

Editorial

Communication research in Ibero-America: a diverse landscape

Investigación de la comunicación en Iberoamérica: una paleta diversa

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Each volume of *Cuadernos.Info* dedicated to General Topics allows us to show the diversity of ongoing research in Ibero-America. This 53rd issue encompasses contributions from 40 authors from Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, Peru and Mexico, some of them in the form of international collaboration. As always, we would like to thank you for your confidence in our journal; we especially appreciate the work of the peer reviewers, essential for the editorial team’s decision-making and for enriching the articles’ content and quality.

September 2022 marks the sixth month of the Russian invasion into Ukraine, a situation that continues to claim thousands of lives with no end in sight. As in any war, media professionals are of crucial importance. In this regard, Alessandra Galloni, director of Reuters Agency, calls us to question ourselves about the role of journalism and traditional media in a so-called *Tik Tok war*, with a significant use of social networks. Besides generating trust and ensuring objectivity and independence, she states that “in its best version, journalism based on facts can serve as an antidote to the disinformation that increasingly obstructs social networks” (Galloni, 2022, p. 52), even in conditions that hinder its exercise. According to Nohrstedt (2009), the media tend to pay more attention to the true face of war, and it is relevant to reflect self-critically on the conditions of journalists’ professional performance in such situations. This is the research focus of Annette Unda Endemaño, Leire Iturregui Mardaras, and María José Cantalapiedra González in the case of Spanish media professionals who have covered different conflicts. Through interviews with 24 professionals with experience in war episodes, in different periods, and with diverse technological conditions, the researchers report, among other findings, the job insecurity to which correspondents are exposed in a context of high exposure, gender inequalities, and the challenges linked to the profession.

The coexistence between social networks and traditional media –not free of tensions if we consider, for example, the phenomenon of disinformation– is also reflected in studies in the field of political communication, specifically in the case of different electoral processes in Latin America. In this line, there is no doubt that the Internet and social networks are tools with an increasingly important communicative potential for political parties and candidates (Vergeer et al., 2011). In this regard, two articles investigate case studies in Colombia through international inter-university research partnerships.

Researchers Angie Katherine González and Carme Ferré Pavia analyze how the two most voted candidates for mayor of Bogotá in 2019 use Twitter and its narrative possibilities to develop their communication strategies. From a textual analysis of the messages, they characterize these narratives; the findings show a tendency to use emotions and personal stories over the reference to political parties.

Focused on studying the practice of information verification during an electoral process, Carlos Rodríguez-Pérez, Dafne Clavo, and Eva-Campos Domínguez study the case of the 2019 regional elections in Colombia based on the work conducted by the RedCheq platform on the veracity of the contents issued by political parties. Since the fact check experiences would generally be concentrated in large urban centers, the authors defend the need to investigate case studies not only in capitals. On the other hand, their study reflects the impartiality and independence of such verification practices.

In the same field –political communication and use of social networks–, and focusing on the phenomenon of the majority illusion that can be caused by the so-called echo chambers, researchers Pedro Santander, Claudio Elórtegui, Héctor Allende-Cid, Pedro Alfaro, and Sebastián Rodríguez analyze, in Chile, the campaign prior to the 2020 plebiscite (which ended in a constituent assembly process) of the supporters of the right-wing Republican Party against the drafting of a new Constitution to replace that of 1980. The illusion of the majority is an effect that occurs in people's perceptions of the attitudes and behaviors of others, specifically of their influence networks (Lerman et al., 2016). Thus, as Lerman and coworkers state, a given attitude towards an issue can be systematically overestimated as if it were majority which can, in turn, generate an incorrect propagation or unrealistic contagion of that attitude. In this case, this is what happened with the supporters of the rejection of the new Constitution in the period studied.

In the same country, Matías Gómez Contreras and Felipe González López use the quantitative technique of full matching to study a possible association between the consumption of political information on Facebook and Twitter and effective electoral participation, in a context of voluntary voting, without finding it.

Considering the growing translation of politics to cyber-political contexts, their findings invite to deepen, as they suggest, the types of information practices, to conduct longitudinal studies, and to employ mixed methodologies. The article also contributes, from the Ibero-American region, to consolidate studies on the effects of the use of social networks on political participation, due to their potential for citizens to develop knowledge on political issues and to facilitate their civic participation (Boulianne, 2015).

Lorella Bellia Calderón and Martín Echeverría Victoria address the question of the importance given by voters to survey information in their voting intention in the case of the 2019 extraordinary elections for the governorship of Puebla, Mexico. The authors combined a quantitative survey, in which participants self-reported such a relationship versus other traditional voting intention factors, with the subsequent conduct of focus groups. The results show that, according to the participants, the information from the surveys would have no effect, since it is not sought after and, on occasions, the data is distrusted; however, they found that when there is a higher level of education, there is a tendency to consider surveys more important.

As in the previous cases, a relevant part of the campaign for the second round of the 2021 general elections in Peru took place on Twitter. Juan Manuel Ponte Torrel investigates the phenomenon of affective polarization in the messages referring to the two finalist candidates, Pedro Castillo and Keiko Fujimori, posted on this network. The research yields three results regarding Twitter: it functions as a space to channel and express the emotional charge of the citizenry in the political scenario, there is a lower number of neutral messages and, in the case of negative messages, these tend to destabilize the opposing candidate. However, as Waisboard (2020) argues, “it is wrong to understand polarization as a product only linked to digital communication trends” (p. 249) Ponte Torrel agrees that the context of previous political fragmentation has an impact on the polarization climate.

In the Ecuadorian case, Allen Panchana and Carlos Barrera study the use of television as a resource for official governmental political communication through nationwide broadcasts and their implementation in the media system. They use interviews with different actors involved in the governments of Correa and Lenín Moreno between 2007 and 2021. The authors analyze its use as a strategic key to communication and propaganda by the political power, especially through the new public broadcaster *Ecuador TV*, parent company of the networks since 2007. In such situations, the principle of independence that conditions media regulation, as well as that of diversity, are affected, as established by Mendel and collaborators (2017) in their study on the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and the impact of its restriction for democracy in the Americas.

A third set of articles refers to the fields of communication and health, and public communication of science, with three contributions from Chile and Spain, respectively. In the context of an overabundance of information and uncertainty generated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Casino (2022) argues that the greatest avalanche of disinformation ever known began to spread. As Macarena Peña y Lillo and Pablo Guzmán propose in their research, three types of informational behaviors around the coronavirus occurred in Chile: seeking, scanning, and avoiding. Through a quantitative study and online and telephone surveys applied to 3,952 people, these behaviors were profiled by type of media, age, gender, and education levels, showing significant gaps in the case of these last three variables.

Isabel Mendoza Poudereux, Vanessa Roger-Monzó, and Myriam Martí-Sánchez investigate how the most read digital newspapers in Spain (*elpais.com*, *elmundo.es*, *lavanguardia.com*, and *abc.es*) actively participate in the creation of public opinion on food issues, analyzing the contents of information on different popular diets and the eating patterns linked to them between 2011 and 2020, as well as their effects on health. The article contributes to a growing line of research on communication about healthy food consumption habits and patterns for present and future generations (Lutz, 2021), in which the media play a key social role.

Social networks have been employed to teach and engage people about the importance of science (López -Goñi & Sánchez-Angulo, 2017). Researchers Juan Ignacio Martín-Neira, Magdalena Trillo-Domínguez, and María-Dolores Olvera-Lobo analyze the uses of Instagram by journalists working in scientific institutions to disseminate science in Chile, based on a questionnaire with open and closed questions, to discuss the associated challenges. Among these, the need to be attentive to users to promote greater engagement stands out.

Three articles revolve around studies in the field of strategic communication and advertising. In a context of an aging population, access to technologies and the development of digital skills by the elder show significant inequalities, challenges, and opportunities (Sánchez, 2015). Marilé Pretel Jiménez, Mónica Viñaras-Abad, and Leopoldo Abad-Alcalá investigate the factors that determine the relationship and use of e-commerce made by the over 60s in the Spanish case through focus groups with e-commerce experts and using the Delphi method. The findings reveal the need to design specific strategies for this population and a manifest interest of older adults to master these tools.

For decades, the employment situation of women advertisers has been studied in Spain, including analyses of the figure of professional women working in the advertising industry in that country between 1970 and 1980, and the inequalities they experience (Domínguez Porras, 2020). The research by Marina Ramos-Serrano,

Blanca Miguélez, and Víctor Hernández-Santaolalla focuses precisely on the barriers faced by female professionals in creative departments in Spain based on a questionnaire applied to 252 women between 21 and 59 years with different years of experience and roles in the industry. The authors discuss three main findings: the phenomenon of Pink ghettos and promotion, the unconscious biases that profile them in highly feminized accounts, and how women envision and experience motherhood in the advertising environment.

Andrés Del Toro-Acosta, Purificación Alcaide-Pulido, Javier Lozano-Delmar, José Antonio Muñoz-Velázquez, and Alejandro Tapia Frade set out to profile and list the training and performance needs of public relations professionals in Spain in a context of technological disruption. The authors argue that the current training scenario in this communications specialty has not been updated by higher education institutions since 2005. Through interviews with professionals and specialists, they determine, based on expert judgment and the self-assessment of the professionals, 29 soft and hard skills necessary for professional updating, which they propose to integrate into the offer of university training in public relations.

We end this issue of volume 53 with a contribution from Mexico, in which Djamel Toudert delves into the dynamics of digital inclusion and access to technologies in territories that, although marginalized, are usually less studied and less considered in public policies to reduce the gaps, since they have more than 2,500 inhabitants. Based on information from the last two censuses conducted in the country in the last decade, he compares the situation of technological backwardness in these marginalized contexts.

We hope that this selection of research on different objects of study and topics will contribute to your academic interests and production. We are grateful to the UC 2021 Research Journal Indexing Support Fund, which makes possible part of the financing of *Cuadernos.Info*.

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