

## The media apparatus as objectivation practice of the subject “businesswoman” / *O dispositivo mídia como prática de objetivação do sujeito mulher empresária*

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### ABSTRACT

The present work aims at understanding how the media apparatus, particularly the social columnism media circulating in the city of São Luís-MA, produces objectivation practices about the subject “woman”. Therefore, we analyzed two journalistic articles taken from Deluxe magazine issue 37, of the year of 2016, which pays homage to women entrepreneurs and summarizes the main purpose of the magazine, which is to value the entrepreneurial and independent woman, showing her as an example to be admired and followed. Our work is based on Foucault's reflections on the processes of subjectivity construction, in which the forms of constitution of the modern subject are studied through mechanisms of objectification and subjectivation, which tend to make man politically and economically useful, and that refers to the processes that make man a subject bound to an identity attributed as belonging to him. We also consider the idea of apparatus, which constitutes a space of knowledge production crossed by mechanisms of power and utterance strategies, constructing discourses and enabling their circulation as truths.

**KEYWORDS:** Apparatus; Businesswoman; Objectivation; Subjectivation.

### RESUMO

O presente trabalho busca compreender de que modo o dispositivo mídia, de modo particular a mídia de colonismo social em circulação na cidade de São Luís-MA produz práticas de objetivação sobre o sujeito mulher. Para tanto, analisamos duas matérias retiradas da edição nº 37, ano 2016, da revista Deluxe, que homenageia mulheres empresárias e sintetiza a proposta central da revista, que é valorizar a mulher empreendedora e independente, mostrando-a como exemplo a ser admirado e seguido. Ancoramo-nos nas reflexões de Foucault sobre os processos de construção da subjetividade, em que são estudadas as formas de constituição do sujeito moderno, por meio de

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mecanismos de objetivação e de subjetivação, que tendem a tornar o homem dócil politicamente e útil economicamente e que se referem aos processos que fazem do homem um sujeito preso a uma identidade atribuída como lhe pertencendo. Consideramos, ainda, a ideia de dispositivo, que constitui um espaço de produção de saberes atravessado por mecanismos de poder e de estratégias de enunciação, construindo discursos e possibilitando sua circulação como verdades.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Dispositivo; Mulher empresária; Objetivação; Subjetivação.

## 1 Introduction

This scientific paper aims to verify how the media *apparatus* produces practices of objectification of the subject *woman*, based on the articulation between different fields of knowledge. Our analyzes reflect upon journalistic articles published in a women's press segment focused on social columnism, the *Deluxe* magazine, which circulates in the city of São Luís, Maranhão, and that presents, in its discursive practice a regularity about the entrepreneurial and successful woman. For this academic paper, which has its origins in a master's dissertation, we analyze two journalistic articles from issue number 37, published in *Deluxe* in 2016.

Throughout history, women and the role they play in society have been through constant transformations. The image associated with domestic life and family, predominant until the 1960s, gradually began to give place to other discursivizations, as women advance in their struggle for equal rights and occupation of spaces. Their performance in the labor market through entrepreneurship and the boost of the female leadership are examples of these new configurations and, therefore, new ways of objectifying this subject through different *apparatus*, such as the media.

In the magazine issue that was analyzed, the main journalistic piece of the issue features eight profiles of women who receive recognition for their professional performance. We chose, for this academic paper, only two journalistic pieces because we consider them to be representative of our analysis, considering that there is a discursive regularity between them.

We based our analyses on the works of Michel Foucault (2004), French philosopher, who proposes to create a history of the formation of the subject, that is, of the different ways by which human beings become subjects while effects of a constitution.

Foucault (2004) understands that historically situated practices determine the modes of constitution or subjectivation of the subject. These practices, according to him, comprise the whole of what was “done” and what was “said” at a given time, thus constituting discursive and non-discursive practices.

Foucault seeks to understand the discourses that mold the subject as an object of possible knowledge and “the processes of subjectivation and objectification that make the subject able to become, in the capacity of a subject, an object of knowledge.”<sup>1</sup> (FOUCAULT, 2004, p. 236). Objectivation and subjectivation complement each other and establish a relationship with each other through truth games. The processes of subjectivation consist in the way humans understand themselves as the subjects of knowledge, and the processes of objectivation refer to the way the subject becomes an object for the knowledge. Foucault also investigates the modes of formation of the subject by themselves through the technologies of the self.

As a historian of discontinuities, this philosopher conceives subjects as the result of practices that are architected in different historical formations according to power relations. The construction of the subject, in the discontinuity of history, directs our look, in this paper, in order to analyze the modes of objectification of the subject *businesswoman*. Therefore, we will begin our discussions by presenting the subject as an object of knowledge.

## 2. The subject as an object of knowledge

By proposing a historical viewpoint on subjectivity, Foucault intends to show that the subject does not exist as a universal and transcendental entity. He performs such an approach in the so-called archaeological, genealogical, and ethical genealogy phases. It is worth mentioning that these “phases” constitute a didactic way of studying Michel Foucault.

In the archaeological phase, he analyzes the subject as an object of knowledge. In this sense, he investigates the knowledge that yearns for the modes of investigation that try to reach the status of science, what occurs through the objectification of the speaking subject in Linguistics, the productive subject in Economics and the living subject in Biology. In this phase we can highlight the following works: *A História da Loucura na Idade Clássica* (2014), *O Nascimento da Clínica* (2006), *As Palavras e as Coisas* (1999), and *A Arqueologia do Saber* (2008). In *A Arqueologia do Saber* (2008), Foucault aims to answer some questions made in his previous books.

The second mode of objectification of the subject, “divisive practices,” occurs in the genealogical phase. Such practices objectify the subject, dividing them in their interior and in relation to the other: the mad man and the healthy man; the good man and the delinquent. They

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<sup>1</sup> Translated by this author.

constitute the subject as an object of power. We highlight the works *Vigiar e Punir: Nascimento da prisão* (2013) and *A História da sexualidade I: a vontade de saber* (1999a).

The phase of “ethics and aesthetics of the self” or genealogy of ethics, the third mode of constitution of the subject, is characterized by the analysis of the ways by which the human being becomes a subject, that is, the modes of constitution of the subject by their own self. In this phase, Foucault studies how the individual becomes subject of a sexuality. From this phase, we emphasize the works *História da sexualidade II: o uso dos prazeres* (1998) and *História da sexualidade III: o cuidado de si* (2005).

According to Michel Foucault, it is possible to investigate multiple areas about the construction of subjectivity. This is how his look on the constitution of the subject goes through the question of the episteme, after through the apparatus and then through the practices of the self. What he called episteme in archeology, which used to be discursive formation, is now called apparatus. Despite the similarity between the two terms, the term apparatus has a more broad sense than discursive formation.

As highlighted by Revel (2005, p. 39),

The term “apparatus” appeared in Foucault in the 1970s and initially designated the material operators of the power, that is, the techniques, strategies, and forms of subjection used by power. From the moment that Foucault's analysis focuses on the question of power, the philosopher insists on the importance of dealing not with “the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the state apparatus, the accompanying ideologies,” but of the mechanisms of domination: it is this methodological choice that engenders the use of the notion of “apparatus.” They are, by definition, heterogeneous in nature: they are both discourses and practices, institutions and moving tactics: this is how Foucault comes to say, in accordance with the case, of “power apparatus,” “knowledge apparatus,” “disciplinary apparatus,” “sexuality apparatus” and so on. (REVEL, 2005, p. 39) (translated by this author).

This understanding of the term apparatus will expanded to:

A decidedly heterogeneous ensemble that encompasses discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, philanthropic propositions. In short, the *said* and the *unsaid* are the elements of the apparatus. The apparatus is the network that can be established between these elements (FOUCAULT, 2000, p. 244). (translated by this author).

Dreyfus and Rabinow's (1995, p. 255) understanding of the concept of apparatus in Foucault points to “the practices themselves, acting as an apparatus, a tool, constituting subjects

and organizing them.” For Agamben (2005, p. 40), the apparatus, in Foucault's perspective, concerns something capable of guiding, modeling, and controlling the conduct of individuals, as well as their discourses. The apparatuses define the actions of the subject and their relation to reality.

From this perspective, we understand the media as an apparatus that produces knowledge and subjects, organizing them, defining their actions based on specific ways of communicating, for example, the subject *woman entrepreneur*.

### 3. The constitution of the subject *businesswoman* in *Deluxe* magazine

In the process of constitution of the subject *woman*, the media apparatus establishes with different fields of knowledge an effective objectification of this subject, which conducts their behavior.

It is essential to understand that

Knowledge, for Foucault, is not merely a science per se. Science would be part of knowledge, but it would not be summed up by that. On the contrary, knowledge, such as knowledge about madness, for example (object of his first archeology) has utterances of various categories: legal, scientific, philosophical, religious, and so on. Foucault's method does not separate each of these types of utterances; On the contrary, he places them side by side, to make emerge in their pure positivity the structure of their discursive possibility [...] (SOUZA; FURLAN, 2018. p. 326) (translated by this author).

In the two subjects we analyzed, it is possible to notice media practices that speak to fields of knowledge such as health, aesthetics, philanthropy, among others. Such fields are placed side by side, and they do not exclude each other.

In the first article we analyzed, page 09 of *Deluxe* magazine, the journalistic piece presents the entrepreneur Andreia Ramada, the owner of a women's clothing store. Andreia is shown in a well-produced photo, dressed in elegant clothes and in a posture that conveys confidence.

Figure 1 – Andreia Ramada



SOURCE: Edition nº 37, *Deluxe* magazine, 2016, p. 09

A high-spirited, modern, up-to-date person who has never allowed herself to be in the “comfort zone.” Andreia Ramada was a federal civil servant, but her entrepreneurial side and taste for fashion were always present in her thoughts. She started with a multi-brand women's fashion store, that later became a franchise store of *TheLure*, a women's fashion label from São Paulo, aimed at the modern woman and present in several cities of Brazil, being a precursor of the brand throughout the Northeast of Brazil.

Professional and committed to doing what she likes as well as in touch with the news, Andreia saw in the local market a promising opportunity for her business. She has graduate diploma Tourism, a postgraduate diploma in Human Resources Planning and is now studying the last year of the Law course, she also works as a Fiscal Counselor in the Board of the Entrepreneurial Women Association of Maranhão (AME-MA).

An analysis made by the *TheLure* franchisee shows that the current economic downturn in the country is the perfect time for big entrepreneurs: “I don't see the economic downturn as a problem for my business, on the contrary, I see it as an opportunity for change and investment in that. No one is currently betting on new proposals and new projects. There will always be a consumer for your product, especially if you have an unique trait.”

With a routine of hard work, meetings, traveling, social and personal life, the dedication to health is not put aside. The businesswoman makes all the regular medical appointments, does not miss the visits to the nutrologist and does orthomolecular monitoring, in addition to practicing physical exercises. In her journey, the businesswoman always seeks to help others through campaigns, bazaars, and charity auctions with donations of pieces from her store. (DELUXE, 2016, No. 37, p. 09)<sup>2</sup>

They initially introduce the businesswoman as “a high-spirited, modern, up-to-date person who has never allowed herself to be in the ‘comfort zone’”. She is pushed to change as she owns an

<sup>2</sup> The use of the image of *Deluxe* magazine was allowed by its chief editor in a document signed and notarized by the authors of this article.

entrepreneurial personality whose venture is directed "at the modern woman." Andreia is a "precursor of the [*TheLure*] brand throughout the Northeast."

This entrepreneurial subject is objectified according to divisive practices, which divides themselves in their own interior as well as in relation to the other: they leave behind a comfortable condition for that of an entrepreneur, unique, in the fashion sector. As a professional, Andreia Almada sees in her country's economic recession an opportunity for big entrepreneurs to showcase their competence to overcome the crisis. The businesswoman shows that she knows how to take advantage of opportunities, one of the characteristics that make up the profile of an entrepreneur. (SEBRAE, 2012). This subject divides herself in relation to the other by considering their uniqueness: it is not let down by the economic crisis, facing it positively instead.

This entrepreneurial woman also stands out for the investments she makes in her academic education (She has a graduate diploma in Tourism, a Postgraduate degree in Human Resources Planning and is attending the last year of the Law course) and the position she occupies in the market (Fiscal Advisor at the Board of the Entrepreneurial Women Association of Maranhão).

It is also worth mentioning her balanced personality, as she can combine a routine of hard work, meetings, and traveling with her social and personal life. Health and body care reflect the actions of a subject who, by adhering to a subjectivation practice, is part of a health and beauty format produced by medical and aesthetic knowledge. The medical appointments, the visits to the nutrologist, the orthomolecular treatment, the physical exercises – they also compose the subject *businesswoman* presented at *Deluxe*.

It is also possible to observe a practice that inserts it into a norm. The woman entrepreneur subject is a prototype of success: her life is productive both professionally and personally.

It is also possible to verify, in the image that illustrates the referred article, the body of the businesswoman as a prominent object and identification of this subject. The woman who appears in the picture fits within an aesthetic pattern. She is thin, has fair skin, straight hair, is wearing makeup, jewelry, and elegant clothes. In this sense, it is possible to notice that the media discourse, which in this case is supported by *Deluxe* magazine, also reinforces the beauty/aesthetics as a mark of the entrepreneurial woman. This woman's appearance must conform to a model defined as "beautiful," her body must be shaped in a certain way, so that



outward looks validate the image of the subject *successful woman*. The body of this subject must communicate this to others, as it is marked by being able to consume certain goods and services.

As Foucault points out, the mechanisms of objectification and subjectivation, respectively, tend to make the individual, as a dynamic of power, economically useful and refer to the processes in our society that make the individual a subject bound to an identity attributed to them as theirs. In our analysis, it is possible to observe a power that establishes a truth status for the subject (being a businesswoman is...always something positive, valued). Then, the subject recognizes herself as an entrepreneur woman who is not afraid of challenges when it comes to entrepreneurship (“I do not see the economic recession as a problem for my business, on the contrary [...] There will always be consumers for your product, especially if you have an unique trait.”). We can also perceive this status of truth in the construction of the subject *entrepreneurial woman*, in the following text we analyzed, which presents businesswoman Danielle Braide.

Danielle Braide owns a beauty salon; she stands out for her entrepreneurial potential and professional excellence. She is also “a woman of strong personality, feminine, sophisticated, and with some well-lived years that made her a successful businesswoman.” The idea of a successful woman is reiterated for the construction of the subject *businesswoman*, supported by thematic axes such as work / academic education, family, body/beauty/health.

Image 2 – Danielle Braide



Source: Deluxe magazine, edition nº 37, 2016, p. 11

A woman of strong personality, feminine, sophisticated, and with some well-lived years that made her a successful businesswoman. With an



entrepreneurial vision and always attentive to the news of the fashion world, Danielle Santos Braide Maciel invested in the beauty market and became the owner of Dot Beauty Salon. Chandon Brasil sponsors only one Beauty Salon in Maranhão, and it is hers. It is among the 45 best salons in the country, according to Kérastase Brazil.

The businesswoman always wanted to be an independent woman and saw in her studies the best bridge to success. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from PUC - Campinas and a postgraduate degree in Marketing from ESPM, and she has also a degree in marketing from the University of California. In addition to managing the company, she is also Director of Marketing at the Association of Entrepreneurial Women in Maranhão (AME-MA).

The beauty market is highly attractive and promising. A survey by the São Paulo Aesthetics and Cosmetology Business Union estimated growth of 160% for the sector in 2015. However, even with such a safe horizon, the economic crisis made Danielle more demanding: "Together with my team, we have been able to overcome threats, diminish our weakness and improve our qualities."

Dedication, determination, and focus are the indispensable ingredients for success. "You must have a passion for what you do, and also have respect for your competitors," she says.

Caring for the mind and body is also necessary for this successful entrepreneur. Physical activities and health care abound. Also, these are her tips. "Run on the beach, apply sunscreen daily, drink coconut water, always smile and feel good about life, welcome the sunrise and the sunset, play sports, drink lots of water and eat healthy foods." During her leisure time, Danielle Braide Maciel likes to gather friends for a good chat accompanied by "oysters, crab, and Chandon".

The greatest inspiration of the businesswoman has always been her family, who have always supported her decisions. Her parents taught her to walk the right path with good examples and advice; her children and husband represent the foundation of her achievements; and, Francisca Lima Silva, who has helped and helps to care for her most prized possession, her children. Like her aunt, Marlene Braide Serafim, who, while she was alive, was present in her entrepreneurial life during the time she was studying in São Paulo, improving her studies to become a great entrepreneur in her segment. Success depends on the help and trust of special people. (DELUXE, 2016, No. 37, p. 11).

Deluxe magazine follows the same line of thought when introducing the two businesswomen. It starts by highlighting their qualities: women with strong personalities, feminine, sophisticated (as can be seen in the picture of Danielle Braide), with entrepreneurial vision, a successful businesswoman, and the first and only owner of the Dot Beauty Salon, the only one to be sponsored by Chandon Brazil in Maranhão.

Investing in studies as a bridge to success makes up the entrepreneurial woman's objectification practices: "[she is] an independent woman and saw in her studies the best bridge to success. She has a bachelor's degree in business administration from PUC - Campinas and a postgraduate degree in Marketing from ESPM, and she also has a degree in marketing from the

University of California”. In addition to this is the place that the businesswoman occupies as Marketing Director at the Association of Entrepreneurial Women in Maranhão (AME-MA).

With dedication, determination, and focus, Danielle overcomes the crisis to stay firm in the beauty market, while respecting competitors.

Mind and body care are practices of medical knowledge that give this entrepreneurial subject one more reason to succeed. Danielle runs on the beach, not neglecting the sunscreen; hydrates herself with coconut water and always tries to smile and be optimistic about life; she plays sports and eats healthy foods, and also meets friends often. In other words, she combines work with healthy living practices.

Another element of objectification of this successful entrepreneurial subject is the linking of the idea of personal fulfillment with family support. They present the ascending family as exemplary and the basis for their moral and professional formation, just as the descending family - husband and children - is shown as the “foundation of her achievements” and “most prized possession.”

We can consider that the media apparatus "operates in the constitution of subjects and subjectivities in contemporary society," producing "images, meanings, in short: pieces of knowledge that somehow address the 'education' of people, teaching them ways of being [...] ". (FISCHER, 2002, p. 153)<sup>3</sup>

The discursive production about the businesswoman makes the subject see and speak because it guides their conduct and their speech. Being a businesswoman is to get recognition for your qualities, such as being an entrepreneur, and it is also to recognize that success depends on investments in vocational training, which is related to an excellent business vision and to recognize that it is necessary to fit into a status of truth that makes them recognize the need to be beautiful, healthy, to take care of their bodies, to have a personal life, and to have family support. These practices are linked to the constitution of knowledge regarding this entrepreneurial subject that makes her politically docile and economically useful.

The processes of subjectivation / objectification are always historical and, in this sense, must be seen “in their wide diversity, in the modes of existence they produce, according to the time and the type of social formation being considered.” This implies that “modes of existence, learned in the most diverse dynamics of power and knowledge, are never fully compact and

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<sup>3</sup> Translated by this author.

definitive; on the contrary, there are always interstices, cracks, ethical and aesthetic possibilities not considered by the knowledge and powers at stake.”(FISCHER, 2002, p. 154)

Thus, our look at the media apparatus and the discursive production about the businesswoman, analyzed here, is presented as one of several possibilities of analysis about the subjectivation / objectification of this subject.

### Final considerations

The media apparatus, that has as it support Deluxe Magazine issue 37, released in 2016, is composed of practices that subjectify and objectify the subject *woman* and gathers a heterogeneous set that encompasses discourses, moral, philanthropic propositions. The businesswoman is one who has sound principles in the market, because she respects the competition; she is the one who dedicates her short time to social, philanthropic services; she is the one who has entrepreneurial skills to stay in the market, despite the crisis, therefore investing in her profession in order to have autonomy.

Also included are the discourses that structure this apparatus such as intellectual capacity and academic training, resourcefulness when it comes to balance in personal life, health care and dedication to the family, knowledge that is related to fields such as the sociopolitical, the religious, the medical and the aesthetical.

At the same time, there is a valorization of the physical appearance through photographs that illustrate the articles: the businesswoman is, above all, beautiful and vain. Her position as a successful woman is expressed in an appearance that generally fits the prevailing aesthetic standard.

The media builds a subject *woman* by proposing a multiplicity of rules and “practices of the self,” in accordance with the norms established by society about what it means to be a successful businesswoman. To succeed, this woman needs to maintain a balance between business and a healthy and Christian life, and of a dedicated mother and wife.

These elements, while making a “high-spirited, modern, up-to-date” woman evident, establish a relation with knowledge already crystallized in society about the relationship between woman and success: it is not enough to have an entrepreneurial spirit; it’s necessary to have beauty, elegance, intelligence, health, balanced personality, family support - undeniable values in society that legitimize knowledge about the subjects.

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