Faith, entertainment, and conflicts on the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James): a case study on the mediatization of the pilgrimage experience on Facebook groups

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Abstract: We call upon the concepts of mediatization, circulation, and discussions about the pilgrimage ritual to reflect on the media interference in the experience of pilgrims going to Santiago de Compostela. From these concepts and the methodology of case studies, we analyze posts in four Facebook groups. The evidence points to a certain distance regarding the Catholic institutional sphere and the linking of this experience to media consumption and entertainment through the expression of the most diverse motivations (self-help, tourism, spiritual, sports, etc.). It also consolidates a *totem image* of The Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) as a transforming experience for the different types of pilgrims.

Keywords: mediatization, Camino de Santiago, Facebook, circulation, pilgrimage

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Foi, divertissement et conflits sur le Chemin de Saint-Jacques de Compostelle : une étude de cas sur la médiatisation de l'expérience de pèlerinage dans les groupes Facebook

Résumé : Les concepts de médiatisation, de circulation et de discussions sur le rituel de pèlerinage sont utilisés pour réfléchir sur l'interférence des médias dans l'expérience des pèlerins se rendant à Saint Jacques de Compostelle. En s'appuyant

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sur ces concepts et sur méthodologie des études de cas, nous analysons les messages de quatre groupes Facebook. L'analyse indique un certain éloignement par rapport au cadre institutionnel catholique et un rattachement de cette expérience à la consommation et au divertissement médiatique, au travers de l'expression des motivations diverses (développement personnel, touristique, spirituel, sportif, etc.). Nous observons également la consolidation d'une « image totem » du Chemin de Saint-Jacques en tant qu'expérience transformatrice pour les divers types de pèlerins.

Mots-clés : médiatisation, Camino de Santiago, Facebook, circulation, pèlerinage

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1. Introduction

Studies about the complex relations between media and religion have shown us that today the comprehension that this phenomenon goes beyond the simple understanding of how religious institutions make use of communication vehicles. If, on the one hand, research in the academic field of communication has emphasized the importance of reflecting on how the public interacts and appropriates of a given media message; on the other hand, the advancement of digital communication technologies has enabled ordinary citizens to produce and broadcast publicly media content. This scenario opens up multiple possibilities of investigation for researchers seeking to understand aspects of a mediated religion/religiosity.

In this work, we align ourselves with these concerns by proposing an analysis of the interactions in four Portuguese-speaking Facebook groups that have as subject The Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James). The interest in the subject arose from doubt deriving from the cell phone use by pilgrims and the fact that the pilgrimage ritual has historically been structured from a disconnection of the individuals in relation to their near world. In searching for clues about possible transformations of the pilgrimage experience in contemporary times, Facebook groups have shown themselves to be interesting, since in them pilgrims and future pilgrims share their senses about the pilgrimage.

For this research, we bring the discussion about pilgrimage as a ritual (Cardita, 2012; Rieger, 2014) and we deal with the concepts of mediatization (Gomes, 2016, Hepp, 2014) and circulation (Fausto Neto, 2010). From this theoretical preamble and the methodology of case studies (Braga, 2008), we analyze posts of the Facebook groups in two moments. The publications show the emergence of structured reports in a distinct way from those traditionally linked to pilgrimages, as well as attest a certain distance from the mediation of the Catholic Church. Despite the constitution of multiple ways of pilgrimage, there remains a 'totem image' (Rosa, 2012) of the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) that passes through the different expressions of the subjects.

2. The ritual of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage, like all rituals, involves making a crossing from a profane[1] to a sacred reality, thus leaving ordinary time and space and plunging into another temporal and spatial dynamic (Eliade, n.d., p. 82). In *The Sacred and the Profane*, Eliade elaborates a phenomenology of religion that derives from the concept of hierophany, which means 'manifestation of the sacred' (Eliade, n.d., p. 25). According to him, religions were constituted historically by the inscriptions of the sacred[2] in the world, by means of 'hierophany'. Hierophany creates with itself an *axis mundi*, a center, an axis of orientation for humanity. Thus, it demarcates a differentiated place that organizes the others. In light of this perspective, we can infer that the supposed tomb of the apostle James the Great in Spain has become a sacred space for believers.

> Like space, time is also neither religious nor homogeneous nor continuous. There are, on the one hand, the intervals of sacred time, the time of the feasts (for the most part, periodical feasts); on the other hand, there is profane time, the ordinary temporal duration in which deprived acts of religious significance are inscribed (Eliade, n.d., p. 82)

Rituals measure the passage from one time and space to another. They can be from the sign of the cross that is made before entering a church or walking a great distance on foot, a pilgrimage, to a destiny considered sacred. By immersing in the pilgrimage ritual, one also enters a sacred time, which historically entailed prayers and sacrifices.

Reflecting specifically on the pilgrimage, Cardita (2012) points out that this ritual is present in several religions and, in spite of its particularities, it has some characteristics common to all of them. According to him, the motivations of the pilgrims and the act of leaving the family and walking a certain distance to a place considered sacred are present in every pilgrimage. In addition, Coleman, one of the authors cited by Cardita (2012, p. 206), considers the narrative when the pilgrim returns home also part of the ritual, implying, therefore, not only what is lived directly in the course, but also a construction of meaning that may stimulate others to do the same.

In Facebook groups, pilgrims tell their experiences, ask for help or give recommendations as they drive themselves to Santiago de Compostela. This type of action already suggests two changes in the experience of pilgrimage: 1) the isolation that once was a sine qua non condition of pilgrimage is broken; 2) the narrative mode, once shared with the relatives only upon the return, is altered and now emerges in an episodic way, told by the pilgrim in situ and shared online.

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[1] It is important to point out that for Eliade the term profane does not necessarily mean a *counter-sacred* (demons, for example), but rather an existence different from the sacred.

[2] Eliade does not bother to define whether the experiences actually said sacred were true. What matters to the author is to think of how supposed manifestations of the sacred have common elements in their configuration.

Understanding such transformations that take place in the contemporary world leads us to deal with historical aspects of The Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) and the concepts of mediatization and circulation.

3. The Way of St. James

The Catholic tradition tells that in the VII century a peasant of the kingdom of Asturias (Spain) would have seen lights in the sky that seemed to indicate a path that followed until Mount Libradón. Interpreting the vision as a miracle, he goes to the local bishop and reports what happened. The priest decides to accompany him and also sees the lights. There they find amidst the vegetation a marble tomb which they interpreted to be of the apostle James and his two disciples. The news quickly runs to Europe, and the king of Asturias orders a chapel and a monastery to be built on the site (Trombini, 2013, p. 18).

The fact gave rise to the pilgrimage to where the supposed tomb of the apostle is. In the early centuries, the pilgrimage was associated with penances, paying promises, and sacrifices. The pilgrim faced unknown lands and his life was permanently at risk. In addressing the Christian pilgrimages in the Middle Ages, Rieger points out that 'according to medieval law, pilgrims were declared physically dead if they had not heard from them for a year and a day' (Rieger, 2014, p. 69). The Modern Age came to bring more security and also new meanings for the pilgrimage.

> As modernity has emphasized the freedom of the individual and has helped finance that freedom through the economic development of flourishing capitalism, pilgrimages could now also be realized as a demonstration of personal freedom and independence. (Rieger, 2014, p. 70)

Some traces of this process could already be observed in the twelfth century. According to Vidotte and Rui,

> Finally, in the twelfth century began the process that until the end of the Middle Ages would profoundly alter the meaning of the pilgrimage. As García de Cortazar affirms, "the painful path of the old pilgrimages will become, by the end of the fifteenth century, a path of intellectual curiosity and exchange. (Vidotte, Rui, 2011, p. 159)

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, members of the educated elite traveled pilgrimages routes to contemplate examples of culture and art. Yet in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, tourism has brought other configurations to the ritual, mixing faith and leisure.

> What has changed over the years, of course, is not only the form of pilgrimage but also the popular definitions of the sacred and how people relate to it. Where once the search for the holy for the pilgrims implied a challenge and had to do with the concepts of penance and an intentional commitment to the difficulties and dangers of the journey, now the search for the sacred has to do with concepts

> *such as personal growth and self-realization of the pilgrim*. (...) In addition, the difficulties and dangers of the travels have been reduced to such a degree by modern forms of travel that the journey itself has almost been abandoned as a significant part of most pilgrimages. What matters is only arrival and departure (Rieger, 2014: 70-71, emphasis added).

According to this author, the pilgrimages demonstrate that in contemporary religiosity there is a certain 'domestication of the sacred' (Rieger, 2014, p. 71). The relation with the sacred would not be through a submission of the individuals to it. In fact, individuals make the sacred to adapt based on their concerns. They corroborate for this change in the profile of the pilgrim's data collected by the Pilgrim's Reception Office (*Oficina de Acogida al Peregrino*), an institution linked to the diocese of Santiago de Compostela responsible for issuing the pilgrim diploma[3]. Dividing the motivations of those who applied for the diploma in religious, cultural, and religious/cultural, statistics indicate that in 2004, when they began to be elaborated, 75% of the pilgrims claimed a strictly religious purpose, 20% religious/cultural and 5% cultural only. As far back as 2016 there was an inversion: religious/cultural: 48%; religious: 44%; cultural: 8%.

In addressing the Christian pilgrimages in the Middle Ages and nowadays through narratives of pilgrims, theologian Notker Wolf (2012) points out that although the devotional dimension continues to attract millions of pilgrims, especially to places like Lourdes (France) and San Giovani Rotondo (Italy), there is a new type of pilgrim emerging on other routes, such as that of Santiago de Compostela, to whom miracles and relics of saints draw little (Wolf, 2012, p. 233). Wolf disagrees with the view that such subjects are only "improved wanderers" or just "walkers" who seek to test their physical limits. According to him, today and in the medieval period have in common the following aspects: 1) the awareness that it is an experience of great importance for his/her life; 2) community living with unknown people; 3) the impulse to introspection and existential analysis; 4) the idea that subjects are transformed through this experience (Wolf, 2012, p. 228-233).

In the interactions analyzed in the Facebook groups, we observed few mentions to the Catholic Church or to practices associated with its doctrine. Multiple motivations are articulated through the contact of the subjects with the various logic that begin to act in the experience of pilgrimage, among them those coming from tourism, the media, self-help discourses, esoteric religiosity, etc. However, this does not happen without conflicts between the pilgrims. In the virtual spaces investigated there is intense 'circulation' (Fausto Neto, 2014), implying disputes of meaning about the pilgrimage. Mediatization brings with it not only new social practices but also practices of meanings that highlight tensions and negotiations about what is

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[3] The so-called *Compostela* consists of a certification attesting the completion of the pilgrimage. In order to obtain it, it is necessary to have the *pilgrim's passport* (a document necessary for access to the public and parish halls), the stamps of the accredited hostels / restaurants and to sign the declaration that it has been done on foot for at least the last 100 km or 200 km by bicycle from one of the recognized routes.

transformed in the process. Before going to our analysis and methodology it is necessary to contextualize what we understand about mediatization and circulation, two concepts that underlie this research.

4. Mediatization and circulation

The concept of mediatization is always accompanied by the words change or transformation. Despite the multiple theoretical perspectives and research contexts there is a common understanding that 'we can define mediatization as the concept used to analyze the (long-term) interrelationship between media and communication change, on the one hand, and the change of culture and society, on the other, in a critical way' (Hepp, 2014, p. 51). Similarly, Gomes (2016, p. 1) states that 'mediatization is used as a concept to describe the process of expansion of the different technical means and to consider the interrelations between the communicative change of the media and the socio-cultural change'.

This means that the media are not thought of as merely messages conducting instruments, but that from their uses and appropriations in different socio-cultural contexts, *processes* are created, and by them, sectors of society are entangled by the dynamics of media devices. Such *mediatic processes* 'cannot be seen as *an object in itself*, but through their relations, connections and interconnections, because their greater epistemological richness comes from their relations and connections in the context' (Gomes, 2004, p. 31). Talking about mediatization leads us to reflect on how the *media processes* start to integrate social processes in order to provide them with new configurations.

It is necessary to be careful. Although one speaks of the mediatization of society or society in the process of mediatization, one should bear in mind that one does not propose a standardization of the social world by the sign of the media. In this discussion, the distinction made by Braga (2015) between the 'logic of the media' and the 'logic of mediatization' is productive. In a critical reading of Hjarvard, the Brazilian author points out that thinking about mediatization demands to consider not only the influence of the media on society, that is, how the second adapts to the logic of the first, but also to understand how social actors in their experiments and appropriations transform the logic inherent to the media (Braga, 2015, p. 31).

Thinking about the relationship between media and religion through the mediatization concept bias requires considering (1) appropriation of media by religious institutions, (2) how media companies refer to religion in their informational or fictional productions, and (3) how social actors move forward the senses they attribute to media productions and how they themselves become media producers and shapers of new practices. In reflecting on the concept of medialization (a complexification of the concept of related mediatization) and its relation to religion, Bratosin (2016, p. 412) argues that in the present context this means considering: the increasing prevalence of media communication by all actors in

society, the perception of the decisive importance of the media in the diffusion of religious ideas and the adaptation of the actors of the religious communication to a media oriented communication. In our analysis this leads us to identify the interferences of communication in transformations of the ritual of pilgrimage.

Studies of similar concerns have been made with other materials and objects. Apostol (2011) in addressing the media coverage of the pilgrimage in Romania identifies a common posture that transits from the sacred to the secular, hierarchizes actors who are present in the conduct of the ritual and builds meanings on this experience in the context of a post-communist society. In relation to Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James), Silva and Santos (2015) and Trombini (2013) analyze narratives of pilgrims in websites of Brazilian associations dedicated to this route of pilgrimage. The work suggests that in such reports, posted after the pilgrim's return, the understanding of a transformative experience persists, as Wolf (2012) says. The Facebook groups that we analyze are also spaces in which pilgrims and future pilgrims inaugurate ways to experience the pilgrimage and share it in real time, what in some way affects the way he/she makes sense of this experience. Thus, thinking about the mediated pilgrimage leads us to address issues of a discursive order, which makes us resort to the concept of circulation.

According to Fausto Neto (2010), the development of the circulation concept has made itself essential to think about mediatization. In the first studies, circulation was seen as an automatic zone of the passage of speeches' (Fausto Neto, 2010, p. 7). Emphasis was placed on the intentions of the sender, with the recipients having the role of consuming the received messages and submitting to calculated effects. Further elaborations of the research in Communication pointed out an active behavior of the reception subjects. Circulation ceases to be seen as interval, passage, becoming to be understood as a zone of indetermination, space that generates potentialities.

In subsequent developments it became a place of difference, comprising the gaps between grammars of production and recognition. Next, it is seen as 'a point of contact and then later becomes a zone of articulation, but without clearly showing its dynamics and its effects' (Fausto Neto, 2010, p. 6). With the complexity of the media processes in the 'society in the process of mediatization,' we are facing a new social/technical/discursive scenario that constitutes the new interactions between production/reception. These results directly from new forms of organization of discourse circulation' (Fausto Neto, 2010, p. 6).

Moving from the traditional reception to the role of media content producer, it becomes more perceptible to researchers the character of the circulation as a continuous stream, whose traces we distinguish in the circuits that are created through the multiple actions that involve, among others, communication companies, individual actors, social institutions, etc. It is also worth mentioning the aspect of circulation as a relation of value (Rosa, 2016) because what is put into circulation, carried forward, is the result of a game between actors and institutions that begin to

attribute value to certain texts, images, and objects. The Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James), for example, enters the circulation in diverse forms, or by the media movements that transform even its connotation when assigning to it a value of tourist destination or a mystification. At the same time, there are the social actors who identify in the Way a value, whether religious, affective or cultural and who are available to produce and elaborate meanings about this experience. Of course, when we speak of circulation as value, we also speak of non-values, that is, of exclusions, of cultural and religious elements that are gradually being overshadowed by the increase of visibility in the circulation of other choices. The circuits, therefore, evidence these valuations, even when we think of discourses that repeat themselves and, therefore, confirm the experience, though transformed.

Thus, it is becoming increasingly rare to find that unique confirmation that unidirectional vectors determine mediatized practices. Keeping in mind the hermeneutic key that the concept of circulation opens to us, it is up to us researchers to identify which instances act and how they shape the social phenomena. For this, strategic choices are also needed to deal with the extensive material we collect for this analysis, which has led us to opt for the case study methodology.

5. Between clues and ways of thinking

For Braga (2008), the academic field of Communication in Brazil has increasingly employed the case studies to produce knowledge. This is due to the fact that Communication is not a nomothetic discipline, that is, with a concern to determine great regularities to produce laws that explain phenomena of the world. This is not to say that in case studies the concern for mapping regularities disappears, but rather those singularities gain importance. It is based on observables and specific questions to produce abstractions that allow tensions and approximations that enrich the area and contribute to its consolidation (Braga, 2008, p. 75-76). According to the author, in the case studies we note four articulated purposes, namely:

> a) to generate rigorous and diversified knowledge about a plurality of phenomena that are intuitively perceived as of interest to the area (...); b) to ensure elements of articulation and tension between situations of reality and previous in-depth comprehensive abstract propositions (...); c) generate propositions of increasing abstraction 'from concrete realities'; d) to be characterized as the most likely scope of success in the 'disentangling' of communicational issues. (Braga, 2008, p. 76).

However, the *case studies* face four risks: 1) Dispersion: the variety of objects causes studies to lose connection with each other and with the area itself; 2) centrifugal derivation: theories of neighboring areas *swallow* the work; 3) empiricism: when it is limited to describing the singular thing, without making risk

(abductive) inferences; 4) apriorism: when the case only serves to prove a certain theory. (Braga, 2008)

The risk inferences (abductive thinking) are strategic in this methodology since, in addition to producing knowledge that extrapolates the reality of the object, they mean not reproducing what is already known. Abductive thinking is also at the basis of Ginzburg's indicial paradigm, since 'it implies making general propositions from the singular data obtained' (Braga, 2008, p. 78). Such similarity leads Braga to seek referrals from this paradigm to the case studies. One is the differentiation between essential and accidental evidence.

Faced with its object, every researcher asks himself what he should select, observe and discard. In this investigation, it would be impossible to analyze in detail all the postings of the Facebook groups. Such an observational exercise, besides being exhausting, would inevitably lead us to paths that would escape the research problem. Thus, for this work, we have selected clues from two observational moments. In the first one, we accompany the groups *Caminho de Santiago*, *Caminho de Santiago de Compostela*, and *Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela* in June and July 2016 in a discontinuous way (Sousa, 2016). The second moment comprised a continuous period throughout the month of April 2017, which led to the collection of 773 posts. This time the group *Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela* was replaced by the group *Caminho Português – Porto a Santiago de Compostela* since the first one was apparently excluded or deactivated, not having appeared in our searches after the first collection. In this second exercise, we focus on the narratives of pilgrimage.

6. Going through Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James)

In the analysis of the groups, we studied the types of content posted, their potential objectives and interactions finding more similarities than differences between groups. In the description of the *Caminho de Santiago*, the group is presented as a place to share experiences: 'Personal experiences with the greatest sincerity. That's just transmutation. Included?! This is the Gospel! Pax et Bonum'. The group *Caminho de Santiago de Compostela* is placed as an environment of collaboration and brings a brief history of the pilgrimage.

> Support Group for Pilgrims. Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) are the routes wanded by the pilgrims who have flown to Santiago de Compostela since the 9th century. These are called pilgrims, from the Latin 'per ægros', 'that which crosses the fields'. They have as their symbol a shell, usually, a scallop called locally by "venera", a custom that already came from the time in which the ancestral towns peregrinated to Finisterra.

Like the previous ones, the group *Caminho Português – Porto a Santiago de Compostela* emphasizes the collaborative character of the group, distinguishing itself for indicating that certain type of posting was vetoed.

This is a Group for the Pilgrims who have made or will make the Portuguese Way (PORTO - SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA) to post their suggestions and experiences that they had for the Way. Here you will find tips, maps, photos of the stages among others. ... Advertising is not allowed in this Group.

Advertising is also not well received in other groups and gets criticism in the comments, especially when dealing with products and services not related to the Camino de Santiago (The Way of Saint James). Finally, in the description *Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela* we find a different proposal from the others since it is made explicit as an objective of the group to avoid the transformation of the pilgrimage into commercial/tourist enterprise. The attached publication is illustrative.

> Only to seriously discuss the *Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela*. All due to the seriousness of the itineraries of pilgrimage and, always, against the prostitution of the yellow arrows to the taste of the political and economic interests. Any type of advertising, namely commercial housing and, above all, profitable organizations of pseudo-pilgrimages will be erased, and their authors will be dispatched from this group[4].



Figure 1. *Publication pinned in the group Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela.*

Source: Retrieved from https://goo.gl/VUjDtx. Acess 06/24/2016.

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[4] Description of groups. 1) *Caminho de Santiago*, available at: https://goo.gl/X4Oz7o. 2) *Caminho de Santiago de Compostela,* available at: https://goo.gl/ubpYuO. 3) *Caminho Português - Porto a Santiago de Compostela*, available at: https://goo.gl/3Trn52. Access: 06/24/2017. We could not access the group *Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela* on Facebook.

In the comments of the post above there is a nostalgic tone about a past in which the essence of the Way was more respected, and now we can see with sadness the loss of identity and resemblance with tourism enterprises. Some cite as examples pilgrims who stop staying at popular hostels to stay in comfortable hotels. Although most of the comments demonstrate agreement with such discontentment, we found disagreements. One person criticizes those who agree with the post and suggests that they would also be responsible for the change by not 'caring of the Way'.

Our attention was attracted by the fact that the two groups linked to *Caminho Português,* albeit in different ways and for different purposes, made explicit criticisms of the commercial aspect. Our hypothesis is that this is related to the fact that the groups are specifically geared towards a route of routes and count among its members many pilgrims who live nearby. From the vocabulary used in the posts and in the comments, we can infer that most of the participating internauts are Portuguese. Thus, the relationship built with the Way would be not only that of the pilgrim who walks the journey and returns home but also involves the connection with the earth and the sense of caring.

We have noticed that a community perspective is common to all groups as spaces of mutual collaboration where members act as "amateurs" (Flichy, 2010). Flichy (2010) calls with this term the social actor who produces media content about a theme and gains recognition from a community. It is a figure who is between the specialist and the ignorant in a certain subject and develops an unofficial competence, that is, not attested by an institution. Through the action of amateurs, 'learning communities' are formed (Flichy, 2010, p. 22), spaces where people help each other. This interpretative key seems productive to us to understand how the groups work, since, as we shall see, posts with requests for help and sharing of experiences are frequent. In both, there is intense participation.

On the other hand, there is an emptying of the institutional aspect, that is, of mentions or even of the active presence in these spaces of the Catholic Church or of associations from Galicia responsible for the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James). It should be noted that we believe that such lay role has to do not only with questions which, as noted above, relate to the media sphere, but also seem to relate to the particular configurations of the pilgrimage that, unlike other rituals, does not require the presence of a member of the clergy for its providing. In addition, resuming Cardita (2012), we saw that the narrative of the pilgrim assumes a decisive role that, again, also puts the layman in the spotlight. What differs in these media operations are the few references to specialized places that, though not unintentionally, reinforce the authority of the 'amateur pilgrim'.

This will become clearer in the next item, as we advance in understanding the modes of operation of the groups. Despite the differences indicated with regard to its proposals, we found similar content. Thus, from the collection, made discontinuously in June and July 2016 and continuously in April 2017, we identified

nine types of posts, common to all groups, based on the authors' interactional objectives.

One of the distinguished types of posts consists in what we call "disputes of meaning about the pilgrimage" and has already been discussed above when we dealt with the Caminho Central Português para Santiago de Compostela. The others are 1 - dissemination of products and services; 2 - curiosities; 3 - motivational/spiritual; 4 - news; 5 - about the group itself; 6 - unrelated to the theme of the group; 6 - requests for help and recommendations; 7 - narratives of pilgrimage. It is important to notice that this procedure does not imply a closed classification since the same post can include more than one type, but aims to systematize the material collected to enable its analysis.

6.1. *Dissemination of products and services / Advertising*

It is common to find offers of products and services, most of them aimed at pilgrims. However, we noticed that some posts receive harsh criticism while others have positive manifestations (likes, shares, etc). Negative reactions refer to advertisements of items not related to the Way or that are made by companies. The publications that receive positive interactions are related to products and services associated with the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James), where there is no explicit identification that it is part of a larger commercial enterprise.



Figure 2. *Internet user offers a course for women in the group Camino de Santiago*

Source : Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/LyBD3q. Access: 23/06/2016

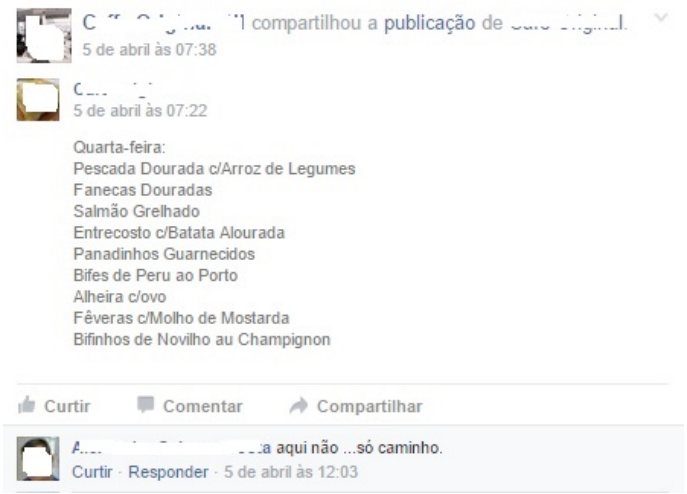


Figure 3. *Restaurant located in one of the cities of the Way announces its menu of the day in the group Caminho de Santiago. Pilgrim comments: "not here ... just the way".*

Source : Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/LyBD3q. Access: 06/23/2016

Once again, the association of the pilgrimage route with commercial interests is not well seen. The discursive reading is that with the statement 'not here... just the way' the association of commercial interests with this route of pilgrimage was denied. Offering products and services is not a problem as long as it is not related to a wider commercial purpose, which explains the positive reactions to the course's publicity and the criticism of the restaurant's posting.

6.2. *Curiosities*

Many publications tell details about the history, symbols, and legends of the localities through which the pilgrims go, etc. The following image presents a publication that addresses the use of staff by pilgrims.



Figure 4. *Post made in the group Caminho de Santiago in which the focus is in the use of the staff. The author of the publication comments beneath, probably for the purpose of gaining more visibility.*

Source : *Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/cROqyj. Access: 28/04/2017.*

The post above is from a pilgrim who runs the Facebook page *Buen Camino: the custom-made Camino de Santiago*. During the month of April 2017, she made daily posts on her page in the analyzed groups. We identified a typical action of the amateurs, which consists in the production of content on their topic of interest and in the constitution of places of reference among the members of the *learning community*. Such members consume what is produced by amateurs who have greater knowledge about a particular subject.

6.3. *Motivational / Spiritual*

Some netizens post motivational/spiritual phrases and videos. The messages take a religious tone or incorporate some aspect of the Way. However, often times this religious aspect does not necessarily identify with the Catholic Church institution, as we can see in the following figure.



Figure 5. *Posted in the group Caminho de Santiago de Compostela from the page 'Thinking and Attracting' brings an optimistic idea about life from a short story. There is a reference to God, but without identifying with a particular religion.*

Source : *Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/5Ph4pp. Access: 06/24/2016.*

In April 2017, more specifically during Holy Week, we found a greater number of references to the Catholic Church than in the observation made the previous year. Some pilgrims posted the Holy Week program in Santiago de Compostela, others wished *Happy Easter* (Figure 6).



Figure 6. *Post made in the group Caminho de Santiago de Compostela. Text: 'I wish a Holy and Happy Easter to all the pilgrims of this beautiful group'. In the answers, the participants thanked and wished 'Happy Easter'.*

Source: *Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/v9qLtc. Access: 05/20/2017.*

The emphasis given to Easter shows us that although the Catholic dimension is not central to the group, it remains an integral part of The Way of St. James. In fact, the expressions of religious or spiritual character in the groups show us that an individually negotiated religiosity emerges. Another example.

In response to a participant who had asked for suggestions on which city to stay in for a certain length of the pilgrimage, a pilgrim suggests that he spent the night in Foncebadón and go to the place where the writer Paulo Coelho would have faced the devil, as described in the book The Pilgrimage. The pilgrim, who had been there previously, describes his experience as 'mystical and ghostly'. In the same post, another pilgrim suggests 'attending the blessing to the pilgrims' in a chapel in the city of León.

We also found esoteric and non-Christian religions references. Curiously, the mention of other religiosities at no time generated misunderstandings. The leading

role assumed by the figure of the pilgrim as conductor of his experience seems to grant him autonomy as to the religious references that he links to The Way of Saint James. 'The Way', an expression used by many, acquires the independent character of a specific doctrine, a point to which we shall return further on.

6.4. *Not related to the group themes*

As in other Facebook groups where there are many members, there are posts that have no relation to their interests. Some of them we suspect are viral links. This type of publication also usually receives negative comments.

6.5. *News*

When the Way is a topic in the press, the links of the articles are shared. This type of content often engages many members. In June 2016 there was consternation in the *Caminho de Santiago* group when a German pilgrim disappeared. In the comments, the netizens showed concern and updated the information[5]. Some recalled similar cases, either to tranquilize or alert.



Figure 7. *Post narrates that the civil guard is looking for a German pilgrim of 23 years that got lost. In the comments, the participants mourn and fear for the worst. Publication text: 'mercy ... Not again ...'.*

Source: *Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/lEamXb. Access: 06/23/2016.*

[5] Retrieved from: https://goo.gl/lEamXb. Access: 06/23/2016

6.6. *About the group itself*

Of the types of publications listed this is the rarest. In them, members reflect on the group itself. When they occur, they criticize the excess of posts that run off the topic or to thank the group for some help or for inclusion in the group.

6.7. *Help requests and recommendations*

Another type of common publication corresponds to requests for help and suggestions. The most frequent are people interested in going through the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) and ask for help or those who have already gone through it and give recommendations. So, the talking is about themes like ideal backpack weight, places to meet, shelters to avoid, movies and books, etc. This type of publication, together with the reports and the news are the ones that generate more involvement. This reinforces the character of a 'learning group' (Flichy, 2012). Once having made The Way of St. James, the pilgrim passes from ignorant to the condition of 'amateur' for the other members. That is, he becomes respected in the space for having passed through that experience and can, therefore, help other members. Obviously, we noticed that some participants are more active, going through the pilgrimage more than once, or keep blogs and pages on Facebook about The Way of St. James. These end up becoming references to the others.

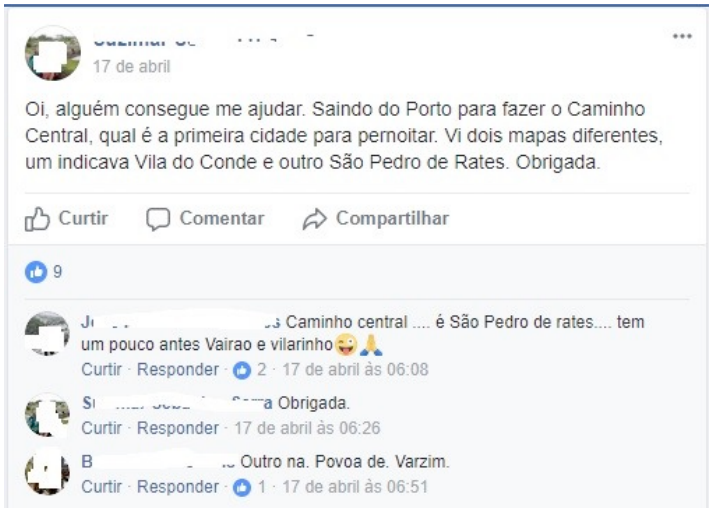


Figure 8. *Post extracted from the group Caminho Português - Porto a Santiago de Compostela. The participant asks which city to stay overnight from the route they are taking. Participants suggest cities.*

Source: *Retrieved from:. Available at: https://goo.gl/wpBm6R. Access: 06/24/017*

Many of the requests and recommendations are associated with the consumption of products and services, such as backpacks, sneakers, staffs, applications, films, etc. It is important to emphasize that the notion of consumption that we are working with is not restricted to the idea of buying, but, in tune with Barbosa and Campbell (2006, p. 26), we see it as a category that accounts for the 'production of meanings and identities, independently of the acquisition of a good; a strategy used in everyday life by the most different social groups to define different situations in terms of rights, lifestyle and identities'. Consumption leads to the formation of a new pilgrim being, that incorporates icons of the contemporary world to his/her daily life, either by the use of well-known footwear or by inspiration to go through The Way from a work of fiction, such as the already quoted Paulo Coelho's book, or the movie The Way, that on more than one occasion was quoted. However, these emergent modalities of pilgrimage occur in a way that is not always harmonious, implying conflicts and tensions, as mentioned previously.

6.8. *Sharing my pilgrimage*

Posts with stories from pilgrims are frequent in the groups. Considering the month of April 2017 and the three selected groups (*Caminho de Santiago*, *Caminho de Santiago de Compostela*, and *Caminho Português - Porto a Santiago de Compostela*) of the 773 collected posts, 289 of them correspond to the narratives of pilgrims. This shows us that despite the transformations of the pilgrimage ritual the narrative dimension continues to play a fundamental role in the pilgrim's experience.

According to Ricoeur (2012, p. 303), it is through the narrative that subjects confer intelligibility to their experiences. It is not only a matter of enumerating facts in a particular order, but rather of 'weaving the intrigue', tying fragments, dissonant events, actors, and assigning them an ordering, thus building a story that can be followed by another person. The narrative also organizes the temporal modes of human experience, grouping the signs in order to express duration. Reflecting on Saint Augustine's aporias about time, Ricoeur considers that '(...) time becomes human insofar as it is articulated in a narrative way, and the narrative reaches its plenary significance when it becomes a condition of the temporal existence' (Ricoeur, 2010, p. 93, emphasis added).

To account for the complexity of narrative operations, Ricoeur still resorts to the Aristotelian conception of *mimesis*, arriving at what he calls the 'triple mimesis'. The term *mimesis* is translated by imitation. However, in the narrative sphere one does not merely have a mirror of reality, but the invention of an *almost if*, a creative copy set in the 'world of the text' that is revealed in the reading. When speaking in a triple mimesis the author emphasizes the dynamic and circular aspect of the narrative within its temporal existence. Thus, one goes from a *prefigured time* (experience lived by the narrator), passing through the *configured time* (marked by the presence of the narrator) to the time *refigured* by the narrative (in which the active participation of the reader is highlighted). According to Carvalho,

> Starting from a preconfigured world, mimesis I represents more concretely the ethical dimensions, the social world in its complexity, mimesis II is the act of configuration, the remarkable presence of a narrator, but also the mediation between mimesis I and mimesis III, which corresponds to the reconfiguration, the moment that marks the active presence of the reader. (Carvalho: 2010, p. 6)

The reading would consist of the moment when the narrative is put into *circulation*, that is when the reader gives meaning to it. It is the moment when the *world of the text* meets the *world of the reader*, causing the text and the reader to transform themselves through interpretation.

The incorporation of communication technologies (tablets, smartphones, etc.) into the daily life of the pilgrim implies a temporal experience and different narrative configurations of those of the medieval pilgrim. Before, the moment of the sharing of the experience occurred when returning home through a synthesis narrative that grouped the diverse events that integrated the pilgrimage in a unique history. During the Camino de Santiago, the pilgrim immersed himself in a reality in which he was deprived of contact with his relatives, with the world that was close to him, with his ordinary life. We can say, from Eliade (n.d), that it was an interruption of profane time and an immersion in sacred time.

To the contemporary pilgrim is given the possibility to weave his narrative in real time, during the pilgrimage, as we witnessed in the three groups. In the context of the triple mimesis, we can say that we witness a shortening of the narrative time of the pilgrimage since the narratives begin to be shared episodically as the subjects follow their itineraries to Santiago de Compostela. This results in an accelerated experience of time, inasmuch as it slides easily from the sacred temporality to that already present in the ordinary experience. Such an acceleration of the narrative time turns impossible the necessary split for the diving that once characterized the time of the ritual. Moreover, the time of the experience previously involved the experience and its decanting, when the time of memory, the magical aspect, came into play. Nowadays, it is verified that the times are mixed between memory and experience, between past and present, being linked to a future that is constantly updated within the scope of a practice: the production of narratives aiming at circulation.

In this sense, it not only distances itself from the narrative structure of the past but also incorporates aspects of entertainment productions. The individual pilgrimages become media products consumed by an interested public, arousing expectations for new chapters and can lead the pilgrims to make adjustments in their posts based on the reactions obtained from each publication. The climax of these stories would correspond to the arrival in Santiago de Compostela.

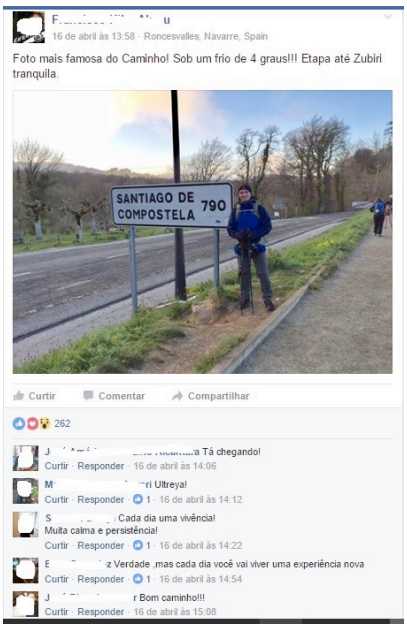


Figure 9. *Pilgrim reports his experience in the first kilometers of his itinerary in the Caminho de Santiago group. In the pilgrims' comments, they desire 'Good way'.*

Source: *Retrieved from: https://goo.gl.wacISO Acesso: 04/28/2017.*

The meanings of the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) that are built by the contact of the pilgrim in situ with other netizens also lead to a joint narrative construction. The comments generate interactions that can result in route deviations or meetings with other pilgrims who are currently going through the journey. These meetings are properly recorded in the groups. In this way, the narrative is no longer limited to translating the experience of pilgrimage, but, starting from the circuits that it makes emerge in its circulation, redraws the pilgrim's ways in situ.

Finally, as we have already observed, we note few references to the Catholic religious dimension in the narratives. However, this does not mean a disappearance of the religious, since statements such as 'God bless you' or 'the Way calls' are recurrent. In addition, sometimes we found posts in which pilgrims mentioned having felt a 'different energy' and, especially in the publications that brought synthesis of the experience of the pilgrim, understandings of the pilgrimage as a unique and transforming experience, resulting in a 'before and after the Way' in their lives were frequent.

Final considerations

The number of pilgrims who flock to Santiago de Compostela in the last five years (2011-2016)[6] shows the growing interest in this route of pilgrimage. Different motivations to go through The Way of St. James proliferate and that coincides with the wide range of actors who talk about this route of pilgrimage. The media productions, be they of large media corporations, tourism companies, the Catholic Church or the pilgrims themselves, put into circulation different meanings about The Way embodied by the subjects through complex negotiation processes.

However, the analysis has shown that this process is not always harmonious, leading to emerging conflicts that highlight the validity of some ways of pilgrimage, especially those involving tourism. Those who make negative comments about the *turisgrinos – pilgrims because of tourism* - seem to be disturbed by the association of large-scale financial gain with the ritual, criticism is also frequent in the ecclesiastical sphere, and with the facilities and comforts that exist in this modality of pilgrimage. If formerly a pilgrimage involved a permanent risk of death and going through some ordeal, today, with the increase of security and tourism, we notice that remnants of this religious dimension remain in the idea that going through the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) implies to challenge oneself.

As we realize, despite the few references to the Catholic Church, this does not mean the disappearance of the religious aspect. This brings us back to the idea of 'domesticated sacred' by Rieger (2014). That is, it is a relation with the sacred in which it is shaped by individual interests and not by an adequacy to the precepts of a religious institution. For this reason, references to other religions (esoteric, especially) are made without major clashes between individuals. The Way of St. James starts to appear as a super religious entity that contemplates the diverse needs expressed by the subjects in their interactions in Facebook groups.

The idea of the totem image seems to be clear here. We understand the totem as a deep social bond that is evidenced in narratives and visual productions, implying in an *auratic* image in Benajmin's terms. That is, The Way of Santiago no longer depends on a religious image or discourse, it consolidates itself as an object of *adoration*, detaching itself from the Catholic institution. According to Rosa (2012), to a totem to consolidate itself in the sphere of mediatization, it is necessary that some logic is employed. This logic can be broken down into six steps: APPEARANCE/OFFER - ERASURE/DISAPPEARANCE - REAPPEARANCE - REPLICATION - RESTRICTION – TOTEMIZATION.

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[6] Data from the Pilgrim's Reception Office show an increase in the number of those who have requested Compostela in recent years. Source. Available at: https://oficinadelperegrino.com/estadisticas/. Access: 07/20/2017.

> The appearance is, on the one hand, the fruit of access to the field of the media and, on the other hand, the work is done in the journalistic devices for its exhibition. That is, the facts appear, as well as the images, but when entering the field of the media they belong to this space and, therefore, undergo the logic of the media, mainly with respect to the mechanisms of election/selection by criteria of newsworthiness. Regarding the erasure, after the election phase of the images synthesis of the facts or of their transformation into a media event, the images are inscribed in diverse devices affecting the other spheres of the communication system. However, these affectations imply inscriptions by individual actors and non-media institutions that end up contributing, through interaction, to the instance of erasure. That is, an image replicated several times, in several devices and that cyclically returns to journalistic devices, tends to be an image that resists erasure, it undergoes a kind of *shielding* by circulation. However, the other images offered remain, but are obscured. Thus, the images integrate a game of accessibility x inaccessibility, of appearance x erasure, of visibility x disappearance, of access x excess, movements that intersperse themselves. (Rosa: 2012, p. 288-289)

But beyond these binarities, the third media operation is that of reappearance, when the images and their discourses receive the right to be constituted in the only ones to be seen, generating senses that are not given and that are added from the detachment[7]/displacement of the image of the initial fact and its circulation as a vector. This means that reappearance implies in the construction or restriction of something. Thus, there are two aspects to be observed here regarding Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James). The first concerns the reappearance of the vector image, the image that consolidates The Way of St. James in the collective and social imaginary, what implies a continuity of inscriptions, new narratives and their permanence in circulation. The second accounts for a kind of imposed restriction. That is, even if not by religious bias, The Way of St. James remains sacred to its amateurs and pilgrims. There is no way to break or rupture the image of the route, even if other ends are added, such as the issue of consumption and tourism. Regardless of the senses that are added, the process of mediatization potentiates the creation of the totem, since The Way of St. James becomes the object, the referent of devotion, and this eliminates, in part, the ritual. In part, because it reconfigures itself, it transforms itself, it ceases to be only the moment of experience, the act of walking, to gradually become the act of drawing visibility to the journey and the ways of being a pilgrim.

However, although the religious character is reduced to institutional terms, the Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) as a symbol, element of veneration is reiterated and fixed in the imaginary mainly through the narratives. These narratives

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[7] The term "detachment" is adopted here in the metaphorical sense of the decal, that is, it does not mean that the image is completely detached, but that there are transformations in the relations between the significant images and the referred reality. Then there is a detachment and at the same time a displacement.

are built no longer solely by the pilgrim in situ when returning home, but jointly by him and other amateurs in a digital environment, leading, as seen, for an acceleration of the time of experience and crossings of profane temporality in that sacred. In its intense replication in media devices, the image of the Camino de Santiago is elevated to the totem category, restricting the access of other images existing in the media space[8], which results, as a consequence, in the restriction of the interpretation and existence of other images. When we speak here in images, we do not refer only to photographs and videos, their visual materiality, but the mental image we make of The Way of St. James itself that is elaborated in the circulation. Thus, this totem image of The Way of St. James is a transforming experience for the different types of pilgrims that is independent of their negotiated religious link. The emphasis is on Camino de Santiago (The Way of St. James) as an object of worship.

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[8] The term media space is adopted here not only to define the space of journalistic devices, but also the space of production of significant materials of individual actors and institutions that do not have journalism as their doing.

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