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# THE SPECIALIZED AND ENGAGED JOURNALISM OF AZMINA MAGAZINE: feminist and intersectional agendas



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**ABSTRACT** – The growing number of journalism studies guided by gender issues carried out in Brazil in recent years puts tension in the production mode of journalism, which historically has been rooted in objectivity and newsworthiness. This article follows this perspective by analyzing the editorial guidelines and the journalistic team profile at AzMina, a digital magazine that practices a journalism model engaged and specialized in feminist causes with an intersectional approach. Bibliographic review and document analysis showed that the magazine adopts investigative and writing methods legitimized by professional journalism, but differentiates itself with its agendas and information sources, which requires journalists who are highly qualified and educated on the issues it covers.

**Key words:** Specialized journalism. Engaged journalism. Feminist journalism. Editorial guidelines.

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## **O JORNALISMO ESPECIALIZADO E ENGAJADO DA REVISTA AZMINA: pautas feministas e interseccionais**

**RESUMO** – Estudos de jornalismo orientados por questões de gênero têm se intensificado no Brasil, nos últimos anos, tensionando o modo de produção jornalística ancorado em postulados de objetividade e noticiabilidade historicamente excludentes. Este artigo segue essa perspectiva ao analisar os princípios editoriais e o perfil da equipe jornalística da revista digital AzMina, tendo em vista um modelo de jornalismo engajado e especializado nas causas feministas com abordagem interseccional. Por meio de revisão bibliográfica e análise documental, foi possível observar que a revista segue rotinas de apuração e redação legitimadas pelo jornalismo profissional, diferenciando-se na seleção de pautas e no tratamento das fontes de informação, o que demanda um perfil de jornalistas altamente capacitadas na temática em questão.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalismo especializado. Jornalismo engajado. Jornalismo feminista. Princípios editoriais.

## **EL PERIODISMO ESPECIALIZADO Y COMPROMETIDO DE LA REVISTA AZMINA: lineamientos feministas e interseccionales**

**RESUMEN** – Los estudios de periodismo orientados por cuestiones de género se han intensificado en Brasil en los últimos años, tensando el modo de producción periodística anclado en postulados de objetividad y noticiabilidad históricamente excluyentes. Este artículo sigue esta perspectiva al analizar los principios editoriales y el perfil del equipo periodístico de la revista digital AzMina, considerada como un modelo de periodismo comprometido y especializado en causas feministas con un enfoque interseccional. A través de una revisión bibliográfica y análisis documental, se pudo observar que la revista sigue métodos de investigación y redacción legitimados por el periodismo profesional, diferenciándose por los lineamientos de agenda y la selección y tratamiento de las fuentes informativas, lo que demanda un perfil de periodistas altamente calificadas.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo especializado. Periodismo comprometido. Periodismo feminista. Principios editoriales.

### **1 Introduction**

Journalism is universally understood as a professional activity carried out by qualified journalists (or recognized as such) who adopt a set of techniques, methods, and routines for producing current news and information, in various formats, based on pre-established criteria. Expressions such as “professional journalism”, “traditional journalism”, “business journalism” and “good journalistic practices” are used to designate the “right way” of doing “quality” journalism, which excludes engagement in social causes as it is supposedly seen as not being committed to “the truth”.

This article – an excerpt from a more comprehensive study<sup>1</sup> – goes against this established norm based on the premise that,

despite its apparent antagonism, journalism engaged in specific causes has been growing, reaching a wider audience and gaining more credibility. This has been happening precisely because of the use of similar techniques for formulating guidelines, selecting sources (human and documentary), investigation, writing, and editing in increasingly multimedia and intermedia formats. So, what differentiates this journalism from the recognized traditional form?

The often-cited “map of independent journalism” (an interactive resource prepared by outlet Agência Pública)<sup>2</sup> is a combination of collective initiatives by online Brazilian journalists who are dedicated to a variety of social issues such as public policies, migration, peripheral communities, urban mobility, active motherhood, anti-racism, inclusion, citizenship, among others. Within this sea of themes, one has recently been garnering a lot of attention in journalism studies in Brazil: feminist journalism, which has led to more comprehensive journalism studies conducted from a gender perspective.

Gender issues did not significantly mobilize this field until recently in Brazil, according to surveys conducted between 2014 and 2016 by Cláudia Lago, Evelyn Kazan and Manuela Thamani (2018) based on articles presented at the Annual Congress of the SBPJOR (the Brazilian Society of Journalism Researchers), and on reputable magazines specializing in the field of communication. Since then, there has been an increasing amount of production in this line of research, including at least one doctoral thesis by Anna Flávia Feldmann (2018) and nine separate dissertations: by Jessica Gustafson Costa (2018), Francielle Esmitez (2019), Heloisa Souza dos Santos (2019), Bibiana Garcez (2020), Jade Vilar de Azevedo (2021), Gabriela Braga Schander (2021), Camila Barros de Albuquerque (2021), Luíza Buzzacaro Barcellos (2021), and Hyvana L. Rodrigues de Sousa (2023). Six of these works are case studies on AzMina, the basis of the research that gave rise to this article, which highlights the importance given to this magazine and the journalism it practices.

Based on a critical reading of these works (in contrast to journalism studies on objectivity and newsworthiness) and a documentary analysis of AzMina’s editorial guidelines, this article aims to demonstrate that the kind of journalism this digital magazine produces is engaged and specialized. It is engaged because the document that outlines its editorial line publicly defends women’s rights from an intersectional viewpoint (which takes into account

the interaction and/or conflict aspects of gender, race/ethnicity, and social class). It is specialized because this journalism requires a deep knowledge of several women's issues, which are even more complex when considering the magazine's intersectional perspective.

AzMina is a journalistic media outlet that covers a wide range of *topics with a focus on gender*. We do not, however, treat women as a universal category and always consider the perspectives of race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender identity (we include trans men, transmasculine, and non-binary people in our coverage). (AzMina, 2023, emphasis added).

The digital magazine AzMina was created by a group of journalists in São Paulo in 2015, at a time when “the Brazilian media referred to femicide as a ‘crime of passion’, ‘feminism’ was a bad word, and black, indigenous, trans and lesbian women were invisible to the mainstream media” (AzMina, 2023). Since then, the magazine publishers have made it clear that their agenda would follow a non-hegemonic and non-neutral framework, but with a strictly journalistic approach:

AzMina is opposed to all forms of racism, lesbophobia, homophobia, transphobia, or any other type of prejudice [...] we follow standards of good journalism practices and current legislation, listening to other sides when appropriate (see more in the “reporting violence” section), investigating and verifying cases of violence against women with responsibility [...] transparency, accuracy, and veracity of the information we publish. (AzMina, 2023).

The magazine follows a trend of the so-called “fourth wave” of feminist movements, which began in the early 2020s and, after facing patriarchalism and biological determinism, converged on the issue of identities (and, as a result, intersectionality). As Schander (2021, p. 54) highlights, this fourth wave

[...] mainly uses digital networks to disseminate online activism, such as cyberfeminism. This helps renew the feminist debate and expand the discursive field to include more female voices on social networks, blogs, media, and journalism outlets – mainly alternative ones (Schander, 2021, p. 54).

However, studies on the visibility of feminism in the media took a long time to pay attention to journalism as a practice controlled by the masculine *ethos* in all its decision-making processes, as Márcia Veiga da Silva (2010) did. Her investigations into the journalistic production at a TV station in Rio Grande do Sul revealed gender values

throughout the company's structure and decision-making processes, affecting both the hierarchical positions and news production process.

These findings led her to define journalism as “masculinist”, meaning it operates based on the production and maintenance of hegemonic standards historically associated with masculine values, such as competitiveness (in the idea of news “exclusives”), neutrality, strength, objectivity, and detachment, while characteristics such as subjectivity, kindness and cooperation are considered feminine and therefore not valued in journalism. This masculinist valuation, rooted in professional routines and pertinent to the field of subjectivity, is not neutral but is linked to the precept of objectivity, as we shall discuss below.

## **2 The standards of objectivity and newsworthiness**

Although not intrinsic to journalism, the notion of objectivity is one of the most important precepts in the profession. Journalists focused their attention on these issues in the 19th century, when reason, science, and positivist thinking were the explanatory powers of the world (Brixius, 2006, p. 17), whose ultimate goal was a supposed absolute truth. In this context, newspapers emphasized fidelity to the facts, avoiding any opinionated and interpretative vision, which influences the narration of the facts differently from the prevailing until then.

In the search for objectivity, journalistic texts try to incorporate new narrative resources such as the use of quotation marks when transcribing statements, and the use of descriptive techniques to narrate facts in a believable way. The notion of objectivity strengthened between the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century when journalism incorporated methods of industrial production and commercial distribution, which in turn gave rise to new narrative techniques, such as the lead and the inverted pyramid. Since then, objectivity has been viewed as a belief in facts and a disbelief in values. However, one may not ignore that the expectation of objectivity and impartiality in news coverage still exists today (Barros, 2003).

Objectivity (associated with the precept of truth) and impartiality (associated with non-subjectivity in the report) are fundamental to eliminating any bias a journalist (or media outlet)

may have with the object they are covering. However, the notion of journalistic objectivity as a method, that is, as a set of procedures to “guarantee” the quality and veracity of the news, is not at odds with journalism that is committed to a cause, as indicated by the editorial guidelines of AzMina Magazine (detailed below). Although it mentions the word objectivity only once, the text is consistent with Tuchman’s (1993) approach of “objectivity as a strategic ritual”.

A mainstay in journalism, this strategy requires a number of steps that journalists must take into account when building their stories, such as assessment of what is, or is not, news; supporting evidence added to the reporter’s speech; use of citations to identify which statements come from sources and not from news professionals; and structuring the information in hierarchical order, what is known as the “inverted pyramid” (Tuchman, 1993). The conflict with the idea of subjectivity in the reports requires one to reflect on other possibilities to face the paradigm of objectivity, as proposed by Fabiana Moraes (2019), to whom journalism does not need to avoid subjectivity.

The subjectivity we refer to in this journalism that seeks to be more integral is based on objective criteria: the need to observe class, gender, geographic, racial, and group positions; to take into account the surrounding social structure (in our case, the Brazilian one, fractured by classism and racism); to look closely to understand how these issues translate into people, how they are returned to the world; to crack previous representations (or previous facts); finally, in a self-criticism of the field itself based on positivist bases and which also privileges narrating from a spectacular framework. (Moraes, 2019, p. 209).

Considering the objective of this paper is to observe the perspective of journalism engaged in feminist causes, and understanding that subjectivity and objectivity are not two sides of the same coin, we need to confront and give new meaning to objectivity in a context not governed by the dominant masculinist mentality in journalistic newsrooms. When analyzing an experience of “independent journalism” in her Master’s thesis, Jessica Gustafson Costa (2018) borrowed the concept of objectivity used by Donna Haraway, for whom subjectivity and objectivity go hand in hand from a “place”, from a “body”, from an individual, and through which each situation is read from a point of view from which the interpretation starts. This focus allows us to analyze the objectivity intended by journalism from other perspectives, understanding the nuances that surround this movement of tensioning the dominant standard.

For Costa (2018, p. 198), working with objectivity from a perspective that considers the particularities that surround the subjective view is an “exercise of constant reflection both on the framing of the news and in the relationship with the sources”. This implies not disregarding subjectivity, but valuing it, “by focusing on the subjective nuances that are inherent to [a journalist’s] work”. In this approach, the individual is placed at the center of the process, showing a significant break from the idea of neutrality and universality, as particularities stand out in this construction (Silva & Moraes, 2019, p. 13):

By proposing a journalism of subjectivity, we subvert the modes of journalistic objectification, capable of imploding mainly the epistemic racism/sexism on which it is also based. From this perspective, subjective and objective do not exclude each other, but they complement each other, despite the greater social legitimacy conferred on the latter.

The perspective proposed by these authors takes into account the knowledge and previous experiences that support the readings, decisions, and interpretations of journalists, as well as the critical view of individuals on events. This viewpoint opposes the technical bias still dominant in Brazilian journalism, which upholds objectivity and impartiality. However, as Moretzsohn (2000, p. 12) notes:

(...)this perspective dismisses the political importance of journalism and, therefore, ends up as a victim of its own assumptions, failing to break the vicious circle of formalistic analysis. Perceiving the journalist strictly as a “professional” obedient to predetermined procedures (which companies prefer) is a way of reducing their importance and their transformative possibility.

Journalism studies also pay attention to the decisions journalists make in their professional routines, based on newsworthiness criteria. Gislene Silva (2005) – one of the leading researchers on the topic – views newsworthiness as a systematization of criteria based on three fronts: 1) newsworthiness criteria at the origin of the fact; 2) newsworthiness criteria in the treatment of facts; and 3) newsworthiness criteria in terms of facts. Each of these sets brings parameters that guide the process of selection related to facts and how they will be reported.

However, the very idea of “newsworthiness” reduces journalism to a flow of daily events, which, although it is still the dominant form in daily news and the one that generates public

debate, it is not exclusive, and much less antagonistic with reports from other non-daily productions, typical of journalism committed to causes, especially in the digital environment. In this case, we work with expanded current references, and news values are changed into knowledge values governed by the unveiling of what is not yet widely public knowledge, even though it is not recent in the timeline.

We can think of this movement from the notion of “knowledge of recognition” (Ericson et al., 1987 as cited in Traquina, 2005)<sup>3</sup>, thought as a journalist’s ability to identify which facts and events have the necessary values to become news (Silva, 2005; Traquina, 2005). Some authors consider this instinctive and secret knowledge, and that it differentiates journalists from other professionals and other people (Tuchman, 1993; Traquina, 2005; Correia, 2012; Baccin, 2013). But if we replace the word “news” with “agenda”, we can substantiate Gislene Silva’s reasoning (2005) when considering that the values attributed to the agendas of engaged media are built from shared knowledge that becomes clear directions to be followed. In other words, it is not something instinctive that emerges from the void, but a set of references from exposure to news-building routines, as happens in newsrooms.

### 3 The editorial guidelines of AzMina Magazine

From an empirical point of view, this article is based on data obtained through document analysis techniques applied to the editorial guidelines of AzMina Magazine, listed in the “Who we are” section on its webportal. Documental analysis involves identifying, verifying, and evaluating documents with a specific objective, using secondary sources (reports, journalistic materials, recordings) and/or primary sources (personal writings, letters, internal documents) to collect the necessary materials (Moreira, 2005).

Data collection for this article involved looking at the document and identifying the procedures described as “journalistic routines” (investigation, writing, and editing), which guide the premises of objectivity and impartiality in the field. The main objective of this methodology was to identify the magazine’s *modus operandi*, as well as the professional profile of its journalistic team and the ways of financing this work. The next step aimed to compare this information with the magazine’s editorial positioning on gender and intersectional issues.



AzMina's editorial principles clearly prioritize addressing issues that are "ignored or do not receive the necessary coverage in the mainstream press" by including "new sections on topics that are often explored from a male perspective, or no gender perspective" (AzMina, 2023).

At AzMina Magazine, every topic is considered a topic for women and trans people, and there are no prohibited topics. However, we prioritize in-depth, critical, and investigative journalism over covering hard news – that is, "hot" last-minute news, which only records what is happening at that moment or what has just happened. If a hot topic is driving the social debate, we look to go beyond the news, bringing analysis, unpublished data, and new viewpoints even in more immediate reports.

This anti-hard news position does not mean that media outlets engaged in causes do not include other newsworthiness criteria, pointed out by Gislene Silva (2005, p. 96), such as the "hierarchical selection" of information and images that make up the narratives and stories on the printed press, a website screen, or a mobile device, for example. In the same way the hierarchization process in independent media outlets is also subject to the infrastructure and production conditions available. For example: when observing the *modus operandi* of a "feminist news portal" (later identified as Catarina's), Jessica Costa (2018) noticed the lack of a fixed production routine, even though regular journalistic practices and procedures were followed. She believes this provides more time to make decisions and not just cover news exclusives (Costa, 2018, p. 106).

In the case of AzMina Magazine, even though it is a digital media outlet with a decentralized newsroom and journalists spread across three regions of Brazil, it does adopt fundamental routines of journalism such as agenda meetings, carefully selecting sources, data collection, fact-checking, discussions about the magazine's actions to the detriment of reports, as well as administrative and communication issues. The magazine also produces its news based on investigation manuals that go beyond the technique, such as the *Minimanuals of humanized journalism* from the NGO *Think Olga*<sup>4</sup>, and the *Manual of Good Practices for Covering Violence against Women* from the UOL portal (AzMina, 2023). It is clear that the magazine's journalistic production criteria, although it adopts classic procedures of the profession, cannot be explained and analyzed based solely on conceptually restricted (although

universalizing) terms, such as newsworthiness, newsmaking, and news values. It is no coincidence that AzMina has created, throughout its still recent history, a document in which it makes public the editorial and ethical principles that guide its journalistic practices, as discussed below.

As a media platform using “information, technology, and education to combat gender-based violence”, AzMina Magazine has continuously included new descriptive and normative items into its classic “Who We Are” page. It is now a comprehensive document (around 20 pagedown screens), similar to the editorial principles of media outlets such as O Globo or Folha de S.Paulo (Aguiar & Rodrigues, 2022). The page currently consists of eleven topics: team; who funds our journalism; diversity of voices; what guides AzMina journalism; error policy; best investigation practices; reports of violence; legal issues; accessibility; re-publication; and interaction with readers. Considering the limitations of this article, we only highlight those aspects that dialogue with the tension between the founding premises of journalism and the criteria for legitimizing the intersectional feminist journalism that AzMina practices. The team is an important part of categorizing this journalism as specialized and engaged.

AzMina Magazine identifies itself as “a feminist journalistic publication” guided by the “ideal of equity among people”. The word “journalism” appears 22 times in the “Who We Are” section, yet the word “news” appears only twice. It clearly points to engagement in a cause as one of the guiding principles of its journalism:

[...] We believe that one of the responsibilities of journalism is to contribute toward building a fairer society. By producing factually accurate, fair, and complete news reports, we aim to fuel debates that free women from all types of violence, considering the diversity of race, class, and sexual orientation. [...] We dream of a world in which people of all races, classes, religions, sexual orientations, and gender identities have access to information that allows them to fight for (and achieve) a life free from violence and oppression. May they develop their maximum personal, professional, political, spiritual, and emotional potential without hindrance. (AzMina, 2023).

To achieve this, the magazine adopts what it calls “best investigation practices”. However, when clicking on this section, you will not find a clear description of what this means. What it does show are its priorities for defining agendas, the rejection of commercial influence on journalistic content, and a list of the magazine’s positions

on gender and ethical issues, including a reference made to the Code of Ethics for Brazilian Journalists. These positions are summarized in the following excerpt:

Every report made by AzMina Magazine is based on the principle that: a) the right to choose whether or not to be a mother is a basic human right of women, currently denied to Brazilian women by the government; b) violence against women, in all its forms, is not tolerable; c) passion, love, jealousy, etc. are not justifications for violence against women – nothing is a justification for violence against women; d) male and female genders are social constructions and, regardless of biology, people's gender identity must be respected. (AzMina, 2023).

Even though the section “diversity of voices” does not clearly explain how “voices of different races and ethnicities, classes, ideologies, sexual orientations, and genders” are included in its decision-making processes, it is mindful of the sources of information. The word “source” appears 19 times in the document in two specific sections: “Basic rules about sources” and “Anonymity of sources”. Speaking to the latter:

[...] AzMina Magazine recognizes the journalistic value of non-anonymous sources, but we prioritize maintaining the women we interview anonymous if they are in danger. We evaluate the consequences of revealing the interviewee's identity on a case-by-case basis, as well as openly explaining everything to all interviewees so that they can make an aware and informed choice. (AzMina, 2023).

In the section “Basic rules about sources”, the magazine's journalists describe how they choose their sources, which ones they prioritize, and how they go about guaranteeing diversity in terms of location, specialization, reputation, and reliability. Three of the five points presented in the section allude to the search and prioritization of experts to address the topic, while the other two refer to the search for groups and institutions “whose performance, history, and reputation qualify them to address the topic of the report” (AzMina, 2023). These may also be seen as specialized sources of an institutional nature. The section “Error Policy” states that “changes are only made to published articles if there is an error or if certain information must be removed in order to *guarantee the safety of the source or individual interviewed*, who will be duly notified of such” (AzMina, 2023, emphasis added).

The magazine prioritizes female experts and sources, in

addition to seeking a plurality of sources that represent different races and ethnicities, classes, ideologies, sexual orientations, and genders (AzMina, 2023). Another priority is the search for qualified sources and institutions outside the cities of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Brasília, allowing space for viewpoints and stories from other regions of the country, thus providing more diversity of experiences and narratives. These criteria for choosing experts and sources are part of a qualification of feminism within the spectrum of specialized knowledge, in which the reading of what is treated involves gender issues and is coded from this perspective. It can be based on a reference to the woman's experience (in reports that intertwine with life) or from specialized perspectives (professionals and academics) who interpret what is said from this specific place of knowledge and experience.

The guidelines and sources that AzMina chooses also follow the criteria for the so-called ethics of mindfulness. As Rogério Christofoletti and Dairan Paul (2020, n.p.) point out, this mindfulness must involve a consideration of "sources, information, the public, and self-care [with the profession]". Before being included in journalism, the ethics of mindfulness underwent several debates in feminist theory, as well as in the fields of sociology, philosophy, and psychology.

One of the first works to defend the ideas of mindfulness ethics comes from Carol Gilligan, entitled *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, published in 1997. According to Tânia A. Kuhnen (2014), Gilligan argues that there are two perspectives for moral understanding: the default voice of morality, which bases moral decisions on the notion of justice from a "masculine" perspective, and the "different voice", referred to as "feminine". This view "points to a different way of talking about moral problems, based on the experience of connection with others, resulting in priority given to maintaining mindful relationships when making moral decisions" (Kuhnen, 2014, n.p.). Through the ethics of mindfulness, feminist journalism demonstrates its commitment to listening and thinking about the source, beyond just verifying correct information. It thus becomes an attribute of journalism that proposes to look at the specificities of events, phenomena, and situations more calmly, with time to reflect, in an attempt to exercise diversity and plurality in its approaches.

## 4 Specialized and engaged journalism

The term “engaged journalism” still has differing definitions in journalism studies. For some authors (Dornelles, 2006, 2008; Silva, 2012; Belmonte, 2017), it is associated with community journalism, popular journalism, or civic journalism, in other words, linked to popular or citizen participation in news production. It is also frequently associated with studies on environmental journalism and the defense of socio-environmental issues (Aguiar, 2003; Dornelles, 2008; Belmonte, 2017, 2020; Loose, 2022). More recently, the idea of engagement seems to be integrated into alternative and/or independent journalism initiatives that have no ties to media groups, politicians, or companies (Calado, 2019; Andrade & Pereira, 2020), which made a lot of progress online in the 20th century.

According to recent perspectives, engaged journalism seeks to expose social problems that directly affect specific groups in society, explaining causes and consequences that affect these populations intending to reflect, guide, and mobilize society to promote actions and resolve these problematic issues. The main idea behind engaged journalism is that it must shift from a strictly observant and descriptive position (supposedly neutral) to one that takes action and seeks to “concentrate the objectives of the profession toward encouraging and exerting citizenship, improving public debate, reviewing public life, and contributing to the improvement of democracy” (Dornelles, 2008, p. 123).

Our documentary analysis of AzMina Magazine revealed that its involvement in feminist and intersectional causes has allowed its staff to accumulate the knowledge they need to practice engaged and specialized journalism and produce articles committed to fighting violence against women and gender violence based on data, documents, and sources with authoritative knowledge. The difference with this specialized and engaged journalism lies in its themes, that is, the topics they choose and the sources they consult to provide specific coverage from a specific point of view.

While magazines traditionally aimed at a female audience, such as *Cláudia*, *Nova*, *Marie Claire*, and *Glamour*, among others, focus their agendas around fashion, beauty, gastronomy (in the place of cooking), relationships and professional careers, publications that

adopt a feminist or “gender” perspective focus on women’s rights and the “structural inequalities” that affect them (Nalvarte, 2021 as cited in Aguiar & Rodrigues, 2022)<sup>5</sup>.

According to Frederico Tavares (2007, 2009, 2012), specialized journalism began to take shape in Brazil in the 1950s and adopted a more explanatory tone than the informative characteristic of journalism at the time. It also appeared in printed newspapers as a way of organizing the production and framing the news into different themes, according to Mário Erbolato (1981), the first Brazilian author to systematize the practices of specialized journalism in daily newspapers in the early 1980s (which he refers to as a “general information press”). However, this author’s approach does not include media outlets dedicated to specific subjects (economy, culture, sports, etc.), which are a mainstay in specialized journalism nowadays, regardless of the platform on which it is broadcast (print, sound, audiovisual, and digital).

Erbolato’s (1981) list of fifteen specializations was based both on editorials and sections and on themes that require journalists to have some specific knowledge, without outlining a distinction between these categories. However, today we observe that the thematic sections – the categories of specialized journalism – work with different narrative genres of journalism and introduce different ways of reading the world and producing meanings, whether broader and in-depth or objective and factual. Specialized reports are not found only in large reports, but also in more concise materials and articles. These different reports are linked to another way of relating to the social and its manifestations, which materialize in specific journalistic productions (Tavares, 2007).

Specialized journalism strives to discover the reasons behind the events by going beyond the facts and exploring the issues that surround the topics that are relevant to our society. It uncovers aspects not well explored or associated with issues in the daily reality of populations, in addition to being an explanatory agent of what is reported. It is as if this attentive and specialized look draws attention to “[...] certain ‘invisible events’ within society that are fundamental in its constitution” (Tavares, 2007, p. 47). These aspects, resulting from a series of previous processes and contingencies, are generally not recognized (or covered) due to the exclusive focus on current events given by factual reports in daily journalism.

One of the indicators that a media outlet is specialized is the terminology it uses to frame its articles and other content. In the “Who We Are” section, AzMina clearly states that its editorials sections “are decided jointly by the editorial team and undergo sporadic revisions, and can be questioned or changed at any time”. At the beginning of 2023, these editorial sections included Politics, Violence, Health, Feminism, Behavior, Culture, Money, Sport, and Motherhood. Although the first three categories are recurrent themes in daily news outlets, the research preceding this article (Sousa, 2023) highlighted their specific link to feminist causes from an intersectional perspective.

Another fundamental attribute of specialized (and more engaged) journalism is the level of specialization that the team of journalists has on the issue they cover. Specialist journalists understand the dynamics and particularities of every issue they report, both from their practical experience of covering these issues over time and further training they invest in, like refreshers and specialization courses. For example, in political journalism, a journalist needs to be familiar with the current and historical background of the political scene, the relationships among parliamentarians, and the negotiations they have with governments, other political parties, and other actions a journalist may be familiar only when immersed in this environment. This immersion allows journalists to develop the skills needed for prospecting stories and sources that distinguish the coverage of specialized and engaged media. However, it is the formation of the team that really makes the difference.

## **5 Profile of engaged journalists at AzMina**

When analyzing journalistic training and its specialties, Frederico Tavares (2012) looks to the studies from Spanish researcher Montserrat Quesada Pérez, who claims that what differentiates specialized journalists from what she calls “generalist journalists” is their academic and professional training, their attitude towards information, their relationship with sources, and the methodology they work with. In the case of feminist journalists, activism brings a plus to the repertoire of knowledge and professional experience they have accumulated throughout their careers. But this is not mandatory,

as is evident in the information available about the journalists who make up the magazine's team of 19 professionals from different areas, among them, nine journalists, and one journalism student (at the time this article was completed, in March 2023).

Our analysis of the material in the "Who We Are" (2023) section showed that AzMina Magazine believes that diverse journalistic coverage begins with a diverse team. "Today, our team is made up of 24 people in five states: 75% are non-Caucasian, 39% are LGBTQIA+, and 29% are young people (under 24 years of age)". However, for the purposes of this article, we only take into consideration the academic training and professional trajectory of the team of journalists.

Only one of these journalists did not pursue any further education after graduation, three had specializations, two were postgraduate students, four had a Master's degree, and one had finished doctorate classes (but had not yet defended her thesis). The fields of education were diverse: Administration (two), Anthropology, Communication and Culture (two), Philosophy and Self-knowledge, Cultural Journalism, Creative Media, and Government Relations. Two of these specializations deserve note: Investigative Journalism, Data and Visualization (from Rey Juan Carlos University, in Spain), and Data Journalism, Automation, and Data Storytelling at Insper (São Paulo). Only one of the journalists had not studied a foreign language, while all the others stated that they were proficient in English, four also mentioned proficiency in Spanish, and two in French, which points to a possible international version of AzMina Magazine in the future.

Regarding professional careers, a group of journalists from Bahia who worked for the state's two main newspapers, A Tarde and Correio, as well as the iBahia webportal and the television news program Bahia Notícias, are of particular interest. One of these journalists worked as a regional correspondent for Portal Terra, Zero Hora, and Rádio Gaúcha in Porto Alegre. Many of the other journalists had worked for mainstream media outlets such as the Folha de S.Paulo, Estadão, O Globo, El País and Valor Econômico newspapers; television news programs at Bandeirantes, Record and RedeTV; the *Época*, IstoÉ, and Piauí magazines, as well as the women's magazines Marie Claire, Cláudia, Trip and TPM. One of the journalism managers had collaborated with a number of other digital native outlets, such as Agência Pública, Repórter Brasil,



Projeto Colabora, The Intercept Brasil, and Marco Zero Conteúdo. Other media outlets mentioned by AzMina's journalists are Canal Meio, Aos Fatos, and Núcleo Jornalismo.

These professional trajectories helped build the expertise that these journalists now apply to their activities at the magazine. Data journalism is associated with project management and the so-called “quick methodologies”, technology, and innovation, as well as with investigative journalism and the use of open public data, public transparency, human rights legislation, and coverage of gender, health, and bioethics issues. This set of skills includes two awards: the Cláudio Weber Abramo Award for Data Journalism and the Global Health Reporting Contest 2018 (ICFJ), this one for a story on abortion. Another set of skills converges with the growing adoption of multimedia narratives at AzMina Magazine, which mobilizes scriptwriting, direction, and editing of video reports, internet documentaries, and podcasts.

In terms of content, issues related to feminist causes are prevalent, such as covering elections, monitoring legislative houses, and crisis management, political coverage with a focus on technology and social media, investigation and analysis of data on human rights, combating violence against women and gender-based political violence, sexuality, sexual and reproductive rights. But it is also worth noting the lack of references to any training or interest related to intersectional issues.

In addition to being journalists with degrees in the field, that is, with basic knowledge of journalistic practices and theories, these professionals demonstrate proximity to social movements, theory, and feminist movements, as well as a familiarity with the agendas associated with these movements, which naturally leads them to adopt a feminist position in their professional practice. It is this specific knowledge that, linked to the dynamics of journalism, offers professionals the tools for choosing agendas and narrative formats, and using visual resources and other technical characteristics. In this way, these professionals are able to give visibility to agendas and viewpoints that at one time were only found in feminist collectives, and can also inform clearly, from a critical perspective, in order to raise the debate on issues that do not usually guide business journalism.

## 6 Conclusions

AzMina Magazine, whose slogan is “Journalism and technology for gender equality”, is a digital native publication that openly defends women’s rights through what it calls “feminist journalism” from an intersectional perspective. Our extensive research (outlined in this article) allowed us to identify and categorize its activities as specialized journalism, which demands specific and up-to-date knowledge about gender issues and women’s rights in Brazil, and as being engaged in the fight against violence and the defense of these rights.

As the data on the magazine and its team’s editorial principles demonstrate, engaged and specialized journalism is a social position that involves a way of investigation, production, and dissemination of information based on accumulated knowledge and experience. This kind of journalism dismisses the role of being a mere outside observer and encourages social awareness when reporting the facts. This awareness means that journalism and journalistic coverage play a part in building the social world, and how these facts are told influences the way stories are read, how characters are seen, and how reality can be changed.

Since it is a specialized and engaged media outlet, the newsworthiness criteria it uses are adapted to a dynamic of thematic agendas, producing special reports that treat current affairs as a “hook”, that is an opportunity to address certain topics journalistically and provide more in-depth information. Within these editorial guidelines, objectivity is not a mechanistic action of just reporting the facts, but rather a narrative construction (forms of organizing and relating information) based on contextual data of events and reports of experiences from human sources collected during the investigation process. There is no impartiality involved when choosing sources as the magazine prioritizes listening to women and people from marginalized groups, thus breaking from the masculinist references that often dominate journalism.

Having a diverse team of experienced and trained journalists is crucial to developing this engaged and specialized journalistic model at AzMina. Based on their accumulated knowledge and professional experience, the journalists develop expertise and add to their profession an attentive and diverse reading of the world, which is reflected in the magazine’s production routines.

These trajectories deconstruct the false dichotomy between profit-based professional journalism practiced in media companies and the equally professional and growing number of digital native journalistic initiatives in Brazil.

## NOTES

- 1 Master's thesis developed with a Capes scholarship and approved in the Postgraduate Program in Communication from the Universidade Federal de Sergipe in 2023.
- 2 Survey conducted by the Public Agency for investigative journalism, available at: <https://apublica.org/mapa-do-jornalismo/>
- 3 Ericson, R. V., Baranek, P., & Chan, J. B. L. (1987). *Visualizing Deviance: A Study of News Organizations*. University of Toronto Press.
- 4 Proposed as a set of tools to help the press “be better” (<https://thinkolga.com/ferramentas/>), each one addressing a specific topic such as “racism”, “harmful stereotypes”, “violence against women”, “abortion”, “lgbt+”, “sports journalism”, “people with disabilities”...
- 5 Nalvarte, P. (2021, August 25). *Feminist media in Latin America amplify voices in the press by reporting from a gender perspective*. LatAm Journalism Review. Retrieved from <https://latamjournalismreview.org/pt-br/articles/meios-feministas-na-americalatina-ampliam-vozes-do-ecossistema-de-imprensa-ao-reportar-com-uma-perspectiva-degenero/>

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