

# Media and Society, Cyberculture and Cyberspace: The Representation of the Subject in Social Networks – A Study on the Construction of the Artist *the Weeknd*

Luís Cardoso<sup>1</sup>, Pedro Silva<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre and Centre for Comparative Studies of the University of Lisbon, Portugal

<sup>2</sup>Media and Society Master Student, Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre, Portalegre, Portugal

## ABSTRACT

The present study sought to identify the representation of the “I” in the social networks of the artist The Weeknd, more precisely in his Instagram, through cyberculture and cyberspace and also through content analysis and semiotic analysis. Through the investigation and analysis carried out it was possible to conclude that from the perspective of Cyberculture, the artist makes his photographs available in a systematic and premeditated way and ends up reconfiguring the communication practices and the communicational landscape of the cultural industry.

**KEYWORDS:** *Media and Society, Cyberculture, Cyberspace, Social Networks, Instagram, Marketing and TheWeeknd*

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## INTRODUCTION

Cyberculture occupies a digital space called cyberspace. The word appears in the work of the writer William Gibson in the book *Neuromancer* and is a space where several fragments from other cultures come together and are made available so that others have access and in a way interact with users: It has a dynamic based on digital, hypertext, it is organized within two logics, that of reconfiguration which is its update through the groups that use it and it is also a “remix” culture, which allows the transformation and combination (Amadeu, 2015). Social networks are part of this cyberspace, since they exist in the digital space, since they generate opportunities for the creation of new social ties, soon showing us that there is a reconfiguration of the established social relationships and also those that will be established, according to Falqueto (2015, p.3) reinventing the ways of communicating and acquiring knowledge.

Today, social networks are undoubtedly part of today's society. According to Saad (2017), two moments were important to understand the combination “cyber” and “culture”: the first was the moment when people started using the internet in their daily lives from 1997, and with that, the digital has evolved. The second moment is how “cyber” was introduced in the users' daily lives and daily lives.

In a way, Instagram fits Falqueto's words, since it uses images and videos of short duration, communicating and generating new relationships. Created by the American Kevin Systrom and the Brazilian Mike Krieger, both graduated from Stanford University, in California. In the beginning, the application was developed for iOS systems (Apple). In 2012 when it was made available for the Android operating system platform (Google) it had 1 million downloads through the virtual store (Google Play). After the app was made available for the Android operating system, Facebook owner Mark Zuckerberg announced the purchase of the company that had developed Instagram for approximately one billion dollars.

Instagram has become not only a tool for communication but also sale. In a way, it has become a necessary tool for sales and dissemination and marketing actions. According to Kotler (2017), marketing has undergone four evolutions, the last of which (4.0) is the one in which it is currently located. In it, we talk about the big changes from product-centred marketing (1.0) to consumer-oriented marketing (2.0) and, finally, to human-centred marketing (3.0) ".In his latest book "Marketing 4.0" he works to update marketing concerning new technologies and mainly how brands interact with their customers online and offline:

In the digital economy, digital interaction alone is not enough. In fact, in an increasingly connected world, offline touch represents a strong differentiation. Marketing 4.0 also mixes style with substance. Although brands must become more flexible and adaptable because of the rapid changes in technological trends, having an authentic personality is more important than ever (KOTLER 2017, p. 63).

Therefore, we are at this stage of marketing where the machine-to-machine connection and new technologies are providing new tools for new communication strategies to boost the connection between brand and consumer.

An artist who in a way has been exploring Instagram and marketing issues is called The Weeknd, creating characters when he is working on new projects. This study will address his latest creation, from the album entitled "After Hours", on the social network Instagram, and in turn within cyberspace and cyberculture. What will be studied is your Instagram, more precisely your photos and videos, then a content analysis and semiotics.

### CYBERCULTURE AND CYBERSPACE

According to Lemos (1999, p.11), cyberculture is the modality that is also responsible in a certain way in the sociocultural field and "arises from the symbiotic relationship between society, culture and the new microelectronic based technologies that emerged with the convergence of telecommunications, with computer science in the 1970s". Lemos (2008) still mentions three laws:

1. Release of the issuing pole: for the author, this is due to the new ways of relating socially, when related to the way information is made available and also in opinion and how it moves since chats and other means of communication disseminate information falls under this law and this definition: "The release of the emission pole is present in the new forms of social relationship, information availability and the opinion and social movement of the network. Thus chats, weblogs, websites, lists, new media modes, e-mails, virtual communities, among other social forms can be understood by this law (p.20).
2. Generalized connection: this law refers to the issue of collaboration on the part of people in the contents: "In this era of connection, time is reduced to real-time and space becomes non-space, even if for that reason the importance the real space and the chronological time that passes, have their importance renewed"(LEMOS, 2008, p. 20).
3. Reconfiguration of the communicational landscape of the cultural industry: this law is related to the idea of changing social foundations and communication practices. "In various expressions of cyberculture, it is a question of reconfiguring practices, media modalities, spaces, without replacing their respective antecedents" (LEMOS, 2008, p. 18).

Thus, according to Champagnatte, D. M. O and Cavalcanti, M. A. P (2015, p. 5), cyberculture is the configuration where the mass and post-mass processes alternate both inside and outside the network. The processes are coexisting, therefore, the new model can allow this reconfiguration of the means of production and dissemination of information, as well as the new ways of relating to others that may arise (Lemos, 2008).

After a brief introduction to cyberculture and its laws, it is necessary to speak about cyberspace which is a word that was created by the writer William Gibson. According to Lemos (2008) the word cyberspace created by Gibson is a non-physical territorial space that is composed of computer network connections, where information is shared in different ways where it circulates:

Gibsonian cyberspace is a "consensual hallucination". The Matrix, as Gibson calls it, is the mother, the womb of post-industrial civilization where cybernauts will penetrate. It will be populated by the most diverse tribes, where cyberspace cowboys circulate in search of information. Gibson's Matrix, like all of his work, makes a caricature of the real, of everyday life (LEMOS, 2008, p.127).

In Pierre Lévy's works, he sought to give a concept to cyberspace, which arises from the worldwide interconnection of computers - the network - "not only about the material infrastructure, but also in relation to the ocean of information that digital communication holds, as well as humans who navigate, inhabit and feed on this universe"(LEVY, 1999, p. 17). However, according to the author, space also provides a basis for what Levy (2003, p.28) calls collective consciousness, an intelligence distributed everywhere, constantly valued, coordinated in real-time, which results from an effective mobilization of skills ". For the authors, Champagnatte, D. M. O and Cavalcanti, M. A. P (2015, p. 6) interpret this intelligence as space where individuals recognize their abilities so that they can organize and use them for a collective good.

### SOCIAL NETWORKS AND INSTAGRAM

These spaces that are analyzed by the authors of cyberculture and cyberspace are social networks. Social networks are responsible for social interaction. According to Recuero (2015) these interactions seek to develop connections and communication and then build social bonds. Social networks allow a selection of the content that its users can access, an example of this selection and this interaction in users are comments. For Recuero (2005) people interact with each other through comments and at the same time raises a question that is every comment would be a new connection.

A tool that has been used today by a large part of the world population is Instagram, creating groups and also creating spaces for discussions, in various social spheres. Today, the platform allows its users to use it in different ways, according to Othon, Coelho (2016), due to the tools it provides:

1. "Instagrammer" (as the most active supporter of the network is called) can publish photos and videos, taken at the time of publication, or retrieved from the device's library;
2. The images can be submitted to 40 filters and 13 adjustment tools (such as brightness, contrast, sharpness and saturation), while the videos have 40 filters and cut, frame and audio editions with resources;
3. It is possible to tag other users in these publications and share them instantly on Facebook, Tumblr, Foursquare, Twitter and Flickr, as well as insert targeting tags in the captions and comments (the marked people also receive notifications of this type of action);

4. When activating the device's geolocation services, the user can also publish the location where he is and add the publication to a photo map;
5. The user has a series of choices related to privacy: he can keep his profile public, allowing anyone to see his publications and follow him, or privately, authorizing followers; as well as allowing followers to have access to the publications in which they are marked;
6. Once on the network, the user can like and comment (actions that demarcate the social character of the platform) the publications of other users and send private messages to them, in private chats or groups;
7. Maintaining and switching more than one account (personal profile and professional profile, for example);
8. Search for users and publications linked to certain hash tag or certain places through the search tool.

At this moment Instagram has more filters and more tools, such as IGTV which is a resource that is made available to people who have more than 1,000 followers, this tool allows the user to create content with more time than a common post. Another resource is that the user can identify what type of content he is producing, such as digital influencer, health, fashion and other options.

Digital has also influenced marketing, as well as other fields of communication that have been affected by the internet. Traditional marketing is different from digital marketing. The main difference is in the name itself: it uses different strategies and its applications are in the digital field. According to Gabriel (2010, p.104), the term digital marketing designates "the marketing that uses strategies in some digital component in the marketing mix - product, price, place or promotion". The author also points out that many strategies outlined are based on consumer behaviour. Through behaviour, strategies are defined as activities that will be carried out and also on any platforms they will be applied. According to Torres (2009, p.72 - 79), digital marketing is composed of seven strategic actions:

1. Content marketing: the content published on a website, aiming to make it visible on the internet and attractive to the consumer.
2. Marketing on social media: social media are sites on the internet built to allow the collaborative creation of content, social interaction and the sharing of information in different formats;
3. Viral marketing: sending a message on the internet from one person to another, in order to transmit a marketing message;
4. E-mail marketing: companies adapted the old direct mail to e-mail, forming this type of strategic action, seeking to ensure that the message reaches the consumer;
5. Online advertising: started from banners published on websites, currently, the banners have gained animation, interaction, sound, video and other resources.
6. Online research: research is the basis of marketing activity, and online research can be supported by computer programs, such as spiders.
7. Monitoring: it is the strategic action that integrates the results of all other strategic, tactical and operational actions.

Six strategies allow their execution in the online scope, but it is necessary to monitor them soon if there is a justification

for the seventh strategy of digital marketing. But in addition to the previously mentioned strategies, digital marketing has its methodology, which is called 8P. Vaz (2011) describes them individually, as:

1. 1st P, for research: involves the question of the company looking for facts about its consumer, such as habits, preferences, etc;
2. 2nd P, for planning: in this phase the information gathered from the consumer research is used for the elaboration of marketing strategies, such as, for example, the creation of websites;
3. 3rd P, of production: involves the execution of the actions elaborated in the planning;
4. 4th P, for publication: involves the content that will be made available by the company to the consumer in the market;
5. 5th P, for promotion: it is related to the creation of campaigns, promotional hot sites, among others;
6. 6th P, for propagation: it is related to work involving social networks, forums, blogs that allow the propagation of the company's content from consumer to consumer;
7. 7<sup>o</sup> P, of personification: involves the relationship with the customer, using e-mail and social networks to retain the customer and consequently disclose the company's promotions;
8. 8<sup>o</sup> P, for precision: it consists in measuring the results obtained through the use of digital marketing by the company.

Therefore, in order to be able to implement digital marketing in an organization and or company, it is necessary to use the 8Ps methodology, so that there is a return in communication with its consumers and, in this way, to attract them. And then the use of the seven strategies for which there is a complementation of both parts.

#### METHODOLOGY

To analyze the artist's social network, content analysis was chosen, since what will be analyzed are the photographs he made available on his partner networks. Since Moraes (1999) says that for content analysis to be built, the raw material can start from verbal and non-verbal communication, so it is up to the researcher to process this information, and also to facilitate the understanding and interpretation of the analysis.

The raw material for content analysis can consist of any material from verbal or non-verbal communication, such as letters, posters, newspapers, magazines, reports, books, autobiographical reports, records, recordings, interviews, personal diaries, movies, photos, videos, etc. However, data from these diverse sources reach the researcher in a raw state, and then need to be processed in order to facilitate the understanding, interpretation and inference work that content analysis aspires to (p.3).

According to Moraes (1999), the process takes place in five stages: preparation of information. For this article, six photographs were selected, referring to the beginning of this new moment by the artist, three of which were related to the release of his first single and three related to the last three songs released by him, thus closing a cycle of the artist. Transformation of content into units: during this monitoring



period, six photographs were selected to be analyzed and which will be fundamental for the analysis to take place. The categorization occurs through the photos with the highest number of "likes" and the highest number of comments so far (it is worth remembering that these numbers may increase and / or decrease). Description: for this stage, a synthesis of what was analyzed of the images was made. Interpretation: in this last step, the aim is to indicate to the reader what has been deduced through the analysis and what has been interpreted more completely and profoundly.

This last step meets the other half of the analysis, semiotics. According to Silveira (2004), semiotics had the same study objective as languages, but whoever takes charge of carrying this communication are the symbols of this form, creating a basis for non-verbal analysis. The author still defines semiotics as: "Semiotics is understood, in general terms, as the science that studies signs, which are signs that represent something, which can be perceptible or just imaginable objects". And second, Santaella defines semiotics as: "the science that has as its object of investigation all possible languages, that is, that aims at examining the ways of constituting all phenomena of production of meaning and meaning or, simply, it is the science of signs (1983, p. 13)." Pierce (1940) mentions that the sign goes through three stages until the human mind can interpret it or not: the object, in this case, is the representation of the sign, and the interpretant constructs the mental effect that is induced by the sign. Whoever interprets it ends up creating, generating other signs. And according to Pierce, the meaning of a sign would be another sign by which it could be translated.

Lúcia Santaella is based on her studies Pierce, mentioned above, and she ended up developing a theory based on Pierce semiotics, more precisely on the categories of Pierce signs, which would be applied semiotics.

For Santaella (2012), semiotics applied to the fundamentals of advertising seeks to identify the potential when referring to the levels of communication, whether they are a product, image and or piece. For the author, the theory excels in image analysis. What is sought in the analyzes is to identify what is the effect that the product, image and or piece produces on its receiver, from the first impression until its final judgment.

According to the author, semiotics has three points of view that are fundamental and enable the development of methodological processes, according to Carlan and Neto (2019, p.6):

1. Qualitative-iconic: In this point of view, all qualitative aspects of the respective image are analyzed, being guided by the first impression and the relations of similarity comparison. These qualities can be material or abstract: colours, lines, dimension, texture, shape, luminosity, delicacy, strength, lightness, fragility etc.
2. Singular-indicative: The image is analyzed here, understanding it in a certain space and time, searching for its identity and destiny. That is, the context to which it belongs and the functions it performs as well as its purpose: environment, origin, target audience, context, utility, etc.
3. Conventional-symbolic: The image is analyzed in type, at the levels of design, representation and consumer:

patterns of design and taste, cultural levels that fulfil, what it represents, culturally added values, cultural status, construction and contribution for the consolidation of the brand, consumer it aims to serve, meanings of the product values for the consumer, etc.

#### INSTAGRAM ANALYSIS OF THE ARTIST THE WEEKND

Firstly, before starting the analysis on the social network Instagram of the artist The Weeknd (<https://www.instagram.com/theweeknd/?hl=pt>), it is necessary to talk about him. The Weeknd (Abel Tesfaye) born in Toronto, Canada, started to promote his music through streaming services. When the artist made his debut with the album "Trilogy" Troussé from Uncut magazine in London, he highlighted his productions and the musical elements that he used in his works. Abel Tesfaye has established himself as the Tricky of modern R&R, seasoning his jelly of filigree and falsetto, samples of post-punk and indie rock (Siouxside, Beach House), post-party with dead eyes, dubstep decay, wooziness and Vicestyle art direction (2013, p.83).

It is necessary to talk about this first project because it was where it came from or where this "me" of the artist was introduced in his first character. In an interview that The Weeknd gave to the American magazine "King Kong magazine" he said that "all of his songs are a continuation of other songs" (<https://www.instagram.com/p/B9jy4MKnnZm/>), what this shows us is that these characters are connected to him and there is a reality behind them. The semiotic analysis below seeks to identify the "I" in the images that he used on his social network more precisely on his Instagram. The images will be analyzed in a group way, with the first three referring to the first three posts and in a second moment three other photographs related to the last photographs that are related to the songs present in his album:

1. Qualitative-iconic: The artist's face wearing glasses occupying the entire photo; The photograph is in black and white with the image at high speed and it is also moving, which ends up creating this "blur" effect; The photography's highlight is the aggressive movement, which leads to an unnecessary reading of the artist's face. The frame is larger, showing more than the previous photo; The same is in black and white, in this image it is possible to identify more characteristics of the artist such as, big hair and his clothes; The wall at the bottom of it leads us to realize that it is in an open place due to the depth of the image; the highlight of this image would be the high-speed effect on the artist's face, the interpretation that is made of the face is that his soul is coming out or even that there is another "me" inside the artist and that this other "me" is in conflict with it. The artist's face centred on the image wearing glasses and smiling; With strong colours; The effect produced by the camera leads us to look directly at the artist's highlighted face; The elements around you are just lights; The highlight for photography is the use of text at the bottom of the photograph to indicate who the artist is and the name of his music.

2. Singular-indicative: It is identified that the artist is in a movement with his head, inducing a non-perspective of what happens in the background; the photograph does not reveal much about it. The artist shows himself to be in an

environment of power and of people who have great monetary values; The same is found in a mysterious place; What photography communicates to its audience is that it hears a change in it, a physical change, which made its fans apprehensive and confused since nothing about this character was previously disclosed, thus maintaining its characteristic of mystery. The lighting in the background of the photograph suggests a place of power, party and the like; again the artist is the main figure; The composition of the image directs your eyes to the centre where The Weeknd is located; It shows that he is happy with stasis.

3. Conventional-symbolic: What is understood from the image is that the artist produced this image on purpose, and this is a characteristic of the mystery and even the ambiguity; In a way, because it is the first image of the artist in his new project, it is identified that he wants his audience to be apprehensive, confusing them. What is understood from the image is that it is a sequence of the previous one, the movement on the face of the image is equivalent to its movement in this current one; What we notice is that the image followed the pattern of the previous one, thus giving a perspective that your audience will find in your album a different "me" in relation to their previous projects, in this image it is also impossible to discover who this new one is. What you understand from this photograph is that the artist is in a place where he is happy; The lights in the background of the photo give a feeling of vertigo as they seem to be spinning; It is possible to identify that the artist has his eyes closed which ends up giving a sense of real moment due to his laughter a genuine moment of it; The Weeknd is the centre with all the characteristics of the image leading to the centre; Unlike the previous images, it is possible to identify that this moment is related to the release of his first song from the album, his name and title of the song are in the bottom corner of the photo.

4. Qualitative-iconic: the artist is in a game environment in the background if he finds a slot machine; His face is highlighted, he is wearing glasses and he is wearing a gemstone earring; Her face is lit with a subtle blue light just to give a picture of melancholy and loneliness; It is possible to identify that the artist is wearing dark clothes. The Weeknd is on his back using a black toothpick; Its silhouette is highlighted in the background if it identifies itself again it is possible to identify the slot machine but now there are two; It is possible to identify delicate lighting near your neck with red light and on the other side blue lighting. The artist is on a dark background, with only a spot of light on it; It is possible to identify that he is wearing black-framed glasses with red lenses; The same is looking down; It is possible to identify that he is also using a black toothpick.

5. Singular-indicative: The Weeknd is located in a gaming location, which seems to be an environment only focused on this type of function, betting and the like; The image has an identification of which music the photograph represents, the text is in red; The positioning of your head gives an air of thought. The artist is in a place that again refers to the question of games; It has red text that indicates which song this photo represents; His position in the photograph shows that he is alone and by the position of his head it shows that he is looking forward, going towards something. The Weeknd is in a place of mystery with a black background; His positioning shows that he is pensive with his head down, the

lighting shows a little of his facial expression which leads to his analogy; The name of the song is also indicated in the photograph in red and the photograph represents the same.

6. Conventional-symbolic: The characteristics of the image and the environment that surrounds the artist show a mystery, the environment also causes a certain impression of loneliness, since the place is an environment where many people attend, but the same is alone; The phrase in red helps to contextualize it giving more meaning to the photograph. what can be understood from this photograph, from this moment, is that the artist finds himself alone, looking down, walking in a straight line without a destination; Again, the scene in which it is located should have more people due to the location, but again the artist is alone; The red text helps to contextualize the photograph. The interpretation that is made of this photograph is that it is the end, the text in red suggests this since what is written is "final song to sleep"; His position also influences this analysis as if he were looking down, looking at something or someone.

### CONCLUSION OF THE ANALYSIS

The analysis process made it possible to identify not only features visible in the images but also deep aspects such as the elements present such as angles, lighting, positioning, texts and texture of the photographs. But it must be emphasized that each image has a representation and therefore each photograph has a symbol.

In a statement that the artist himself gave about the character he lives in this project, The Weeknd says that the character he lives in the videos is committed and that he ends up being attracted by the sins that Vegas has. The artist also points out that this is one of the best ways to introduce this new chapter that he had lived through.

The artist's commitment to his art is symbolic. The Weeknd grew up to be a mysterious figure always in control of his actions, but later it is possible to identify a vulnerability that was not previously identified in his previous projects. As the artist himself said earlier: "A great introduction to the next chapter of my life".

### CONCLUSION

The conclusion of the study from the perspective of Cyberspace and Cyberculture is that the artist corresponds to the three laws previously mentioned: the way the artist makes his photographs available and the way they move within the space of the social network Instagram, they end up helping in the dissemination of information and image we can soon define it as the release of the issue. When their fans interact with the images, they end up collaborating with the time issue, because they interact with them regardless of time, this refers to the question of generalized connection. It can be concluded that the way he uses his space and his posts he ends up reconfiguring the communication practices, is based on images and short ceilings, this refers to the reconfiguration of the communicational landscape of the cultural industry. Through cyberspace he got recognition from his audience, which organizes to wait for a new post and or new content by The Weeknd, so he managed to develop a collective conscience with his fans.

When it comes to personal marketing, in the case of digital marketing, it uses six out of seven existing ones. The one that

ends up not being used is E-mail marketing since the artist uses a platform that bases his communication only with images, there is no need for him to use it. As for the methodology, it uses the 8Ps, and the last 8<sup>o</sup> P, of precision, disrespect to the artist and his digital marketing team, since it refers to the results he obtained when using the strategies and methodologies.

The analysis of his images allowed us to identify that the question raised had an answer, and the answer was “yes” since the artist in interviews affirmed that his songs at some point carry veracity about him and real events and also that your character is a fragment of your persona. According to Gofman (2002, p. 25) “In one of the extremes, we find the actor who may be fully aware of his number. You can honestly be sure that the impression of reality you stage is the real reality”.

Soon the artist is committed to his art that believes that what he is singing is real and in a way it is, as Gofman (2002, p.25) wrote: “When your audience is also convinced”. Right through its performance and interpretation, it ends up making your audience interpret it in the same way.

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