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EDITORIAL GATEKEEPING IN SPORTS NEWS DURING PRIME TIME TELEVISION IN A PUBLIC BROADCASTER

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Abstract

Introduction. Based on Shoemaker's model of gatekeeping, this study addresses two questions: What social representations of sports are promoted by the prime time news program of the public television broadcaster Radio Televisão Portuguesa (RTP)? How do editors assess sports news stories during the editorial decision-making process? **Material and Methods.** For this, we quantitatively examined all the sports content in the prime time 'Telejornal' daily news program of RTP during a trimester. Moreover, we studied the factors that influenced editorial decisions, by conducting naturalistic participant observation and semi-structured interviews. **Results.** Results indicate that facts of greater public protagonism, which cause a significant emotional reaction and are relatable to the public, are more newsworthy. The main constraints influencing the editorial decisions were organized in three co-dependent areas: Social System (macro level), RTP Organization (meso level) and Telejornal Newsroom (micro level). **Conclusions.** Findings contribute to a reduction in social stereotypes created by television broadcasters, and to sports actors optimizing their communication strategy.

Key words: gatekeeping, decision-making, social perception, public service, television news

Introduction

Television news has a powerful impact on how the audience values and understands the covered stories, from politics to sports. The emphasis given to any of these editorial topics, organized in news sections [1], strongly influences the public's perception of what is important, interesting or worth discussing [2]. This is supported by research showing a positive relationship between news programs and the acquired and shared social perceptions of the news broadcast [3, 4]. Thus, understanding sports news and how editorial decisions are made is crucial for understanding the process of social representation of sports, especially since television continues to be the public's preferred source of news [5, 6, 7]. The present study addresses two interconnected questions: What social representations of sports are promoted by the prime time news program of the public television broadcaster Rádio e Televisão de Portugal (RTP)? How do editors assess sports news stories during the editorial decision-making process? To answer the first question, we performed a Quantitative Content Analysis of all the sports news in the prime time 'Telejornal' daily news program of RTP during a trimester. To answer the second question, we attempted to identify the factors that influenced editorial decisions by using a qualitative approach based on naturalistic participant observation and semi-structured interviews with the decision-makers, during the same period. It is important to note that this combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allowed us to uncover the relationship between product (the news broadcast on television) and the process (editorial decision-making).

Theoretical model of gatekeeping in editorial decision-making

Although the format of television news programs is essentially based on their own editorial style, there are variations resulting from influences from the social system, from the media broadcaster itself or from reporters. Shoemaker and Vos [8] explain in great detail how i) the individual action of a journalist, ii) the work routines of the newsroom, iii) the specific organizational characteristics of the television broadcaster (e.g., public or private) and how iv) they articulate with the context, v) the influence from social institutions (competition, ownership, audience, advertisers, pressure from the government or lobbies, etc.), and even the vi) subtle influence of the social system (history, culture, dominant ideology) are important constraints on editorial decision-making. Given the enormous time pressure reporters are under to meet tight deadlines, they are not necessarily consciously influenced by those constraints [9]. However, such constraints contribute as forces that promote positively and/or negatively the editorial decision called gatekeeping.

Based on social and ecological psychology studies by Kurt Lewin [10, 11], the gatekeeping model provided a theoretical framework to the first researchers in communication sciences [12, 13, 14] for assessing the decision-making process in news reporting, in particular for understanding why some news stories are selected for broadcasting while others are rejected. The *Gatekeeper* is therefore a person who "lets through" some stories but not others. These pioneering theoretical models were, however, fairly static, as they were mostly centered on individuals or organizations, without establishing interconnections between the elements. Tuchman [15], Gans [16] and Schudson

[17] mark the turning point in the paradigm shift towards a more ecological approach linking individuals and organizations. However, it is Pamela Shoemaker [18] who, returning to Lewin's holistic perspective and his field theory, introduces a dynamic and socio-ecological model that highlights the primary and interlinked factors of the field on which the editorial decision-making process is based. For Lewin [10, 11], the field is not a product of two independent factors, the individual and the context. Instead, these two interconnected factors form the psychological field (i.e., the perceived context). Thus, the focus is neither on what the individual thinks or does, nor on the characteristics of the environment; it is rather on the collective properties of the person and its organization (i.e., institution), at a given time and context.

Following this reasoning, Shoemaker argues that the news media are perceived in a holistic perspective when they are analyzed as organizations, with all their idiosyncrasies, and integrated in a social, cultural and ideological system, and their multiple institutional factors of reciprocal influence [8, 19]. Notably, ecological decision-making has been studied in areas such as sports [20, 21].

Topical focus: social perceptions of sports news

Given that any published news becomes public knowledge, it is important to consider the constraints affecting editorial decisions in television news programs [22, 23]. This becomes particularly relevant in the context of a daily news program in a public television broadcaster such as the "Telejornal" of RTP, given the public service to which it is contractually obligated. It is therefore important to uncover the aspects of sports that are highlighted by the public television, which will be central to the viewers' thoughts, interests and discussions. Thus, news programs report the sports facts that the broadcaster wants the public to know.

Studying which aspects of sports are reported in the news during prime time in public television allows sports institutions and actors, as well as the general audience, to learn how (and why) the sports panorama is represented by the media. In addition, this understanding may also help to increase public interest in sports and its agents, which is much stimulated by the celebrity status that some sports figures enjoy in the media [24]. For sports teams, athletes and coaches that are less mentioned in the media, an understanding of the editorial decision-making process may increase their visibility and hence have a direct effect on sports performance and economic benefits [25, 26]. Indeed, Rowe [24] has suggested that sport journalism can be described as the best advertising agency in the world. Even though this statement is arguable, it is a fact that sports news reported in general television news programs is relevant for public knowledge and for sport careers, whether it is as an identity, reference or prestige element, or simply as a product capable of attracting audiences and advertising [23]. But "what sports" are promoted by RTP's Telejornal?

This study aims to analyze the characteristics of sports news (the product of editorial decisions). Moreover, the process underlying these editorial decisions was examined *in situ*, specifically, the news gatekeeping model was used to identify which aspects of sport are assessed by editors and what constraints influence their decisions.

Material and Methods

Case selection

Direct naturalistic observation in combination with ethnographic and semi-structured interviews approaches were used to analyze the editorial decision-making process and its product (the specific news transmitted) in sports news television broadcasting. We chose a mixed method approach [27] to enrich the quantitative data with qualitative data. We interviewed all the subjects involved in making editorial decisions in *Telejornal*, from those who gave less important contributions to the process to the people at the top who made critical (and final) editorial decisions. We contacted the interviewees verbally and in writing to explain the study and to explicitly ask for permission to be interviewed. Participant anonymity and confidentiality were assured. The subjects of observation performed all the different tasks involved in the editorial decision-making process of *Telejornal* (Tab. 1). Our study universe is therefore a *sample by homogenization* [28], and a *total sample* [29]. In this type of sample, diversity control is carried out within the group.

Table 1. Team of editorial decision-makers, their departments and roles

Departments	Roles
Agenda setting	Coordinator of news scheduling and planning
Newsroom	Editors in the following beats: National Politics Economy Society Sports Culture International
	Executive Director of Telejornal
	Coordinator of Telejornal
Board	News Sub-Director
	News Deputy-Director
	News Director

Access to a television broadcaster's newsroom, including RTP, is typically restricted [30]. It was therefore necessary to make special requests to the Administration Council and the News Director of RTP. After several administrative diligences, access to RTP's newsroom was granted to the first author (C.C.) of this study due to the given credentials of social scientist and journalist [31]. This researcher had full access to the decision-makers, daily and weekly editorial meetings, news production rooms, the preliminary and final line-ups of *Telejornal* (before broadcasting), news items from several sources, and the statistical data concerning the daily audience of *Telejornal* and of its competitor programs. This opportunity was offered, promoted and encouraged by the News Director (in line with Flick [29]).

Quantitative methods to assess the product of the editorial decision-making

To understand the social representativeness of sports news, we analyzed the entire *Telejornal* daily news program between January 5th and March 31st, 2009 (RTP asked for 10 years of confidentiality although they maintained their gatekeeping editorial method). Only weekday shows were considered from RTP's main channel (Canal 1). We included 1744 news stories

from 62 *Telejornal* programs over a total of 48 hours, 6 minutes and 21 seconds in our naturalistic observation. We conducted our research during a period characterized by normality [32] to capture the news selection process in a routine context. 182 sports news stories (out of a total of 1744) were analyzed in the same 62 *Telejornal* programs over four hours, 39 minutes and 21 seconds. In addition to categorizing by editorial topics (we considered the topics defined by the newsroom – Politics, Society, Economy, Culture, Sports, and International), we defined registration categories for each editorial topic as follows: Subjects (themes), Genres (journalistic formats), Character (role and status), Emphasis (position in line-up) and News-values (criteria of newsworthiness):

- The **Subjects** category represents the themes within each topic (1; [33]), given that news stories are narratives that resemble fictional stories with action and characters (main and secondary).

- The **Genre** category assesses the relative ratios of factual, descriptive (1st degree news) and interpretative (2nd degree news) news, as well as opinion news forms, in current television news broadcasting [34].

- In the **Character** category we were interested in determining how often different characters appear in *Telejornal*, and concurrently, in understanding how the news process favorably or unfavorably places those characters (Role: Protagonist/Deuteragonist; Status: from elites to anonymous).

- The **Emphasis** category identifies the hierarchical organization (in terms of relevance) of the themes.

- The **News-values** category shows the score given to the news broadcast by *Telejornal* according to newsworthiness criteria [35, 36].

The classification of the data was based on the frequency (absolute/relative time of transmission and occurrence), direction (via inferential analysis: good/bad, ugly/beautiful, moral/immoral, etc. [37]), and order of appearance of the news story in the line-up.

However, it is necessary to compare these data parameters (frequency, direction, order in line-up) with those from other editorial topics (e.g., International, Politics, etc.) to understand how sports news is socially represented. It is important to note that these categories integrate several units of analysis following the rules of *Exhaustiveness* (considering the totality of the material), *Homogeneity* (clear separation between the analyzed themes), *Exclusivity* (each content segment can only be in one category), *Objectivity* (any encoder should be able to achieve the same results) and *Relevance* (relevant to the study objectives) [38].

Qualitative methods to assess the editorial decision-making process

We conducted participant naturalistic observation [39, 40] to monitor the daily experiences of decision-makers. This technique allows capturing the meanings and assessments subjects make about the context and their actions [41]. The observation was carried out on weekdays over three months (from January 5th to March 31st), in particular during the daily editorial meetings, when the provisional line-up was defined. We focused our observation on the interaction between editors, journalists, and the news program coordinator in two key moments: while the news pieces were being prepared and during the news program in real time (from the production room, where the final line-up was produced). Concomitantly, we conducted ethnographic interviews [42] with several individuals involved in making *Telejornal*, and semi-structured interviews [43, 44] with individuals

with greater responsibility in deciding which news stories are selected or eliminated from the line-up (Sports editor and News program coordinator). We conducted the naturalistic observation diligently albeit also gradually and with a conscious effort not to be intrusive or judgmental [41]. Moreover, the live broadcast of *Telejornal* was observed from the newsroom and particular attention was paid to changes made to the provisional line-up. Ethnographic interviews resulted from spontaneous conversations with various subjects directly or indirectly involved in the program's editorial decisions. These spontaneous interviews were not audio-recorded but were quickly recorded afterwards in a field notebook. These interviews were useful to increase the scope of observation and for making the scripts of the semi-structured interviews.

For the semi-structured interviews [45, 46], we used a previously prepared script to guide the conversation. The questioning process was based on the underlying theoretical framework, observational methods, and a review of the relevant literature. These interviews were scheduled at early stages of the observational phase at RTP. Although the interviews had a common structure focusing on the central question being studied, each script was specific to the interviewee's role and tasks. The interviews lasted from 18 minutes (shortest) to one hour and 40 minutes (longest). All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the interviewees and transcribed in their entirety. A crucial goal was to establish a connection with each interviewee, as trusting and connecting with the interviewer is important in qualitative interviewing [45]. Before the interviews, the participants were told they were going to be asked about their roles, and the researcher tried to answer any questions from the participants. The participants were informed that the duration of the interview would depend on how much they had to say and that there was no time limit. This initial contact helped to prepare the participants for the formal interview and provided opportunities to start building a professional relationship with the researcher.

Data analysis

We used 1) discourse interpretative analysis [47, 48, 49] for naturalistic observation and interviews, and 2) content analysis [50, 51, 52, 53, 54] of the final line-ups, to characterize sports news and make inferences about its social representations. Moreover, we analyzed the data in categories defined through an interpretative process that required "disassembling" the data and identifying the most significant segments for our investigation.

Results and Discussion

The sports section in the news

During the entire period of analysis, the sports section included 182 stories, corresponding to 9.7% of the absolute time of *Telejornal* (Tab. 2).

The most predominant theme in the sports section is soccer, which accounts for a total of 149 stories and 81% of the time used by this section in the news line-up (Fig. 1). Other sports themes only accounted for eight stories, which corresponded to less than 3% of the sports news.

Soccer was a preponderant theme in all the 62 *Telejornal* news programs analyzed. Although the Sports section covered only a modest fraction of the news program line-up, just slightly more than the Culture section (Tab. 2), overall the soccer theme had similar coverage to other themes, including "Government" (9.2%) and "Banking and Finance" (10%).

Table 2. Absolute and relative frequencies and duration of each editorial section in the definitive line-up of Telejornal

Editorial section	N	%	Duration	%
Sports	182	10.4	4h:39':21"	9.7
Politics	292	16.8	7h:43':43"	16.1
Society	616	35.3	18h:21':17"	38.2
Economics	330	18.9	8h:08':46"	16.9
Culture	24	1.4	39':24"	1.3
International	300	17.2	8h:33':50"	17.8
Total	1744	100	48h:06':21"	100

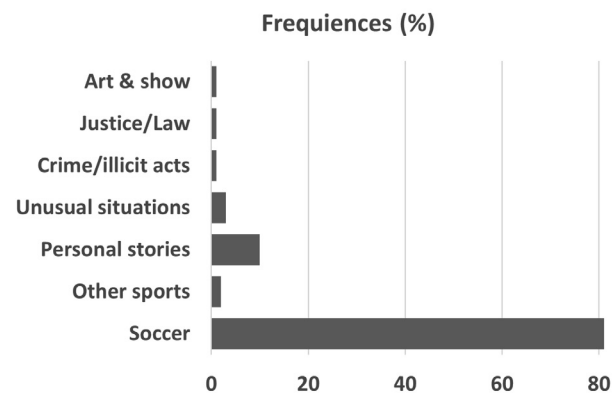


Figure 1. Themes covered by the Sports editorial section of Telejornal (% of the Sports section transmission time).

Characters in sports news stories

We identified a total of twelve characters in the sports new stories and then assessed their role in the news items reported (Tab. 3). The attention received by the characters in those events is one of the factors used to assess public perceptions.

We found that overall there are six main characters in the sports news (Tab. 3). However, when their role is taken into account, it becomes clear that some characters have more influence on the public’s perception than others. Concerning the three main Portuguese soccer teams (Sporting, Benfica and Porto), Benfica stands out by taking a dominant role in the sports news. Sporting was more often reported as a secondary actor and F.C. Porto was equally reported as the main and secondary character in the news. National soccer teams have a more predominant role in the news when compared to international teams, although overall the latter are mentioned more often. Coaches, players and the national soccer team are clearly predominant in the sports news when compared to all other characters.

The sports section in the line-up of Telejornal

The order of appearance in the line-up gives different emphasis to news stories. A commercial break separates two sets of news in *Telejornal*. The first half typically consists of news of public interest, whereas the second half includes news more closely linked to *infotainment* [55, 56]. Six news highlights were identified in *Telejornal*. The news program’s ‘body’ has the least impact from a cognitive point of view [57].

In the absence of popular sporting events, sports news occurred more often during the second half of *Telejornal*, thereby following conventional line-up strategies, which place more

Table 3. Characters identified in the sports news of Telejornal (frequencies)

Characters	Main role		Secondary role		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Soccer National Team	19	10.4	15	8.2	34	18.7
S.L. Benfica	21	11.5	10	5.5	31	17
Sporting C.P.	14	7.7	19	10.4	33	18.1
F.C. Porto	8	4.4	5	2.7	13	7.1
Other national soccer teams	17	9.4	12	6.6	29	15.9
International soccer teams	10	5.5	21	11.5	31	17
Soccer coaches/players	69	37.9	57	31.3	126	69.2
Coaches/athletes in other sports	6	3.3	3	1.6	9	4.9
Sports associations and their managers	8	4.4	1	0.6	9	4.9
Referees	5	2.7	8	4.4	13	7.1
People	4	2.2	7	3.8	11	6
Reporter/Social communication	1	0.6	2	1.1	3	1.6
Total	182	100	182	100	182	100

Note: For calculating the % in “Secondary role” and “Total”, we considered the number of news stories (182) to grasp how often the character was mentioned in the news program (as the main, secondary role, or as total time mentioned in the news).

emphasis on news aimed at entertaining (*soft news*) during the second half.

Since soccer is a strong theme (Tab. 4), it appears in the line-up in a similar position as the editorial theme itself. This privileged position in the line-up (e.g., between the first six stories of *Telejornal*) reveals that soccer is not only the topic most likely to “get into” *Telejornal*, but it is the most emphasized.

The category ‘coaches/players’ is the most relevant for the news program, since the sum of occurrences during various high-moments of the line-up was higher than the number of stories in the core of the program. On the other hand, these characters were also mentioned in stories of the Society section, albeit registered in other issues categories. For example, the awarding of an honorary doctorate to José Mourinho by the Faculty of Human Kinetics of the University of Lisbon, and the attribution of the Golden Ball to Cristiano Ronaldo were classified under “celebrities”.

Regarding the teams, Benfica and Sporting showed greater visibility, with some stories showing within the first 10 minutes of the line-up and the reopening of the second half, which correlates to criteria of importance. F.C. Porto only appeared twice within the final stories in the program, a position more correlated to *fait-diver*.

Selection criteria of newsworthy sports stories

Newsrooms have to follow various daily routines in order to function in a timely manner. It would otherwise be impossible to select a reasonable number of stories from the thousands of pieces of news that reach the “*Agenda*” (section of the news pro-

Table 4. The sports section, its main subject, and order of characters linked to soccer in the line-up

		Opening		First six stories		Exit to intermission		Re-opening after intermission		Last two stories		Closing		Body of news program	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Sports stories (total)		1	0.6	11	6	6	3.3	3	1.6	41	22.5	4	2.2	116	63.7
Strong topic	Soccer	1	0.7	9	6	4	2.7	3	2	33	22.1	3	2	96	64.5
	Characters linked to soccer														
	National sports team	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	36.8	-	-	12	63.2
	S.L. Benfica	-	-	2	9.5	-	-	3	14.3	-	-	-	-	16	76.2
	Sporting C.P.	-	-	1	7.1	-	-	1	7.1	2	14.3	1	7.1	9	64.4
	F.C. Porto	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	25	-	-	6	75
	Other national teams	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	1	5.9	13	76.4
	International teams	-	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	1	10	-	-	8	80
	Soccer coaches/players	1	1.4	9	13	3	4.3	-	-	18	26.1	3	4.3	35	50.7

Note: The sum for some of the characters may exceed their respective order in the Soccer line-up because they were involved in events from other categories (not identified here).

gram where the news pitches from public and anonymous sources are classified according to their relevance before being passed on to the editors). The criteria to select newsworthy stories are part of this routine and help the decision-makers to quickly evaluate the thousands of inputs that arrive every day in the *Agenda*. The news items that fulfill more criteria are more likely to be reported. It is therefore important to assess these criteria of selection, and in particular, the main criterion used to select

a given story. In Sports, we identified 15 main criteria of selection of newsworthy stories (Tab. 5).

Protagonism is the strongest criterion of newsworthiness of the entire sports section, whether it refers to the news program itself, the subject matter, or the actors involved in soccer (Tab. 5). The other criteria are, in order of relevance, *Audience*, *Entertainment*, *Negativity* or *Controversy* associated with soccer, which was the prevalent topic among all the other stories reported.

Table 5. Selection criteria of newsworthy stories in sports, soccer and the main players in the soccer world

	Sports section (total news stories)		Main Topic		Characters linked to Soccer														
			Soccer		National Team		S. L. Benfica		Sporting C. P.		F. C. Porto		Other National Teams		International Teams		Coaches/Players		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Importance	1	0.6	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Entertainment	33	18.1	23	15.4	2	10.5	6	28.6	3	21.4	3	37.5	5	29.4	2	20	4	5.8	
Relatability	3	1.6	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4	
Negativity	19	10.4	15	10.1	-	-	1	4.8	3	21.4	-	-	3	17.6	-	-	6	8.7	
Quality of story	2	1.1	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	-	-	1	1.4	
Balance	1	0.6	2	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	-	-	-	-	
Length	-	-	2	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Exclusivity	2	1.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4	
Competition	1	0.6	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4	
Protagonism	77	42.3	64	43	9	47.4	5	23.8	5	35.7	4	50	1	5.9	7	70	42	60.9	
Unpredictability	1	0.6	1	0.7	-	-	1	4.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Continuity	1	0.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	7.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Audience	34	18.6	34	22.8	8	42.1	8	38.1	1	7.1	1	12.5	5	29.4	-	-	7	10.1	
Public Service	3	1.6	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	-	-	1	1.4	
Self-promotion	4	2.2	4	2.7	-	-	-	-	1	7.1	-	-	-	-	1	10	5	7.2	
TOTAL	182	100	149	100	19	100	21	100	14	100	8	100	17	100	10	100	69		

Protagonism was not a decisive selection criterion only for news about smaller soccer teams. In contrast, *Protagonism* is the only relevant criterion for selecting stories about international soccer teams. We noticed that international teams with Portuguese players received more attention from the editorial decision-makers. *Entertainment* and *Audience* are criteria that reflect the added value of the Sports section to *Telejornal*. Specifically, this section appeals to the emotions to captivate the public. This is why the Sports section is at the end of the news program, to attract the maximum audience to the following program. In other words, sports news functions as a 'leverage'. The aim of capturing the public may also explain why other news topics are absent from the grid. Regarding the secondary criteria, the list is broader but also homogeneous (Tab. 6).

A well-designed news grid aligns different schedules and offers a diverse content, and *Balance* is therefore the most emphasized criterion. Due to the current European crisis and the resulting negative economic, political and social news stories, it was even more necessary to generate interesting and empathetic news content. The *Entertainment* and *Identification* criteria were crucial to define the sports agenda, especially on soccer. *Competition* and *Audience* are also important secondary criteria in the selection of sports news. Since *Telejornal* is broadcast

simultaneously with news programs of its competitors (SIC and TVI), it has to compete for the so-called 'general public', which is focused on prime-time television. In summary, relevant facts with significant impact which the public can relate to have more newsworthiness.

Testimonies from the "field" for contextualizing the decision-making product

Direct observation revealed that the sports editorial team is like a *ghetto* in the newsroom. This may be explained by the organizational culture itself, as in the previous RTP headquarters the sports section news team was on the third floor and the remaining *Telejornal* staff was on the floor below. On the other hand, the Sports section team collaborates with general news programs but mostly with specialist information platforms. At the time of this study, the team comprised 16 members, including journalists, the editor and coordinators. In the Portuguese society, it is common to hear complaints, both from the public and from sports agents, about how sports news is not representative of the reality in sports, which is particularly worrying in a public broadcaster such as RTP. The qualitative analysis in this study aimed to identify the positive and negative constraints to

Table 6. Newsworthy secondary criteria associated to the Sports section, its strong theme (Soccer) and the characters linked to Soccer

	Section		Main Topic		Characters linked to Soccer														
	Sports		Soccer		National Team		S. L. Benfica		Sporting C. P.		F. C. Porto		Other National Teams		International Teams		Coaches/Players		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Importance	4	2.2	2	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4
Entertainment	132	72.5	115	77.2	15	78.9	12	57.1	8	57.8	5	62.5	9	52.9	8	80	62	89.9	
Identification	143	78.6	121	77.2	16	84.2	18	85.7	11	78.6	7	87.5	10	58.8	9	90	59	85.5	
Negativity	38	20.9	36	24.2	3	15.8	8	38.1	3	21.4	-	-	3	17.6	1	10	12	17.4	
Quality of story	23	12.6	11	7.4	-	-	1	4.8	1	7.1	1	-	2	11.8	-	-	14	20.3	
Balance	166	91.2	137	91.9	19	100	16	76.2	13	92.9	8	100	14	82.4	10	100	59	85.5	
Accessibility	2	1.1	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	10	-	-	
Time length	16	8.8	14	9.4	1	5.3	3	14.3	-	-	-	-	3	17.6	1	10	4	5.8	
Protection	20	11	14	9.4	2	10.5	1	4.8	3	21.4	1	12.5	3	17.6	1	10	5	7.2	
Exclusivity	5	2.7	5	3.4	1	5.3	-	-	1	7.1	-	-	1	5.9	1	10	3	4.3	
Competition	114	62.6	101	67.8	15	78.9	13	61.9	8	57.8	6	75	10	58.8	5	50	38	55.1	
Protagonism	44	24.2	35	23.5	3	15.8	11	52.4	3	21.4	1	12.5	4	23.5	-	-	15	21.7	
Visual material	38	20.9	32	21.5	5	26.3	5	23.8	3	21.4	2	25	4	23.5	5	50	10	14.5	
Frequency	2	1.1	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	-	-	1	1.4	
Format	6	3.3	8	5.4	-	-	1	4.8	-	-	-	-	2	11.8	-	-	6	8.7	
Unpredictability	3	1.6	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	12.5	2	11.8	-	-	2	2.9	
Continuity	8	4.4	8	5.4	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2.9	
Socio-economic factors	3	1.6	1	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Audience	113	62.1	97	65.1	11	57.9	12	57.1	12	85.7	7	87.5	8	47.1	8	80	44	63.8	
Public Service	6	3.3	2	1.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	5.9	-	-	-	-	
Self-marketing	1	0.5	2	1.3	1	5.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1.4	
TOTAL	182		149		19		21		14		8		17		10		69		

Note: The calculation of the percentages was based on the total number of occurrences in each category (see Table 5).

the sports editorial *gatekeeping* process by direct observation in the field.

A set of reasons was identified from three co-dependent spaces, according to the *Gatekeeping* theory (Fig. 2): Social System (macro level), the RTP Organization (meso level) and the Telejornal newsroom (micro level).

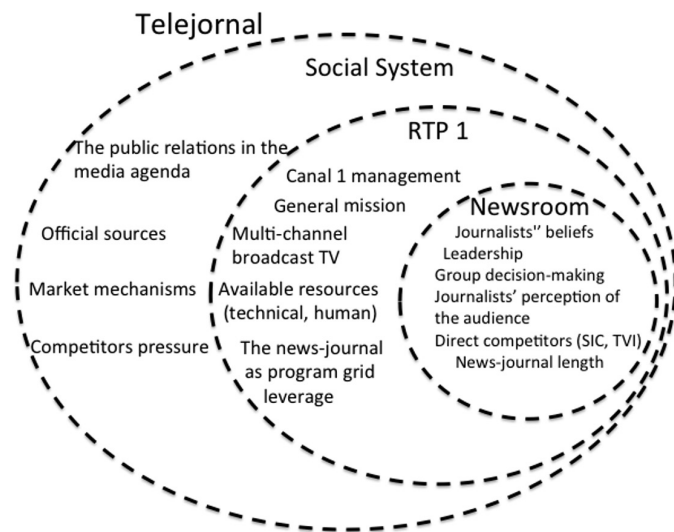


Figure 2. Macro, meso and micro constraints to the editorial decision-making process of the sports news in Telejornal.

Social system (macro). Nowadays journalists no longer need to search for news stories. Instead, news stories continuously land on their desks. Established organizations rely on communication departments run by specialists who know the *modus operandi* of journalism. Sending press releases to media outlets has become an integral part of these organizations' routine. Sports institutions that do not develop a communication strategy become invisible to the media [58], and our results confirm this. Moreover, official sources are privileged by journalists because they are generally more reliable, and hence reporters need to invest less effort in fact checking. However, this approach results in institutionalized news based on little research [59], and the news interests may be confounded with the interests of the sources [60]. Sports news in *Telejornal* is also affected by the pressure from the competition. Market sharing by various oligopolies leads to a reduction in content volume and diversity of perspectives [61]. Indeed, television broadcasters rather invest in mainstream news and avoid the risk of introducing novel content. The Coordinator of *Telejornal* admitted that the pressure from the competitors in this market system prevented him from experimenting with new content, particularly in Sports news. Hence, soccer remains the central theme and the most famous coaches and players are the prevalent characters in this news section.

RTP as organization (meso). RTP is a public television broadcaster with several channels managed according to their specific characteristics. *Telejornal* is also entirely or partly conditioned by the management agenda specific for Channel 1, a general channel with open signal and the only that has commercials. The editorial team therefore has to produce a news program that is appealing to the general public and which therefore attracts advertisers. Thus, although all editors wish to create unique content, they end up producing predictable line-ups because originality carries significant risks of rejection [62]. Soccer is

a subject that has already been proven successful [63]. News about the "big" teams and/or their celebrities is particularly prone to be selected for the *Telejornal* line-up. This constraint can be very powerful, since the decision-makers, due to intra-organizational social pressure, have a tendency to normalize the interests of advertisers and confuse them with the organization's interests and even the interests of the public [64].

The organization's technical or human resources can affect editorial decisions. During our analysis, the ongoing economic crisis captured the attention of the decision-makers, thereby diverting a substantial amount of resources from other news sectors. Even the RTP's regional delegations were unable to respond. These decisions led to the cancellation of sports news, particularly news about sports other than soccer, because there were no reporters available.

Telejornal is a prime time program among many others. At the time of this study, the program immediately following *Telejornal* was also news-based, while the competition was betting on entertainment. The line-up strategy of *Telejornal* was formulated to 'set the stage' for the following program. The coordinator placed the news stories with more impact (entertainment, emotion, novelty, etc.) at the end of the grid. Soccer was one of these topics. Although the end of the line-up has indeed great public visibility, these editorial decisions create a stereotyped social representation of sports, which seem to greatly displease the sports editor.

The newsroom of Telejornal (micro). The personal sports preferences of the decision-makers have some influence on the selection of the sports agenda. For instance, few news stories about F.C. Porto are reported even though this is one of the largest soccer teams, and this partly results from the personal team preferences of the decision-makers at the top of the editorial chain (those making the final decisions). Time pressure and a vast amount of news items to triage may lead to the selection of news stories that confirm personal convictions [65].

Conclusion

Understanding how sports news agendas in the mainstream media are conceived allows the development of news selection strategies for sports agents outside of the media spotlight. This is particularly relevant for those who depend on sponsorship, given that sponsors invest in profitable "products" with impact on the general public, including general media outlets such as RTP.

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