

Limantha fandom activism on Twitter: media competence analysis about social issues discussions

Activismo del fandom Limantha en Twitter: análisis de la competencia mediática en la discusión de las causas sociales

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This paper intends to discuss the relationship between media competence and fan culture, focusing on content creation shared on Twitter by fans of the Limantha ship, from the Brazilian telenovela *Young Hearts (Malhação: Viva a Diferença)*. In order to reflect on how telenovela social issues were explored in the content shared on Twitter, we adopted Ferrés and Piscitelli's concept of media competence. We concluded that, in addition to deepening themes dealt within the plot, fans expanded and resignified discussions based on correlations with personal reports.

KEYWORDS: Fan Culture, media competence, activism, telenovela, children and youth audience.

Este artículo busca discutir la relación entre competencia mediática y cultura fan, teniendo como objeto de análisis las producciones del ship Limantha de la telenovela brasileña Malhação: Viva a Diferença en Twitter. Para reflexionar sobre cómo se exploraron los temas sociales de la telenovela en el contenido compartido en Twitter, adoptamos el concepto de competencia mediática de Ferrés y Piscitelli. Concluimos que, además de profundizar en los temas abordados en la trama, los fanáticos expandieron y resignificaron las discusiones a partir de correlaciones con relatos personales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cultura de fans, competencia mediática, activismo, telenovela, público infantil y juvenil.

Este artigo procura discutir as relações entre a competência midiática e a cultura de fãs tendo como objeto de análise as produções compartilhadas no Twitter pelos fãs do ship Limantha, telenovela brasileira Malhação: Viva a Diferença. Para refletirmos como as causas sociais abordadas na trama estiveram presentes com conteúdos publicados no Twitter adotamos o enquadramento teórico-metodológico de análise das dimensões da competência midiática proposto por Ferrés e Piscitelli. Concluimos que além de aprofundar os temas tratados na trama, os fãs ampliavam e resignificavam as discussões a partir correlações com relatos pessoais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Cultura de fãs, competência midiática, ativismo, telenovela, público infanto-juvenil.

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INTRODUCTION

According to Pearson (2010) and Booth (2010), contemporaneity has introduced hitherto unprecedented forms of sociability, production, resignification and content distribution in fan culture. As suggested by Bennett (2014), fan communication and influence in media flows were expanded in the convergence environment. The Internet and, in particular, the popularization of digital social networks allowed the development of more segmented communities and the instant exchange of information.

One of the central points of fan culture practices is the audience's ability to critically analyze fictional universes. According to Jost (2016), fandom conducts detailed discussions about plot, collectively reflecting on discussion forums and social media, engendering new layers of interpretation and collaboration. Using their critical comprehension, fans creatively expand and give new meaning to the plot through multimodal and intertextual elements. Their reflections go beyond the fictional universe's canonical limits, establishing distinct correlations and dialogues with other audiovisual productions, literary works, social issues, true events, among others.

Digital technology also allows new forms of curating and distributing content. Through specialized websites, Facebook groups and Twitter threads, fans prepare lists with main episodes of the series, edit videos with best scenes of the season and perform the subtitling of the contents. All the material is available for free and often comes with tutorials that help the public to download, synchronize subtitles, etc.

According to Jenkins (2012, 2015), Hirsjärvi (2013), Herrero-Diz et al. (2017) and Borges et al. (2017), fan culture is in direct dialogue with the concept of media competence. As defined by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), competence is "usually understood as a combination of knowledge, ability and attitudes seen as necessary for a given context" (p. 3). It contributes to autonomy and critical ability of citizens, being present both in the way we consume and create media content. The fans' intellectual and affective relationship "... involve various levels of attention and invokes various spectator competences, different from when casually watching that same piece" (Jenkins, 2015, p. 73). As

pointed out by Booth (in Grandío, 2016, pp. 148-151), fandoms have a critical understanding not only of fictional universes, but also of digital platforms. In this sense, fans are always adapting to new technology and seeking to understand the potential of the social networks informational architecture to share and resignify their content.

Considering this context, this paper intends to discuss the relationship between media competence and fan culture, focusing on creative content shared on Twitter about the Limantha ship, composed of characters Lica (Manuela Alipert) and Samantha (Giovanna Grigio), from the 25th season of young adult Brazilian telenovela *Young Hearts* (*Malhação*, 1995-current, Rede Globo), broadcast under the title *Viva a Diferença* (2018-2019). In order to reflect on how telenovela social issues were explored in the content shared on Twitter, we adopted Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015) concept of media competence.

This paper will be structured as follows: initially, we will discuss the main topics of fan activism, and how fandom mobilization gains new developments in the convergence culture environment. In the next section, we will present the fictional universe of *Malhação*, the telenovela in question, and the details of the Limantha ship, and how it is organized on Twitter. Then, we will conduct an analysis of fan production on social media, through the methodological framework proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015). Finally, we conclude that fandom engagement around social, cultural and political themes contribute to develop critical understanding and creative production among young people.

FAN CULTURE AND ACTIVISM

Van Zoonen (2004, p. 46) states that, in fan culture practices, it is possible to identify what is most fundamental for political democracy: information, discussion and activism. Whether through discussion, mobilization or engagement, fans establish a very close relationship to issues involving civic and citizen participation (Brough & Shresthova, 2012). As Jenkins et al. (2020) pointed out, the expansion of political activism has been happening, in part, due to the way in which avid audiences engages creatively and critically in popular culture.

According to Amaral et al. (2015), fan mobilization can be associated to various forms of resistance in creative and cultural spheres. In this sense, activism encompasses a broad universe of practices such as, for example, campaigns demanding a permanence of a program; discussions about representation of minorities and the promotion of social issues in the plot; engagement around the release of some specific content, and so on.

According to Lopez (2011) and Guerrero-Pico (2017), media competence is an inherent aspect of fan activism. The authors state that fandom's emotional and intellectual involvement encourages the development of critical thinking, learning and developing production-focused creative abilities, and the capacity to access, analyze and create various content. Guerrero-Pico (2017) highlights that, even if indirectly, fans draw a parallel between the artist's and/or the show's/movie's universe and the contemporary world. Thus, the bridge established between media content and reality would allow mobilization in favor of sociopolitical issues.

Fan activism presents four central points: interconnection between political and cultural participation; tension between participation and resistance; the role of affection/taste in mobilizing civic participation and the impact of mobilizations in the fandom profile (Brough & Shresthova, 2012). The issues highlighted by Brough and Shresthova (2012) can be observed in various fan culture practices. For instance, the philanthropic organization *The Harry Potter Alliance*, founded in 2015, that engages fans worldwide in favor of social issue campaigns. The actions, organized by the readers of J. K. Rowling's franchise, have raised over 41 000 books for people without access to literature, and around 123 000 dollars for victims of the earthquake in Haiti.

Considered by Rose (2011) and Jenkins et al. (2014) as one of the most tangible cases about the power of influence of fans in the decisions of US broadcasters, the renewal of *Chuck* (2007-2012, NBC) was only possible due to the mobilization of the series' fandom. As exposed by Rose (2011), the show was about to be taken off the air by NBC in 2011, when the fandom created a campaign to draw the attention of its companies sponsoring the attraction. Led by *We Give a Chuck* website, the objective of the action was to show the network that

audience metrics did not represent the actual number of viewers. To that end, during *Chuck*'s commercial breaks, fans tweeted at sponsors' profiles commenting on the product and demonstrating that they could give back to the brands. However, even with social media repercussion and the coverage by specialized press (Poniewozic, 2009), NBC held on to its decision. One step away from losing their favorite show, fans had to change their strategy. On the *We Give a Chuck* website, they asked all viewers of the show to go to Subway, the show's biggest sponsor, every Monday and buy a sandwich. The fandom adhered to the call with such force that the company had to hire employees to keep up with the demand (Rose, 2011, p. 196). The result was unavoidable: NBC went back and decided to produce new episodes of *Chuck*.

Social media also plays a central role in avid audience activism. Facebook groups *Aussie X-Files Fans*³ and *heART*,⁴ managed by *The X-Files* (1993-2002,⁵ Fox) fans, for example, organize auctions with plot items in benefit of educational projects in South Africa (Jones, 2012). Each campaign conducted by fans of the program raises, in average, 20 000 euros. Thus, the emotional and intellectual connection fans have with programs goes beyond fictional universes and starts to mobilize sociopolitical actions, whether through discussions, fundraising campaigns, online mobilizations etc.

YOUNG HEARTS AND YOUNG AUDIENCES

Currently in its 27th season, Brazilian telenovela *Young Hearts* (*Malhação*) was created in 1995 by Andréa Maltarolli and Emanuel Jacobina, directed by Roberto Talma. Broadcast by Rede Globo from Monday through Friday, in the 5:30 PM to 6:00 PM time slot, it is the channel longest-running serial fiction aimed at young audiences. According to Memória Globo (2020), *Young Hearts* gave rise to a new concept in the network's productions: "... a TV show that had

³ Available at: <https://bit.ly/2IxFmo>. Last accessed: August 13th 2020.

⁴ Available at: <https://bit.ly/2IPog6x>. Last accessed: August 13th 2020.

⁵ After a 14-year hiatus, the show's tenth and eleventh seasons were aired on 2016 and 2018.

some similarities to American soap operas, without a set end date and with more flexibility to changes in plot and character profiles” (n.p.). The plot is organized in seasons, usually composed of an average of 180 episodes, which are shown over the course of one year. Seasons are independent from one another, presenting distinct characters and narrative arcs, sharing only the setting and themes relevant to young people.

Initially, the show was set in a fitness gym, which gives the program its name (*malhação* is Portuguese for “workout”). In 1999, in its 6th season, the main set moved to a high school. According to Cavalcanti (2016), the school, although featuring different characteristics each season, made it easier to insert adult casts, usually composed of teachers, school clerks and parents.

One of the central points of the telenovela are the themes addressed during the seasons, encompassing family and social issues relevant to young adult audiences (Cavalcanti, 2016). In its first years on air, those issues, such as the beginning of sexual life, the relationship with parents and friends, and doubts regarding the professional future were treated with a generalist approach, without major discussions. From the 2000s onwards, themes such as racism, bullying, and teen pregnancy were included in the episodes in a denser way, presenting various perspectives and encouraging the dialogue between parents and children. However, it is worth noting that, since it is composed of independent seasons, developed by different creative teams, the way in which those issues are discussed varies according to the fictional universe proposed by the authors.

In addition to social responsibility, *Young Hearts* is also a space for experimentation for the network’s engagement strategy (Cavalcanti, 2016). According to Cavalcanti (2016), the program is “a privileged space to analyze Rede Globo’s transmedia strategies” (p. 146). Since 2009, the network has created character blogs, websites focused on specific casts, podcasts, web series and videogames. The program mobilizes countless fans in specialized websites and social media—for example, terms connected to the fictional universe occupy Twitter’s trending topics weekly and fanfiction about the telenovela are among those most popular in specialized platforms—.

LIMANTHA FANDOM

Developed by Cao Hamburger, the 25th season of *Young Hearts*, broadcast under the title *Malhação: Viva a Diferença* (*Celebrate Diversity*, in loose translation) (2017-2018), drew 1.4 million viewers and mobilized viewers on social media. For the first time, in 25 years of exhibition, the attraction was carried out by five women. The main narrative arc begins when teenagers Keyla (Gabriela Medvedovski), Benê (Daphne Bozaski), Tina (Ana Hikari), Lica (Manoela Aliperti) and Ellen (Heslaine Vieira), who are different in origins and profile, are stuck in the same subway car during an electrical shortage caused by a storm in the city of São Paulo. Pregnant Keyla goes into labor and the other teens come together to help her give birth. Although diversity was its core theme, the season also addressed issues such as racism, homophobia, sexual harassment, asexuality, bisexuality, autism spectrum disorders, self-harm, sexism, social inequality, bullying and corruption.

As reported by Peccoli (2018), the season broadcasted from May 2017 to March 2018, had 20.4 audience points and 37% participation, reaching the biggest average audience of the program since 2009. Throughout the season, the audience shared their impressions on social media, especially Twitter, resignifying the fictional universe through memes and videos. In order to engage interacting viewers,⁶ Rede Globo developed a series of digital actions to present new perspectives on the show (Borges et al., 2019). The season finale, broadcast on March 5th, 2018, generated over 299 thousand tweets and the hashtag #VivaADiferença was an international trending topic, one of the most talked about subjects, on Twitter (Peccoli, 2018).

One of the most reverberated narrative arcs among fans was the story of the couple Lica and Samantha, in which for the first time the telenovela featured a kiss between two bisexual girls. The scene, broadcast in December 2017, had instant repercussions on social

⁶ Designate the audience that interacts (shares, retweets, creates content, answers polls, etc.) with television shows' fictional universes (Sigiliano & Borges, 2019).

media and the characters gained fans all over the world. The ship is called Limantha by the fandom, a portmanteau of Lica and Samantha. It was given broader, deeper and new meaning through various fan culture practices, such as fanfic, crack videos, fanart and other forms of engagement.

With the success of the plot, Globo returned, after 13 years, to exporting the telenovela to international markets. The telenovela also won a spin-off, *As Five (The Five)*, that premiered in November 2020. According to Cao Hamburger, the mobilizations of fans on social networks was central for the development of the attraction. “We decided to do a show about ‘the five’ due a demand from the public that kept asking for a continuation of the story via social media” (Leão, 2019). The series portrays the personal, professional and love affairs dilemmas faced by the five protagonists in adult lives, and Limantha’s arc is one of those explored.

METHODOLOGY

Media competence dimensions in the Limantha fandom activism

In order to analyze the creative production of Limantha fandom on Twitter from the perspective of media literacy, a methodological proposal for monitoring, coding, organizing and analyzing data (Bruns & Moe, 2013; Fragoso et al., 2011; Recuero et al., 2015; Sigiliano & Borges, 2019) was elaborated, consisting of four stages. The first stage was carried out in December 2017 and consisted in systematically browsing profiles to delimit the pages that would be monitored. To that end, we insert into Twitter search bar, connected to its API,⁷ terms (keywords and hashtags) related to the fictional universe of *Malhação: Viva a Diferença*. Like, for example, the name of the season, the characters and the ship. Based on the results,⁸ profiles were selected using individualization resources and structural layers of information (Bruns & Moe, 2013; Recuero, 2009). Thus, the profiles had to present aesthetic, and conversation features related to Limantha ship.

⁷ Application Programming Interface.

⁸ At this stage, 209 active Twitter profiles were found.

In systematic navigation, we observed whether pages were composed by at least two of the four individualization resources (profile picture, cover, username and description). The items had to make some allusion to Lica and Samantha. The other criterion used to select profiles to be monitored refers to structural layers of information. Conceptualized by Bruns and Moe (2013), this categorization establishes different levels of conversation on Twitter: micro,⁹ meso,¹⁰ and macro.¹¹ In this way, we observed whether the contents, mentions and indexations posted by interacting viewers referred to the couple. Using these filters, we defined a selection of 40 active profiles relating to the Limantha's fictional universe.

The second stage was focused on monitoring and extracting tweets, and it was divided in two moments. During the broadcast of episodes that explored Lica and Samantha's narrative arc (from December 21st, 2017 to March 5th, 2018), and after the end of the show (from March 6th, 2018 to May 10th, 2018). To view tweets posted during the exhibition of the episodes we used TweetDeck, a Twitter native application that mirrored and updated live all posts from 40 profiles. As adopted in other works, due to the large volume of data, we opted to capture content using the screen capture software Snagit (Borges et al., 2017; Sigiliano & Borges, 2019). In a second moment, after the end of the season, on March 5th, 2018, monitoring was expanded until May 10th 2018.

The third stage consisted in codifying tweets extracted during the monitoring, totaling 392 thousand posts. At this stage, tweets were manually identified, described and categorized, i.e., each post was individually analyzed without the help of software (Borges et al., 2017;

⁹ The micro level is in dialogue with the interacting viewer's interpersonal communication, i.e., their Twitter mentions, users they message, etc. (Bruns & Moe, 2013).

¹⁰ The meso level refers to the interacting viewer's follower network and all conversational developments involving this issue (Bruns & Moe, 2013).

¹¹ The macro level is focused on Twitter's indexing, i.e., hashtags used by interacting viewers and the momentary communities created around them (Bruns & Moe, 2013).

Fragoso et al., 2011; Recuero et al., 2015; Sigiliano & Borges, 2019). Tweets were grouped according to its idiosyncrasies in search for similarities, dissimilarities, patterns and peculiarities (Fragoso et al., 2011). Due to the volume and complexity of data, coding was divided in two phases: macro and micro-coding. Initially, we categorized posts through conversational context, that is, the central theme of the publication. In this way, 48 macro categories were identified, such as, for example: compliments, social issues, interaction with the show's cast and etc. In the macro category "social issues", for instance, we searched for issues (LGBTQIAP+, racism, feminism, etc.) that fans resonated with. In the micro-coding stage, categorization was guided by each context's specific content. In this way, 195 categories were raised from the 48 categories defined in the macro-coding. It is worth noting that micro-coding categories were non-exclusive, meaning that a single tweet could appear in more than one category.

The fourth stage consisted of analyzing content about Limantha posted on Twitter from the perspective of the dimensions of media competence. More specifically, we observe how the social issues explored in the plot were reinforced, expanded and re-signified in the social media.

In order analyze media competence, Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015, pp. 8-14) proposed six dimensions, such as language, ideology and values, aesthetic, technology, processes of interaction, and processes of production and diffusion. Thus, these dimensions operate both in the scope of analysis, that is, the way in which people receive and interact with messages, as well as in the scope of expression, that is related to the way people produce messages. However, it is important to emphasize that all dimensions are interconnected, that is, this separation is made so that we can didactically analyze each of them.

In this paper, we will analyze in detail the dimensions of language, ideology and values, and aesthetics that can be observed in the production of creative content by the fandom Limantha. However, the other dimensions are also present. Technology can be observed in the understanding that fans have of the informational architecture of Twitter, when interacting, creating and sharing content on social media. Processes of interaction permeate all actions developed by Limantha

shippers when they produce content collectively based on discussions of social issues (feminism, LGBTQIAP+ rights, etc.). Meanwhile, processes of production and diffusion encompass the creative production of interacting viewers, involving multimodal elements and the resignification of certain aspects of the *Malhação: Viva a Diferença* fictional universe through memes, crack videos, crossovers and photo edits.

RESULTS

Dimension of ideology and values

According to Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015, pp. 13-14), the dimension of ideology and values involves the ability of interacting viewers to critically engage with the way in which media representations structure our perception of reality; the ability to detect, contrast, search and evaluate the intentions and interests present in the content; the ability to critically analyze productions, identifying stereotypes; as well as managing their own emotions, identifying the potential manipulation mechanisms on-screen. The scope of expression relates to the ability to use new media to commit as a citizen, as well as elaborating and modifying products to question values or stereotypes present in media.

Since Lica and Samantha are a queer couple, discussions about representation of minorities in the arcs involving the characters were present throughout the monitoring. Fans pointed out how straight couples starred in longer and more explicit scenes, especially in affectionate and sexual contexts. Thus, the fandom claimed that there was a clear distinction in the way straight and queer characters were developed in the telenovela.

Interacting viewers also reflected on the importance of media aimed at teenagers' audiences addressing themes such as queer relationships and homophobia. The posts highlighted that those scenes helped to introduce these issues into the family discussions, and some fans shared personal accounts of conversations they had with their parents about sexual orientation, gender identity and so on. Therefore, the dimension of ideology and values, as proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), is intertwined in the conversational contexts of Limantha shippers on Twitter.

However, it is worth noting, since the monitoring was not limited to the telenovela broadcast period, that the critical reflection of interacting viewers on issues encompassed by the dimension of ideology and values were not restricted to Limantha's fictional universe. Interacting viewers shared issues related to feminism, racism and the LGBTQIAP+ population through other media content. In this way, the mobilization of fans included a specific event, discussion of facts reported in newspapers and fictional narratives.

Broadcast in 2018, the reality show *Big Brother Brasil 18* (Rede Globo, 2000-current) generated various discussions on Twitter. As in previous editions, the public engaged in collective efforts to collect¹² votes in favor of their favorite participant. Towards the end of the reality show's season, the Limantha fandom started the action *Mini Mutirão Limantinhas Apoiam Gleici* (Mini Task Force Lil' Limanthas Support Gleici) which aimed to the participant Gleici Damasceno to remain in the show. The 22-year-old girl, from the state of Acre, was known in the reality show for discussing issues such as meritocracy, social inequality, racism, feminism and the importance of public policies for marginalized youth. Tweets shared by *Young Hearts* fans included the times of the joint efforts, links to the reality show's website and tips on the voting process. Tutorials, using arrows and screenshots, highlighted shortcuts in the system so that interacting viewers could optimize their voting.

Women's empowerment in sport was also echoed by Limantha fandom. Held in 2019, the Women's Soccer World Cup games were widely publicized by Lica and Samantha's fans profiles on social media. Interacting viewers retweeted (RT) content shared by the Brazilian Soccer Federation (Confederação Brasileira de Futebol-CBF); combined watching the matches together and commenting simultaneously on Twitter. Also, they highlighted the importance of giving visibility to the sport aiming at the interest of sponsors and specialized media, so

¹² Every week, two or three competitors are chosen by the cast to face popular vote, where the one who gets the most votes is eliminated from the show. The competitors' goal is to overcome weekly eliminations and remain in the house until the last day, when the audience chooses who wins the big final prize (TVPédia Brasil, 2020).

FIGURE 1
TWEET CALLING FOR A COLLECTIVE EFFORT IN FAVOR OF GLEICI
AND TIPPING ON THE VOTING PROCESS



Source: Twitter (2018).¹³

that players could have equal pay and good working conditions as male soccer athletes. The participation of fans through the hashtag #SeleçãoFeminina (#Women'sTeam) was so expressive that during the Brazil-Uruguay match a commentator from TV channel Band sent a hug to the fandom, thanking the audience.

The mobilization of interacting viewers around social issues was not restricted to entertainment and sports television broadcasts; publications also highlighted factual news items related to the investigations into the murder of PSOL councilor and activist Marielle Franco and episode of the Bienal do Livro (Book Biennial), in Rio de Janeiro, in 2019. During the book fair, Rio de Janeiro mayor, Marcelo Crivella,

¹³ According to Recuero (2009), despite Twitter being a public social network, it is recommended that the identities of the users be preserved in academic research. In this way, we choose not to disclose the profiles that will publish the tweets analyzed in this article.

determined that the comic book *Avengers: Children's Crusade*, as well as other LGBTQIAP+ works, should be recalled from shelves of the publishers (G1 Rio, 2019). On Twitter, Limantha fandom shared protests against Crivella's measure and discussed the importance of the representation of minorities in works aimed at young audiences. After the mobilization of readers, authors, editors and social media users, the decision was suspended. Racist episodes published in the press were also constantly propagated in the monitored profiles –shippers disavowed prejudice and discussed issues such as structural racism and the genocide of Black youth in Brazil–.

In addition to curating through Twitter threads with links to download episodes (Drive and Torrent) and scenes from series featuring LGBTQIAP+ characters, such as *Skam France* (France TV Slash/RTBF Audio, 2018-current), *Wyonna Earp* (Syfy, 2016-current) and *Atypical* (Netflix, 2017-2021), fans reflected representativeness of these communities in Rede Globo telenovelas. For example, during *The Other Side of Paradise* (2017-2018), which aired on the 9:00 PM time slot, the fandom questioned the perpetuation of stereotypes in the plot.

FIGURE 2
FANDOM CRITICIZES STEREOTYPES IN THE PROGRAM AND
THE UNFOLDING OF NARRATIVE ARCS



Source: Twitter (2018).

Tweets drew attention to the negative caricature of gay characters and the unfolding of the narrative arc involving violence against women. According to fans, despite assaulting his wife Clara (Bianca Bin) throughout the chapters, Gael (Sergio Guizé) had a happy ending, not suffering any repression for his actions.

Thus, we can observe that various issues explored throughout the episodes of *Malhação: Viva a Diferença* were mirrored and expanded by interacting viewers in other spheres, going beyond the fictional development of the telenovela.

DIMENSION OF LANGUAGE

According to Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015, p. 9) in the dimension of language the scope of analysis refers to the ability to understand how messages are constructed in different media, generating diverse meanings, as well as the ability of establishing connections between texts, codes and media. The scope of expression refers to the ability to say oneself using various representation systems and styles depending on communicative situations, the content transmitted and the interlocutors, in addition to the ability to modify existing products, attributing new meanings.

During the screening of *Malhação: Viva a Diferença*, transmedia actions of the plot were conducted by #*MalhaçãoemTodasTelas* (#YoungHeartsinEveryScreen) (Borges et al., 2020). The contents expanded and deepened the telenovela's narrative arcs through social media profiles (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest) and videos, both pre-recorded and live on the channel's website GShow.

In the final weeks of the attraction, Rede Globo launched an action that aimed to raise awareness about fake news. The transmedia strategy developed the narrative arc involving the Colégio Estadual Cora Coralina. In the plot, the school was the target of a misinformation campaign which defamed the teachers, claiming that they displayed pornographic content in their classes. The fake news also spread hate messages about LGBTQIAP+ population, particularly homophobic content, with statements such as “males are males” and “females

are females”. The posts, shared on the telenovela’s Twitter profile,¹⁴ presented a sort of good practices booklet, highlighting the importance of fact checking information before sharing it on social media and WhatsApp.

FIGURE 3
AS PART OF ITS TRANSMEDIA ACTIONS, REDE GLOBO LAUNCHED
A CAMPAIGN TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT FAKE NEWS AND
MISINFORMATION



Source: Twitter (2018).

At the same time, the Limantha fandom created the hashtag #PreconceitoÉLixo (#PrejudiceIsTrash). Using the tag, fans discussed how often false information helps in the perpetuation of homophobia and racism. The tweets included personal reports from young people pointing out how untrue information was harmful in the process of discovering sexual identity; criticism of hate speech propagated on

¹⁴ Available at <https://twitter.com/malhacaogshow>

social media; in addition to scenes from the telenovela that discusses racism and sexism. The fandom also highlighted the importance of reflecting on the social issues explored in the telenovela in other spaces, such as school, at home with family and friends.

One of the main points echoed by fans was the correlation between the narrative arc of fake news and *Queermuseu: Cartografias da diferença na arte brasileira* (*Queermuseum: Difference cartography in Brazilian art*). In 2017, the art exhibition was the target of a misinformation campaign claiming that the works were an apology for pedophilia, zoophilia and religious slander (G1 RS, 2017). The fake news quickly spread on social media, arousing the revolt and mobilization of conservative groups. The controversy surrounding the exhibition ended up leading to its closure. Interacting viewers pointed out that the plot featuring Colégio Estadual Cora Coralina was present in everyday life as well as they explained the importance of fact-checking information before sharing it. Finally, some fans published pictures of trashcans using the hashtag #PreconceitoÉLixo.

FIGURE 4
TWEETS REVERBERATED THE ISSUE OF FAKE NEWS THROUGH THE HASHTAG #PRECONCEITOÉLIXO



Source: Twitter (2018).

In this context, the Limantha fandom critically reflected on fake news and how misinformation reinforces prejudice. In addition to expanding the discussion on Twitter through personal reports, the mobilization of interacting viewers also extended Rede Globo's transmedia action through various multimodal resources, such as written text, screen captures of telenovela scenes, hiperlinks to news about *Queermuseu*, picture edits, videos and hashtags.

DIMENSION OF AESTHETIC

The dimension of aesthetic, as proposed by Ferrés and Piscitelli (2015), is related to the understanding of the importance of technical-expressive aspects in the composition of media productions. The scope of analysis involves the sensitivity to recognize the aesthetic quality of media content and the ability to identify basic aesthetic categories, such as formal and thematic innovation, originality and style. The scope of expression is related to the ability to produce creative messages, as well as appropriating and transforming artistic productions, intending to enhance creativity, experimentation and aesthetic sensibility.

Created by fans after the end of *Malhação: Viva a Diferença*, in April 2018, the campaign #FazendoADiferença (#MakingADifference) aimed to take the main themes of the season to the walls of schools and colleges. To that end, the fandom selected quotes from songs about love and diversity featured in the plot's soundtrack and transcribed them to post-its. Inspired by street posters, fans stuck the post-its in spaces where many students circulated, such as bulletin boards and bathrooms. In addition to sharing pictures of the #FazendoADiferença action, interacting viewers highlighted how small actions could contribute to a greater cause.

In short, it is important to highlight how the fictional universe of the telenovela and, in particular, the social issues discussed throughout the episodes were interpreted by fans in various contexts and actions. The fandom expanded the plot based on real situations, organized collective action, mobilized to raise awareness, critically reflecting on the narrative arcs of *Malhação: Viva a Diferença* and creatively producing creative content for Twitter.

FIGURE 5
FANS STUCK POST-ITS IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES



Sources: Twitter (2018).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The contents created by Limantha shippers on Twitter introduces the discussions presented on young adult telenovela *Malhação: Viva a Diferença* into spaces and contexts that go beyond the fictional universe. In this sense, the plot works as a starting point, encouraging the debate on dense issues such as, for example, sexism, racism, and prejudice.

By mobilizing on social media, fans demonstrate not only the ability to reflect on social issues, but also to use the potential of Twitter's informational architecture to reach their goals. Through hashtags that unify the flow of the timeline and the mentions that strengthen the asymmetrical connections, fandom creates a collaborative web in favor of issues that it deems pertinent. In other words, viewers direct the usual mode of organization within the fan culture, guided by information-sharing and collaboration, towards activism. It is also worth noting

the transposition of online actions to the daily lives of fandom. By spreading posters in schools, interacting viewers start to engage, even indirectly, with other audiences, not limited to Twitter users, thus introducing a new layer in the reinterpretation of the fictional universe of the telenovela.

It's worth noting that Limantha ship practices must be analyzed taking into consideration its multiplicities and quirks. Despite originating from a single fictional world, the critical understanding and creative production of this subcultural community might present significant variation in interpretation strategies. In this context, the analysis conducted in this paper is restricted to the accounts that were monitored, considering their access to online tools and their mutual goals.

Finally, the expansion of debates presented in the telenovela also highlights the importance of programs aimed at young adult in the discussion of social issues. The plots encourage fandom reflection and engagement around relevant issues, which is crucial for the development of media competence in its critical and creative scope.

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