

Broadening dissemination through media

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Abstract

It's a huge challenge to promote a wide dissemination of our statistics in Brazil, more specifically in the state of Sao Paulo, considering some of these aspects: our state has 645 cities and a population of 46 million of people and 248,000 Km²; all the dissemination is made by the IBGE employees, and the local team is composed by six people; annually we disseminate more than 80 releases, including indicators and structural surveys. Additionally, we are located in the biggest city of America Latina, with a high demand for social and economic data.

One successful strategy that we developed in the last years is training newly graduated journalists from the major communication vehicles of Brazil, like "Estado de Sao Paulo" e "Globo". Our primary goal was to present a view of what we produce, converting these journalists in well-trained information users and disseminators, considering that they are opinion formers and have the capacity to spread our data. But, beyond this objective, we were able to be seen as assets to these journalists. As a result of these experiences, we helped them to incorporate our official statistics in a lot of published articles, multimedia material and established a long-term relationship with them.

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It's a huge challenge to promote a wide dissemination of official statistics in Brazil, more specifically in the state of Sao Paulo, considering some of these aspects: our state has 645 cities and a population of 46 million of people and 248,000 Km² (almost the same extension of Unit Kingdom); all the dissemination is made by the IBGE employees, and the local team is composed by six people; annually we disseminate more than 80 releases, including indicators and structural surveys. Additionally, we are located in the biggest city of America Latina, with a high demand for social and economic data.

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Key Words: statistical dissemination; media partnership; public communication

I. Context

The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) is an entity part of the federal administration, created in 1937, that nowadays operates under the Ministry of Economy. The Institute mission is "Portray Brazil with the necessary information to the knowledge of its reality and the exercise of citizenship." This public statement reveals two important aspects: the first one is that we are a state organism and must produce reliable and relevant official statistics, so the governments can use them to rule the territory and the population. The second one is that we must assure that this information effectively reaches not only the government, but the general population, so they can fulfill their role in society and exercise their rights as citizens, and this only can be done by having a good "public communication", what we comprehend as a "process and communication environment (information and dialogue) involving the State, government, companies, parties and civil society in the search for training and meeting the collective will" (DUARTE, 2006).

In order to address this mission and provide official data about the country and the resident population, IBGE implemented a national and capillary network of survey and dissemination, composed by:

- 04 Boards (Research, Geosciences, Administrative, Computing)
- 01 Coordination of Documentation and Dissemination
- 27 Sectors of Documentation and Dissemination
- 27 State Units
- 570 Agencies

It's a huge challenge collecting data and disseminating our statistics in a country with 213 million of people and 8.5 million km². Our experts on dissemination and communication ask themselves routinely how to be able to talk to our population despite all inequalities - social and economic - and regional differences that exists in Brazil. At the same time, we must spread the information, and reach many people as possible, and we must address specific groups (like students, third sector, government, and media) and individual needs too. In a country that is still struggling with structural problems like poverty, access to education and high rates of unemployment, is mandatory to focus on the democratic access and use of information.

Trying to answer this question we developed some strategies and projects in the last few years, and one path that we can consider successful and consolidated is broadening dissemination through media. Here we are presenting the experience developed by the IBGE's unit located in the state of Sao Paulo.

Over time our relationship with media and journalists consisted basically in disseminating releases and responding their demands for information and interviews. But eventually some journalists signed up to attend our training programs and these isolated experiences evidenced that there was a demand from this public, and that should be evaluated, because they are not only final users of our data, but distributors too, amplifying the range of audience.

Beyond the possibility of expanding our audience by quantity, we could improve the quality of this communication. That's because we had the statistics, but only journalists and media could build stories around them, daily, delivering intelligible information to an immense audience

that could know and/or recognize our people and territory. And to do so we had only to build a better bridge between us and media.

II. Assumptions about the relationship between IBGE and media

- Our Institute needs media to do a better public communication. We don't have advertising budget and, as an official information producer, we need media support in all phases of our work and in a lot of ways: to communicate about surveys, to convince people about the importance of participating on surveys, to disseminate our statistics and even to enhance our credibility.
- Journalists (specially the newly graduated ones) usually don't know all data that IBGE produces in different areas (social, economic, and geographic) and, in general, we are still recognized by the Census.
- Journalists would like to understand statistical data in an easy and simple way.
- Journalists can be interested in exploring better our data by themselves because it would give them a competitive advantage as professionals.
- In times fake news are everywhere, a good strategy is to disseminate our statistical data through journalists because they are opinion formers and have credibility to inform the population. Indirectly, they endorse our work and give us credibility too.
- Journalists and media have a great interest in obtaining official data from primary sources.
- Media would like to establish an institutional partnership with IBGE to capacitate their journalists (at no cost), providing them with tools and contacts to do a better job.
- Media exercise their essential role in citizenship by providing democratic access to official statistics. As evidenced by Fonseca (2011, p.2)¹, *"media, by participating in public sphere as a "service provider" or social communication entities, have an essential function in democracies: inform about the events, bringing a variety of data to people that, otherwise, wouldn't be able to know other realities beyond that experienced by them or by close people."*

¹ A mídia, ao participar da esfera pública como "prestadora de serviços", isto é, como entidades de "comunicação social", teria uma função imprescindível nas democracias: informar sobre os acontecimentos levando às pessoas uma gama de dados que, sem esse serviço, não teriam condição de conhecer outras realidades que não as vivenciadas ou relatadas por pessoas próximas

III. Actions

We developed a training program for journalists based in a practical approach, focusing on what would be important to facilitate the use of our statistics in their articles focusing in broadening (quantitatively and qualitatively) our audience. This program has been offered to mass media like TV Globo, O Estado de São Paulo and Folha de São Paulo.

The three pillars of our training program are:

1. **KNOW.** We present our institute, what we produce and the institutional divisions and contacts that can help them.
2. **EXPLORE.** We teach them how to use our database and find data. We show them how to investigate questions and discover leads by navigating at our website, exploring releases, databases, library and even survey forms. At this stage we apply an exercise list exploring real examples from media news, like:

“What were the inflation villains past month?”

“Would be true that only about 50% of population contributes to social security?”

“The retired are returning to the job market?”

“Talking about gender equality, what is the distribution of hours spent with house tasks between men and women?”

3. **TELL A STORY.** At this point the journalists understands that a number isolated doesn't say much, but they can analyse this data through time and space and contextualize, transforming it in something interesting and meaningful to the audience, so it will reverberate much more.

In our most consolidated experience - at “O Estado de São Paulo” newspaper - we've been participating of their two annual training programs for recently graduated journalists since 2012. These traditional programs recruit people from all over the country and our classes are presented in a single day, but, at the end of 3 months, the journalists develop a special multimedia about a specific theme, and generally they use our data to write some articles. This final assessment makes the whole experience much more productive and allows us to guide them in a real practice.

IV. Results and lessons

- We trained more than 500 journalists
- We strengthened our partnership with media, assuring contact with new generations of journalists and increased our mailing list.
- This experience reinforces our role as a state organism, independent, that invests in public communication and facilitates - to media and general audience - access to our primary data.

- Even though this experience involved mass media (and a bigger audience), the same model can be applied to small and alternative media, like communitarian or segmented newspapers, what would bring the benefit of better reaching minorities and groups in social disadvantage. We consider that, in a long term, this experience has potential to bring achievements much more significant to Brazilian scenario.

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