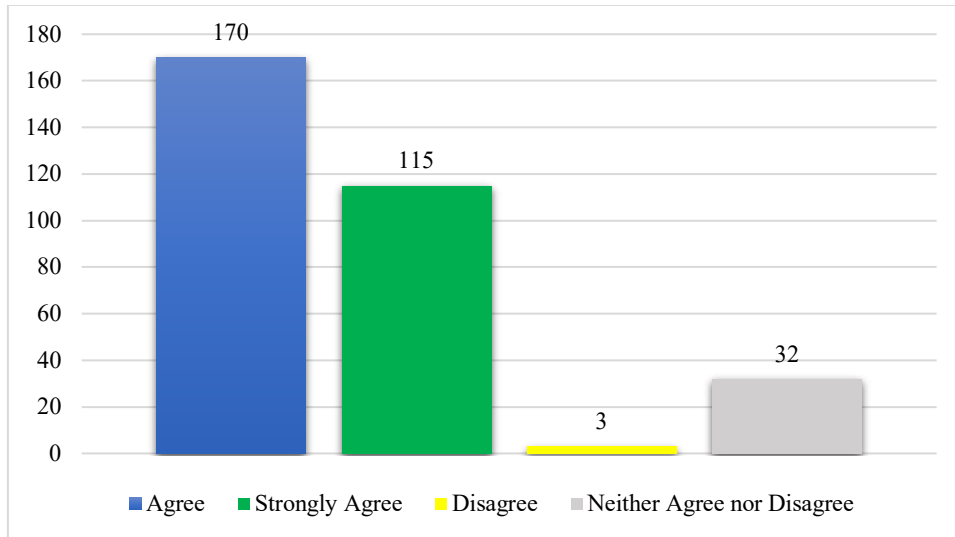
Participants were asked how they see Mensagem's role in building a sense of community in Lisbon. This was an open-ended question and answers were grouped into categories. The categories were created according to idea repetition in the answers. 44% of respondents see it as important, 17% found it very important, 14% see it as a community builder, the same percentage answered different visions, 7% did not have an opinion, 3% said they do not have the knowledge to answer and 1% did not recognize this role in the newspaper.



### 5.1.4 User Needs Model

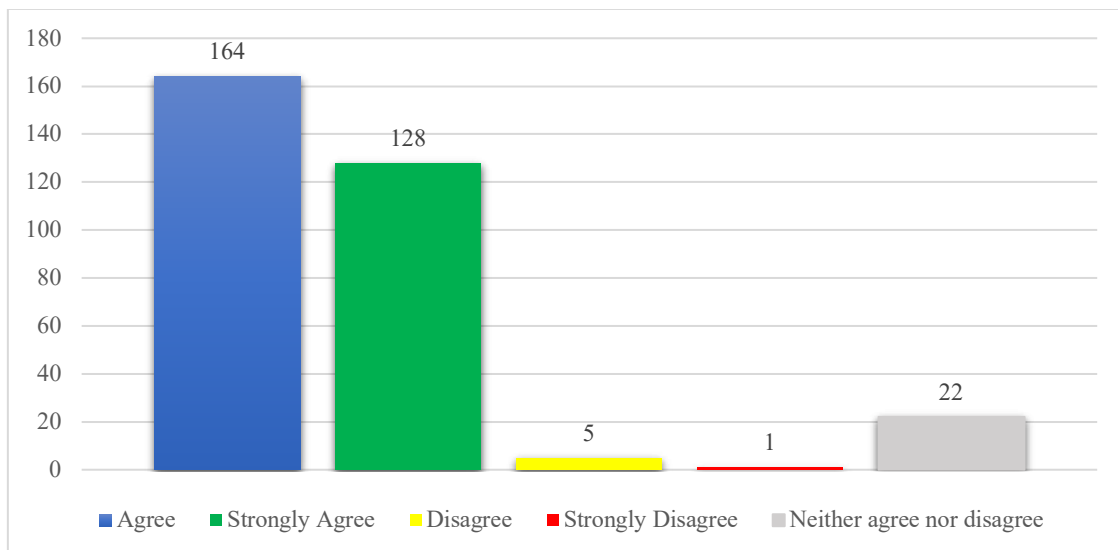
To understand why readers read Mensagem, the User Needs Model was adapted in sentences to participants indicated agreement or disagreement.

#### “Update me” Need



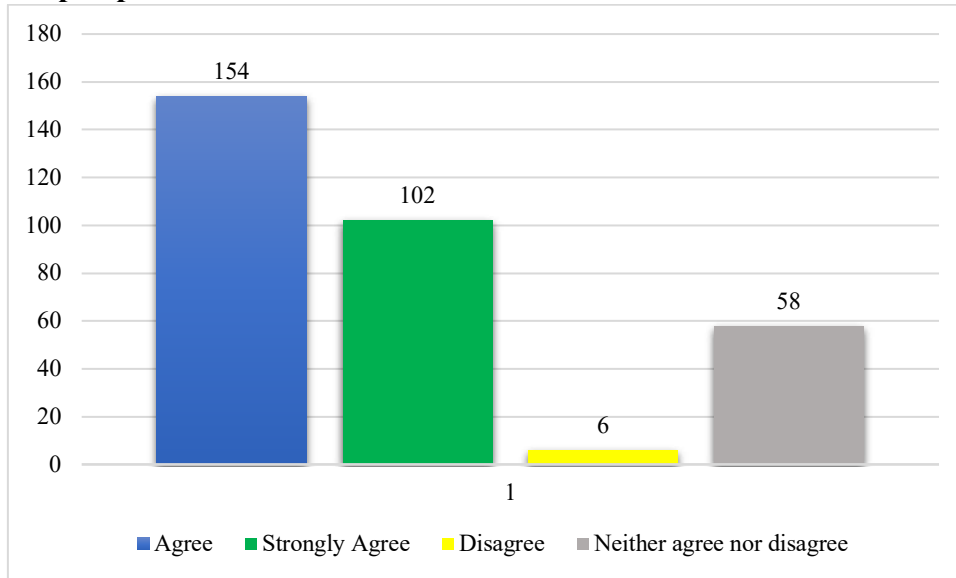
53% of the participants agreed that they read Mensagem to be updated on what is happening in the city, 36% strongly agreed, 10% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1% (3) disagreed.

#### “Educate me” Need



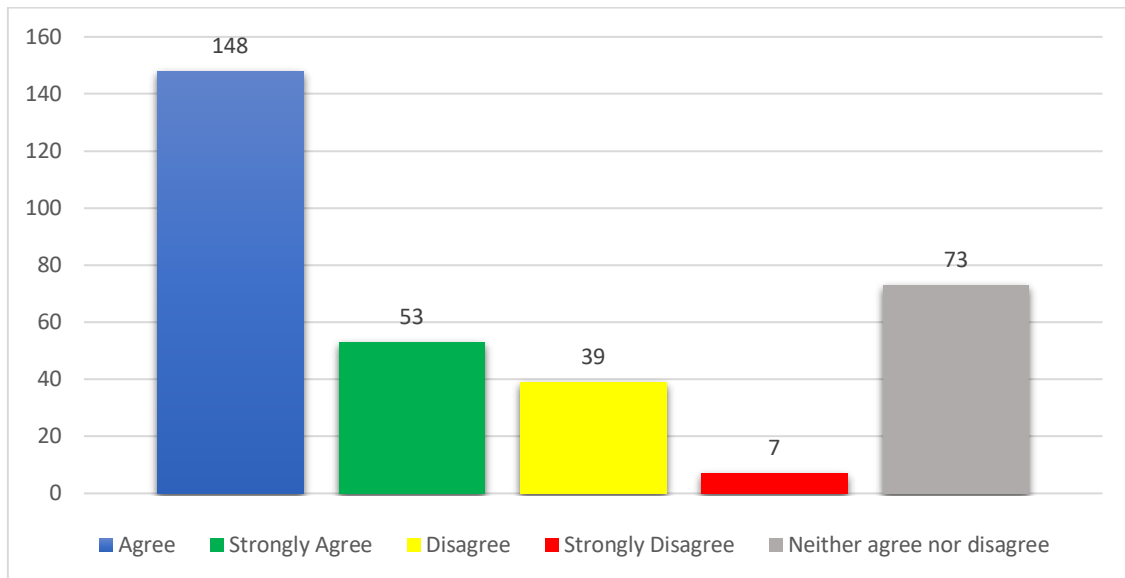
51% of the participants agreed that they read the newspaper to be more educated about the city, 40% strongly agreed, 7% neither agreed nor disagreed, 2% disagreed, and 1 participant strongly disagreed.

### “Give me perspective” Need



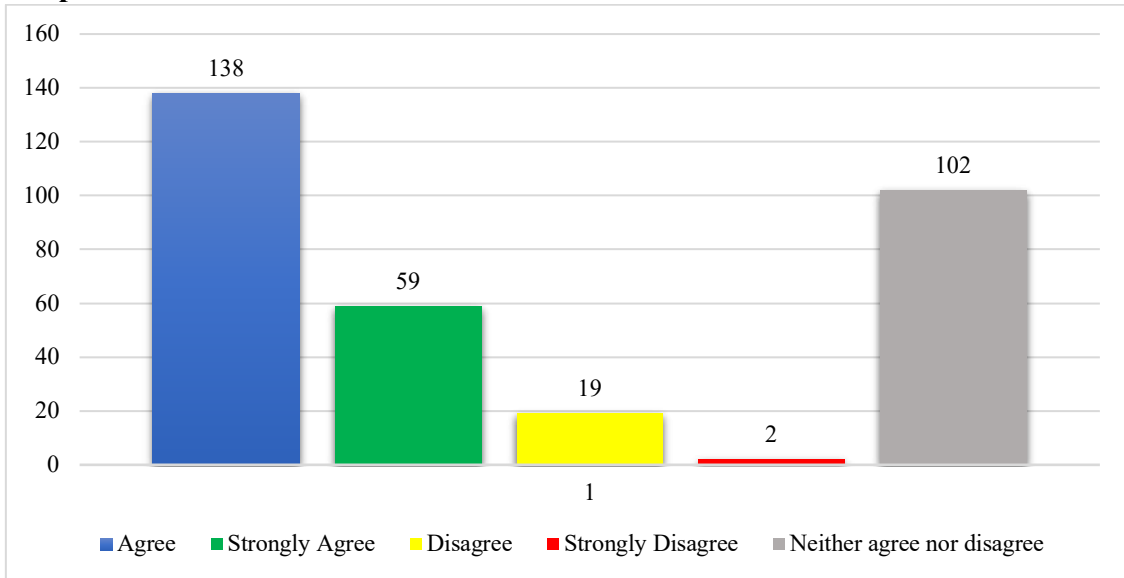
48% of the readers agreed that they consume Mensagem to have different perspectives, 32% strongly agreed, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed and 2% disagreed.

### “Divert me” Need



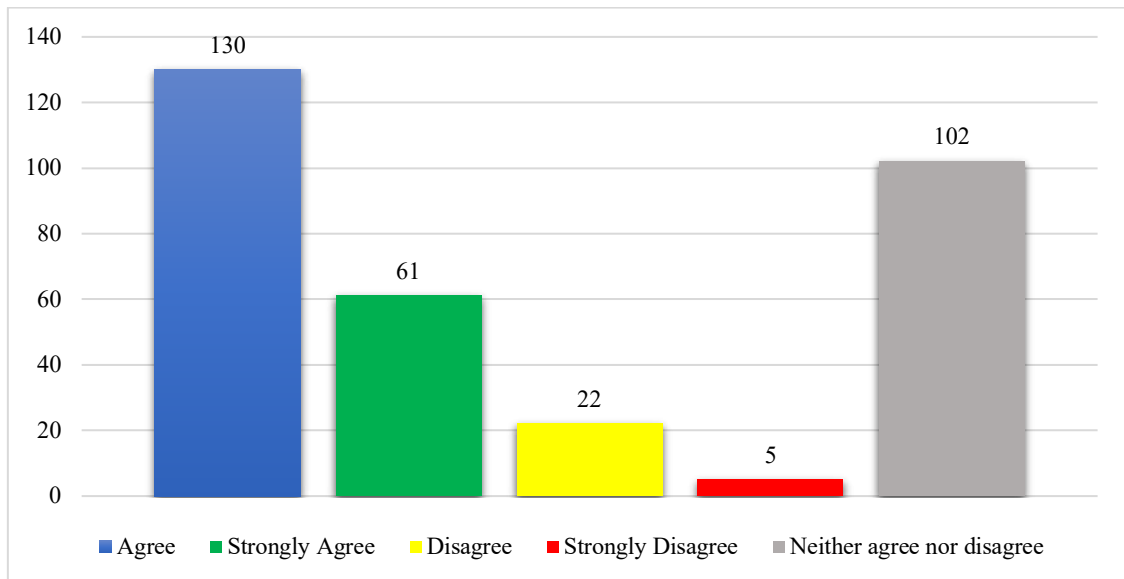
46% agreed that they read Mensagem’s news for enjoyment, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed, 17% strongly agreed, 12% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed.

### “Inspire me” Need



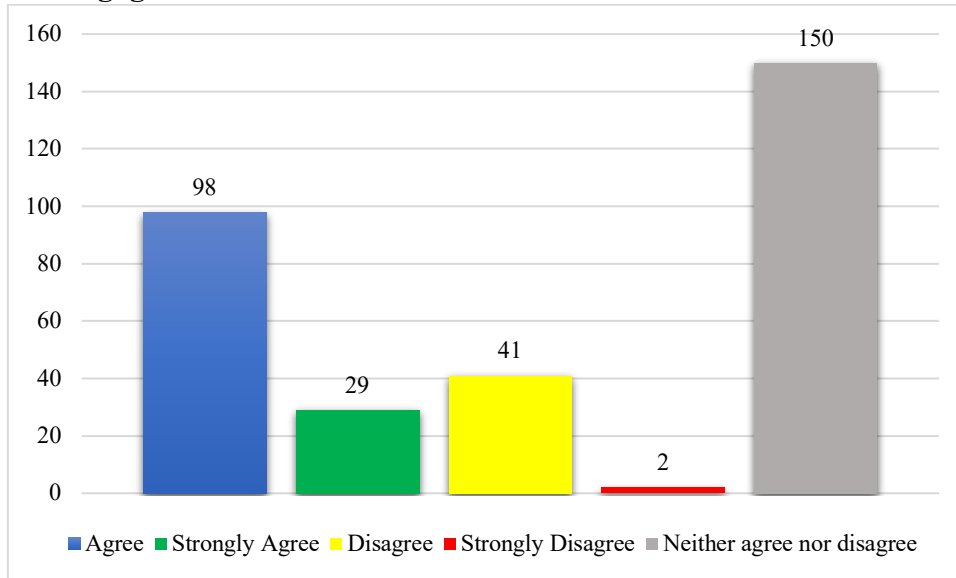
43% agreed that they read Mensagem to be inspired, 32% neither agreed nor disagreed, 18% strongly agree, 6% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed.

### “Connect me” Need



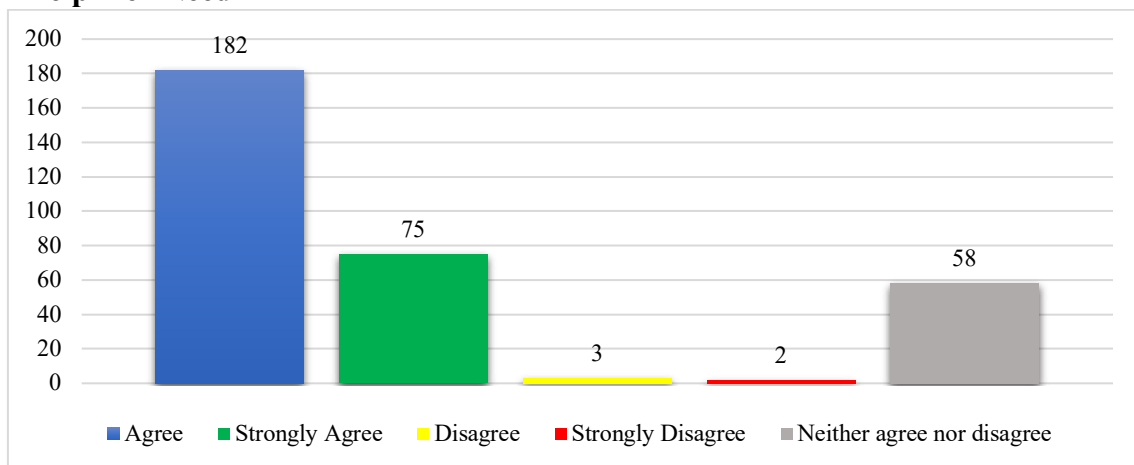
41% of respondents agreed that they read Mensagem to be connected to the community, 32% neither agreed nor disagreed, 19% strongly agree, 7% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.

### “Keep me engaged me” Need



47% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they read Mensagem to stay engaged in Lisbon’s activities, 30% agreed, 13% disagreed, 9% strongly agree, and 1% strongly disagreed.

### “Help me” Need



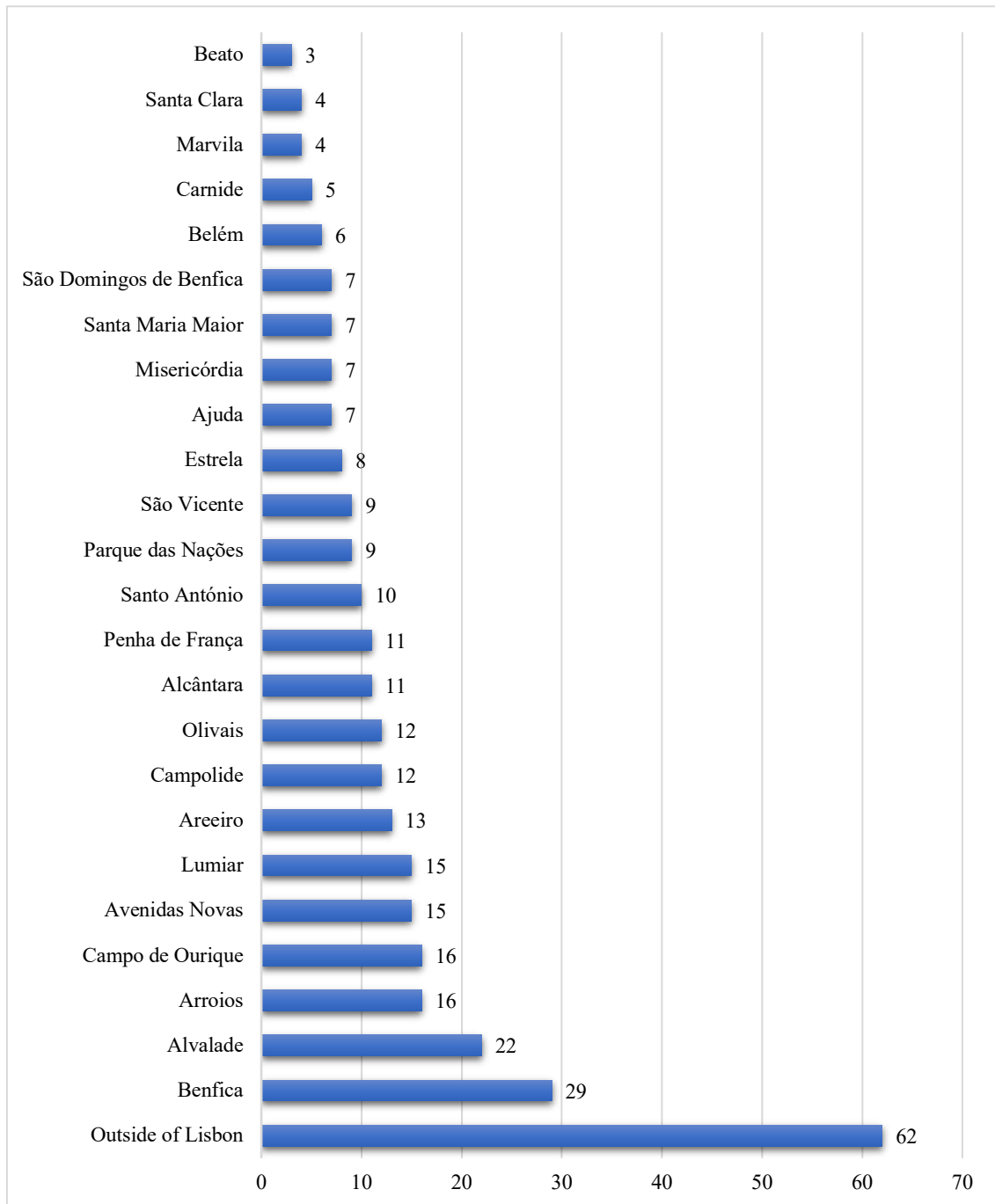
57% of the readers agreed that Mensagem’s content helps them learn more about the city and discuss the topics and get involved in activities in the city, 23% strongly agreed, 18% neither agreed nor disagreed, 1% disagree and 1% strongly disagreed.

## 5.1.5 Demographic information

### Age

51% of the sample were between 50 and 69, 19% were between 40 and 49 years old, 15% are over 70 years old, 9% were between 30-39 years old and 6% were between 21-29 years old.

## Residence



The neighborhood question had response options of all the neighborhoods of Lisbon and the option “outside of Lisbon.” This option had the largest representation of respondents, followed by the parishes of Benfica (29), Alvalade (22), Arroios (16), Campo de Ourique (16), Avenidas Novas (15), and Lumiar (15). The remaining neighborhoods had fewer than 15 responses each.

## **Gender**

Regarding gender, 206 respondents were female, 111 respondents were male, and 3 respondents selected “other.”

## **Education**

Regarding academic qualifications, 45% of respondents had a graduate degree, 104 33% had a master's degree, 12% had a high-school degree, 8% had a PhD, 4 had Technological/Professional course, 2 went only to middle school, and one went only to Elementary school.

## **5.2 Interview Results**

The interviews addressed Mensagem's online and offline initiatives as well as the newspaper's strategy for engaging readers, including editorial choices. The team's attention to readers' needs, the role of Mensagem in building a sense of community in Lisbon, the newspaper's business model, and the three journalists' hope for the newspaper to have an impact on the city and its readers were all explored.

### **5.2.1 Editorial Choices**

#### **Content decisions**

The interviews reflected a consensus about what subjects to cover and how to address them. The social media manager, Inês Leote, started by explaining that it is expected that the media “have to cover or demonstrate the values of democracy” so Mensagem is also doing it. The director, Catarina Carvalho said that Mensagem is not a “utilitarian website or a pure and simple information system.” If it were, there would be no point in creating Mensagem “because there were already many media of this style in Lisbon when Mensagem appeared.” The same perspective was shared by the editor, Catarina Reis, that explained that the newspaper does not “cover pure and simple politics, there is no hard news.” She clarified that “it is not because something has been decided in the city council that Mensagem is going to publish it.” Besides, Reis asserted that the “first criteria” to cover an issue is the “*local* one” as well as “inclusion and diversity.” Reis said it is “very important to ensure diversity of sources, always, but also diversity of protagonists”, because the newspaper also tries that “interveners mirror that diversity.” In the same line, Carvalho said that “most of the most read articles are about things that involve people who are never talked about or who the media will never talk to.” This was due, according to Reis, to the fact “what Mensagem does is dig up curiosity again, dig up about the things

that were not being told.” Carvalho said, “history articles hold great interest, they hold unknown stories in the sense of stories that people have witnessed happening, but it is a curiosity they never had the opportunity to understand.” Beyond history articles, Carvalho said human interest stories are also of the most read as “they can be inspiring or not as they can also encompass more sad narratives, but with a social character.” Taking this into account, Carvalho highlighted that Mensagem is “recognized for its content.”

### **Topic approaches**

In this line of thought, Carvalho said the team “takes great care to keep the editorial line of Mensagem, ensuring a positive and constructive perspective in the content regarding the relationship and the world.” She noted that she believed that “people recognize this commitment, and that is why they follow Mensagem.” One of the reasons Mensagem stands out from other media is, according to the interviews, the way it approaches topics. Carvalho said that often the team opts for not covering some issue because “everyone is already doing it.” In Reis’s perspective, the discussion about what topic to cover many times takes the shape of how the team should cover. Reis said that “when a local issue is also national and is being discussed at a national level, the team always has this discussion: do we go after what everyone else is doing, or do we not go at all, or do we go in a completely different way?” She explained that many times the team opts to “keep an eye on the topic to assess whether it is of interest from a different perspective.” She said that “there must be a discussion to understand if it makes sense or if the subject can be scrutinized in another way, or if it is merely a superficial issue of the present moment.”

In addition to this, Reis stated there is a willingness to “create community with articles as “what Mensagem chooses to do is always to unite and never to separate.” That is why the team often “spends more time on some article because sometimes realizes that in a certain article, only a specific community is being addressing” and there are more sides that could be covered. She said that they prefer to spend more time if they know that only one side of the story is being told and that “will create even more division and will not bring people together.”

Regarding the use of Solutions Journalism, Reis said it is a “priority”, even if the team does not strictly follow the rules of the Solutions Journalism Network. She explained that this type of articles has the “possibility to inspire and always have great receptivity.” Reis recognizes that the receptivity is higher when the story at the beginning is about solutions.

This kind of solutions journalism (which is not from the Solutions Journalism Network) presents the “story of someone who has a solution to a problem in Lisbon.” But Reis also said they follow the Network’s standard by writing “a story that is not so good, starting by explaining the whole context and then putting the solution at the end.”

### **5.2.2 Readers’ Needs**

Both Carvalho and Reis explained that Mensagem has created a need in readers. While this may be unconscious in readers, the journalists said that the newspaper considers what readers may be expecting from the newspaper. Carvalho began by explaining that when Mensagem was founded, the team “wanted to do in-depth work on Lisbon” and that “somehow created a need in readers.” She even mentioned that when she gives presentations about the newspaper, she titles them as “how the Lisboners and their informative needs created a type of journalism about Lisbon.” This view was echoed by Reis who said the team often wonders if “readers know what they need.” According to Reis, “maybe they do not know because there was no newspaper that did what Mensagem does today. And so, readers could not say they needed something like what Mensagem does.” In this way, she said that “somehow, Mensagem has created a need in people that is probably not rational for them. She explained that “readers do not say they want a story that inspires them, for example.” But Reis said that the newspaper “knows from the engagement numbers how this thing that we do, in fact, was missed by people.” Carvalho explained the needs refer to the idea that “there are stories that nobody knows and that, therefore, readers do not know they want to read, that is, they do not know they have the need to know that part of life, until they know it.” Thus, Carvalho claimed that “in a way we take into account what readers are expecting”, recognizing that “needs are not only articles, but also activities that we do, yet they are mainly content.”

About the content, Carvalho said the team “applies intuitively the User Needs Model from the beginning.” She clarified that the newspaper does not do a strict implementation of the model “but those needs are always present, when in meetings there are discussions about the several stories to be covered and the balance they should have on the website and in the weekly publication calendar.” She admitted that Mensagem “tries to do this balance.” She acknowledged that the need “keep me on trend” (this need is from the User Needs Model 1.0) is the one that has the fewest articles assigned to it “because it is related to social media.”

Reis explained it is “easy to understand exactly what people want” as “if an analysis by year is made, the most read articles are always about nature, history, inspiring stories or curiosities.” She mentioned that when the newsletter is sent with this type of article the team can “see how important this is for people because it will fill this need that did not exist and that has come to exist” as they receive several replies to the newsletter with compliments. She argued that “curiosity, nature, and history are hooks for new articles that cater to what readers enjoy.”

Beyond inspiration, Carvalho said the team also tries to “educate” readers and gave examples of some articles that educate readers. She finds it important to clarify things for the readers, by giving background context about things readers could not know as “it makes sense that people know what Mensagem is writing about.” Essentially, she said, “there are topics that we explain to people, but also educate them in a certain sense.” She stated that some articles could “educate but at the same time to inspire” or lead people to get “involved in something.”

### **5.2.3 Offline Engagement**

Carvalho recognized that “one of the big challenges for Mensagem is to balance the editorial work, which is what journalists are more used to, with the idea of having events and doing things with the community outside of that very specific journalistic work”, yet, she said that the fact that the team is small also makes it difficult to organize events. Nevertheless, she remarked that “Mensagem has several events.”

Carvalho said that one way to measure offline engagement is “the number of people who come to the events and, in a way, the people we talk to, if they talk to us about Mensagem and how they talk about us” and she said that in addition to the newspaper being recognized for its content, “Mensagem’s brand is also recognized as a collection of activities.”

These activities can be neighborhood meetings in which “there is a debate about a topic that concerns the neighborhood in which the meeting is taking place”, explained Reis. According to Reis, these debates happen with experts in the topic chosen and one of the goals is “to make the debate as constructive as possible” as many and opposite perspectives are shared. In addition to bringing the community together to discuss concerns, these meetings have more advantages. “We also benefit because we come away with stories and with ideas of things we did not know”, explained Reis, underlining that

“this was the primary mission of these neighborhood meetings.” She shared that “several stories have already emerged from the neighborhood meetings and are published” and others are “on the list for us to look at and write.” Above all, the journalist declared it is “more and more important that the team goes to people’s neighborhoods and actually listens to them.” She also recognizes the effort people put into participating in the events. “Thinking about the idea of community and engagement, it is so interesting to think about the effort that a person has to make to leave home or leave work early to go and get involved in a Mensagem event.”

Whether at neighborhood meetings or other events organized by the newspaper, Carvalho said that in those occasions Mensagem’s journalists are “always talking to people in the eyes and meet people who know Mensagem.” She highlighted that what the team “get from the events, it is, in essence, a closer look and a closer listening” from the community.

Beyond neighborhood meetings, the newspaper has partnered with some companies or community’s organizations. Carvalho mentioned the partnerships with El Corte Inglés where debates moderated by Mensagem’s journalists took place and Passa Sabi, a community organization with “which Mensagem have a neighborhood correspondents project.” Mensagem also has a partnership with a local organization for the popular party’s season and another with Iminente festival. Reis said, “there are strategies wherever Mensagem is positioned.” “When collaborating with Iminente festival, it is culturally strategic because we want to be part of these things in the city, but also to reach an audience that we do not access so easily and that does not know Mensagem yet”, she clarified. It is a perspective shared by Carvalho since she explained that “these events are to showcase the newspaper, just like going on TV or radio shows, it is an outreach strategy.”

#### **5.2.4 Online Engagement**

##### **Engagement measurement**

Reis, Carvalho, and Leote agreed that there are multiple ways to measure online engagement. Carvalho explained online engagement is measured by “social media metrics, if people read an article, how long they are in each article, if the article has comments, surveys’ answers or the emails sent by the readers.” Newsletters replies are also a measure as it shows effort from the reader “because an email is not the same as writing in a comment box on social media, which is quick and easy”, explained Reis.

Regarding the time reading, Reis explained that the newspaper “has a very high percentage of readership, that is, of people who stay reading our articles. This means that a person opens the article and reads a lot.” The social media manager, Leote said, “the average reading time in April was 6.23 minutes.” She explained what, in her view, could lead someone to engage with Mensagem’s content, underlining that the value of “democracy” must be embedded in all content. “I think people relate a lot more and share a lot more of our content where that is more evident, but there are things where the value is not so direct, but people see themselves in those values that we are sharing by denouncing some reality or telling someone’s story.”

Leote made a distinction in how engagement is measure depending on the social media; on Facebook “I can share a post only on our page and not share it anywhere else and it has a few likes, comments, shares and few interactions but it has a giant reach because I have been spreading it through the groups of neighbors and the likes, comments and shares are in the groups and are not counted in the organic post.” She explained that a post can have “30,000 views and have four likes”, but that reach is “because it was shared a lot in those groups.” This explains why “sometimes there are not good engagement results on the original post, but there are good engagement results within the group between them.” She explained that sometimes “Mensagem’s article are topics for internal conversation.” On Instagram she measures engagement “with likes and comments”, but on Twitter, she uses likes as a measure. TikTok still works “on a test basis.” Despite all this, Carvalho said that “sometimes engagement numbers can be misleading.”

### **Online Strategy**

Regarding Mensagem’s online presence and its interaction with readers, Reis said the fact that the newsletter has the “signature of each journalist” enables readers to “reply and say our name.” She said this “might be the most personal thing on the digital form.” Carvalho said that the online relationship with readers “is one of love” as they “never have any harsh online criticism”, except for “one or two very heavy criticisms, but nothing special.” She said Mensagem never has “that hate that sometimes causes some negative engagement.”

To have a closer relationship with the readers, when sharing an article in any social media, Leote tries “to make it as relatable as possible” as she always tries “to position the individual person in the situation” portrayed in the article.

In addition, Mensagem has a broadcast channel in Instagram. For Leote this has a lot of advantages as “it has the potential to make the readers who have joined feel exclusive with content that only those people have access to, since more than 30 thousand follow Mensagem and just over 600 have joined.” Besides, “it is good to take a more human approach.” She said she can “be Inês from Mensagem and not an anonymous account manager who only delivers content. I am the one who shares and tries to get them involved, my day to day can be relatable.” She explained that she tries “to associate that with the stories Mensagem tells.” It is also an opportunity “to appear more often in the feed of the community, which may want to be updated and not see Mensagem in the feed or stories because they follow too many people or because the algorithm does not deliver.” Lastly, these community members can in the future “contribute to Mensagem.”

Beyond this, there is also a specific strategy for Instagram since each article is adapted for an Instagram post. Leote explains that “we tell the whole story, because we want to keep people on Instagram.” She recognized that people who are on Instagram do not want to exit the app for a website, so, “it makes sense for Mensagem to be much more into Instagram and try to get people to stay there.” However, she also admitted that even posting the whole story in an Instagram post, she does not know if “people are actually reading.” She also expressed doubts about a digital community as “Mensagem grew in followers”, but she said she does not know “if it grew in community” as she has not figured out “if the growth in comments and shares was proportional to the increase in followers.”

Although she interacts with readers by replying to comments or messages or liking their sharing of Mensagem content, she acknowledges that it is difficult to create a “sense of belonging in digital.” “There may be community in the audience”, she said, expressing doubts if the readers “feel community with Mensagem.” She said that “perhaps they see Mensagem as intermediaries between reality, the story told, and then the community.”

### **Reader’s participation**

Nevertheless, Leote asserted that in any social media, Mensagem asks readers for content or ideas because the team “actually want to hear them”, although she assumed that “people are still not comfortable sending suggestions because they think Mensagem will not be interested.”

Carvalho said the newspaper receives “reports, but also story ideas via email and comments on articles, as well as on Facebook and Instagram.” The goal to publish reader’s content is “to make what we are doing matter to people. If people do not get involved, they will not actually have that interest in wanting to participate.” Reis said that one of the most-read articles of 2022 was a “report written by someone writing on a subject from the suburbs of Lisbon on Twitter.” She said the newspaper reached out to the author and asked him for a text. “All we must do is to be attentive.”

### **5.2.5 Community Community spirit and impact**

Carvalho explained that publishing readers’ articles aims also to “create community.” Reis acknowledges that “it was, and it has been very difficult to create community spirit because there seems to be no culture of bringing people together.” She expressed concern because “when one is talking about a whole city, very different, very disparate and very far apart as well, it is difficult because it is a busy city and people have less and less time to look at each other.” That is why she highlighted that “Mensagem is not just an aggregator of stories. Mensagem also brings people together”, by giving the example of the Book Club that promotes a discussion about a book about Lisbon, but it is also a gathering moment.

The three journalists expressed the desire of Mensagem to have an impact on the community. Leote, the social media manager, said that with each shared article the team “strives for some kind of intervention for a change in the city.” Carvalho said that Mensagem should play a “role in provoking awareness of the knowledge of new stories.” She expressed hope that the contact with the community can lead the readers “to act, to get a sense of what they want to do with the city and that there are interesting stories in the city that can be worked on by Mensagem.” Reis said that the neighborhood meetings, for instance, can “give new perspectives” to the community of a specific problem, in addition to being “a moment of community gathering.” When talked about Solutions Journalism articles, Reis expressed the wish that these articles be read by people who oversee any power and with the solutions shared by Mensagem they can change something in Lisbon as “the citizen readers are also those who are in the city hall or other authority bodies and they may think that the solutions Mensagem presents may be a good idea to apply and even solve some problem.”

Apart from the desire to have an impact on some kind of institution of authority, Carvalho explained that she often wonders about this balance: “What is the degree of engagement that makes one thing more important than the other? Changing the life of one person where I truly make a difference and know that I am changing it, or reaching many people and having them suddenly reflect on that life? Or is it the same to reach many people who read my articles but simply remain indifferent?” She said she would rather have a reader change their view of homelessness after reading an article about it than have good engagement numbers, for instance. She concluded by saying that “the impact is not measured solely in large numbers as it can also be measured in the depth of relationships and the magnitude of change.”

### **Business Model and Editorial Strategy**

Carvalho said that Mensagem decided to keep the content open, without any paywall as the newspaper is a “niche media” and this was the “defined strategy with the main investor.” Still, she expressed doubts that there would be enough people donating to make the newspaper sustainable. She wonders if Mensagem “had a thousand people who gave €5 a month, we would have some of the money covered, but a thousand people is a lot of people.”

This strategy enables the team to opt for not covering some trending topics as Mensagem “does not rely on ads and those are things that increase online traffic.” Although the articles are freely accessible to everyone, she explained that there is “no relationship between having open content and higher reader engagement. “The articles are free partly because we are niche, and it would be difficult otherwise.” Reis admitted that she does not know “if there is a relationship between open content and higher interest or engagement of readers because articles are free as a matter of democracy.” She explained that “it is a decision and there are newspapers that cannot afford that or do not want to.”

To promote the articles on social media, Carvalho said that “the team spent some money on social media to promote some of the pieces, but not as a pure marketing strategy.” She reinforced that Mensagem “always had from the beginning a strategy which was not to spend money on marketing.” She highlighted that “all the marketing is organic” as they do not “spend money and never did an advertising campaign.” What Mensagem does, in fact, are “certain actions to reach readers.”

The sustainability of Mensagem is assured by investors but having the content open access raises questions. Carvalho said that she does not agree that the newspaper should ask for reader donations as “people want Mensagem to exist, or they do not.” For her, Mensagem has “to explain to people that it is a small project that needs support to grow and evolve and that growth must be done with the readers.” She admitted that “begging is a bit unnatural in journalistic terms.” She assumed that it is preferable that the Mensagem business be done with “companies that find its work worthwhile and decide to stand with us in this battle.” Above all, she said that Mensagem’s strategy “is not to beg.” In fact, “it is to try to do other things and use our time to do worthwhile projects that make sense, and that people are willing to pay for and be with us on and that have an impact in the community.”

### **Reaching more communities**

According to the journalists, having an impact on the community also means reaching out to more communities. They listed some communities that are already Mensagem's audience, such as the Book Club members, the readers of urban issues, or the fans of history and heritage content. Reis shared that “there are several communities, some more active and each with its own role and others who only like Mensagem for certain things and only care about that, others who like everything.” But Reis said, “there is still plenty of Lisbon to explore.”

Although these target audiences already exist, Carvalho said that Mensagem should invest more time in “working for less privileged communities” whether at events or by representing them in articles. Reis added that it is important “to create niches” and not give up on the niches “because they do have their importance and Mensagem will not be truly inclusive if it does not include them.” She believed that it is sometimes in the niches that one finds “the most committed people, more willing to donate, more willing to be present and to give us ideas, in essence, to really create community.” She concluded by saying that “several niches all together give a great community however different it may be.”

## **Chapter 6: Discussion**

This chapter presents the triangulation of the data collected throughout this study. It shows how the study's goal of analyzing Mensagem's engagement strategies, assessing the alignment of its content and activities with reader needs and expectations, understanding the motivations behind readers consuming Mensagem's content, and examining the patterns of reader engagement with the newspaper have been met. To answer the research question "How does Mensagem reach its readers and how do readers engage with Mensagem?", the data collected in the interview and survey results were triangulated.

This section explains some key findings. The interviews suggested that Mensagem has a clear online and offline strategy to engage with readers. The online strategy takes various forms, whether it is participating in neighborhood groups on Facebook, a broadcast channel on Instagram, asking readers for content, with a newsletter, or trying to make the content shared on social media as relatable as possible. When it comes to the articles on the website, the interviews indicate that there is an effort to appeal to the community spirit, be diverse in terms of protagonists, inspire, and offer solutions to the community's problems. Outside the online sphere, there is also a strategy that goes through the organization of events to get to know and listen to the community, participate in city activities, partnerships with companies, or participate in television and radio programs. The interviews showed the team considers what readers could expect from the newspaper and it applies the User Needs Model intuitively.

Regarding the survey results, they demonstrated that most readers read Mensagem to fulfill the needs presented in the User Needs Model, although the "keep me engaged" need does not show much agreement among the participants.

Engagement data indicated that 65% of readers usually share Mensagem's articles (either on social media (30%) or with friends (57%)), but readers rarely participate in the news process with content suggestions or in events. Most participants have done something based on a Mensagem article, and think the newspaper is a "good newspaper about Lisbon" and it is important to community building in Lisbon.

### **Readers Needs**

The interviewees said that they consider what readers could expect from Mensagem, and the newspaper intuitively applies the User Needs Model. From the survey results, it is

possible to say that readers see the needs stated fulfilled as the questions related to the User Needs Model had high percentages of agreement, except for the question related to the need “engage me”. This could mean that most readers agreed that the needs stated are the reasons why they read the publication. At the same time, the newspaper is aware of what its public wants to read which confirms what Lee and Tandoc Jr (2017) said of journalists increasingly paying more attention to audiences, and it is a confirmation of Newman (2023) prediction.

The needs “educate me,” “give me perspective,” “help me,” and “divert me” garnered a lot of agreement from the participants. It is worth noting that the need “update me” seemed to be fulfilled for almost all the readers (53% agreed that they read Mensagem to be updated on what is happening in the city, 36% strongly agreed). This seems contradictory to the claims of Carvalho and Reis that explained Mensagem does not cover hard news and it prefers not to approach trending topics. At the same time, the figures from questions related to Mensagem as a source for what is happening in the city show the newspaper is an important media for the readers to being up to date.

These data seems contradictory to the claims of Shishkin (2021) as in his studies the articles assigned to the need “update me” were the one with lower consumption. This can be explained by the fact that Mensagem is a new local newspaper and the media studied by Shishkin were mainstream media. Besides, the public could see Mensagem as a reliable city news source – data from the survey also show high levels of Mensagem’s importance to keeping up-to-date about city issues – which corresponds to what Jenkins and Nielsen (2020) said of local media being vital for information. Another explanation could be the interpretation of readers of the meaning of *update*. They could have interpreted it as a way of *just* knowing about what is going on in the city and not as a source of hard news about Lisbon.

The need “connect me” to the community had a great percentage (32%) of responses of “neither agreed nor disagreed.” The need “keep me engaged” with the community activities had a great portion of the readers neither agreeing or disagreeing (47% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they read Mensagem to stay engaged in Lisbon’s activities). Both data could be explained by the difficulty of creating a sense of community in a large city that was highlighted by Reis. Nevertheless, the quantity of readers that agree they read Mensagem to be connected to the community is higher (41% agreed and 19% strongly agree) which could indicate that this local newspaper could be

doing what McNair (2006) wrote about local media being a crucial component in bringing communities together.

According to the interviews, the newspaper does not cover hard news—something that traditional Portuguese media do—and this factor may be a justification for the fact that the answers in the survey indicate that readers read the newspaper for entertainment or inspiration, among other reasons. These results confirm what Kuntze (2022) wrote about media emphasizing different perspectives other than the cold hard facts being an advantage.

Besides, the interviews indicate that the team believes that the newspaper created a need in the readers, whether it be with articles or events. These perspectives are in agreement with the survey results, as in response to the open-ended question (How would you define Mensagem?), it was often said that the journalism Mensagem practices are what was lacking in Lisbon, and it covers topics that other media do not (See Appendix C). These responses (53%) were labeled as “good newspaper about Lisbon.” In addition, the journalists said that they published some articles that could fulfill more than one need, which is something that Shishkin et al. (2023) explained in the evolution of audience-driven publishing.

Taking this into consideration, it is possible to say that Mensagem is fulfilling its readers’ needs.

### **Offline Engagement**

Despite Mensagem being a digital newspaper, the interviews show that the publication wants to be more than an aggregator of stories and therefore wants to be close and listen to the community. In this way, there is a strategy to reach the community outside the online medium. The participants in the interviews stated that offline strategies can be neighborhood meetings, participation in city events, organizing Mensagem events, or partnerships with companies. Carvalho said that through events, the team gains “a closer look and a closer listening” from the community. This will, clearly expressed, is in line with what the authors say about journalists being closer to the public in offline ways (Belair-Gagnon et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2018; Moore & Hatcher, 2019; Radcliffe & Ali, 2017).

However, the survey results do not indicate such high levels of offline engagement as 93% of respondents have never participated in a Mensagem event (and Carvalho said one way to measure offline engagement was the reader's participation in the events). This low participation could be explained by many reasons. The figures show that 57% did not participate in Mensagem's events because they did not know about them. However, Reis' earlier comment that it is challenging to reach various Lisbon communities in such a large city may also be another factor. This explanation is also mentioned by Carson et al. (2016) as one of the difficulties of hyperlocal media.

Besides, only 12% of respondents donated to Mensagem, which suggests not so many people are willing to pay, which is in line with what Carvalho said of the public not wanting to contribute to media and the doubts she expressed about whether there would be enough people to support the newspaper. Survey and director perspectives confirm what Felle (2016) wrote about the difficulty of local media have a successful paywall due to the dimension market.

On the other hand, the survey results demonstrated that 87% of Mensagem's readers discuss the articles with someone (45% said they do it sometimes, 26% said they do it rarely, 15% said they do often, 1% said they do it always) — these data confirm the findings of the Digital News Report 2023 (2023) that showed that discussing news in person is the most often reported method of news participation. 65% remembers a Mensagem's article, and 99% would recommend the publication to someone. From this perspective, readers seem engaged.

Overall, it seems the team is making efforts to engage offline with its readers, but readers are not so engaged, as they hardly ever participate in events or donate. However, an important finding is that readers discuss the newspaper articles with someone, an essential factor of engagement discussed by Lu and Luqiu (2019).

### **Online engagement**

The interviewees agreed that there is an online strategy to engage with its readers by sharing the content in Facebook neighborhood groups, creating an Instagram broadcast channel, asking readers for content or suggestions, sending the newsletter, and sharing their articles on social media in the most relatable way possible. The journalists were unanimous in saying that the goal of these strategies is to foster a sense of community.

These findings follow the engagement practices described by Green-Barber (2018) and by Lee and Tandoc Jr's (2017) perspective about public participation in news production.

Combining the data, the survey results revealed that 30% of readers share an article after reading it on social media, 72% never or rarely comment on an article on the website or social media and 92% said that never suggested something to the newspaper. The low participation in the news process is explained by Leote who said, "people are still not comfortable sending suggestions because they think Mensagem will not be interested". Nevertheless, Reis emphasized the will to seek for readers' content. It should be noted that the fact that 30% of participants share an article on social media after reading it should be interpreted carefully as the question was asked in a general way, with the answer options being "social media", "friends" and "other" and the first options are not mutually exclusive as sharing with friends can be made by social media platforms.

These results may demonstrate a medium level of online engagement as readers effectively read the content online and some of them share it, but at the same time, few of them comment on it or suggest something for the newspaper to cover.

Taking this into account, it is possible to say that online engagement, especially the team's seeking of suggestions and content, may be a dimension to be worked on more by the newspaper if it is a clear goal to have more online interactions with the community. This is a very important characteristic of online engagement, as many engagement definitions refer to audience participation (Broersma, 2019; Ha et al., 2018; Wenzel, 2020).

Nevertheless, keeping in mind what Carvalho said about engagement numbers being misleading, it is possible to say this mindset is like Green-Barber's (2018) as the scholar said that, in her work, audience reach does not indicate how engaged journalism strategies are supplying communities with knowledge and fostering connections based on trust.

### **How Mensagem's content and activities have an impact on readers**

In this section, data and information about editorial choices, the potential impact of Mensagem on the community, and the community spirit will be discussed together as they are intrinsically linked.

The interviews showed a clear desire for Mensagem to have an impact on the community. It is worth noting that Carvalho said that "the impact is not measured solely in large numbers as it can also be measured in the depth of relationships and the magnitude of

change.” This impact can be achieved by writing articles with a diversity of voices, appealing to community values, and showing solutions to community problems. Besides content decisions, creating moments of community gathering and discussion is one of the main goals of the publication. With articles or events, the journalists also expressed a willingness to raise awareness and promote citywide discussions. The goals expressed match the literature on community and local journalism.

From the survey results, it is evident that articles have some impact on the readers as, combining the data, 44% said they did something based on some article they read. When asked to define the newspaper, most readers complimented the publication, saying it is a good newspaper about the city and it is also a community newspaper. Combining the data, 72% gave 7 or more points when asked to assess Mensagem’s importance to stay up-to-date about Lisbon. 61% consider the publication important or very important to build a community spirit in Lisbon. The importance expressed by the readers matches what Reis said about the newsletter reactions (usually they include complements to the newspaper) as she claimed that through them the team can see its work it is important for people.

From the open-ended questions, it is possible to say Mensagem is having a positive impact on the readers as most of them are complimentary to the newspaper. Some of them highlighted how the newspaper is fostering a good neighborhood spirit, describing it as a “milk bottle that was left at the doorstep daily.” These responses coincide with what Reis mentioned regarding the newspaper’s goal of fostering community through the inclusion of various viewpoints, different approaches, and inspiring topics. This corroborates what Byerly (1961) has written about community newspapers having a “friendly neighbor relationship with readers” (p. 25), also a perspective discussed by Park et al. (2022). Although Byerly referred to media outside big cities, it is possible to say that Mensagem could be building a community spirit, even being based in the largest Portuguese city.

Some survey participants claimed that the newspaper is socially conscious and represents a variety of viewpoints, which is in line with Reis’s concern about diversity and representation in the articles. This mention of diversity by the readers and the editor confirms what Ha et al. (2018) argued about the diversification of news sources leading to more engagement and the perspective of Gillmor (2006) that media diversity can result in audiences that are more engaged.

Others survey participants noted how the articles “allow the creation of a collective identity, pushing disagreements into the background and consolidating the city and its parts” and how Mensagem is “breaking barriers” of different parts of society. These responses are consistent with what Carvalho and Reis indicated regarding the efforts being made by the newspaper to incorporate various viewpoints in stories as well as in initiatives that try to connect with Lisbon’s most underprivileged neighborhoods.

The research approached in this study (Barnett, 2009; Jenkins & Nielsen, 2020; Radcliffe & Ali, 2017) highlighted the importance of local media as watchdogs of local power. However, this may not be the case for Mensagem since the journalists explained the newspaper does not cover politics (and hard news are usually associated with political affairs). Nevertheless, it may be possible to say that the publication could be acting in a different role of watch dog since the newspaper does not cover topics directly linked to council politics, but a wide range of issues that affect readers’ lives.

Some survey answers mentioned that the article approaches by giving solutions is an attempt to “improve people’s lives” which is important for “the effective development of a sense of community.” This matches what Curry and Hammonds (2014) found in their study, as readers felt impacted after reading an article with solutions. Other responses refer to Mensagem as a media “raising awareness” which agrees with what Carvalho said of the newspaper having a role in shaking awareness and sparking discussion of local issues, demonstrating that the publication is not solely focused on online metrics. The viewpoints of the readers and the team are in line with what Ardia et al. (2020) and Shaker (2014), wrote about how local news fosters community values. Moreover, Carvalho’s point that it is crucial to consider the newspaper’s impact rather than just the numbers was also raised by Naldi and Picard (2012), who claimed that news startups evaluate success not just in terms of financial gain but also in terms of community impact and public service.

The literature on community journalism (Abernathy, 2014; Firmstone, 2016; Nielsen, 2015; Shaker, 2014) supports the idea that local media outlets help the public to be more civically engaged. This study cannot prove that. Although 41% of the survey participants said that they have participated in a civic movement, it is not possible to say it is related to reading Mensagem.

Answering the research question, Mensagem reaches its readers by having a closer approach on social media, writing articles that appeal to the community spirit and solutions to community problems, and organizing or participating in events. It is possible to say that readers engage in the online sphere with the newspaper as they read the news online. But regarding social media, online engagement is not so strong as not a great proportion of them share or comment on the articles. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that almost half of the readers have done something based on an article and almost all of them discuss an article after reading which shows they are not only engaged offline, but the publication has some impact on them, even if event or participation in the news process is not so significant.

Mensagem's two-and-a-half-year history makes it more challenging to attract readers and to be consolidated in the Portuguese media landscape, which may also help to explain the limited participation in events or in the news process as even the most loyal readers could not be so available to participate in Mensagem's activities or content. Survey figures showed that most readers did not know about the events. Beyond the potential lack of Mensagem's events promotion another reason can explain these data. As Reis and Carvalho explained, the newspaper is a young niche media that it competes with other mainstream media outlets and events that take place throughout the city. Besides, it is difficult to reach a Lisbon that is made up of several communities that are different from each other and, therefore, with motivations that are also different. Taking this into account, it is understandable that Mensagem is still trying to reach readers. Overall, the results show that considering what readers could be expecting seems to be a good way of having more engaged audiences whether online or offline.

### **Limitations of the Study**

As the study was being done, potential limitations began to emerge. It should be acknowledged that the sample includes the newsletter subscribers and the social media followers. However, the survey was sent twice on the newsletter and posted only once on social media, which could indicate the findings cannot be generalized to all Mensagem followers. Even though the sample had a confidence level of 90% and a margin of error of 5%, the findings would be more accurate if the sample had been larger, as the confidence level of 95% would have been achieved.

Second, it should be noted that the survey was designed with Mensagem's team because the newspaper also wanted to conduct a readers' research, which could mean that some questions could have been made differently to get more impartial results. All the questions were discussed with the team and ultimately the final choice rested with the team. Thus, the survey was somewhat limited as when asked (question 10) if readers usually share what they read, the answer options were too broad ("social media", "friends" and "other"). With these options it is not possible to say how many readers share articles on social media, as participants may have interpreted this question in different ways as sharing on social media and with friends are not mutually exclusive possibilities. In any case, to understand whether readers talk about the articles with other people, they were asked (question 17) how often they discuss Mensagem articles with other people, thus making it possible to understand whether they are engaged with the newspaper beyond the online sphere. In future research, questions related to online sharing should be made clearer. Still, other forms of online engagement (such as commenting on articles or sending suggestions) were assessed. Besides, some survey questions could have been made more clearer, as some were open-ended and make data analysis challenging. Nevertheless, as the answers to the open questions were divided into categories, it was easier to analyze them.

Lastly, since I know Mensagem and the team and had worked with them for over a year, there may have been some bias in the interviews, though every effort was made to keep an objective and impartial attitude during the interviews in order to get the most reliable findings possible. Only from the interviews it is not possible to assert that all the engagement strategies implemented are being successful. To avoid hearing only one side of the story, the survey results helped to achieve a balanced perspective.

## **Conclusion**

Journalism seeks to demonstrate its relevance and keep people interested in a complicated multiplatform media landscape. This becomes more challenging for local media outlets as all over the world communities are losing its media and becoming news deserts. In Portugal, most media are based on Lisbon, but they have a national scope. That it is why Mensagem's emergence as a local community newspaper about Lisbon can be seen as a novelty in the Portuguese media context. Additionally, newspapers are trying to have more engaged audiences by finding strategies to show their relevance.

Combining these two perspectives—of the newspaper and of the readers—this study aimed to understand how Mensagem engages with its readers and how the readers engage with the newspaper, focusing on readers' needs. Based on a quantitative and qualitative analysis of readers and journalists' perspectives, it can be concluded that the newspaper engages with its readers with a clear online and offline strategy and readers see their needs fulfilled.

In the online sphere, the newspaper is present in neighborhood groups on Facebook, has a broadcast channel on Instagram, asks readers for content, sends a newsletter, and tries to make the content shared on social media as relatable as possible. The articles are written with the intention of appealing to community spirit by featuring varied protagonists, inspiring, and offering solutions to community problems. From the readers' side, it can be concluded that most readers read Mensagem to fulfill the needs from the User Needs Model. Regarding engagement, this study has shown that readers are not so engaged online, as few shared the articles on social media, commented on the articles or sent suggestions to the newspaper.

Readers are not so engaged offline as few of them participate in Mensagem events or make donations. Nevertheless, this study concluded that most participants have done something because of a Mensagem story, most discuss the articles with someone, and most believe the newspaper is a great newspaper about Lisbon that is important for the development of community spirit in Lisbon which could mean that the work developed by the publication has some impact on the readers. From both viewpoints, it is possible to conclude that Mensagem is connecting with its readers in ways that are of interest to them. However, some online strategies and offline initiatives could get more attention from the audience.

Regarding the online strategy, as the results showed low levels of reader participation in commenting and sharing on social media or suggesting articles, the team could improve its online presence and fostering a closer online relationship with its community. The interviews showed a clear interest in listening to the readers, but maybe this strategy is not completely successful so Mensagem could organize online events like Q&A sessions or webinars about community issues to foster a closer and more dynamic relationship with the readers. This way, in these debates readers could interact with journalists, experts, or community leaders that ideally could lead to a more consolidated “Mensagem community”. Besides, to promote a more engaged online community, the publication could organize more activities that would require greater participation from readers and would acknowledge the readers’ participation, such as naming a “reader of the month”, someone who had suggested the most stories, or made the most comments, and this reader would have access to more content or other benefits such as activities or discounts in a shop or organization that is Mensagem partner. The results also showed low levels of event participation which can have various explanations as detailed before, but Mensagem could improve event promotions to attract more participants. Perhaps, just posting the events’ date online is not enough. The events could be more promoted with, for instance, a consistent publication in Mensagem’s social media, but also with the contacts of the networking team or even the guests of the events could also share the event. Besides, the survey results show that more people would participate in the events if the topic was more interesting. Perhaps, Mensagem could adapt the events’ topic based on readers feedback and match those interests. Lastly, some readers said they would participate if the events were in an accessible place or in a different schedule which could mean the team should consider diversifying the events’ locations and timing based on readers’ feedback through surveys, for instance.

The significance and novelty of this research are that it explored Mensagem for the first time, and it provided real-world value to the newspaper team, as it gives detailed insights into readers’ needs, and how they are engaging with the newspaper content and initiatives. Understanding the link between Mensagem’s strategies, how they are performing, and the readers perspectives will allow the publication to better define its approach and position with the community it serves. These results may be considered when Mensagem’s team is discussing its editorial approach or organizing events and contributed to understand that some engagement strategies should be better worked. To

tailor a better relationship with readers it is necessary to make adjustments that are an ongoing process that requires active listening, genuine interest in the readers and the willingness to adapt to the readers' needs.

Finally, this the current shortage of research in local community media as it is a contribution to the body of knowledge of community media in Portugal as well as the media consumers' perspective of journalism. It would be interesting in future research to conduct a longitudinal study to track and assess reader engagement with the publication over a longer period as this would give some insights into readers' patterns and help Mensagem adapt its strategies. Besides, conducting focus groups and in-depth audience surveys to have a broader understanding of reader preferences and how they affect engagement would provide an understanding that would help the newspaper to adapt its content and activities in a more effective way. An impact assessment of Mensagem events on the community would help reveal how it is contributing to community building and civic engagement. By assessing these elements, the newspaper could continue to improve its editorial approach as well as its interactions with the community. Lastly, future research could address the audience needs in other Portuguese media outlets to assess if the media is considering the public will.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Articles written during the Internship

- Palácio do Grilo. O sonho de um duque português realizado por um milionário francês <https://amensagem.pt/2022/10/08/palacio-do-grilo-duque-portugues-milionario-frances/>
- Património do Chiado, para conhecer esta semana com o Centro Nacional de Cultura <https://amensagem.pt/2022/10/11/patrimonio-do-chiado-para-conhecer-esta-semana-com-o-centro-nacional-de-cultura/>
- Rogério Rosa: o lisboeta que não quer que a deficiência visual o defina. E sonha ser ator <https://amensagem.pt/2022/10/24/rogerio-rosa-lisboeta-destino-pedinte-deficiencia-visual-sonha-ator-teatro/>
- Em Lisboa, as mulheres sobem aos andaimes, pintam a cidade e desfazem preconceitos <https://amensagem.pt/2023/01/18/lisboa-mulheres-murais-pintura-sobem-andaimes-cidade-desfazem-preconceitos/>
- “Perdi tudo!” Em Benfica, as inundações deram cabo do Natal do comércio de rua <https://amensagem.pt/2022/12/15/benfica-freguesias-lisboa-inundacoes-chuva-cheias-deram-cabo-natal-comercio-rua/>
- Crise da habitação em Lisboa leva movimentos cívicos à rua. “Temos de agir agora” <https://amensagem.pt/2023/03/30/habitacao-crise-lisboa-casas-jovens-movimentos-civicos-grupos-manifestacao-pessoas-futuro-sair-rua/>
- Em Benfica, um túnel que era sujo agora homenageia o primeiro jogo da seleção nacional <https://amensagem.pt/2023/02/04/benfica-tunel-homenagem-futebol-nacional/>
- “Mais vale uma sessão de ginástica do que um comprimido!” No Centro de Saúde da Baixa, os médicos também receitam aulas de culinária e História <https://amensagem.pt/2023/03/09/prescricao-social-saude-medicos-receitam-baixa/>
- Fazel e Ebrahim, os músicos afegãos refugiados que se juntam nos palcos de Lisboa para homenagear os sons do seu país <https://amensagem.pt/2023/03/22/refugiados-fazel-ebrahim-juntam-se-nos-palcos-de-lisboa-para-homenagear-musica-do-afeganistao/>
- Estes vizinhos de Chelas fizeram dos seus bairros sítios mais bonitos. Agora, vão mostrar tudo num festival <https://amensagem.pt/2023/03/29/vizinhos-bairros-chelas-fizeram-dos-bairros-sitios-mais-bonitos-festival/>

## Appendix B – Survey

Queremos ouvir os nossos vizinhos!

Este questionário é anónimo e tem a duração média de 5 minutos - é o tempo entre uma paragem de metro e a seguinte; às vezes, também o tempo de espera por um café e um pastel de nata na esplanada. Para que o trabalho da Mensagem de Lisboa (<https://amensagem.pt/>) continue a fazer a diferença na cidade, precisamos de saber o que pensam os nossos vizinhos (os mais leitores e os mais ouvintes):

### 1. Como conheceu a Mensagem?

Amigos  
Redes Sociais  
Media  
Other...

### 2. De que forma costuma chegar à Mensagem?

Site  
Newsletter  
Redes Sociais  
Motor de busca (ex: Google)  
Other...

### 3. Normalmente, o que está a fazer ou onde está quando lê a Mensagem?

Nos transportes  
Nas refeições  
No trabalho  
Em casa - nos tempos de lazer  
Other...

### 4. Quando pensa na Mensagem, vem-lhe à cabeça algum artigo/história em particular? Se sim, qual?

Open ended question

### 5. Porque é que se lembrou desse artigo?

Aprendi sobre a história de Lisboa  
Conheci pessoas novas  
Informe-me sobre um assunto que me preocupa  
Era sobre o meu bairro  
Era uma história que me fez sentir bem  
Other

### 6. O que gostaria que a Mensagem trouxesse mais?

Artigos de História  
Temas de interesse público: habitação, turismo, urbanismo, mobilidade  
Cronistas diferentes  
Ajuda à vida prática - restaurantes, lojas, moda, etc...  
Mais séries  
Mais podcasts  
Other...

### 7. Recomendar-nos-ia a um amigo?

Sim  
Não

**8. Se sim, como nos definiria? Se não nos recomendaria, avance para a próxima pergunta.**

Open question

**9. Depois de ler um artigo da Mensagem, costuma partilhar?**

Sim  
Não

**10. Se partilha, onde o faz? Se não partilha avance para a próxima pergunta.**

Redes Sociais  
Com amigos  
Other...

**11. Com que frequência partilha o que lê?**

Sempre  
Muitas vezes  
Ocasionalmente  
Raramente  
Nunca

**12. Já enviou sugestões de temas para a Mensagem cobrir, alguma reportagem ou crónica escrita por si?**

Sim  
Não

**13. Costuma ouvir os nossos podcasts (Lisboa em 2 minutos; Sons de Lisboa; Mensagem Rádio)?**

Sim  
Não

**14. Se não ouve os nossos podcasts, porque não o faz?**

Não ouço podcasts  
Não me interessa pelos temas  
Não conheço os podcasts da Mensagem  
Other...

**15. Costuma ver as nossas séries (ex: "Cidades para Quem")?**

Sim  
Não

**16. Se não, por que razão não as vê?**

Não vejo séries  
Não me interessa pelos temas  
Não conheço as séries da Mensagem  
Other...

**17. Com que frequência discute os artigos da Mensagem com amigos ou familiares?**

Sempre

Muitas vezes  
Ocasionalmente  
Raramente  
Nunca

**18. Assina e recebe a nossa newsletter?**

Sim  
Não

**19. O que mais gostaria que lhe enviássemos na newsletter?**

Artigos recentes publicados pela Mensagem  
Conhecer melhor o processo de trabalho da equipa da Mensagem  
Eventos próximos em Lisboa  
Curiosidades sobre o que se está a fazer noutras cidades pelo mundo fora  
Other...

**20. Já participou em algum evento da Mensagem? Se sim, em qual?**

Open question

**21. Se sim, porquê?**

Para conhecer outras pessoas  
O tema interessava-me  
Para conhecer a equipa do jornal  
Other...

**22. Se não, porquê?**

Inscrevi-me e à última hora não tive tempo  
Não gostei do tema  
Não soube  
Não gosto de eventos públicos com muita gente  
Other...

**23. Se nunca participou, que o levaria a ir/assistir? Se já participou, avance para a próxima pergunta.**

Open ended question

**24. Prefere:**

Eventos online  
Eventos presenciais

**25. Sente que está informado sobre o que se passa na cidade?**

Sim  
Não

**26. Sente que está informado sobre o que se passa na cidade?**

Sim  
Não

**27. E sobre o seu bairro?**

Sim

Não

**28. Já fez alguma coisa com base em algum artigo que leu? (Voluntariado, doação, mudança de hábitos, assinar petição, etc)**

Sim

Não

**29. Se sim, o quê?**

Open question

**30. Onde vai buscar informação sobre Lisboa?**

À televisão

Às redes sociais

À Mensagem

À rádio

A outros jornais

Other...

**31. Já se envolveu em algum movimento de cidadania? Se sim, qual?**

Open question

**32. Leio a Mensagem para me manter a atualizado do que está a acontecer na cidade.**

Concordo plenamente

Concordo

Nem concordo nem discordo

Discordo

Discordo totalmente

**33. Leio a Mensagem para me educar/saber mais sobre a cidade.**

Concordo plenamente

Concordo

Nem concordo nem discordo

Discordo

Discordo totalmente

**34. Leio a Mensagem para conhecer diferentes pontos de vista.**

Concordo plenamente

Concordo

Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**35. Leio a Mensagem para me divertir/entreter.**

Concordo plenamente  
Concordo  
Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**36. Leio a Mensagem para me inspirar.**

Concordo plenamente  
Concordo  
Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**37. Leio a Mensagem para me conectar com outros lisboetas, projetos e sentir que faço parte de uma comunidade.**

Concordo plenamente  
Concordo  
Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**38. Leio a Mensagem para me envolver nas atividades da comunidade.**

Concordo plenamente  
Concordo  
Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**39. Leio a Mensagem para ter conhecimento sobre a cidade, ter ajuda a compreender o que se passa em Lisboa e com isso poder discutir os assuntos e envolver-me nas atividades da comunidade.**

Concordo plenamente  
Concordo  
Nem concordo nem discordo  
Discordo  
Discordo totalmente

**40. Faz ou já fez alguma doação à Mensagem?**

Sim  
Não

**41. De quanto?**

<5  
5-15  
15-25  
+ 35

**42. Como vê o papel da Mensagem na construção do sentido de comunidade em Lisboa?**

Open ended question

**43. Qual a importância da Mensagem para se manter a par do que se passa em Lisboa?  
(0 - Nada importante, 10 - Muito importante)**

0-10

**44. Que idade tem?**

17 ou menos  
18-20  
21-29  
30-39  
40-49  
50-59  
60-69  
+70

**45. Em que freguesia de Lisboa vive?**

Alcântara  
Ajuda  
Alvalade  
Areeiro  
Arroios  
Avenidas Novas  
Beato  
Belém  
Benfica  
Campo de Ourique  
Campolide  
Carnide  
Estrela  
Lumiar  
Marvila  
Misericórdia  
Olivais  
Parque das Nações  
Penha de França

Santa Clara  
Santa Maria Maior  
Santo António  
São Domingos de Benfica  
São Vicente  
Fora do concelho de Lisboa

**46. Género**

Feminino  
Masculino  
Outro

**47. Habilitações Literárias**

1.º Ciclo do ensino básico  
2.º Ciclo do ensino básico  
3.º Ciclo do ensino básico  
Ensino Secundário  
Licenciatura  
Mestrado  
Doutoramento  
Curso Tecnológico/Profissional

**48. Alguma observação?**

Open ended question

*Os resultados obtidos também serão utilizados para fins académicos, no âmbito de uma tese de mestrado da Faculdade de Ciências Humanas da Universidade Católica Portuguesa que tem como objetivo perceber de que forma a Mensagem chega aos leitores e como é que estes olham para o trabalho desenvolvido pelo jornal.*

*O anonimato e a confidencialidade das respostas serão garantidos.*

## Appendix C – Open ended questions

### Question 8

A melhor informação sobre Lisboa(s), por quem sabe escrever!
Um media local com potencial
Um serviço de utilidade pública
Amor a Lisboa
Interessados
Excelente
Curiosidades
faz-me lembrar "o corvo" que acabou com muita pena minha...
Lisboa aqui e agora
Útil
Uma forma de conhecer mais profundamente a cidade em que vivemos
Um excelente meio de divulgação
Útil e interessante
Uma publicação sobre Lisboa, com notícias e artigos, que não costumam aparecer nos restantes meios de comunicação e um tom que não é sensacionalista nem desinteressado.
Não respondeu
Informativo
Notícias de Lisboa
Jornalismo de proximidade, aberto e, aparentemente, ainda não dominado pelo neoliberalismo económico
Não respondeu
Diversidade com bom jornalismo
Jornal local, aberto à comunidade
Cultos e motivados para a mudança
O jornal da cidade de lisboa
Não respondeu
Um site de gente que anseia pela Lisboa do nosso contentamento :)
Uns muito interessantes artigos "ao redor" de Lisboa
Interessante
Artigos interessantes.
Interessante
Um bom jornal de lisboa
Pessoas que se interessam por Lisboa.
Importante para estar atualizada
jornal sobre Lisboa para lisboetas interessados
Interessante
Não respondeu
Sempre em cima da micro-história.
Não respondeu
Informativo
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Diversidade
Lisboa por dentro
Não respondeu

Informação não intermedia, mas directa
Abrangente e não rotineiro
Informação de qualidade, descomprometida e bem fundamentada
Excelente
Artigos simples e interessantes que divulgam o mais proeminente em Lisboa.
Artigos interessantes e sobre assuntos que não se veem outras fontes
Vizinhos
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Bons artigos
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
informação bem escrita sobre quotidianos de Lisboa
práticos
interessante
Boa e interessante informativo
Com muito interesse e útil. Importante para o exercício da cidadania enquanto habitante de Lisboa.
Lisboa atualizada
Uma newsletter com artigos interessantes sobre coisas que nem alguns que vivem em Lisboa. Com um sentido de comunidade e proximidade principalmente.
Não respondeu
Comunidade interessante para que mora na cidade
Jornalismo alternativo
Jornalismo de proximidade
Informativos e vizinhos
Tem de ser mais abrangente
Pela curiosidade dos assuntos abordados e como é feita a abordagem.
De interesse para quem ama Lisboa
Jornal local, bem feito, bom jornalismo, sóbrio, interessante, só coisas boas
A Mensagem de Lisboa é um meio de informação credível
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Histórias das gentes de Lisboa.
Credível
Uma visão muito realista, independente da cidade. Há um quê de poesia e romance, mesmo quando o assunto é próprio, ruim, triste. Tem um carácter muito próprio.
Não respondeu
Intervenientes
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu

A Mensagem de que precisas para saber o que vibra em Lisboa... e como podes contribuir para a mudança!
A melhor maneira de conhecer Lisboa por dentro e não por fora.
interessante
Comunidade/ boa vizinhança
Não respondeu
Jornal muito interessante
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Úteis. Convida a pensar
Não respondeu
Promotor de novas realidades e de vizinhança
Amigos
Solidários e cívicos
Recomendo a "Mensagem" a um amigo, uma vez que tenho o privilégio de conhecer histórias interessantes de pessoas que vivem na cidade de Lisboa.
Com informações com muito interesse
Não respondeu
Jornal imparcial e com temas muito relevantes. Ajuda a conhecer outras realidades em Lisboa.
Os anos que passei em LISBOA, trouxeram à memória a Cidade dos anos 70 a 90.
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Muito informativa, pelas fotografias e conteúdos
Não respondeu
Interessante
Informativo, didático e independente
Jornal do Bairro, da Cidade, como há muito não se via
Atual
Bons conteúdos, leitura interessante.
Artigos de gente que vive a cidade e quer melhorar os pontos fracos
Solidários e atentos às denúncias do bairro
Uma publicação que retrata Lisboa de um ponto de vista diferente dos outros oCS
imprensa de proximidade :)
Uma intervenção e um olhar diferentes
Inovadores e solidários
Artigos sobre Lisboa, sobre desenvolvimento de comunidades locais, sobre sustentabilidade
Um jornal eletrónico que mostra todas as nuances da cidade
Artigos muito interessantes
Leitura fácil e atual
O blog sobre Lisboa mais surpreendente e por vezes mais interessante da atualidade
como a garrafa de leite que era deixada diariamente à sua porta
Um despertador de consciências
Importante
Continuar a descobrir a cidade.
uma boa aposta na informação local
Como um Grupo com um objetivo jornalístico bem definido e cheio de vontade de o concretizar!

Jornalismo de investigação diferenciador
Conhecimentos da cidade
Não respondeu
Já o fiz a um jovem casal que, por razões profissionais, se mudou de Matosinhos para Lisboa.
Sempre interessantes e bem escritos
Como bom jornalismo de proximidade
Um jornalismo de qualidade, de pesquisa e confirmação das fontes.
Gosto das histórias contadas, não sei porquê, mesmo sabendo que provavelmente as não viverei.
Um jornalismo que vale a pena conhecer!
Úteis e prático
Pessoas com visão e com amor à cidade e ao convívio com os outros
Notícias da cidade
Não respondeu
Um jornal digital inovador, que aposta na proximidade, no diálogo, atento aos problemas sociais da atualidade, sem esquecer a história da cidade e promovendo também a arte e a literatura.
Media claro e perto do povo
Interessantes e com potencial
Já os recomendei a dezenas de Amigos e Amigas. Informação não apenas curiosa como muito (mas MESMO muito!!!) relevante. E exemplarmente tratada na forma e no conteúdo.
Trazem vozes pouco ouvidas de Lisboa para o domínio público
A revista de Lisboa
Jornalismo sobre Lisboa, com participação activa dos lisboetas
Um exemplo de como se faz jornalismo para a comunidade
A voz de Lisboa
Jornalismo local de grande profundidade
Histórias da cidade, jornalismo a sério.
Para aprender mais sobre Lisboa.
Há notícias que só vocês divulgam, têm um cariz humanitário
Criativos
Informação de proximidade
Corajosos
Independentes politicamente?!
Janela aberta sobre Lisboa
Útil
Lisboa viva
Interessantes e com interesse em casos esquecidos/ úteis
Úteis
Não respondeu
Local
Perspícazes e atentos
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Independente e resistente
Com atitude lisboeta
É sobre Lisboa, artigos muito bem escritos e falam de tudo
Muito interessante e giro

Interessante
Não respondeu
Jornalismo de interesse; notícias para além das agendas políticas e grandes media
Uma publicação de carácter local com uma visão interessante
Estórias de quem vive Lisboa
Jornalismo de proximidade, positivo, de soluções
Uma mensagem que nos traz do passado para o presente.
Um jornal solidário com as causas e as pessoas da cidade.
Excelente jornal
Uma das boas novas maneiras de conhecer a cidade e as questões locais.
Não respondeu
Jornalismo de proximidade, não vinculado a partidos políticos, mas com causas.
Socially concerned, community-based media
Escrita concisa, simples, direta, interessante, artigos do mais interesse para os moradores,
Proximidade
Newsletter interessante sobre Lisboa
Notícias locais importantes, contadas de forma humana
Uma boa panorâmica para conhecer melhor Lisboa
Colecionadores de pessoas memoráveis.
Inteligentes e próximos
Jornalismo independente sobre a cidade
Jornal sobre temas de lisboa
Uma voz autêntica e participativa da minha cidade
Amantes de pessoas
Uma revista do e-mail sobre Lisboa, bem feito e escrita e assuntos interessantes
Comunicação inspiradora é feita pela positiva
Quando recomendei a um amigo informei-o que é um jornal com interesse sociológico (área de estudo do meu amigo) porque a informação demonstra como a composição e a substituição da sociedade portuguesa se está a operar
Inovadores, autênticos, construtivos
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
Singulares, Lisboetas, e interessados numa cidade para pessoas que a habitam e a cuidem.
Jornal que procura trazer histórias interessantes e diferentes sobre a cidade
A Mensagem dá-nos a conhecer a "grande" cidade com os seus problemas e histórias com final feliz
Comunicações de sua cidade
Fica a conhecer a tua cidade
Não respondeu
Jornalismo de ótima qualidade, com temas interessantes e relevantes para quem mora e trabalha na cidade.
Diferentes e próximos dos alfacinhas
Comunicação com alma
Independente, progressista, interessante
Um jornal de proximidade, que fala sobre a cidade onde vivemos de uma forma atractiva.
Artigos muito interessantes
Um jornal com assuntos atuais e de proximidade na minha cidade.
Lisboa vista por quem sabe e se importa

Reenvio por mail newsletter
Sentir Lisboa na nossa memória.
Lisboa, coisas que importam
Não respondeu
Espetacular
O tipo de jornalismo que os diários já não fazem muito.
Um jornal de bairro moderno
Um site focado em pessoas da cidade
Variedade e profundidade.
Informação, cultura, cuidado e comunidade.
Tem por tema Lisboa
O melhor conteúdo sobre libra
Notícias interessantes e fora do comum sobre a periferia de Lisboa.
A informação que interessa sobre Lisboa
Um jornal local sobre Lisboa para Lisboa
O melhor jornal português
Como um veículo de informação sobre as várias realidades em Lisboa
Jornalismo local, interessante, com qualidade e rigor
One stop shop para a actualidade de Lisboa
Um portal sobre a Lisboa que encontramos nas ruas, nos metros, nos autocarros e nas esplanadas.
Criativos, defensores de boas causas
Interessante
Jornalismo comunitário e de activismo; que dá a conhecer Lisboa de dentro e por dentro.
Media com qualidade sobre assuntos da cidade de Lisboa
Como uma voz nova, diversa e interventiva. Como uma mensagem de mudança.
Lisboa do lado dos bons
Atentos
Informações verdadeiras sobre Lisboa sem o viés "para turista ver"
Imprensa alternativa sobre a minha cidade
Amantes da proximidade
O jornal do bairro que é uma capital europeia
Lisboa próxima
Jornal local
Um jornal com interesse sobre Lisboa
Fantástico! Super interessante! Informam-nos sobre os temas e assuntos da nossa cidade/comunidade/bairro.
Jornalismo independente sobre a cidade de Lisboa com impacto na comunidade
Um jornal da cidade!
Não respondeu
Um jornal que ajuda a compreender e a mudar a cidade de Lisboa.
Site de notícias para quem mora/gosta de Lisboa, por quem se preocupa com ela e por quem vê-la como uma cidade do futuro e sustentável
Humanos
Jornalistas de esquerda, onde se encontram por vezes artigos interessantes.
Une vision différente de Lisbonne
Não respondeu

Traz A Mensagem de bons tempos e ao mesmo tempo informa-nos do presente
excelente jornalismo, o que todas as cidades (localidades?) deveriam ter <3
que têm uma maneira diferente de mostrar as coisas e Lisboa
Leitura muito interessante com perspetivas positivas, informativa sobre a comunidade
Artigos de grande interesse, com jornalismo rigoroso e detalhado, que não se encontra na maioria da comunicação social.
Informação Real de Hoje
Jornalismo de proximidade
Lisboa sob múltiplas perspetivas, diferentes das habituais
Não respondeu
Não respondeu
O jornal mais próximo da população
Informação. Atualização sobre vários assuntos de interesse
Uma escrita diferente sobre Lisboa
Jornalismo positivo e de qualidade
Um espaço onde um os nossos problemas, valores e preocupações se tornam visíveis
Preocupado em mostrar histórias de Lisboa mais escondidas
Temas interessantes, boa escrita
Um "jornal" com artigos interessantes sobre a nossa cidade
Úteis, informativos, dinâmicos.
Não respondeu
Um jornal digital de Lisboa
Como uma ferramenta de ajuda.
Informa com maior proximidade e aborda temas que realmente preocupam os residentes de Lisboa: pressão turística, salubridade, ruído, problema dos sem-abrigo
Disruptivos
Universais na singularidade de cada história
Como uma revista que aborda temas importantes para quem vive em Lisboa, o que vai acontecer em termos de obras, transformação de locais e transportes públicos
Jornal local aberto ao mundo
Um meio de comunicação mais isento, que não está nas mãos de grandes grupos económicos, e com artigos onde se fez de facto investigação e jornalismo
Outras perspetivas
Um jornal com temas de preocupação social que trazem notícias bem construídas e sobre realidades muitas vezes invisíveis.
Definiria como um dos jornais onde melhor se escreve
Um bom site para quem gosta de Lisboa.
Uma escrita jornalística diferente: humanizada e preocupada com as pessoas.
Um jornal sobre a cidade
Excelente informação nos temas abordados, mais objetiva que sentimental
Se queres saber de Lisboa, assina a Mensagem, é nossa
Gente que tem sabor de vida e alegria para inventar conversas sobre nós todos - humanos
Divertidos e bem-dispostos
Muito interessante
Uma proposta diferente de jornalismo, muito interessante, e que aborda temas não presentes nos jornais regulares. Uma nova forma de fazer jornalismo, adaptando-se ao que esperamos seja o futuro da profissão, mais perto das pessoas e dos seus problemas reais.

Não respondeu
Jornal local de Lisboa de qualidade
Defino-vos como a voz da comunidade. aliás, mais que isso, um agregador de comunidades. e fazedor de tantas outras
Uma organização que promove a comunicação, o desenvolvimento social, e o saber.
A importância do coletivo
Defino como um órgão capaz de dar voz a quem não tem.
Um cocktail de histórias do dia a dia
Um jornal interessante com notícias novas
Próximo, atual
If you want to know what's really going on in Lisbon, in terms of arts, culture, politics you need to read this regularly
Um jornal digital extraordinário, humano, vizinho.
Informações simpáticas e interessantes.
Não respondeu
Equipa que ajuda a descobrir a cidade
Como jornalista, há 44 anos, vejo no vosso trabalho um exemplo raro de...jornalismo. Falo, evidentemente, de Portugal. Basta atravessarmos a fronteira para perceber que em Espanha o jornalismo ainda é o que era!

## Question 42

Cidadania ativa
Visão rigorosa e diversa sobre cidade e fora da logica dos jornais mais clássicos
O meu contacto com a mensagem ainda é pequeno
Ainda incipiente.
Precisaria de conseguir chegar às camadas mais pobres da cidade, que não têm jornais e na tv só vem futebol (eles) e novelas (elas).
Difuso
A mensagem tem potencial para dar a conhecer ações de pequena dimensão que muitas das vezes nem temos noção de que acontecem.
Actuante
Penso que é difícil fazer parte de uma comunidade apenas através de um jornal. Não é suficiente. Mas ajuda.
Católica
O papel de informar
Dando voz a todos
Melhorar os problemas da cidade
Julgo que as escolas deveriam ter uma disciplina, em que o conteúdo programático, incluísse a comunidade, em que se apelasse ao esclarecimento dos vários organismos executivos do país. Apercebo-me que a maioria dos jovens desconhecem, como funcionam e qual o seu valor. Desconhecem quais são os deveres e direitos de um cidadão.
Um despertar de consciência cívica.
Comunicando a cidade a todos
Premente
Mostrar algumas realidades e pontos de vista, que não são divulgados noutros meios
Fgifsj
Cidadania, preservação.
Lento, mas firme ;)
Ajuda a divulgar

Acho que é fundamental um jornal independente e que fala sobre os problemas da cidade/bairros e das pessoas, é fundamental
Informação de proximidade
Dar voz a quem não a tem.
Sinto que trabalhei em lisboa 40 anos e não a conheço
Persistente
Trazer pontos de vista diferentes sobre problemas e opiniões dos diversos sítios da cidade
Gostaria de começar a receber
Tem capital humano
Mensagem ajuda compreender melhor lisboa
Dá informações pertinentes e não sensacionalistas.
Informação, alerta para temas urgentes e crimes de lesa-lisboa
Estamos a financiar a sua publicação em inglês, que vai facilitar a educação dos estrangeiros sobre os problemas da nossa cidade (alguns dos quais estão associados à sua presença e capacidade de poder de compra).
Deveria abordar mais assuntos
Destaca personagens, lugares, e atividades na cidade, incluindo alguns que normalmente estão excluídas dos jornais tradicionais
Atribuo um papel determinante à mensagem (ou a qualquer ocs) que se debruce diariamente sobre as dores e as emoções, o orgulho e as dificuldades de uma comunidade. Que dela pertença e comungue e que de dela para fora - e vice-versa - trabalhe para melhorar a vida de toda a gente.
Gostaria que fosse mais efetivo
Penso que talvez seja necessário mais do que o que a mensagem faz para que ela venha a vingar
Lugar de voz
Qualquer papel a ser de construção da comunidade de lisboa deve-se pautar pela imparcialidade e pelo apartidarismo
É o único jornal sobre lisboa
Útil e sustentável
Influência a política, iniciativa para motivar pessoas a participar
Importante
Positivo. Infelizmente há poucos hábitos associativos nos meus concidadãos
Com interesse
Agregador
Precisaria de conseguir chegar às camadas mais pobres da cidade, que não têm jornais e na tv só vem futebol (eles) e novelas (elas).
Importante
Sim
Acho que a mensagem tem uma boa visão sobre os vários temas da nossa lisboa, e bom sentido comunitário.
É útil
Bom influenciador
Importante
Bem
Bem
Positivo
Positivo
Muito importante
Partilha
Útil
Importante

Útil e importante.
Muito importante
Acho que não leio a mensagem o suficiente
Não tenho opinião
Não tenho opinião
Muito relevante
Muito positivo
Importante
Pode ter influência
Interessante
Importante
Como muito importante
Muito importante.
Positivo
Difusão
É um instrumento valioso
Não vejo.
Importante
Excelente, é uma forma de livre expressão. É político sem politicagem.
A mensagem tem potencial para dar a conhecer ações de pequena dimensão que muitas das vezes nem temos noção de que acontecem.
Actuante
Penso que é difícil fazer parte de uma comunidade apenas através de um jornal. Não é suficiente. Mas ajuda.
Positivo
A mensagem constrói e apoia vários pontos de vista que ajudam no desenvolvimento da comunidade.
Espero que contribua para o empoderamento dos cidadãos, para que nos possamos juntar em torno de causas importantes e locais.
Boa iniciativa que cobre muito mais temas específicos sobre lisboa, dando-lhes espaço amplo para uma discussão que se quer interessante e esclarecedora.
Com interesse
bem da comunidade/ boa vizinhança
Não tenho opinião
Interessante
Não conheço
Católica
Não tenho conhecimento suficiente
Importante
Importante, porque traz o modo de ver de outra geração de lisboetas
Criar espírito de pertença a um território e a uma comunidade multicultural alargada
pode ajudar a unir as pessoas para projetos comuns
O papel da mensagem elabora a construção do sentido de comunidade em lisboa, porque consegue fazer com que a partir de diferentes estilos de vida consiga entender a experiência de vivência numa cidade maravilhosa e elegante.
Tem um papel importante
O papel de informar
Dando voz a todos
Vejo com interesse
Não tenho opinião
Tem sido importante na divulgação de várias iniciativas e grupos criados pela comunidade

Muito positiva e envolvente pela mobilização
Não sei.
Interessante
Interessante
Importante.
Um excelente contributo para mover os lisboetas em prol de um bem comum
Pode ajudar.
Vejo como uma aposta nas pessoas que vivem a cidade, para poderem falar dela na 1ª pessoa e conseguirem dar a conhecer, com isenção, os problemas, mas também a partilha das boas práticas e ideias com interesse para o desenvolvimento do espírito de vida em comunidade.
Importante
Tem sido importante, mas penso que ainda é para um nicho
Agregador
Muito importante. Um olhar diferente
Muito bom
Agregador de pessoas que partilham valores e disseminador de projetos
É um caminho muito interessante de promover a interação entre as pessoas
Útil
Importante
Tem muito potencial agregador de vontades em torno da identidade de Lisboa e da sua qualificação para os residentes e todos os que cá passam
Um bom auxiliar do quotidiano urbano
Instrutivo
Importante
Não conheço a mensagem o suficiente ainda para definir.
Sentido construtivo
Fundamental
Importante
Melhorar os problemas da cidade
Relevante
Bastante interessante e importante, pela informação que faculta aos cidadãos e a aproximação que promove entre os lisboetas entre si e com os problemas que os afetam.
Reforça o sentido de pertença
Acho-a importante, mas penso que deveria ser mais divulgada
Julgo que as escolas deveriam ter uma disciplina, em que o conteúdo programático, incluísse a comunidade, em que se apelasse ao esclarecimento dos vários organismos executivos do país. Apercebo-me que a maioria dos jovens desconhecem, como funcionam e qual o seu valor. Desconhecem quais são os deveres e direitos de um cidadão.
Importante para um conhecimento mais aprofundado na comunidade
Um despertar de consciência cívica.
Excelente iniciativa
Uma iniciativa fantástica
Pode vir a ser importante. Precisa de maior ou visibilidade ou posso ser eu que conheço mal
Fazem um ótimo trabalho
Penso que tem um papel importante através das reportagens que publica e dos eventos que promove, dando voz às pessoas.
Ajuda a mediatizar assuntos poucos mediáticos
Ainda estou a analisar este papel
Muito interessante e carregada de boas intenções - algumas até admiráveis!

Fundamental
Comunicando a cidade a todos
Relata várias iniciativas da comunidade, e alerta para problemas, para os quais a comunidade se pode juntar para solucionar
Muito importante
A união através das palavras permite uma criação de identidade coletiva, relegando desavenças para segundo plano e consolidando a cidade e as suas partes.
Importantíssimo. Temos sociedade extremamente fragmentada e fechada em "casulos"; iniciativas como a mensagem ajudam a pôr esses casulos em contacto e a quebrar barreiras. Pelo menos assim espero.
Premente
Nada a dizer
Mostrar algumas realidades e pontos de vista, que não são divulgados noutros meios
Fgifsj
Nada a dizer
Útil
Importante, mas não determinante
Incremento do sentido de sentimento de pertença e de cidadania
Não sei responder
Interessante
Importante
Útil
Importante
Muito bem.
Cidadania, preservação.
Importante
Importante
Positivo
Lento, mas firme ;)
Ajuda a divulgar
É muito importante. A mensagem permite conhecer projetos que se podem replicar noutros bairros. É importante também conhecer a história e estórias da cidade. Tudo isto reforça o sentimento de pertença e sentido de comunidade.
Importante
Útil, mas não muda grande coisa a alguns disparates que se fazem na cidade.
Nada a dizer
Importante
Importante
Relevante.
Aglutinador.
Importante para o exercício da cidadania.
Pela forma como aborda as questões de Lisboa, sempre na perspectiva de melhorar a vida das pessoas, penso que é uma publicação muito importante para o desenvolvimento eficaz do sentido de comunidade.
Muito importante
É um papel importante - conhecer novos pontos de vista pode agregar pessoas que se sintam sós e vão finalmente perceber que não são as únicas.
Não tenho opinião
Muito importante e com cada vez mais impacto.

Importante!
Acho que é fundamental um jornal independente e que fala sobre os problemas da cidade/bairros e das pessoas, é fundamental
Informação de proximidade
Muito importante
Importante
Ajuda muito a conhecer pessoas e projetos.
Impactante.
Importante
Orgulho numa cidade que queremos melhor, sustentável, integradora
Dar voz a quem não a tem.
Um papel importante, especialmente para os que não se sentem parte e podem ter esperança de mudar esse sentimento
Muito importante e algo a ser mais divulgado!
Sinto que trabalhei em lisboa 40 anos e não a conheço
É um bom contributo
Acho que é muito importante na construção da ideologia woke que ocupará o espaço espiritual da cidade, assim que ficar terminado o movimento de expulsão dos portugueses que maioritariamente a ocupavam até à última década do século xx, e a cidade se transformar num espaço destinado a turistas; expatriados de alto rendimento e isenção fiscal; imigrantes miseráveis oriundos do terceiro mundo; cidadãos originários dos palop em fuga da fome e em busca do estado social português, e portugueses da classe alta que habitam em condomínios nas zonas caras da cidade. Thats all folks !!!
Francamente positivo!
Persistente
Importante
Acho que é um papel muito importante para criar um sentimento de pertença.
Essencial. Nunca desistam
Trazer pontos de vista diferentes sobre problemas e opiniões dos diversos sítios da cidade
Numa época em que as pessoas vivem cada vez mais na sua "bolha", o importante é sabermos que há quem se preocupe com os outros e vá até eles
Gostaria de começar a receber
Tem capital humano
Mensagem ajuda compreender melhor lisboa
Dá informações pertinentes e não sensacionalistas.
Imprescindível
Activo e interessante
Importante
Útil
Hoje, é muito importante desenvolver as iniciativas em prol dos laços humanos. Incentivar o espírito de pertença e de solidariedade.
Vejo que é positivo por nos mostrar o presente de diversos bairros e realidades que de outra forma não conheceríamos e, com isso, criar esse sentido de comunidade.
Informação, alerta para temas urgentes e crimes de lisboa
Não sei, as comunidades virtuais são um pouco incompreensíveis para mim
Importante
Um esforço positivo
Muito bem
Ajuda

Estamos a financiar a sua publicação em inglês, que veio facilitar a educação dos estrangeiros sobre os problemas da nossa cidade (alguns dos quais estão associados à sua presença e capacidade de poder de compra).
Importante
Deveria abordar mais assuntos
Conhecimento, partilha.
Muito importante
Importante
Não tenho opinião
Importante
Muito importante
Destaca personagens, lugares, e atividades na cidade, incluindo alguns que normalmente estão excluídas dos jornais tradicionais
Não sei
Muito importante
Bem
Como um veículo de informação alargada
Nos mostra que outras pessoas também veem os problemas que vemos.
Ajuda na construção desse sentido de comunidade
Relativa...
No dar visibilidade a projetos e grupos que outros meios de comunicação não cobrem.
Importante
A mensagem tem um lado de denúncia social e de promoção do envolvimento cívico, nesse sentido ajuda a construir um sentido de comunidade em lisboa.
Importante
Muito positivo
Mesmo à distância, vejo como fundamental alimentar o espírito de comunidade para além do mundo virtual, criando sentidos na experiência real do cotidiano na cidade.
Bom
Não tenho opinião
Atribuo um papel determinante à mensagem (ou a qualquer ocs) que se debruce diariamente sobre as dores e as emoções, o orgulho e as dificuldades de uma comunidade. Que dela pertença e comungue e que de dela para fora - e vice-versa - trabalhe para melhorar a vida de toda a gente.
Útil
Importante
Tem um papel interventivo para os que se interessam pela cidade
Serviço público útil e educativo/informativo muito importante.
Ligação entre pessoas, aproximação das histórias de bairro, dar a conhecer projetos locais
Muito importante.
Tem um papel significativo na partilha da vida associativa em lisboa, bem como das histórias das pessoas que fazem a cidade, humanizando muito a vida na cidade.
Mantém as pessoas informadas sobre a cidade.
É bastante interessante e eficaz
Activista
Não vejo. Falam de comunidades. Africanas normalmente. E assim mantem-se separadas.
N
Muito relevante. O trabalho da mensagem conecta as pessoas, através de histórias comuns.
De muita relevância e um bonito papel
Excelente, por favor continuem
Não tenho opinião

Muito positivo, mas pouco abrangente e com pouca divulgação
Bastante importante.
Muito importante
Importante
Fundamental
Como forma de mobilizar, informando
Não tenho opinião
Um elo de ligação
Uma ajuda a quem vive afastado do que se passa na sociedade
Importante
Relevante e uma ideia original
Fulcral, a comunidade é que faz um lar, um sentimento de pertença, de inclusão e aceitação dos moradores
Um papel fundamental para conhecermos outras realidades da nossa lisboa
Importante
Tem um papel importante
Importante.
Melhorar a cidade. E também fazer publicidade de eventos.
Gostaria que fosse mais efetivo
Sinto que esse papel tende a ser mais eficaz
Muito positivo por ser praticamente o único
Acho importante
Importante
Como uma importante ajuda
De forma muito positiva
Penso que talvez seja necessário mais do que o que a mensagem faz para que ela venha a vingar
Lugar de voz
Uma voz não associada forçosamente a um partido político ou visão partidária que traz temas de preocupação para todos de uma forma construtiva e com jornalismo sóbrio.
Um papel fundamental
Não vejo!
Fundamental!
Acho importante
Muito positivo
Muito importante
É importante e para resistir é preciso vontade e um certo gosto pela aventura
Pode ser importante, mas teria de ter mais visibilidade e comunicação simples e direta
Muito importante
Muito importante
Qualquer papel a ser de construção da comunidade de lisboa deve-se pautar pela imparcialidade e pelo apartidarismo
Bastante importante
Ao dar visibilidade a tantas e tantas comunidades espalhadas por esta cidade fora e ao contribuir para que outras possam surgir, vejo a mensagem a consolidar cada vez mais esse seu papel.
Necessária. Pertinente.
Importante
Vejo a mensagem como algo mais empenhado em dar relevância a histórias de vida de pessoas, de bairros e da nossa cultura, que outro órgão de comunicação, raramente o faz.

Muito positivo e deve continuar.
É o único jornal sobre lisboa
Útil e sustentável
Opening up conversations, particularly to newcomers who wish to be part of solving civic problems (since we contribute to creating issues being from abroad)
Aproxima gentes, desejos e soluções
Muito importante.
Bom
Não tenho opinião
Acho que o vosso papel indispensável. Até porque, pelo meu conhecimento, parece-me único; ou seja, dão a conhecer aspetos de lisboa e da sua vida que praticamente são absolutamente ignorados pelos meios generalistas. E não me cansam com processos de inquisição medievais, como aqueles que ultimamente me tem saturado todos os meios!

## **Appendix D – Script interviews**

### **Catarina Carvalho script**

1. Como é que defines engagement?
2. Através de que iniciativas offline a Mensagem chega aos leitores, à comunidade?
3. Como é que a Mensagem interage com os seus leitores? / Como descreves a relação da Mensagem com os leitores?
4. A Mensagem tem em conta as necessidades e os interesses dos seus leitores na decisão dos temas que cobre?
5. Na tua opinião, com a presença da Mensagem em Lisboa, a cidade já não é um deserto de notícias?
6. Como é que a Mensagem equilibra as necessidades dos seus leitores? Seguem o modelo User Needs Model? Pedir exemplos práticos
7. O modelo de negócio da Mensagem fomenta o engagement?

### **Catarina Reis script**

1. Como é que se decide quais as histórias a cobrir no jornal? Qual o critério
2. A Mensagem tem em conta as necessidades e os interesses dos seus leitores quando decidem as histórias a cobrir?
3. Como é que a Mensagem recolhe o feedback dos seus leitores?
4. Com o contacto que a Mensagem tem com os leitores, tenta aceder aos seus pedidos no conteúdo que publica? Pedir exemplo prático
5. Como é que o jornal promove um sentimento de pertença/comunidade com os leitores? Pedir exemplo prático
6. A Mensagem dá prioridade à cobertura de histórias que oferecem soluções práticas para os problemas que a comunidade enfrenta?
7. Qual a relação entre o modelo de negócio e o engagement

### **Inês Leote script**

1. Definição de engagement no contexto da Mensagem?
2. Como é que a Mensagem interage com os leitores? Resposta a comentários, tópicos, grupos de vizinhos?
3. Como é que utilizas as redes sociais para interagir com os leitores do jornal? Pedir exemplos práticos
4. Que métricas utilizas para medir o sucesso dos esforços de Engagement nas redes sociais?
5. Como é que decide em que plataformas se deve concentrar e que conteúdo deve publicar? / Como é que a Mensagem decide quais as plataformas de redes sociais a que deve dar prioridade para chegar aos leitores?
6. A Mensagem procura ativamente as opiniões dos leitores nas plataformas das redes sociais?
7. Como é que a Mensagem garante que o seu conteúdo nas redes sociais é cativante e relevante para o seu público?
8. De que forma a Mensagem adapta o conteúdo às diferentes redes sociais?
9. O tipo de conteúdo que a Mensagem escolhe fazer tem em conta o engagement nas redes sociais?

## **Appendix E – Transcript of interview with Catarina Carvalho**

### **Como é que tu defines e medes o *engagement*?**

Há várias formas. Nós temos as quantitativas que são as que nos chegam através do *engagement* medido nas redes sociais, que há certas formas de medir. Se as pessoas viram, quanto tempo tiveram. Os artigos terem comentários ou não, os mails que as pessoas nos mandam, as respostas a inquéritos. Depois, as idas aos nossos eventos e, de certa forma, as pessoas com quem nós falamos, se nos falam da Mensagem e como falam.

### **E através de que iniciativas offline a Mensagem chega aos leitores? Por exemplo, eventos ou projetos?**

Sim, nós temos vários eventos. Nomeadamente, o Clube de Leitura agora mais frequente, no café *A Brasileira*. Já fizemos várias reuniões de vizinhos e vamos voltar a ter uma espécie de reuniões de vizinhos específicas. E depois também temos participado em eventos fora daqui, como nomeadamente os Arraiais e o Festival Iminente, por exemplo, de quem somos parceiros sempre todos os anos.

### **E parcerias com empresas ou associações?**

Nós temos, por exemplo o caso da Passa Sabi, uma parceria para o projeto dos correspondentes de bairro. Mas nós também somos poucos e, portanto, não nos podemos espalhar em muitas coisas diferentes. Um dos grandes desafios é precisamente esse, que é o de equilibrar o trabalho editorial puro e duro, que é aquele a que os jornalistas estão mais habituados, com a ideia de ter eventos e de fazer coisas com a comunidade fora desse trabalho jornalístico muito específico.

### **E aqueles eventos do El Corte Inglés, por exemplo?**

Sim, também isso. Fizemos o ano passado vários eventos no El Corte Inglés, este ano não fizemos. Teve imensa resposta, tivemos lá muita gente, mas não sabemos se é por causa da Mensagem, se é por causa dos conteúdos, porque esse é um ponto muito importante. Uma coisa é teres a marca Mensagem, outra coisa é teres os conteúdos que a Mensagem proporciona às pessoas. E na nossa vida as duas misturam-se bastante, porque nós somos reconhecidos pelos conteúdos e também pela marca Mensagem como um conjunto de atividades.

**Mas as presenças nesses eventos, por exemplo, do El Corte Inglês e do Iminente, também têm uma estratégia associada?**

Sim, esses eventos são para nos mostramos. Tal como as idas à televisão e a ideia de que podemos participar em programas de televisão ou de rádio, é sempre essa estratégia de divulgação. A Mensagem sempre teve desde o início uma estratégia que foi não gastar dinheiro em *marketing*. E isso foi uma coisa que nós sempre fizemos desde o início, ou seja, todo o nosso *marketing* é orgânico. Não gastamos dinheiro. Tudo o que fazemos são determinadas ações para chegar às pessoas. Não fizemos publicidade, nunca fizemos uma campanha de publicidade, gastámos algum dinheiro na *internet*, nas redes sociais a divulgar algumas das nossas peças, mas não como pura e simplesmente uma estratégia de marketing.

**E como é que é a relação com os leitores?**

É muito de amor. Eu acho que às vezes até é um bocadinho difícil porque nós, quando recebemos umas críticas negativas, ficamos muito chateados com isso, muito arrasados, porque nós temos muito cuidado em manter a linha do que é a Mensagem e de ter um certo ponto positivo e construtivo sobre a nossa relação e o mundo. Eu acho que as pessoas reconhecem isso e é por isso que nos seguem. A maior parte das coisas que são mais lidas têm a ver com coisas que dizem respeito a pessoas de quem nunca se fala ou com quem nunca os *media* vão falar. E eu acho que esse é um papel que nós temos, que é o de provocar esse conhecimento dessas novas histórias. Por isso, a relação é muito assim, é muito ainda de grande amor. Ou seja, nunca temos críticas online brutas. Tivemos uma vez ou duas críticas muito pesadas, mas nada de especial, não temos aquele ódio que as pessoas têm, ódio que às vezes até provoca algum *engagement* negativo, não temos isso.

**E têm em conta o que os leitores estão à espera de ler na Mensagem?**

Sim, de certa forma temos em conta do que os leitores estão à espera. Para nós é um bocado difícil, porque nós quando nascemos não queríamos ser um site utilitarista, ter um sistema de informações puro e duro e de certa forma pouco jornalístico, pouco de perceber o que é que se está a falar, porque já havia muitos em Lisboa e nós não tínhamos equipa para isso. Queríamos fazer um trabalho um bocadinho mais profundo e nesse sentido acabámos por criar nos leitores uma necessidade. Aliás, o título da minha apresentação normalmente que eu faço sobre a Mensagem é: como os lisboetas e as suas necessidades

informativas criaram um tipo de jornalismo sobre Lisboa. E isso é muito evidente nestes últimos inquéritos, embora seja menos evidente do que no primeiro inquérito que era muito *overwhelming* e inspirador. É essa ideia de tu teres histórias que ninguém conhece e que, portanto, não sabe que quer ler, ou seja, não sabe que tem a necessidade de conhecer essa parte da vida, até a conhecer. O que acontece, agora, como nós já criamos essa necessidade, as pessoas já a têm satisfeita e, portanto, se calhar falam menos dela porque sentem menos que isso é uma novidade, quase três anos depois.

**E essas necessidades são artigos normalmente sobre história, curiosidade?**

As necessidades não são só artigos, também são coisas que nós fazemos, mas sim, são sobretudo conteúdos. Os artigos de história têm muito interesse, histórias desconhecidas no sentido de histórias que as pessoas já viram o que se está a passar, é uma curiosidade e nunca tiveram a oportunidade de perceber o que era. E depois, muito histórias de interesse humano que podem inspirar ou não, também podem ser histórias de coisas mais tristes, mas com carácter social.

**E o User Needs Model de Shishkin, a Mensagem aplica-o?**

Sim, aplicamos o User Needs Model. Desde o início estamos de forma inconsciente a aplicá-lo. O *Keep Me On Trend* é o que menos fazemos sobretudo relacionado com as redes sociais. Mas, sim, não é só inconsciente, também é consciente, nós não fazemos é uma matriz. Mas estão sempre presentes, quando nas reuniões falamos das várias histórias e do equilíbrio que elas têm na nossa página e na semana e o que é que vamos publicar hoje, amanhã e depois, fazemos muito esse equilíbrio.

**Por exemplo, aquilo que falaste do Keep Me On Trend, seria que género de artigo?**

O keep me on trend seria tendências, ou seja, o que é que está a dar, o que é que se está a falar. Por exemplo, hoje está-se a falar da ciclovia de Almirante Reis, faríamos essa história da ciclovia de Almirante Reis. Nós não fazemos isso, também porque podemos não fazê-lo. Não dependemos dos anúncios e isso são coisas que fazem aumentar o tráfego. Mas a verdade é que também o fazemos para não ser iguais aos outros, porque toda a gente está a falar sobre isso.

**E, por exemplo, a necessidade de Educar, seria com que tipo de artigo?**

Educar é, por exemplo, o trabalho sobre as raízes africanas do fado. Eu acho que tanto *educa*, como *inspira*. No fundo, estamos a falar de coisas que as pessoas não conheciam. E que faz sentido que as pessoas conheçam e que faz sentido que elas saibam de quê é que nós estamos a falar. No caso do artigo sobre os jacarandás, falamos de onde é que eles vieram e como é que eles inundaram a cidade. Por exemplo, o texto sobre as cidades saudáveis, é a mesma coisa, são áreas que nós vamos obviamente explicar às pessoas, mas também educá-las num certo sentido. No artigo dos refúgios climáticos explicamos o que é que isso significa na cidade, portanto, há muita parte que tem a ver com isso. E mesmo para as pessoas se envolverem temos, por exemplo, a história da Frente Grisalha pelo Clima.

### **E a participação dos leitores na Mensagem?**

Nós recebemos crónicas, mas também recebemos ideias de histórias através do e-mail e dos comentários no artigo e também no Facebook e no Instagram.

### **Qual é que é o objetivo de publicar o que os leitores escrevem?**

O objetivo de publicar o que os leitores escrevem, no fundo, é criar comunidade e fazer com que aquilo que nós estamos a fazer seja importante para as pessoas. Se não for importante, não vale a pena, não há nenhuma necessidade. Se as pessoas não se envolverem, na verdade, não vão ter esse interesse em quererem participar.

### **De que forma é que com os eventos que organiza, a Mensagem contribui para o espírito de comunidade?**

Nós temos feito menos eventos do que gostávamos porque, de facto, o ritmo é muito elevado, há muita coisa a acontecer, ao mesmo tempo, mas mesmo que tenham sido poucos foram bons. Nos eventos, estás sempre a falar com as pessoas nos olhos e conheces pessoas que conhecem a Mensagem, mas que tu não conheces e, portanto, essas pessoas são sempre, obviamente, as pessoas mais empenhadas, mais educadas e etc. Isso também coloca uma questão que é, parte do nosso tempo também tem de ser a trabalhar para comunidades menos privilegiadas do que essas. Essas comunidades que normalmente participam nos nossos eventos são bastante privilegiadas e vivem no centro da cidade e, por isso, têm acesso a estes eventos. Mas isso não impede que cheguemos a outras comunidades menos privilegiadas, nomeadamente, para as levar a agir, para ouvi-las, para ter noção do que é que querem fazer da cidade, para ter noção de que há histórias

interessantes na cidade e que podem ser trabalhadas por nós. Tudo isso é o que nós conseguimos obter nos eventos, é, no fundo, um olhar e um ouvir mais perto.

### **E para essas pessoas também se verem representadas?**

Também, mas elas podem se ver representadas até nos próprios conteúdos. Por exemplo, quando tu fazes a própria representatividade dos temas, às vezes basta aparecer. Às vezes as pessoas que não estão nunca nos jornais, de repente, aparecem nos jornais e isso é extraordinário para elas, para a sua comunidade e para quem os vê como exemplo e como *role model*.

### **E já tens resultados disso?**

Eu acho que a forma como a Mensagem tem crescido ao longo destes dois anos é um efeito disso. De repente toda a gente pensa, “mas há quanto tempo é que vocês já cá estão?” Mas é muito pouco para o que nós já conseguimos e ainda vamos conseguir mais. Às vezes não é tanto os números. Se calhar temos de mudar o nosso pensamento em relação aos números, porque acho que andamos todos um bocado enganados com os números de tráfego que podem ser enganáveis. O que é que me interessa mais? Mudar a vida de uma pessoa em que eu mudo mesmo essa vida e sei que eu estou a mudar ou chegar a uma grande quantidade de pessoas e elas de repente refletirem sobre essa vida ou então chegar na mesma a muitas pessoas que leem os meus textos e simplesmente não aquece nem arrefece. Qual é o grau de *engagement* que faz com que seja mais importante uma coisa do que a outra? O que é preferível: um trabalho para um milhão de leitores que só leem os meus títulos e que não sabem nada, nem foram nada engajados pelo que eu fiz, ou chegar a 10 pessoas que tiveram uma manhã num debate ou num passeio em Lisboa e que aprenderam mais sobre a cidade? Ou seja, onde é que começa a mudança? Onde é que a mudança se opera? É em quem só lê os títulos ou vê as coisas no Instagram ou é em quem, porque leu uma reportagem do Jorge Costa, mudou a sua atitude perante os sem abrigo? Claro que nós não vamos mudar o mundo, mas a questão é, o impacto não é medido só em grandes números, também pode ser medido em profundidade de relações e de mudanças.

### **E com essas mudanças e mais conteúdos sobre a cidade, Lisboa já não é um deserto de notícias?**

A Mensagem tem dois anos e meio e acho que Lisboa já não é um deserto de notícias como era, mas não é só por causa de nós. Temos também visto cada vez mais notícias sobre a cidade e as áreas metropolitanas, embora muito mais sobre a cidade. As áreas metropolitanas continuam a ser muito um deserto naquilo que é de pessoas, de ações específicas, os poucos jornais regionais à volta de Lisboa continuam a ser muito institucionais. Eu gostava que esse impacto fosse avaliado antes da Mensagem existir e depois: quantas notícias se produziam sobre Lisboa e quantas notícias se produzem hoje sobre Lisboa e sobre os lisboetas em geral. Para ver o impacto real.

**O facto de a Mensagem ter os conteúdos abertos e as pessoas não pagarem para ler, achas que faz com que as pessoas se sintam mais interessadas e envolvidas no conteúdo da Mensagem ou não há uma relação entre estes dois fatores?**

Não há uma relação entre termos os conteúdos abertos e o maior envolvimento dos leitores. Nós temos os conteúdos abertos em parte porque somos de nicho e é muito difícil. Tínhamos uma escolha que podia ser feita que era, ou nós, sendo de nicho, cobrávamos muito para ter os nossos conteúdos fechados e há exemplos na Europa de grandes marcas que fazem isso e que têm os conteúdos fechados e que cobram muito por eles, mas são conteúdos muito específicos, por exemplo, de negócios ou de outras coisas assim que têm interesse utilitário, ou então mantínhamos os conteúdos abertos graças à estratégia definida, com o nosso principal investidor. A questão é: será que nós acreditamos que há gente suficiente à volta de Lisboa atualmente com o panorama degradante que há nos media, será que valia a pena ter esses conteúdos fechados, chegar a menos gente e essa gente ser a gente que paga? Os dados dizem que as pessoas não estão tão disponíveis para pagar, então nós preferimos que o negócio da Mensagem seja feito através de empresas que acham que o nosso trabalho é meritório e que decidem estar connosco nesta batalha.

**As pessoas realmente não estão disponíveis e nunca seria sustentável?**

Pois, se pensássemos que se tivéssemos mil pessoas que dessem 5 euros por mês, tínhamos uma parte do dinheiro coberto, mas como sabemos mil pessoas é muita gente. Nós não queremos adotar a estratégia de pedinchar às pessoas para doarem. Ou as pessoas querem que nós existamos ou não querem. Temos de explicar às pessoas que é um projeto pequeno, precisa de apoios para crescer e evoluir. E esse crescimento tem de ser feito com os leitores. Agora, pedinchar é um bocado contranatura em termos jornalísticos. Se tens de pechinchar, então o que é que estás cá a fazer? Ou as pessoas acham que tu vales

a pena e é bom que existas ou então não faz muito sentido. A nossa estratégia não é pedinchar. Não é isso. É tentar fazer outras coisas. Usar o nosso tempo a fazer projetos válidos que façam sentido e que as pessoas estejam disponíveis para pagar e para estar connosco neles e que tenham um impacto na comunidade.

## **Appendix F – Transcript of interview with Catarina Reis**

### **Qual é o critério para a escolha das histórias e temas a cobrir?**

A primeira estratégia de todas é o local. E o local aqui parece óbvio sendo um jornal local, mas não é. Quando o local também é nacional, ele está a ser discutido a nível nacional, temos sempre esta discussão de: vamos atrás do que toda a gente está a ir, ou não vamos de todo ou vamos de outra forma completamente diferente? Depois, não cobrimos política pura e dura, não há *hard news*. Não é por sabermos que foi agora decidida uma coisa na Câmara que vamos publicar. Quando muito estamos atentos e vemos se aquilo tem interesse para um segundo pé. Portanto, tem de haver essa discussão de perceber se faz sentido para nós ou se o tema pode ser escrutinado de outra forma ou se é um assunto espuma dos dias. Depois, a inclusão e a diversidade. Isso é muito importante. Temos de garantir a diversidade de fontes, sempre, mas também a diversidade de protagonistas, porque nós, de facto, nós queremos isso. Os nossos intervenientes também têm de ser espelho dessa diversidade. E depois, quando vemos que um artigo tem possibilidade de inspirar e de ser uma coisa a que nós chamamos de jornalismo de soluções, então, essa é a nossa prioridade.

### **Mas essas estratégias têm em conta o que é que os leitores estão à espera?**

Há alguns ganchos que nós já temos. Por exemplo, nós sabemos que os leitores gostam de coisas curiosas. E coisas curiosas é, normalmente, história. Ou seja, um sítio pelo qual passam todos os dias, sabem que há ali qualquer coisa, mas não sabem exatamente a história daquele sítio. Quer ele esteja a ser ocupado, quer esteja abandonado. E, portanto, nós sabemos que isso é sempre um gancho tal como as histórias sociais que inspirem. Nós temos uma discussão desde o início: os leitores sabem aquilo que precisam? Esta é uma discussão. Se calhar não sabem porque não havia jornal algum que fizesse o que a Mensagem faz hoje. E, portanto, os leitores não podiam dizer que precisavam de algo como o que a Mensagem faz. De alguma forma, nós criamos uma necessidade nas pessoas que, se calhar, não é irracional para elas. As pessoas não estão a dizer que querem uma história que as inspire. Se calhar, não é irracional. Mas nós sabemos, pelos números e pelo *engagement*, como isto que nós fazemos, de facto, fazia falta às pessoas. Há muita impotência perante as notícias, no geral. E o que nós fazemos é escavar a curiosidade outra vez, escavar sobre as coisas que não estavam a ser contadas.

## **Estavas a falar dos números, que as histórias que inspiram e de História têm maior visualização. É isso?**

Posso-te dizer quais são os artigos mais lidos de sempre: “A senhoria sensata ou como perdi um T1 nos Olivais para um casal brasileiro” é um artigo que inspira, “Quem era o “Rei do Lixo” que enriqueceu com a sua recolha de Lisboa para o Barreiro, onde construiu um castelo” apela à curiosidade, o texto “Praça do Império: Agnelo, o calceteiro caboverdiano que se orgulha de ter feito o brasão do seu país no chão do novo jardim”, causou bastante polémica, o artigo “Como é viver no quarteirão mais populoso de Lisboa (e do país)? Um T1 para oito e lojas do mundo em “vida de bairro” é um artigo curioso. Depois, o artigo “Quem é Alice Neto de Sousa, a lisboeta que pôs toda a gente a falar de poesia” foi publicado numa altura em que se falava muito do poema dela, mas ninguém sabia quem ela era e nós fizemos a história sobre ela. Depois, o texto sobre a Estação do Alvito é também uma curiosidade porque é uma estação que está parada. Não existe, praticamente, só fisicamente. É uma curiosidade e algumas pessoas nem sequer sabiam que isto existia. Estes são os textos mais lidos de sempre. Se fizermos a análise por ano vemos que os artigos mais lidos são sempre sobre natureza, História, histórias inspiradoras ou curiosidades. Um dos artigos mais lidos de 2022 foi uma crónica intitulada “Ode ao comboio suburbano” que era sobre a Linha de Sintra. E foi muito interessante porque era um texto de um miúdo que andava no Twitter a escrever umas coisas sobre a linha de Sintra. E que eram engraçadas e interessantes. É uma pessoa que faz a linha de Sintra todos os dias e começa a contar o que aquilo tem de interessante à volta. Porque ninguém vai à linha de Sintra por prazer. E nós chegamos até ele e pedimos-lhe uma crónica sobre isto. Tendo em conta isto é muito fácil a partir daqui perceber exatamente o que as pessoas querem. Estas também não são só as histórias mais lidas, são as histórias em que há mais engagement: comentários, reações, e-mails. E tens uma coisa muito gira também de acontecer. Pela newsletter também consegues ver a importância que isto tem para as pessoas porque quando nós enviamos uma newsletter com uma destas histórias nós sabemos que são boas e que vai preencher esta necessidade que não existia e que passou a existir. É quase certo que vais ter muitas respostas à newsletters. Pode ser só: "Que giro, gosto tanto de vocês, Mensagem". Ou pode ser: "que engraçado, não sabia sobre isto, nem andava atento ao que vocês fazem, mas agora vou andar". Portanto, o engagement podes medir de variadíssimas formas. Este da newsletter, eu acho particularmente muito interessante porque um e-mail não é a mesma coisa que escreveres numa caixa de comentários de uma rede social a que aparentemente estarias mais habituada. É rápido

e não dá trabalho. E na newsletter as pessoas sabem que vai parar diretamente à caixa da Mensagem. Aliás a nossa newsletter, vem sempre assinada por alguém. E, portanto, as pessoas também dizem o nosso nome e as pessoas também falam connosco e é capaz de ser o mais pessoal que nós temos do engagement digital.

**De que forma é que a Mensagem usa essas sugestões ou até coisas escritas por outros, como falaste daquela questão do Twitter?**

Sim usamos sugestões dos leitores. No Twitter é estarmos atentos ao que se passa. Depois, outra forma é criar reuniões de vizinhos, ir aos bairros, escolher um tema que preocupe aquela zona e discutir. A primeira vez que nós fizemos isto foi na freguesia de Belém e testamos um modelo. Sentamo-nos e perguntamos à comunidade que histórias é que tinham para perguntar, mas não resultou porque não levamos tema.

**Porquê?**

As pessoas sugeriram coisas que nunca caberiam na Mensagem como, por exemplo, queixas dos vizinhos, que não têm impacto para o nosso trabalho na Mensagem. E nós tivemos de parar. Este foi o primeiro desafio porque as pessoas não sabem também o que é que nós procuramos. Porque esse não é o trabalho das pessoas. Esse é o nosso trabalho. Elas não sabem exatamente qual é o nosso processo. A Mensagem ainda é recente. As pessoas não sabem o que cabe e o que não cabe no nosso processo de escolha de temas. Até nós às vezes temos dúvidas, quanto mais uma pessoa que não está por dentro deste processo. E depois decidimos que o que nós temos de fazer é ir ter com as pessoas, mas levar um tema que sabemos que preocupa aquela zona.

E fomos depois a Alvalade e levamos a debate o problema do estacionamento. E correu muito bem por duas razões. Primeiro porque levamos um tema e afunilamos a conversa para aquilo que sabíamos que gerava muita polémica e muita divisão. Mas nós não queremos chegar ali e pôr os moradores uns contra os outros. A questão não é essa. Tentamos tornar a coisa o mais construtiva possível. Primeiro, chamámos as crianças também. No cartaz que nós lançamos e pusemos na biblioteca de Alvalade dissemos: "é sábado, traga os seus filhos também, porque também os queremos ouvir". Primeiro, por uma questão logística porque as pessoas sendo sábado seria muito mais difícil irem. Depois, porque de facto faltava-nos esta voz dos mais novos que às vezes têm a opinião mais sincera possível e que faz os outros pensarem. E isso aconteceu.

Depois, a segunda forma de tornar isto construtivo foi não nos sentarmos só nós, equipa Mensagem, ali e ficar a ouvir os moradores. Chamamos especialistas que eram vozes de diferentes perspetivas. E assim podemos ter uma conversa mais construtiva. De facto, eles trazem os seus dados porque trabalham naquela área e sabem do que é que estão a falar. E, portanto, trazem consistência à conversa. Não é só ali gente a dizer coisas sobre as quais não sabe e efetivamente sobre as quais não estuda. Então, temos sempre aqui um contraponto. Tudo isto resolveu numa conversa mais consistente e em que as crianças chamaram à atenção dos adultos sobre o problema do estacionamento em que havia pontos de vistas opostos sobre os locais certos e errados para estacionar. A determinada altura, uma criança diz que tem medo de ir para a escola a pé, porque há muitos carros e se sente muito insegura. E isto de repente parou uma sala. E as pessoas voltaram atrás e perceberam que estava a pensar com a cabeça de adulto e não como uma criança. E elas, de facto, no bairro são muitas. Obriga as pessoas que saem dali a pensarem minimamente de forma diferente. É de facto construtivo. A palavra é mesmo essa. E nós também temos ganhos porque saímos com histórias e com ideias de coisas que não sabíamos. E esta era a missão primordial destas reuniões de vizinhos. E depois as pessoas passaram ali tempo e saíram com a cabeça a fervilhar de ideias. A próxima vez que discutirem sobre este assunto provavelmente já não irão discutir da mesma forma. Desta forma, sabemos que estamos a contribuir diretamente. Contribuímos porque trazemos conteúdos para a Mensagem e isso há de chegar a todos e porque demos a estas pessoas novas perspetivas.

### **E desses encontros já surgiram histórias já publicadas?**

Sim, dos encontros de vizinhos já surgiram várias ideias e histórias e estão publicadas. Aliás, temos muitas em carteira. Mas a que eu me estou a lembrar melhor foi quando juntamos o lançamento dos correspondentes do bairro, no bairro do Rego, com uma reunião de vizinhos. Acabamos por conhecer um senhor que tinha uma galeria de arte africana no bairro. E este é um artigo de inspiração e de curiosidade. Primeiro, porque é uma galeria de arte africana ali no bairro do Rego. É uma galeria de arte africana que está no mapa de milhares e milhares de estrangeiros que vão diretamente ao Rego, não vêm aqui à Baixa, não vão passear a Belém, não vão à Expo, vão diretamente ao bairro do Rego e vão à procura daquilo. Parece assim uma ideia um bocadinho estranha. Mas há aqui um turismo que este morador está a criar. Essa é a que eu me lembro mais recentemente de termos feito e que saiu de uma reunião de vizinhos.

## **E como é que o conteúdo escrito da Mensagem promove o espírito de comunidade em Lisboa?**

Costumo refletir sobre isso. Foi e está a ser muito difícil criar espírito de comunidade porque parece que não há uma cultura de nos juntarmos. Há associações de moradores e reuniões de condomínio e isso é uma forma de agregar as pessoas. Só que há sempre uma coisa muito específica e em comum entre essas pessoas. Quando se fala de uma cidade inteira, muito diferente, muito díspar e muito distante também, é difícil porque é uma cidade com um grande movimento e as pessoas têm cada vez menos tempo para olhar umas para as outras. Esta é a realidade. Nós temos dados sobre isso. As novas gerações estão a sofrer com isso. Há esse descolamento entre gerações, entre pessoas. E isto torna a nossa missão muito mais difícil à partida. Quando nós fizemos a primeira reunião de vizinhos foi por Zoom. A Mensagem tinha nascido há uma semana. E eu achei fantástico porque se juntaram logo 50 pessoas. Eu achei fantástico aquilo. Só que depois tornou-se cada vez mais difícil. Ou porque as pessoas não percebem muito bem ainda o que é que nós somos, o que é que estamos aqui a fazer, que temos esta missão agregadora e de debate. E esse é um trabalho que nós temos mesmo de solidificar a partir de agora, ou seja, não nos mostrar apenas como um agregador de histórias. Mas que estamos aqui de facto para ter algum impacto. E o impacto não é só editorial. Mas que queremos ouvir e isso faz-se estando na rua com as pessoas. Não só para entrevistar. Mas é cada vez mais ir aos bairros das pessoas e dizer: "Digam lá o que é que têm para dizer, e é isto que nós vos trazemos também". Por isso é que estas reuniões de vizinhos servem de facto para alguma coisa. Mas têm muitos defeitos. O primeiro deles é que não é fácil agregar estas pessoas. Depois, a cidade está cheia de eventos e é muito difícil diferenciarmo-nos no meio destas mil e uma coisas que estão a acontecer. E, portanto, temos de queremos criar nichos. O clube de leitura é um deles: juntamo-nos à comunidade que gosta de ler. E que não era a nossa comunidade de foco no início. Mas criamos assim mais pessoas interessadas naquilo e que também vão ver a Mensagem e gostar de outras coisas. Essa é uma comunidade ainda que pareça que seja só virada para o livro, a discussão é sobre Lisboa e é uma forma de gerar agregação, partilha e de criar comunidade. E depois, criar comunidade sempre com os artigos também, não podemos esquecer a parte editorial. Porque aquilo que escolhemos fazer é sempre para unir e nunca para separar. A ideia é esta. Por isso é que muitas vezes nós perdemos mais tempo com trabalhos porque às vezes percebemos que em determinado artigo só estamos a falar de uma comunidade e sabemos que vai criar ainda mais divisão e não vai agregar.

### **Podes dar um exemplo em concreto?**

Vou-te dar um exemplo em concreto do que aconteceu no processo do artigo sobre a estação da Cova da Moura que está fechada a dois bairros. Estava a ser muito difícil conseguir chegar às entidades, à câmara e à IP. E nós podíamos publicar o artigo assim. Estava tudo ótimo. Bem, não é bem assim porque quando não se permite que haja esse contraditório, estamos a criar mais fúria do lado que ainda não compreendeu e que não conseguiu estar junto das autoridades para perceber o porquê daquela decisão. Enquanto jornalista, tens aqui uma grande arma na mão. Enquanto jornalista, vamos fazer aquilo que o cidadão comum não consegue fazer vais mostrar o porquê daquela entidade ter tomado aquela decisão. E a partir daí, cada um tira as suas ilações, se concordam ou não concordam. Se não publicássemos este lado, a fúria seria muito maior. Se o artigo vai criar fúria, é uma coisa que nós devemos evitar quer seja na forma como escrevemos, quer seja no que escolhemos escrever.

### **Disseste que o jornalismo de soluções é uma prioridade. De que forma os leitores o recebem?**

As histórias sobre soluções têm sempre grande receptividade, completamente. E acho que têm mais quando a história à partida é de soluções. Nós temos dois tipos de jornalismo de soluções, sendo que um está mais correto do que outro e isto viemos a saber recentemente num workshop que fizemos. Um deles é o jornalismo de soluções à partida que é uma história de solução. Estou-me a lembrar agora de uma que era sobre uma senhora espanhola que mora aqui em Lisboa. Pôs-se a olhar para os limoeiros que estavam no quintal dos vizinhos e via que não estavam a ser aproveitados que caíam muito cedo e que era fruta para o lixo. E ela sabia das propriedades de isolamento que a casca do limão tinha. E ela pensou que fazia sentido aproveitar os limões desperdiçados todo ano para criar isolamento e que é mais amigo do ambiente. E pode de facto resolver um problema drástico em Lisboa que é o isolamento das casas, passa-se muito frio aqui. A pobreza energética é de facto um assunto. E este é um jornalismo de soluções à partida. Damos a história de alguém que tem uma solução para um problema que está muito enraizado em Lisboa. O outro tipo de jornalismo de soluções é escrever uma história que não é tão boa, começando por explicar o contexto todo e depois dizendo, por exemplo, na Holanda ou em Valongo fez-se assim para resolver o mesmo problema. Às vezes não está lá fora. Está cá dentro. Não está em Lisboa. Mas está pelo país. Estas são duas formas de nós fazermos

isso. A solução só está no fim. Mas nós temos de facto uma percentagem de leitura, ou seja, de pessoas que permanecem na leitura dos nossos artigos, que é muito grande. Isto significa que uma pessoa abre o artigo e lê bastante. Isto indica-nos que não vale a pena desistir deste modelo em que no meio do texto ou no fim do texto dizemos a solução ou o que está a ser feito para resolver determinado problema. E com isso queremos dizer aos leitores que não estamos só a dar uma história muito má, também queremos chamar a atenção às autoridades competentes para as soluções que existem. Passamos uma mensagem aos leitores que podem ser cidadãos absolutamente comuns sem competências algumas para fazer isso. Mas os cidadãos leitores também são aqueles que estão na câmara ou noutras entidades de autoridade. E podem de facto pensar que as soluções que apresentamos ou o que está a ser feito noutros lugares pode ser uma boa ideia e eles podem estudar esse tal modelo, aplicá-lo e até resolver o problema. Pode funcionar ou não. E isso é uma coisa que nós temos de melhorar nos nossos artigos. Nós raramente vamos tão a fundo ao ponto de dizer isto resultou, aquilo não resultou. Ou seja, estudar a implementação de uma solução naquele sítio e ver porque é que não resultou em determinado sítio Este trabalho nós ainda não fazemos, leva muito mais tempo. Mas é muito importante, porque se queremos de facto chegar às autoridades competentes, temos de lhes mostrar tudo: o que resultou e o que não resultou e porquê é que não resultou. Há essa importância no jornalismo de soluções que é mais difícil de fazer, mas temos de fazer.

**O modelo de negócio fomenta o engagement? Ou seja, os artigos estão todos abertos, a pessoa não paga para ler. É possível deduzir que a pessoa, à partida, esteja mais interessada no conteúdo e até mais envolvida com o que lê?**

Não sei se isso é tão óbvio. Não sei se existe esta relação entre os conteúdos abertos e o maior interesse ou envolvimento dos leitores porque nós abrimos os conteúdos por uma questão democrática. Se quiseres chamar-lhe assim. É uma decisão. Há jornais que não se podem dar esse luxo ou que não querem. Eu acho que podemos olhar para isto de duas formas e não é certo porque o nosso público é muito diferente. Os leitores podem olhar para isto de uma forma ativista, concordar e dizer que nós queremos mesmo que eles conheçam a cidade e não pedinchamos dinheiro para que eles conheçam Lisboa. Eles podem pensar, "a Mensagem quer mesmo criar uma comunidade e é ótimo que o façam desta maneira". Mas também podem olhar para isto de outra forma e pensar que, como não pagam, não têm um compromisso com a Mensagem. Há esta relação entre o dinheiro

que se investe e a sensação de se sentir parte de alguma coisa. E eu acho que essa relação não é clara. Mas tens estes dois públicos que olham para isto de uma maneira e que olham de outra. Não acho que haja ninguém que diga que devíamos fechar os conteúdos. Mas que se calhar pensam que com o dinheiro se calhar podiam estar a criar uma comunidade.

**Quando falamos do engagement tu falaste da questão da newsletter, redes sociais e a reunião de vizinhos. E as presenças ou a organização de eventos?**

Sim, sim. E há coisas estratégicas. Por exemplo, quando nós fazemos uma relação com o festival Iminente é estratégico culturalmente porque nós queremos fazer parte destas coisas na cidade, mas também ir buscar um público a que não chegamos tão facilmente e que ainda não nos conhece. Eu lembro-me que quando estávamos lá no Festival tínhamos um painel como o nosso logótipo. E as pessoas iam entrando e olhavam. Iam ao telemóvel. Isso foi ótimo porque já ficou na cabeça delas e a próxima vez que virem algo da Mensagem já sabem. E associação ao festival que é algo que gostam e a Mensagem pode fazer sentido para eles. Há estratégias onde nos posicionamos. Onde quer que nos posicionemos, estamos a criar outra comunidade a que não estávamos a chegar. Nós ainda temos muita Lisboa para desbravar. Há várias comunidades, umas mais ativas e cada uma com o seu papel. Outras que só gostam de nós por determinadas coisas e só ligam a isso, outras que gostam de tudo. Não podemos desistir dos nichos, porque não somos absolutamente inclusivos enquanto não pensarmos assim. Enquanto acharmos que temos de ir para as massas, trabalhar para as massas... obviamente que isto é uma preocupação na nossa cabeça porque temos de ver onde estão as massas e o que as pessoas no geral gostam de ler. Temos sempre que de nos reger um bocadinho por isto. Mas não desistir dos nichos porque de facto eles têm a sua importância. E às vezes é nos nichos que se encontra as pessoas mais empenhada, mais dispostas a doar, mais dispostas a estar presentes e para nos dar ideias, no fundo, para criar de facto aqui esta comunidade. Vários nichos todos juntos dão uma grande comunidade por muito diferente que seja.

**Como é que a Mensagem olha essas tais comunidades?**

Há grupos completamente diferentes. Temos os das bicicletas, temos os de história, a comunidade do património. E depois é muito disperso. Podemos assumir que aquelas pessoas que vão ao clube de leitura é um nicho que vai lá. Portanto são pessoas que estão interessadas em ir a um clube de leitura, sair de casa e ir a um clube de leitura, ter tempo para ir a um clube de leitura, discutir um livro sobre Lisboa. É muito exigência. Pensando

na ideia de comunidade e de *engagement* é tão interessante pensar no esforço que uma pessoa tem de ter para sair de casa ou sair do trabalho mais cedo para ir e envolver-se num evento da Mensagem. Alguém dedicar-se a ir aos nossos eventos porque acredita especificamente naquele evento e naquilo lhe vai trazer é ótimo porque foi para isso que nós fizemos isso. Fazermos alguém sair de casa, é incrível. Por isso é que cada vez mais ter dez é melhor do que ter cem porque sabemos que aqueles dez de facto estão lá. Temos é de garantir que os apanhemos, criar uma certa coerência e mostrar que a Mensagem não é só um agregador de histórias. A Mensagem também faz isto: junta pessoas. E isso é uma coisa que nós não podemos abandonar. De todo.

## **Appendix G – Transcript of interview with Inês Leote**

### **Como é que defines *engagement* no contexto da Mensagem?**

Acho que o engagement é muito baseado na partilha de valores. É óbvio que o jornalismo tem sempre subjacente o valor da democracia. Mas acho que as pessoas se relacionam muito mais e partilham muito mais o nosso conteúdo, em que isso é mais notório. É muito mais fácil, por exemplo, nós fazermos uma publicação sobre o 25 de abril e nós vemos que as pessoas interagem e partilham, porque nós sabemos que as pessoas partilham daqueles valores. Mas há coisas em que o valor não é tão direto, mas está lá e as pessoas revêem-se naqueles valores que nós estamos a partilhar e que estamos a defender ao denunciar aquela realidade ou a contar a história de alguém. Se nós falarmos de uma senhora que vende flores há não sei quanto tempo e que começou antes do 25 de abril, as pessoas não se vão-se relacionar pelo facto de a senhora vender flores, serem mais velhos, ou porque viveram naquele tempo, mas porque estão solidários com a história que estamos a partilhar. Não só porque sentem inspirados por, mas porque se sentem tocados, acho que é mais para aí. E acho que tudo o que tem a ver com reivindicações também, não só desses valores democráticos, mas coisas que no dia a dia são reivindicações que parece que passam ao lado de todos, porque nós no dia a dia já estamos habituados a que aquilo aconteça. Mas que se nós, Mensagem, falarmos daquilo e aprofundarmos e falarmos da história e de soluções, as pessoas vão-se relacionar e se calhar podiam nunca ter discutido, por exemplo, o Largo do Rato, na vida deles, mas se calhar depois do artigo sair já passaram a discutir e já passaram, em vez de ser só criticar, já passaram a explicar ou mesmo a sugerir e às vezes a intervir, ou na Assembleia de Freguesia, na Assembleia Nacional Municipal. No fundo, tentamos que haja alguma intervenção para alguma alteração na cidade.

### **E na escolha dos conteúdos, há esse *mindset* de "vamos querer que os leitores se relacionem" e depois essa identificação com a história também se vai reproduzir nas redes sociais?**

Eu acho que, não da minha cabeça, mas da dos jornalistas, já está um bocado enraizado que tu tens de cobrir essas áreas ou demonstrar esses valores da democracia. Depois daí, do que é curado por eles e depois do que é curado pelas editoras, quando chega às minhas mãos, não é que eu tenha já a papinha toda feita, mas os pontos fulcrais para as pessoas, que também serão os mesmos para mim, já estão lá todos. E eu só tenho de passar isso para uma forma que toque, mas também que seja apelativa e que se perceba que eu quero

que toque as pessoas. A história pode ser ótima, mas se eu comunicar de uma forma que não é nada cativante para as pessoas, os valores que elas pedem podem estar todos ali, mas a história não passa e não a vão ler sequer, não abrem e não interagem.

### **E qual é a diferença de publicar um artigo no Facebook e no Instagram? Porque há públicos diferentes, não é?**

Sim. No geral, e eu acho que para todas as páginas que têm conta no Facebook e no Instagram, a grande diferença é o tipo de audiência de faixas etárias, principalmente. Também se vê uma diferença entre as reivindicações que são feitas no Instagram, porque são muito compartilhadas a título individual, ou seja, há uma partilha de um *post* porque quem partilha quer que as pessoas saibam que, enquanto indivíduo, partilham daquela opinião. No Facebook, às vezes é mais pelo coletivo e as pessoas tendem a defender aquilo a que pertencem. Se for no Instagram, é título individual, mas pode ser sobre um coletivo também, por exemplo, alguém partilhar algo sobre um bairro onde não mora, mas partilha porque se solidariza com o bairro. No caso do Facebook, uma pessoa não partilha porque solidariza com aquele bairro. É por isso que partilhamos os conteúdos nos grupos de moradores do Facebook porque há esse foco nas comunidades dentro dos bairros. E, às vezes, há bairros que têm mais do que um grupo e têm pessoas diferentes que defendem coisas diferentes. E às vezes até têm conflitos uns com os outros. Mas se a história toca, é muito discutida e pegam muito no nosso artigo para discutirem entre eles. Não pegam no nosso artigo para partilhar e mostrar que se relaciona. E às vezes nem temos bons resultados de *engagement* na nossa publicação original, mas há bons resultados de *engagement* dentro do grupo entre eles. Às vezes somos um mote para a conversa interna, outras vezes somos um mote para a partilha do nosso artigo.

### **E quais são as métricas para medir o *engagement*?**

O Facebook acho que é a rede social menos linear que temos, porque eu posso partilhar uma publicação só na nossa página e não partilhar em mais lado nenhum e ela ter alguns gostos, comentários e partilhas. Depois, uma publicação na nossa página pode ter poucas interações, mas ter um alcance gigante de pessoas, porque eu andei a espalhar pelos grupos de vizinhos e os *likes*, os comentários e as partilhas estão nos grupos e não são contabilizadas na publicação orgânica. A única coisa que pode refletir a partilha desses grupos é o alcance, é o número. Às vezes temos 30 mil pessoas que viram aquilo e temos quatro *likes*. Mas eu sei que tem aquele valor porque foi muito partilhado nos

grupos. Mas, apesar de tudo, por exemplo, em abril, o tempo médio de leitura no site foi de 6.23 minutos.

### **E os cliques no site?**

O Analytics da Google mostra a origem e o meio de onde vem. Aquilo não é muito bem dissecado, às vezes não podemos confiar muito. Mas há vezes em que a maior percentagem vem do link direto do site. E é muito estranho, a não ser que venha pela newsletter. É um bocadinho difícil de acreditar, às vezes, mas às vezes as pessoas podem ter visto no Google e quando abriram o nosso artigo, como não tinham sessão iniciada no Google, aquilo abriu o site direto e não abriu aquilo como tem vindo do Google News. Às vezes, a primeira *percentagem* com mais peso é essa do link direto. A segunda é sempre do Facebook. Quando o artigo é muito lido, a segunda percentagem é do Facebook. Do Instagram é mínima. Até porque nós fechamos as pessoas no Instagram, porque nós contamos a história toda. E eu acho que faz mais sentido. O percurso de Instagram-site é uma coisa que se calhar se vê muito nos jornais diários, porque partilham o título da notícia e o hiperligação nas *stories*. Vais passando imensas *stories* e aquela que tu quiseres abrir, tu vais abrir. Ele não está a mandar abrir nada para conhecer mais sobre a história e não está a incentivar a ir, mas tu vais. Quando se incentiva as pessoas a abrir, eu tenho a sensação que elas não vão fazer porque elas estão numa rede social que é de entretenimento, estão a ler notícias sim, mas se elas quisessem que os jornalistas impusessem alguma coisa, se calhar não estavam na rede social a ler notícias. Para nós, faz sentido estarmos muito mais dentro do Instagram e tentarmos que as pessoas fiquem ali. Acho que temos 10% ou 20% do tráfego a vir de todas as redes no geral. É provável que estejamos abaixo da média porque nós não incentivamos as pessoas a ir a não ser pelo Facebook. E grande parte do tráfego do site, podia ir pelo Instagram e não vai porque nós não dizemos às pessoas para ir. E quando dizemos, elas não vão.

### **Mas então é porque há um objetivo claro de manter as pessoas no Instagram?**

A pessoa anterior responsável pelas redes sociais começou a contar a história de cada artigo nos dez slides de cada publicação. Agora, eu tenho tentado reduzir isso. Não tiro completamente porque é a nossa imagem e nós queremos manter as pessoas lá. Mas tenho tentado reduzir porque eu tenho a ideia de que as pessoas não vão ler os dez slides. É uma rede social de entretenimento que tu vais lá para te distrair. Quem está connosco desde o início sabe que nós contamos em dez slides. Se calhar lê os 10 slides. Mas nós temos

muito mais pessoas nos últimos meses que eu não tenho a certeza se leem. Crescemos em seguidores, não sei se crescemos em comunidade. Ainda não consegui perceber muito bem se o crescimento em comentários e partilhas foi proporcional ao aumento de seguidores. Recentemente aderimos aos canais de transmissão. Os canais de transmissão são uma ferramenta nova do Instagram que todas as pessoas com conta de criador de conteúdo podem criar. Chegou a Portugal há pouco tempo, já andava a ver a ser utilizada nos EUA e no resto da Europa. Pelo que percebia, ao entrar num, tornava os "membros" mais próximos por podermos ter novidades dentro da caixa de mensagens. Apesar de usarmos muito o WhatsApp para messaging, o Instagram continua a ser muito utilizado para conversas também, de preferência mais curtas. Pareceu-me logo bom para a Mensagem porque ninguém ia querer mais um grupo no WPP se a Mensagem criasse um grupo de envio exclusivo (ou seja, ninguém pode responder), e no Instagram há mais potencial porque assume uma nova aba de "Canais" - não se perde nas mensagens e grupos. Só adere quem quer (recebem notificação de criação e podemos continuar a convidar partilhando nos stories) e só a comunidade diz que quer estar ali a ouvir-nos. Querer ser seguidor não significa automaticamente querer fazer parte da comunidade, e é bom a decisão estar do lado deles. É ótimo para aparecer mais vezes no feed da comunidade, que pode querer estar atualizada e não nos ver no feed ou Stories por seguir muita gente ou porque o algoritmo não entrega. É ótimo para ser sucinto e dizer para verem o post X. Mandar as pessoas para o site é mais cansativo, que era o que fazíamos nos Stories ou link na bio. Assim é só ficarem na aplicação. Tem potencial para os fazermos sentir-se exclusivos com conteúdo que só aquelas pessoas têm acesso sendo que nos seguem mais de 30 mil e aderiram pouco mais de 600. É bom para assumir uma abordagem mais humana, posso ser a Inês da Mensagem e não um gestor de conta anónimo que só entrega conteúdos. Sou a Inês que partilha e os tenta envolver, o meu dia a dia pode ser relatable e posso tentar associar isso às histórias que contamos. E podemos no futuro conseguir converter alguns desses membros a contribuir para a Mensagem.

### **E a estratégia no Twitter?**

O Twitter é uma bolha, principalmente, uma bolha de classe média, média-alta. A quem os tais valores dizem respeito, e eles preocupam-se com eles, mas as reivindicações são um bocadinho mais de nicho e às vezes um bocadinho extremadas no tema a que os seguidores são mais afetos. Imagina, mobilidade e coisas em específico: bicicletas, passeiras, peões que levam o filho à escola, são coisas muito específicas. São aquelas

questões que são criticáveis no dia-a-dia, mas a que a essas pessoas não passam despercebidas. Porque se estivermos a falar de um público do Facebook, é muito provável que eles vão para o café reclamar disso porque são coisas que acontecem no dia-a-dia. Por exemplo, viram um buraco no caminho de casa para o café, vão falar do buraco no café. Mas se calhar não lhes interessa ler sobre o buraco. No Twitter interessa porque eles são os primeiros a falar do buraco. E depois, se nós fizermos alguma coisa, eles vão partilhar.

### **E são questões que podem gerar alguma polémica. Fazes algum tipo de moderação?**

Acho que tento sempre que seja o mais *relatable* possível. Eu acho que faço isso em todas as redes com todos os artigos. Mas tento sempre posicionar a pessoa individual naquela situação. Por exemplo, o artigo dos semáforos. O *tweet* que eu pus foi "Quem é que já teve de correr na passeadeira antes do semáforo fechar", porque toda a gente já passou por isso. E acho que o artigo está muito pessoalizado, até porque fala de pessoas que se juntam para mudar alguma coisa relativa ao tempo dos semáforos. Mas ainda dá para ser mais pessoal, porque toda a gente já sentiu aquilo. Mas não tenho algum cuidado por causa da polémica, porque eu sei que a polémica nunca vai partir de nós. Mas a partir do momento em que eu partilho nos grupos, se eu vou partilhar num grupo e partilho uma citação do artigo, ainda que neutra, portanto não espelho lado nenhum, as pessoas respondem-me com citações de coisas que estão dentro do artigo, ou seja, a jornalista escreveu, mas eu das redes é que partilhei. Então eles caem em cima de mim, não é em cima da jornalista nem em cima da Mensagem, caem em cima de mim com a polémica de coisas que estão dentro do artigo que estão incorretas. E não estão incorretas, aquela pessoa simplesmente tem um lado. A polémica é mais a esse nível.

### **Mas nas caixas de comentários fazes de moderadora?**

Não faço moderação. Não é que eu esteja só a depositar informação e depois não tenha mais a ver com aquilo. Mas às vezes comento com agradecimentos, principalmente, e com explicações. A informação está dada nos slides, mas a pessoa ainda assim fica com dúvidas e perguntam e eu respondo. Mas quando as pessoas falam entre si, falam entre si. É como se estivessem a ler o jornal numa mesa de café e falassem entre si e ninguém tem de moderar.

### **E nos grupos de vizinhos quando pedes ideias ou histórias, qual é o objetivo?**

Pedimos ideias ou histórias nos grupos de vizinhos porque queremos ouvir. E faço isso com o meu perfil pessoal. Só que é normal que se as pessoas não sabem quem eu sou, não associam à Mensagem ou não sabem o que é a Mensagem. É muito difícil dar esse passo. Portanto, tenho sempre de dar um contexto. E dar o contexto pode ser pôr uma imagem, pode ser pôr um excerto. Só que isso nos grupos de vizinhos já é texto a mais e já ninguém quer ler. Só afasta mais do que aproxima as pessoas. Mas, às vezes, há histórias que se relacionam tanto com aquele grupo de vizinhos, e quando partilho, digo, de uma forma muito simples: "isto aconteceu há x tempo no bairro, ainda se lembram disto?" Às vezes não pega, mas também tem muito a ver com o algoritmo de cada pessoa, se aparece na página inicial ou não. Mas nos artigos de história tento apelar à memória e os comentários costumam ser sobre as memórias que as pessoas têm nas ruas. É a tal personalização e esses artigos costumam ter bastante alcance.

### **De que forma é que é possível construir um espírito de comunidade nas redes sociais?**

Tento, pelas mensagens que recebemos, responder às pessoas. Interagir quando as pessoas partilham coisas nossas, vou meter gosto, às vezes agradecer por terem partilhado. Eu acho que é um bocadinho difícil ter isso no Facebook porque são imensas pessoas e nós existimos no Facebook não enquanto página Mensagem, mas vivemos de publicação a publicação. Não vivemos enquanto página, apesar de termos muitos seguidores. No Instagram, quem nos segue associa-nos um determinado tipo de conteúdo e de histórias. Mas tenho alguma dificuldade em dizer que é isso que nos junta enquanto comunidade. Eu acho que eles nos veem como intermédios entre realidade, a história que contamos e depois a comunidade. Pode haver comunidade no nosso público, mas acho que eles não se sentem em comunidade connosco. Apesar de nessa comunidade também haver pontos de vista diferentes. Penso que as pessoas ainda não estão à vontade para nos mandarem sugestões, pensam que não vamos estar interessas. Mandam sugestões, às vezes, pela newsletter e no Instagram às vezes recebemos mensagens de associações com histórias próprias e não com sugestões de histórias. É tipo *press release*.

### **Então achas que no digital é difícil criar um sentido de pertença?**

Acho que se tivéssemos um número de seguidores reduzido seria mais fácil. Não há sempre as mesmas pessoas a comentar, os primeiros *likes* costumam coincidir, mas não é linear. Acho que no digital é difícil criar um sentido de pertença.

**Para terminar, quando estávamos a falar da medição do *engagement* falaste em comentários e partilhas, certo?**

Depende das plataformas, mas sim. Facebook é gostos, comentários, partilhas na publicação original. E os gostos, comentários e partilhas nos grupos em que eu partilho a publicação. Por isso, às vezes, as publicações no Facebook, tem apenas três *likes*, às vezes nenhum comentário, depois têm quinze partilhas. E essas partilhas são minhas provavelmente nos quinze grupos e se calhar está a correr muito melhor em três ou quatro desses quinze do que está a correr na publicação original. Portanto, eu faço essa distinção, mas depois quando olho, conto no geral e conto tudo. No Instagram, gostos, comentários, não que eu os contabilize, mas vejo como é que corre. Às vezes se não tem nenhum comentário, significa que não vai ter. Se não tiver um comentário ao final do primeiro ou segundo dia, não vai ter. E acho que se tivermos três ou quatro comentários é provável que haja mais. Portanto, *likes*, comentários, as partilhas não dão para contabilizar e dá para ver os *saves*. Não é uma coisa que eu ligue muito, mas percebo porque é que o fazem. No nosso caso, não são coisas de dia a dia, porque nós não fazemos isso, mas são coisas que se calhar daqui a três semanas não são tão intemporais assim. Mas as pessoas guardaram porque queriam ler. Mostra uma forma de interesse. Pode não se efetivar, mas mostra o interesse. Em média devemos ter uns 20, 25. Às vezes os que são mais vistos têm mais de cem.

**E o TikTok?**

O TikTok ainda funciona como experiência. Uma coisa que funciona muito bem no TikTok são vídeos com a informação: "vê no próximo episódio". E, por exemplo, as nossas séries "Cidades para Quem" são gigantes. E dava perfeitamente para dividir. Não sei se podiam estar exatamente como estão no Instagram, porque são muito cinematográficas. Mas é uma coisa que também quero experimentar. Uma ideia que eu tenho é que no TikTok funciona muito bem o conteúdo de comida. Principalmente, porque no motor de busca, se escreveres "Lisboa", só te vai aparecer ou coisas para visitar ou sítios para comer. Portanto, acho que a comida é uma rubrica que nós temos de pensar, mas do ponto de vista histórico e não *lifestyle*. De facto, tenho usado o TikTok para publicar lá coisas que meti no Instagram. Só que o que acontece no TikTok é que eu publico e deixo. Eu não quero ir ver porque se não vou me desiludir com os números porque são completamente diferentes no Instagram e não sei o quê. Nos últimos três ou

quatro vídeos que eu publiquei lá, não deve ter chegado às 500 visualizações, mas partilhei recentemente o da Cova da Moura e já tem 17 mil. Não dá para usar como métrica. Mas óbvio que os que pegam são os que são mais polémicos. Agora o que é polémico para o TikTok, não é o que é polémico para o Twitter, não é o que é polémico para o Facebook.

### **E como medes o *engagement* no Twitter?**

No Twitter meço o engagement com os *likes*. Normalmente, nós publicamos em fio e costumo ver quanto é que perde de *tweet* para *tweet*. Por exemplo, consigo ver quantas pessoas viram aquele *tweet*. Se calhar, as mesmas viram o segundo, mas não tem tantos *likes*. *Dms* não é de todo uma métrica, nem no Instagram, nem no Twitter. Mas sim, às vezes citações com comentário no Twitter, tipo fazer um *quote*. Não conto muito os *retweets*, porque lá está, o que nós partilhamos no Twitter é uma pequena entrada e depois aparece o link por baixo. Não é uma coisa que mais ninguém partilhe, a não ser por título individual. Imagina, eu vi um artigo qualquer da Mensagem, eu própria vou lá. Prefiro eu, com a conta pessoal, ir meter lá o link e dizer "vejam isto".

### **E fazes isso muitas vezes?**

Sim, a título individual. Prefiro fazer isso do que estar a *retweetar*.