



DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS, A SUCCESSFUL PORTUGUESE JOURNALISM PROJECT IN AN ADVERSE ENVIRONMENT

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Resumo

Portuguese journalism of the 19th century suffered the influence of the political parties or wealthy elites and newspapers were read by this narrow audience and circulation was poor due to low reading rates. In 1864, *Diário de Notícias* represented a turning point in the press evolution process. It had an easy style, and an informational purpose. It was ‘a newspaper of all and for all - for rich and for poor, for both sexes and all conditions, classes and parties.’ It meant a change in terms of news coverage enhanced by a popular writing style. This study aims to show how *Notícias* represents a turning point in the ideological journalism model and also its relation to popular international newspapers, as an analysis framework. The methodology will rely on original documentation and newspapers and will focus on Eduardo Coelho and his role in *Diário de Notícias*’s history.

Palavras-chave

Diário de Notícias; Eduardo Coelho; journalism models; informational purpose; popular style.

INTRODUCTION

The 19th century was a period of intense changes in Portuguese journalism which may be seen as part of the global transformations occurred in the western news industry. Still, it presents some specific features. There was a dominant press model characterized by the influence of the political parties and these newspapers were mostly read by the elites, and at the same time, their support depended on wealthy sponsors. Apart from these features there was a strong publicist activity marked by specialized newspapers and magazines, many of them with pedagogical purposes and sponsored by several powerful organizations. The main debility would be the feeble circulation due to the very low reading rates and, therefore, the unsustainability of the news business. Gradually, the elite model gave way to a more popular approach and the ideological newspapers included forms of informational journalism and news factuality that also evolved to a more emotive discourse. But the Portuguese journalism milieu wasn't very keen on radical changes, and, therefore, when *Diário de Notícias* was launched, it really stirred the waters. It was a project founded by Eduardo Coelho, a long career journalist that for quite some time was planning an ambitious newspaper, conceived with an informational guidance and supported by a business concept. The program number was launched in late 1864 and its steady publication began in early 1865. The first issue outlined the editorial guidelines where *Diário de Notícias* was characterized as a modern newspaper, created according to foreign journalistic models that proved to be successful in other countries, and in particular it praised the *Petit Journal* from Paris. The title, *Diário de Notícias [Daily News]*, stated its main purpose and, in fact, it published the everyday news. It had an easy style, more concise than the more traditional newspapers and readers were provided with information about interesting occurrences, the last hour events and all the news subjects considered as relevant. *Notícias* brought a transformation in the journalism roles in terms of

news coverage, with a sense of novelty and actuality as prevalent news values that were framed by a modern writing style. It also got a good acceptance by the public and it rapidly became a successful and popular daily which represented a blow to the elitist and doctrinal journalism that for a long time prevailed in Portugal. By one hand *Diário de Notícias* was received with applause by the public in general, but this new news concept was also marked by jeers and reservations, being most of the critics made by its peers.

The methodology used in this analysis relies on literary research, original documentation and newspapers from this period and it seeks to reconstruct and interpret the early history of *Diário de Notícias*. It also considers Eduardo Coelho's conceptions on modern journalism and his main role as the founder of this innovative project, mainly through his memoirs, recollected by another journalist from that period, Alfredo da Cunha. It will also tackle the link to popular international newspapers considered as role models.

THE CONTEXTS

In the first half of the 19th century, Portuguese journalism, and according to the European scenario, was mainly marked by the political events and the fight for freedom of press. Portuguese newspapers also had to deal with other serious handicaps, namely the low income of the population and the illiterate people's heavy rate that endured till the end of the century and forward. Hence, newspapers were part of the political debate and journalists were partisans, even if their reading was limited to a minority, provided with literacy skills and economic power. Accordingly, Portuguese journalism was marked by an elaborated discourse which put the focus on the higher subjects that concerned the elites as quality newspapers generally did (Conboy, 2011), and by following this editorial strategy they aimed to reach a very specific audience.

Considering the political contexts, the modernization of Portuguese journalism was, therefore, delayed since the factors that would bring 'democratization' (Schudson, 1978) to the press would take some time to be put in place. For about 30 years, the press law suffered the upheavals resulting from military coups and civil wars and other authoritarian

circumstances. The permanent political or social insurrection prevented the country to embrace the industrialization process and, therefore, the growth of the urban middle classes. Political instability was also responsible for the lack of educational reforms, fundamental for the combat of the strong levels of illiteracy. Thus, a first wave of popular press could not emerge this entire period, since there were no technological, cultural or economic conditions to sustain such a movement. The building of a modern democratic society, where the penny press had a cultural role was yet to come.

During the entire century the main trend was of a doctrinal journalism, way engaged with the political causes. There were also other editorial purposes like literary and ludic publications or the educational magazines similar to the British ‘Penny Magazine’, but even these had an ideological frame, considering the need of the popular education which was also controversial for the more conservative ranks. Among the publicism movement, several ‘popular’ newspapers would show before the launching of the first Portuguese ‘industrial’ newspaper, the *Diário de Notícias*. Regardless their popular designation, all of them used a language too near of the official discourse, rather dense and complicated and so not directed to the masses. Those periodicals had no concern with the news timing concepts of actuality or factuality, since the news events took several days to be published (Tengarrinha, 1989: 216).

The 2nd half of the century was marked by political stability and freedom of press allowed the flourishing of journalism, even if the ideological model still prevailed. The basic economic support of opinion newspapers was subscriptions, but they were not sufficient, since circulation was low. The money back line was formed by sponsors, political rulers or others that by their funding sustained both the causes and the dailies and were commonly referred as capitalists. However, this funding system was contingent and very depending on political or capital’s flow or the sponsors’ whim. By the half of the century, newspapers had already incomes from advertisement, but and for several reasons they didn’t yet fulfil the commercial sustenance model that would follow (Lima, 2013).

In spite of the absolute domination of the opinion press, in the last quarter of the century some conditions permitted the rise of an informational journalism and some popular newspapers. The

technological transformations allowed the industrialization of the printing process and new layouts for newspapers. In the same sense the communication system was increased which brought velocity in the news gathering process, as well as facilitating the dailies' circulation. Besides, Lisbon and Oporto had already a tradition of news consumption and a certain eagerness for the daily events that nourish the urban life. Gradually, traditional newspapers included this factuality that would become the core of industrial journalism. Clarence Darrow's assumption 'The world has grown tired of preachers and sermons. To-day it asks for facts.' (as quoted in Stephens, 2006: 240), shows the transformation occurred in American journalism but also represents the factuality values that spread out in the western press in the late 19th century. It also results from the great influence that the positivism and experientialism gained in the cultural frame and that in journalism in particular, was enhanced by a new writing style. Furthermore, this concept would achieve its ultimate meaning by the use of photographs, considered as the caption of the exact moment.

This international trend would also influence the Portuguese press even if the circulation never reached outstanding numbers, since illiteracy remained as a major hindrance. Still, the new dailies sought to address to the whole society, in a new communicational pattern where the tripod information, education, entertainment would prevail (Briggs and Burke, 2010). Innovating technics and new and large circulation (considering the Portuguese scale) allowed low price per copy, mainly supported by advertising. To reach broader audiences the writing became clear and easy and the polemics were dropped. Normally, these newspapers would not trail any political stand and followed the path of independence granted by the new commercial frame, regardless what this independence might bring in terms of new forms of pressure (Curran and Seaton, 1991).

The focus was on reporting important or interesting facts with truth and the possible objectivity. The complete change into a reporting format, however, would take some time to take place and it resulted as in other cases, of the vulgarization of the use of telegraph, the contracts with news agencies and the triumph of the inverted pyramid (Briggs and Burke, 2010).

In this process, newspapers written by two or three amateur elements

gradually gave place to newsrooms with dozens of professionals in which the reporter acquired increasing importance in contrast to the previous and dominant ‘newspaper writer’. In spite of this shift, the Portuguese press had a slow evolution to the popular model, considering the restraints of economic, social and cultural development. Some of the new features would have to coexist with traditional forms, in a more attractive mix intended to allure broader audiences, but also trying to prevent the loss of traditional readers (Conboy, 2011). For Portuguese journalism, the decisive turning point was the launching of *Diário de Notícias* that, for its meaningful informational editorial guidance based on a commercial purpose, definitely stirred the waters, causing changes in traditional newspapers and becoming a model for future dailies to come.

***DIÁRIO DE NOTÍCIAS,* A NEW INFORMATIONAL AND COMMERCIAL PURPOSE**

The first issue of *Diário de Notícias* is from December 29, 1864. It was different from all the other Portuguese newspapers from this period, in terms of contents and style. It diverged from the others also by the form, particularly in the page layout, with four columns instead of one, and by the size, similar to the current tabloids, and not the usual pamphlet or book size very popular among doctrinal newspapers. The price was also lower than the others, ten reis per copy and even less when sold by subscription, while the elite newspapers cost 60 reis or more.

Diário de Notícias meant to be a business concept, idealized by the renowned journalist, Eduardo Coelho. The company also included Quintino Antunes, a typography entrepreneur and apart from informational novelty announced by the newspaper it also aimed for profit in sales and advertising. Eduardo Coelho was an experienced journalist that lived a full life dedicated to newspapers and in spite of the mainstream journalism and the political engagement he was never politically committed to any cause. In his many activities, Coelho had an opportunity to travel to Paris where he knew le Petit Journal. This was the first inspiring model that would lead him to the *Diário de Notícias* foundation. In 1962, he returned to Portugal but never abandoned the idea of having a modern independent newspaper, similar to other

French and British examples. However, Girardin's newspaper *La Presse* became the main justification for the need of a new journalism project.

In the Portuguese context, this purpose became a new and contemporary perspective of news journalism and information. On the first issue's cover page the editorial guidance was clear, under the column 'The Public'.

Diário de Notícias, as the title states, will be a careful compilation of all the news of the day, of all countries, and all subjects, a universal newscast. In an easy style, and with greater brevity, it informs the reader of all the interesting occurrences, as well as from Portugal as from other nations, giving all the lastminute news, political, scientific, artistic, literary, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and criminal statistics, etc. By suppressing the background chronicle, it will prevent the political discussion or controversial claims. It registers with the possible truth all events, leaving to the reader the comments according to his likings, whatever principles and opinions he might have. Written in a proper and urban style, in its columns are absolutely forbidden the exposure of acts of private life of citizens, allusions to insults and to dishonest or insidious rumours. It is, therefore, a newspaper of all and for all - for the rich and poor of genders and all conditions, classes and political parties. (December 29, 1864)

Diário de Notícias opted for a neutral stance, consensual, mild, contained and politically independent, as Eduardo Coelho always did. It looked upon events according to factuality values that were registered 'with the possible truth', which expresses the informative pursuit of objectivity. It gave information and news on which all could express opinions, instead of spreading theories and opinions ready to consume. By this editorial profile *Notícias* had found the right formula to build solid foundations in the Portuguese journalistic milieu. Besides, the launching article also used the international fashion as a valid argument for this completely innovative project, pointing the finger at how the combination of news and advertising were examples of success in other modern countries.

All civilized countries have this kind of publications and in particular England, France, Belgium, and even our neighbour Spain, have publications that have drawn considerable number of sympathies, readers and subscribers. Therefore, the idea is not originally ours, but

imitates or adopts others, being this the best way to fill a notable gap in our journalism. And the publishing means used by *Diário de Notícias*, although they seem natural, they are also a true copy from what is used in countries where there's an understanding of all the advertising means. (December 29, 1864)

Which was new in the *Diário de Notícias*' editorial guidance? A refreshing approach to news on daily events (and even non-events) of everyday life of the Portuguese, but mostly centred on Lisbon. It also presented broad international news covering such as politics and economics, as was customary at that time, but also other subjects such as crime, society, cultural life, which was less common for the Portuguese news agenda (Reese, 1991: 312) of that period.

News in *Notícias* trailed one after another without major concerns of order, hierarchy or enhancement, since priming (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen, Carpentier, 2002: 97) and the organization of news according to thematic sections would be unknown concepts for quite some time. However, the first news published in the first number-program integrates prominence as news value (Shoemaker, Reese, 1996, p. 106), by regarding elite personalities an almost timeless concept in Western culture when it concerns to royalty:

'Their Royal Majesties pass without incident in their important health.' (December 29, 1864: 1)

Remarkably, a non-event. This short news comes down to a paragraph-lead, like many others, without furthermore elaboration.

Nevertheless, the information purpose of *Diário de Notícias* would be shown in several other articles published in the first numbers. They concerned government issues, social content, economic matters, crime; all shaped in short news, written in a plain language, which is typical in the lead concept. It's also remarkable the flowery language and politeness in which people were depicted, conveying the historical pleasantries typical of that period.

International news regarded a variety of subjects in the first years of the newspaper, such as the transcription from a French newspaper of an assault, also in a lead format.

On the night of the 16th, near Vercel, there was an assassination attempt, followed by theft, says the newspaper *Franche-Comté*: Filipe Jeanner, a former magistrate of Ecourotte, and general agent of the insurance company France, carrying 5 to 6000 francs (\$ 12000000 reis) and heading to Vercel, was assaulted in the woods of Chamois by three individuals of ugly faces, that by throwing him to the ground, strongly compressed his throat and stripped him of every values he had on him. When he reached Vercel, Jeanner referred the case to justice authorities which did not achieved yet, as long as we know, any results in the investigation. (December 29, 1864)

Other informational purpose was given by political matters, like the following short news from the Havas agency.

Madrid, 17 - The radical deputies meeting from yesterday afternoon, decided to support the candidacy to the parliament of Zorrilla for president and Gabriel Rodriguez for vice president. Yesterday after noon there were also numerous federal republicans' meetings. All in good order. (January 18, 1870)

In the *Notícias*' international agenda Spain and Brazil had an important role, the first one due to the vicinity and political influence and the latter, the previous colony with great impact on Portuguese economy and society. Therefore, proximity as news worthiness (Shoemaker, Reese, 1996, p. 106) was present for instance in abundant news on the Brazilian war with Paraguay (1866-1870).

The diversity of subjects can also be seen in short news on market prices but also in straight news unveiling of the city critical spots.

A resident of Mirante Street complains that in one of its corners pills up filth resulting from the dump of a nearby alley, which exhales an asphyxiating miasma that makes it impossible to pass by without suffering horrible nausea. We cautioned the authorities. (July 7, 1867)

These examples give us clues to understand the news feed of inner and international information. Often the news refers their sources like foreign newspapers, official reports, the Havas agency or the anonymous people. In others it can be seen the sources particular interest that seek the newspaper for their own benefit, ergo the complaint from a reader on the accumulated garbage. Notably, in spite of the informational

purpose, *Notícias* did not prevent from making “social intervention”, shown by these several examples extracted from various numbers from 1864 to 1867. This daily featured inter-classist journalism and therefore was read by the Royal Family but it also pleased the common people. Its success was stated by the circulation numbers. It began with an initial print of five thousand copies and in five years they increased to 17000, which was about a third of the 50000 daily copies that circulated in Lisbon, in that period (Cunha, 1891: 57-58). In 1885, it reached the 26000, but the increase also included contents and ads, as can be seen in table 1.

	1865	1885
Average daily run	7 300	26 000
Minimum daily run	5 000	26 000
Maximum daily run	9 600	26 000
Maximum number of columns	16	44
Maximum number of lines	1 520	11 220
Maximum number of letters	40 000	260 000
Number of ads during the year	14 402	178 078
Average number of ads per number	48	490
Minimum number of ads per number	4	201
Maximum number of ads per number	141	686
Issues	297	362

Table 1. Diário de Notícias: numbers.

Source: own production, based on Cunha, 1891: 58).

These numbers show the increase in circulation and, as consequence, in advertisement, which in turn brought profits and more and more readers in a sort of a *fortunate circle*. The *Diário de Notícias* became strong and prosperous which inevitably attracted much envy and criticism amongst the very conservative Portuguese press milieu. By the other hand, it also inspired several imitators. In that very same period, Cunha (1891: 56-57) recognizes that the daily was not welcomed by all.

It is true that not everyone recognizes this revolution as real progress and, on the contrary, many attributes it to what is commonly called “the increasing decline of journalism”. But it is also certain that (...) other embraced this decay, namely, through the exploitation of the newspapers by the political and economic affairs [jobbery] that enslave them to not so scrupulous personal interests, and on the other hand, taking the insulting language often used in journalistic polemics (...).

Some Portuguese elites kept seeing journalism as an extension of politics and parties and newspapers were useful instruments in the

spreading of the ideological debate. Hence, when a different kind of newspaper became able of reaching a broad audience and diverting the public's attentions by speaking in an independent discourse, it had to be regarded as a hamper by the traditional press.

Notícias' social and political concerns drew attention to the people's problems in the chronicle "Issues of the Day" and not in-depth articles as others used to. The first one was from September 10, 1868, and it was signed by the Eduardo Coelho, that approached the controversial idea of an Iberian Union. But the chronicle could approach very eclectic matters such as the lack of health conditions and the required measures to fight them. The Portuguese elites resented this new form of addressing public matters and, indeed, *Diário de Notícias* could sometimes be seen as inconvenient. In spite of its political distance and the news profile it also sought, now and then, to put pressure on the government policies, by being the 'voice of the governed'. This shift mirrored the new press roles at the end of the 19th century and in the following decade and the new configuration of the public sphere.

Portuguese elites claimed against the 'decline of journalism' performed by *Notícias*, given its attention to the crime news, trivia and other social affairs from people's everyday lives and also because of its way of considering the news as a product and journalism as a business, and for keeping away from the agenda of high policy and high finance. News factuality was considered particularly annoying because the traditionalist fashion couldn't bear the replacement of the doctrinal severity of the 'serious journalism' that disregarded everything but politics, finance and international agenda, even if written in an excessive language.

Nevertheless, *Diário de Notícias* kept its steady path and also followed the modern journalism trends, namely in the way people were treated on the news, as it was stated by Eduardo Coelho, according to Cunha (1891: 91).

It can be exceedingly painful for some citizens to have their names fully disclosed in cases of police news, often resulting from unavoidable incidents. From now on, the *Diário de Notícias'* newsroom decided to publish only the initials of the individuals related to cases of minimal importance, and by doing so, it introduces in Portuguese journalism another cultivated practice, followed by major foreign newspapers.

This announcement was also opened a controversy and was considered by *Notícias*' detractors as a 'condemned innovation', with the argument that it wasn't enough information, while others attacked the daily because of the publicity given to this kind of events, considering that the public shouldn't be informed in such a way. And for those that accused *Notícias* of giving too much information, the newspaper responded.

In the United States, England, France, Italy and even Germany, newspapers give the daily and often flashy record of all crimes (...). Advertising, said an intellectual, is the judge of all the errors and crimes, of all false ideas and all reprehensible actions. Hiding rot, vices and infamy is not to remedy them. (Cunha, 1891: 92)

This newspaper was also revolutionary in the way it gathered information through the newsroom organization. The variety of news relied also on a network of correspondents spread through country. Besides, its launching was contemporary of the telegraph, news agencies and the railways, and indeed it got everywhere while news came from all over, due to the correspondents' net from Portugal, Brazil and Spain. In time, news was recollect and written by reporters rather than editors that waited for second hand information.

Notícias was also innovative in the way it introduced new formats on the journalistic discourse. In October 22, 1881 it published a text that can be classified as an incipient news report and, at the same time, an investigative procedure. Under "Issues of the Day", this article reveals a deep analysis on the tobacco industry, but other subjects would follow. Afterwards, the use of the news report style became common, as well as other forms of journalistic writing for that period, such as curiosities, articles of public education, and such. Another trace of the modern approach was the launching of special editions, in 1870, which began with a number dedicated to the Franco-Prussian war.

The publishing of contemporary novels in the serials turned to be another way of gaining the readers interest, particularly by choosing fashionable Portuguese authors. That was the case of the first serial, a mystery crime novel with an extraordinary success that contributed to the newspaper's popularity. *Notícias* also included ludic subjects and illustrations and also tried to conquer the female audience. The editorial strategy was based on the publication of wide-ranging subjects that

could attract diverse audiences including women and young people, unlike what happened with the doctrinal press that almost only raised the interest of the male political elite and high finance sectors.

Diário de Notícias really stirred things up by deciding to include a section of low-price ads. They were more or less thematically organized in order to facilitate the reading. This option had an instant popularity and the income allowed the hiring of more employees and the purchase of new machinery. In the first year, were published 14402 ads, an average of 48 per number, and twenty years later, the increasing to 180000 per year, implied the inclusion of more pages. At last, advertising became the primary source of income for a Portuguese newspaper, and by following this policy it was able to reduce the price per copy. This was also reason for new attacks from its detractors and several arguments were exchanged. *Notícias'* point of view was once again justified by several international examples like *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Le Figaro*, *Jornal do Comércio* from Rio de Janeiro and others. *Notícias* didn't regard ads as an 'industrial instrument' that 'enslave, kill and shackle the press' and 'if they are exaggerated and false, there's always the public scrutiny to correct them.' (Cunha, 1891, p. 102)

Thus, the *Diário de Notícias* thrived and prospered and opened way to the informative press with a commercial intent. Besides, the public was eager for relevant and interesting news which favoured the launching of several newspapers with a similar editorial line, as the *Diário do Povo* (Lisbon, 1866) and *Jornal de Notícias* (Oporto, 1866). The success of 'industrial' newspapers forced some traditional press to adapt by reorienting the editorial guidance, as for instance *Comércio do Porto* and *O Primeiro de Janeiro*. A bit later, such was also the case of *O Século*, a newspaper created by the masons to spread the republican cause. However, by the end of the century, in spite of the political frame, *O Século* included many of the novelties initiated by *Diário de Notícias*. In fact, this newspaper had a very appealing layout and its covers had wonderful illustrations which might have contributed for being the first in sales in the beginning of the new century. That and the rise of republican ideas may also be considered as a probable explanation.

In Oporto, another important newspaper, *Jornal de Notícias* was launched in 1888, according to a political profile with the brand of one of the monarchic parties. Nevertheless, it also soon changed contents

towards a more informative and entrepreneurial model. Following a new path in such a commercial and bourgeois city, this newspaper became famous by the popular style in terms of news and language. This strategy allowed the allure of the public that didn't quite fit in the more elite style of *O Comércio do Porto* and *O Primeiro de Janeiro*, previous competitors that had a steady audience amongst Oporto's richer and educated classes.

CONCLUSIONS

In the late 19th century, Portuguese journalism milieu was still narrow-minded and amateurish, marked by doctrinal and literary journalism, whose characters moved from politics to journalism and journalism to literature, and vice versa, doing journalism mixed up with politics or with literature. The 'journalists' were mainly 'newspaper writers' or politicians who randomly worked in newspapers but not in a professional way.

In that small and claustrophobic environment, everyone knew each other and shared the bohemian life of theatres and taverns. Eduardo Coelho reported these particular quirks in his memories which were recollected, afterwards, by Alfredo da Cunha (1891) to write his biography. In this unsteady background, journalists opposed or supported each other, in endless disputes with no trace of amiability and politeness, moreover in intemperate and insulting language that characterizes many of Portuguese newspapers from this period.

Diário de Notícias represented a drastic change in the way newspapers were done, as well as the relation between the press and the readers. It conquered a new space by being an independent and inter-classist newspaper, read by the elites and common people, men and women, by young adults and seniors, thanks to the huge variety of content published on numerous subjects. In *Notícias*, the news was the core. The informational profile was often criticized by elites for giving attention to crime and trivialities. In spite of the criticism, the news events filled most of the publishing space, while the opinion press reduced them to two or three columns. This strategy granted this daily an immediate success and, in twenty years, it quadrupled the initial circulation which

allowed it to perform a powerful public voice. Sometimes it was seen as inconvenient, because due to its diffusion and echo among the public it claimed the right to represent the Portuguese people.

The journalistic model of the *Notícias* was supported by the funds of advertising that increased steadily and gave the investors good profits. Its success was imitated by several new titles and provoked changes in the elite press, but it also contributed to the death of many small doctrinal newspapers, due to the loss of subscribers, buyers and ads. Therefore, *Diário de Notícias* transfigured the press, being ultimately responsible for the modernization of journalism in Portugal, and with it, for good and for bad, newspapers entered the industrial phase.

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