

## LOBBY AND INFLUENCE POWER FROM THE PUBLIC AGENTS<sup>i</sup>

LOBBY Y PODER DE INFLUENCIA DE LOS AGENTES PÚBLICOS

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### Abstract

The present research aims at exploring and deepening the knowledge about lobby and the influence power from pressure groups along to public agents in favour of the consumer. This qualitative work used a semi-structured interview as a data collecting tool. The results were processed and analysed through the content analysis technique, presented by analysis categories and subcategories. Based on the investigation, it was concluded that the pressure group and lobby activities presented themselves as vital for the acquisition of hypercompetitive advantages, and that the persuasion that originates from privileged information benefits the end consumer. Keywords: lobby, pressure groups, influence power, public agents, privileged information, consumers.

### Resumen

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo explorar y profundizar el conocimiento sobre el lobby y el poder de influencia de los grupos de presión a los agentes públicos a favor del consumidor. Este trabajo cualitativo utiliza una entrevista semiestructurada como herramienta de recolección de datos. Los resultados fueron procesados y analizados a través de la técnica de análisis de contenido, presentados por categorías de análisis y subcategorías. Sobre la base de la investigación, se concluyó que el grupo de presión y las actividades de cabildeo se presentaron como vitales para la adquisición de ventajas hipercompetitivas, y que la persuasión que se origina a partir de información privilegiada beneficia al consumidor final. Palabras clave: Lobby, Grupos de presión, Poder de influencia, Agentes públicos, Información privilegiada, Consumidores.

### Resumo

A presente pesquisa tem como objetivo explorar e aprofundar o conhecimento sobre o lobby e o poder de influência de grupos de pressão junto a agentes públicos em favor do consumidor. Este trabalho qualitativo utilizou uma entrevista semiestructurada como ferramenta de coleta de dados. Os resultados foram analisados e analisados através das técnicas de análise de conteúdo, apresentadas por categorias de análise e subcategorias. Com base na investigação, concluiu-se que o grupo de pressão e as atividades de lobby se apresentaram como vitais para a aquisição de vantagens hipercompetitivas, e que a persuasão que se origina de informações privilegiadas beneficia o consumidor final. Palavras-chave: Lobby, Grupos de pressão, Poder de influência, Agentes públicos, Informação privilegiada, Consumidores.



## INTRODUCTION

According to Romagni (1994), lobby came to be in the legislative houses in England more than a century ago, through the pressure group's operation which tried to influence the parliament decisions. On the other hand, Oliveira (2004) sustains that lobby came to be in the United States of America and he sees it as a process in which the pressure groups tried to be part of the government's decision taking system, adding information to the building up of public policies. In this perspective, lobby is much more than only an isolated activity from a certain group; it also appears to be a democratic instrument to be used by society to defend its interests, reinforcing the idea of a country's democratic process support.

Romagni (1994) and Oliveira (2004) pointed out that lobby emerged from the democracy interstices and that each public power activity seeks for its legitimacy upon general interest service. Following the same train of thought, Soimu, Margarit, Andrisan and Stefan (2011) stated that lobby is a democratic mechanism due to the fact it provides its actors the possibility to get involved with and to participate in the state decision process.

Thus, lobby does not mean, by itself, pressure to approve or defend a given matter facing the public power but aims at bringing along a set of specific information the legislator still ignores. Scott (2015) states it is not about contributing to a campaign or to a candidate, for, while the donations may promote the access to the congressman, the real influence that comes from lobby is about the relationships established in different environments. We also observed that a lobbyist has influence over the legislators, supplying them with different pieces of information, sometimes known as 'grey information', that is, the informal character that still lacks validation (Vasconcelos, 1999).

Based on the context perspective from the influence use over congressmen, the present work aimed at studying lobby by researching about the legislator, that

is, those who are influenced by the pressure groups. Several studies have been done about lobby, pressure groups and about influence, such as: Rasmussen (2015), Marshall (2015), Mayrhofer (2014), Libardi (2012), Mackley (2011), Mack (2005), Oliveira (2004), Graziano (1994). However, we noticed a gap in the specialised literature that deals with the studies which involve the part that is influenced by the lobbyist activity.

Usually, the researches which cover this topic are related to the study of its development, its history, its regulation and operation attempts and pressure group identification. Based on these premises, this article was developed under the perspective of exploring the comprehension of a set of people's representatives, the one who has the power to decide and vote for the approval of legal matters that interest society and which is the target of several pressure groups that act along with the persuasion activities in the Brazilian parliaments.

Thus, we aimed at getting to know the state congressmen's perception about lobby and the pressure group influence power, using a categorization process (analysis category), as proposed by Bardin (2016).

However, the size, variety, and speed of data that impact procurement decision-making are expanding fast, and, the more strategical procurement became higher the demand for taking real-time assertive decisions. The evaluation of big and complex data in deep offers unprecedented opportunities for advancing in procurement value-adding, lower costs (Chae et al., 2014; Wang et al, 2016) and avoid fraud (Ramamoorti & Curtis, 2003; Westerski et al, 2015). On the other side, practitioners need to discern and act fast (Chick & Handfield, 2004), avoid premature design, share and take improper conclusions (Van Knippenberg et al., 2015; Bendoly, 2016). It requires investments in technology, organizational process change (Barbosa et al., 2018) as well as strategies

and specific capabilities to handle and transform such huge amount of information into clear, reliable and valuable material to leverage resources (Tippins & Sohi, 2003; Kiron & Shockley, 2011; Carrillo, 2017).

Despite the strong interest of big data in supply chain and procurement strategies (e.g. Chen et al, 2012; Waller & Fawcet, 2013; Sanders, 2014; Li et al., 2016; Kache & Seuring, 2017; Gunasekaran et al., 2017; Roßmann et al., 2018), theoretical and empirical evidences of how to include big data strategies into procurement managers decision- making process still lacks (Mogre et al., 2017). Based on that, this study intends to verify: 1. To what extent do alignment, knowledge, and coordination of big data strategies impact its use and efficiency in the

## LOBBY

According to Libardi (2012), lobby can be understood as an activity which embeds the influence practise in the context of political decisions to safeguard or reach certain interests. It is exactly the place where it happens which transformed this meaning of physical space into a persuasive professional activity.

Hall and Deardorff (2006) address lobby as being a legislative subsidy, for they consider that the lobbyists supply the thinking legislators with high-valued information that is aligned with theirs, carefully selected, in the search of common political objective support. The authors also highlight that it is not necessarily about changing the politicians' minds, but encouraging them, with this information, to reach their goals.

Mack (2005) discussed the concept of lobby in the perspectives that are present in the USA laws and in the European parliament and presented it as the act of keeping in touch with politicians or public authorities with the objective of influencing decisions that are pertinent to the interests of a given pressure group. Likewise, he catalogued the strategy and the

procurement environment? 2. Do current procurement executives' behaviors (intention and reaction of individuals) impact the deployment of data analytics and consequently the overall superior results?

To address these questions, we structure our paper as follows: First, we review some work exploring the integration between corporate, procurement and big data analytics strategy, followed by the role of procurers' behavior (intentions, actions, and reactions) that should influence the deployment of data analytics. Then, we present the methodology and data analysis. We conclude by discussing the implications of our findings and propose possible future studies for advancing this discussion.

influence activity implementation as components that are essential to a decisive lobby.

Rival (2006), on the other hand, defined lobby as an activity done through intervention from those who are interested in influencing, whether directly or indirectly, the development process, the law, the norms and regulations application or interpretation, as well as governmental decisions.

Polère (2007) described lobby as the act of influencing political decisions through a group of similar interests. The author stated that the lobby's main objective is to influence the legislative power and that it is about a political activity which is not restricted to the economical group acting, but about both these groups and the public interest, through NGOs and other social classes.

Mayrhofer (2014), however, upon considering that the interest and pressure groups are the main European influencers, expressed that lobby corresponds to the actions of promotion, representation and specific

interests' defence through the influence in the political decisive process.

In a study which analysed lobby in the American political scene, Graziano (1994) noticed that the lobbyist activity acts in a set which comes from a range of diversified interests and that, in several situations, specific knowledge about the matter becomes necessary. Thus, he considered it as a technical support for the representation of interests, once the lobbyists or pressure groups act as holders of specialised information that can maximize the influence in a political decision. From the author's point of view, the lobbyist or pressure group he represents comes covered in a technical support function for the legislator or decision maker.

Rasmussen (2015) adds that the technical knowledge provided by those interested is necessary to allow the legislator to critically evaluate the matters under his appreciation. Lobby, in this meaning, ends up being a mutual support, in which the group interest tends to be granted and the legislators may widen their field of knowledge about the matter and better understand the topic, since they are served with specialised information that is difficult to access, that is, privileged information.

For Libardi (2012), lobby is seen as an activity which intends to interfere or influence the state decisive process to defend specific interests, configuring an essential tool for the democratic entities and for society's participation upon the making of governmental decisions. The theorist highlights

### **LOBBY'S MALICIOUS SIDE**

According to Oliveira (2004), the distorted image of the term lobby is partly related to the media acting, which frequently use it imprecisely. Usually, it is employed as a synonym to traffic of influence or even to corruption. It is also labelled as a usual practise in great corporations which use their economic power to reach their goals. By acting this

that lobby is valued in the gap of the public man's knowledge. In short, lobby longs for the decision routing which interests or, somehow, favours a certain society's group. Thus, it is shown as a convincing activity which is practised through provision and information exchange and the propositions of a legal matter between the public power and the lobby operator. Therefore, it is a purely convincing act practised over the decision maker, highlights the author.

For Farhat (2007), the lobbyist activity is understood as the one practised within the law and the ethical precepts by special and legitimate interest groups, which aim at being heard by the government with the objective of obtaining benefits and/or conveniences through measures, decisions and attitudes supported by the deontological principles. Thus, the author defends that the organised interest groups must act in an ethical and legitimate environment with the objective of bearing consistent information to obtain the desired attitudes. However, we should highlight that, according to the related literature, lobby carries a derogatory image linked to its term. Upon trying to deconstruct this malice-associated image, it is advisable to understand that which the word does not represent. With the proposal to defend the practise of legitimate lobby, so it will not go through misrepresentations or meaning inappropriateness, Farhat (2007) catalogues that which the term does not denote, such as money misuse to obtain favours and special treatments, evasive moves and everything else that results from the characterisation of corruption.

way, they contribute even more to the inaccuracy of the term use, since it links lobby to these criminal practises, contributing to the strengthening of a negative image.

We should mention that the media offer relevant service to society when they report such actions but,

mistakenly and by using the term indistinctly, they mystify its sense. Currently, the word carries such a negative meaning that even the professionals who act in this area prefer to use other terms for designation, such as consultant professionals, public relations, and others.

Rival (2006) reports that, to avoid risks with issues that do not meet the ethical precepts in lobby activities, the business influence must be practised in a way it covers such values, not only to meet the law, but also to contribute to the establishment of good relationship practises. In France, for instance, lobby carries a negative image for, according to Polère (2007), it is related to secret, suspicious and crooked activities which aim at promoting personal interests instead of collective ones. The author highlights that the term is affected by this image and that the public opinion predominantly symbolizes a distortion in the democratic process, since it essentially represents the economic interests, masking the idea of a representative democracy with the lobbyists who keep the decision power.

In his studies, Libardi (2012) explains that the lobby activity is under an exponential development. However, it still carries a strong slanderous image, since, just like pointed out by Oliveira (2004) and Polère (2007), several of these practises are taken wrongly, having the meaning of lobby attributed to them. They are backed up by actions that are supported by the most diversified types of crimes, such as bribery, public bidding fraud and electoral crimes, here classified as misdemeanour. The pressure groups' legitimate activity must be distinguished from the one which uses illegitimate means to get private advantages which, in turn, overcome the collective interests. For these practises, which maculate the lobby image, to be driven away from its concept, it is pertinent that it follows up is ruled by a transparent process and that its control happens through social involvement.

Libardi (2012) also sustains that the term protection must be associated to an efficient normative discipline which is compatible with its importance. He also mentions that lobby is relevant to a country's democratic system and that this standardisation can meaningfully contribute to diminishing the pejorative term. For the author, the elaboration of a specific legislation about the matter would result in a need to identify the actors in the current lobbyist activities, entailing a possible inhibition of criminal practises, such as making them more trustworthy. The attempt to regulate lobby would, then, consist in making it transparent and of easy supervision, allowing the demystification of its unfavourable connotation. Following the same train of thought, Polère (2007) emphasised that the lobby regulation could result in a probable transparency in the relationship between the government's decision makers and the lobbyists, making the access of different groups to this kind of activity more equal.

Scott (2015) presents the case of lobby regulation in the United States, where lobbyists must mandatorily be registered, which enables the activity transparency. The author deals equally with the three main prohibitions involving the work of such professionals: the limitations in the relationships with public decision makers, in the sense of openness to the giving of gifts to people with whom they relate; the impairment to make false statements; they can even exist but without wilful misconduct; and the limitation of financial expenses with lobby by entities which have contracts or receive any kind of resources from the government. Another aspect addressed by Scott (2015) about this regulation is that, to avoid potential problems when the legislators or the government team members leave their positions and become lobbyists, the law determines a quarantine through which these individuals are hindered from getting involved with lobby.

## POLITICAL INFLUENCE AND THE ORGANISED INTERESTS LOBBY

The political influence is presented as a relevant factor in the context of organizations and the organised interests. Knowing how to deal with several tools and mechanisms, as well as identifying the right moment of action with the political environment, can be a differential in order to achieve the desired changes.

Marshall (2010) published a study to try to comprehend the institutional interface between the congressmen and the organised interest activities in the European Parliament. The author noticed that the parliament formal procedures and its informal organization determine the way the “legislative influence” is distributed among deputies and, consequently, the lobby operators’ strategic positioning. The study identified that the lobby’s main objective in the Parliament is the influence through interest negotiation, which is characterised by a successful process of attaining a favourable legislative report. To attain this report, Marshall (2010) emphasised that it is essential for the lobbyists to know how to decide correctly about which legislator (or legislators) the lobby activities must concentrate on; likewise, it is necessary to identify when the legislative process must take place. To this purpose, it is important to know the formal rules since they provide a timeless logic of report paperwork with a committee, dividing the legislative process into phases. This provides those interested with distinct opportunities to influence according to the process development.

Thus, it is typified in the studies that the open phase for changes, during which the commission members and other deputies are free to present amendments, is the perfect moment for the influencers to adopt a strategic behaviour between the commission members and to organise their persuasion activities. This way, the lobbyists act assuring the legislative

changes through the incorporation of their counselling in the proposal’s final report that will be voted in the plenary.

In another analysis, Marshall (2015) deepens the premises previously presented in the researches and, besides ratifying that the organised interest objective is to influence the public policy results, he adds that it is more appropriate to press the congressmen who have interests that are aligned to their own in order to maximize the information explanatory potential they wish to include in legislations and, thus, boost the legislative influence. So, it is taken to a higher strategic level providing the interested groups with the opportunity to enhance its acknowledgment instinct of voting intentions with the objective to bring the legislators closer to their political position.

Still in relation to the political influence in the European Parliament environment, Rasmussen (2015) tries to identify the conditions under which entrepreneurial groups mould political results in this institution and defends that the enterprises’ capacity to leave their “digital fingerprints” in the commission reports depends on a set of factors. The research highlights that the given parliament is seen as a proper place for the representation of diffuse interests, but that the congressmen are making more and more room for the entrepreneurial questions in favour of those interested in collectively.

The study analyses four situations in which fierce battles were fought between interests of entrepreneurial groups and defending groups with collective coverage. In the two situations in which the need of accurate and specialised information is more evident – the case of regulation about nutritional information to the consumers in the products; and the case on reducing the vans’ CO2 emission –, the business expectations prevailed. On the other hand,

and in other situations, like the one which dealt with the pregnant employees' rights and the working hours in highway transportation, the unions had their points of view respected. Thus, it is appropriate to consider what Chalmers (2013) emphasised, when he evidenced that groups that hold special information have better positions before the European congressmen because they provide information that is necessary to them and thus influence the decisive process in a given matter.

Besides according to Rasmussen (2015), three aspects are of fundamental importance for the influence to take place with successful entrepreneurial groups: the business unit, the low matter impact and the reports being dealt with by the main commissions. The business group's internal unit is presented as a prerequisite so as to influence policies like, for example, the regulation on nutritional information to the consumers and the vans' CO2 emission decrease, to which the deputies were exposed, especially to the entrepreneurial pressure groups that got together and shared the report results. This first aspect is like the one discussed by Bunea (2015), to whom the organised interests' formal alliance importance is necessary in order to create a convergence zone and to establish lobby coalitions between the interest groups with the objective of keeping its purposes always aligned.

The increase of capacity to face the adversary lobby, the competitiveness and the synergy are defended by Rival (2012) when it comes to the benefits which may come from the collective lobby actions, like influence gain and business credibility. As for the matter impact, the business interests tend to be met when it doesn't have an expressive visibility for the media and for the public, building a favourable ground for the enterprises to shape the decision makers' minds without a popular observation. Finally, the businesses tend to be more influential the moment the matters

are appreciated by the main commissions, once they usually deal with more technical questions.

Sager, Bürki and Luginbühl (2014) investigated how the Swiss program 'EnergieSchweiz' influenced political decisions. The program was in effect from 2000 to 2010 and involved several tasks, many of them attributed to private organizations, like the Industry Energy Agency (ENAW), which was founded in 1999 by several commercial associations. The objectives were notably to reduce the use of fossil fuels and the CO2 emissions in 10% during the program's duration, besides assuring that the total consumption of electricity during the same time would not increase more than 5%. The CO2 emission reduction's main point was the passing of a law that introduced a tax over emission, once the voluntary measures of reduction did not work out in terms of goals' achievement. For the authors, when the Law was implemented the program was able to trigger a learning effect in the decision makers' content level from the public administration and the parliament and, upon doing so, there was a significant influence over the tax introduction. The study emphasises that the EnergieSchweiz influence impact was due to its operation in the parliament debates around the topic.

Sühlisen and Hisschemöller (2014) credit the current transition of the German energy policy to the lobby activities in the renewable energy sector. The authors checked the influence of the renewable energy enterprises and concluded that they have a strong interference over the political decision making for using special strategies which involve close and frequent contacts with the politicians, but also for fostering the knowledge with accurate information about the matters related to the topic and for making a conjoint lobby, that is, one that is aligned with the interests of several enterprises.

Feurtey, Ilinca, Sakout and Saugler (2016) reported the case of a wind energy sector in France and in Quebec (Canada), addressing several factors in their

researches that influenced the strategic decisive process related to energy policies in each situation, like the pressure groups' operation, the society's perception in relation to the use of this type of energy and the context the sector belongs to. We should emphasise that, in the French case, the authors noticed that the influence that comes from the so-called anti-wind lobby was decisive for the weakening of the use of this type of energy for almost a decade.

Shelley, Ogedegbe and Elbel (2014), on the other hand, addressed the program of public policy in the city of New York that anticipated the sales prohibition of sugary drinks with sugar levels above a specific limit. However, a judicial decision overturned the prohibition, and this defeat from the program was partly attributed to the resistance of beverage industry and of racial and ethnic minority organization groups. We notice that the beverage industry received the support from the racial minority organizations, since those who belong to them would be the most damaged ones, once most of the merchants affected by this public policy were members of these organizations. At the same time, since it was a program from the city of New York, the major merchants would not be affected by the program's determination because they are tied to the state formalities. We highlight, then, the combination of groups with similar interests in the search for alterations and/or changes in norms and legislations.

From the same standpoint, Rasmussen (2015) and Bunea (2015) demonstrated the importance of groups' union to reach common goals. Likewise, Jones (2004) had already addressed the political influence relevance and the gathering of common interests, noting a case in which a group of nurses sought the support from medical and pharmaceutical groups to persuade the government to meet their demands.

Upon trying to better understand how the organised interests get results in legal texts and to check the effectiveness of the lobby actions over public

decision makers and congressmen, two studies stress the importance to measure the interest groups' influence: Dür's (2008) and Klüver's (2009).

Dür (2008) states that the analysis of the organised interest influence is of fundamental importance to understand the political processes, as well as to obtain explanations about pressure results over policies. The author highlights that the analysis is hindered by the existence of different influence channels, by the occurrence of a contraproductive lobby and by the fact the influence is applied in several phases of the political process. Thus, Dür (2008) states that it is possible to evaluate the group's accomplishment level when comparing the results achieved by the pressures in the political processes with the objectives searched in that which was the influence goal, the distance between the result and the desired objective reflects the group's influence level. Klüver (2009), in turn, reinforces the importance to compare the interest groups' political propositions with the final political output to make it possible to draw conclusions about the successful or unsuccessful results of the pressure processes. To this end, he supports what was exposed by Dür (2008) and adds the legal text content analysis since, for that one, the textual data constitute with the source which mostly denotes evidences of the imprints left by the pressure activities in the political processes. Klüver (2009) also stresses that the political documents have a great potential to reveal information about the influencers' political propositions.

As we can see, Dür (2008) and Klüver (2009) converge when it comes to the relevance to measure the accomplishment level of the objectives from the activities that involve lobby. Notwithstanding, as emphasised by Rufanges (2016), the results are not always that easy to be checked, since they can only be achieved after a long time. From this discussion, we underline that the abovementioned measurement comes from the need to look at

the organised interest's political influence activity effectiveness in the achievement of its objectives to get some feedback on the importance to practise it. This reaches the business strategy dimension for, according to what is stated by Marshall (2010), the cost of forsaking the participation in a lobby activity is higher than the cost associated to the lobby from a rival business. Furthermore, Scott (2015) points

out that the investment payback is significant to enterprises that are intelligent enough to invest in such activities, and highlights that developing them along with the government is a very complex task, but it can be reflected on massive paybacks. He also stresses that an executive becomes a fool and a negligent upon leaving the influence game to his own competitors.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study has a qualitative approach and used semi-structured in-depth interviews for data collection. The field research was performed in the state of Rio Grande do Norte's Legislative Assembly (ALRN) and included State Deputies from the 2015-2018 legislature. The research had the participation of seventeen out of the twenty-four congressmen, which represents 70.83% of the legislative house's total. There were no participant's choosing criteria and the individual and face-to-face interviews took place as the researchers had access to each congressman, relying on the interest and cooperation availability of each congressman who participated in this investigation.

For ethical reasons, we kept the congressmen's names private. That is why the speeches are represented by the letter "D" and the transcriptions were done randomly, in a way the lines mentioned and used in the data analysis follow this representation: Deputy 1 (D1), Deputy 2 (D2), Deputy 3 (D3) and so on. However, we emphasize that we cut some of the deputies' speech parts to represent the results. Nevertheless, to reach them, the interferences considered all the material that was collected and processed, and which came from the interviews.

The interview script was structured with eleven questions to reach the work's objective. We reinforce that one of the questions was removed from the script because it did not add any value to the data that were being collected and because it bewildered the

interviewees and generated resistance from them. However, a new questioning arose from the collocation done by the first interviewee at the end of his participation, which brought curiosity from the researchers to know the perception of the others pertaining to the topic that was raised, entailing the appearance of a theme subcategory (the plenary galleries' pressure).

Malhotra (2012) proposes the support to an eventual script alteration due to the fact the researcher must be alert to the new insights and pieces of information that come up during the research process, giving the chance to alter the investigation course in a specific moment to better elucidate points that are relevant. Clearing that up, we should inform that the interviews were recorded with the aid of a Samsung recorder which is compatible with the research needs. Also, each interview lasted for an average of fifteen minutes.

For the data processing we performed a content analysis of the information that came from the dialogues between the state congressmen. For such, we followed the phases suggested by Bardin (2016) for this kind of analysis, that is: the pre-analysis; the material exploration; the results processing, the inference and the interpretation.

The pre-analysis' objective is to enable the material organization, even if it is performed in a non-structured way. In this study, it consisted of mounting the researched material scope, transforming the recorded

audio tracks in the interviews into texts (transcriptions), and later we went through the fluctuating reading.

After this phase, we performed the material exploration procedures through its categorisation. The transcribed interviews went through an editing process in which several files were created following the topic classification criteria, in a way each one would correspond to a topic category or subcategory. In other words, each file had the registration units (RUs), which were the clippings from the corresponding speeches from each deputy related to each topic. We should mention that the RUs were established, as suggested by Bardin (2016),

by clippings in a semantic level, in a way they would refer to each category and subcategory's topics.

Similarly, to carry out the content analysis of the seventeen interviews carried out during the field research, we created a major mixed analysis (represented by Table 1), for, at first, we employed categories that were once split into subcategories, as suggested by Vergara (2010). Finally, we performed the result processing, the inference and the processed material interpretation phase, following the intention to correlate what had been extracted from the interviewees with the objective, with the categories and with the study support literature.

**Table 1.** – Research analysis chart.

Category	Subcategory
Image	Media approach
	Standardisation
	Democratic legitimacy
Operation	Information and knowledge
	Aligned/unified form
	Entrepreneurial groups – Low matter repercussion
Influence	Feeling influenced
	Privileged position
	Legislative alteration
	Plenary galleries' pressure

Source: Personal elaboration.

## RESULTS ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

The research result analysis and presentation are structured in a segmented way to meet the purposes the investigation proposed. The analysis segmentation was established according to major analysis defined in the methods to present the results by topic categories and subcategories.

The establishment of topic categories and subcategories was the result of a systematization work of topics related to the objective and

sustained by the research's literary support. The systematization effort followed the semantic criteria of categorisation, as sustained by Bardin (2016). We should underline that the fact of systematising the analysis categories provided advancement to the research's methodological framework and facilitated the entire analysis results.

## **Analysis of the subcategories related to the Image category**

The image analysis done through this category and of its respective subcategories, as suggested by Bardin (2016), facilitated the separation of the congressmen's understanding by topic to obtain a more consolidated and complete interpretation.

As the congressmen were asked the first question on the image they had about lobby, the group of deputies presented the consensual negative perception in society. However, some of them, in this first moment, indicated they had the understanding that lobby is not, in its essence, something harmful.

The group of deputies synthesised the common sense's negative perception, but indicated they knew the real meaning of the word. Congressman D14 described the essence of the pressure that comes from the lobby activities as he emphasised the importance to practise it through arguments and in a legitimate way. This deputy's understanding aligns with what was addressed by Sarger, Bürki, Luginbühl (2014) – as they indicated that the Energie Schweiz's influence impact was due to its operation in the congressmen's debates about the topic – and, also, due to the study by Sühlsen e Hisschemöller (2014), which highlight the importance to foment the congressman's knowledge with accurate information about the current topic. The D14's speech also addressed the question of pressure legitimacy, which goes along the definition by Farhat (2007) that deals with the use of ethical and lawful means by the pressure groups to have their goals achieved.

The subcategories explored the perceptions deeper and enabled a better look into other aspects related to the construction of the term image being discussed with the objective to widen its analysis. The 'Media approach' showed the congressmen's unanimity as for the understanding that the media acting way (whether on TV, printed or digital media), linking illegal

practises and criminal people to the lobby activities, contributes a lot for the term to keep this pejorative image. This supports the collocation by Oliveira (2004) that the media use the word inaccurately and connect it to criminal practises.

The "Standardisation" aimed at evaluating the interviewees' opinion about a possible lobbyist activity standardisation in Brazil, in the sense that a regulation would either help or not to demystify the term's tortuous image. It also presented the congressmen's unanimity when it comes to the belief that a possible lobbyist activity standardisation would help demystify the term: the understanding that a normative discipline would provide more transparency and legitimacy to the contacts made between the interested ones and the congressmen in the search of their objectives and legislative demands is deduced from the answers received.

Another relevant aspect which was brought up by the interviewees was the regulation example of this activity in the United States of America. The American regulation exemplification reinforces the state congressmen's perception that a possible standardisation could help mitigate the lobby's obscurity. In this regard, it is appropriate to highlight the D11's speech, in which he himself emphasizes the existence of offices that are specialised in these activities, and which assume publicly the tasks in defence of their clients' interests. Unlike what happens in Brazil, as pointed by D10: "it happens so much that nowadays a lot of people prefer to say they are a lobbyist consultant". In other words, the practise is so misinterpreted that the Brazilian lobby offices prefer to be labelled as "consultancy offices" not to have their business linked to a negative or illegal image.

On the other hand, the "Democratic legitimacy" came into the question of demonstrating that the persuasion practise, done through contacts made between the congressmen and the society groups, has a democratic character exactly because it allows

the society's access to the congressmen and vice-versa. So, with this character, the persuasion practise would not have this negative magic wand to which it is linked. The congressmen's perceptions reinforce what Oliveira (2004) and Romagni (1994) stated and showed that the practise becomes a democratic instrument due to the fact it allows this contact, according to what was asserted by D6: "This is a two-way lane. Either the politician goes after the information or the lobbyist comes".

Notwithstanding, we must add that, even though the pejorative image has prevailed in the first moment, the congressmen believe that the lobby activity is legal, that it has democratic legitimacy and that, if it was standardised, the society's negative perception would weaken. In short: the perception, in its majority, is that lobby is a legitimate and important activity for the society, but it has a negative image, from the common-sense point of view, because it is associated only to illicit conducts.

### **Analysis of the subcategories connected to the Operation category**

The subcategories' separate analysis enabled the investigation scope fragmentation to improve the quality of the inference related to the category that was analysed. To view the comprehension the deputies had about the pressure groups' operation in the parliament, each category contributed to a set of information.

Under 'Information and knowledge' we addressed the importance of contribution the pressure groups give as they practise their activities. The interviewees expressed they act importantly as they are fomented with knowledge and technical or specialised information. From the interviews that were carried out we were able to infer that the congressman has gaps of knowledge, considering that each one has an area of qualification and different life experiences,

and that none of these contemplate the totality of topics that are in the lower houses.

An important aspect of the interest groups' operation is the fact there is always the lobbyist figure that follows the legislative demand to explain the matter and clear up any doubts related to it, as stated by D6 in his reply: "there is not one single matter that has come here which didn't have a carrier to come and explain it and lobby, somehow". It is important to highlight that this information exchange is a two-way lane, for it helps the group's influence activity and the deputy vote's reason.

The 'Aligned/unified form' gave support to the comprehension that the pressure groups which act this way have a great possibility to succeed in their attempts to influence the parliament. In this sense, it became obvious that the aligned operation not only concatenates the efforts for some well-done and effective pressure, it also has the power to influence the congressman's vote, as stated by D15 when he spoke of the power the pressure has to change the thinking and the decision of the one who analyses the matter and is on the spotlight of those who are interested. Thus, this way of acting is an advantage which can be used by the organised interests at the time they develop pressure activities through the forwarding of a given matter, both from the business community and from the union movements.

The 'Entrepreneurial groups – Low matter repercussion', on the other hand, determined the comprehension that there is some possible ease for the entrepreneurial pressure groups to act in matters of low repercussion, whether in the media or in the society. In this respect, the interviewees underlined that this possible relation of entrepreneurial interests to matters of low repercussion depends a lot on the object content of these interests. Thus, we were able to notice that, depending on the matter, it'd better have a popular repercussion and gain force to press the

parliament; in other cases, however, it becomes more interesting if there is no repercussion to be influenced.

So, the organised interests need to be alert to the content of its demands and know how to deal with the sensitive relationship there is between its interest approval and the consequent reach of its objectives, and the feeling that can come from the support or not to its persuasion and influence activities.

Consequently, upon analysing the three subcategories related to the 'Operation' category, we emphasised the reason why the analyses were performed separately, in the sense of consolidating the congressmen's perception understanding about the pressure groups' operation.

### **Analysis of the subcategories connected to the Interference/Influence category**

Once more, the category analysis was carried out through the fragmentation into subcategories so that the understanding could be more detailed and better comprehended by the interviewees. This category shows the influence that the lobby activities have before those who have the power to decide and to vote the interest legislative matters of the organised groups.

'Feeling influenced' showed that the congressmen really feel inspired by the lobby developed by the interest groups and that the influence activities can be reversed to very advantageous results for those involved. It was clear that the argument and the information exchange are the most efficient ways to influence a congressman. Many revealed that the influence practised by the groups can reach the level of changing their perceptions and decisions about a certain matter.

The 'Privileged position', on the other hand, addressed the power of influence that the pressure groups, which come from the set of entrepreneurs, from institutions or from specific public service sectors have due to holding a significant social position or

to being backed up by society. In this respect, it was deduced that this 'privileged position' is a burden for the congressmen upon deciding and voting a specific matter, since they take longer to consider the arguments and the explanations presented by these groups. Thus, groups which are significant, and which carry a good image for society, both public and private, have a higher power of influence in the legislators' decision.

The concerns pertaining to 'Legislation alteration' complement the 'Feeling influenced' subcategory in the sense of analysing the power the groups must influence the legislator to make him suggest alterations in matters that are pending in the lower house, which is an ordinary attitude. The congressmen's understanding converged on the statement that the groups have this power and, once more, they highlighted the importance to practise this activity through information exchange and well-drafted arguments.

The last subcategory, which arose from the observation made by the first interviewee and became a question to know the others' perception about the topic discussed as well, addressed the comprehension the congressman had about the fact of noticing if the set of congressmen tends to behave differently when the plenary galleries are full. The remarks turned to the situation where the congressman, in general, feels influenced by the external pressure which comes from the galleries during the voting time, forcing the deputy to behave in a way that is different from what was not expected previously.

In the end, upon analysing the 'Interference/Influence' category, and taking into consideration all the nuances reported by the legislators about how they feel in relation to the pressure groups' lobby activities, which operate along with the state congressman, we were able to identify how the persuasion activities are seen from the congressman's perspective.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective reach of this work shows that the legislators' perception is that lobby and the pressure groups' power of influence cause a strong interference in the state parliament matters and decisions for, despite acknowledging the term's pejorative image – present in the common sense –, these activities have the legality magic wand and are set as a way of society's access to the lower house. We highlight that this perception is composed of the set of image, operation and interference/influence factors and that this perspective is restricted to the parliament studied.

Considering the research findings, we can conclude that the lobby activity unfolds as fundamental for the groups which long to defend interests and benefit from ultracompetitive advantages through interferences in the public decisive process and in the elaboration of specific legislations.

According to witnesses in the revised studies and in the investigation results, the entrepreneurial or social groups' objective implementation has depended on well-structured actions of influence over the congressmen and over the public authorities. Groups that can notice this and move forward to perform lobby and pressure activities, and which are insightful enough not

the leave such activities at the mercy of the interests or of the commercial competitors, get a competitive gain and ensure excellent return rates over all kinds of investments.

In short, this work enables us to notice that a congressman's political activity is full of influence actions and understanding them and using them in appropriate moments can change the reality of the organised interests and show a new operation scenery for the objectives' achievement.

Therefore, we stress the resistance of some members of the legislative house as a limitation of the research whose topic is lobby and the power of influence, especially because of the stigmas caused by the media in general.

Finally, we suggest new investigations that can use mixed methods of research (qualitative and quantitative), as well as studies which address the topic in a local or even federal level, as a way to know the perception of the congressmen who are linked to other legislative houses; or, in addition, works that address the influence activity effectiveness performed by the pressure groups or even by the private sector's representatives.

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#### ENDNOTES ARTICLE

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