

General Topics Editorial

Researching Communication to Understand Contemporary Society

Investigar la comunicación para comprender la sociedad contemporánea

Pesquisar a comunicação para compreender a sociedade contemporânea

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The 60th issue of *Cuadernos.info* is dedicated to General Topics. Fifteen research studies are presented, divided into six main areas: political communication, the phenomenon of influencers, health communication, the study of disinformation at different levels, journalistic framing, advertising and the streaming industry in Ibero-America. Each contribution allows us to understand different facets of today’s society from a communicative and scientific perspective. This diversity is possible thanks to the efforts of the researchers, as well as to the quality of the work and the commitment of the reviewers, to whom we are especially grateful.

As for the first two articles, which deal with political communication, the year 2024 will be remembered as one of the most important in the world regarding the number of millions of people who went to the polls in various types of electoral processes, including in six Latin American countries and the United States (Lissardy, 2024). In this context, televised political debates are of particular importance because they reveal “substantive issues about the candidates, the electorate and the state of our democracy” (Mindich, 2024, p. 296). But what happens when candidates draw on the discourse of fear in these broadcasts? This is precisely what **Sara Rebollo-Bueno** addresses by examining five Spanish general election debates since 2014 broadcast by the public broadcaster Radio Televisión Española (RTVE) through a content analysis of 446 segments to determine how the participating political parties mobilized fear as a propaganda tool. From the perspective of rhetorical analysis, this reminds us of the work of Pfau (2007), who

states that “fear is an influential emotion, whose history reveals its impact not only on individuals but on entire communities, economies and political systems” (p. 216).

In turn, **Bruno Bernardo de Araújo** and **Dôuglas Aparecido Ferreira** focus on the specific use of Instagram by a far-right candidate for the Brazilian parliament in 2022. By analyzing his posts, the authors note how the politician mobilizes three characteristics that are close to Bolsonaro's discursive frame, namely anti-politics, attack on the left, and Christian conservatism. In both articles, we see a wide range of possible studies on the mediatization of politics, from television to the role of a social network such as Instagram in the construction of political leadership (Pont Sorribes & Gutiérrez-Rubi, 2020).

As Vaydia and Karnawat (2023) note, “today, social media influencers have become an effective and crucial link between consumers and brands” (p. 84). The article by **Araceli Castelló-Martínez** and **Laura Ruiz-Martínez** introduces the block of research that we summarize under the umbrella of studies on these opinion leaders. The authors propose a characterization of the sixty Spanish social media influencers with the highest engagement by sector and gender, after reviewing the literature published between 2009 and 2024 on both variables.

Another dimension related to research on the phenomenon of influencers is the likelihood that they overlap with hate speech. Famous is the case of the reaction of Internet users to the posting of US President Donald Trump in 2019, in which he made fun of the speech made by Greta Tunberg at the COP 25 conference at the United Nations, and how this message from the first president served as a catalyst for hate speech against the activist, then a teenager (Arce-García et al., 2023). In this sense, **Arantxa Vizcaíno-Verdú** and **Paloma Contreras-Pulido** analyze the content of more than 16,000 hate messages against six Spanish influencers in a mixed-methods study, quantitatively examining their polarization and toxicity and then exploring their resistance strategies through interviews.

The need to study the phenomenon of influencers in relation to the impact that these opinion leaders can have on children and adolescents' body self-image and possible eating disorders is becoming increasingly urgent (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022). The research of **Beatriz Feijoo** and **Charo Sádaba** mobilizes from the field of communication a conceptual framework of the potential of advertising literacy to counteract the relevance of body and beauty standards promoted by influencers who advertise brands and whom minors follow. They surveyed more than 1,000 adolescents between 11 and 17 years old in Spain and inquired about the relationship between these young people's concern for their bodies and their level of advertising literacy.

Turning now to studies on communication and health in the digital context, we present two that are in some way related to misinformation. Although research on this phenomenon has gained importance with the recent coronavirus pandemic at the beginning of 2020, it should be noted that there was already a significant scientific production on disinformation and health before that, as in the case of Ebola, Zika and, above all, in the anti-vaccination movements (Encinillas García & Martín Sabarís, 2023). In this context, researchers **Jesús Ángel Pérez Dasilva, María Ganzabal Learreta, Koldobika Meso Ayerdi, Urko Peña Alonso** and **Terese Mendiguren Galdospin** look at the testimonial communication of women who developed breast cancer in TikTok between October 2022 and 2023, and analyze 270 videos with the highest engagement, taking into account the need of those who have this disease to consult and share experiences in a space of trust and authoritative voices. An alarmist tone about the disease was identified in 23.1% of cases, as well as videos categorized as misinformation or quackery.

Regarding the link between antivaccination communication, the use of social networks, and disinformation, **Giovana Santana Carlos, Lúcia Raquel Herculano Maia, Luisa Massarani, Thaianne Oliveira** and **Francisco Jadson Silva Maia** conducted research on the use of the figure of medical authority to promote antivaccination in Brazil, specifically in more than 900 messages shared via antivaccination groups on WhatsApp between 2022 and 2023. A previous study on the verification of misinformation on COVID-19 in Spain and Latin America (Noain Sanchez, 2021) shows that Brazil was the country with the second highest clarification of hoaxes by fact checkers, for just over 70% of the population with Internet access. Therefore, this research on the antivaccine movement via WhatsApp can be an important contribution to implement possible measures that favor reliable health communication.

In a context of information disruption, in 2023, researchers **Óscar Iván Londoño Pardo, María Paula Arbeláez Linares** and **Julio-Cesar Mateus** studied the perception of students of communication professions in the Andean region (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru) regarding disinformation and the role that university students attribute to social networks in its amplification. It should be recalled that Unesco itself has circulated, in different languages and in open access, educational resources for Journalism students against disinformation (Ireton & Possetti, 2018), proposals that are consistent with this type of research conducted within the framework of international cooperation projects.

Two articles analyze the content of journalistic frames on education, both conducted in Chile. As Gronemeyer (2017) notes, the uniformity or homogenization of news content is a multifactorial factor that may be due, among other things, to

the fact that journalists systematically use certain representational frames. In Chile, this issue has been at the center of debate and journalistic coverage since the movement for education in 2006, led by high school students at the time and those that followed. In this regard, **Paulina Salazar Vera**, **Lorena Ortega Ferrand**, **Ana Luisa Muñoz García** and **Cristian Cabalín Quijada** address the question of how a mainstream newspaper presented and framed female academics and researchers in the field of education in the news between 2018 and 2022, specifically in the Education section. They identify five frames, which they compare based on the results. One of the findings is that the least present frame is the one related to their status as experts.

On the other hand, **Yasna Patricia Ferrada Montecinos** and **Pablo Segovia Lacoste** examine the journalistic coverage of the student protests in an emblematic public high school in Santiago de Chile before the social outbreak of 2019 in opinion and news texts in two mainstream newspapers. By finding specific frames that mainly emphasize violence, they reflect on the stereotypes about high school students that such media might promote.

We arrive at the section of contributions on studies in the field of Advertising, which includes four contributions. In this sector, advertising festivals have been considered a cornerstone of this commercial communication system (Galmés et al., 2016). **Araceli Castelló-Martínez** and **Laura Ruiz-Martínez** analyze the evolution of the sections, categories and subcategories of advertising festivals in the period 2000-2023, as well as their thematic blocks. They observe a trend towards sections other than those related to advertising media or the advertisers' sectors of activity.

Noelia García-Estévez examines the strategies of toy brands that promote values of inclusion and diversity in the areas of disability, race, and gender inclusion, how these actions are portrayed in the press, and how adult buyers perceive them.

Advertising a tourist area in the media over a long period of time is an arduous task. In their study, researchers **Onésimo Samuel Hernández Gómez**, **Antonio Raúl Fernández Rincón** and **Pedro Antonio Hellín** examine how the Comarca del Mar Menor in Spain was advertised from 1940 to 2019 on the basis of certain values. To this end, they analyze more than 240 audiovisual works available in the Spanish Film Library and the Spanish Broadcasting Archive (RTVE) in the context of tourism promotion at a global level. The article also allows us to consider the communication strategies of a destination based on its life cycle over time (García et al., 2013).

Researchers **Júlia Alabart-Algueró**, **Óscar Gutiérrez-Aragón**, **Joan Cuenca-Fontbona** and **Joan-Francesc Fondevila-Gascón** study the advertising strategies used in Spain to promote sporting events, specifically equestrian ones, by collecting information from surveys and interviews with professionals and specialists in the sector.

This volume concludes with another article on international cooperation, in this case between Portugal and Spain, by authors **María-José Higuera-Ruiz** and **Vania Baldi**, who compare the production and co-production of Ibero-American feature film series on Netflix between 2020 and 2023. This global production and commercialization company of audiovisual VOD content represents a fascinating space of investigation at different levels (Lobato & Lotz, 2020), including the study of production for a global market of this cultural industry, a contribution that complements other related research with which to dialog, such as the study by Gómez and colleagues (2022) on Spanish production for this platform, which celebrates almost three decades since its creation.

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