



COMUNICAÇÃO E SOCIEDADE



45

ADVERTISING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PUBLICIDADE E DESENVOLVIMENTO SUSTENTÁVEL

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE: POLAROID ADVERTISING

NOTA INTRODUTÓRIA: A PUBLICIDADE *POLAROID*

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Advertising language (when “achieved”) opens onto a spoken representation of the world, a representation which has been practised by the world since ancient times and is “narrative”: all advertising *says* the product (its connotation), but *it also tells* something else (its denotation). (Barthes, 1985, p. 169)

We propose to consider advertising as a discourse that derives its power from its capacity to produce and reproduce the meaning of a culture and a society. With remarkable speed and clarity, it generates instant portraits, akin to polaroids, where everyone either recognises themselves or prefers not to.

What does advertising show us? For many, advertising is still primarily associated with consumption, representing everything that drags us towards the apocalypse as the effects of climate change become more tangible. Hence, this thematic edition — “Advertising and Sustainable Development” — seems to announce visions of advertising’s unsustainability. However, this issue prompts us to adopt a different perspective: to explore the relationship between two concepts, breaking down the apparent antagonism and shedding light on both the contributions and challenges of advertising.

Indeed, if we seek a vivid portrait of each era — including technological advances, social norms, expectations, anxieties, contradictions, and tensions — we need only examine advertising campaigns. It is crucial to remember that advertising reflects the tensions within a society. Nowadays, alongside environmental concerns, social issues dominate campaigns: gender equality, freedom of expression, inclusion, and diversity are just a few examples.

Advertising possesses the power to summarise, yet it also wields influence over our choices. It showcases what is dominant, both at its best and at its worst, while also shaping new attitudes and behaviours. Through its captivating and persuasive discourse, it

informs and recommends choices that can promote healthy outcomes, whether in terms of our physical or mental well-being or support of more responsible consumption.

Among the prevailing features of contemporary societies, we recognise issues of social and environmental responsibility and sustainability (as well as individual responsibility). Sustainability has become a key priority for today's consumers: approximately 85% of consumers have embraced more sustainable behaviours, and 45% expect sustainability to be a given (Arora et al., 2024). This trend significantly influences purchasing decisions, prompting organisations to allocate more time, attention, and resources to integrating environmental and social responsibility into their business practices. Consequently, it is increasingly common to find products labelled as “environmentally sustainable”, “environmentally friendly”, “fair trade”, and so on, on supermarket shelves (Bar Am et al., 2023).

As previously mentioned, messages promoting companies' ESG¹ strategies are becoming commonplace. Brands are increasingly communicating various aspects of sustainability through advertising campaigns. According to an IPSOS study (Reboul, 2022), “people expect advertisers to act for sustainability. The challenge for brands then resides in balancing the communication for a more sustainable future with the potential to grow sales and market share for the brand” (p. 3). Concepts such as “corporate social responsibility”, “sustainable development”, “corporate political advocacy”, and “corporate citizenship” have become integral to the organisational lexicon.

In this context, it is essential to analyse brands' communication dimensions. How do brands position themselves, and how do they communicate this to citizen-consumers? How are their messages perceived? What are the dominant advertising strategies in this context? What practices should be followed, and what risks should be avoided?

It seems clear that credibility, reputation, and transparency are key factors in communicating sustainability: “not doing so exposes [the brand] to the risk of being accused of greenwashing and facing a media backlash” (Reboul, 2022, p. 13). Indeed, communicating sustainability is complex. The increased public awareness of current environmental and social challenges has led to greater scrutiny and pressure for enhanced transparency in the disclosure of companies' environmental and social performance.

With significant support from the academic community, the editors of this issue compiled the collection of texts presented below, addressing the intersection of advertising and sustainable development. The thematic section of this volume consists of eight articles offering critical analyses, highlighting the tensions that emerge in advertising practices related to the communication of sustainability and social responsibility. The analysis of greenwashing phenomena predominates, with half of the articles addressing this issue. Furthermore, the prevailing ethical and social values in society — particularly emphasising the millennial segment — as well as the ways employed by organisations to position themselves and communicate are themes that permeate all the texts, illustrating how advertising functions as a capillary system.

¹ Acronym for “environmental, social and governance”.

The article “Greenwashing and Disinformation: The Toxic Advertising of Brazilian Agribusiness on Social Media” by Priscila Medeiros, Débora Salles, Thamyres Magalhães, Bianca Melo and Rose Marie Santini opens the thematic section of this Volume 45 dedicated to “Advertising and Sustainable Development”. Focusing on agribusiness, one of Brazil’s main economic sectors, the study aims to identify the presence of greenwashing in the communication strategies of the Parliamentary Agricultural Front, a key player in the anti-environmental lobby. To this end, the authors conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of 158 advertisements published by the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (Parliamentary Agricultural Front) in 2023 on the social networks Facebook and Instagram, searching for attempts to “enhance the image of agriculture”. The results of this investigation revealed that, in general, the adverts analysed advocate for maintaining socio-economic relations centred around agribusiness while promoting denialism and misinformation about the economic impacts of this sector.

The paper “Distinguishing Green Marketing From Greenwashing: Insights From Data Analysis of Banco do Brasil S.A. and Natura & Co.”, co-authored by Camila da Costa, Dusan Schreiber, Paola Schmitt Figueiró, and Luciane Pereira Viana, describes a study aimed at identifying the differences between green marketing and greenwashing and their implications for companies’ social and environmental development practices. To achieve this, the researchers employed a multiple case study methodology, focusing on the examples of Banco do Brasil S.A. and Natura & Co. Through the analysis of various documents, including annual reports and content published on institutional websites, the authors of this work established that both organisations adhere to ethical and truthful principles when advertising their social and environmental sustainability initiatives, thus supporting the green marketing model over greenwashing.

In the article “Greenwashing — The Danger of Generalised False Claims and How the Portuguese Media Represent This Practice” by Lauralice Ribeiro and Paula Campos Ribeiro, the objective was to understand how two Portuguese newspapers, *Expresso* and *Público*, reported on the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign, launched by the United Nations, which aimed for companies to reduce their carbon emissions by 2023 voluntarily. Specifically, this research aimed to explore how these media outlets approached the issue of greenwashing and how they sought to highlight the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign. For this purpose, the researchers conducted a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of the news published in the online versions of the newspapers throughout the campaign’s dissemination period in 2022 and 2023. The findings of this study suggest that the national media still allocates limited attention to the issue of greenwashing. However, when they do cover it, they tend to approach it critically.

The article “Advertising and Sustainability: The Case of ‘The Last Photo’ Campaign” by Priscila Kalinke da Silva, Carlos Henrique Sabino Caldas, Luiz Antonio Feliciano and Rogério Gomes Neto examines the role of advertising as an agent of social and environmental transformation by analysing the most awarded advertising campaign at the 2023 Cannes Film Festival — “The Last Photo” — which tackled the stereotypes surrounding the topic of suicide. Through a qualitative methodology using a discursive approach that considered lexical elements, argumentative techniques and non-verbal components, the analysis concluded that the campaign seeks to use advertising discourse, particularly its

audiovisual dimension, to address a social issue, challenging the stereotypes surrounding suicide.

The article “Not Very Instagrammable: Sustainability in the Digital Communication of Portuguese Designer Fashion Brands” by Pedro Dourado presents a study on how Portuguese fashion designers address sustainability on Instagram. Analysing posts by 47 designers who participated in ModaLisboa or Portugal Fashion, the research shows that only around 6% of the content is related to sustainability. Most posts focus on showcasing final products rather than discussing production processes, materials, or labour practices. This study highlights a gap in the promotion of sustainability, suggesting that although designer fashion has the potential to lead in sustainable practices, its digital communication strategies do not fully capitalise on it.

In “Sustainability Struggles: Discursive Tensions in Latin American Cosmetic Industry”, Adriana Angel and Alejandro Álvarez-Nobell investigate how leading cosmetics brands in Latin America communicate their sustainability initiatives and corporate social responsibility. Focusing on Avon, Natura, O Boticário and Yanbal, the study employs qualitative and quantitative methods to analyse interactions on social media and the discourses used by these brands. The results reveal significant tensions between sustainability and capitalism, corporate impact and consumer agency and empowerment and traditional gender roles, highlighting the complexities and contradictions in promoting sustainability within a capitalist framework.

The authors of “Understanding the Role of IKEA Portugal’s Brand Values in Shaping the Purchase Decisions of Millennial Consumers”, Nuno Goulart Brandão and Bárbara Côrte, investigate the impact of IKEA Portugal’s brand values on the purchasing behaviour of millennials. Using a quantitative methodology and surveying 402 respondents, the research underscores that values such as cost-consciousness, sustainability, social responsibility, and simplicity significantly influence millennials’ purchasing decisions. The findings emphasise the importance of brand values in shaping consumer behaviour, indicating that millennials prioritise brands that align with their ethical and social values.

The article “Lifestyle Eco-Influencers Advertising: Is Engagement Driven by Content or Fandom?” by Bárbara Castillo-Abdul, Luis M. Romero-Rodríguez, and Carlos Fernández-Rodríguez investigates the impact of social capital and personal branding on eco-influencer engagement. Through a quantitative analysis of the content of five eco-influencer accounts from the United Kingdom, the United States, Belgium, Spain and Peru, the research unveils fundamental insights into the engagement dynamics of these content creators, contributing to the theory of social capital by demonstrating how personal content and emotional appeals not only increase authenticity but also impact how influencers engage with their audiences. This combination of personal and activist content demonstrates that influencers’ social capital is a key factor in promoting environmental issues, albeit with a tendency to prioritise the influencer’s personality over their activist message.

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Sara Balonas is an assistant professor at the University of Minho and a researcher at the Communication and Society Research Centre (CECS). She holds a PhD in Communication Sciences, specialising in advertising within the social sphere, and she teaches strategic communication, brands, advertising, and creativity. Her research interests include advertising and behavioural change, social change, strategic communication, brands, creativity, political communication, health communication, and social marketing. She has authored numerous articles, books, and other scientific publications in these fields. Additionally, she coordinates Createlab — Experimentation and Innovation Laboratory (CECS) and the Communication, Organisations, and Social Dynamics research group (CECS). She previously coordinated the Advertising Working Group of the Portuguese Association of Communication Sciences. Furthermore, she is the founder of B+ Comunicação (2002) and Be True, a strategic intervention programme in the social sphere (2010).

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GREENWASHING AND DISINFORMATION: THE TOXIC ADVERTISING OF BRAZILIAN AGRIBUSINESS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Agribusiness, a cornerstone of Brazil's economic sectors, wields considerable political clout through entities like the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (Parliamentary Agricultural Front; FPA), a potent force in the country's Congress and appears to be the main driver of the anti-environmental lobby. The FPA sought to influence labour, land and tax legislation and was an important ally of Jair Bolsonaro's administration, aligning closely with the former president's agenda of environmental deregulation, which mirrored the economic priorities of agribusiness interests. However, the imperative to maintain a favourable public perception of the agricultural sector is evident in various communication strategies, including the deployment of paid advertisements on online platforms. In this sense, the objective of this research is to scrutinise the potential presence of greenwashing and/or disinformation within the 158 advertisements disseminated by the FPA on Facebook and Instagram throughout 2023. Using Meta's Ad Library interface, we collected the advertisements and employed three complementary analytical approaches. These methodologies enabled us to identify and interpret the discursive tactics employed by the FPA to "enhance the image of agriculture": automatic word counting and co-occurrence analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis. The advertisements analysed show that Brazilian agribusiness uses sustainability as a form of greenwashing and disinformation in

its online communication efforts. The FPA's digital advertising uses these discursive strategies to vilify social movements advocating for land reform and instigate fear regarding legal uncertainties surrounding property rights. Our findings indicate that these advertisements advocate for the preservation of the current socio-economic landscape in the Brazilian rural area while propagating denialism regarding the environmental impacts of agribusiness.

KEYWORDS

disinformation, greenwashing, Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária, digital advertising, anti-environmental lobby

GREENWASHING E DESINFORMAÇÃO: A PUBLICIDADE TÓXICA DO AGRONEGÓCIO BRASILEIRO NAS REDES

RESUMO

O agronegócio, um dos principais setores econômicos do Brasil, compõe uma das mais poderosas forças políticas no congresso do país, a Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (FPA), e aparece como o principal impulsionador do *lobby* anti-ambiental. A FPA busca incidir sobre a legislação trabalhista, fundiária e tributária e foi uma importante aliada do Governo de Jair Bolsonaro, uma vez que a agenda de desmonte ambiental do ex-presidente ia ao encontro dos interesses econômicos do agronegócio. No entanto, a necessidade de garantir uma imagem positiva do setor se reflete em diversas estratégias de comunicação, inclusive na veiculação de anúncios pagos nas plataformas online. Nesse sentido, a presente pesquisa pretende analisar a possível presença de *greenwashing* e/ou desinformação nos 158 anúncios publicados pela FPA no Facebook e Instagram durante o ano de 2023. Após coletarmos os anúncios na interface da Biblioteca de Anúncios da Meta, adotamos três abordagens complementares de análise que nos permitiram identificar e interpretar as estratégias discursivas empregadas pela FPA para “melhorar a imagem do agro”: contagem automática de palavras e análise de coocorrência entre elas, análise de conteúdo e análise de discurso. Nos anúncios analisados, a sustentabilidade é instrumentalizada pelo agronegócio brasileiro como *greenwashing* e desinformação em sua comunicação publicitária online. Essas estratégias discursivas são utilizadas na publicidade digital da FPA para criminalizar os movimentos sociais que lutam por uma reforma agrária e para disseminar pânico sobre inseguranças jurídicas relacionadas ao direito à propriedade. De uma forma geral, nossos resultados mostram que os anúncios defendem a necessidade de manutenção do *status quo* das relações socioeconômicas no campo brasileiro e promovem negacionismo em relação aos impactos ambientais do agronegócio.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

desinformação, *greenwashing*, Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária, publicidade digital, *lobby* anti-ambiental

1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil, home to the largest expanse of tropical rainforest on the planet, holds a pivotal position in global sustainability due to its environmental policy. Changes in land use, particularly deforestation to expand the agricultural frontier, stand as the primary cause of greenhouse gas emissions in the country (Pereira et al., 2020). Agribusiness, a

cornerstone of the country's main economic sectors, currently contributes approximately 24% to the country's gross domestic product (Centro de Estudos Avançados em Economia Aplicada, 2023). Its considerable economic influence translates into political power, with the sector holding substantial representation in the Brazilian legislature, making up the largest caucus in the National Congress: the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária (FPA), known as the "ruralist caucus" or "ox caucus" (Noberto et al., 2022). Within this context, agribusiness emerges as the main driving force behind the anti-environmental lobby in Brazil (Castilho, 2018).

Established in 2002, the FPA prioritises "the modernisation of labour, land and tax legislation, as well as the regulation of Indigenous lands and quilombola areas, to ensure the legal certainty essential for the sector's competitiveness" (Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária, n.d., para. 4). Comprising members from all regions of Brazil, the FPA currently encompasses 374 parliamentarians from 20 different political parties and positions. Although the Frente has members from the Workers' Party, Lula's party has established itself as a supporter of land struggle movements. It is perceived as a political adversary of the ruralists (Bruno, 2021).

The FPA was an important ally of Jair Bolsonaro's administration (2019–2022), aligning closely with the former president's agenda of environmental deregulation, which mirrored the economic priorities of the agribusiness sector's interests. His environmental policies facilitated the expansion of livestock production in the Amazon region (Pereira et al., 2020) while concurrently undermining crucial environmental governance structures and regulations, cutting budgets for scientific research, monitoring and environmental protection (Athayde et al., 2022). However, in 2023, the Workers' Party reassumed the presidency of Brazil, initially met with apprehension by the FPA. The Frente accused the new Government of harbouring ideological biases against agribusiness (Borges, 2023).

One of the FPA's communication strategies involves amplifying paid advertisements on Facebook and Instagram. Through Meta's Ad Library, we collected 718 advertisements run by the FPA from January 1 to September 15, 2023. In the context of digital platforms, advertising content frequently leverages the strategy of avoiding the appearance of traditional advertisements. Instead, it adopts the language and visual style of organic content, thereby making its economic interests less obvious (Evans & Wojdyski, 2020). The limited attention given in existing literature to this phenomenon, often referred to as the "identity crisis" of advertising on digital platforms, particularly concerning sensitive topics like environmental debate, underscores the importance of research endeavours aimed at addressing this gap.

In this sense, the objective of this research is to scrutinise the potential presence of greenwashing and/or disinformation within the advertisements disseminated by the FPA on the Meta platform throughout 2023. In the forthcoming section, we will delve into our understanding of greenwashing, which entails the promotion of environmentally friendly activities in advertising campaigns to divert attention from environmentally hostile practices (Netto et al., 2020). Additionally, we define "disinformation" as a deliberate strategy aimed at manipulating public opinion through the dissemination

of false, decontextualised information or distorted frameworks (Fallis, 2015; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). The choice of the year 2023 allows us to examine the advertising strategies employed by the FPA at the onset of a Government perceived as not aligned with the economic interests of the agricultural sector. By contextualising the political and economic landscape of agribusiness in Brazil, along with the activities of the FPA, and drawing upon scientific research on disinformation and greenwashing within the advertising domain, our research seeks to address two primary questions (PQ):

PQ1: what are the primary themes and frames in the advertisements advocating for agribusiness disseminated by the FPA on Meta's platforms?

PQ2: does the FPA's advertising on Meta's platforms incorporate strategies of greenwashing and/or disinformation? If so, how?

2. BRAZILIAN AGRIBUSINESS AND THE FRENTE PARLAMENTAR DA AGROPECUÁRIA

The “green revolution” in Brazil, which took shape towards the late 1980s (Müller, 1993), played a pivotal role in institutionalising agribusiness within the country. It positioned the sector as a political, economic and social structure in the country, promoting exports while creating a rift with rural groups (Silva, 1998). The military dictatorship in Brazil between 1964 and 1985 worked to industrialise the sector (Carvalho, 2019), consolidating the developmental profile of agribusiness (Santos et al., 2019).

The surge in agricultural production in Brazil has brought about escalating social and environmental repercussions associated with land use. As outlined by Bombardi (2017), the conversion of land intended for domestic food cultivation facilitated alliances among Brazil's ruling elite, enabling them to control the production of commodities (including primary agricultural, livestock, mineral, and environmental goods) at prices dictated by international demand. Moreover, this agricultural paradigm stands as a primary contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the country, with the livestock, agriculture, and food industries being significant sources (Pereira et al., 2020).

Brazilian agribusiness has built a strong anti-environmental lobby by leveraging its agendas in the political field. The FPA receives counsel from the Instituto Pensar Agropecuária, which is supported by 38 associations, including 22 major agribusiness corporations such as Bayer, JBS, Syngenta, Bunge, and Cargill. The institute's funders also include banks such as Itaú, Banco do Brasil, and Santander (Arroyo, 2019). Moreover, there is a conflict of interest, as certain FPA parliamentarians own land across various regions of Brazil (Fuhrmann, 2019).

Santos et al. (2019) note that the FPA's achievements have led to setbacks in Brazilian legislation, notably regarding opposition to agrarian reform and land demarcation, among other issues. One of the FPA's disputed agendas is the “Milestone Thesis”, a 2009 legal thesis which stipulates that Indigenous reserves can only be demarcated if they were occupied by original peoples when the Constitution was promulgated in 1988 (Câmara dos Deputados, 2023). The approval of the thesis would allow rural producers to expand their properties but would also exacerbate historical conflicts with Indigenous

peoples. Additionally, the proposed construction of Ferrogrão, a railway aiming to connect roads in Mato Grosso and Pará for commodity transportation (Xingu +, n.d.), contributes to further conflicts due to the potential socio-environmental impacts of the project (Melito, 2023).

In the ongoing dispute for political and economic hegemony in rural areas, the FPA has demonstrated considerable success by establishing supra-party caucuses, forging alliances with traditional media outlets, and nurturing political and party leaders who champion the interests of the agricultural sector (Bruno, 2015). Media corporations play a pivotal role in promoting the agenda of agribusiness. The interest in refurbishing the sector's image has led to the creation of broadcasters and programmes dedicated to disseminating a positive image of the agricultural model (Carvalho, 2014). The launch of Rede Globo's "agro é tech, agro é pop, agro é tudo" (agro is tech, agro is pop, agro is everything) campaign in 2016 ushered in a new era in agricultural advertising (Santos et al., 2019). In addition to accentuating "agro" as the "wealth of the country", the campaign propagates the idea that its production model epitomises technological advancement, modernity, prosperity, and the ongoing battle against rural poverty (Moncau, 2022).

These deceptions have constructed a rhetoric of legitimacy for the sector, reviving its historical interests: profitability, competitiveness and disregard for the rights of rural workers and traditional populations (Bruno, 2015). As a constituent of the dominant political class, the FPA endeavours to advance its interests through State mechanisms (Simionatto & Costa, 2012), effectively transforming the State into a pro-agribusiness instrument and hindering social movements' ability to challenge this hegemony. In light of controversial actions within the political and economic spheres, it becomes imperative to understand the communication strategies employed by agribusiness on social media platforms.

3. GREENWASHING, DISINFORMATION AND ADVERTISING

Online platforms have ushered in a new form of advertising. By combining data on billions of users with artificial intelligence, the internet has made it possible to target personalised advertisements according to each consumer's profile. In recent decades, advertising has been significantly influenced by media fragmentation, the expansion of digital media and the audience's increasing freedom to choose the channels, devices, and programmes they prefer to consume (Balonas, 2019). In Brazil, major media conglomerates have witnessed the migration of advertising investment to social media platforms (Bell et al., 2017).

Currently, advertising revenue stands as the primary source of income for Meta and Google (Meta Investor Relations, 2023; United States Securities and Exchange Commission, 2023). The business model of these tech giants revolves around advertising, as they generate profits by providing advertisers with services for personalising and targeting messages to hyper-segmented audiences (Dobber et al., 2023). Consequently, predictions regarding user behaviour based on personal data have become these companies'

primary capital (Zuboff, 2018/2021). Unlike advertising in traditional media, which is open to public scrutiny as it is presented equally to the entire audience, programmatic advertising on digital platforms is distributed through opaque algorithms, meaning there is no transparency concerning the content of the advertisements or their distribution criteria (Jamison et al., 2020).

Recent studies indicate that major platforms are profiting from environmental disinformation and misleading sustainability practices, as their advertising systems lack transparency and accountability mechanisms. A recent report exposed Google's failure to adhere to its own policies aimed at combating disinformation, revealing instances where advertisements disseminating lies about climate change were displayed in videos (Climate Action Against Disinformation & Centre for Countering Digital Hate, 2023). Similarly, another study exposed the strategic use of disinformation and greenwashing in the fossil fuel industry, along with the complicit role played by major platforms in fighting environmental disinformation (Bunchan et al., 2023).

Greenwashing can be defined as disclosing environmentally friendly activities in advertising campaigns to divert attention from environmentally hostile practices (Netto et al., 2020). According to Delmas and Burbano (2011), greenwashing involves misleading consumers about an organisation's environmental practices or the environmental benefits of a product or service. In essence, the phenomenon is regarded as a deliberate corporate action involving deceptive elements aimed at manipulating stakeholder perceptions.

Research on greenwashing in advertising has revealed that advertisements tend to contain a low level of factual claims and rely heavily on emotional and ambiguous appeals (Baum, 2012; Naderer et al., 2017). Greenwashing has also been defined as the selective disclosure of information by associating two simultaneous behaviours: withholding the disclosure of negative information related to the environmental performance of a company or sector while simultaneously exposing positive information about environmental performance, social responsibility initiatives and sustainable practices (Netto et al., 2020).

For Baum (2012), greenwashing necessarily involves the deliberate dissemination of disinformation. Thus, the production of false information constitutes an integral aspect of greenwashing, aligning this practice with disinformation strategies (Naderer et al., 2017). However, there are differences between the concepts of "greenwashing" and "disinformation", referring here to an intentional strategy to manipulate public opinion. It involves the dissemination of false or decontextualised information, discrediting adversaries, broadcasting sensationalist or hyper-partisan content and reproducing real news with distorted frameworks (Fallis, 2015; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

In Brazil, agribusiness has engaged in corporate marketing endeavours aimed at concealing anti-ecological practices, seeking to enhance its legitimacy among consumers and in international competition (Budó, 2017). Budó points out that within this context, the concept of greenwashing is expanded to encompass attempts to control information concerning the adverse effects of pesticides and genetically modified organisms by influential sectors in Brazil. The construction of the image of Brazilian agribusiness as a hegemonic coalition of significant economic, political and social influence in the debate

on the country's development is essential amidst the antagonistic dispute between the discursive practices of this sector and the agroecological discourse (Bittencourt et al., 2022). In fact, some Brazilian agribusinesses have resorted to harmful propaganda and greenwashing strategies to impede the implementation of energy transition policies and regulations for product origin traceability and advocate for regulatory dismantling (Regattieri, 2023). Regattieri suggests that Brazilian agribusiness's denialist repertoire was imported from the global far right in an attempt to manipulate public opinion by generating controversies, uncertainties, and conflicts of interest between industry and science.

These strategies draw inspiration from communication tactics employed by the tobacco industry, for example, which is notorious for manufacturing false controversies and doubts (Brandt, 2011). Companies whose operations are essentially destructive and inherently non-ecological (Naderer et al., 2017), such as airlines, manufacturers of plastic bottles or batteries, oil corporations and mining enterprises, invariably resort to greenwashing when they portray themselves as "green" or "environmentally friendly", as it is unlikely that any measures they take will extend beyond being merely superficial given the negative impact inherent in their activities. Historically, companies linked to fossil fuels have been primarily responsible for funding climate denialism, impeding countries' adherence to measures to tackle the problem. Denialist strategies promoted by companies in this sector include framing global warming as a theory rather than a fact, highlighting alleged uncertainties, promoting economic alarmism, and shifting responsibility onto individuals (Carrington, 2021).

It is crucial to acknowledge that the dissemination of false information is a widespread practice across various types of advertising strategies aimed at making products or services seem more appealing to consumers: for example, nutritional claims such as "fat-free" or "sugar-free" often target children and adolescents, who are more susceptible to harmful advertising tactics (Naderer, 2020). In this sense, vague assertions, emotional messages or false promises are not exclusive to "green" advertising. However, the dissemination of disinformation about ecological issues in advertisements can significantly undermine public support for environmental preservation and conservation policies (Kilbourne, 2013). Naderer et al. (2017) caution against the political, economic and social repercussions of disinformation in "green" advertising amidst the climate emergency. According to the authors, given the proclaimed influence of advertising on public opinion, greenwashing can affect how we address environmental challenges globally and contribute to climate inertia.

Due to public awareness and the increase in environmental problems, investors, consumers, governments, and organisations are becoming more vigilant and applying pressure on companies and productive sectors to disclose information about their environmental performance, eco-friendly products and social responsibility initiatives (Netto et al., 2020). However, with the evolution of "green" consumption since the 1970s, organisations and sectors have sought to capitalise on this segment by making sustainability and responsibility claims in their advertisements, even if their products or services are not truly "green" (Naderer et al., 2017). Despite the increasing prevalence of

greenwashing practices in recent decades, consumers are facing greater challenges in discerning truthful claims (Schmuck et al., 2018). Some organisations have endeavoured to educate consumers by conducting studies and creating guides on greenwashing to help the public identify companies' greenwashing practices (UL Solutions, n.d.).

In this sense, it is essential to understand the extent to which Brazilian agribusiness uses sustainability as a form of greenwashing and disinformation in its online advertising communication. Accordingly, we inquire about the advertising strategies employed by Brazilian agribusiness to engage with citizens who are increasingly vigilant about sustainability. This involves assessing the prevalence of false arguments, ambiguous statements, and emotional appeals conveyed by the FPA on behalf of the sector.

4. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

With approximately 150,000,000 users in Brazil on Facebook alone (Bianchi, 2023), Meta's reach can ensure widespread impact for disinformation campaigns run on its advertising network, especially if we consider the platform's advertising-orientated business model (Nieborg & Helmond, 2019). Meta's advertising and targeting policies have been the subject of controversy due to a lack of transparency, violation of user privacy and their exploitation for hate campaigns and political manipulation (Andreou et al., 2019; Jamison et al., 2020). In 2018, following scandals and public pressure, the company launched the Ad Library to archive content served on the company's advertising network, encompassing Facebook, Instagram, Audience Network and Messenger.

Data collection within the library involves searching for keywords associated with the advertisement or the advertiser's page. In this study, we searched for adverts run by FPA using the library's interface, allowing for the download of the content and metadata of the adverts. A total of 158 advertisements were collected from January 1 to September 14, 2023, when the data was acquired. Considering the library's transparency limitations (Le Pochat et al., 2022), the data collected here may not represent the entirety of investments made by the FPA but only the self-declared adverts, leading us to believe that the prevalence of adverts with disinformation and greenwashing may be higher than indicated by our data.

To analyse the data, we adopted three complementary analytical approaches. These methodologies enabled us to identify and interpret the discursive tactics employed by the FPA to "enhance the image of agriculture": automatic word counting and co-occurrence analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis. Initially, we conducted an automated word count using a script in the R programming language. We followed basic data cleaning procedures, such as removing URLs and non-alphanumeric symbols and converting all uppercase letters to lowercase. Additionally, we used a code to remove stop words, which are words with little semantic value, such as prepositions, articles, and conjunctions. Finally, to identify compound words, a human analysis was performed, which considered all n-grams (2-grams, 3-grams, and 4-grams) with more than 10 occurrences.

From this compiled list, we computed the correlation among the most frequently used keywords in the advertisements, thereby identifying the main thematic axes of the FPA's advertising communication. To validate the results, we conducted an exploratory analysis of the adverts' content. This approach offers the advantage of open mapping without predefined themes, ensuring that the identification of relevant issues remains unaffected by researchers' assumptions and biases. However, since this analysis only allows for the consolidation of textual content, we further examined the discourse present in the videos and images to enhance the interpretation of the themes.

In addition, we conducted a systematic content analysis of all the advertisements collected to identify those that portrayed a distorted image of agribusiness through the use of disinformation and greenwashing strategies. We adopted a majority voting protocol wherein authors examined all the advertisements, and in the event of dissent, a third analysis was conducted for validation (Lombard et al., 2006). Thus, we selected relevant examples and patterns for discourse analysis, which was approached from the perspective of the French school (Maingueneau, 2014). At this stage, we analysed the frame and tone of the posts, breaking down the pieces in which the FPA employs strategies of disinformation, manipulation and greenwashing.

Although we sought a mixed-methods approach to enhance the comprehensiveness and relevance of the analysis, the study has some limitations. Firstly, the transparency constraints of Meta's Ad Library (Le Pochat et al., 2022) may have resulted in an incomplete analysis of all the advertisements run by the FPA during the specified period. Additionally, the multimodal nature of the adverts' content, which may encompass text, video, and still images, among other formats, poses limitations to the analysis, particularly as the automated word count method may not capture textual content present in the videos.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. THEMATIC AXES AND FRAMES

Through an automated analysis of term frequencies within the textual content of the advertisements, we can discern the most recurring themes and frameworks in the FPA adverts disseminated on Meta's platforms. Among the most frequently used words are what we term "operational" terms. These are words that pertain to the identification and description of the Frente, its members, and organisational structures ("FPA", "deputy", "Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária", "sector", "president", and "senator" are some examples). There are also, among the most frequent terms, names of politicians and party acronyms ("PP", "PL", "Pedro Lupion", etc.). Moreover, there are several generic words associated with drawing attention to the advertised content ("check it out", "video", "click", "watch", etc.), as well as terms denoting the national scope of the enunciator ("Brazil", "Brazilian", "country", "national", "unity", etc.), among others. These words do not spell out specific themes or frameworks but are dispersed across adverts that encompass different thematic axes.

With this approach in mind, we opted for a methodological strategy that involved selecting terms explicitly indicative of themes and frameworks within the posts. Among the 100 most frequent words (Figure 1), we identified the following key terms associated with themes and frameworks: “property/properties” (33 ads), “invasions/invasion” (32 ads), “security” (29 ads) “law” (26 ads), “milestone thesis” (20 ads), “mst”¹ (16 ads), “tax reform” (15 ads), “crime” (15 ads), “development” (14 ads), “indigenous/indigenous people” (12 ads), “agrarian reform” (11 ads), “justice” (11 ads) and “ferrogrão” (six ads).

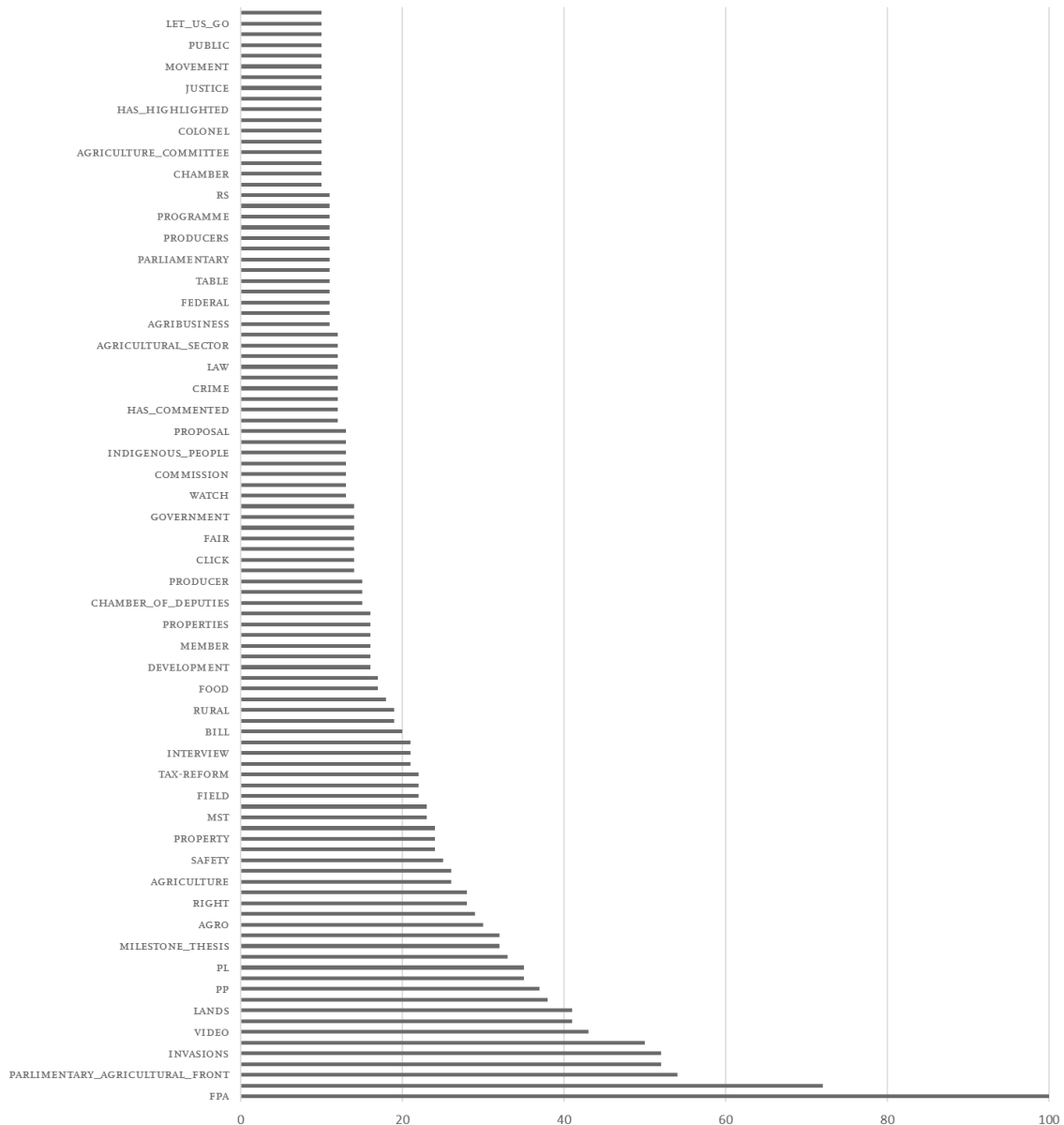


Figure 1. Frequency of the 100 most used terms in advertisements published by the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária profile on the Meta platforms

¹ “MST” is the acronym for the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Movement of Landless Rural Workers), an influential social movement founded in 1984. Its core objectives involve advocating for agrarian reform and striving to democratise land access across Brazil.

In Figure 2, we created a heat map illustrating the co-occurrence of these terms within the same advertisements, aimed at identifying thematic axes, associated players and the frameworks present in them. Through an exploratory analysis of the corpus, combined with the heat map results, we defined five primary thematic axes and two sets of players. The thematic axes are “land invasions”, “Milestone Thesis”, “tax reform”, “economy”, and “Ferrogrão”, while the sets of players are “MST” and “Indigenous/Indigenous people”. Terms such as “property/properties”, “security”, “law”, “crime”, “development”, and “justice” emerge as frameworks for the thematic axes mentioned. Notably, the term “agrarian reform” was disregarded since the exploratory analysis revealed that in eight out of its 11 occurrences, the term appears only as a part of the organisational names such as the Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária and the Comissão de Agricultura e Reforma Agrária. It is possible to observe that the terms chosen as thematic axes have little or no co-occurrence within the advertisements, indicating their independence and validating our selection.

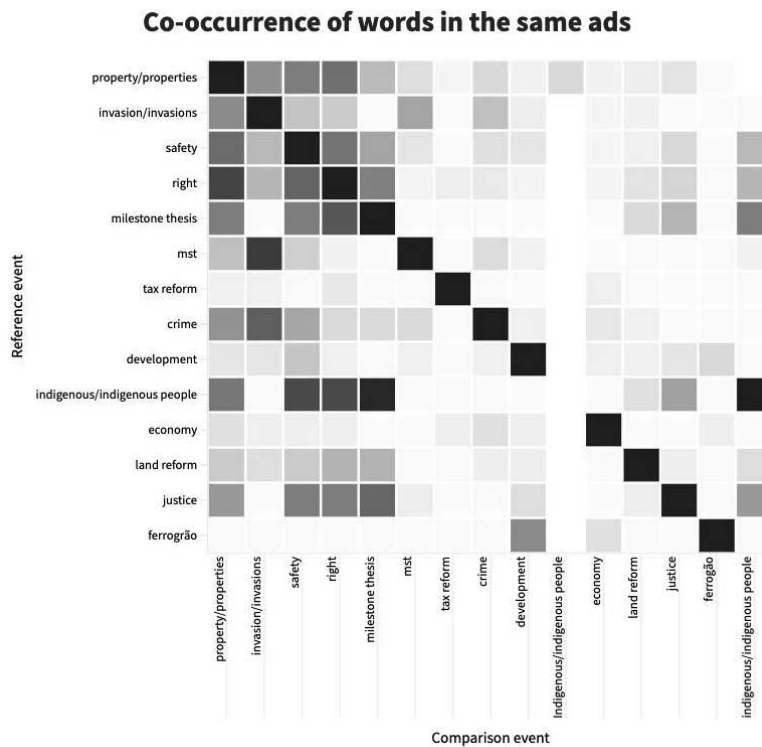


Figure 2. Heat map displaying the co-occurrence of terms within the same advertisements

Among the advertisements mentioning “invasion/invasions”, 41% also mention the “mst”. Conversely, 81% of the adverts mentioning the “mst” also include “invasion” or “invasions” in their text, suggesting the MST’s involvement in the debate on land invasions. Thus, we understand that the MST is a player within this thematic axis. Concerning the primary frames of the thematic axis, 50% of the adverts that include “invasion” or

“invasions” in their text also mention “property” or “properties”, 31% reference the word “crime”, 30% include the word “security” and 27% include “right”. Consequently, in the FPA’s adverts, the so-called “land invasions”, often promoted by the MST, are depicted as criminal acts threatening the right to property and the security of landowners. It is worth emphasising that the very choice of the term “invasion” instead of “occupation” carries ideological implications. While “occupation” refers to the subject position of the landless rural worker, based on the “property right”, “invasion” refers to the subject position of the landowner, based on the “right to property” (Indursky, 2002).

Among the adverts addressing the “Milestone Thesis”, 55% mention the term “Indigenous” or “Indigenous people”. When considering “Indigenous/Indigenous people” as a reference term, 92% of the adverts that include one of these terms also mention “Milestone Thesis”. In this way, Indigenous people are depicted as players involved in the debate on the thematic axis “Milestone Thesis”. Regarding the frameworks present in the thematic axis, 70% of the adverts on “Milestone Thesis” include the word “right”, 55% include “property” or “properties”, 55% include security, and 35% include “justice”. Therefore, in the adverts’ discourse, the bill limiting the possibility of the demarcation of Indigenous lands is framed as a matter of justice, law and the security of landowners where such demarcations could take place.

Figure 3 summarises the players and frameworks related to our analysis’s two main thematic axes: “land invasions” and “Milestone Thesis”. The opacity of the dotted line in the diagram corresponds to the co-occurrence of each word in the adverts on the respective themes.

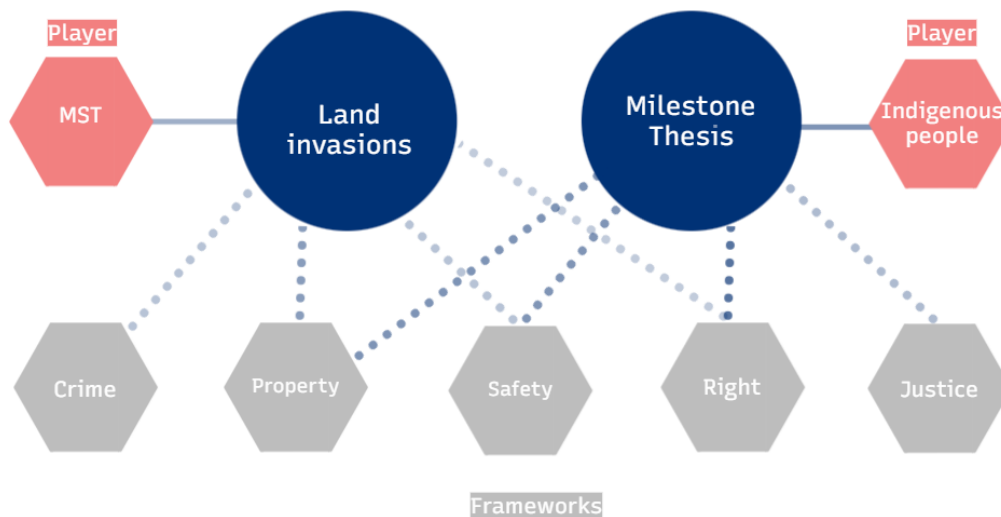


Figure 3. Players and frameworks related to the thematic axes “land invasions” and “Milestone Thesis”

Note. The intensity of the blue in the dotted lines indicates the percentage of co-occurrence of the terms.

“Tax reform” emerges as a thematic axis with little intersection with the most recurrent high semantic value terms selected in this analysis. Our exploratory analysis indicates that the adverts under this thematic axis aim to advocate for the interests of rural producers concerning the proposed changes to tax policy in Brazil. Figure 2 illustrates that only the word “right” is associated with “tax reform” in more than one advert (two in total, representing 13% of occurrences). In both cases, a “fair tax reform” is framed as an issue related to “the right to affordable food”.

“Economy” represents another thematic axis with limited correlation with the words analysed. Our exploratory analysis revealed advertisements emphasising the agricultural sector’s role as a driving force in the Brazilian economy. Only “property/properties” and “crime” appear in more than one advertisement alongside the term (each appearing in two advertisements in co-occurrence with “economy”).

Finally, half of the occurrences within the thematic axis “Ferrogrão” also include the word “development”. Additionally, one advertisement regarding Ferrogrão incorporates the word “economy”, and these are the only occurrences in these thematic axes. This suggests that the Ferrogrão infrastructure project is perceived as a developmental catalyst for Brazil.

In addition to analysing the thematic axes, it is crucial to underscore the relevance of the term “property” combined with its plural variation (“properties”) as a cross-cutting framework for different thematic axes. The terms “property/properties” were the most recurrent among the high semantic value terms considered in this analysis. Among the adverts containing one of these terms, 61% also include the word “right”, indicating that the right to property is a central concept propagated by FPA adverts. This concept upholds the status quo of land distribution in Brazil, staunchly opposing any notion of land redistribution, whether for agrarian reform purposes or to demarcate land for Indigenous peoples.

5.2. DISINFORMATION AND GREENWASHING

Our content analysis, conducted through human evaluation, identified that among the 157 advertisements examined, 61 (39%) contained some form of toxic or misleading discourse, as illustrated in Figure 4. In this analysis, we consider misleading or toxic discourses, those that provide false verifiable information, those that promote alarmism/fatalism, discourses that criminalise social movements, that deny the environmental impact of agribusiness and conspiratorial discourses. In the “greenwashing” category, we identified 27 adverts (17%). We consider adverts containing greenwashing those that portray agribusiness, as a whole, as environmentally responsible, thereby concealing the sector’s recognised environmental impacts.

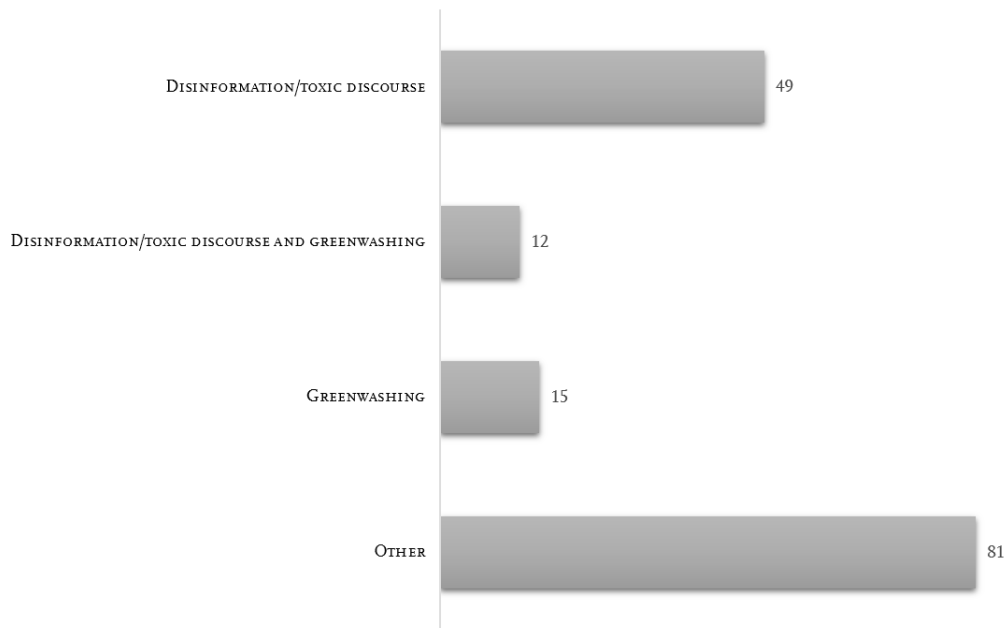


Figure 4. Number of advertisements featuring disinformation/toxic discourse and greenwashing in the examined corpus

We consider false verifiable information adverts that include statements or data that are known to be untrue. For example, one advertisement's video features the following line: "can you imagine a project generating over 370,000 jobs, 30,000 of them being direct positions, helping the development of the country and agriculture, all without any environmental impact? That's Ferrogrão" (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1281712859380537>). We classify this statement as misleading because no infrastructure project can have zero environmental impact (even if its efforts are made to minimise it).

In addition to false verifiable information, we also see the use of alarmism/fatalism as a disinformation strategy. Out of the 13 adverts identified as containing alarmism, 10 are related to the "Milestone Thesis" thematic axis. Therefore, in the FPA adverts, alarmism appears as a discursive strategy for addressing this issue. Overall, these adverts frequently employ a vocabulary that includes terms such as "threat", "uncertainty", "harm", and "losses", accompanied by numerical estimates predicting adverse outcomes for farmers and the population at large. Figure 5 shows an example of this discursive strategy. Moreover, in addition to employing alarmist language and disturbing estimates, the adverts often use the colour red (commonly associated with danger), as well as the pronoun "you", aiming to directly involve the reader in the perceived threats posed by the non-approval of the Milestone Thesis.

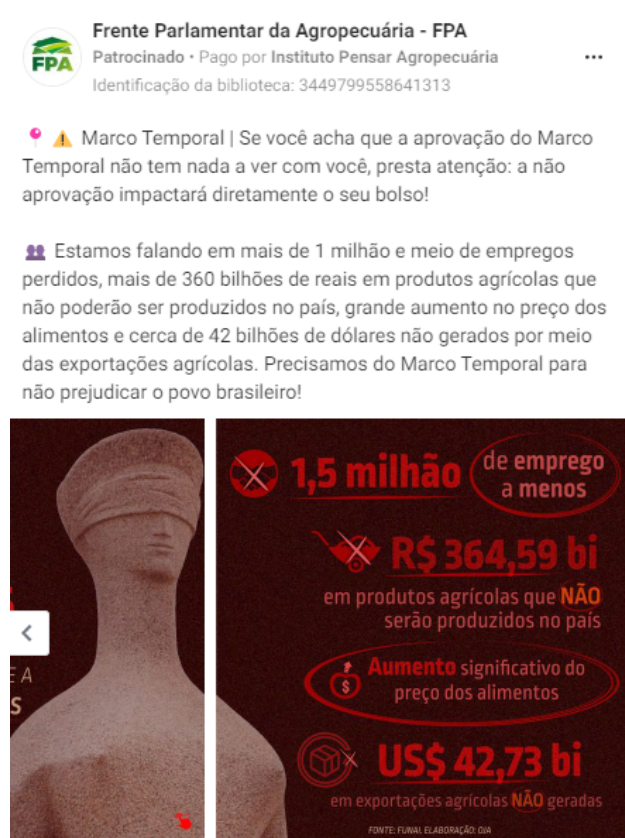


Figure 5. Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária advertisement on the Milestone Thesis with alarmist content

Source. From Marco Temporal | Se você acha que a aprovação do Marco Temporal não tem nada a ver com você, presta atenção [Post], by Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária - FPA, 2023b, Facebook. Library ID: 3449799558641313². (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=548436300794954&set=pb.100068857674657-2207520000&type=3>)

Note. Translation: “Milestone Thesis | If you think that the approval of the Milestone Thesis has nothing to do with you, pay attention: failure to approve will have a direct impact on your wallet! We’re talking about more than 1.5 million jobs lost, more than 360 billion reais in agricultural products that won’t be possible to produce in the country, a huge increase in food prices, and around 42 billion dollars not generated through agricultural exports. We need the Milestone Thesis to avoid harming the Brazilian people!”.

Regarding the criminalisation of social movements, most of the disinformation containing this narrative is on the thematic axis of “land invasions”. Criminalisation is evident in statements such as “increasing penalties for individuals involved in land invasions is essential to safeguarding property rights” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=135508952585668>) and “the MST’s practices do not resemble the struggle for land, but extortion and various other provisions of the criminal code [sic] figures” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1663390137413440>). In one of the adverts, the FPA highlights the arrest of a former MST leader, as shown in Figure 6.

² <https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=3449799558641313>

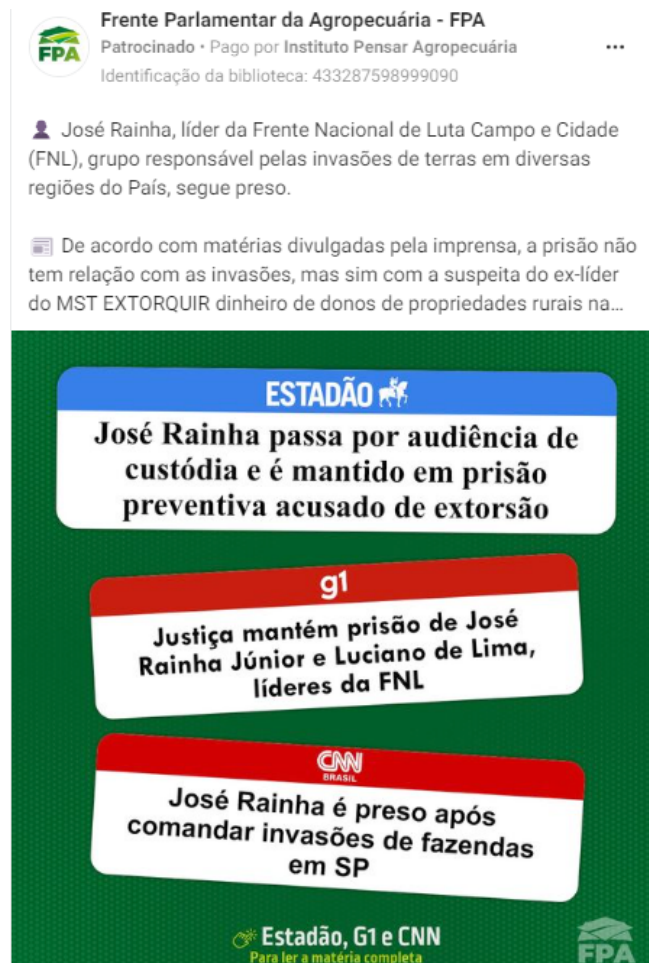


Figure 6. Advertisement by the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária discursively links the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra to the arrest of a former member

Source. From *José Rainha, líder da Frente Nacional de Luta Campo e Cidade (FNL), grupo responsável pelas invasões de terras em diversas* [Post], by Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária - FPA, 2023a, Facebook. Library ID: 4332827598999090. (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=506527054985879&set=pb.100068857674657.-2207520000&type=3>)

Note. Translation: “José Rainha, leader of the National Front for Struggle in the Rural and the Urban areas (FNL), the group responsible for land invasions in several areas, is still in jail. According to press reports, the arrest is not related to the invasions but to the suspicion that the former MST leader is EXTORTING money from rural property owners in the...”. “ESTADÃO — José Rainha undergoes custody hearing and is remanded in custody on extortion charges. g1 — Justice keeps FNL leaders José Rainha and Luciano de Lima in prison. CNN Brazil — José Rainha arrested after leading farm invasions in SP”.

In the advert, the emphasis on the fact that the individual mentioned is a “former MST leader” is an attempt to implicate the movement in the crime committed discursively. Visually, the word “extort” is presented in capital letters right after the mention of MST, which corroborates the attempt to associate the crime with the image of the movement, even though the individual at issue no longer holds an active role within the MST.

An example of conspiracist discourse is an advertisement that states, “we are being governed by International Organisations with economic interests dressed up as environmental concerns [sic]” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=610674101176294>).

Almost all of the adverts marked as containing discourses denying the environmental impact of agribusiness were also classified in the “greenwashing” category. In Figure 4, they are depicted in blue. In addition to the statement above that the Ferrogrão project would have no environmental impact, this category also includes statements such as the one in Figure 7.



Figure 7. Advertisement denying the environmental impact of agribusiness

Source. From *Sustentabilidade | O Brasil segue representando quando o assunto é agricultura sustentável! Através de muitos anos de pesquisa, estudos e tecnologias* [Post], by Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária - FPA, 2023c, Facebook. Library ID: 1338797093713366. (<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=579478054357445&set=pb.100068857674657.-2207520000&type=3>)

Note. Translation: “Sustainability | Brazil remains at the forefront of sustainable agriculture! Driven by years of research, studies, and technological advancements, Brazilian agriculture has created systems that combine production with environmental conservation, becoming a world example when it comes to providing quality food and respecting the planet”. “BRAZIL — world reference in sustainable agriculture. Learn about some of the conservation systems that have made Brazil a benchmark in sustainable production”.

One of the primary greenwashing strategies employed in the FPA’s adverts is the assertion that Brazilian agribusiness epitomises sustainability. This assertion is constantly associated with the notion of scientific progress and increased productivity. In the corpus studied, statements such as “walking side by side with the environment, Brazil leads the world ranking in reducing environmental impacts in agricultural production” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1437746120392536>) and “Brazil, so that there is no doubt, has sustainability in production and the vocation to feed the world while respecting the environment and combating committed. We will not accept ideologies overriding official satellite data and science” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=755405875984507>).

Another characteristic present in adverts containing greenwashing is the attempt to overrule conflict through a discourse of reconciliation between economic growth and sustainability (Krieg-Planque, 2010). Verbs such as “conciliate” and “ally” and expressions like “side by side” are used to promote the notion that there is no inherent contradiction between the expansion of economic activity and environmental protection. These

adverts say, for example, that with Ferrogrão, “our country will be more competitive, thousands of jobs will be created, billions of reais spent on freight will be saved, and it will be the best alternative in terms of sustainability” or that “the Frente’s support for this initiative reflects its members’ commitment to pursuing solutions that reconcile economic growth with environmental preservation, aiming for a prosperous future for the sector and the country”.

5.3. OTHER DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES AND REGULARITIES

In addition to the strategies of disinformation, toxic discourse and greenwashing, we identified other discursive regularities in the adverts used to create a distorted image of Brazilian agribusiness. In 26 adverts (16.6%), the focus is placed on the small producer as the protagonist of agribusiness. While terms like “small producers” or “family farming” are frequently mentioned in the adverts, words like “large estates”, “large producers”, or “landowners” are omitted. In one of the adverts, the text reads: “agribusiness x family farming | Did you know that family farming is a segment of agribusiness, not a competing sector?” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=594461118820772>). In the video accompanying this advertisement, Congressman Pedro Lupion states that

we cannot segregate producers. (...) We are all rural producers. The micro-producer, the small farmer, the settler, the newcomer to the rural area and the giant. We all have our share of responsibility; we generate employment; we generate income.

The attempt to include all rural producers in the same interest group is also an attempt to discursively nullify the contradictions in the rural areas, silencing historical agendas such as the struggle for land and the reduction of land inequalities in Brazil.

In 28 adverts (17.8%), we observed the use of emotional appeal strategies, most of them related to the thematic axes of the “Milestone Thesis” or “land invasions”. Overall, there is an attempt to portray small rural producers as potential victims of Indigenous land demarcations or land invasions by social movements. “This family would like to pass on the legacy of food production for generations. What’s stopping them? The uncertainty that the municipality of Arvoredo faces with the demarcations planned for the region” (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1365046254223082>) reflects this construction. Among these advertisements, we also find videos that use testimonies as a strategy to evoke emotional responses, individualising the problems. If the wording of the textual field of the adverts and the speech of the characters use terms that relate to concepts such as “family” and “legacy”, the videos that accompany the adverts employ cinematic strategies to reinforce the idea. For instance, they may feature different members of a family spanning multiple generations within the same frame, as depicted in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária advertisements use testimonies as a strategy to evoke emotional responses to oppose the demarcation of Indigenous lands and land occupation. In this article, we have chosen to blur the faces of the individuals depicted

Source. From *Gerações, um amor inabalável pela terra e a paixão pela produção de alimentos, que agora enfrentam a incerteza de que* [Post], by Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária - FPA, 2023e, Facebook. Library ID: 1578592689215512. (<https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?id=1578592689215512>)

Note. Translation: “Generations, an unshakeable love for the land and a passion for food production now face the uncertainty that their property rights as citizens will be respected. We need the TMilestone Thesis bill to preserve Brazil’s agricultural legacy. Hit play and watch this story. #TogetherForAgro”.

One final discursive strategy we mapped was the use of fact-checking to propagate ideas favourable to Brazilian agribusiness. Maingueneau (2014) explains that every enunciator establishes, through their enunciation, the context from which they wish to enunciate. This unique staging of enunciation is precisely what the author calls “scenography”. Four of the adverts published by the FPA in 2023 begin their textual field with the expression “fact or fake”, commonly associated with the activity of fact-checking. The expression also appears in the accompanying videos (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Advertisements by the Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária using fact-checking scenography to legitimise information that portrays a positive image of Brazilian agribusiness

Source. From *Fato ou Fake Sustentabilidade | Brasil desmata? Brasil queima? A agropecuária está matando nosso planeta?* [Reel], by Frente Parlamentar da Agropecuária – FPA, 2023d, Facebook. Library ID: 828184975681014. (<https://www.facebook.com/reel/864820808405303>)

Note. Translation: “Fact or Fake Sustainability | Does Brazil deforest? Does Brazil burn? Is agriculture killing our planet? Is livestock farming killing our planet? Play the video and learn more about the investigation into Brazilian sustainability”.

The use of fact-checking scenography serves to legitimise the information verbalised by the enunciator. Dynamic virtual backgrounds, the incorporation of memes in the middle of speeches and the use of humour in the construction of the content are some of the elements used in these adverts. The videos featuring the “fact or fake” branding are among the minority in our sample that adopt a vertical format aligning with the micro-video trend popular on platforms like Instagram’s “Reels” and TikTok.

6. CONCLUSION

This study employed various methodological approaches to examine the content disseminated on the Meta platforms by the FPA in Brazil. The advertisements analysed show that Brazilian agribusiness uses sustainability as a form of greenwashing and disinformation in its online communication efforts.

Among the primary findings, the automated analysis of the frequencies of terms revealed five main thematic axes: “land invasions”, “Milestone Thesis”, “tax reform”, “economy”, and “Ferrogrão”. These themes were associated with keywords that illustrate how they are framed in the advertisements. Overall, the frameworks attempt to criminalise social movements advocating for land reform and to sway public opinion in supporting the approval of the Milestone Thesis, presenting it as a matter of right to property and legal certainty.

The content analysis revealed misleading discourses or greenwashing in 75 of the 157 advertisements studied, representing approximately 48% of the total sample. Through language and visual choices in the advertisements, we identified discursive strategies to criminalise social movements advocating for land reform, alarmism tactics to hinder legislation favouring the demarcation of Indigenous lands, denialist strategies regarding the environmental impacts of agribusiness, and discursive strategies to nullify conflict in the rural areas, among others.

Our findings show that the discourses in the advertisements defend preserving the status quo of socio-economic dynamics in the rural areas, primarily aiming to counteract actors and agendas advocating for land redistribution in Brazil. This is evident through the adverts’ strong discursive opposition to the demarcation of Indigenous lands and their portrayal of social movements advocating for land equality as antagonistic figures. The promotion of alarmism also aims to instil fear of potential transformations in property relations in the rural regions, seeking to garner public support for the maintenance of current power structures. Furthermore, the effort to discursively nullify the contradictions in the rural areas promoted by the adverts, which lump all rural producers into the same interest group, fabricates the notion of a harmonious rural region where large-scale and small-scale producers purportedly pursue the same goals. This “manufactured harmony” is another discursive element to uphold the status quo.

As a potential agenda for future research, we contend that the content analysis of these advertisements should be confronted with an analysis of the advertiser’s segmentation strategies to enable a deeper understanding of the types of messages directed towards specific audience segments.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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DISTINGUISHING GREEN MARKETING FROM GREENWASHING: INSIGHTS FROM DATA ANALYSIS OF BANCO DO BRASIL S.A. AND NATURA & CO.

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the differences between green marketing initiatives and greenwashing, as well as their implications for companies' social and environmental development practices. It relies on data from Banco do Brasil S.A. and Natura & Co. A qualitative, descriptive and multiple case study was employed, involving an analysis of documents such as annual reports and other publicly available information on the companies' websites. The documentary analysis was guided by the checklist developed from the theoretical review. The research findings indicate that both organisations analysed adhere to ethical principles when communicating their sustainability efforts in environmental and social dimensions, thus aligning with the green marketing model advocated in scientific literature and distancing them from the representation of greenwashing. Banco do Brasil and Natura & Co., as evidenced in reports available on their websites, demonstrate genuine actions and support projects in both social and environmental domains. Communication with the market and stakeholders includes verifiable details, sources, and documents, establishing credibility and affirming that the reported actions were indeed implemented. Consequently, it is possible to infer that the practices observed align with green marketing rather than greenwashing.

KEYWORDS

green marketing, greenwashing, social and environmental development, Banco do Brasil, Natura

DIFERENCIANDO MARKETING VERDE DE GREENWASHING COM BASE EM DADOS DO BANCO DO BRASIL S.A. E NATURA & CO.

RESUMO

Este estudo tem como objetivo identificar as diferenças entre as ações de marketing verde e de tendência ao *greenwashing*, bem como suas implicações para as práticas de desenvolvimento socioambiental das empresas, com base em dados do Banco do Brasil S.A. e Natura & Co. Utilizou-se uma pesquisa qualitativa, descritiva e estudo de caso múltiplo, realizado com análise de documentos, como relatórios anuais, além de outras informações disponíveis aos consumidores pelas duas empresas em seus *sites*. A análise documental foi orientada pela *check-list* construída a partir da revisão teórica. A pesquisa evidenciou que as duas organizações analisadas seguem princípios éticos na publicização de suas ações no âmbito da sustentabilidade, nas dimensões ambiental e social, configurando desta forma o modelo de marketing verde, preconizado na literatura científica, distanciando-se da tipificação de *greenwashing*. Tanto o Banco do Brasil como a Natura & Co. demonstram, por meio de relatórios disponibilizados em seus *sites*, a realização de ações e apoio a projetos, tanto sociais, como ambientais, que, ao serem objeto de comunicação ao mercado e *stakeholders*, evidenciam características de veracidade, com indicação de fontes e documentos que comprovam a efetiva execução de ações citadas. Destarte, é possível inferir que se trata de marketing verde e não *greenwashing*.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

marketing verde, *greenwashing*, desenvolvimento socioambiental, Banco do Brasil, Natura

1. INTRODUCTION

Global environmental changes have marked the early years of the 21st century. While there have been advancements in environmental technologies, international policies have yet to address ecological issues effectively. The environment, once a less-discussed subject, has now become a moral obligation and a predominant topic in the media (Alkhatib et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Pancić et al., 2023). This movement has also left its imprint on various market segments.

Many companies have embraced a sustainable, ecological, “nature-friendly” approach, introducing various “green” products as part of a strategy to align with the evolving societal and economic landscape. However, it has come to light that not all advertised environmentally friendly practices are genuine green marketing practices; instead, some companies disseminate false information to create a misleading perception of sustainability; such practices are characterised by greenwashing (Braga et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2023; Nygaard & Silkoset, 2023).

The surge in greenwashing marketing campaigns in Brazil prompted the Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Council (CONAR) to introduce new guidelines in 2011 within its Brazilian Advertising Self-Regulation Code, for advertisements incorporating sustainability claims (Macêdo, 2018). Nonetheless, as outlined by Ferreira et al. (2019), CONAR

faces limitations in its supervisory role, making it challenging to monitor practices that do not genuinely align with environmental considerations.

Hence, the research question was posed: “what are the differences between green marketing initiatives and greenwashing practices in two notable Brazilian companies, Banco do Brasil and Natura & Co., both featured in The Global 100 ranking by Corporate Knights for the year 2021?”. This study aims to identify the differences between green marketing initiatives and greenwashing, as well as their implications for companies’ social and environmental development practices. It relies on data from Banco do Brasil S.A. and Natura & Co. In the Corporate Knights’ The Global 100 for 2021, these companies secured significant positions, with Banco do Brasil ranking 3rd and Natura & Co. claiming the 42nd spot (Corporate Knights, 2022). Recognised as a global authority in sustainability-focused publications and research, Corporate Knights holds a prominent status in this field (Meireles, 2019).

The authors opted for a methodological approach involving a multiple case study strategy of two prominent Brazilian organisations featured in The Global 100 ranking, employing a qualitative approach. The chosen method for data collection was a documentary survey, relying on publicly available reports from both Banco do Brasil and Natura Co. The empirical data collected underwent content analysis.

Banco do Brasil S.A., a public, private, mixed-capital company, is under the control of the Federal Government. It was the first bank to operate in the country and holds the distinction of being the first company to make a public offering of shares on the Brazilian capital market (Banco do Brasil, 2022). Natura & Co. has reached the milestone of serving 100,000,000 consumers and has more than 1,700,000 beauty consultants in Brazil and Latin America. Recognised as the best e-commerce in the country in 2018 and 2021, it also conducts online sales in Argentina, Chile, the United States, and France (Calache, 2022).

In order to facilitate the analysis of green marketing and greenwashing practices, it is essential to enumerate initiatives and programs addressing the environmental and social aspects of sustainability. The environmental dimension involves efforts to protect and preserve natural resources and ecosystems, with the aim of ensuring balance and life on the planet. Meanwhile, the social dimension focuses on individuals and their living conditions. These two dimensions are interdependent and complementary, as human development depends on the quality of the environment, which is affected by human activities (Feil et al., 2023; Wolffenbüttel & Garcia, 2020).

The significance of these two dimensions is highlighted by the 2030 *Agenda for Sustainable Development*, a global action plan adopted by the United Nations in 2015. The 2030 *Agenda* establishes 17 sustainable development goals that span the three dimensions (triple bottom line) of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental (Elkington, 1997; Organização das Nações Unidas, 2023; Vier et al., 2020).

In order to attain the intended objective, the article is structured around five primary sections: the introduction, which presents the theme and object of the study; the theoretical review, which delves into the theoretical underpinnings of green marketing and

greenwashing; the methodological design, which describes the criteria for selecting and analysing the bibliographic and documentary sources used; the fourth section describes the results and analysis; and finally, the final considerations summarise the key points discussed throughout the article.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section outlines some fundamental concepts about green marketing and greenwashing. Green marketing promotes the environmental advantages of a product or service, while greenwashing involves misleadingly publicising false or exaggerated ecological claims. The objective is to analyse the differences between these two approaches and explore the ethical and legal implications of greenwashing for companies and consumers.

2.1. GREEN MARKETING

According to Jabeen et al. (2023), “green marketing” emerged in the 1970s as an approach to meeting human needs and desires with minimal environmental impact. The growing consumer demand for eco-friendly and responsible alternatives also played a significant role (Cidón et al., 2021). The American Marketing Association introduced the term during a workshop addressing the impact of marketing on the environment (Vangeli et al., 2023).

Green marketing is directed towards environmentally conscious consumers, tackling market-induced environmental issues. It involves the development and promotion of products that adhere to “environmental performance” principles and exhibit positive environmental attributes (Lee et al., 2023). Jabeen et al. (2023) characterise “green marketing” as a comprehensive and responsible process designed to satisfy customers and society profitably and sustainably.

In other words, green marketing is a strategy that seeks to balance consumption and minimal impact on the environment by offering products with sustainable characteristics throughout the entire life cycle, from production to disposal (Pancić et al., 2023). This term has become popular with society’s growing environmental concern and the need for companies to communicate their environmental performance through their websites, packaging, products, social media and other channels (Alkhatib et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023).

However, a common misconception has emerged, where many now associate green marketing solely with advertising products that incorporate environmental attributes. Consumers tend to link terms like “recyclable”, “reusable”, “ozone layer friendly”, and “environmentally friendly” with the concept of “green marketing” (Mehraj et al., 2023). This perception persists because consumers face challenges in differentiating deceptive strategies from genuine initiatives adhering to environmental standards. Simultaneously, there is lingering uncertainty about whether individual actions can effectively contribute to the rational and sustainable use of environmental resources (Pancić et al., 2023).

According to Schreiber et al. (2023), most people would like to consume environmentally friendly products from sustainable companies. To address this consumer

demand, it becomes imperative to develop more sustainable marketing strategies despite the challenges posed by the widespread lack of understanding of the term “sustainability” and doubt about the companies’ ability to improve their behaviour. Cidón et al. (2021) emphasise the need for transparent and truthful relationships, marked by clear, coherent, and honest communication from companies identifying themselves as sustainable. The public is more influenced by practical actions that demonstrate the eco-efficiency of processes and products rather than being swayed by the appearance of ecological packaging.

Nevertheless, not all criteria are consistently fulfilled. Alkhatib et al. (2023) highlight that consumers may be confused by ill-founded claims, making it challenging to assess the level of commitment from brands. In Brazil, many companies face problems with organisations such as CONAR, for example, for running ecological campaigns without tangible evidence to substantiate their claims in practice (Schreiber et al., 2022).

CONAR outlines four principles to be adhered to due to the increasing use of environmental information and indications in advertising: (a) veracity: the environmental information must be true and verifiable; (b) accuracy: the environmental information must be exact and precise, with no room for generic or vague information; (c) suitability: the environmental information provided must be related to the production and marketing processes of the advertised products and services; and (d) relevance: the highlighted environmental advantage must be significant concerning the overall impact of the product and service on the environment throughout its life cycle, encompassing its production, use and disposal (Conselho Nacional de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 1978).

Nonetheless, a routine visit to the local supermarket may reveal numerous products from various brands, all claiming to be “greener” than their competitors. The question arises: are they really contributing to a better, more sustainable world? Is it possible to gauge the authenticity and effectiveness of such claims? This lack of accessibility and clarity is indicative of greenwashing, a topic explored in the subsequent section.

2.2. GREENWASHING

Greenwashing is a deceptive tactic derived from green marketing, aiming to create the illusion that a particular company prioritises environmental concerns when, in reality, it does not. This strategy has adverse consequences for the environment (Ferreira et al., 2019). It undermines the trust of environmentally conscious consumers, who, as the most vulnerable party in consumer relations, are willing to pay more for products from companies that are only concerned with selling and making a profit (Maia, 2019).

TerraChoice (2010) highlighted the “seven sins of greenwashing”, outlining strategies used to promote products that are not always sustainable: (a) imposing a “green” label by emphasising minor attributes of the product while neglecting significant environmental issues; (b) making environmental claims that cannot be easily verified; (c) using vague terms such as “green” or “100% natural”; (d) making environmental claims that are true but not relevant; (e) creating the impression of third-party certification and approval when none actually exists; (f) making true environmental claims within a product

category while diverting attention from potentially more significant environmental impacts of that category; and (g) making false environmental claims.

While some companies create truly “green” products, as organisations, they engage in other operations that do nothing to improve environmental quality, such as nuclear power divisions or companies that oppose clean-up laws (Schreiber et al., 2023). As highlighted by Macêdo (2018), companies may be making commitments without having any real intention of implementing social and environmental policies.

Greenwashing involves companies with subpar environmental performance presenting a positive, exaggerated image, magnifying their attributes to seem more significant than they truly are. This deceptive practice can severely erode the trust of consumers and investors who seek environmentally friendly products, even undermining the credibility of companies genuinely committed to environmentally friendly performance aligned with their marketing actions (Braga et al., 2019). According to Horiuchi et al. (2009), the global non-profit organisation Business for Social Responsibility defines four types of greenwashing: (a) misguided greenwash: this category includes companies that are making substantial efforts to be more environmentally conscious, but their efforts are not very effective and they often use statements such as “environmentally friendly” in their communications; (b) unsubstantiated greenwash: this category includes companies that seem to be doing a commendable work and providing data to back up their claim, but a closer examination shows that the companies have not made the change for the environment, but for their own benefit; (c) greenwash noise: this category includes companies that claim to be “green” do not have much to back up this claim, and their are not compelling to consumers; and (d) effective environmental communication: this category alone represents the model for all organisations, as they do everything to improve environmental and social performance in different company functions and are able to communicate effectively.

To ensure coherence between discourse and actions, oversight organisations like CONAR should play a supervisory role, and consumers are encouraged to research companies to know what they are buying (Costa et al., 2017). Providing misleading information that does not reflect reality can be deemed a crime against the consumer, subject to legal consequences (Braga et al., 2019; Ferreira et al., 2019). Consumers have the right to verify that information corresponds to reality, making it the manufacturers’ responsibility to provide access to that information. Companies should refrain from offering statements such as “environmentally friendly” or “sustainable company” without giving specific details on why it is environmentally friendly and/or sustainable (Macêdo, 2018).

In this scenario, a trustworthy brand conducts itself ethically toward its customers, who recognise and value this attitude. Thus, brands must communicate their actions clearly and promptly rectify any mistakes (Nygaard & Silkoset, 2023; Pancić et al., 2023; Tolentino et al., 2019). As numerous products in the market fail to live up to their environmental commitments and lack transparency regarding their impacts, consumers are increasingly cognisant of the risks associated with greenwashing (Qayyum et al., 2023).

Liu et al. (2023), Vangeli et al. (2023), and Pancić et al. (2023) note a lack of consensus on the identification and measurement of greenwashing, with limited understanding

of its impacts on product sales and corporate reputation. Table 1 provides a summary of the primary points analysed in this research.

TERM	SUMMARY	AUTHORS
Green marketing	A sustainability proposal, inspired by the surge in environmental awareness during the 1970s, involving all activities intended to facilitate exchanges for fulfilling human desires and needs. The aim is to benefit not only prospective consumers but society as a whole, with the least possible impact on the environment.	Alkhatib et al. (2023); Jabeen et al. (2023); Lee et al. (2023); Mehraj et al. (2023); Pancić et al. (2023); Qayyum et al. (2023).
Greenwashing	It is a derogatory term used to describe a deceptive practice originating from green marketing aiming to create the illusion that a particular company is environmentally conscious. This practice directly undermines consumer confidence.	Braga et al. (2019); Ferreira et al. (2019); Macêdo (2018); Nygaard and Silkoset (2023); Vangeli et al. (2023); Yu et al. (2020).

Table 1. Primary concepts addressed

Finally, there has been an exponential increase in statements about the environmental positioning of corporations, causing consumers to question the authenticity of such content. Verifying certain claims becomes challenging, particularly given the constant release of new products, advertisements, and initiatives under the “green flag”. These products often feature names, seals, and packaging that give the impression of aligning with the concept of “sustainability” but lack any tangible environmental benefits (Yu et al., 2020).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

This study is characterised as descriptive research, which, as defined by Prodanov and Freitas (2013), involves the description of observed facts without researcher interference. Descriptive research employs standard data collection techniques such as interviews, surveys, forms, and observation. The methodological approach adopted is qualitative, encompassing a review of secondary and bibliographic data from various sources.

The selected methodology for this study is the multiple case study (Prodanov & Freitas, 2013; Yin, 1984/2015). The objects of study in this research are the top Brazilian companies ranked in Corporate Knights’ The Global 100 in 2021, considered one of the most influential rankings worldwide. Banco do Brasil and Natura & Co., ranked 3rd and 42nd, respectively, represent highly significant brands known for their green marketing initiatives (Corporate Knights, 2022).

The first data collection phase occurred between August and October 2019, followed by the second phase in October 2022. A documentary survey (Prodanov & Freitas, 2013) involved examining publicly accessible documents from the two companies analysed. The documentary analysis adhered to a checklist developed during the theoretical review conducted from August 2019 to February 2020, with the foundations outlined in Table 2.

DATABASE	KEYWORD/THEME	ARTICLES RETRIEVED	ARTICLES RELEVANT TO THE STUDY
SPELL	Greenwashing	4	2
	Green marketing	265	4
SciELO	Greenwashing	2	1
	Green marketing	54	6
EBSCO	Greenwashing	1	1
	Green marketing	0	0
Google Scholar	Greenwashing	5,800	15
	Green marketing	16,600	19
Number of articles relevant to the study			48

Table 2. Analysis of articles relevant to the research

The SPELL database was selected due to its indexing of scientific journals that publish articles on sustainability within the organisational context, and it is affiliated with the Brazilian Academy of Management. The SciELO database was chosen for its inclusion of scientific journals that publish articles on sustainability across diverse disciplines, including engineering and health. This coverage spans various technologies adopted for promoting environmental management in both private and public organisations. The EBSCO database was chosen, leveraging the Sustainability Reference Centre, a specialised database for scientific research encompassing articles published on all aspects of sustainability concerning society. Google Scholar was employed for its integration functionality with university libraries.

Upon identifying articles in these databases, the analysis involved reviewing the title, abstract, and keywords to assess their thematic alignment with the research objective. The examination revealed that articles on green marketing, identified in the first phase of the search across the four databases investigated, did not have the structuring elements aligned with the research objective, as they linked the topic to areas such as sanitary and environmental engineering, chemistry, the development of materials and fuels from renewable sources and similar.

Using the term “greenwashing”, it becomes evident that only a limited number of articles and publications delve into this issue, underscoring the need for further research on the subject. The theoretical review encompasses a total of 19 articles on greenwashing and 29 on green marketing. In addition to these primary themes, the contribution of other subjects, such as “conscious consumption” (12 publications) and “ethics” (24 publications), is also pertinent to this research. This compilation of 84 publications forms the basis of the documentary survey. All the terms were searched in both Portuguese and English.

The evaluation of companies’ environmental and social management was conducted using The Global 100 international ranking. Data sourced from the publication’s website, including the ranking, documents elucidating the methodology, and key performance indicators, were analysed. In order to scrutinise the content of these actions, annual reports accessible on the companies’ websites were examined, along with other pertinent information available to consumers that was deemed relevant to the study.

Following the conclusion of the documentary analyses, a content analysis of the material was undertaken, characterised by a set of methodological tools in line with the explanation, systematisation, and inference principles outlined by Bardin (1977/2016). Building upon this framework, criteria for determining the difference between “green marketing” and “greenwashing” were established as categories of analysis. This approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how organisations approach their environmental and social initiatives, shedding light on the considerations taken into account when designing green marketing campaigns and actions.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

An initial theoretical review of both concepts was conducted, incorporating insights from both seminal and contemporary authors to examine the companies’ green marketing and greenwashing practices. The goal was to address any incongruities and structuring divergences, thereby consolidating the definitions that guided the analytical process of this study. Subsequently, through a documentary survey of publicly available information from Banco do Brasil and Natura & Co., empirical elements related to the concepts of “green marketing” and “greenwashing” were identified. These were categorised into dimensions recommended by Elkington (1997) within the theoretical model known as the “triple bottom line”, with a focus on the environmental and social dimensions of the actions disclosed by the organisations (see Table 3).

DIMENSION	GREEN MARKETING	GREENWASHING
Social	Communicating to society actions conducted by the company that resulted in the social inclusion of communities.	Communicating social actions not undertaken, social actions conducted with a greater number of beneficiaries, sharing repercussions of social actions that did not attain the reported results.
	Communicating the results attained by the company as a consequence of its social actions.	Communicating the results attained by the company as a consequence of actions not undertaken in the social sphere.
	Providing information that illustrates the actions and values associated with these initiatives in the social sphere.	Not providing information that describes the actions and values involved with these initiatives in the social sphere.
Environmental	Providing genuine and verifiable environmental information.	Communicating to society as many awareness-raising actions and activities as possible, capacity-building, and training programs, as well as environmental risk prevention activities, that were either not implemented or were undertaken for a shorter duration than reported.
	Providing information that reflects the actions and values linked to these initiatives in the environmental sphere.	Not giving information reflecting the actions and values related to these initiatives in the environmental sphere.
	The product or service must offer the environmental benefit emphasised.	The environmental benefit highlighted is not significant in terms of the total impact on the environment throughout its life cycle, that is, production, use and disposal.

Table 3. Differences between green marketing and greenwashing

4.1. BANCO DO BRASIL S.A.

In The Global 100 ranking, Banco do Brasil, the only Brazilian company within the top 10, was recognised as the most sustainable financial institution in the world, achieving a performance score of 81.70%, as reported by the publication. This percentage is derived from evaluating various indicators throughout the process. These encompass energy usage, carbon emissions, water consumption, solid waste management, innovation capacity, tax payments, the ratio between the average worker's salary and the CEO's, the number of casualties, corporate pension plans and the percentage of women in management, among other criteria (Corporate Knights, 2022).

This is the fourth time that Banco do Brasil has been listed among the world's most sustainable institutions. The bank has committed significant resources, amounting to R\$193,000,000,000, towards initiatives in the green economy. This investment includes funding for the Programa Água Brasil, a nearly decade-long partnership with the National Water Agency, the Banco do Brasil Foundation and WWF-Brazil. The institution aims to reduce its carbon footprint, enhance the use of resources and foster social inclusion policies (Meireles, 2019; Vangeli et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2020).

Banco do Brasil (2022) uses its annual report as a means of communicating to shareholders, investors, employees, clients, and representatives of Government and society about its business operations and their impact on the environmental and social spheres. The report, published electronically since 2010, adheres to the Global Reporting Initiative Standards and undergoes an audit by KPMG Auditores Independentes. The institution reported that its social actions have led to the social inclusion of communities. Particularly as a financial institution, Banco do Brasil implements initiatives such as micro-credit operations and the provision of rural credit, which promote social inclusion across all regions of Brazil. These endeavours align with one of the bank's key objectives, which is to develop financial solutions and business models fostering the transition to a green and inclusive economy (Banco do Brasil, 2022).

The environmental information disclosed by the institution is aligned with the Social and Environmental Responsibility Policy. The Environmental Management System adheres to the specifications outlined in the Brazilian Standard ABNT NBR ISO 14.001 of 2015. Banco do Brasil is committed to mitigating social and environmental risks and minimising the impacts of its funding and investments, as well as identifying new opportunities within sustainable businesses (Banco do Brasil, 2022).

The Social and Environmental Responsibility Policy serves as a guiding framework for the institution's conduct regarding social and environmental responsibility. Through the *Plano de Sustentabilidade – Agenda 30 BB* (Sustainability Plan – Agenda 30 BB) and in accordance with internal regulations, a strategic approach is formulated, addressing economic, social, and environmental variables by fostering the development of processes, products, and services (Banco do Brasil, 2022).

Ethical actions that reflect credibility and soundness are deemed essential factors for a financial institution. Transparent conduct and adherence to laws and regulations by the organisation and its employees contribute to greater reliability and influence the

satisfaction of customers and shareholders. Ethics management serves as a preventive measure against illegal activities, mitigating financial losses and minimising damages to the reputation as vulnerabilities in processes, systems, and people can pose risks and, consequently, generate losses for stakeholders (Banco do Brasil, 2022).

Banco do Brasil reports its social and environmental performance to the Board of Directors annually. The content of this report is based on the results derived from sustainability market indices such as the Dow Jones sustainability index and the accountability of actions developed within the scope of the *Plano de Sustentabilidade – Agenda 30 BB* (Banco do Brasil, 2022). Through an analysis of the data concerning the institution's actions and initiatives, an examination was conducted to determine whether the criteria addressed confirm the “green” aspects of marketing or exhibit a tendency towards greenwashing.

The analysis of the actions in the social dimension, involving the communication of initiatives leading to the social inclusion of communities and highlighting institutional values supporting these actions, demonstrates adherence to the theoretical foundations of green marketing (Jabeen et al., 2023; Mehraj et al., 2023; Qayyum et al., 2023). In the environmental dimension, where the focal point is the disclosure of information about institutional performance for verification, along with characteristics of actions implemented, services provided and institutional initiatives aligned with environmental principles, with emphasis on recycling, circular economy and low carbon, Banco do Brasil's green marketing criteria were also met.

Based on the information extracted from the documents made available by Banco do Brasil (2022), it becomes evident that the institution adopts the practice of communicating its social initiatives, both in the traditional media and on social networks and its institutional website, shedding light on the impacts these actions generate, particularly concerning social inclusion (a component of the social dimension of sustainability). An excerpt from the document reads: “in 2022, the social investment made by Fundação BB totalled R\$ 149.3 million. It concerned 256 projects supported and 1.7 million people served” (Banco do Brasil, 2022, p. 10).

The same page also mentions the institution's initiative to promote social inclusion: “we are the first bank in Brazil to provide extensive services in Libras, the Brazilian sign language. Since it was implemented in April 2022, we have recorded over 5,400 calls” (Banco do Brasil, 2022, p. 10). The document also underscores the institution's initiative to support female entrepreneurs:

in 2022 Banco do Brasil launched the web series named *Imagina Sua Empresa*, (Imagine your Company) featuring inspiring stories of female entrepreneurs backed by the Bank. Each episode posted on social media (YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn) features a customer sharing her entrepreneurship journey and the partnership she has with the Bank. (...) In 2022, five episodes of the female entrepreneurship-focused web series were released, totaling overall over 38 million views. (p. 48)

With regard to the environmental dimension, it was noted that Banco do Brasil goes beyond mere communication of actions by providing substantiating evidence for the information reported to the public, making it possible to verify the integrity of the facts mentioned. On Page 99 of the *Relatório Anual de 2022* (Annual Report 2022; Banco do Brasil, 2022), the institution demonstrates that the weight of non-hazardous waste sent for recycling increased from 2,689.50 tonnes in 2020 to 4,258.39 tonnes in 2021. The document also outlines the institution's initiative called the "BB Zero Paper Programme", with: "proper disposal of equipment, and job creation and income generation, and the highlight was the donation of recyclable waste to associations and cooperatives of collectors" (p. 107).

By presenting and elaborating on these and other initiatives and actions undertaken within the scope of the environmental dimension of sustainability, the institution demonstrates the relevance of these endeavours, encouraging, by way of example, other companies to engage in low-carbon activities. In this sense, the *Relatório Anual de 2022* (Banco do Brasil, 2022) accentuates key areas such as recycling, procurement of products from this process, reverse logistics, and, in the portfolio of financial products, those designed to stimulate environmental projects, reconfigure industrial operating plants to reduce environmental impact, the implementation of projects to mitigate environmental impact, adopting reduced banking spreads in sustainable operations.

As previously mentioned, Banco do Brasil makes both reports and evidence of reported actions available to the public, encompassing both the social and environmental dimensions. This transparency allows for verification of the accuracy of the expenditures and the number of individuals benefiting from these actions through other publicly available sources. An analysis of the reports for 2019 and 2022 reveals the institution's success in the listed actions and initiatives, earning recognition through national and international awards. This recognition has contributed to Banco do Brasil's upward repositioning in the ranking, moving from the 8th to the 3rd position.

Drawing upon evidence gleaned from secondary sources and data provided by the mentioned institution, it was possible to demonstrate that the process of communicating actions to the market does not constitute greenwashing. The company does not fulfil any criteria indicative of this practice. The actions and initiatives communicated align with green marketing criteria (Alkhatib et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Pancić et al., 2023; Qayyum et al., 2023; Vangeli et al., 2023).

4.2. NATURA & Co.

Natura is a publicly traded company listed on the São Paulo stock exchange, aligning its operations with the 2050 sustainability vision. The company actively supports initiatives such as the Partners for the Amazon and AmazôniaUp platforms, which are dedicated to promoting entrepreneurship in sustainable agroforestry businesses. Drawing on insights from the Carbon Neutral Programme, the organisation has also established a collaborative platform aimed at attracting companies interested in offsetting greenhouse gas emissions from their activities. Additionally, Natura promotes dialogue with other organisations on the subject of female empowerment (Calache, 2022).

Natura ranked 42nd with a performance score of 67.90% in The Global 100 (Corporate Knights, 2022). The Natura & Co. group, of which Natura is a part, also owns Aesop, The Body Shop and Avon (acquired in 2012, 2017 and 2019 respectively). Natura has 6,600 employees and operates in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, the United States, France, Mexico and Peru. Additionally, it maintains a distributor in Bolivia (Calache, 2022).

Recognised as the largest Brazilian multinational in the cosmetics sector, Natura is recognised for aligning its discourse with a multitude of positive initiatives. Serving as a benchmark for all Brazilian companies, Natura has garnered recognition for its waste management practices, pension fund status, and the representation of female executives (Corporate Knights, 2022). In 2018, besides securing a commendable position in the Corporate Knights ranking, the global organisation Ethisphere Institute, dedicated to enhancing business practices, also selected Natura as one of the world's most ethical companies for the sixth consecutive year (Calache, 2022).

In the same year, Natura was awarded the seal of the Union for Ethical BioTrade, an international non-profit organisation focusing on fair trade, the preservation of Brazilian biodiversity and a trustworthy relationship with the community. This seal affirms that all plant ingredients in Ekos products have undergone an assessment of the Union for Ethical BioTrade's ethical bio-trade principles. These principles include practices ensuring the preservation of ecosystems, equitable sharing of benefits derived from the use of biodiversity, respect for associated traditional knowledge, and adherence to fair working conditions (Calache, 2022).

Natura ceased animal testing in 2006 and is certified by Cruelty Free International, an organisation dedicated to ending such testing. Approximately 1,000 companies globally have Cruelty Free International's The Leaping Bunny label. It was awarded to Natura in September 2018, making it the first company in Brazil to receive this certification and the second within the Natura & Co. group.

As of 2014, Natura has held the B Corp certificate, which integrates the company into a global network promoting economic growth while adhering to criteria for social and environmental well-being. The certification, renewed in May 2017, underscores the company's commitment to sustainable development. Originating in the United States in 2006 under the leadership of B Lab, a non-profit organisation, the B Corp movement unites companies that believe in the possibility of fostering social, environmental and economic development through products, practices and governance. Receiving the B Corp seal and being part of the B Corp movement involves a stringent certification process, requiring a minimum score of 80 out of 200 points (Calache, 2022).

Natura holds the Pro-Ethics Company seal, awarded by the Office of the Comptroller General and the Ethos Institute, which recognises its dedication to establishing ethical and transparent business practices across its chain. In addition, it was ranked among the most ethical companies in the world for the eighth consecutive year by the Ethisphere Institute, a global authority in defining and developing standards for business ethics. Additionally, Natura is a signatory of the Ethos Institute's Business Pact for Integrity and Against Corruption (Calache, 2022).

Based on the data pertaining to the actions and initiatives promoted by Natura, as presented in the *Relatório Integrado Natura & Co. América Latina 2022* (2022 Natura & Co. Latin America Integrated Report; Calache, 2022), made available by the company, as well as the sustainability reports and supporting documents, in the form of appendices and annexes, were analysed in the light of structuring concepts of green marketing, as a dominant paradigm. In the social dimension, Natura showcases initiatives leading to the social inclusion of communities and provides accessible data and information about its social actions. In the report, the company highlights

Palm AFS, the first palm oil cultivation agroforestry system in the world. Led by Natura since 2008, in partnership with Embrapa and the Camta cooperative (Cooperativa Agrícola Mista de Tomé-Açu), the AFS cultivates palm oil sustainably in Pará, reproducing its original environment in the forest through the association of diverse plants in the production system. The cultivation practices in the areas are based on agroecological stewardship, without using crop defence products, to promote the regeneration of the local ecosystem and capture carbon from the atmosphere. (Calache, 2022, p. 86)

In the environmental dimension, the company is recognised for its transparency, presenting comprehensive data on its environmental performance, allowing for verification of its accuracy, including environmental investments such as reverse logistics, recycling and reuse, sustainable products and packaging, as well as the growing use of renewable energies. Notably, the report highlights the “PlenaMata platform, created by Natura in partnership with Mapbiomas, InfoAmazonia and Hacklab. This presents scientific data, qualified information and disseminates data on deforestation with the purpose of sensitising and mobilising people around the need to conserve the Amazon” (Calache, 2022, p. 76).

The content of the documents of the second company analysed, Natura & Co., demonstrates that sustainability has become one of the primary strategic orientations guiding both its operations and communication with the market. The company recognises that the consumer market it caters to is sensitised to sustainability and considers it a determining criterion in choosing products and services. Furthermore, other stakeholders, as well as institutional partners, share a similar interest in implementing the greatest number of actions aligned with the dimensions of sustainability, notably the social and environmental dimensions.

When analysing the reports for 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, and 2022, one can see that Natura Co. has added actions and initiatives, particularly climate action, which includes the company’s commitment and actions to tackle climate change and its impacts; the regeneration of nature, which aims to protect, restore and promote the sustainable use of ecosystems; and the distribution of value, which consists of making efforts to reduce inequalities within and between the countries where the company operates. The three themes are set out in the Global Reporting Initiative 3-2 and have been highlighted in particular over the last five years (Jabeen et al., 2023).

The reports and supporting documents provided by Natura provide a comprehensive view of the real dimension of their social initiatives, showcasing clear social inclusion of people from the communities where their funded projects are implemented. In the environmental dimension, Natura directly promotes various projects, with significant repercussions, at the national and international levels (considering its operations in other countries through its subsidiaries), either through direct implementation or financing and co-financing of environmental initiatives. The facets of the actions undertaken, both in the social and environmental dimensions, are incompatible with greenwashing, as defined in the scientific literature reviewed (Nygaard & Silkoset, 2023; Vangeli et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2020).

The actions and initiatives communicated by Natura & Co. align with the criteria of green marketing, satisfying all its requirements. It is worth highlighting the relevance of the data extracted from the reports, which emphasise the social dimension in the context of sustainability as an integral and inseparable aspect of organisational strategies that confirm alignment with the principles of green marketing, as emphasised by Vangeli et al. (2023), Braga et al. (2019) and Pancić et al. (2023). Therefore, it is possible to assert that the analysis of communicated sustainable actions does not suggest any tendency towards greenwashing, as the company does not meet any criteria indicative of such practices (Alkhatib et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2023; Pancić et al., 2023).

It is worth noting that this research relies on data provided in the annual reports published by both companies (Banco do Brasil, 2022; Calache, 2022). As these reports undergo auditing before publication, it is inferred that the presented data and information accurately represent reality. This aligns with the recommendations in the literature reviewed, highlighting transparency as a fundamental attribute in the context of green marketing (Alshurideh, 2016; Tolentino et al., 2019).

To distinguish green marketing from greenwashing, it becomes imperative to assess whether companies maintain transparency and coherence between their statements and actions. Additionally, it is crucial to verify whether they have recognised environmental certifications and whether they adhere to current standards and legislation. After all, greenwashing can have adverse consequences for companies, including loss of credibility, financial penalties and damage to their corporate image.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aims to identify the differences between green marketing initiatives and greenwashing, as well as their implications for companies' social and environmental development practices. It relies on data from Banco do Brasil S.A. and Natura & Co. Green marketing has gained popularity with society's growing environmental concerns and compelling companies to communicate their environmental performance through various channels. It is a type of marketing that involves creating and promoting products or services with ecological benefits, aiming to satisfy customers and society profitably and sustainably. However, one of the most significant challenges in the current

sustainability landscape is the difficulty people have in distinguishing green marketing from greenwashing.

Greenwashing is a deceptive practice that tries to create a false image of environmental responsibility without actually changing the company's activities. The crux of the issue lies in the fact that many consumers lack the knowledge to assess the authenticity of companies' environmental claims and end up being influenced by contradictory discourse. This knowledge gap can lead to confusion, potentially jeopardising the credibility and competitiveness of companies truly committed to sustainability.

Therefore, based on an analysis of Banco do Brasil's social and environmental endeavours and the transparency with which it communicates them to the public through different media, it can be concluded that the institution does not engage in greenwashing. It should be emphasised that its actions and initiatives align with sustainability criteria. Banco do Brasil goes beyond mere publicity by providing substantiating evidence, including reports and external validation. The marked improvement in Banco do Brasil's ranking from eighth to third place between 2019 and 2021 underscores the consolidation of a corporate strategy focused on differentiation through sustained investments in socially and environmentally responsible actions.

Natura can be described as a company strategically oriented towards sustainability, actively contributing to and endorsing social and environmental initiatives with positive impacts on the communities it serves, both in Brazil and globally. The consistency of its green marketing initiatives underscores that the company avoids exaggeration, omission, or distortion of information regarding its social and environmental performance. However, the decline in its ranking from 15th position in 2019 to 42nd in 2021 can be attributed to the broader economic impact, particularly on financial results, suffered by the company during the COVID-19 pandemic, mirroring challenges faced by other companies operating in the same economic segment.

One of the limitations of this study pertains to the nature of the empirical data, primarily sourced from secondary outlets such as public reports made available by the two organisations under scrutiny. This reliance on publicly accessible information imposes constraints on the depth and breadth of the analyses conducted. For this reason, it is recommended that further studies be undertaken to collect primary data through interviews and systematic observation, complemented by a documentary survey of internal records not publicly disclosed.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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GREENWASHING — THE DANGER OF GENERALISED FALSE CLAIMS AND HOW THE PORTUGUESE MEDIA REPRESENT THIS PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The United Nations launched the “Race to Zero” campaign, which private companies have voluntarily joined in the quest to reduce carbon emissions by 2030. The results of this action can be found in the Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor, developed by the NewClimate Institute and Carbon Market Watch. This study aims to understand how the two largest Portuguese newspapers — *Expresso* and *Público* — report on the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign and how much the media focuses on greenwashing in the period before and after the release of the Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor, in 2022 and 2023. In search of answers to the following questions: how do Portugal’s two largest online newspapers approach greenwashing? And how visible is the report on the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign? Methodologically, the study follows two approaches: firstly, a non-systematic review of the latest literature on the concept of “greenwashing”; and, secondly, an empirical survey of qualitative/quantitative content analysis based on the online publications of the two largest newspapers in Portugal (*Expresso* and *Público*) during the period of publication of the Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor.

KEYWORDS

greenwashing, sustainability, “Race to Zero”, Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor

GREENWASHING — O PERIGO DE ALEGAÇÕES FALSAS GENERALIZADAS E COMO OS MÉDIA PORTUGUESES REPRESENTAM ESSA PRÁTICA

RESUMO

As Nações Unidas lançaram a campanha “Race to Zero”, à qual empresas privadas aderiram voluntariamente na busca pela redução das emissões de carbono até 2030. Os resultados desta ação estão presentes no Monitor de Responsabilidade Climática Corporativa, desenvolvido pelo NewClimate Institute e pelo Carbon Market Watch. Ora, o presente estudo visa perceber como é que os maiores jornais portugueses — *Expresso* e *Público* — noticiaram os resultados da campanha “Race to Zero” e qual o foco dos média sobre o *greenwashing* nos períodos anterior e posterior à divulgação do Monitor de Responsabilidade Climática Corporativa, em 2022 e 2023. Assim, procuram-se respostas para as perguntas: como é que os dois maiores jornais online de Portugal abordam o *greenwashing*? E qual a visibilidade dada ao relatório dos resultados da

campanha “Race to Zero”? Metodologicamente, o estudo segue duas abordagens: em primeiro lugar, uma revisão de literatura não sistemática sobre o estado da arte do conceito de “greenwashing”; e, em segundo lugar, uma pesquisa empírica de análise de conteúdo qualitativa/quantitativa realizada a partir das publicações online dos dois maiores jornais de Portugal (*Expresso* e *Público*) no período de divulgação do Monitor de Responsabilidade Climática Corporativa.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

greenwashing, sustentabilidade, “Race to Zero”, Monitor de Responsabilidade Climática Corporativa

1. INTRODUCTION

Faced with a scenario of growing environmental degradation, increasing concern about global warming and an increasingly demanding and informed society, organisations cannot be expected to take any other stance than that of becoming “green” (de Jong et al., 2020). We are faced with a society that appreciates environmental practices (Torelli et al., 2020), which has become a strong pressure for organisations to adapt to the expectations of this more informed and demanding public (Nassar & Farias, 2017).

Investing in environmental causes, fulfilling the objectives to which they are committed and acting for sustainable development are aspects that organisations can benefit from, strengthening their reputation in the eyes of society, which is now monitoring and judging these actors (Srouf, 2008). Studies show that consumers evaluate communication about the environment by comparing it with previous experiences they have had with the organisation (Mason & Mason, 2012), in which the trust they place in the organisation will only be shaken by credible third parties reporting on the false environmental claims. More specifically, regulators and non-governmental organisations (NGO) that work for the environment have a fundamental role to play in denouncing false claims made by organisations. They are tasked with publicising the results of companies’ commitment to combating climate change.

However, organisations have not acted as expected with regard to environmental consciousness, but in a widespread and articulated pattern (de Jong et al., 2018; Lyon & Montgomery, 2015) with the intention of misleading the public about what organisations should and should not do, even though they publicise otherwise.

Organisations must not lose sight of the fact that sincerity and credibility play a central role in environmental communication (de Jong & van der Meer, 2017) and that the only way to benefit from their ecological actions is to be truthful and transparent (de Jong et al., 2020). However, recognising that their reputation and image may be at risk, organisations end up giving in to the temptation to use their communication to overestimate or mislead the public about their environmental commitments (Kim et al., 2016), which will irremediably lead to greenwashing practices.

2. WHAT IS GREENWASHING

“Greenwashing has emerged as CSR’s [corporate social responsibility] evil twin” (de Jong et al., 2018, p.79) as organisations recognise the undeniable potential benefits of claiming to care about the environment. According to de Jong et al. (2020), studies have shown that the practice of greenwashing is a widespread phenomenon, gaining so much attention that it has become a prominent topic, with a significant growth in publications in the area, 69% of them in the last five years alone (Santos et al., 2023). This reflects the importance of the subject for society’s interest in environmental issues and related organisational practices (Musgrove et al., 2018).

However, the important thing is to understand the various definitions that encompass the concept of “greenwashing”, which, initially, emerging from a more pragmatic perspective, was seen as “intentional communications with the aim of deceiving stakeholders” (de Jong et al., 2020, p. 41). However, today the concept has reached a broader classification, with the definition that was accepted in the past limiting the understanding of the practice, which, according to some authors (Laufer, 2003; Ramus & Montiel, 2005), can also be understood as corporate misinformation, or according to Delmas and Burbano (2011), divided into deception at product level or deception at organisational level. According to de Jong et al. (2020), greenwashing

involves more than just the disclosure of information, is often not deliberate, is not necessarily instigated by companies and does not necessarily benefit companies and harm society. These observations are in line with research into the determining factors, or drivers, of greenwashing, showing that deliberate deception is only part of the picture. (p. 42)

Thus, the authors agree that the phenomenon of greenwashing is broad and varied (Freitas Netto et al., 2020), with the practice of deceiving stakeholders being just one of its facets, which is demonstrated by the results of research by TerraChoice (2007, 2009, 2010), a Canadian green marketing agency, which assessed the environmental claims of thousands of products. According to TerraChoice (2007), the results of the survey showed seven different practices, which they called the “seven sins” of greenwashing. This research showed that the sins generally correspond to more ambiguous and less apparent situations (de Jong et al., 2020), including blatant lies, lack of evidence, inaccuracy and irrelevance, the worship of false labels, to name but a few (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). Lyon and Montgomery (2015), in their study, went beyond the “seven sins” and listed 11 reasons that lead to greenwashing practices.

Going beyond the mapping of “sins”, in order to better understand the dichotomy between doing and communicating environmental actions, it is possible to classify organisations into four different types in relation to their ecological claims (de Jong et al., 2018). These types include organisations that don’t do anything (brown), but don’t communicate anything either (silent brown); those that don’t do anything and communicate (vocal brown — classic case of greenwashing organisations); those that do (green) and don’t communicate (silent green — case of a complete loss of opportunity); and finally,

those that do and make their actions known (vocal green — the case of the most strategic and well-prepared organisations).

Between implementing the changes necessary for the organisation to become truly environmentally efficient and merely producing positive communication, it is obvious that it is much easier and quicker to direct communication towards environmental performance than it is to mobilise the company to make the necessary changes (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

But what drives organisations to do this? In the opinion of Delmas and Burbano (2011), greenwashing represents the “intersection of two company behaviours: poor environmental performance and positive communication about environmental performance” (p. 65). Thus, the authors suggest that there are some drivers that lead underperforming organisations (“brown” companies) to rely on overly positive communication. These drivers can originate internally, as obstacles to matching the actual environmental behaviour with its communication. These drivers can be identified as: ineffective internal communication; little understanding of the subject; optimism bias; a focus on short-term returns; a lack of firm incentives; and dubious ethical conduct. Similarly, external drivers can incentivise organisations to make mistakes, such as: pressure from society for a rapid environmental response and the inefficiency of NGOs and the regulatory market in monitoring and enforcement. In this respect, “the current regulatory environment is the main driver of greenwashing” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011, p. 65), since, for unknown reasons, some countries, contrary to global needs, adopt lighter standards for polluting activities and, in the absence of common legislation and regulation, many organisations, especially multinational, are able to engage in reprehensible environmental practices that will not be punished (Bem-David et al., 2021).

The lack of global standards and structures, the loose definition of legitimate sustainable practices and alignment with environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, which classify organisations based on a reliability ranking, are the main facilitators of greenwashing (Schumacher, 2022). In the absence of these standards, “sustainability data, the main pillar of ESG ratings, remains largely self-assessed” (Schumacher, 2022, p. 6), that is, it is up to the organisation to self-report how sustainable it is. However, we agree that implementing stricter regulations is a huge challenge given the lack of clarity about what truly constitutes “green” behaviour, when we don’t even agree on how to use the terms “biodegradable” or “all-natural” (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

3. THE IMPACT ON STAKEHOLDERS

Studies have shown that the number of green communications is increasing and becoming more popular, however, most of the “green” claims made are misleading (de Jong et al., 2020), which does not necessarily mean were not successful. This discrepancy between an action based on error and its eventual positive outcome, in the case of greenwashing, can be understood from some studies that try to explain the effects of greenwashing on the consumer’s perception and on the way society interprets this

phenomenon, although these studies are still quite limited (de Jong et al., 2018). The field still needs more detailed and in-depth empirical research into the impacts of the phenomenon, although this “requires the ability to clearly identify greenwashing and measure its effects” (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015, p. 243).

De Jong et al. (2020) state that until now, research evaluating the impacts of greenwashing has focused on cases of explicit lying, but aspects of this communication can often be misleading, making consumers unable to adequately criticise the messaging. However, what is known so far is that “the impacts of greenwashing on consumers and other stakeholders suggest that greenwashing has detrimental effects on a brand’s image” (de Jong et al., 2020, p. 44).

Thus, when discovered, greenwashing has a negative impact on consumers’ intentions and behaviour towards a brand or organisation (Atkinson & Kim, 2014; Chen & Chang, 2013; Nyilasy et al., 2014), and can even reach other organisations, via a spillover effect, which negatively affects the purchase of products or services from companies operating in the same sector, as stated by Wang et al. (2019). Such consumer behaviour can partly be explained by uncertainty and lack of awareness about environmental claims and when confronted with possible greenwashing, they become suspicious of products or brands that claim to be ecological (Lim et al., 2013).

However, as Turri and Turri (2015) state, in order for people to accept a lie as such, they must truly believe that it is an intentional mistake, so when faced with greenwashing situations in which people are not confident enough to make a judgement, consumers often seek facts to weigh the environmental claims against the conflicting information from third parties (de Jong et al., 2020). People may adopt various strategies to resolve this dissonance (Tanford & Montgomery, 2015), but the fact is that greenwashing represents a major threat to organisations, as well as offering no competitive advantage (Santos et al., 2023). The practice compromises financial performance (Testa et al., 2018) and the interest of investors, who are more tolerant of behavioural discrepancies that are not related to deceptive communication (Gatti et al., 2021).

Therefore, the important thing to note is that “only when a credible source makes an accusation of intentional, structural and substantial use of greenwashing practices are consumers likely to punish the organisation for its false claims” (de Jong et al., 2020, p. 48).

4. THE CHALLENGE OF MONITORING AND REPORTING GREENWASHING

The role of environmental regulators and NGOs is fundamental, not only to achieve the sustainable goals that need to be met, but also to protect society by clearly flagging misleading “green” claims. These organisations must be sufficiently credible to expose and denounce greenwashing. In this respect, it is worth highlighting the work of the NewClimate Institute, and the Carbon Market Watch, in drawing up the annual report on the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign.

In June 2020, the “United Nations Climate Change High-Level Champions” campaign was launched by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

the United Nations's branch that deals with climate change. It is a global campaign that brings together different organisations with the aim of taking rigorous and immediate action to halve global carbon emissions by 2030. The “Race to Zero” campaign brings together leaders and the support of companies, cities, regions and investors for a healthy, resilient, zero carbon recovery that avoids future threats, creates decent jobs and unlocks sustainable and inclusive growth (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, n.d.). The scope of the campaign, in a global alliance mobilised by zero emissions initiatives, included more than 8,000 companies, 595 financial institutions, 1,136 cities, 52 states, 1,125 educational institutions and 65 health institutions, as of September 2022. The “Race to Zero” campaign aims to involve high-level leaders to engage in the Climate Ambition Alliance, which was launched in 2019 in Chile at the climate action summit. With this campaign, the United Nations hopes to unite the real actors of the economy in the biggest alliance ever to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050 at the latest. This strategy aims to show governments that companies, cities, regions and investors are united in meeting the goals of the Paris agreement, in order to fulfil the objectives for sustainable development through a more inclusive and resilient economy (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, n.d.).

The campaign brings together 25 multinational companies, leaders in their sectors, who have joined the “Race to Zero” challenge on a voluntary basis. In 2020, these companies accounted for approximately €2,890,000,000, around 10% of the revenue of the 500 largest companies in the world whose greenhouse gas emissions accounted for around 5% of global emissions (NewClimate Institute, 2022). By taking part in this initiative, companies have earned themselves the title of “climate action champions”. By joining the campaign, these 25 companies made a commitment and promise to implement best practice strategies that would enable them to achieve zero emissions, net zero emissions or carbon neutrality target by 2030. What they didn't realise, however, was that there would be organisations monitoring these promises.

5. CORPORATE CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY MONITOR

In February 2021, the NGOs, NewClimate Institute and Carbon Market Watch, presented the Corporate Climate Responsibility Monitor (CCRM) — a report on the transparency and integrity of the climate commitments of the 25 companies in the “Race To Zero” campaign. The NewClimate Institute for Climate Policy and Global Sustainability is an organisation that promotes action against climate change and sustainable development, by sharing knowledge, developing research and helping create public policies (see <https://newclimate.org/>). For its part, Carbon Market Watch is an independent research and monitoring organisation with experience in carbon pricing and participating in and influencing international climate policies, they work to make communication more accessible in order to empower people to take action on environmental issues (Otis, 2023). The perception these organisations have about these companies is reflected in the introductory text of their report:

companies around the world are increasingly aware of the climate emergency. They receive calls from a growing range of stakeholders to take responsibility for the impact of their activities. Companies now have public climate strategies and targets, many of which include promises that, at first glance, appear to significantly reduce, or even eliminate, their contributions to global warming. (NewClimate Institute, 2023, p. 4)

However, due to the fragmentation of approaches and the lack of international regulation (Delmas & Burbano, 2011), drawing up a report with the results of the actions that companies have taken makes it difficult to distinguish real climate leadership from unsubstantiated leadership, or greenwashing. The aim was to monitor the strategies used to fulfil the promises made and to assess the integrity of the climate commitments against the criteria of good practice. The report sought to identify examples that could be replicated in areas that still need improvement. However, the results were frustrating.

In the first survey, in 2022, the reduction metrics attained by 13 of the companies evaluated were, on average, 40%, while the suggested figure was 100%. Among these, five companies had only reduced their emissions by 15%. In addition, only three of the 25 companies assessed have actually committed to “deep decarbonisation of more than 90% of their emissions across the entire value chain by their respective declared deadlines” (NewClimate Institute, 2022). The other 12 companies didn’t follow through with their commitments focussed on reducing emissions within the established period.

For the 2023 report, the NGOs used a different strategy to select the sample that would be evaluated. The three largest global companies were selected from the eight sectors with the highest greenhouse gas emissions that were also volunteer for the “Race to Zero”, generating a sample of 24 companies (Otis, 2023). Among them, 10 companies were in the group analysed in 2022. The conclusion for 2023 was that 15 of the 24 companies assessed had their strategies classified between “low” and “very low” integrity. “Their combined emission reduction commitments are totally insufficient to align with decarbonisation trajectories compatible with the target” (NewClimate Institute, 2023, p. 5). Among the 10 companies that had been assessed the previous year, limited progress was identified in the integrity and transparency of climate strategies, while the biggest problems persisted.

To summarise, the 2023 CCRM found that the majority of the companies assessed do not have good practice climate leadership strategies and that, of all of them, not one received a “high” integrity score. Based on these results, Carbon Market Watch warns on its website that

regulators must act to protect people from these false claims and ensure that only true climate leaders can claim this mantle. If this isn’t dealt with properly, people will continue to be fooled by false climate claims and effectively won’t have the opportunity to decarbonise their consumption (...). It is therefore imperative that policymakers, both in the European Union and globally, act urgently to remedy this widespread problem of greenwashing. (Otis, 2023, para. 2)

In Portugal, this report is supported by Associação Zero – Associação Sistema Terrestre Sustentável, an independent non-profit organisation operating nationwide, created in 2015 and a member of the NewClimate Institute and Carbon Market Watch. The Associação Zero (2023) reinforces the dissemination of the report to local media and emphasises that “it is crucial to demand greater transparency from companies that have so far taken advantage of their own misleading promises of climate neutrality by continuing greenwashing campaigns, while keeping their operations unchanged” (Zero, 2023, para. 5).

6. METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY OF THE STUDY

In pursuit of the objectives of this research, we intend to understand the repercussions and impact of these two annual reports for 2022 and 2023 in the media in Portugal, investigating their presence in the news and understanding the focus that the media gives to the phenomenon of greenwashing. The relevance of research into the approach taken by the media is based on the fact that we are impacted on a daily basis by the mediatisation of information processes, which can enhance certain aspects and perspectives on a topic (Santos, 2020). As Figueira (2014) states, “mediatisation is a factor in any process of institutionalisation” (p. 22) and the media plays a crucial role in shaping the meaning of a given topic, since “almost everything we know about the world today is largely due to the mass media” (Schmidt, 2003, p. 35). In this regard, how do Portugal’s two largest online newspapers approach greenwashing? And how visible is the report on the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign?

To carry out the empirical research, we paid special attention to objectivity, the selection of the *corpus* and reliability in order to design this study. In order to define the sample to be analysed, we selected all the publications from the online version of the two Portuguese newspapers, *Expresso* and *Público*, considering that they represent the two largest print media outlets in Portugal. The choice of evaluating the online publications of the two newspapers is due to speed, their accessibility and the low cost of operation. It’s important to note that both outlets offer the same content online as in print.

The period for collecting the material was defined taking into account the announcement of the CCRM, with the evaluation of the results of the “Race to Zero” campaign, covering around a month before and just over 45 days after this announcement. For the two years considered in the analysis (2022 and 2023), the fact that the later deadline for collection is longer than the earlier one is due to the expectation that the repercussions in the media could last longer, especially given the importance of the global companies involved in the campaign, the results of whose actions were cited in the CCRM report. On the other hand, the decision to collect the news a month earlier was intended to see if greenwashing was already a prominent issue even before the CCRM was announced. All publications from 10 January to 31 March 2022 and 2023 were selected using the keyword “greenwashing”. After collecting the pieces, we selected a *corpus* of 23 publications, 13 from *Público* and 10 from *Expresso*. In mapping the material, we identified the dates, editorials, classification themes and type of approach to greenwashing.

The strategy for the qualitative/quantitative analysis carried out anchored the methodology to the matrix approach method described by Carlson et al. (1993) in their research

on the nature of environmental advertising, where categories were defined based on two different typologies, one that considered the subject of the publications, and the other, their veracity. For this study, the application of this classification seems useful and follows similar identification criteria, although we are aware that the *corpus* of analysis does not deal with advertising, but with news, articles or interviews, however, it is possible to code the contents of the sample using the same classification.

Following the classification typology that categorised the publications under four macro-themes (Carlson et al., 1993), to answer the first question of this study this coding was divided into: “product” — launches of new products, or their environmental characteristics and impacts; “processes” — new practices, technologies, innovations or new environmental rules; “cause” — direct link to some specific environmental cause; and “facts” — strictly factual reports, news or findings on the environmental theme. Similar to the study used as a reference (Carlson et al., 1993), a fifth category was included in order to identify cases that can fit in more than one theme, which we have named “combination”. We believe that through this classification, it will be possible to carry out a thematic analysis, identifying the focus of the environmental issues publicised. However, in order to identify the approach taken to greenwashing specifically, a second typology needs to be applied, not to assess the veracity of what is published, but to understand the approach taken to this practice, which involves “reaping the benefits of a green positioning without behaving accordingly” (de Jong et al., 2020, p. 39).

For this second codification we used the following designations: “combat” — describes a direct action against the practice of greenwashing, condemning this practice; “alert” — highlights the danger and warns the reader about pitfalls; “explanation” — when the approach is intended to educate and teach about what greenwashing is; “denunciation” — brings to light a current action, putting the person responsible in check; and “only quoting” — when the word appears in the text without further implications or details. Similarly, for this coding we also accept “combination” in order to identify cases with more than one approach. From there, we started reading all the pieces in order to analyse them and then process the results.

7. RESULTS ANALYSIS

We began our observations by pointing out that among the selected publications there was only one interview, while the rest were news items and articles. All the pieces were collected from the newspapers researched by searching for the keyword “greenwashing” during the predefined collection periods. In 2022, in the *Público* newspaper, we only had four news items in this period, two of which were discarded because they didn’t deal with greenwashing, despite mentioning the term, and only the other two were validated. In the same period, we collected five news items from *Expresso*. In 2023, this number grew, which from the point of view of environmental defence is a good indicator and is in line with what was stated by Santos et al. (2023), who emphasised the growth of this topic in publications. In *Público*, we collected 11 news items, while in *Expresso*, we had the same number as the previous year, five publications. In total, 23 valid articles were collected during the collection period.

Next, we evaluated how the articles were allocated between the different sections in the two newspapers. In the case of *Público*, news on environmental issues is concentrated in the “Azul” (Blue) section, a specific section focussing on sustainability and the environment. However, two of the 13 publications evaluated were in the “Ímpar” (Miscellaneous) section, which deals with lifestyle, which makes sense in a way, as the articles dealt with biodegradable personal care products made from environmentally friendly ingredients. In contrast, in the *Expresso* newspaper, the pieces were distributed in three different sections: “Economia” (Economy), “Sociedade” (Society) and “Ambiente” (Environment), as well as the fortnightly newsletter “Ser” (Be; focused on sustainability, ecology and social responsibility). The latter accounted for 30% of the pieces collected from the newspaper, while only 10% in the “Environment” section and the majority in “Society” with 40%. The newspaper’s strategy is notable for the dispersion and lack of identity given to the environmental issue, which already suffers from a huge lack of clarity and where, according to some authors in the field of communication, there is still a lack of information (Batistella & Marchiori, 2013; Kunsch & Oliveira, 2009; Rossetti, 2009; Vieira & Gonçalves, 2014).

Moving on to the analyses the results (Table 1), according to the coding of publications into macro-themes, 43.5% dealt with facts related to environmental issues, 26.08% dealt with products, 26.08% processes and 17.39% environmental causes. Of all the publications, 21.74% contained a combination of two different macro-themes. This is in line with the media’s intrinsic role of prioritising facts as news.

MACRO THEMES	PERCENTAGE
Facts related to environmental issues	43.5%
Products	26.08%
Processes	26.08%
Environmental causes	17.39%

Table 1. Macro themes of greenwashing in the media

In assessing how greenwashing is dealt with by the media, we saw that most publications take more than one approach to the issue. Classifying the 23 pieces researched, the corpus was divided into the following codes, which are not mutually exclusive: 34.78% combat greenwashing; 43.48% warn the reader; another 43.48% explain and detail greenwashing situations; 26.08% denounce it; and 13.04% only contain quotes. Of the 10 pieces that combined more than one approach, 40% had three different approaches and 70% focused on warning and explaining the issue. The classification is detailed in Table 2.

CODES	PERCENTAGE
Combat	34.78%
Alert	43.48%
Explain/educate	43.48%
Denounce	26.08%
Only quote	13.04%

Table 2. Approaches to the subject of greenwashing in the media

In view of these findings, we have seen that the approach to greenwashing is not set in stone, as we have seen from the literature review on the subject (Delmas & Burbano, 2011; Freitas Netto et al., 2020); on the contrary, it shifts between categories pertinent to the subject, and the media's approach to it. It is important to note that the media still place importance on explaining and warning readers about the topic, even when the intention is to combat or denounce it. The point is that the alert, with the appropriate clarification about greenwashing, is reflected in the actions of the media. The intention to educate society so that it may protect itself from misleading arguments in organisations' environmental discourse still prevails and deserves recognition. It's worth noting that of all the articles explaining the subject, the one produced on 5 February 2023 by *Público* was the only one to explain greenwashing in depth, including its definition and different forms of presentation, and of all the articles researched, only one had the word "greenwashing" in the title (*Público*, 26 January 2023).

In order to answer the study's second starting question, under a quantitative analysis, we realised that, among the selected publications, only one story, published on 16 February 2023, in the *Público* newspaper, presented the results of the campaign "Race to Zero", although not referring to it, but highlighting the CCRM and naming the companies that failed to fulfil the sustainable objectives they had committed to. Considering that the Associação Zero is a Portuguese organisation that is part of NewClimate and Carbon Market Watch and is a major player in the environmental protection sector, mainly because it is a recurrent source of reference for the media on the subject, it seems to us that the repercussions of the report's results by the media surveyed were rather meagre. The report also explicitly exposed all the large multinationals companies that were assessed for greenwashing practices, which, for the media, would have had a strong news appeal and could have led to the issue unfolding, especially since *Público* cited some of them in particular. However, the coverage was reduced to a mere news item, in only one of the newspapers surveyed, during the two years in which the campaign's results were publicised. Meanwhile, the relevance of this campaign and its impact are crucial if we are to achieve the goals of controlling carbon emissions, as the statement by the Associação Zero in the Ambiente Online portal: "this report exposes serious procrastination on the part of multinationals that not only have a major impact on the planet, but also have the availability of means to reduce their carbon footprint" (Zero, 2023, para. 5).

8. CONCLUSION

The study in question showed that awareness of the harmful effects of greenwashing has increased, "which may help reduce the frequency of these acts" (Santos et al., 2023, p. 33), but there is still a long way to go to combat this practice. It is a fact that the European Union has adopted laws to regulate aspects covering financing for sustainability and investments that are in line with companies' environmental, social and good governance practices, with the aim of preventing misleading "green" communication on the one hand, and promoting fair and sustainable economic growth on the other (Schumacher, 2022).

However, some authors stress that more efficient regulatory mechanisms should be adopted in order to guarantee greater transparency of environmental commitments, more awareness about greenwashing and organisational alignment between structures, processes and incentives (Delmas & Burbano, 2011). NGOs are crucial in this effort to control organisations' "green" actions. Based on this understanding, we highlighted the work carried out by two large and recognised international climate organisations and concluded that, even with so little time left to change our behaviour in relation to the environment, we are still faced with reprehensible practices regarding commitments to the planet on the part of the world's largest companies.

Various studies have been carried out on greenwashing, from assessing consumer perception, trying to diagnose the reasons that motivate this practice, to identifying the various types of deceptive actions that can be involved in organisations' "green" claims. However, in this study we tried to investigate the media's relationship with the subject, and found that in 43.5% of the occurrences, the concept of "greenwashing" appears in relation to facts about environmental issues and in approaches to combat the practice (34.78%), to alert society (43.48%) and to explain and detail the subject (43.48%).

So, when the media bring up the subject, they try to do so with a critical eye. However, our perception is that the subject is still given little space on the agenda of Portugal's two largest newspapers. For future studies, we believe that a critical discourse analysis could clarify the underlying meaning, which cannot be perceived simply by counting (Ganapathy, 2022), or by identifying macro-themes, but will allow us to go deeper, or at least offer clues, to understanding the different greenwashing practices based on their motivation, in the identification of the four typologies that classify organisations ("browns", "vocal browns", "vocal greens" and "silent greens"), or from the perspective of the resources used, which can be limited to distancing themselves from the truth, or the deliberate use of techniques to deceive or confuse (de Jong et al., 2018).

Translation: Linguaemundi

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ADVERTISING AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE CASE OF “THE LAST PHOTO” CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society. A theoretical-methodological analysis was carried out exploring the interactions between advertising, sustainability and symbolic production, with a focus on evaluating the trajectory of the Cannes awards, which recognise advertising as an agent of social and environmental transformation, identifying campaigns in these areas. The *corpus* was defined by the most awarded campaign in 2023 at Cannes, related to social and/or environmental issues, in this case “The Last Photo”. The analysis was conducted using a discursive approach, considering lexical elements, argumentative techniques, prominence and components external to verbal language. The results of the study showed that the campaign predominantly uses advertising discourse, especially audiovisual adverts exploring social issues. Scenography plays an important role in the construction of these scenes, lending credibility and emotion to the speeches. The campaign’s approach challenges the stereotypes surrounding suicide, using real cases to promote reflection. Transmedia storytelling and accessible language are used to reach audiences effectively.

KEYWORDS

symbolic production, sustainability, suicide

PUBLICIDADE E SUSTENTABILIDADE: O CASO DA CAMPANHA “THE LAST PHOTO”

RESUMO

O objetivo da pesquisa foi investigar a construção de cenas enunciativas da campanha de cunho socioambiental mais premiada no “Festival de Cannes” em 2023, a fim de identificar e descrever os discursos midiáticos, que concorrem para a produção de cultura e valores na sociedade. Foi realizada uma análise teórico-metodológica explorando as interações entre publicidade, sustentabilidade e produção simbólica, com o foco em avaliar a trajetória das premiações em Cannes que reconhecem a publicidade como agente de transformação social e ambiental, identificando campanhas de impacto nessas áreas. O *corpus* foi definido pela campanha mais premiada em 2023 em Cannes relacionada à questão social e/ou ambiental, no caso “The Last Photo” (A Última Fotografia). A análise foi conduzida por intermédio de abordagem discursiva considerando elementos lexicais, técnicas argumentativas, destacabilidade e componentes externos à linguagem verbal. Os resultados do estudo demonstraram que a campanha utiliza predominantemente o discurso publicitário, especialmente o anúncio audiovisual explorando a temática social. A cenografia desempenha um papel importante na construção dessas cenas, conferindo credibilidade e emoção aos discursos. A abordagem dessa campanha desafia os estereótipos em torno do suicídio, utilizando casos reais para promover a reflexão. A estratégia transmídia e a linguagem acessível são usadas para alcançar o público de maneira eficaz.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

produção simbólica, sustentabilidade, suicídio

1. INTRODUCTION

The ESG (environmental, social, and governance) agenda provides brands with a scale of priorities in relation to issues linked to the environment, social responsibility and governance, including communication policies within brands. The more complete concept of “sustainable development” first appeared in the report *Nosso Futuro Comum* (Our Common Future; Brundtland, 1987/1991), organised by the Brundtland Commission, which presents two key concepts in its definition: the essential needs of the poorest people, which must be a priority on the agenda of all countries; and the level that technology has reached that imposes environmental limitations, preventing present and future needs from being met (Dias, 2019).

Resolution 41/128 of the United Nations Organisation (Declaração sobre o Direito ao Desenvolvimento, 1986) provides an interesting concept of “development” in the sense of sustainability, namely:

it is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process aimed at constantly increasing the well-being of the entire population and all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and the fair distribution of the resulting benefits. (p. 1)

In contrast, Boff (2012) believes that today “in the standard model of development that claims to be sustainable, the discourse of sustainability is empty and rhetorical” (p.

47). The author adds that “things are only done as long as profits are not affected, competition is not weakened, and technological innovations are not jeopardised” (p. 48).

Neither because of the quantity of its inventions, nor because of its social and political derivation, can advertising today be reduced to the commercial field, says Eguizábal (2010). According to the author, in any democratic and socially developed country, both civic education and political campaigns account for an important part of the total amount of advertising material. From Eguizábal’s (2010) perspective, the advertising industry’s job is to load products with meaning. This means that goods/merchandise are emptied of material content in order to be filled with symbolic content. To this end companies are not only appropriating social and environmental content to create significance for their products and services, but also to symbolically carry the brand’s meaning.

In addition to these arguments, campaigns with a socio-environmental responsibility theme have greater public interest and are gaining notoriety at advertising festivals. The 2023 *Global Consumer Trends* (Mintel, 2023) survey shows that consumers are currently looking for well-being, engagement in community projects fostered by brands and company initiatives that provide healthy connections with technology, leisure and well-being. There is also more interest in getting involved with local, authentic and sustainable consumption. In this sense, they want greater links with socially responsible companies and brands. It should be noted that non-profit companies also need to publicise, especially in order to attract potential donors to maintain their activities, as well as to promote more sustainable consumer behaviour or attitudes that contribute to a more harmonious social life.

At the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, for example, of the 10 most awarded campaigns, six were of this nature:

- “The Last Photo”, by Adam&eveDDB London for ITV and Campaign Against Living Miserably (2022): with the aim of showing the importance of mental health care, the campaign features home videos of people in happy situations who later commit suicide, showing that there is no pattern to suicidal behaviour. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize (“Film”), four golds (two in “Outdoor”, one in “Brand Experience & Activation”, and one in “Health & Wellness”), three silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “PR”) and three bronzes (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “Media”).
- “Where to Settle” (Marketing & Media, 2023), by McCann Poland for Mastercard: in order to help 10,000,000 Ukrainian refugees in Poland, a platform was created to present the cost of living and economic opportunities in different cities, showing the best options according to their profiles. Polish people from different regions invited the refugees to their cities in the media. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize (“Sustainable Development Goals”), a titanium lion, two golds (“Direct” and “PR”), two silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Direct”) and three bronzes (“Creative Data”, “Direct” and “PR”).
- “The Greatest”, by Apple (2022): aimed at the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December 2022. The aim was to present hardware and software solutions that help and support accessibility for people with visual, hearing, motor and cognitive disabilities. In the images, people with disabilities go through everyday situations with aplomb and positivity. Awards received at the festival: grand prize (“Entertainment for Music”), three golds (all in “Film Craft”), four silvers (two in “Entertainment for Music”, one in “Entertainment” and one in “Film”) and one bronze (“Film”).
- “ADLaM - An Alphabet to Preserve Culture”, by McCann New York for Microsoft (2023): digitising the alphabet of the Pulaar language of the Fulani people of West Africa, considered to be the

largest nomadic group in the world. Less than 30 years old, the alphabet is already spoken by more than 40,000,000 people and has been given fonts that identify the local culture, created by famous designers who have also produced typographic works of art that are available to download for free. Awards received at the festival: two grand prizes (“Creative Business Transformation” and “Design”), two golds (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Film Craft”), one silver (“Sustainable Development Goals”) and two bronzes (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Film Craft”).

- “Anne de Gaulle” (LLLLITL, 2023), by Havas Paris for the Fondation Anne de Gaulle: the name of “Charles de Gaulle” airport was changed to “Anne de Gaulle” in order to draw attention to the issue of mental disability. The daughter of Charles de Gaulle, Anne was born with Down’s syndrome and is the name of an institution that has been working for 75 years to promote more inclusive public transport. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize, three golds (“Direct”, “Health & Wellness” and “Outdoor”), one silver (“Media”) and one bronze (“Brand Experience & Activation”).
- “The Postponed Day” (Design and Art Direction, n.d.), by Grey Argentina for the Argentinian League Against Cancer: on International Breast Cancer Day (19 October), 30 non-governmental organisations fighting cancer joined forces to inform the press that they had decided to postpone the date by one day: “we’ll put it off until tomorrow”. The aim was to raise awareness and alert women who postpone their annual mammograms. Awards received at the festival: four golds (two for “Direct” and two for “PR”) and three silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “PR”).

Given this context, the aim of this research is to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society. Specifically, the aim is to: (a) provide a theoretical-methodological overview of the relationship between advertising, the discourse of sustainability and symbolic production; (b) examine the trajectory of Cannes awards for advertising as a possible agent of social and environmental transformation, making campaigns in these areas visible and promoting — even if indirectly — a greater interest on the part of agencies in promoting these discourses; and (c) examine the most awarded campaign in Cannes in 2023 related to social and environmental sustainability through discourse analysis based on lexical elements, argumentative techniques, prominence and components external to verbal language.

2. MEDIATION, MEDIATISATION AND ADVERTISING OF SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSES

By presenting the concept of “mediation”, Martín-Barbero (1987/2001) offers us multiple possibilities for research into the communication process, especially in the second iteration of the map of mediations, dialectically reflecting the relationships between production logics, industrial formats, consumption and cultural matrices, that need to be based on the triad of communication, culture and politics, especially as they constitute a battlefield in terms of the symbolic dimension of their effects on and for society. The map of mediations contributes theoretically to research that seeks to understand the dynamics of communications as a system of feedback between the various variables that take part in the process. Overall, this map shows how “communication is mediating all forms of cultural and political life in society” (Lopes, 2018a, p. 18).

In more recent research, Martín-Barbero (1987/2001) presents a new communicative ecosystem, which includes the concepts of “temporality”, “flows”, “spatiality” and

“mobility” as a result of the processes of technological mutation that reveal new forms of production, consumption, dissemination and social relations. In terms of methodology, this research will be based on Martín-Barbero’s (1987/2001) second map of mediations (Figure 1), as we will detail below.

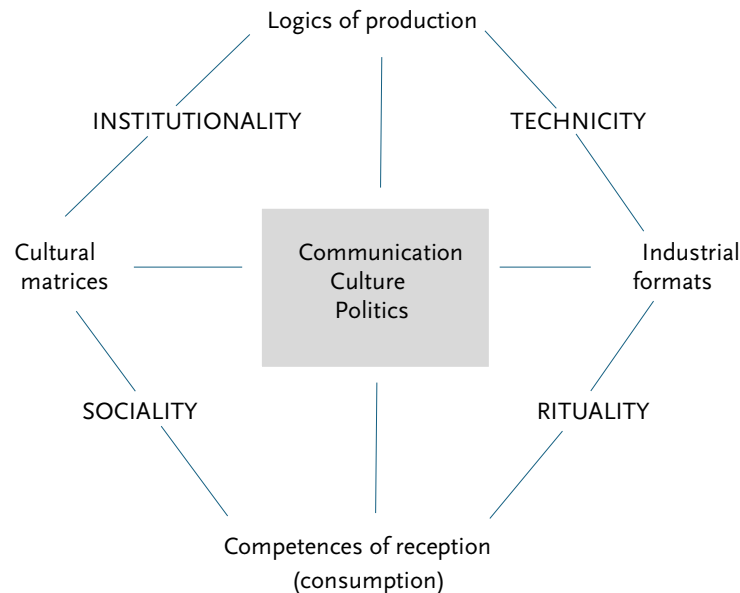


Figure 1. Second methodological map of mediations, 1998

Source. Adapted from “A Teoria Barberiana da Comunicação”, by M. I. V. de Lopes, 2018b, *Matrizes*, 12(1), p. 54. (<https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v12i1p39-63>). Copyright 2018 by Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes.

Between production logics and industrial formats lies technicality, in which focus can be placed on the technical aspects, language and discursive adaptations present in the media. Rituality, which lies between industrial formats and the skills of reception, allow us to analyse the different social uses of the media by the audience, as well as the reading path taken by the consumer, based on their life history, cultural repertoire, among other specificities. Sociality is the mediation between cultural formats and reception skills, which deals above all with the collective ways and uses of communication and the relationship between the product analysed and the notions of meaning and belonging on the part of the audience. Institutional mediation between cultural matrices and the logic of production are reminiscent of the battlefield of powers and interests between those involved in the process. The diachronic axis, which mediates between cultural matrices and industrial formats, deals with temporal and historical relationships in terms of the symbolic dimension and the language of the cultural sources that the industrial format will draw on. The synchronic axis makes it possible to reflect on the feedback process between production and reception.

This map is important for studies of mediatisation, the general way in which the media interferes in culture and society, based on cultural tensions through the interactional circulation of its meanings. This is because Martín-Barbero (1987/2001), by creating the

second map, including technicality and giving more weight to the media — compared to the previous model — allows us a more holistic understanding of the processes of mediatisation. According to Braga (2006), “when it comes to symbolic values and the production and reception of meanings, what matters most is the circulation after reception. (...) The interactional circulation system is this social movement of meanings and stimuli initially produced by the media” (p. 28).

Barros (2001) adds that:

it is in society that the meanings of media discourses circulate, in a “system of social interaction on the media”. And in this process of interaction between society and the media, aesthetic experiences are converted into new political experiences in a continuous process of representation and appropriation that lead to the production of new discourses, constructed by the constant exchange of expressions and impressions. It is a system of “polyphony and polysemy”, of tensions and confluences. (p. 29)

These reflections show how important it is to understand the mediations and reflections of the media on society and culture, in other words, to understand how the circulation of the topics covered by the media collaborate to re-signify cultural concepts and practices, which are in motion and put pressure on the productive system, in a game of social forces¹. In the culture of connection (Jenkins et al., 2013/2014), this circulation spreads to even greater proportions. With this in mind, advertising campaigns also promote important discussions among individuals, as well as being subjected to pressure regarding their position on various societal issues. Over time, we’ve seen less and less of an appeal to sell products and a greater concern with building narratives that make sense within people’s lives, seeking identification between brand and consumer.

It’s important to think that in the symbolic universe of brands there is always an idea of the incompleteness of the human being — who needs to consume in order to feel complete — which is the promise of advertising discourse narratives (Casaqui, 2011). According to Casaqui (2011), the new forms of advertising do not appeal to the sale of the product, but “strategies [that] involve spatiality, design, the re-signification of products, the elaboration of narratives that promote transcendence, the mythification of goods and the convergences between them and human desires, dreams and objectives” (p. 140), in other words, they are much more part of the discourse of the completeness of life. These strategies end up being used by brands and corporations to gain visibility through their mediatisation processes.

In this sense, we observed that various marketing actions by brands that use the sustainability discourse aim to stimulate the circulation of meanings produced by their campaigns to society, creating a buzz, not necessarily related to the product offered by the company. Just to illustrate, we can summarise the promotion of sustainability

¹ Regarding this play of forces, Curran (1998) says that there are pressures from the top down, which point to the influence of the media on the audience, but also pressures from the bottom up, which reveal the audience’s resistance to certain media impositions. In this way, consent comes from negotiation between the two forces.

discourses based on mediations: (a) technicality: new technological tools allow brands to promote greater interaction with consumers through new languages, for example through gamification, the promotion of collaborative strategies and dialogue between interlocutors who are interested in the topic of “sustainability”; (b) institutionality: corporations understand the relevance (socially and economically) of dealing with topics such as sustainability and, to this end, they disseminate symbols related to the topic and their narratives. In addition to their role as producers of goods and services, institutions become disseminators of symbols through narratives related to consumption; (c) rituality: the social uses that recipients make of these sustainability campaigns can be due to their affinity with the subject of the campaign and the degree of involvement can depend on the cultural competence of the subjects with the particular theme involved; (d) sociality: the consumption of these sustainability discourses can give the idea (however fleeting) of the completeness of belonging to a community that is concerned with social and environmental issues, in other words, a feeling of belonging to this community; (e) diachronic axis: it is possible to think historically about the uses of these discourses by brands in their mediatisation processes; (f) synchronic axis: it is possible to observe how the pressures of reception on the subject of “sustainability” can strain production in a feedback loop.

In advertising, at the same time as consumers have become more environmentally aware (Dias, 2019), campaigns with themes linked to socio-environmental issues began to gain more notoriety in 2015, when the world’s largest advertising festival, “Cannes Lions”, launched the “Glass: The Lion for Change” category, which rewards ideas aimed at promoting change in relation to inequality and prejudice; and in 2017, when the festival launched the “Sustainable Development Goals” category — which rewards initiatives and creative solutions aimed at achieving the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (GoAd Media, 2023). In addition to the concerns that corporations may have about positioning themselves as brands that care about sustainable development, agencies also aim to win awards that acknowledge these issues.

With the increase in advertising campaigns on the subject, there is also an increase in greenwashing, “misleading green advertisements of various kinds, some with vague statements (...) and others exaggerating certain environmentally friendly aspects, focusing on one or two positive ones, and ignoring many of the company’s other negative cases” (Dias, 2019, p. 179). In this respect, one of the annexes to the regulations of the Advertising Self-Regulation Council (Conar) applied in Brazil is dedicated to providing guidance on the sustainability appeals used by brands. The document states that it is part of advertising’s role not only to respect and distinguish, but also to contribute to the “formation of ethical, responsible and supportive human and social values. CONAR supports all advertising that, in exercising its institutional or business role, can also guide, develop and stimulate society towards a sustainable future” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52). In order to regulate the practice, the Council subdivides it into

“Advertising for Socio-Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability”²; “Advertising for Socio-Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability”³; and “Cause-Related Marketing Advertising”⁴. For Conar, information and allegations on the subject need to be true, verifiable and correspond to concrete practices adopted by the company. In this sense, in Brazil, for example, advertising actions involving sustainability can be investigated by Conar in cases of complaints, in order to identify supporting data and sources that endorse the information communicated.

However, some care must be taken about the circulation of the content covered by the campaigns in society, since most of them are mistrusted. A survey by Kantar (2022), entitled *Who Cares? Who Does?* which interviewed 3,430 people in Brazil in 2022, found that 56.6% of respondents were unable to mention any brand that had a connection with the theme of “sustainability” and almost half of consumers identified the actions of brands as greenwashing, that is, environmental practices aimed above all at profit. In the same study, 44% of people said they try to buy environmentally friendly packaging, even if they have doubts about the recycling process. This means that there is a demand from society, but many consumers still see the actions of brands as misleading: there is a perception of detachment between discourse and sustainable practice.

In another survey carried out in 2022 in Brazil by Opinion Box (2022), 67% of consumers say they research brands’ ESG practices, even before finalising their purchase from the company. On the other hand, advertising agencies have been looking to expand their advertising activities with a focus on sustainability and avoid links to greenwashing by hiring specialised professionals for more structured projects (Vieira, 2022).

Regarding the coherence between the rhetoric and practice of brands, Gaulia (2019) argues:

it is therefore advisable to analyse whether a brand’s identity attributes are compatible with certain flags, always remembering that coherence should be a guide to the balance between discourse and practice. Coherence is a fundamental attribute for all situations in corporate communication: in the area of relations with the government, in dialogue with different audiences, in institutional messages, in marketing, in conversations on social networks, in communication with employees and other movements that communicate. There must be no gap or hypocritical pretence between what is done and what is preached as organisational values. (p. 187)

² “All advertising that communicates the responsible and sustainable practices of companies, their brands, products and services” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

³ “All advertising that guides and encourages society, based on examples of responsible and sustainable practices by institutions, companies, their brands, products and services” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

⁴ “That which communicates the legitimate association of institutions, companies and/or brands, products and services with socio-environmental causes, of public or private initiative, and carried out with the purpose of producing relevant, perceptible and verifiable results, both for the Advertiser and also for the socio-environmental cause supported” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

This coherence is fundamental when we consider that in mediatization processes, exchanges between potential consumers can have negative repercussions on digital social networks when they identify problems in the brand's identity attributes and what is being communicated, for example, the "DieselGate" case in 2015, when Volkswagen allegedly fudged pollutant emission results by installing software in diesel engines that masked the results (*'Dieselgate': Veja Como Escândalo da Volkswagen Começou e as Consequências*, 2015).

It should be noted that because of the criterion adopted of analysing the most awarded campaign at the "Cannes Film Festival", the investigation is based on a campaign by a charity, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), in partnership with the United Kingdom television network, ITV. This methodology can be applied to any other campaign. Furthermore, this research is not intended to analyse coherence in the discourse and practice of corporations, which may be carried out in other studies, since there is a concern on the part of the public to understand whether there is a harmonious relationship between the advertising discourse and the corporate culture of the organisation. Considering the methodological techniques applied, technicality (the language used through the advertising media selected by the brands) and institutionality (the dissemination of symbols through narratives related to consumption that the promoting brands chose to undertake in their campaigns) will be analysed using the categories listed in the methodology.

Advertising is not restricted to commercial brands. Third sector organisations, which are dependent on donations in order to work with society, also need to publicise their socio-environmental actions in order to sensitise potential donors, as they already have better credibility compared to profit-driven corporations, although there are situations in which they also need to manage image crises. Furthermore, the goal of advertising communication in the third sector, "in addition to stimulating consumption behaviour as is usual with traditional persuasion, should aim to stimulate reflection on the consequences of the consumption of cultural goods and ideas by individuals" (Lima, 2012, p. 17).

As a result, there is a growing number of managers of non-governmental organisations who need to plan marketing and advertising activities in order to gain visibility in relation to other institutions with similar activities for their financial sustainability, including hiring advertising agencies and entering competitions (Lima, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES FOR ANALYSING SCENOGRAPHY IN AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVE

Roughly speaking, we can understand "audiovisual narrative" as the way in which a story is told through the physical and symbolic construction of visual and sound elements, combining narrative principles such as characters, theme and plot. Audiovisual narrative has important elements to be studied and understood when it comes to a product of this nature, namely the imagery and sound, the editing process, the construction of the script and the acting of the characters, if applicable. García Jiménez (2004) explores the concept of "audiovisual narrative" as narratology, that is, the methodical and systematic ordering of knowledge that makes it possible to identify and explain the

system, the process, as well as the instruments of narrativity of the visual, acoustic image, fundamentally considering narrativity in both its form and function. Thus, the articulation of sound and visual elements that carry meaning makes discursive construction possible, henceforth “textual construction”, of which the stories are the meanings.

The aspects of technicality and institutionality will be observed through the enunciative scenes in the narrative of the audiovisual campaign analysed. Maingueneau (1998/2008) explores three scenes involved in a statement: the encompassing scene, the generic scene and the scenography. The encompassing scene refers to the type of discourse (religious, political, advertising, for example). The generic scene deals with the specificities and role of each discourse genre, such as an election campaign leaflet. In this case a candidate addressing voters (Maingueneau, 1998/2013). Finally, the scenography, takes the whole of the encompassing scene and the generic scene into the background. The reader is enveloped by another scene. By scenography, Maingueneau (1998/2008) considers that:

the situation of the statement is not, in fact, a simple empirical framework, it is constructed as a scenography through the means of communication. Here – *writing* [emphases added] is a circular process: discourse implies an enunciator and co-enunciator, a place and a moment of enunciation that validates the very instance that allows it to exist. From this point of view, the scenography is both the source and the outlet of the work. (p. 51)

The scenography legitimises its existence as a statement. The discourse aims to convince the audience on the basis of the communicated scene that it puts into effect and through which it becomes legitimate. This means that behind the positioning of a speech, there are representations of the communicator’s personality. This is the rhetorical ethos that emanates from the discourse. The proof of the ethos, says Maingueneau (1998/2008), “consists of making a good impression of yourself, capable of convincing the audience, gaining their trust. The recipient must therefore attribute certain properties to the organisation that is put forward as the source of the event” (p. 56).

In order to understand the scenography of the campaign analysed, four categories were used, based on Maingueneau (1998/2008), Miguel (2014) and Silva (2017), namely:

- “Lexical elements”: the words or groups of words that make up the lexicon of a language, although very broad, can be studied to situate the positioning of a discourse. In this case, it is important to establish the relationship with the context and not just deal with the pure word, and also to check the frequency of certain terms throughout the discourse;
- “Sequencing/argumentative techniques”: the sequence of discourse, the resources used to construct sentences and the hierarchy of arguments are important in trying to understand the degree of relevance of certain facts and how reasoning is constructed through a sequence of propositions;
- “Prominence”: some sentences stand out in the discourse, making the creator’s position clearer;
- “Components external to verbal language”: we will take some components external to the transcribed text for analysis - predominant colours/tones, vocalities, images and audio/sound composition.

Although it is not the main objective of this research, these categories can also be used to understand the audiovisual narrative based on the elements elaborated by Souza (2009), taking García Jiménez (2004) and García García (2008) as a reference, namely: (a) morphology-narrative — in which the content and expression of the audiovisual story were analysed, above all from the analysis of “lexical elements” and “components external to verbal language”; (b) narrative analytics — whose minimum units of the narrative process were investigated with the grammatical categories in “lexical elements”; (c) taxonomy-narrative — that is, the organisation of the modes of analysis was carried out on the basis of the aforementioned categories in order to understand the scenography; (d) poetics-narrative — the free and creative nature of the audiovisual narrative could be observed especially with the analysis of the “components external to verbal language” and the “argumentative techniques”; (e) pragmatic-narrative — the relationship between sender and receiver, as well as the effects of the narrative on society, were understood from the demonstration of the practical results of the campaign, although it is not possible to go into these aspects in depth; (f) rhetoric-narrative — the structure of the narrative, which can lead to persuasion, was further explored in “argumentative techniques”, “prominence” and “lexical elements”; and (g) hypermedia in the narrative — the processes of convergence and hypertextuality were investigated in the analysis, above all, of the transmedia narrative in “components external to verbal language”.

The *corpus* selected for analysis was the most awarded campaign at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023 (Lemos, 2023), whose theme focuses on the discussion of suicide prevention.

4. ANALYSIS OF “THE LAST PHOTO” CAMPAIGN

Following social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living, the suicide rate has risen significantly in the United Kingdom, with a total of 125 people taking their own lives every week. This data drew attention to the problem and, together with CALM, ITV⁵ and ADAM&EVEDDB launched “The Last Photo” campaign, aimed at preventing suicides. The following are frames from the film of 01 min 30 s, shown on television and in the cinema (Campaign Against Living Miserably, 2022; Figure 2).

⁵ The United Kingdom television network, with the BBC as its main competitor.



Figure 2. Frames from the film *Suicidal Doesn't Always Look Suicidal*

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the advertising film *Suicidal Doesn't Always Look Suicidal*

The material features the last (home-made) videos of people who have committed suicide, in which they appear in happy situations with their children, family and friends. After showing nine of these cases, a screen (Box 10 in Figure 2) shows the following text: “these are the latest videos of people who have taken their own lives”. Three more cases are then presented and, finally, the three final screens (Box 14, Box 15 and Box 16) with the following texts: “suicide doesn’t always look like suicide”; “find out how you can help save a life”, “campaign against unhappy living/#UnitedAgaistSuicide”.

4.1. LEXICAL ELEMENTS

In this section we will look at the texts produced by the broadcasters on the four screens, namely: (a) the first screen (Box 10) contextualises the viewers and therefore has a more descriptive tone. With an anaphoric function, the word “these” is meant to refer to the videos presented earlier on the screen. It then goes on to explain the content of the “people who took their own lives” videos; (b) the second screen (Box 14) goes into more depth about the discussion that the campaign sets out to advertise. The use of the adverb (“not”) complements a sense of doubt, or a possible contradiction, between the content of the videos and the outcome of those involved. This feature triggers the unexpected and surprise, inciting reflection and commotion in the recipients; (c) the third screen (Box 15) gives the call to action. With the use of the imperative verb (“find”), the interlocutors are invited to “help save a life”; (d) on the final screen (Box 16), the logo of the enunciator and the campaign hashtag are shown. “CALM” stands for “Campaign Against Living Miserably”, a charity that has existed in the United Kingdom since 2006.

The use of “united” in the hashtag can either refer to the expression “all united” against suicide, or to the “United Kingdom”, where the campaign takes place.

Superimposed on the ambient sound of the videos, the soundtrack is composed of the song “Bring Me Sunshine” recorded as a solo version which brought another element to create commotion.

4.2. ARGUMENTATIVE TECHNIQUES

Three types of argument were used in a logical sequence to achieve the campaign’s objectives: (a) the first argument raised awareness through the images, followed by a description of the outcome of the characters in the videos; (b) the second is more reflective on the issue, with the text “suicidal doesn’t always look suicidal”; (c) the third invites the recipient to take action, either on digital social networks, using the hashtag, or to find out more about the project and/or make a possible donation to the organisation.

The use of examples also helps to support the argument. In fact, in the case of the campaign, this feature is the one that draws the most attention, as they are homemade videos and can bring more reliability to the discourse. Generally, the use of homemade videos in advertising aims to create greater identification and disguise the creation of the content by the brand, giving it a more realistic feel. Because it has a social tone, this construction helps to create greater emotion among the public, what Carrascoza (2004) calls the “Dionysian model”, with the use of emotive elements.

The argument defies stereotypes because, by common sense standards, a suicidal person is always expected to present themselves publicly with an expression of sadness and melancholy, prior to the event, which does not correspond to the examples mentioned in the campaign. This shows a non-causal relationship between what people show and what they really feel. The music on the soundtrack itself shows this contradiction, because it hints at the possible pain behind a smile; at the same time, it’s a song traditionally considered “cheerful”. The song begins: “bring me sunshine in your smile, bring me laughter all the while. In this world where we live, there should be more happiness”.

In addition to the video, the campaign is building a transmedia narrative (Jenkins, 2006/2009). The story unfolds across multiple platforms and the stories add up to reinforce the campaign’s argument. On the official website (<https://www.thecalmzone.net/thelastphoto>) you can see construction of this narrative.

4.3. PROMINENCE (OVERASSURTION)

According to Maingueneau (1998/2008), there are charged statements which make passages easily memorisable, either by exploiting elements such as rhymes, metaphors, antithesis or prosody. The same author says that “there are formulas that function as autonomous statements and formulas cited to mark a specific position that is implicitly opposed to others” (p. 75). Maingueneau (1998/2008) also introduces the concept of

“overassertion”, the idea of which, roughly speaking, is to emphasise elements that can be returned to at a later date.

In this sense, the statement “suicidal people don’t always look suicidal” stands out in the text, especially because it is an argument that challenges stereotypes, as we have already discussed, and because it is the very message of the CALM institution’s campaign with ITV, therefore going viral on digital social networks and disseminated through other direct actions. The use of the hashtag can also be considered a prominent element, since the sender wants the audience to continue visiting other portals and promote the organisation through media propagation and the circulation of discourse in society. Finally, CALM’s signoff, with the logo highlighted, is unlikely to go unnoticed by the audience, reinforcing the brand with the public.

4.4. ELEMENTS EXTERNAL TO VERBAL LANGUAGE

As it is a collage of home videos, the aesthetic is not homogeneous, making it uncharacteristic of an elaborate production. However, it brings together different characters and, consequently, stories. These factors are relevant because they convey more credibility about the argument and carry a greater symbolic charge, which contributes to a more emotive discourse, especially due to the everyday situations that cause greater identification with the recipients. This aesthetic heterogeneity can be seen in the colour palette, framing, video format and sound. However, the homogeneity is in the expression of the characters, since smiles and moments of relaxation predominate in the images (parents playing with their children, magic tricks, family moments, with friends, on the beach, among others), just as the campaign message intended. The linearity of this feeling is broken with the screens analysed above, with the campaign’s descriptive and explanatory inscriptions on a black screen with white text. Superimposed on the ambient sound of the videos, the a capella soundtrack⁶ helped to make the film more moving.

This piece was broadcast on the This Morning programme by ITV (the United Kingdom’s largest commercial television station), which supported CALM’s initiative. On CALM’s official YouTube page, this audiovisual product was added on 22 June 2022 and has achieved almost 7,000,000 views and more than 28,000 comments in just over a year (data taken from Campaign Against Living Miserably, 2022, on 14 September 2023). In addition to this film, which was shown on television and in the cinema, other actions were carried out to further expand the campaign’s narrative and the reach to the target audience.

On CALM’s website, in “The Stories” section, 50 photos (with name and age) of people who have committed suicide and their respective stories told by family and friends were posted for people to read.

In June 2022, an open-air exhibition was held on London’s South Bank, with 50 photos of apparently happy people, but without revealing any clues as to what the images were about, arousing the interest of people visiting the venue. The revelation that these were

⁶ Radford Music licensed the song “Bring Me Sunshine” and re-recorded it in a cover version with singer Beth McCarthy.

the last images of people who had committed suicide happened on ITV's This Morning programme two days later.

The campaign was also activated by digital out-of-home advertising, out-of-home advertising and print media, providing greater reach and increasing the frequency of visualisations. For the campaign, this was important because it made the cases even more visible and the narrative more robust.

CALM's partner in this cause, ITV aired the launch of the campaign on its This Morning programme, also revealing the intention behind the exhibition on the South Bank.

According to information from the DDB agency (ADAM&EVEDDB, 2023), more than 500,000 people visited the exhibition in person, which was seen live on television by more than 7,500,000 people. The campaign caused a 33% increase in online conversations about suicide. Within 48 hours of the campaign's launch, the video was the most commented on Reddit worldwide, which generated more reflection on the cause. Compared to the previous year, CALM received 400% more donations from the public and in the six months following the campaign, 161 suicides were prevented. Linking ITV to this campaign has helped both to achieve these social results and to link its image as a broadcaster of symbols that encourage reflection on suicide, which reverberates throughout society.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of the research was to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the "Cannes Film Festival" in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society.

Based on the analysis carried out, we identified the following points: the encompassing scene of the campaign is an advertising discourse; the generic scene is an advertisement with a social theme, whose format selected for analysis was an audiovisual product; the scenography, which conferred credibility to the enunciator's discourse. Scenography is a space to capture adherence by establishing an enunciative scene that gives it legitimacy. In this case, the scene was built on a collective imaginary of the suicidal profile, which was put to the test with a discourse that left little room for questioning. This is because by dealing with the subject with real cases, the campaign leads the audience to rethink the stereotypes that media culture and society generally paint of the subject.

The campaign didn't limit itself to treating scenography in a way that was limited to the standard generic scene. As well as lending credibility to the speech, the home videos provided an emotional charge that was enhanced by the soundtrack. The encompassing scene can be detailed in the sections "lexical items", "argumentative techniques", "prominence" and "elements external to verbal language".

This route also allowed us to analyse the issues of technicality and institutionality, as we already mentioned in the theoretical section of the article. In terms of technicality, we observed accessible language, the collage of home videos and an a cappella soundtrack, which gave the audience greater emotion. There wasn't a great deal of technical production in this piece, mainly because the intention was for the audience to be centred on the message the video wanted to convey. In addition to the film, the transmedia narrative allowed for the use of multiple forms of expression that coincide with the campaign's message, reinforcing the campaign's ethos. In any case, the appropriate communication was pertinent to the objectives.

In terms of institutionality, we can see that because it is a traditional charity, it already has values that match the discourses promoted by the campaign. By only using the charity's logo at the end of the film, CALM was able to significantly increase the number of donations from the video, the aim of which was to prevent suicide, which is on the rise in the United Kingdom. By deconstructing the stereotype of the suicidal person, the institution manages to create new symbols for its audience, who now have more relevant information on the subject, especially since the figure of the sad and dejected person has erupted in the collective imagination. On the other hand, the partner brand in the campaign, ITV, sought to position itself socially in relation to the cause by constructing a narrative that caught the attention of viewers and promoted a boom in both viewership and the circulation of media discourse on the cause.

With these considerations, we can see the importance of having institutions that really do have a sustainable policy in terms of business management and communication. In addition to complying with the ESG agenda, brands can spread new symbols across multiple media platforms, allowing for a productive discussion with society, in line with the process of mediatisation. For ITV, the entertainment and sports television network, developing a campaign in conjunction with CALM has helped in terms of audience, image and reflections on a subject considered taboo in many cultures. Although this is not the aim of the article, it could be extended in another opportunity, complementing the possible dilemmas between partnerships in advertising campaigns by philanthropic companies with private or government corporations, which can cover up possible local problems, consequently affecting credibility, as Lima (2012) reflects.

Translation: Linguaemundi

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NOT VERY INSTAGRAMMABLE: SUSTAINABILITY IN THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION OF PORTUGUESE DESIGNER FASHION BRANDS

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ABSTRACT

The increasing acknowledgement of the fashion industry's unsustainability underscores the urgent need to encourage approaches to production that respect the environment and human resources. The attributes commonly associated with designer fashion, such as durability, creativity and aesthetics, offer the potential for designer work to position itself at the forefront of sustainable fashion. For this to happen, this message must reach consumers. Given the indispensability of digital communication in reaching brands' audiences, it is imperative to understand the prominence given to sustainability issues on the digital platforms of Portuguese designer fashion brands. Analyses of the reflective themes and content shared on Instagram by 47 designers who showcased their collections at "ModaLisboa" or "Portugal Fashion" demonstrated a general lack of interest in promoting the sustainability factor. After categorising and analysing 2,753 posts, the conclusion was that the digital platform predominantly serves to showcase the final product, overlooking information regarding production processes, raw materials, or labour. These themes were only observed in approximately 10% of the total content and were omitted from a significant number of the designers and fashion brands analysed. This research offers substantial contributions. It pioneers an intersection between Portuguese fashion, sustainability, and digital communication, addressing the scarcity of work in this area. Additionally, it recommends effective communication and educational practices to enhance the sustainability of national designer fashion brands.

KEYWORDS

fashion, sustainability, digital communication, Instagram

POUCO INSTAGRAMÁVEL: A SUSTENTABILIDADE NA COMUNICAÇÃO DIGITAL DA MODA AUTORAL PORTUGUESA

RESUMO

A conceção da insustentabilidade da indústria da moda começa a ser amplamente reconhecida, tornando urgente a necessidade de incentivos de forma a produzir com maior respeito pelo meio ambiente e pelos recursos humanos. Os atributos comumente associados à oferta de moda de autor, como a durabilidade, a criatividade e a estética, vêm possibilitar que o trabalho autoral se posicione na liderança da moda sustentável. Para que tal ocorra, revela-se fundamental que esta mensagem chegue aos consumidores. Com a indispensabilidade da comunicação digital para alcançar o público das marcas, é premente compreender o destaque dado às questões da sustentabilidade nas plataformas digitais da moda autoral portuguesa. As análises temática reflexiva e do conteúdo publicado no Instagram de 47 designers que apresentaram as

suas coleções na “ModaLisboa” ou no “Portugal Fashion” permitiram constatar um desinteresse generalizado pela promoção do fator sustentabilidade. Foram categorizadas e analisadas 2.753 publicações, concluindo que a plataforma digital é, em larga escala, usada para expor o produto final, sendo preteridas as informações relacionadas com os processos produtivos, as matérias-primas ou a mão de obra. Estes temas foram apenas observados em cerca de 10% do total de conteúdos, sendo omissos num conjunto significativo dos designers e das marcas de moda analisados. Esta investigação apresenta importantes contributos: um cruzamento pioneiro entre moda, sustentabilidade e comunicação digital portuguesas, que permite reduzir a escassez de trabalhos na área, bem como a recomendação de boas práticas de comunicação e educação para a sustentabilidade da moda autoral nacional.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

moda, sustentabilidade, comunicação digital, Instagram

1. INTRODUCTION

With a workforce exceeding 300,000,000 individuals across the value chain (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2019), the fashion industry stands out as one of the most environmentally polluting sectors worldwide (Feng & Ngai, 2020). To address this challenge, some fashion producers have prioritised sustainability, implementing more conscientious and waste-free production models (O’Connell, 2020). The inherent characteristics of designer fashion, including the quality of raw materials and original, timeless designs (Barbero & Tarifa, 2023), position it advantageously in terms of sustainability, particularly due to the contrast they offer to fast fashion (Joy et al., 2012).

Since the beginning of the millennium, significant efforts have been made to spread the message of sustainability, both within industry and academia (Williams, 2019). “Sustainability” has become a watchword in this sector, acknowledged as a “fraught” issue (Thomas, 2020, p. 735) and one of the most debated concepts in the fashion community (Fraser & van der Ven, 2022). Even so, the task of ensuring that this concept does not become trivialised and reduced to merely a “buzzword” cannot be overlooked (Williams, 2019, p. 287).

The “digital revolution” (Couldry & Hepp, 2017, p. 2) has enabled brands to establish closer connections with consumers and gather more information about their audiences (Bulović & Čović, 2020). When it comes to sustainable fashion, the tools of the online world are indispensable, as they are needed to dispel the negative perceptions and mistrust typically associated with this sector (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008; Perry & Chung, 2016). Particularly noteworthy is the effectiveness of social media in disseminating the message of sustainability (Orminski et al., 2021) and the inevitability of this online presence for fashion brands to attain their commercial goals (Ahmad et al., 2015).

It is, therefore, pertinent to understand the emphasis that designer fashion places on sustainability in its online communication processes. That is the purpose of this study, focusing specifically on the Portuguese context. After conducting a reflexive thematic analysis, drawing on the framework established by Testa et al. (2020), all content shared on

the Instagram profiles of 47 designers and labels who showcased their collections at one of the two Portuguese fashion weeks — “ModaLisboa” or “Portugal Fashion” — over six months was scrutinised. From the 16 themes considered for the content analysis, three relate to sustainability, making it possible to conclude the relevance of the “watchword of the season” (Bravo, 2021, p. 253) for fashion designers. Additionally, it allows for comparing the highlights of the two fashion weeks and underscores the practices that illustrate designer fashion’s commitment to sustainable development.

This research identifies both theoretical and practical contributions. Firstly, conceptually, the literature on Portuguese fashion is limited, with virtually no exploration of the potential intersection between fashion, sustainability, and digital communication. Secondly, the analyses provided insights into both effective and ineffective communication and educational practices for sustainability within the realm of national designer fashion. These findings can serve as quick access to communication strategies aimed at enhancing the human and environmental criteria of the fashion proposition.

2. SUSTAINABILITY AND THE FASHION INDUSTRY

With consistent growth, the fashion industry is now one of the largest economies in the world (Orminski et al., 2021). This is largely due to the globalised nature of the market, which is based on a wide variety of products with significant profit margins and short life cycles (Masson et al., 2007). Essentially, these represent some of the fundamental attributes of the fast fashion model, characterised by the rapid and large-scale production of inexpensive, trendy clothing, often manufactured in outsourced facilities and distributed through numerous chain stores (Thomas, 2019).

Presently firmly established (Caro & Martínez-De-Albéniz, 2014) and setting the pace for production standards within the textile and apparel sector (Fletcher, 2014), fast fashion has demonstrated its role in generating significant impacts (Gazzola et al., 2020). From the excessive consumption of natural resources to the carbon footprint associated with a sprawling and intricate global supply chain, the ramifications of this model are becoming progressively apparent (Brewer, 2019).

This gloomy perspective of the fashion industry is further reinforced by the unsustainable nature of the production methods adopted (Williams, 2019), which detrimentally compromise both the human and environmental components of the equation that defines sustainability (Kalambura et al., 2020). Williams (2019) suggests an interpretation that underscores the essential need to integrate sustainability with the fashion sector:

sustainability (...) concerns the balancing our of collective interdependencies as human beings with our simultaneous dependencies on nature. Sustainability today, then, concerns the planetary emergency and the widening wealth-poverty divide, crises acknowledged by world-leading climate scientists, political and religious leaders. Viewing fashion-design through the lens of sustainability situates fashion’s activities in relation to these pertinent issues. (p. 284)

Indeed, as a multifaceted concept (Kakoty, 2018), “sustainability” incorporates the social, environmental, and economic dimensions, as Elkington (1994) proposed in his conceptualisation of the sustainability tripod. Before this theorisation, the *Brundtland Report* (Brundtland, 1987) had already emphasised the need for progressive transformations in the economic and social fields to consecrate sustainable development, defining it as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (p. 41). In fact, when contrasting the current practices of the fashion industry with this approach to sustainability, it is easy to understand how crucial environmental and human elements are in realising a genuinely sustainable trajectory (Brewer, 2019; Ceylan, 2019; Kalambura et al., 2020).

Today, some fashion brands are challenging the principles of durability, considering that the more resistant the product is, the longer its life cycle, the less need for replacement, and, therefore, the lower the rate of sales growth (Guiltinan, 2009). In production, planning for durability is no longer a priority. It has little to do with wear and tear (Burns, 2010) but rather with manufacturing the idea of being “out-of-fashion” (Slade, 2007, p. 53).

So, given the prevalence of production methods that mostly disregard environmental and human concerns, essential for sustainable development, alongside the consolidation of strategies encouraging continuous consumer demand for fashion (Blazquez et al., 2020), Elkington’s (1997) prognoses are confirmed: the sustainability agenda is proving to be more complex than some of the early enthusiasts anticipated — a scenario that is, in fact, a generalised attribute of consumer society, beyond the boundaries of fashion.

3. THE LEADERSHIP OF DESIGNER FASHION

In the first decades of the 21st century, the debate around sustainable fashion has intensified, both theoretically and practically (Williams, 2019), with a notable increase in emphasis on the subject (Bravo, 2021). Even so, the proven lack of awareness regarding sustainable fashion (Blazquez et al., 2020) indicates that its widespread adoption by consumers “is still far from reality” (Tripathi et al., 2021, p. 206). This advocates the well-established idea that prioritising knowledge and education in business development is essential:

businesses first need to think of themselves as educators, not salespeople. And they must expand their lesson plans beyond their own products to the larger issues of pollution, climate change (...) and other environmental problems. (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008, p. 60)

From the consumer’s perspective, ensuring the validity of sustainable fashion options requires certain attributes to justify their choice (Forney et al., 2005). While sustainable fashion has undeniable merit in advancing the planet’s sustainable development, interest in this offer must extend beyond just environmentally-conscious consumers (Munir, 2020). Thus, factors such as quality, aesthetics, and price cannot be overlooked.

Despite the prevalent emphasis on quantity over quality in today’s era, there has been a noticeable shift in perspective, indicating a reversal of this trend (Magnuson et

al., 2017). Fletcher (2014) suggests that a quality-based agenda “promotes a new model of action that recognises the importance of fashion to our culture but disassociates it from the disengaged indifference that is frequently induced by consumerist fashion” (p. 224). Furthermore, visual appeal and aesthetics play significant roles in driving fashion consumption (Munir, 2020) and are often decisive in attracting new consumers (Davis, 2011). Finally, it is important to address the “price” variable and the need to ensure that consumers are not easily persuaded to pay a higher price for a more sustainable fashion product (Pedersen & Andersen, 2015). As expressed by Shrivastava et al. (2021): “the consumers are more price-conscious than environmentally conscious while shopping for clothes” (p. 2).

It would be erroneous to approach the evolution of the concept of “sustainable fashion” without considering one of its main barriers: fast fashion and its vast array of products at affordable prices (Birtwistle & Moore, 2007). Movements such as slow fashion have emerged as an alternative to mass production, aiming to counteract the detrimental effects of the current fashion system (Blazquez et al., 2020; Kalambura et al., 2020). By adopting the model, the industry makes more conscientious decisions across various dimensions of the supply chain (Little, 2018), recognising that many of the issues linking fashion to sustainability stem from issues of scale, efficiency, and localisation (Fletcher, 2014).

In this context, it is crucial to highlight the potential leading position that designer fashion can assume concerning sustainability principles, especially in contrast to the fast fashion system (Joy et al., 2012). Designer fashion is “a type of fashion whose garments are distinguished by original design and high-quality raw materials, making them timeless and unrelated to specific collections” (Barbero & Tarifa, 2023, p. 3). This advantageous position is largely attributed to quality: designer fashion is synonymous with innovative design elements and meticulous attention to detail, manufacturing, and the resulting durability of the pieces (Joy et al., 2012).

The central concept is that authorial work transcends mere functionality and encompasses abstract values and meanings (Valle Noronha, 2017). This encourages purpose-driven consumption, where apparel holds significance beyond its material form, prompting a reconsideration of disposable in favour of enduring meaning (Niessen, 2020). The concept of “emotional durability”, proposed by Chapman (2005), is based on the principle that products are more easily discarded when there is no emotional connection between them and the consumer. This approach to emotionally durable design promotes the existence of emotional experiences that ultimately dictate the drive for consumption, usage, and disposal of products.

Positioned in contrast to “mass-fashion” (Haug & Busch, 2016, p. 331), it is worth highlighting the need for fashion companies to pivot their strategic approach, leveraging sustainability as an opportunity for competitive advantage (Gazzola et al., 2020): a “new-luxury” (Niessen, 2020, p. 871) rooted in timelessness (Joy et al., 2012) and prioritising more humane design and production processes (Kalambura et al., 2020).

4. THE INDISPENSABILITY OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

The power of the term “sustainability” today is undeniable: not only is it a notable buzzword in the fashion sector (Williams, 2019), but it has also proved to be one of the most distinctive trends of recent years (Gazzola et al., 2020). Embedded within the media agenda (Williams, 2019), sustainability is recognised as a tense and sensitive issue for fashion industry professionals (Thomas, 2020).

Social inequalities, economic crises and political conflicts have led to greater awareness of social and ecological values (Gazzola et al., 2019). However, communication, as a tool for public exposure, plays a crucial role in the “exposure” of intensive production practices (Park & Lennon, 2006). This realisation has prompted questions about the ethics surrounding fashion products, which are sold at low costs to consumers but provide lucrative advantages for producers (Joy et al., 2012).

Adapting communication strategies is crucial for fashion brands to showcase their sustainable credentials to consumers (Business of Fashion & McKinsey & Company, 2023). In this sense, it is worth noting the importance of digital communication in this industry (Bulović & Čović, 2020; Orminski et al., 2021; Shrivastava et al., 2021). The fact is that the fashion industry is increasingly aligned with cyberspace, providing ample opportunities to reach consumers, engage with brands and even reduce costs (Bulović & Čović, 2020). Indeed, with digitalisation (Camacho-Otero et al., 2019), the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies has revolutionised the way people interact and consume information today (Casciani et al., 2022).

In this context, digital platforms emerge as pivotal players in the market (Gazzola et al., 2020): information about fashion products is now more easily disseminated, with platforms like social networks enabling users to actively engage in industry decisions (Norris & Cantoni, 2022). The adoption of digital channels by fashion designers and brands is, therefore, imperative (Bravo, 2021), and the role of social media in the sector’s marketing action plans is already axiomatic (Marcos et al., 2020).

More than ever, companies have extensive knowledge about consumers (Shrivastava et al., 2021), and their communication efforts through owned content have propelled them to a status very similar to media companies (Norris & Cantoni, 2022). As a result, traditional channels such as the press are often overshadowed by digital communication tools (Piazza & Abrahamson, 2020), leading to a blurring of the line between information and advertising (Hanusch, 2019), which traditional media outlets uphold but effective gains in reaching their consumers, transcending spatial and temporal barriers (Shrivastava et al., 2021).

It is important to highlight the social network Instagram for its strong relationship with the fashion business: the most effective channel in brand communication in the sector (Pittman & Reich, 2016; Yoo, 2023). Due to its focus on the creation of images and videos (Crapa et al., 2024), this platform attracts fashion producers when establishing their marketing communication activities, from fast fashion to luxury brands (Yoo, 2023). Guided by a strong visual component and a diminishing reliance on textual descriptions, Instagram seems to be the perfect digital space to promote the industry (Park et al., 2021).

As far as sustainability is concerned, social networks have been the ramp for popularising the topic (Orminski et al., 2021). The truth is that communication is proving critical in driving progress toward sustainable consumption practices: issues such as low

awareness, negative perceptions, or lack of trust are some of the barriers pointed out to more conscious consumption (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008). The need to overcome the scepticism surrounding this fashion offer (Perry & Chung, 2016) underscores the essential role of digital tools in sustainable fashion marketing strategies (Shen et al., 2014).

5. METHOD

The research seeks to understand the prominence of sustainability issues in the digital communication of Portuguese designer fashion brands. The study focuses its analysis on Instagram, given its status as the primary digital image-sharing platform for promoting apparel (Park et al., 2021; Pittman & Reich, 2016; Yoo, 2023). Using a platform such as Instagram makes it easier to define consistent metrics when analysing different designers, especially when compared to digital structures such as websites. Furthermore, the tool is also validated by its popularity among internet users and widespread adoption by influencers (Arsenyan & Mirowska, 2021).

This notion is further reinforced by the belief that fashion weeks serve as prime venues for showcasing authorial work: the show conveys avant-gardism, underscoring that fashion creation does not only need to be geared towards consumption but also towards the appreciation of the work (Monteiro, 2023). To this end, we identified the 47 designers or fashion labels that were included in the calendars of the Portuguese fashion weeks — “ModaLisboa” and “Portugal Fashion” — in the October 2022 (spring/summer 2023) or March 2023 (autumn/winter 2023/2024) editions. It is noteworthy that, in Portugal, the authors present their collections at one of the events and that these events take place twice a year. That said, a content analysis was conducted on all materials posted on the Instagram profiles of the 47 designers and brands over six months, spanning from October 2022 to March 2023. Table 1 presents the list of designers and brands analysed and the corresponding number of posts.

EVENT	DESIGNER/BRAND	IDENTIFICATION (@)	POSTS
ModaLisboa (ML)	Arndes	arndes_process	13
ML	Behen	behen.studio	17
ML	Buzina	buzinabrand	120
ML	Call Me Gorgeous	callmegorgeousstore	47
ML	Carlos Gil	carlos_gil_designer	145
ML	Carolina Machado	carolinamachado_official	12
ML	Constança Entrudo	constanca_entrudo	12
ML	Dino Alves	dino_alves_eu	8
ML	Duarte	duartebrand	143
ML	Filipe Augusto	filipeaugusto_studio	45
ML	Fora de Jogo	foradejogo_	42
ML	Gonçalo Peixoto	goncalopeixotooficial	89
ML	HIBU	hibu.studio	16
ML	Ivan Hunga Garcia	ivanhungagarcia	13
ML	João Magalhães	joaomglhs	21
ML	Kolovrat	lidjakolovrat	13

ML	Luís Buchinho	luisbuchinho	29
ML	Luís Carvalho	luiscarvalhoofficial	157
ML	Maria Clara	clarapleca_	31
ML	Mustique	mustique__	94
ML	Nuno Baltazar	nunobaltazarstudio	12
ML	Nuno Gama	ateliernunogama	39
ML	Olga Noronha	olganoronha_official	38
ML	Ricardo Andrez	ricardoandrezstudio	23
ML	Valentim Quaresma	valentimquaresma	43
Portugal Fashion (PF)	Alexandra Moura	alexandra.moura	74
PF	Alves/Gonçalves	m.alves.goncalves	16
PF	Carolina Sobral	carolinasobral	115
PF	David Catalán	davidcatalanbrand	30
PF	Davii	daviiofficial	38
PF	Decenio	decenio	187
PF	Diogo Miranda	diogomirandaofficial	70
PF	Ernest W. Baker	ernest_w_baker	19
PF	Estelita Mendonça	estelitamendonca	59
PF	Huarte	huartebrand	26
PF	Hugo Costa	hugo_costa_label	5
PF	Katty Xiomara	kattyxiomara_official	74
PF	Luís Onofre	luisonofreofficial	91
PF	Maria Gambina	maria_gambina	43
PF	Marques ' Almeida	marques_almeida	118
PF	Miguel Vieira	miguelvieiraofficial	44
PF	Nopin	nopinbrand	139
PF	Nuno Miguel Ramos	nunomiguelramos	87
PF	Pé de Chumbo	pedechumbo_oficial	43
PF	Pedro Pedro	pedropedrostudio	68
PF	Sophia Kah	sophiakah	124
PF	Susana Bettencourt	subettencourt	61

Table 1. Designers and brands analysed

The posts are analysed using the categories defined and applied in Testa et al.'s (2020) work "Engaging Consumers With Sustainable Fashion on Instagram". Seeking to determine the popularity of sustainable fashion among digital consumers, the authors conducted a thematic analysis and identified a number of emerging themes. Table 2 displays all the themes and their corresponding descriptions from that study, alongside information derived from our thematic analysis, guiding decisions on whether to keep, delete, or introduce themes. Employing a reflexive thematic analysis approach, which, according to Braun and Clarke (2021), favours a data-driven orientation. The authors propose a phased methodology that involves familiarising oneself with the data, coding it, defining themes and then reviewing and adjusting them. Leveraging the first stage of the study by Testa et al. (2020) made it possible to define 16 themes, listed below, as observation criteria for "developing, analysing and interpreting patterns across a qualitative dataset" (Braun & Clarke, 2021, p. 4).

THEME	DESCRIPTION/EXAMPLES	OUTCOME
Overall sustainability	Messages directly related to sustainability	Kept
Social sustainability	Human resources, ethics, social responsibility	Kept
Environmental sustainability	Natural resources, materials or pollution	Kept
Philanthropy	Philanthropic initiatives, charity, fundraising	Kept
Social awareness	Inequalities or injustices, race and gender	Deleted
Current affairs	Public sphere (forest fires, public elections, etc.)	Deleted
Fashion	Apparel, accessories and footwear products	Kept
Lifestyle	Moments, “how to” and everyday life	Kept
Celebrities	Featuring a famous individual	Kept
Memes	Humorous or poignant images with text	Deleted
Brand	Brand advertising, shops or events	Kept
Deals and sales	Discounts, sales, deals	Kept
Art and creativity	Creative or abstract images	Kept
Animals	Featuring animals	Deleted
Beauty	Beauty products (make-up, cosmetics)	Kept
Food	Featuring food	Deleted
Press	Featuring media content	Added

Table 2. Themes derived from reflective thematic analysis

6. FINDINGS

Within the defined timeframe, 2,753 posts were analysed, sourced from the Instagram profiles of the 47 designers and brands identified in the calendars of the two Portuguese fashion weeks: 25 at “ModaLisboa” (1,222 posts) and 22 at “Portugal Fashion” (1,531 posts).

Testa et al.’s (2020) reflexive thematic analysis served as the basis for this research’s content analysis. All the themes identified by the authors were considered. Still, our thematic analysis of the posts eliminated five unobserved themes — “social awareness”, “current affairs”, “memes”, “animals”, and “food” — and defined a new “press”-related theme — featuring media content — based on the number of references (see Table 2).

Although this research seeks to establish the interest of Portuguese designer fashion in the theme of sustainability, as reflected in their digital activity on Instagram, it is pertinent to start by uncovering the most frequently discussed themes. The most frequent category of posts is “fashion” ($n=2,271$), featuring content that advertises the brands’ products, emphasising product images from marketing campaigns or on the backstage of the events. This is followed by content focused on “brand” ($n=680$), reflected in brand promotion through advertising campaigns, participation in fashion weeks, collection launches and the brands’ physical spaces such as shops or pop-up stores. In the third place, the theme “celebrities” ($n=228$) refers exclusively to public figures wearing the designers’ clothes. Among the posts analysed, 82.49% are related to the “fashion” theme. It is worth noting that the average number of themes per post is 1.32, and the maximum number of themes associated with a post is four. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the number of posts across each theme, excluding only those related to sustainability, which will be highlighted below.

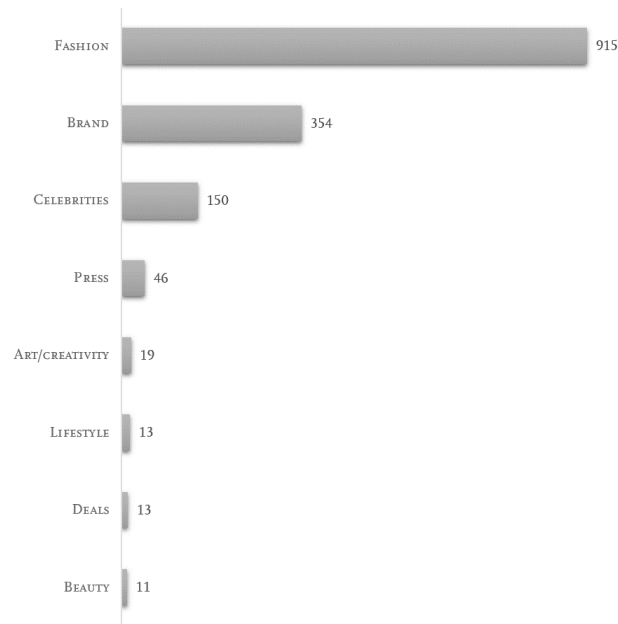


Figure 1. Number of posts per theme in "ModaLisboa"

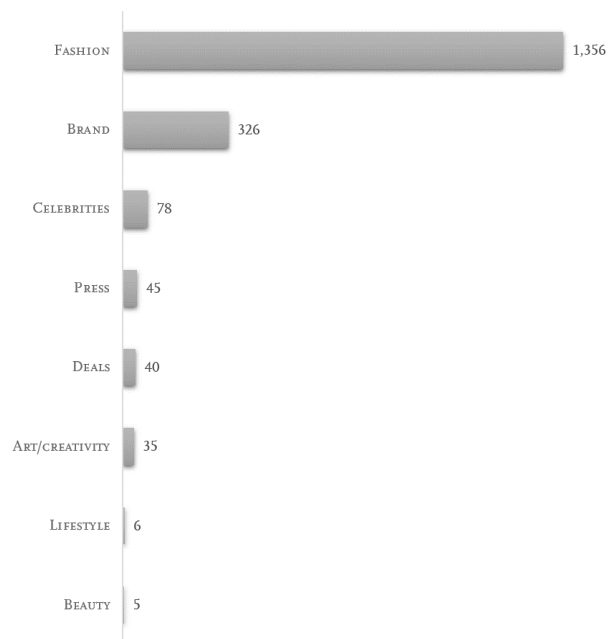


Figure 2. Number of posts per theme in "Portugal Fashion"

Regarding posts related to the theme of sustainability, the analysis focused on three categories linked to conveying sustainable messages: "general sustainability", "social sustainability", and "environmental sustainability". When considering the posts featuring at least one of the three themes above, it becomes apparent that this occurs in 159 posts, representing 5.78% of all posts (2.76% from "ModaLisboa" authors and 3.01% from "Portugal Fashion" authors).

It is also important to analyse the distribution of posts across the different themes identified and, subsequently, observe some relevant examples. First and foremost, it is crucial to highlight the minimal focus on sustainability, which is naturally corroborated

if we also consider the proportion of each of the sustainability themes in relation to the total number of posts: only 0.11% ($n=3$) of the content posted is about “general sustainability”, 3.41% ($n=94$) are interested in “social sustainability”, and 3.92% ($n=108$) in “environmental sustainability”. Figure 3 illustrates the ratio between the number of posts on sustainability and the total number of posts by designer/brand. Ivan Hunga Garcia, Béhen and Carolina Machado, from “ModaLisboa”, and Susana Bettencourt, Nopin and Maria Gambina, from “Portugal Fashion”, are among the designers/brands demonstrating the highest commitment to various sustainability-related topics. Below are selected examples of the content posted, chosen for their clarity and relevance to each sustainability topic. It should also be noted that 17 designers/brands (36.17% of the total) do not post any content on the subject — nine from “ModaLisboa” and eight from “Portugal Fashion”.

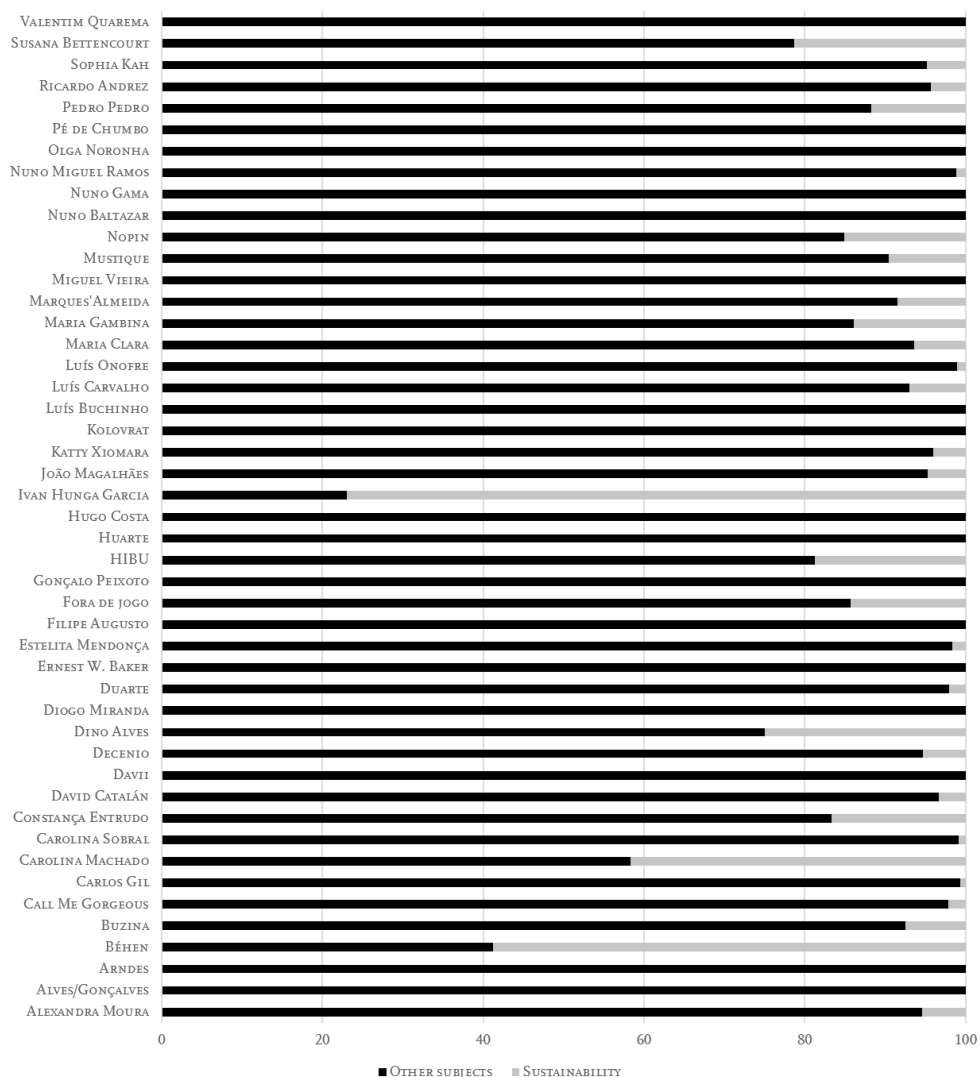


Figure 3. Percentage of posts on sustainability compared to other themes by designer/brand

6.1. OVERALL SUSTAINABILITY

The dissemination of content that directly encompasses the concept of “sustainability” was only observed at the Marques’Almeida brand. It shared a series of three posts

advocating against the shortening of product lifespans and promoting reduced consumption. These posts emphasised the importance of discarding products from past collections to break the cycle and breathe new life into products that are over two years old. The underlying idea conveyed was that the consumer's commitment to higher quality products reduces the need to consume in quantity. Figure 4 depicts one of the three posts.



Figure 4. Post on overall sustainability

Source. From *Today is your last chance to grab your favourite piece from our archive stock* [Photograph], by Marques Almeida [@marques_almeida], 2022, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/ClDjb6XlqrS/>)

6.2. SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

There were 94 posts related to the human component of sustainability. Their emphasis is on describing production processes and their connection to the community, localism and human resources. The following are some of the examples: local labour — described as “produced by hand locally in Porto” in a post by designer Carolina Machado (Figure 5); national production — the “produced in Portugal” label coined in the publication by Lisbon-based brand Mustique (Figure 6); valuing collaborations with resources and companies in close geographical proximity — the know-how present in techniques

such as knitting or embroidery with Arraiolos stitch highlighted in the posts by Maria Gambina (Figure 7) or Béhen (Figure 8).



Figure 5. Post on social sustainability — Carolina Machado

Source. From *Bespoke knits carefully handmade locally in Porto, Portugal* [Photograph], by Carolina Machado [@carolinamachado_official], 2022, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CktNvgCsfl1/>)



Figure 6. Post on social sustainability — Mustique

Source. From *Made in Portugal* [Photograph], by Mustique [mustique_], 2023, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CnO3iS2M6gL/>)



maria_gambina Comecei a trabalhar com a D. Ana quando ainda estudava no CITEX, há mais de 30 anos portanto. E ao longo destes anos fui passando o contacto desta Mestre aos meus alunos, muito do que têm visto por aí em tricot nós desfiles foi feito por ela. A D. Ana trabalha em casa, numa garagem, na sua máquina do século passado e rodeada de milhares de pequenos novelos que foi acumulando ao longo da vida. Prometi-lhe que ia "tratar" deles. E assim foi, pegando na ideia da desconstrução de uma bola de futebol foram feitos, um a um, hexágonos coloridos que depois foram unidos, deixando espaços em

Figure 7. Post on social sustainability — Maria Gambina

Source. From *Comecei a trabalhar com a D. Ana quando ainda estudava no CITEX, há mais de 30 anos portanto* [Photograph], by Maria Gambina [@maria_gambina], 2022, Instagram. (https://www.instagram.com/p/C21lmgwMoSp/?img_index=1)

Note. Translation: "I started working with Mrs Ana when I was still studying at CITEX, which was over 30 years ago now. Over the years, I've shared Mrs Ana's contact details with my students, so much of the knitting you've seen on the catwalk shows has been crafted by her. Mrs Ana works at home in a garage, using her knitting machine from the last century, and she is surrounded by thousands of small skeins she has accumulated throughout her life. I promised her that I would "take care" of them.

And so it was, inspired by the idea of deconstructing a football, we created, one by one, colourful hexagons, which were then assembled, leaving gaps in between".



behen.studio AW23 "The God of Small Things" backstage at @lisboafashionweek by @luis.carmmo with @f4b7o @justmodelmanagement

Arraiolos over cork because why not? 🌿 It's such a special technique and we had the pleasure to work with the best team at @sempre_noiva_tapetes in Arraiolos which translates to "always engaged". One of the stitches used is the "ponto pé de flor" that is almost lost in contemporary Arraiolos but used in the veryyy early Arraiolos tapestries.

THE pants. Thank you to Jorge Barros, national treasure who captured Portugal and its traditions and festivities. The one who sends me the most uplifting messages! This photo is of a picnic in a boat to remind about the importance of the small things, big things and everything all together.

Figure 8. Post on social sustainability — Béhen

Source. From AW23 "The God of Small Things" backstage at @lisboafashionweek by @luis.carmmo with @f4b7o @justmodelmanagement [Photograph], Béhen [@behen.studio], 2023, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CqJHcpLNVz4>)

6.3. ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Among the three types of sustainability analysed, environmental sustainability had the highest number of posts ($n=108$). This theme predominantly highlights the materiality of the author's work: whether through recycling materials — such as the pair of HIBU trousers (Figure 9); or using eco-friendly materials — such as the Ecovero viscose used in the manufacture of the Nopin brand blazer (Figure 10); fabric development in the atelier itself — as Constança Entrudo's publication points out (Figure 11); or through partnerships for reusing pieces — as seen in designer Luís Carvalho's collaboration with Kaporal (Figure 12) and designer Dino Alves' collaboration with Mister Man (Figure 13).



hibu.studio Unisex Smock Orange Trousers crafted from discarded material 70% cotton 30% elastane available at HIBU-STUDIO.COM

Figure 9. Post on environmental sustainability — HIBU

Source. From *Unisex Smock Orange Trousers crafted from discarded material 70% cotton 30% elastane available at HIBU.STUDIO.COM* [Photograph], by Hibu. [@hibu.studio], 2022, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CjiTkeCMoYx>)



nopinbrand one of our main purposes is to taking into consideration the quality and sustainability of our fabrics and raw materials.

the fabric os this Bomber Jacket with exclusive laser cut design is Portuguese and has UV protection - the fabric is made with ecovero viscose , which is a more sustainable source of wood, is more environmentally friendly and has less impact on water.

#LasercutJacket #PinkJacket #PortugueFabric
#PortugueseDesign #SustainableClothes #Handmade

Figure 10. Post on environmental sustainability — Nopin

Source. From *one of our main purposes is to taking into consideration the quality and sustainability of our fabrics and raw materials* [Photograph], by NOPIN [@nopinbrand], 2022, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/ClCT-lsIrpo/>)



Figure 11. Post on environmental sustainability — Constança Entrudo

Source. From *AW22 fabric development* [Photograph], by Constança Entrudo [@constanca_entrudo], 2022, Instagram. (https://www.instagram.com/p/CktDXQTMkXy/?img_index=2)



Figure 12. Post on environmental sustainability — a collaboration between designer Dino Alves and Mister Man

Source. From *#dinoalvesatelier #misterman #modanacional #modasustentavel #upcycling* [Photograph], by Dino Alves [@dino_alves_eu], 2022, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/ClhT9ymMrz/>)

Note. Translation: “2nd Upcycled Label: Dino Alves X Mister Man. PRESS RELEASE: The 2nd Upcycled Label was born out of a challenge from Mister Man, a men’s ready-to-wear and made-to-measure shop in downtown Lisbon, to fashion designer Dino Alves to recreate stagnant stock from the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s through upcycling. Suits, blazers and 3/4 jackets in classic style and high-quality materials and craftsmanship have now been transformed by the designer into mostly gender-neutral, contemporary pieces with a more conceptual design in line with the DNA of the Dino Alves brand. The designer’s new brand is the outcome of his collaboration with Mister Man for his latest fashion show at Modalisboa, where some of the pieces from the SS23 collection were showcased. The full collection consists of approximately 20 pieces and will be unveiled during a “get-together” at the Mister Man shop on Rua de São Nicolau, nº1 in Lisbon, on November 29, between 6 pm and 9 pm. The 2nd - Upcycled Label brand will continue to produce new garments as long as there are stagnant stocks as part of its commitment to fighting waste. The pieces will be available for purchase at both the Mister Man shop and the designer’s atelier”.



luiscarvalhoofficial @kaporalofficial x @luiscarvalhoofficial
UPcycling capsule collection

80% of the collection is unisex and inspired on the construction-deconstruction in oversize pieces with straight lines combined with different shades of blue that gives a second chance to old jeans and fabrics.

The denim was collected at Kaporal stores thanks to the "Kaporal Impact Recycling" program launched in 2014.

Figure 13. Post on environmental sustainability — a collaboration between designer Luís Carvalho and Kaporal

Source. From @kaporalofficial x @luiscarvalhoofficial Upcycling capsule collection [Photograph], by Luis Carvalho Official [@luiscarvalhoofficial], 2023, Instagram. (<https://www.instagram.com/p/CnXbiBuMpZn>)

7. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research's objective is to explore the prominence of sustainability themes in the digital communication of Portuguese designer fashion brands. The content posted on Instagram by 47 Portuguese designers and fashion brands was analysed based on 16 themes identified by Testa et al. (2020) — five of which were eventually excluded and another theme added. Over the six-month analysis period, it was possible to identify notable similarities between the themes observed by the authors and the themes exposed by the population under study.

The conducted content analysis not only allowed for the identification of the primary themes addressed but also facilitated a detailed examination of the conveyed messages. Concerning the fashion offer, the aesthetic component was recognised as an incentive for consumption, affirming Munir's (2020) assertion about the importance of

visual appeal in motivating fashion consumption. The focus on the product is evident in the significant proportion of fashion-related content across all the Instagram accounts analysed: approximately 82% of posts focus on apparel, footwear or accessories. In fact, there is a considerable emphasis on the commercial aspect, not only through showcasing products but also in content associated with the brand itself (“brand”), accounting for around 25% of all posts. However, price-related issues are overlooked and only mentioned in the context of deals or discounts. This information is especially important in the sustainable fashion scenario. As Pedersen and Andersen (2015) point out, consumers are unlikely to consider a fashion product more sustainable if it has a higher price tag.

In this context, it is worth mentioning the small number of posts dedicated to sustainability issues (approximately 6%); a significant portion of designers do not refer to the concept of “sustainability” or related ideas (approximately 36%). Nevertheless, the posts of the 30 designers and brands that do focus on these issues reveal an effort to integrate the social, environmental and economic components proposed by Elkington (1994) into the fashion offer through the definition of the triple bottom line. In fact, the content related to the environmental and labour components of designer fashion brands reflects a growing trend toward seeking more ecologically and humanly viable solutions — as observed by authors such as Shrivastava et al. (2021) and Thomas (2020).

When examining the sustainable message within Portuguese designer fashion brands as a whole, indicators emerge, such as handmade or made-to-order production, localism, collaborations with artisans, and the selection of recycled materials or projects to reuse pieces. These observations align with Fletcher’s (2014) reflection that sustainability intersects with considerations of scale, efficiency and localisation. Although this message is conveyed, there is almost no reference to an overarching sustainability message where brands explicitly articulate their commitment to sustainability principles — a fact proven by the small number of posts in the “overall sustainability” category. That jeopardises the path to sustainability, as it is essential for companies to play first an educational role and only then a commercial one (Bonini & Oppenheim, 2008).

With education for sustainability often sidelined, it is important to note that the primary emphasis of the sustainable message lies in the production phases — *where*, *who* and *how* it is produced. The advantages for the consumer in purchasing designer fashion are limited to the aesthetic component, and attention to quality and consequent durability is always undervalued.

Among other motivations, Kozlowski et al. (2012) highlight green marketing, driven by consumer interest in sustainability, as an incentive for companies to incorporate more sustainable processes. It is interesting to observe in the findings of this study that this is not the case, considering the minimal presence of the sustainable message in the Instagram profiles examined. When considering the obstacles to achieving more sustainable consumption as outlined by Bonini and Oppenheim (2008) and their correlation with fundamental communication principles, it becomes apparent that the efforts made to promote Portuguese designer fashion brands have little or no effect on

raising awareness, addressing negative perceptions, or instilling confidence. Overall, there is limited dissemination of the message directly linking designer fashion brands with sustainability.

Despite the literature indicating a strengthening connection between the fashion sector and the digital environment (Bulović & Čović, 2020), this study reveals that all brands and designers have a presence on Instagram. Nevertheless, the content reflects a certain “amateurishness”, which is also evident in some of the figures: approximately 60% ($n=28$) of the accounts posted less than 50 times in the six months analysed; only 24% ($n=11$) of the profiles have more than 20,000 followers and around 34% ($n=15$) have less than 5,000 followers. While this in no way contradicts the advantages of a digital presence, it is worth noting the importance that printed media still represents for the population under study. We are not witnessing a downplaying of traditional channels, as suggested by Piazza and Abrahamson (2020); quite the opposite, since the theme “press” added to the analysis grid almost entirely relates to mentions and exposure of brands in physical publications.

Additionally, it is noteworthy that there is a great deal of parallelism between the groups of authors from the two fashion weeks analysed — “ModaLisboa” and “Portugal Fashion”. The analysis confirmed a significant proximity in the number of designers represented by each of the organisations, the number of posts made and the number of posts relating to sustainability. Furthermore, it is worth emphasising the prominence given to participation in the events, both in the content included in the “brand” theme ($n=113$) and the product photographs and videos, and in “fashion” ($n=208$), which showcases the pieces within the context of a fashion show. It is pertinent to recall that this is a particularly effective environment for exhibiting fashion as a work of art, as Monteiro (2023) suggests. Accepting the representation of fashion as a work of art is one of the main reasons for framing designer fashion brands consumption as consumption with purpose and, therefore, more conscious because it is designed for the long term — in line with Chapman’s (2005) concept of “emotional durability”.

In fact, it is worth noting that the content analysis shows a limited effort by national designer fashion brands to position their offerings as sustainable fashion. The emphasis on sustainability issues in digital communication through Instagram falls short in steering towards the direction of the “new luxury”, as discussed by Niessen (2020). The literature exposes the current media strength of the term “sustainability” (Gazzola et al., 2020; Williams, 2019), but this research suggests a general lack of interest among the authors in communicating the sustainability of their production. It should be noted that this research applies a selective sample and is not representative of the entire universe of Portuguese designer fashion brands. This inherent limitation underscores the potential for different conclusions based on alternative selections of brands.

This study represents a pioneering effort to focus on digital communication and the sustainability of Portuguese designer fashion brands, mainly because national fashion has received relatively limited scholarly attention. The observation that there is little interest in

communicating the sustainability factor of authorial work raises questions that could guide future research. It is worth mentioning the importance of conducting a longitudinal study to compare this scenario, examined in this specific timeframe, with a scenario from a similar period before and after 2022/2023. Hence, it is crucial to ascertain whether the heightened interest in sustainability aligns with the media coverage surrounding it or diverges from the communication strategies adopted by Portuguese designer fashion brands.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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SUSTAINABILITY STRUGGLES: DISCURSIVE TENSIONS IN LATIN AMERICAN COSMETIC INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

In attempting to understand how leading cosmetics brands in Latin America communicate their sustainability initiatives and corporate social responsibility, we ask the following questions: (a) how do social media stakeholders engage with the sustainability content communicated by leading cosmetic brands in Latin America?, (b) what discourses employ these brands to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability?, and (c) what tensions and contradictions are embedded within the sustainability and corporate social responsibility discourses of these brands? In order to address these questions, we focus on the analysis of four well-established brands within the Latin American cosmetic industry: Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal. By embracing both qualitative and quantitative analyses, our findings help us to identify the tensions that arise when cosmetic companies strive to conciliate the pursuit of profit while advocating for sustainable development. Specifically, we argue that the discourse on sustainability of leading cosmetic brands in Latin America is especially appealing to audiences when it particularly points out environmental concerns and less so when it refers to social sustainability. Moreover, we show a nuanced interplay of tensions that encompass the juxtaposition of three dialectic relationships in this sustainability discourse: the tension between sustainability and capitalism, between corporate impact and consumer agency, and between empowerment and gender roles.

KEYWORDS

sustainability communication, discursive tensions, cosmetic industry, social responsibility, sustainable brands

MARCAS DE SUSTENTABILIDADE: TENSÕES DISCURSIVAS NA INDÚSTRIA DE COSMÉTICOS DA AMÉRICA LATINA

RESUMO

Na tentativa de compreender como as principais marcas de cosméticos da América Latina comunicam as suas iniciativas de sustentabilidade e responsabilidade social empresarial, levantamos as seguintes questões: (a) como é que os utilizadores das redes sociais interagem com o conteúdo de sustentabilidade divulgado pelas principais marcas de cosméticos da América Latina?, (b) que discursos utilizam essas marcas para evidenciar o seu compromisso com a sustentabilidade?, e (c) quais são as tensões e contradições implícitas nos discursos de sustentabilidade e

responsabilidade social empresarial dessas marcas? Para responder a estas questões, analisamos quatro marcas bem estabelecidas na indústria de cosméticos latino-americana: Avon, Natura, O Boticário e Yanbal. Através de análises qualitativas e quantitativas, os resultados obtidos permitem-nos identificar as tensões decorrentes da tentativa das empresas de cosméticos em conciliar a procura do lucro com a promoção do desenvolvimento sustentável. Mais concretamente, argumentamos que o discurso sobre a sustentabilidade das principais marcas de cosméticos na América Latina é particularmente apelativo para o público quando destaca preocupações ambientais e menos quando se refere à sustentabilidade social. Além disso, demonstramos uma interação complexa de tensões que incluem a justaposição de três relações dialéticas neste discurso de sustentabilidade: a tensão entre sustentabilidade e capitalismo, entre o impacto empresarial e a agência do consumidor, e entre empoderamento e papéis de género.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

comunicação sobre sustentabilidade, tensões discursivas, indústria de cosméticos, responsabilidade social, marcas sustentáveis

1. INTRODUCTION

Love for your beauty, love for the planet! — Yanbal
 More bio-beauty for the future of the jungle. — Natura
 Today we take care of tomorrow's beauty. — O Boticário
 Would you like to earn money by making other
 women feel prettier? Join Avon. — Avon

These slogans illustrate the way in which companies, specifically prominent Latin American cosmetic brands, integrate the discourse on sustainability in their communication strategies when engaging with their stakeholders and society at large. While these organizations embrace commitment and social responsibility towards the environmental and social future, the use of these slogans, among other diverse messages from cosmetic companies, constitutes a compelling *corpus* to critically study the communication of sustainability within an intriguing industry, such as the cosmetic that promotes sustainable ideals while simultaneously relying on resource-intensive raw materials and contributing to a culture of excessive consumption.

The scientific evidence is compelling: there is just over a decade left to prevent global warming from exceeding the 1.5 °C limit set in the 2015 Paris Agreement to avoid falling into the worst-case situation. This scenario has far-reaching implications, not only environmentally but also in terms of its social, economic, and numerous other consequences, as highlighted in the sixth report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (The Core Writing Team et al., 2023). Furthermore, while there is still time, the solution lies in climate-resilient development that integrates measures to adapt to climate change and actions to reduce or mitigate greenhouse gas emissions. To achieve this, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change asserts that transformative behavior must align with our values, perspectives, and knowledge and, we should add, with our life's purpose or organizational mission.

In this context, even though the cosmetics industry is increasingly embracing sustainable practices in response to consumer concerns, it still faces significant challenges that include pollution and the rise in greenhouse gas emissions. Consumers are progressively seeking more natural, eco-friendly, and organic alternatives. Furthermore, there is an awareness of the social challenges intertwined with the industry, such as child labor, as well as environmental concerns regarding synthetic ingredients, deforestation, and animal exploitation (Martins & Marto, 2023). In attempting to understand how leading cosmetics brands in Latin America communicate their sustainability initiatives and corporate social responsibility (CSR), we ask the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: how do social media stakeholders engage with the sustainability content communicated by leading cosmetic brands in Latin America?

RQ2: what discourses and narrative strategies employ these brands to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability?

RQ3: what tensions and contradictions are embedded within the sustainability and CSR discourses of these brands?

In order to address these questions, we draw on the literature on the communication of sustainability and focus our analysis on four leading brands within the Latin American cosmetic industry: Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal. Our approach involves a two-fold methodology that aligns with the nature of the communication processes. First, using a Mann-Whitney test, we conduct a quantitative analysis of the most important characteristics of message production and reception within social media. In addition, we performed a critical discourse analysis to explore the messages deeper, particularly focusing on the underlying discourses of sustainability. By combining these two methodologies, we strive to explain the tensions embedded within sustainability discourses in the beauty sector.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptually, we draw on the literature on CSR, sustainability, and purpose-driven companies. Based on CSR, companies should contribute to the betterment of society (Matten & Moon, 2004). From the neo-classical standpoint, CSR primarily entails the provision of jobs and the payment of taxes. More contemporary CSR theories, such as stakeholder, social contract, and legitimacy, advocate for a wider spectrum of responsibilities that encompass ethical conduct, environmental care, and proactive engagement in addressing social issues (Moir, 2001).

From a communication perspective, the stakeholder theory significantly enhances our understanding of CSR. This theory suggests that companies interact and manage relationships with diverse stakeholders who can either influence or be impacted by their operations. According to Morsing and Schultz (2006), this engagement entails communication strategies that have historically evolved. Initially focusing on information dissemination, these strategies then shifted to behavioral approaches, progressed to involvement practices to encourage dialogue and stakeholder participation, and ultimately

evolved into sensemaking and sense-giving strategies. It is in this last set of strategies that this paper focuses on, that is, the discursive frameworks that influence processes of sensemaking related to sustainability.

According to Verk et al. (2021), the evolution of the “CSR” concept has undergone several phases, each of them representing unique communication frameworks. The authors identify three distinct phases: (a) differentiation, which centers on examining the role of communication in reporting information about social and environmental initiatives that companies undertake; (b) mobilization, which expands the scope to encompass stakeholder involvement and specific business cases; and (c) prominence, a stage where CSR gains significant attention in both academia and organizational realms, but also experiences increased fragmentation in its conceptualization, as digital interaction introduces complexity and ambiguity.

Even though the concept of “sustainability” historically emerged after that of “CSR”, it encompasses a broader framework that includes not only responsible practices adopted by companies to benefit society but also a model of development. This model aims to meet current environmental, social, and economic needs without jeopardizing the access of future generations to resources (Livesey, 2002). Scholars such as Signitzer and Prexl (2007) view sustainability as an evolution of the notion of “CSR”. Regardless of the historical relationship between these two concepts, both emphasize the role of individuals, companies, governments, and society at large in shaping a sustainable future. They underscore the collective responsibility to balance economic growth with ecological preservation and social equity.

Sustainability encompasses several dimensions, including economic, social, and environmental aspects. These dimensions are explored from diverse viewpoints, such as sustainable economic models and business designs aimed towards triple impact (Barroso, 2021), the role of communication in fostering a relational and political perspective based on sustainability (Krohling-Kunsch, 2015; Krohling-Kunsch & Oliveira, 2009), and the decolonial approach, which advocates for reclaiming ancient knowledge and the worldviews of Indigenous peoples, social organizations, or overlooked situations (Álvarez-Nobell et al., 2022).

In the context of sustainability, the idea of purpose-driven companies has become increasingly relevant for businesses. In purpose-driven companies, the actions of organizations follow a commitment to enhancing their triple positive impact. In this regard, according to Barroso (2021), such purpose-driven companies embody characteristics like dynamism, responsibility, reliability, transparency, and innovation, among others. They are associated with pro-socio-environmental values such as justice (both social and environmental), cooperation, solidarity, respect, and protection. What sets them apart from traditional companies are attributes like a defined purpose, a continual interest to generate positive social and environmental impact, an impact-driven business model, and their contributions to global and local challenges. These companies might also seek inspiration from nature by applying “biomimicry”, a concept introduced by Benyus (1997/2012), within the realm of communication.

In the study of pro-environmental behaviors among the public, which examines the motivations behind eco-friendly actions, four key perspectives have been identified by Otálora et al. (2022):

- Environmental concern and pro-environmental behaviors;
- The role of organizations in promoting pro-environmental behaviors that lead to social change;
- Individual and collective ethical and political actions; and
- Social norms, consumption patterns, and voluntary behavior.

Furthermore, as individuals are bombarded with information, it has become fundamental for brands to establish a strong and coherent corporate identity capable of building trust. This is where corporate image becomes a strategic intangible asset (Capriotti, 2009). However, it is important to note that all organizations, simply by existing and being visible, communicate, intentionally or unintentionally, messages to their surroundings (Chaves, 2005). Capriotti (2009) also emphasizes that these expressions of corporate identity are no longer only produced from within the organization (corporate communication) but that they reflect the organization's own behavior and its daily evolution, which also communicates.

In the realm of organizational roles, particularly in the context of businesses as catalyzers of citizen activism, purpose-driven companies have emerged as a distinct sector that is often considered the “fourth sector” in the economy. These organizations distinguish themselves from traditional enterprises by operating in the for-profit private sector while simultaneously addressing social and environmental issues (Elkington, 2019; Honeyman & Jana, 2019; Sabeti, 2011). This frame of action constitutes an evolution beyond the traditional CSR approach as it goes beyond specific responsible actions. Within this new frame, social and environmental purposes become the very essence of an organization (Barroso, 2015, 2021; Suárez Monsalve & Álvarez-Nobell, 2022).

Although not directly considered purpose-driven companies, cosmetic brands have recently embraced significant sustainable actions. In fact, we can analyze the impact and relationship of the beauty sector with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, in relation to SDG3, that is, global health and well-being, the beauty and personal care industry directly contributes to the physical and emotional well-being of individuals through products and services related to health and personal care. For SDG12, responsible production and consumption, cosmetic companies have adopted diverse eco-friendly practices, and they are also committed to SDG15 — life on land — as they contribute to the preservation of biodiversity.

However, while cosmetic companies embrace these objectives and convey their commitment, the public and society still keep some skepticism as they encounter instances of greenwashing, SDG-washing, and various other forms of deceptive practices. These behaviors hinder access to the essential information that individuals require to make well-informed choices and underscore the growing importance of companies addressing sustainability issues. It is within this general framework of communication that we situate the research study that we present here.

3. METHOD

3.1. STUDYING SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSES

In order to understand how leading cosmetics brands in Latin America communicate their sustainability initiatives and answer our RQs, we conducted an in-depth study of four prominent cosmetics brands such as Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal. Following a similar approach adopted by other researchers (Dalmarco et al., 2015; Kenalemang-Palm et al., 2021; Ourahmoune et al., 2014), the selection of these brands was based on three criteria: (a) scope and reach as the four of them have extensive market coverage and brand recognition across various Latin American countries; (b) sustainability policies as these brands are acknowledged by their commitment to sustainability and responsible corporate practices; and (c) diverse representation as the four brands have demonstrated an interest in addressing a diverse range of social and environmental issues in Latin America where their market is stronger.

According to the Corporate Reputation Business Monitor ranking (see Table 1), the leading corporate monitor in Ibero-America that has been assessing companies' reputations since 2000, three of the brands selected as case studies are among the top 10 most reputable in Ibero-America. Furthermore, in the case of O Boticário, in Merco Brazil, it ranks second in the “cosmetics and perfumery” sector, preceded by Natura and followed by Avon.

POSITIONS	BRAND
1	Unilever
2	P&G
3	Natura
4	J&J
5	L'Oréal
6	Kimberly Clark
7	Avon
8	Colgate Palmolive
9	Yanbal

Table 1. Companies with the best reputation in Ibero-America in 2021

Note. Information retrieved from Corporate Reputation Business Monitor (<https://www.merco.info>)

Within this group of brands and considering that our primary focus is on communication, we approached it as a complex process that entails production, message, and consumption on behalf of an audience. In order to explore the general characteristics of message production and its reception in social media, we adopted a quantitative approach. To gain deeper insights into the characteristics of these messages — particularly the underlying discourses in sustainability communication — we employed a qualitative approach. In this section, we explain the way in which we performed our analysis through the examination of three different bodies of organizational texts (Atkinson et al., 2008):

Facebook posts published by each of the four studied brands, the sustainability policies also shared by these companies in their websites, and audiovisual content featured in their YouTube channels. As we will explain next, we analyzed this data both quantitatively and qualitatively.

3.2. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In order to address the first RQ, that is, to explore how social media audiences engage with the sustainability content communicated by leading Latin American cosmetic brands, we conducted a statistical analysis on social media posts that Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal published between July 31, 2019, and July 31, 2023, about the topic of sustainability understood broadly, that is, including its environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Facebook emerged as the primary focus for analyzing sustainability communication because of both the considerable user base of the platform and the proactive engagement of organizations, which has led to their predominant presence on Facebook (Capriotti et al., 2019).

We used the analytical tool Crowdtangle to collect this data and gain insights in relation to engagement metrics, trends, and interactions on Facebook for Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal. These insights allowed us to explore the content of the communication and the interactions between these four brands and their Facebook audiences. To ensure this broad approach to sustainability, we employed search terms in the Crowdtangle platform that encompassed diverse facets of sustainability, including “sustainability”, “sustainable”, “social sustainability”, “environmental”, and “equity”. To perform the statistical analysis, we used the R programming language.

3.3. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

In addition, and as done in other studies (Hartono et al., 2022), we also conducted a qualitative analysis that complemented the overview provided by the quantitative study, and that allowed us to address the other two guiding questions of our study — namely, to explore the discourses used by these brands to demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, and to identify the tensions and contradictions within these discourses. This qualitative approach encompassed not only the assessment of Facebook posts but also extended to the inclusion of two supplementary datasets: the sustainability policies published by the companies on their websites and the audiovisual content presented on their YouTube channels.

For each of these three types of organizational texts, we applied the following samples: we analyzed the four sustainability policies of each of the brands studied. All of them were accessed through their websites on the same date (July 27, 2023) to ensure equitable data collection. Audiovisual content was chosen regardless of its format (promotional, training, webinars, etc.) and duration.

However, given the substantial number of pieces and the qualitative purpose of this methodology, we followed a purposive sampling criterion to select those videos most

pertinent to our RQs. In total, we thoroughly examined 20 representative videos — five from each company — until we reached methodological saturation in such a way that distinct content demonstrated evident discursive trends. The videos available on each brand's YouTube channel were accessed on a consistent date (July 13, 2023) with a focus on identifying materials related to sustainability (we used the same set of search terms employed for the quantitative sample). Finally, following the same purposive sampling criteria, we analyzed the Facebook posts and their comments that were relevant to the second and third RQ.

Once we collected the sustainability policies and videos as well as the relevant Facebook posts along with their corresponding comments, we transcribed the material in order to analyze them through a discourse analysis whose main purpose was to critically examine the systems of meaning that those organizational texts created and reproduced. Guided by a methodological critical standpoint (Merrigan et al., 2009), we aimed to deconstruct the contradictions within the sustainability discourses of the studied brands. Considering the multifaceted nature of discourses and their emergence from diverse and conflicting contexts, our focus was on exploring the tensions that shape them (Tracy & Geist-Martin, 2014). This approach aligns with the broader paradigm of paradox studies, which encompasses concepts like “tension”, “contradiction”, “dualism”, “duality”, and “dialectic” (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008; Putnam et al., 2016).

Our particular emphasis lies on tensions as an analytical framework for deconstructing discourses on sustainability. Studying these tensions is crucial because previous research (Chang, 2011; Leonidou et al., 2011) indicates that consumers, even if environmentally conscious, tend to be skeptical of products labeled as “green” due to concerns about greenwashing. However, research also shows that this skepticism can be countered based on the design (both in form and content) of the message in sustainability communication. Therefore, our focus lies in the design of these messages and the underlying tensions that can either amplify or alleviate such skepticism.

Finally, it is important to highlight that by drawing on Potter's (1996) concept of “methodological relativism”, our analysis does not aim to assess the alignment between reality and discourse. In other words, we do not attempt to verify whether the sustainability claims made by cosmetic brands truly match their actions. Instead, we focus on the realm of discourse to explore the tensions embedded within that communication.

4. RESULTS

4.1. ENGAGING SUSTAINABILITY

As explained, in order to explore how audiences engage with sustainability content published on Facebook by brands such as Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal, we examined social media posts using Crowdtangle. Surprisingly, we were able to retrieve 113 posts during the analyzed period, with 106 of them being valid for statistical analysis.

This finding is intriguing, considering the strong commitment to sustainability that these brands exhibit and communicate through other channels, as we will discuss in the following section. Nevertheless, this limited number of posts does not diminish the usability of our sample for statistical analysis. It successfully fulfills the preliminary purpose of our study as it helps us to have a general overview of how sustainability is addressed. Furthermore, as we will discuss, the comparatively modest social media communication itself is a noteworthy aspect, as it contrasts with other platforms.

Among the four analyzed brands, Natura stands out as the most active communicator of sustainability, with 53% of the total Facebook posts. Following Natura, Yanbal represents 20%, Avon contributes 17%, and O Boticário represents 10% of the posts. Videos account for 59% of the shared content, while the remaining 41% showcase images related to sustainability. Figure 1 shows the type of sustainability that these brands prefer to communicate.

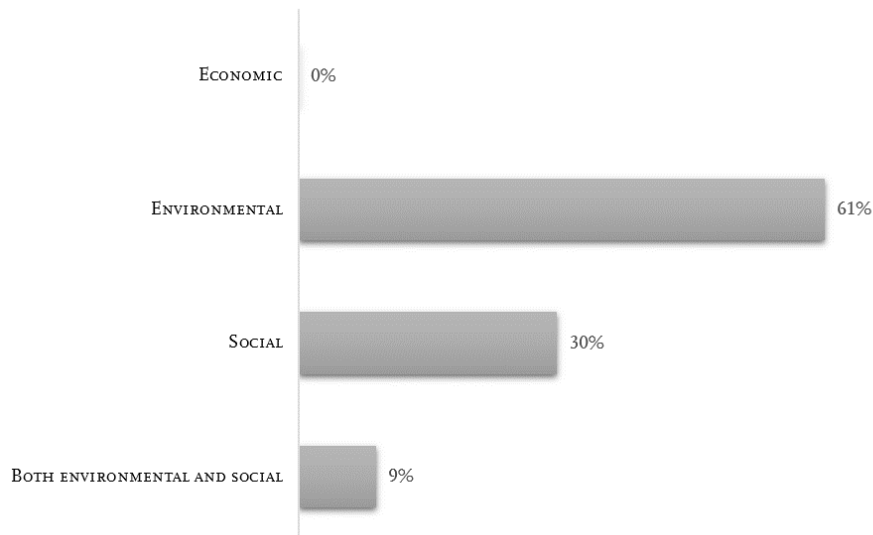


Figure 1. Type of sustainability communicated

As can be seen, a significant portion (61%) is dedicated to environmental sustainability, that is, to address concerns associated with minimizing the cosmetic industry's ecological impact. Additionally, 30% of the posts emphasize social sustainability as they refer to equitable conditions that enhance well-being, human rights, and quality of life for present and future generations. Interestingly, 9% of the content intersects both environmental and social sustainability themes. It is worth noting that none of the messages directly address economic sustainability. This absence could be attributed to the brands' reluctance to openly discuss their economic structures, which contribute to long-term growth, stability, and efficient resource management.

Audiences place significant value on the communication from these brands, in part because of their favorable pre-existing perceptions of them. Notably, unlike findings from similar studies on sustainability communication via social media (Angel, 2023), our

analysis of Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal did not reveal a negative reaction from consumers towards sustainability messages when they held unfavorable opinions about the brand delivering the message.

In fact, among the 1,898 Facebook comments analyzed, 8% of them were positive in the sense that users wrote optimistic messages about the specific content being communicated by the brands; 82% of the comments were also positive, but these responses were not directly linked to the specific post, but rather to the users' favorable perceptions of the brands or to their roles as consultants engaged in catalog sales (as we will elaborate later); only 2% of the comments were negative as they accuse the companies of advocating environmental causes while simultaneously employing excessive packaging and paper wastage; and, finally, 8% of the comments were not connected to the post or the brand, appearing as unrelated icons, non-contextual responses, or blank entries.

In addition to the metrics provided by Crowdtangle, we introduced two new variables: the "type of communicated sustainability" (such as "environmental", "social", and "economic") and the "nature of the sustainability content" (whether companies communicate sustainability due to winning "awards", commemorating relevant sustainability-related dates or "events", showing sustainable "actions", or engaging in "pedagogical initiatives" with audiences).

All of this was in order to understand if there was a relationship between these new variables and our dependent variable, that is, the audiences' engagement with the posts. We considered the variable "over-performing" (provided by Crowdtangle) as the best metric for audience engagement since it summarizes all other metrics of engagement (i.e., shares, comments, emotions, likes, etc.). This metric is positive when the post's engagement is above average, negative when it is below average, and zero for posts with average engagement.

Due to the numerical nature of our dependent variable, the first step was to perform a normality test. We used Shapiro-Wilk's test (Royston, 1982), whose null hypothesis is that the sample is normally distributed. The result of this test was the strong rejection of the null hypothesis ($W = 0.49149$, $p\text{-value} < 2.2 \times 10^{-16}$). Therefore, we can safely assume that the "over-performing" variable does not follow a normal distribution. With this information and considering that our independent variables are categorical, we proceeded using the Mann-Whitney test (Wackerly et al., 2014), whose main purpose is to detect if there is a difference in medians between two populations.

For the first relationship, we considered the type of sustainability (categorized as "environmental" and "social"). The relationship in our sample between this variable and "over-performing" (dependent variable) is shown in Figure 2, where we can see that, in general, "environmental" posts have better engagement than the "social" ones.

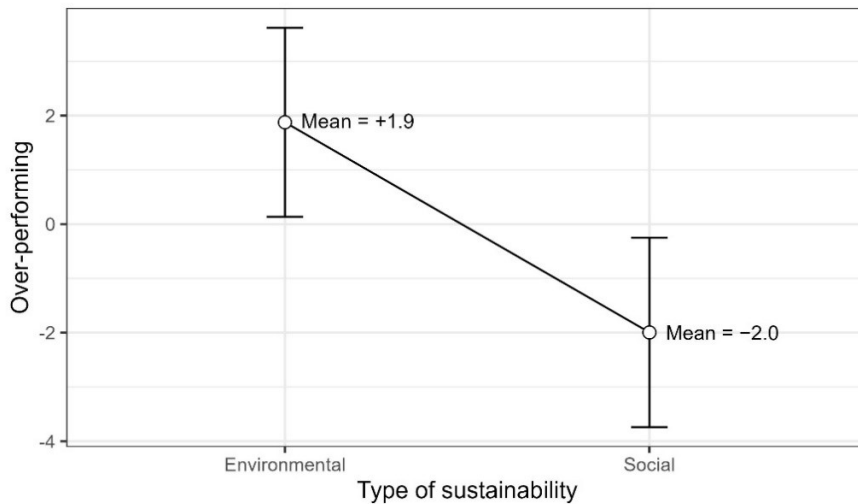


Figure 2. Over-performing by type of sustainability

The results of the Mann-Whitney test ($W = 1,885$, $p\text{-value} = 3.709 \times 10^{-6}$) confirm that, indeed, there is a difference in post-engagement between the two types of sustainability. The statistical estimations allow us to claim that posts related to environmental sustainability achieve, on average, 3 points higher in overperforming compared to those centered around social sustainability (with a 95% confidence interval of [1.6, 3.9]). Perhaps the higher engagement related to the environment is driven by the fact that it fosters a greater sense of identification since the planet constitutes a shared concern. On the other hand, social sustainability is more targeted towards women, as we will elaborate in the next section.

For the second relationship, we considered the content of sustainability (categorized as “awards”, “events”, “action”, or “pedagogy”), and we used the same type of plot to visualize how “over-performing” relates to the type of content in our sample. In Figure 3, we can see that, in general, posts related to “action” tend to have better engagement than “event” posts.

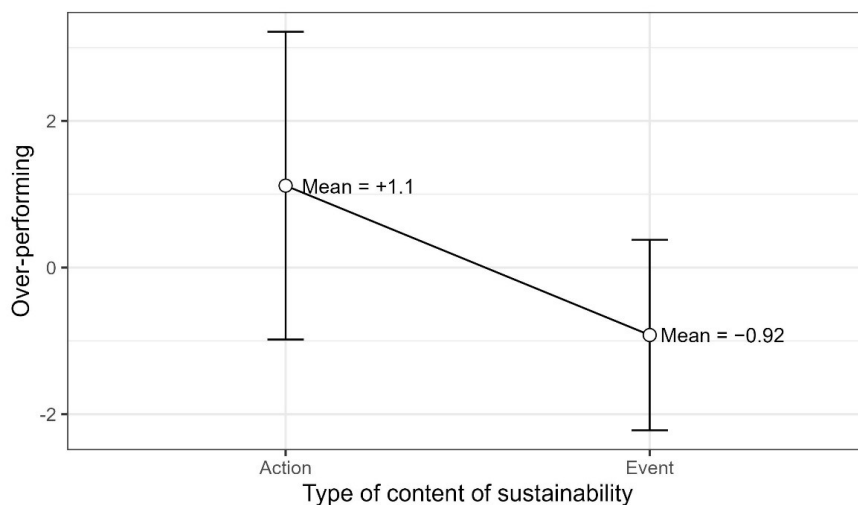


Figure 3. Over-performing by type of content of sustainability

In this case, the results of the Mann-Whitney test ($W = 1,453.5$, p -value = 0.0065) also confirm that there is a difference in post-engagement between the two types of sustainability content. Although we found that the difference is statistically significant (1.3 with a 95% confidence interval of [0.3, 2.9]), this level of difference is irrelevant for communication of sustainability.

4.2. TENSIONS IN THE DISCOURSE ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY

While the quantitative analysis provided valuable insights into the dynamics of message production and consumption, we now focus on the messages themselves and, specifically, on the discourses of sustainability that they communicate. Thus, we performed a qualitative discourse analysis not only on Facebook posts and users' comments but also on the sustainability policies found on the brands' websites and audiovisual content from their YouTube channels. As mentioned, we conducted a discourse analysis of these organizational texts whose purpose was to identify the inherent discursive tensions. In this regard, we considered the vocabularies employed across different organizational texts as terministic screens (Burke, 1969), which not only convey distinct worldviews and values but also reflect the power dynamics and tensions that influence organizational operations (Manuti, 2005; Mumby, 2001). These terminologies reflect distinct ideologies embedded within institutional frameworks (Deetz, 2003).

In order to identify the tensions underlying the sustainability discourse of the studied brands, we followed the approach suggested by Seo et al. (2004), who claim that tensions can be understood in four ways, including selection, separation, integration, and transcendence. A tension addressed through selection involves rejecting one pole of the dichotomy while unintentionally favoring the alternative. Managing tension by separation implies acknowledging both poles of the dichotomy but separating them into different levels of analysis. Integration balances both ends of the continuum as legitimate at once but unfulfilled in their totality. Transcendence entails the reframing of a dichotomy as a whole, creating a synthesis.

The sustainability discourses of Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal are built upon the integration tension, where potentially contradictory elements coexist as legitimate. Specifically, after reading all the described organizational texts, we conducted a detailed cluster analysis to categorize tensions identified in the organizational texts. From an initial pool of seven tensions, we were able to narrow these down by identifying overlaps and similarities, thus refining a more focused set of tensions. This systematic process converged on three distinct yet interrelated pairs of tensions: sustainability *versus* capitalism, corporate impact *versus* consumer agency, and empowerment *versus* gender roles. These emerged as the most pronounced in our data, evidenced by recurring patterns that we will describe next.

4.2.1. SUSTAINABILITY AND CAPITALISM

Within the analyzed brands, sustainability is communicated amidst the tension of the capitalist model that underlies their production and consumption practices. This tension is evident in the discourse of these brands, which emphasizes the pursuit, action, and invitation to be responsible in the present in order to protect the future and, at the same time, the need to operate in a capitalist framework based on maximizing production and consumption. In essence, these brands strongly support sustainability, but this support comes alongside the natural requirements of capitalism.

Evidently, this tension echoes findings from previous research that show that a key aspect of the sustainability discourse lies in the businesses' need to communicate a harmony between their material prosperity and sustainable development (Markkula & Moisaner, 2012). The following excerpt from Natura Colombia's (2021a) YouTube clip illustrates this tension between sustainability and capitalism in the context of the cosmetic industry: "more beauty, less waste" (00:01:08). The phrase embodies the dichotomy: on one hand, "more beauty" encourages consumption of cosmetic products, inherently aligned with the capitalist model, while on the other, "less waste" points out to the imperative of environmental responsibility and reduction of waste. This tension becomes evident as brands persist in introducing new cosmetic products, which raises questions about the equilibrium between their sustainability commitment and their promotion of mindful consumption.

As analyzed in their sustainability policies, these brands embrace different strategies in their production approaches, including the implementation of renewable energy (oBoticário, n.d.), ecodesign (Yanbal, n.d.), and the adoption of "recyclable, reusable, or compostable" packaging (Avon, n.d., para. 11). Simultaneously, there is a strong emphasis on communicating the role of recycling as a primary path for sustainability among consumers. This emphasis on recycling, however, reveals a tension with the dynamics of capitalism as it implies a surplus of waste generated from excessive production. For example, in a YouTube video, o Boticário (2019) highlights their recycling program as

the Boti Recicla has been around since 2006 and is now the largest recycling program at collection points in Brazil. We are talking about 3,700 points across 1,750 cities, with more than 30 accredited cooperatives and around 28,000 people working for the environment. (00:00:20)

While recycling initiatives are positive steps, they might not fully address the product lifecycle if new products are constantly being produced. Even consumers directly point out this tension between consumption and sustainability as the following Facebook comment to a Natura's post illustrates: "I say this with all due respect, but it's quite absurd how large are the boxes that you use to ship such small products". Even though cosmetic companies constantly promote the collection of empty containers, having to collect a large amount of them indicates that there is still a problem of overproduction and waste generation. The focus on container collection might not fully address the core

problem, but instead, it could be seen as addressing the symptom of waste rather than tackling the root cause of overproduction.

According to the previously explained typology (Seo et al., 2004), this first tension follows the pattern of integration as sustainability and capitalism are both legitimized in the discourse of the brands. Interestingly, the financing of social and environmental projects emerges as a unifying element that reconciles the two poles in tension. Thus, brands communicate their intention to address environmental or social problems that are not the direct outcomes of their actions but rather secondary matters that they aim to alleviate. This shift in discourse redirects attention from the environmental or social challenges that cosmetic companies may trigger to other related issues to which they contribute to helping. In a YouTube promotional video, for example, Yanbal (2021) explains how,

in Latin America and the Caribbean, approximately 43 million children and adolescents live in extreme poverty. The lack of education and gender inequality puts them at a disadvantage and diminishes their chances of advancement. For this reason, Yanbal has established the *Mujer Es Poder* [Power Women], project, which aims to empower girls and teenagers by collaborating with [the organizations] CARE and Peru Woman for Woman, as well as the Juanfe Foundation. This joint initiative seeks to bolster their self-esteem. (00:00:01)

In this video excerpt, we see how the company invests its resources in the *Mujer Es Poder* project to empower disadvantaged girls and teenagers in Latin America and the Caribbean. The focus on a different social issue implies a strategic shift in discourse that emphasizes a secondary initiative unrelated to the potential consequences of Yanbal's practices of resource extraction. This redirection of focus suggests a shift in discourse where the emphasis is on addressing a different societal problem rather than directly engaging with the concerns that could be associated with the company's own practices or impacts on local environments.

4.2.2. CORPORATE IMPACT AND CONSUMER AGENCY

A second tension arises when studying the discourse on sustainability of cosmetic brands, this time between corporate impact and consumer agency. In this context, the communication of sustainability entails a tension between the initiatives undertaken by cosmetic companies to ensure a sustainable future and the agency attributed to consumers in the discourse, making them accountable for these sustainable endeavors. Thus, the discourse follows the narrative where companies, using the pronoun "we", proudly highlight their dedication to safeguarding the future, while consumers, referred to as "you", assume a significant role in fulfilling that commitment.

Two forms of discourse illustrate this transfer of responsibility: discourses that invite consumers to recycle and those that point out that consumption of cosmetic

products generates additional funding to support social initiatives like *Mujer Es Poder*, addressed in the previous section. We have already examined the focus on recycling, which is discursively presented as the solution for overproduction. Within the context of this tension, recycling is depicted as the main way through which companies make consumers responsible for sustainability.

On their YouTube channel, for example, O Boticário features several clips that invite and guide consumers about recycling. In one of the clips (o Boticário, 2019), for example, a woman is shown looking at a display in the brand's store and expressing her surprise when seeing a large container filled with empty and used cosmetic packaging. The video later explains that this display is part of O Boticário's recycling campaign. This video illustrates the company's focus on consumer engagement as it encourages a shift in the viewer's attention from the brand's potential environmental impact to the individual role in recycling. Moreover, as supported by our inferential statistical analysis, videos like this are highly engaging. Not only do cosmetic brands communicate subjects related to environmental sustainability more extensively — and users engage more actively with these issues — but brands also dedicate an important part of their communication to encouraging consumers to recycle, and they capitalize on that effort.

Discourses that depict cosmetic companies engaging in social projects also illustrate this tension and, more precisely, the delegation of agency to consumers. While companies actively select and oversee these projects, the discourse emphasizes consumers who are encouraged to sustain their consumption to facilitate the funding and collaborative efforts behind such initiatives. This dynamic becomes evident in a promotional video by Natura Colombia (2022), where the narrator claims: “you and your purchases can also be part of this beautiful dream [helping the Colombian Amazon] every time you purchase a product. Ekos Natura, the world is more beautiful with you” (00:01:49). This emphasis on addressing the audience directly as “you” exemplifies the delegation of agency in which it is because of the actions of the “client” that Natura can help the Amazonas and can make the world more beautiful.

This discourse is also present in the social media communication of sustainability, as the following Facebook post illustrates: “with every purchase of #NaturaBelieveToSee products, you invest in projects to enhance the quality and equity of education. Because the world will be more beautiful when all girls, boys, and young people are in school” (Natura, 2022a). Within this discourse, Natura positions consumers not only as clients of products but as active participants in broader social and environmental causes.

4.2.3. EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER ROLES

As shown by our quantitative analysis, the examined brands predominantly focus on environmental sustainability in their communication. However, they do conceive sustainability in a broader context that extends beyond just environmental actions. The cosmetic industry highlights its endeavors in the empowerment of women by facilitating their financial independence through opportunities such as becoming sales consultants

through catalog sales. The discourse follows the narrative that cosmetic brands empower women by enabling them to become sales consultants, thus fostering financial autonomy. Nonetheless, this discourse also underlies a tension, according to which while cosmetic brands empower women, this empowerment might inadvertently reinforce certain gender roles. Yanbal (2019) articulates this as follows:

the social aspect is actually very natural for us; it's inherent; it's from our beginning that we started in the social aspect; we have a sales force in the 10 countries where we operate with 500.000 women. We have 500.000 consultants and entrepreneurs, of which 12.000 are entrepreneurs, and we have corporate-level collaborators, a total of 5.000. (00:04:27)

Moreover, Avon (Avon Colombia, 2019) puts it in the following way:

would you like to be part of the company that invests the most in breast cancer prevention and treatment worldwide? Would you like to help other women achieve economic independence? Would you like to earn money by making other women feel prettier? Join Avon. (00:00:01)

Therefore, while this discourse empowers women as workers, it might reinforce conventional gender roles by portraying women in traditional roles like salespeople, caregivers, and bearers of beauty within society. YouTube messages like Avon's and Yanbal's could unintentionally perpetuate the notion that women's empowerment primarily occurs within specific predefined boundaries, reinforcing societal norms rather than challenging them.

Regarding gender representation in the communication of social sustainability by cosmetic brands, we observed how the notion of beauty becomes nuanced and complex as, first, it is predominantly associated with women (who are often expected to embody beauty), and, second, its construction is intricately linked to the concept of "nature". Interestingly, the reference to nature creates a bridge between the idea of beauty and two distinct semantic fields: environment and authenticity. In the former case, beauty is associated with harmony, purity, and ecological balance, while in the latter, beauty is juxtaposed with artificial beauty. Consequently, a sub-tension emerges this time between the notion of "authentic beauty" and the consumerism required to attain such an ideal of prettiness.

Natura's (2022b) reference to "bio-beauty" (biobelleza) exemplifies this tension: "more bio-beauty for the future of the jungle" (00:00:14) or "beauty is only beauty for me if it's also beauty for the world. That idea is stronger than ever. And now Ekos [Natura] is bio-beauty" (Natura Colombia, 2021b, 00:00:00). O Boticário's promotion of a new fragrance also plays with these different vocabularies from distinct semantic fields:

as the rhythm accelerates, it becomes challenging to decelerate until you discover a moment of pause. Introducing our new creation, "Arbo Forest" – immerse yourself in the revitalizing energy of nature. Our fragrance captures the essence of a forest bath, renewing both your vitality and well-being. Now

available with a refill option, experience the rejuvenation of Arbo Forest by O Boticário. (o Boticário, 2022, 00:00:03)

While these discourses emphasize the concept of “inner beauty”, the promotion of beauty products simultaneously reinforces the association between beauty and the use of external products. Video clips like these cited above not only appeal to consumers’ emotions but also suggest a harmonious connection between their individual actions and the broader vision that these brands seek to promote. By linking inner beauty with the consumption of their products, cosmetic brands present their products as a way to enhance personal well-being while also promoting environmental preservation.

Moreover, brands reproduce the idea according to which authentic beauty — that paradoxically requires artificial products — leads to more robust female self-esteem, as the following excerpt illustrates:

because only by valuing themselves and understanding their right to equality [women] achieve their life goals, because a girl with strong self-esteem becomes an empowered woman, and an empowered woman can not only change her own future but also change the world. (Yanbal, 2021, 00:00:31)

This discourse subtly intertwines the notion of “authentic beauty” with the cultivation of self-esteem and social impact as it is based on the interplay between cosmetic consumption, personal well-being, and empowerment. Moreover, as previous research has shown, this tension also illustrates how women’s appearances are constructed as an individual project in which women have to work continuously (Kenalemang-Palm et al., 2021). This serves an ideological purpose as it reinforces the neoliberal ideology of self-management and self-improvement in order to be beautiful, healthy, and successful (Chen & Eriksson, 2022). Overall, this type of communication of sustainability reproduces the idea of an individual’s self-identity project that requires hard work to be maintained (Coupland, 2009).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

After completing this analysis, we claim that the sustainability discourse of leading Latin American cosmetic brands, including Avon, Natura, O Boticário, and Yanbal, reveal a complex interplay between their commitment to environmental and social well-being and the constraints of capitalist systems, consumer empowerment, and evolving gender roles. By embracing both qualitative and quantitative analyses, our findings help us to identify the tensions that arise when cosmetic companies strive to conciliate the pursuit of profit while advocating for sustainable development.

Specifically, we argue that the discourse on sustainability of leading cosmetic brands in Latin America is especially appealing to audiences when it particularly points out environmental concerns and less so when it refers to social sustainability. The analysis of

the Facebook engagement dynamics has provided us with a comprehensive picture of how sustainability messages from leading Latin American cosmetic brands are communicated, the forms they take, the content they deliver, and the responses they call within their respective online communities. The examination shows a nuanced landscape in which audiences have different degrees of engagement in response to distinct types of sustainability themes and content.

Moreover, we show a nuanced interplay of tensions that encompass the juxtaposition of three dialectic relationships in this sustainability discourse: the tension between sustainability and capitalism, between corporate impact and consumer agency, and between empowerment and gender roles. The first tension, that is, between sustainability and capitalism, highlights how the discourse of the studied cosmetic brands corresponds to what scholars like Ferns and Amaeshi (2019) refer to as a “weak” discourse on sustainability, which advocates for change, but in the context of a pro-growth and market-based paradigm. These opposing poles are the ones that the tension seeks to reconcile or integrate, in contrast to a “strong” discourse of sustainability that is more radical as it seeks structural change.

The second tension, this time between corporate impact and consumer agency, shows how, by aligning their consumption with the company’s initiatives, consumers are positioned to feel a sense of empowerment, as their purchases are presented as necessary to accomplish positive social change. Thus, the invitation for customers to make possible these projects through their purchases underscores the notion that consumption can contribute to a larger purpose that is facilitated by the consumer’s agency (Pelenc et al., 2015).

Finally, the tension between empowerment and gender roles shows how the sustainability communication of cosmetic brands, while emphasizing environmental responsibility and women’s empowerment, can inadvertently reinforce traditional gender roles and perpetuate social norms. This discourse also highlights the complex relationship between beauty ideals, consumerism, and self-identity projects, shaping perceptions of beauty and women’s roles in society.

Our study makes two contributions to the literature. First, we follow the call of authors who invite scholars to transcend the narrow domestic focus in the examination of sustainability communication and embrace a more global or cross-country perspective (Leonidou et al., 2011). In response to the growing international emphasis on sustainable development, we study the role of leading multinational brands within the beauty sector in their collaborative efforts to safeguard the environment. Particularly, we situate our study in the Latin American context, which is not only a scarcely scholarly examined region but also a region considered one of the planet’s lungs that is called to counterbalance the carbon footprint of major northern corporations. Paradoxically, this planetary lung also serves as a primary source of raw materials for the cosmetic industry, an aspect that we develop in our analysis.

The critical perspective, as advocated by several scholars (Angel, 2022; Ferns & Amaeshi, 2019; Mumby, 2016), constitutes our second contribution. We discuss potential

contradictions within the discourse of sustainability of cosmetic companies and challenge assumptions of genuine commitment in order to understand better the discursive ways in which brands engage with their audiences by using specific rhetorics that, in turn, may imply intrinsic tensions. Ultimately, we adopt an ethical stance (Oe & Yamaoka, 2022), according to which greenwashing must not overshadow the genuine pursuit of sustainable development. Finally, by studying the tensions in the discourses of sustainability, we strive to contribute to understanding and suggesting challenges and opportunities that brands face in balancing profit-driven goals with responsible practices (Chang, 2011). Future studies could explore whether different contexts outside Latin America lead to distinct tensions in the communication of sustainability. Adopting a comparative approach, scholars could assess if the three identified tensions here are relevant to sectors beyond the beauty industry. This could provide a broader perspective on sustainability practices and communication strategies in different business sectors. Additionally, by employing a quantitative methodology, future studies could examine the effectiveness of digital communication strategies that cosmetic brands use, especially when addressing tensions perceived by consumers as contradictory content.

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Adriana Angel, who holds a PhD in Communication Studies from Ohio University in the United States, is a professor at the School of Communication at Universidad de Manizales in Colombia. She is also affiliated with the Communication Research Group at the same university. Her research primarily examines how discourse influences the social construction of organizational and social dynamics. Specifically, she focuses on the discourse of organizational sustainability, exploring how it shapes and is shaped by various communication practices within organizations.

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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF IKEA PORTUGAL'S BRAND VALUES IN SHAPING THE PURCHASE DECISIONS OF MILLENNIAL CONSUMERS

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Investigation, writing – original draft

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the considerable influence of generation Y, or millennials, on purchase behaviour and brand interactions. Their focus on creating a better world, combined with their status as digital natives, has spurred changes in e-commerce and corporate practices. This generation prioritises environmental and social concerns, compelling companies to adopt honesty and transparency in their products, processes, and values. Millennials are inclined to support brands that demonstrate social responsibility, sustainability, and ethical practices. Consequently, brand values have become pivotal, shaping consumer perceptions and behaviours. These values reflect the beliefs and principles a brand embodies, significantly impacting consumer perceptions and behaviours toward it. The study aims to investigate how IKEA's brand values influence the purchase decisions of Portuguese millennial consumers. A questionnaire survey was conducted, employing a quantitative methodology, yielding 402 responses from IKEA consumers. The primary findings reveal that IKEA Portugal's values notably influence the purchase decisions of millennial consumers, particularly those related to value for money, sustainability, social responsibility, and community support.

KEYWORDS

generational culture, millennial generation, brand values, consumer behaviour, purchase decision

A IMPORTÂNCIA DA IDENTIFICAÇÃO DOS VALORES DA MARCA IKEA PORTUGAL PARA A DECISÃO DE COMPRA DOS SEUS CONSUMIDORES *MILLENNIALS*

RESUMO

O presente artigo aborda a influência significativa da geração Y ou dos *millennials* no comportamento de compra e nas interações com a marca. O foco desta geração num mundo melhor e o facto de serem nativos digitais impulsionou mudanças no *e-commerce* e na forma como as empresas operam. Esta trata-se de uma geração preocupada com o planeta e com o futuro, que conseguiu forçar honestidade e transparência das empresas acerca dos seus produtos, processos

e valores. Os *millennials* estão mais propensos a apoiar marcas que priorizam a responsabilidade social, a sustentabilidade e as práticas éticas. Os valores da marca ganharam destaque, moldando as percepções e o comportamento do consumidor. Esses valores representam as crenças e os princípios que a marca defende e têm um impacto significativo nas percepções dos consumidores sobre esta e o comportamento em relação a ela. O objetivo deste estudo é explorar como os valores da marca IKEA afetam as decisões de compra dos consumidores *millennials* portugueses. Foi utilizada uma metodologia quantitativa, com a aplicação de um inquérito por questionário, através do qual se obteve 402 respostas junto dos consumidores da marca IKEA. As principais conclusões indicam que os valores da IKEA Portugal impactam significativamente as decisões de compra dos consumidores *millennials*, especialmente as relacionadas com a relação qualidade-preço, sustentabilidade, responsabilidade social e apoio às comunidades.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

cultura geracional, geração *millennial*, valores das marcas, comportamento do consumidor, decisão de compra

1. INTRODUCTION

Brand values have an increasingly notable impact on consumers, shaping brand perceptions and selections. These values embody a brand's fundamental beliefs and objectives, showcasing its core principles and daily pursuits. Present-day consumers value brands they perceive as trustworthy and relevant, often demonstrating a willingness to invest more in products that resonate with their beliefs and convictions and demonstrate environmental responsibility, ethical conduct, and social impact (Bond, 2021; Carr, 2021). In this landscape, organisations have shifted their focus to the consumer, recognising them as human beings with emotions, aspirations, and fears, prompting a paradigm shift and brand initiatives tailored to their needs (Kotler et al., 2011). However, the response to these needs varies among consumers and their respective generations, each harbouring distinct desires and requirements shaped by their unique experiences and socio-cultural environment.

Advocates of the environment and a more promising future, Generation Y or millennials, born between 1980 and 2000, have become increasingly discerning in their brand choices, favouring those that prove worthy of their loyalty and that work daily in favour of a greater good (Agrocluster, 2017; Costin, 2019; Deloitte, 2022; Lacerda & Borges, 2017; Merck, 2022a, 2022b).

IKEA, a renowned Swedish multinational in the furniture and home décor industry, embodies values that permeate its daily operations, from employee relations and decision-making processes to material sourcing and product design. Guided by its vision of “creating a better everyday life for most people” (IKEA, n.d.-c, para. 3), IKEA is dedicated to making a positive impact on both individuals and the planet through its ongoing efforts.

This article aims to understand whether a brand's values — in this case, the values of IKEA Portugal — influence the purchase decisions of millennial consumers living in Portugal. It seeks to elucidate the significance of the IKEA Portugal brand's values for millennial consumers.

2. MILLENNIALS AND THEIR PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS

Consumers typically make brand choices as they navigate internal conflicts aimed at fulfilling their needs in the best possible way, whether they be physiological or self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1943).

Cultural brand strategy involves applying a strategy that considers the cultural, societal, and political context in which a brand operates. This approach is crucial for developing new businesses and resurrecting moribund ones. Cultural branding aims to identify cultural opportunities and develop strategies to leverage them effectively (Holt, 2012).

In today's market, leading brands are characterised by their distinctive culture, which is the outcome of a combination of strategies known as the "cultural branding model". This model emerges from the brand's capacity to comprehend the transformations occurring across society as a whole, irrespective of the market (Holt & Cameron, 2010).

Distinctive and iconic brands aspire to exceed expectations and soar above, aiming to inspire action and critical reflection in their consumers. They "provide extraordinary identity value because they address the collective anxieties and desires of a nation" (Holt, 2004, p. 6), and they "function like cultural activists, encouraging people to think differently about themselves (...) [they are] prescient, addressing the leading edges of cultural change" (p. 9). Nevertheless, consumers follow their own process when it comes to choosing these distinctive brands and their products from among the numerous options available on the market.

Consumer behaviour "reflects the totality of consumer's decisions with respect to the acquisition, consumption and disposition of goods, services, activities, experiences, people and ideas" (Hoyer et al., 2012, p. 3). It extends far beyond the tangible purchase of products and is often influenced by the choices of other individuals. Understanding these behaviours and their origins enables brands, through marketing, to address consumer needs, prioritise them, and afford them the relevance they deserve (Kotler et al., 2011).

Indeed, multiple factors impact an individual's acquisition of products and services, encompassing their personality, lifestyle, and the symbolic connotations attached to brands and products, which often reflect the social status of the consumer (Baudrillard, 1998; Kotler et al., 2020; Maslow, 1943). According to Kotler et al. (2020), consumer behaviour is influenced by four primary factors, which are interpreted in descending order from a broader perspective to a more specific one: external factors (cultural and social) and internal factors (personal and psychological).

This provides a detailed explanation of each of the factors discussed: (a) cultural factors — the consumer's culture, subculture, and social class are significant influencers of consumer behaviour (Kotler & Keller, 2012), shaping values, perceptions, ambitions, norms, behaviours, and actions inherent to the society of origin (Baudrillard, 1998); (b) social factors — social groups of influence such as family, friends, reference groups, and social status within the hierarchy impacts consumer behaviour (Hoyer et al., 2012), prompting individuals to favour themes, brands, and other categories recommended by their groups and shaping their consumption patterns; (c) personal factors — specific characteristics including age, life stage, occupation, economic status, lifestyle, personality,

and self-image play a role in shaping behaviour; (d) psychological factors — motivation, beliefs, and attitudes are key aspects influencing consumer behaviour, with Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs being one of the most widely used theories to understand human motivation. This theory is organised into five hierarchical categories, each representing different levels of importance to the individual, starting from the most basic and progressing towards higher levels of fulfilment: (a) physiological needs; (b) safety needs; (c) social needs; (d) esteem needs; and (e) self-actualisation needs.

The purchase decision-making process starts long before the actual purchase and continues long after (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Kotler et al., 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). Over the years, consumers have gained increasing relevance in the market. In marketing 1.0, the focus was primarily on the industry, with products and sales as its central elements. However, over time, consumers have become the focal point of organisations (Kotler et al., 2011, 2017).

Traditional methodologies (e.g., Engel et al., 1968, 1986; Howard & Sheth, 1969; Kotler et al., 2020; Nicosia, 1966) have lost their prominence as they struggled to adapt to the evolving societal changes that have fundamentally transformed the entire purchase decision process, including factors like technology integration and impulse buying. These conventional models have relative utility in assessing consumer behaviour in today's hyper-consumerist society, characterised by excessive consumption driven by various factors, including social pressures to acquire goods as a means of shaping individual identity (Baudrillard, 1998; Cyr, 2018). Nonetheless, these models serve as foundational frameworks for understanding the historical context of the consumer purchase decision process, providing insights into their evolution over time. Contemporary approaches increasingly focus on comprehensively understanding consumer experiences and decisions, placing them at the forefront of research efforts and embracing methodologies such as consumer decision journey mapping (Kotler et al., 2017; Santos & Gonçalves, 2021).

According to Kotler et al. (2020), the purchase decision process consists of five distinct phases, each aimed at fulfilling an individual's need: (a) need recognition — the consumer recognises a problem or need. The need can be triggered by internal stimuli, like physiological needs such as hunger or thirst, or external stimuli such as an advertisement or a discussion with a friend; (b) information search — if the consumer's drive is strong and a satisfying product is near at hand, the consumer is likely to buy it then. If not, he or she may undertake an information search related to the need and identify the best available alternatives. This phase allows consumers to form an informed opinion about their decision; (c) evaluation of alternatives — in this phase, consumers process the information gathered during the search stage to choose a product or service from among the available brands. This is a complex process that involves various evaluation processes, and it depends on the individual consumer and the specific buying situation; (d) buying decision — the decision phase is the culmination of the previous steps, after forming their intention to purchase and ranking the brands; and (e) post-purchase behaviour — the purchase decision process does not end with the purchase itself. After buying the product or service, consumers evaluate their satisfaction or dissatisfaction based on

their expectations and the perceived performance of the product. This phase is crucial as it directly influences future buying behaviour and brand loyalty (Kotler et al., 2020).

The truth is that each generation is different, moulded by its unique socio-cultural context and life experiences. Indeed, brands are aware of these distinctions, prompting them to cater uniquely to each generation. They endeavour to tailor experiences and business strategies to meet the demands and preferences of each generation, given their varying tastes and attitudes toward products and services available in the market. According to Wellner (2003), the emergence of timeless, intergenerational brands will be one of the main marketing trends by 2025. Generational marketing stands out by addressing the distinctive requirements of individuals within a specific generational group who share the same era and experience particular historical milestones.

In an era defined by technology and progress, human adaptation prevails. The “digital generation” or “digital natives” (Gurău, 2012; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Twenge, 2010) epitomises a generation of young individuals born between the 1980s and the 2000s who have learned from an environment conducive to complete digital integration, “influencing their personality, beliefs, behaviours and attitudes” (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2018, p. 231). Descendants of the baby boomers and generation X, millennials have grown up in a globalised and technologically driven world. While a significant part of their daily activities revolves around digital interaction, that does not mean that this is their focus and priority. This generation wants to collect life stories rather than wealth and material possessions, leading them to consume fewer products compared to older generations (Kotler et al., 2021). Portuguese millennials, in particular, aspire to a more sustainable and inclusive future, advocating for action from organisations in support of equality, diversity, and inclusion (Merck, 2022a).

Millennials' consumption habits are influenced by a multitude of factors, including digital progress, growing environmental awareness, and socio-economic changes. Their decision-making processes are also influenced by factors such as the brand they are considering, the feedback from their peers, and the environmental and social responsibility demonstrated by brands. Costin (2019) argues in *Forbes* that millennials base their purchase decisions on several key values, including (a) social responsibility, (b) environmental concern, (c) authenticity, (d) local sourcing, (e) ethical production, and (f) giving back to society. The author's research indicates that 75% of millennials prioritise companies that give back to society over those solely focused on profitability. This generation is recognised for its commitment to sustainability and social action (Deloitte, 2022; Merck, 2022a), thus placing a high value on sustainable consumption and companies that prioritise environmental and social responsibility (Agrocluster, 2017; Costin, 2019; Lacerda & Borges, 2017).

According to Woo (2018), millennials approach decision-making in various categories with the following insights: (a) millennials want their purchases to make them feel good: they value money and products that can satisfy their rational and emotional needs together; (b) millennials value experiences: they rather pay for experiences than material things and are willing to pay extra for this; (c) sharing: millennials like to share their

opinions, positive or negative, about a product on their social networks, promoting their forum for debate and opinions; (d) millennials buy products and services promiscuously: they exhibit low brand loyalty and are more inclined to try new and innovative brands rather than stick to familiar ones. Brands should focus on understanding their needs, both rational and emotional, to capture their attention and encourage repeat purchases; (e) millennials rely on peer recommendations: more than a third of millennials prefer to wait for trusted peers' feedback before making purchase decisions. While open to new experiences, millennials actively avoid brand communications and place more trust in word-of-mouth about the brand's products and services (Costin, 2019); and (f) millennials seek relevance: customisation and relevance resonate with this group, which values brands that tailor their advertising and social media content to their interests and preferences, fostering a stronger connection with the audience.

3. THE OBJECT OF STUDY: IKEA PORTUGAL

With Swedish origins, IKEA, founded by Ingvar Kamprad in 1943, initially sold smaller items (IKEA, n.d.-a), but in 1948, it invested in a new product category: furniture, with Ingvar himself having the opportunity to design his own furniture (IKEA, n.d.-a; Kamprad & Torekull, 2006/2010). After opening its first showroom and shop in Älmhult under the name Möbel-IKÉA in 1958 (IKEA, n.d.-a; Kamprad & Torekull, 2006/2010), expansion was inevitable. By 1970, IKEA had already expanded into countries like Denmark and Norway, and in subsequent years, it continued its global expansion into places like Australia and Singapore. In 1980, big decisions were made. Ingvar sought to give IKEA an “eternal life” by separating the ownership of the retail operation from the IKEA concept and the IKEA brand. This separation led to the establishment of independent business groups operating under a franchise system (IKEA, n.d.-a).

The first IKEA Portugal shop opened in 2004 in Alfragide. Presently, IKEA Portugal has five outlets nationwide — Alfragide, Loures, Loulé, Braga, and Matosinhos — and operates several planning studios and an online sales platform (IKEA, n.d.-b).

Guided by its vision “to create a better everyday life for the many people” (IKEA, n.d.-c, para. 3), the brand strives “to offer a wide range of well-designed, functional home furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them” (para. 6). IKEA's values reflect what they consider to be important and guide their work, decisions and interactions. IKEA is driven by its eight “forever parts” (IKEA, n.d.-c, para. 12), also called “values”: (a) “different with a meaning” — curiosity, enthusiasm, and a desire to drive positive changes in the industry and the world sets it apart from other companies, challenging existing solutions and striving to take risks and learn from the past, always with an eye on a more accessible and sustainable future; (b) “cost-consciousness” — every day, IKEA seeks to eliminate unnecessary costs and implement solutions to make its products accessible at low prices to most people, challenging itself and others to make more from less without compromising on quality, functionality, sustainability and design; (c) “simplicity” — the search for simplicity both regarding products and business bureaucracies, focusing on the most simple, straightforward and

down-to-earth approach, making all processes more efficient and natural; (d) “caring for people and planet” — directly related to the brand’s sustainability strategy reflecting its ongoing commitment to making a significant and lasting impact on people and the planet, offering more sustainably sourced and manufactured products and sharing green information and content to help people live a more sustainable life at home and continuously supporting human rights, the community and children. By taking on this responsibility, IKEA has the chance to help create a better life for most people, becoming a force for positive change, locally and globally; (e) “renew and improve” — reflects IKEA’s dedication to constantly enhancing its operations and addressing challenges encountered on a daily basis, always considering the best for most people. According to IKEA, there is no such thing as “impossible”, and they “go the extra mile” to constantly find solutions to move forward; (f) “togetherness” — “tillsammans” in Swedish, is at the very heart of IKEA culture. It emphasises fostering trust, encouragement, and genuine camaraderie among team members, promoting collaboration and collective growth; (g) “lead by example” — IKEA gives people’s values as much weight as their competence and experience, advocating for the organisation’s values and people who “walk the talk”. “Lead by example” starts with being aware of one’s own behaviour and the consequences of one’s actions, big or small; (h) “give and take responsibility” — IKEA promotes trust and fosters autonomy among its employees, enabling them to evolve and grow within the organisation by embracing each task and challenge. As Ingvar says, “IKEA is not the work of one person alone. It is the result of many minds and many souls working together through many years of joy and hard work” (IKEA, n.d.-c, para. 8).

4. METHODOLOGY

The methodological strategy applied is based on a case study, which examines the influence of a brand’s values — in this specific case, IKEA Portugal — on the purchase decision process of Portuguese millennial consumers. It is worth noting that these values are shared across the broader IKEA brand.

This study employs a quantitative methodology involving the distribution of questionnaire surveys to millennial consumers of IKEA Portugal.

The principal objective of this study is to address the research question: “does the perception of IKEA’s brand values influence the purchase decision process among its millennial customers in Portugal?”. The questionnaire survey incorporates variables corresponding to IKEA Portugal’s eight values. This approach enables the examination of the relevance and correlation between IKEA Portugal’s values and the purchase decisions of its millennial consumers regarding furniture and decoration products.

The questionnaire was disseminated online through personal social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram, as the company was unable to use IKEA’s social media platforms to reach Portuguese millennial consumers. It was conducted through the Google Forms platform. In order to ensure the responses met the sample parameters, two important exclusion factors were established: (a) responses from individuals who were not regular or occasional consumers of the IKEA brand were

disregarded, as the study's focus was to assess the influence of the brand's values on the purchase decision process; and (b) responses from individuals outside the millennial generation were excluded. The sampling method employed was non-probabilistic convenience sampling, comprising individuals who were available and willing to participate in the questionnaire.

According to Huot (1999/2002), for a universe equal to or greater than 100,000 individuals where $N > 100,000$, as in the case of IKEA (2021), a minimum sample size of 384 is required since $n = 384$. In this way, the questionnaire survey was made available for six weeks (from April 5, 2023, to May 12, 2023). Considering that in the first four weeks, it had not been possible to obtain a significant sample, the decision was made to extend the survey for an additional two weeks. This extension proved beneficial, as it was possible to get a total sample of 476 IKEA Portugal consumers.

Hence, the online questionnaire was accessible for 42 days to assess the perceptions and opinions of Portuguese millennial consumers (aged 22 to 44 who consume IKEA Portugal products) during the study's timeframe, spanning from April 5, 2023, to May 12, 2023, as previously indicated.

The questionnaire comprised a total of 12 questions, with Question 1 intended to understand the respondents' perception of IKEA's values. Question 2 was drafted to inquire about each distinct IKEA value, albeit indirectly, to ensure subtlety and provide an opportunity to evaluate the values individually based on the sample's perceptions. Questions 3 to 12 were formulated to enable the comparison of the association of values with the brand and to assess the impact that Portuguese millennial consumers attribute to each of these values on their decision to purchase furniture and decoration products and services.

The total sample collected was comprised of 476 participants who identified as consumers of IKEA Portugal. However, only 402 responses met the criteria outlined for this study, excluding those from non-regular or occasional consumers of the IKEA brand and individuals outside the millennial generation. Data analysis was conducted using the Excel program.

The methodological framework for assessing values, drawing on the model proposed by Sheth et al. (1991), was employed to address the research question, aiming to examine the perceptions of millennial consumers of IKEA Portugal.

Therefore, the model proposed by Sheth et al. (1991), which has been applied in numerous studies (e.g., Gonçalves et al., 2016; Zainuddin et al., 2008), does not focus on the process itself but rather on the factors or aspects that influence the purchase behaviour concerning products and/or services. This model was deemed the most suitable for addressing the research question because it delineates five fundamental consumer values that impact the purchase decision process: (a) "functional value", which reflects the physical, useful, or practical attributes of a product, thus emphasising functionality and associated product attributes such as durability, affordability, safety, and reliability; (b) "social value", representing a general aggregation, positive or negative, with demographic, socio-economic, cultural, or ethnic groups; (c) "emotional value", which emerges from an alternative and leads to an affective or emotional state in the consumer, such as feelings or memories; (d) "epistemic value", which stems from new

stimuli or misconceptions when presented with an alternative, which captures attention, sparks curiosity, and offers novelty, enabling new experiences and routines for the consumer. It is relevant to their personality, influencing their receptiveness to novel information; and finally, the (e) “conditional value”, which considers the situational context and occurs based on the specific conditions or circumstances of the purchase decision.

This model focuses on the factors influencing purchase behaviour, using its variables (particularly “emotional value”, “functional value”, and “social value”) to relate to the essential aspects of millennials’ purchase decision process (Agrocluster, 2017; Costin, 2019; Woo, 2018) and the pillars outlined in the model by Enquist et al. (2007).

Thus, the goal was to gauge respondents’ awareness of IKEA’s values, indirectly defining and informing them about all the values and initiatives undertaken by the brand in alignment with its vision, to ascertain the level of importance attributed by consumers to each individual value of the brand.

5. PRESENTATION OF STUDY DATA

Regarding the presentation of the data, Figure 1 illustrates the responses to Question 1 — “what values do you associate with IKEA?” — respondents were asked which values they associated with IKEA Portugal. The options provided included both the eight values of IKEA and those of competing brands. This setup aimed to assess participants’ ability to differentiate between the values of the brand under study and those of its competitors. Therefore, alongside IKEA’s specific values, general values like “innovation” and “transparency”, as well as competitor values such as “authenticity”, “interdependence”, “democratic”, “passionate about design”, and “specialists in decoration and smiles”, were included.

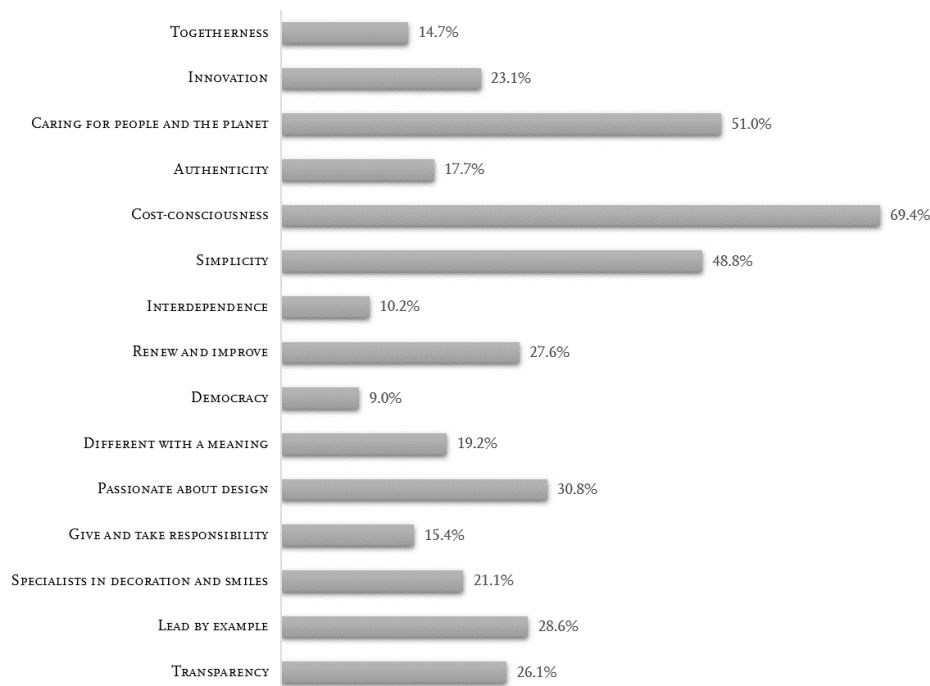


Figure 1. Outcomes of respondents’ replies to Question 1 concerning the values linked with IKEA Portugal

As illustrated in Figure 1, the top three values selected by respondents are inherently associated with the IKEA brand. This indicates that Portuguese millennial consumers perceive the brand's commitment to "cost-consciousness", "caring for people and planet", and "simplicity". Nevertheless, values like "different with a meaning", "give and take responsibility", and "togetherness" are among those least linked to the brand by the surveyed individuals. This phenomenon may be attributed to the fact that these latter two values are more accentuated within IKEA as an employer rather than in external communication.

In Question 2 (Table 1), participants were presented with nine statements and asked to rate their agreement using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. Here, 1 represented "strongly disagree", 2 "disagree", 3 "neither agree nor disagree", 4 "agree", and 5 represented "strongly agree". The intention was to indirectly inquire about each of IKEA's values, allowing for individual assessment based on the respondents' perceptions. In this question, nine statements were provided corresponding to each IKEA value, except for "caring for people and planet", which had two statements associated with it, reflecting the brand's exceptional dedication to this value.

QUESTION 2	1	2	3	4	5
2.1. IKEA Portugal challenges the status quo. (value "different with a meaning")	7.7%	12.4%	26.1%	36.8%	16.9%
2.2. IKEA Portugal's products and services have low prices. (value "cost-consciousness")	7%	10.2%	20.6%	37.6%	24.6%
2.3. IKEA Portugal is known for its simplicity in its products and services and in the company itself. (value "simplicity")	6%	8.2%	16.7%	47.8%	21.4%
2.4. IKEA Portugal is a sustainable brand. (value "caring for people and planet")	9.7%	4.5%	19.4%	43.8%	22.6%
2.5. IKEA Portugal supports vulnerable communities and groups. (value "caring for people and planet")	10.4%	12.2%	27.9%	32.1%	16.4%
2.6. IKEA Portugal is constantly improving and finding better ways of doing things. (value "renew and improve")	7.5%	11.7%	27.4%	36.6%	16.9%
2.7. IKEA Portugal has united employees. (value "togetherness"):	8%	10.9%	45.8%	29.1%	6.2%
2.8. IKEA Portugal has employees who are consistent in their words and attitudes and who lead by example. (value "lead by example")	8.7%	13.4%	37.8%	35.6%	4.5%
2.9. IKEA Portugal has autonomous employees. (value "give and take responsibility")	8.2%	8.7%	37.6%	40.5%	5%

Table 1. Correlation between questions and IKEA Portugal's values, along with the corresponding outcomes for each

For the value "different with a meaning", the findings from Question 2, specifically Point 2.1. — "IKEA Portugal challenges the status quo" — indicate that 53.7% (216 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Analysing the data related to the value "cost-consciousness", it is evident that this value is the most associated with IKEA Portugal by its specific name, demonstrating that it is directly associated with the brand among the majority of the respondents. Specifically, Point 2.2. reveals that 62.2% (250 respondents) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "IKEA Portugal's products and services have low prices", underscoring the brand's recognition for its consistent efforts to offer affordable furniture and decoration items accessible to a wide range of consumers.

Regarding the value “simplicity”, it is apparent that it is associated with IKEA Portugal, ranking as the third most associated value with the brand through its direct name. Point 2.3. — “IKEA Portugal is known for its simplicity in its products and services and in the company itself” — further illustrates this association, with 69.2% of respondents (278) agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement.

The value “caring for people and planet” emerged as the second most associated value with IKEA Portugal, indicating that respondents strongly connect this value with the brand. This association likely stems from IKEA's consistent commitment to sustainability initiatives and its efforts encouragement to help the planet. Point 2.4. — “IKEA Portugal is a sustainable brand” — received significant agreement from respondents, with only 14.2% (57) indicating they disagreed or strongly disagreed, while 66.4% (267) expressed they agreed or strongly agreed. Only 19.4% (78) of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed with this sentence. Similarly, Point 2.5. — “IKEA Portugal supports vulnerable communities and groups” — garnered agreement from 48.5% (195) of respondents, while 27.9% (112) were indifferent and a total of 22.6% (95) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Hence, as can be seen below, there is some lack of awareness regarding IKEA Portugal's initiatives to support vulnerable groups and communities. There is a need to invest more in publicising these efforts, considering that nearly 70% of respondents view this as a pivotal factor in their decision-making process when purchasing furniture and decoration products and services.

The value “renew and improve” ranked fifth most associated with the IKEA Portugal brand. In addition, in Point 2.6. — “IKEA Portugal is constantly improving and finding better ways of doing things”, 53.5% (215) of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with the sentence, and 27.4% (110) neither agreed nor disagreed.

Upon analysis of the findings concerning the value of “togetherness”, it became evident that this was the least associated value with IKEA Portugal in Question 1. There is a variation compared to the previous questions, presented in Point 2.7., where 45.8% (184) of the sample neither agreed nor disagreed with the question, 29.1% (117) agreed, 10.9% (44) disagreed, 8% (32) strongly disagreed, and 6.2% (25) strongly agreed. This shift may stem from the brand's more internal exploration of value rather than its external communication of it, thus making it less associated with it by the public.

Regarding the value “lead by example”, it ranked as the fourth associated value with IKEA Portugal, making it the fifth most hierarchically associated value when competitor values are also considered. When we also analysed Question 2, Point 2.8. — “IKEA Portugal has employees who are consistent in their words and attitudes and who lead by example” — 40.1% (161) of the sample agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. However, it is worth noting that this constituted only a 2.3% (9) difference, as 37.8% (152) neither agreed nor disagreed.

The value “give and take responsibility” was the seventh brand value associated with IKEA Portugal, ranking as the second least associated brand value. Compared to previous points, a variation was observed: 40.5% (163) of the sample agreed, 37.6% (151)

neither agreed nor disagreed, 8.7% (35) disagreed, 8.2% (33) strongly disagreed, and 5% (20) strongly agreed with the statement.

To compare the collected data and gather more nuanced insights, we used the values outlined by Sheth et al. (1991), specifically their “functional”, “emotional”, and “social values” (Table 2). Additionally, we considered the factors influencing the purchase decision process, as highlighted in previous analyses of essential aspects of millennials' purchase decision process (Agrocluster, 2017; Costin, 2019; Lacerda & Borges, 2017; Woo, 2018), along with the pillars outlined in Enquist et al.'s (2007) model corresponding to each brand value. This approach enabled a deeper understanding of the significance of brand values in the purchase decision process of Portuguese millennial consumers.

SHETH ET AL. (1991) VALUES	FACTORS INFLUENCING THE PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS	VALUE	QUESTIONS 3 TO 12
Functional	Product function	“Different with a meaning”	3
	Price	“Cost-consciousness”	4
	Quality	“Different with a meaning”	3
	Range/form	“Different with a meaning”	3
	Customisation	“Different with a meaning”	3
Emotional	Innovation	“Different with a meaning”	3
	Honesty	“Simplicity”, “togetherness”, “lead by example”	5, 10 and 11
	Consistency	“Simplicity”, “lead by example”	5 and 11
	Promoting difference and originality	“Lead by example”	11
	Striving for continuous improvement	“Renew and improve”, “give and take responsibility”	9 and 12
Social	Sustainability	“Caring for people and planet”	6
	Social responsibility	“Caring for people and planet”	6, 7 and 8
	Ethical production	“Caring for people and planet”	6
	Support to communities	“Caring for people and planet”	7 and 8

Table 2. Correlation between the factors influencing millennials' purchase decision process and IKEA Portugal's values, based on the Sheth et al. model (1991)

Each of Questions 3 to 12 matched an IKEA value to enable the comparison of the association of values with the brand and to assess the impact that Portuguese millennial consumers attribute to each of these values on their decision to purchase furniture and decoration products and services. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the following statements for their purchase decisions using a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. On this scale, 1 corresponds to “not at all important”, 2 to “not very important”, 3 to “indifferent”, 4 to “important”, and 5 to “very important” (Table 3).

QUESTIONS 3–12	1	2	3	4	5
3. Does IKEA's ongoing effort to explore new ways of surprising and inspiring positive change in the world significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	11.2%	7.7%	22.6%	43%	15.4%
4. Does IKEA's commitment to offering its products at affordable prices significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	6%	6.7%	12.9%	30.3%	44%
5. Does IKEA's preference for simplicity, whether in its communication or its approach to bureaucracy, play a significant role in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	6.5%	7.2%	32.3%	35.3%	18.7%
6. Does IKEA's commitment to environmental sustainability, such as selecting sustainable materials and striving to provide zero-emission delivery services, significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	4.7%	9.2%	17.2%	38.8%	30.1%
7. Does IKEA's commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and groups, such as victims of domestic violence and refugees, influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	6.2%	10.4%	15.9%	32.6%	34.8%
8. Does IKEA's commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, both within and outside the company, play a significant role in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	7.5%	10%	21.1%	35.1%	26.4%
9. Does IKEA's commitment to finding better ways to positively impact people and the planet significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	7%	8.5%	17.9%	41.5%	25.1%
10. Is IKEA's commitment to promoting togetherness internally, with each department working towards common goals every day, a determining factor in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	9.5%	11.4%	29.4%	40.3%	9.5%
11. Is IKEA's prioritisation of personal values over experience in hiring, its belief in people's ability to lead by example, and its investment in them a significant factor in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	10.4%	14.7%	29.1%	30.1%	15.7%
12. Does the fact that IKEA gives its employees autonomy from the start of their career and invests in them so that they grow influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?	9%	10.7%	36.8%	27.9%	15.7%

Table 3. Outcomes of the importance of IKEA Portugal's values in the purchase decision process of Portuguese millennial consumers

Table 4 was created to simplify the analysis of the outcomes presented above and address the research question. It displays the positive responses (sum of answers 4 and 5 on the Likert scale) to all the questions posed, organised hierarchically according to their corresponding values.

ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES HIERARCHICALLY ORGANISED					
Question 1	Question 2			Questions 3 to 12	
Cost-consciousness	69.4%	Simplicity (Point 2.3.)	69.2%	Cost-consciousness (Question 4)	74.3%
Caring for people and planet	51%	Caring for people and planet (Point 2.4.)	66.4%	Caring for people and planet (Question 6)	68.9%
Simplicity	48.8%	Cost-consciousness (Point 2.2.)	62.2%	Caring for people and planet (Question 7)	67.4%
Passionate about design	30.8%	Different with a meaning (Point 2.1.)	53.7%	Renew and improve (Question 9)	66.6%
Lead by example	28.6%	Renew and improve (Point 2.6.)	53.5%	Caring for people and planet (Question 8)	61.5%
Renew and improve	27.6%	Caring for people and planet (Point 2.5.)	48.5%	Different with a meaning (Question 3)	58.4%
Transparency	26.1%	Give and take responsibility (Point 2.9)	45.5%	Simplicity (Question 5)	54%
Innovation	23.1%	Lead by example (Point 2.8.)	40.1%	Togetherness (Question 10)	49.8%
Specialists in decoration and smiles	21.1%	Togetherness (Point 2.7.)	35.3%	Lead by example (Question 11)	45.8%
Different with a meaning	19.2%	-	-	Give and take responsibility (Question 12)	43.6%
Authenticity	17.7%	-	-	-	-
Give and take responsibility	15.4%	-	-	-	-
Togetherness	14.7%	-	-	-	-
Interdependence	10.2%	-	-	-	-
Democracy	9%	-	-	-	-

Table 4. Analysis of the outcomes obtained from Questions 1 to 12, organised hierarchically, according to the positive responses obtained in each question

Therefore, Table 5 presents the correlation between the values of Sheth et al. (1991) and IKEA's values and the influence they have on the purchase decision process.

SHETH ET AL. VALUES (1991)	VALUE	QUESTIONS	INFLUENCE IN THE PURCHASE DECISION PROCESS
Functional	Different with a meaning	3	+
	Cost-consciousness	4	+
Emotional	Different with a meaning	3	+
	Simplicity	5	+
	Togetherness	10	+
	Lead by example	11	+
	Renew and improve	9	+
	Give and take responsibility	12	+
Social	Caring for people and planet	6, 7, 8	+

Table 5. Correlation between IKEA Portugal's values and the fundamentals of the Sheth et al. (1991) model and their influence on the purchase decision process

The analysis of the outcomes presented in Table 5 will be structured based on the presentation of the “functional”, “emotional”, and “social” values (Sheth et al., 1991) rather than following the sequence of Questions 3 to 12 in the questionnaire. This approach aims to provide a clearer understanding of the relationship between these three values and the outcomes obtained regarding IKEA's values and their impact on the purchase decision process.

Regarding the “functional value”, two values attributed to the IKEA Portugal brand were identified: “different with a meaning” and “cost-consciousness”. These values align with Questions 3 and 4, respectively, which seek to evaluate factors influencing the purchase decision process related to functional aspects such as product function, price, quality, range/form, and customisation.

According to Question 3, “is IKEA's ongoing effort to explore new ways of surprising and inspiring positive change in the world a determining factor in [my] decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?”, 58.4% of respondents deemed it important or very important. This indirectly suggests the relevance of the “different with a meaning” value to their purchasing decisions, indicating its significance to millennial consumers (refer to Table 4). Thus, concerning the “different with a meaning” value, it appears to align with the variables associated with the “functional value” outlined by Sheth et al. (1991), demonstrating its influence on the purchase decision process. Notably, although IKEA's name might not be directly associated with this value (as evident in Figure 1), its actions are recognised and valued by its audience (as shown in Table 1), making it the fourth most impactful value on the purchase decisions of Portuguese millennial consumers, as per Question 2.

In addressing the value of “cost-consciousness” in Question 4 — “does IKEA's commitment to offering its products at affordable prices significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?” — a notably positive response was observed. The vast majority of the sample, accounting for 74.3%, deemed this value important or very important in their decision-making process when purchasing furniture and decoration products. This underscores the significance of value for money to this generation, with affordability being a crucial factor. This value aligns with the “price” variable associated with the “functional value” paradigm, emerging as the primary determinant in the decision to purchase furniture and decoration products, as indicated by the data in Table 4.

Thus, it is possible to infer that within the “functional value”, the IKEA value with the greatest impact on the purchase decision process for furniture and decoration products and services is “cost-consciousness”. This finding corroborates the insights gleaned from prior literature reviews (Costin, 2019; Deloitte, 2022; Merck, 2022a), which suggest that millennials prioritise value for money and are inclined towards brands they trust and perceive as offering quality, irrespective of price point. Consequently, it becomes evident

that in relation to “functional value”, with which these two IKEA Portugal values are associated, the balance was positive, and their influence on the purchasing decision process of Portuguese millennial consumers is substantial, as illustrated in Table 5.

Six distinct IKEA Portugal values were included in the umbrella of “emotional value”, namely: “different with a meaning”, “simplicity”, “togetherness”, “lead by example”, “renew and improve”, and “give and take responsibility”. These values correspond to Questions 3, 5, 10, 11, 9, and 12, respectively. The objective of these questions is to evaluate the factors that influence the purchase decision process, which fall within the “emotional value” variables (innovation, honesty, consistency, promoting difference and originality, and striving for continuous improvement). Question 3 was analysed earlier.

The value of “simplicity” was perceived as a decisive factor by 54% of the respondents in their decision-making process for purchasing furniture and decoration, as indicated in Question 5: “does IKEA’s preference for simplicity, whether in its communication or its approach to bureaucracy, play a significant role in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?”. However, it is noteworthy that 32.3% of the sample expressed indifference towards “simplicity” in this question (Table 3), ranking it fifth in terms of values that significantly influence the consumer’s purchase decision (see Table 4). This suggests that “simplicity” is not a top priority value for Portuguese millennial consumers when making purchase decisions.

Therefore, the value of “simplicity” demonstrated its relevance in addressing the variables associated with it (honesty and consistency) within the framework of “emotional value” outlined by Sheth et al. (1991).

Question 10, which pertains to the value of “togetherness” — “IKEA’s preference for simplicity, whether in its communication or its approach to bureaucracy, play a significant role in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items” — revealed that 49.8% of the sample considers this value important or very important and perceives it as a decisive factor in their purchase decision for furniture and decoration (Table 3). It is possible to conclude that “togetherness” ranks as the sixth determining factor in the purchase decision process (refer to Table 4), notably in Question 2, Item 2.7. — “IKEA Portugal has united employees” — 45.8% of respondents expressed indifference, indicating a lack of awareness regarding the actual unity among IKEA Portugal’s employees or the brand’s adherence to this value.

Regarding the value “lead by example”, 45.8% of the sample perceives it as a determining factor in their decision to purchase furniture and decoration items, 29.1% expressed indifference, and 25.1% admitted it held little or no importance in their purchase decision (refer to Table 3). Consequently, it becomes evident that compared to other values, “lead by example” is not as significant to the Portuguese millennial consumer. Therefore, it ranks as the second-to-last value to be considered when making a purchase decision (see Table 4).

The value “renew and improve” was deemed a significant factor in the decision-making process for purchasing furniture and decoration items, with 66.6% of the sample considering it important or very important (refer to Table 3). Consequently, it can be established that this value ranks as the third most influential factor in the purchase decisions of millennial consumers (see Table 4).

The value “give and take responsibility”, addressed in Question 12 — “the fact that IKEA gives its employees autonomy from the start of their career and invests in them so that they grow influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items” — garnered a significant number of indifferent responses, accounting for 36.8% or 148 individuals. However, when considering the answers categorised as important and very important, totalling 43.6% or 175 individuals, it becomes evident that this value indeed influences the decision-making process of Portuguese millennial consumers when purchasing furniture and decoration items (refer to Table 3). Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the difference in responses between importance levels was relatively small (27), indicating a notable level of indifference, particularly towards values that are more internally focused at IKEA Portugal. Therefore, while it holds importance for the majority, it ranks as the least influential value to be considered (see Table 4).

Regarding the “emotional value”, encompassing six associated values — “different with a meaning” (Question 3), “simplicity” (Question 5), “togetherness” (Question 10), “lead by example” (Question 11), “renew and improve” (Question 9), “give and take responsibility” (Question 12) — there was a positive balance, indicating an influence on the consumer’s purchase decision process.

On the other hand, the factors aligned with the “social value” of Sheth et al. (1991) — sustainability, social responsibility, ethical production, and support to communities — were addressed in Questions 6, 7, and 8, regarding the value “caring for people and planet” (refer to Table 1; Costin, 2019), aiming to evaluate the values of the IKEA brand.

Analysing the results of Question 6 — “IKEA’s commitment to environmental sustainability, such as selecting sustainable materials and striving to provide zero-emission delivery services, significantly influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items” — which emphasises sustainability and ethical production, it was considered important and very important by 68.9% of the sample, accounting for 277 respondents. It is also noteworthy that only 13.9% of respondents (equivalent to 56 individuals) indicated that this factor was not very or not at all important in their purchase decision (refer to Table 3).

Question 7 — “IKEA’s commitment to supporting vulnerable communities and groups, such as victims of domestic violence and refugees, influence my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items” — emphasises social responsibility and support to communities. It was shown to be a determining factor in the decision to purchase furniture and decoration items, as it had the highest number of “very important” responses of the questions associated with “social value”. Of the sample, 67.4% of respondents stated that

it was important and very important for their purchase decision, indicating its relevance for millennial consumers.

Question 8 — “does IKEA’s commitment to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, both within and outside the company, play a significant role in my decision to purchase furniture and decoration items?” — it has proved to be a determining factor in the decision to purchase furniture and decoration items for Portuguese millennial consumers, since 61.5% of the sample, or 247 respondents, consider this aspect to be important or very important, indicating its relevance to consumers.

As discussed above, the factors that fall under Sheth et al.’s (1991) “social value” — sustainability, social responsibility, ethical production, and support to communities — align with the value of “caring for people and planet” and its corresponding questions — 6, 7 and 8 — which it was concluded to be a determining value for the furniture and decoration purchase decision process (see Table 4). Thus, by associating this IKEA value with “social value”, it can be inferred that the overall balance of “social value” is positive (refer to Table 5).

6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study endeavoured to explore how brand values influence the purchase decisions of millennials. Through a comprehensive literature review, coupled with the collection and thorough analysis of primary data via a questionnaire survey, the research aimed to address the fundamental query: “does the perception of IKEA’s brand values influence the purchase decision process among its millennial customers in Portugal?”.

The millennial generation is better educated, idealistic, open-minded, culturally diverse, ambitious, and often impatient. It is inclined to break down barriers, both professionally and in terms of their own mental health and the way they view life. Millennials are notably dedicated to sustainability, social responsibility, and inclusivity, advocating for brands to align with their values and contribute to a better future (Agrocluster, 2017; Costin, 2019; Deloitte, 2022; Lacerda & Borges, 2017; Merck, 2022a, 2022b; Woo, 2018).

In response, brands must understand the priorities and motivations of millennials in their purchase decisions. Companies are increasingly differentiating themselves through their values, aiming not only for profitability but also to address complex social and environmental challenges (Kotler et al., 2021).

IKEA, guided by its vision of “creating a better everyday life for most people” (IKEA, n.d.-c, para. 3), remains steadfast in its commitment to eight core values— “cost-consciousness”, “simplicity”, “togetherness”, “caring for people and planet”, “renew and improve”, “give and take responsibility”, “lead by example” and “different with a meaning” — which have been foundational to the company for decades. IKEA’s relentless dedication is evident in its daily efforts to make a positive difference in the lives of people and the planet.

Based on the analysis of the eight dimensions, it becomes evident that the values most closely associated with IKEA Portugal, both by name and by their application, are “cost-consciousness”, “caring for people and planet”, and “simplicity”. However, its relevance to the decision-making process when purchasing furniture and decoration products and services ranks fifth. This indicates that, although valued, “simplicity” may not be as critical a factor in the purchase decision compared to other considerations. On the other hand, “cost-consciousness” and “caring for people and planet” emerge as highly decisive factors in this purchasing process. It is apparent that values like “togetherness”, “lead by example”, and “give and take responsibility” have the least association with the IKEA Portugal brand and consequently have minimal impact on the consumer’s purchase decision process compared to the other five values.

Despite this, the value “different with a meaning” does not have a strong association with the brand by name, yet it ranks fourth in response to Question 2 and the level of importance to consumers when making their decisions. Additionally, “renew and improve”, although not closely linked to the brand, emerges as the third most influential value in the decision-making process for purchasing furniture and decoration items. This suggests that while certain values may not be directly associated with the brand, they still hold significance for consumers.

In conclusion, this research aimed to ascertain the significance of humanistic values in the purchasing decisions of Portuguese millennial consumers, particularly concerning the IKEA brand. Ultimately, the findings suggest that, in answering the research question, brand values do play a pivotal role in the purchasing decisions of this generation. Specifically, values such as “cost-consciousness” and “caring for people and planet” emerged as key determinants, contributing to a positive overall assessment.

Whether it is at the moment of the purchase decision or even at the start of this process, such as when evaluating alternatives, a brand’s values have an impact on the millennial generation’s choice. Millennials will be more willing to invest in a product or service that allows them to fulfil their “needs for social, economic and environmental justice” (Kotler et al., 2011, p. 4). As such, a brand like IKEA Portugal that presents humanistic values and is committed to a better future and to “creating a better everyday life for most people” can only hope for a continuous increase in sales and, at the same time, a reputation based on transparent and coherent values between the organisation and its consumers and other stakeholders.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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LIFESTYLE ECO-INFLUENCERS ADVERTISING: IS ENGAGEMENT DRIVEN BY CONTENT OR FANDOM?

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the main common characteristics among the contents of five eco-influencer accounts from different Western countries. A quantitative content analysis was performed on 187 Instagram posts published by eco-influencers from the United Kingdom, United States, Belgium, Spain, and Peru. The topics that eco-influencers deal with the most are promoting veganism, spirituality, environmental and political claims, product advertising (their own and third-party), and personal life, generating the most interactions in the accounts. Carousels win on engagement for eco-influencers on Instagram despite videos being sponsors' favorite format. Both sponsored content and sponsors themselves are well-received, with over half of all posts featuring them. It seems evident that the social capital of influencers encourages environmental commitment, although there is a particular bias to appreciate the person more than their activist message. In light of the results, this research contributes to the social capital theory of influencers by demonstrating that influencers show personal content and emotional appeals, such as activities with their families, personal reflections, and political statements that give them a high sense of authenticity, but which, blurs the barriers between the public and private spheres.

KEYWORDS

social media, advertising, eco-influencers, environment, influencers

PUBLICIDADE DE ECO-INFLUENCIADORES DE ESTILOS DE VIDA: O ENVOLVIMENTO PROVÉM DO CONTEÚDO OU DO FASCÍNIO?

RESUMO

O presente estudo analisa as principais semelhanças entre os conteúdos de cinco contas de influenciadoras verdes (eco-influenciadoras) de diferentes países ocidentais. Foi realizada uma análise quantitativa de conteúdo em 187 publicações do Instagram das influenciadoras verdes do

Reino Unido, Estados Unidos, Bélgica, Espanha e Peru. Os temas mais abordados pelas influenciadoras verdes são a promoção do veganismo, a espiritualidade, as reivindicações ambientais e políticas, a publicidade a produtos (próprios e de terceiros) e a vida pessoal, sendo os últimos a gerar o maior número de interações nas contas. Os carrosséis destacam-se em termos de envolvimento entre as influenciadoras verdes no Instagram, apesar de os vídeos serem o formato preferido dos patrocinadores. Tanto o conteúdo patrocinado quanto os patrocinadores são bem recebidos, com mais de metade das publicações a apresentá-los. Parece claro que o capital social das influenciadoras incentiva o compromisso ambiental, apesar de haver uma tendência particular de apreciar mais a pessoa do que a sua mensagem ativista. À luz dos resultados, esta investigação contribui para a teoria do capital social das influenciadoras, demonstrando que estas apresentam conteúdos pessoais e apelos emocionais, como atividades com as suas famílias, reflexões pessoais e declarações políticas, que lhes conferem um elevado sentido de autenticidade, mas que também esbatem as barreiras entre as esferas pública e privada.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

média sociais, publicidade, eco-influenciadores, ambiente, influenciadores

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media influencers (SMI) are profiles with the power to attract followers, opinions, trends, tastes, and modes that compete for the attention of conventional media audiences, reflecting the values of a society in profound change (Elorriaga Illera & Monge Benito, 2018; Pérez-Escoda & García-Ruiz, 2019). An influencer is a person with a broad community of followers who value the information offered by the latter and with whom he or she shares common interests and concerns. The possibilities can range from purely informative messages, including recommendations or practical advice, to accounts of experiences, lifestyles, or opinions. In essence, the aim is to establish a connection and give the public what they are looking for (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2023; Martínez-Sanz & González Fernández, 2018).

Influencers differ from conventional celebrities, as their attractiveness is built through their followers on social networks. In this way, the primary users of these platforms — millennials and centennials — see influencers as people who resemble themselves (Allsop et al., 2007; Mangold & Smith, 2012) through a subculture of online celebrity (Hamilton, 2010; Johnstone & Lindh, 2022). Influencers are micro-celebrities with many followers, in general or among a specific segment (Carter, 2016). Previous research evidence that influencer marketing and the use of shareable content can improve audience engagement and the reach of campaigns (e.g., Coates et al., 2019; Gough et al., 2017; Kostygina et al., 2020).

In this line, a celebrity influencer is any person who enjoys public recognition beyond the universe of social networks and brands due to their large number of followers. On the other hand, there are also mega-influencers (individuals with more than 1,000,000 followers), macro-influencers (those with between 100,000 and 1,000,000 followers), micro-influencers (from 10,000 to 100,000 followers), and nano-influencers (less than 10,000 followers; Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

Cultural elements endemic to social media platforms, such as influencer marketing and user-generated content, can significantly enhance the visibility of specific campaigns (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Vallone et al., 2016), but engagement should also be carefully considered when evaluating their effectiveness.

2. INFLUENCERS' EFFECTS ON THE AUDIENCE

The main reasons why young audiences use influencers as primary sources of information are driven by six principal reasons: search autonomy, virtual storage, instant gratification, visual inspiration, accessible information, and authenticity. Millennials and centennials prefer to get information from bloggers and influencers rather than conventional media, as they feel they are more similar to them and consequently consider them more trustworthy (Jones & Kang, 2019; Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2022).

This feeling of closeness is favored by the rise of interactive marketing, which echoes the rapid development and innovation of technologies, the revolution of platforms, participatory culture, and the proliferation of social media, promoting a more tailored and personalized approach on social networks, with which customers can enjoy more of the experience (Wang, 2021).

Most of the academic efforts have focused on the effect of celebrity campaigns on mainstream media, explaining that these public personalities have an enormous influence on audiences' attitudes, behaviors, and decision-making (e.g., Hoffman & Tan, 2013, 2015; Kata, 2012; Viale, 2014). Celebrity endorsements can enhance a brand's value and product desirability, giving them social capital (Ohanian, 1990; Till & Shimp, 1998). More recent neuroscience research has shown that brain regions that create positive associations are activated by seeing or hearing celebrity advice (Klucharev et al., 2008; Sung et al., 2018).

Brands usually employ the services of influencers not only because of the credibility that their microcelebrity profile gives them (Romero-Rodríguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2023) but also because social networks tend to make influencers' branded content campaigns more visible, while they can "shadowban" those of brands' profiles (Barquero Cabrero et al., 2023).

The technological revolution has undoubtedly encouraged and empowered companies to form technological bonds with their consumers through innovative and interactive technologies on social media platforms. Consequently, the combination of social media and interactive marketing serves as a conduit to engage deeper levels of consumer attention and emotion, which ultimately positively impacts the overall consumer experience (Romero-Rodríguez & Castillo-Abdul, 2023; Ryding et al., 2023).

Brands associated with influencers benefit from their support since many consumers admire the attractiveness, accessibility, and authenticity of celebrities (Campbell & Farrell, 2020).

However, according to Ryding et al. (2023), consumers do not distinguish between nano, micro, macro, and meso types of influencers but exclusively between "celebrities"

and “influencers”. Generally, despite celebrity influencers’ high number of followers, their lack of interaction leads to lower consumer engagement. Nevertheless, companies are less concerned about working with macro-influencers, which have a more significant impact on the industry due to higher engagement and credibility.

On the other hand, according to Kay et al. (2020), micro-influencers seem to be more effective in improving consumer outcomes. Along these lines, micro-influencers are characterized by their credibility, relevance, and high engagement on social networks through interaction with their followers (Alassani & Göretz, 2019), while larger companies usually employ macro-influencers, as they already have a broad reach and the viral effect is greater than that of micro-influencers. Likewise, marketing managers tend to work more with micro-influencers because they enjoy greater authenticity and trust and are often more connected to the needs and interests of their followers (Wissman, 2018).

All digital influencers have a common denominator: a social media profile from which they share content and reach a specific audience. Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez (2017) distinguish several types of prescribers (Table 1) whose opinions, assessments, and published purchasing decisions unleash streams of influence.

TYPE OF INFLUENCER	DESCRIPTION
Citizen advocates	Those who share information and opinions spontaneously through content about their experiences with the brand. Brand advocacy does not involve financial compensation, but these influencers make genuine recommendations explaining the benefits of products and services. They are the most credible and authentic influencers.
Experts	Refers to those who, due to their profession, experience, knowledge, and specialization, can generate trends in an audience, although they are usually smaller audiences. Positive recommendations could represent an economic benefit for them.
Opinion leaders	Those who can stimulate the opinions of third parties and act as a loudspeaker for a community (as a gatekeeper). A positive message about a brand can be produced from an economic relationship.
Celebrity	Public figures whose popularity generates a large community of followers. Their positive comments on brands are linked to economic retribution, which is generally significant for the reach and awareness that can be achieved. The celebrity usually represents both the tastes, preferences, and inclinations of the target as well as the qualities of the product.
Brand Ambassador	They are usually well-known characters, but not necessarily, as cases of companies that have as brand ambassadors their employees who are close, credible, and reliable for the target, connect the brand with its followers, and want to spread the real commitment that it has with its target clients.

Table 1. *Types of influencers*

Note. Own elaboration from Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez (2017).

Trust is a factor that impacts electronic word-of-mouth on social networks. According to Shen (2021), fashion micro-influencers have the potential to positively influence consumer engagement through electronic word-of-mouth, with eye-catching brand names in the mouths of these actors, transferring a positive attitude toward the brand. The higher the audience’s familiarity with these influencers, the more likely they will search, broadcast, and transmit opinions about products and services (Shu-Chuan & Yoojung, 2011).

Unlike celebrities in conventional media, in influencer marketing, brand endorsement information is often implicit, and sponsors tend to use tactics different from those

employed by advertisers on traditional media platforms to maximize impact and trust with their followers. For example, influencers may use digital native advertising strategies similar to product placement, such as posting selfies with a product, using product-branded backgrounds (Ashley & Tuten, 2015; Campbell et al., 2014), but also doing product experience reviews (called “haul”) or “unboxing” sessions.

This opinion leadership of certain young people encourages many commercial brands, particularly those linked to fashion and beauty, to find in the profiles of these influencers the ideal space to penetrate, in a non-intrusive way, the imaginary of their target audience and to adhere to the credibility and trust that the prescriber transmits. SMI has become an integral part of brand communication, especially in the fashion industry (Martínez-Sanz & González Fernández, 2018).

Social network opinion leaders appear to be important starting points on the part of business sense, either because of their involvement in word-of-mouth communication or because of the great potential they have to influence other consumers in the opinion leaders’ network (Akdevelioglu & Kara, 2020; Molitor et al., 2011).

3. FASHION AND ECO-LIFESTYLE INFLUENCERS

The eco-influencer is an opinion leader committed to disseminating environmentally-themed content and is not necessarily a member of social organizations or activists in the conventional sense. These micro-celebrities are dedicated to promoting a sustainable lifestyle through their example, which becomes their communications’ main objective and theme (San Cornelio, Ardèvol, & Martorell, 2021; San Cornelio, Martorell, & Ardèvol, 2021). In the same way, they are committed to an “eco-friendly” lifestyle, recommending readings on healthy living, as well as sustainable brands and products, thus promoting a lifestyle that, through their example, makes their passion for an environmentally friendly life the main objective of their communications (Ardèvol et al., 2021).

Bloggers have become priority broadcasting channels for the fashion and lifestyle industry and have become a perfect tool for advertising their products. Most fashion blogs are made up of people outside the conventional media world but with great interest and participation in the digital ecosystem, making them prescribers accepted by society (Esteban et al., 2019). From a marketing point of view, it is widely believed that a recommendation from a trusted source, such as an SMI, is a decisive factor in purchasing a product or service (Martínez-Sanz & González Fernández, 2018).

Fashion brands attract the interest of young people basically because they are linked to the emotional and identity aspects of the brand (Rubio-Romero & Barón-Dulce, 2019). According to Lipovetsky (1983/2000), the current postmodern culture legitimizes the affirmation of personal identity according to the values of a personalized society in which the important thing is to be oneself. In other words, what is being sold is an identity that must be personal and, in the case of eco-influencers, a life model. For all these reasons, SMI manage to capture more attention from younger audiences. In addition, the practices of users and influencers in the digital field are aimed at the need to “look perfect”,

often focusing on building these identities through digital manipulation to acquire such an appearance. Society has never appeared more beautiful, more standardized, nor more filtered than it does today (Castillo-Abdul et al., 2021; Lomborg, 2015).

In the past, fashion brands or magazines were the primary sources of news, trends, and fashion and beauty advice. Nowadays, users have joined these information channels in general, and fashion bloggers in particular, who have become “prosumers”. They not only consume content but also actively request, participate, and shape current trends through a variety of products, initially showing them on their initiative but later collaborating with the advertising brands (Esteban et al., 2019). In this sense, user-generated content is also emerging as an excellent possibility for brands to have unofficial brand ambassadors. According to Duffy and Hund (2015), the success of fashion bloggers and other cultural producers who make their living by sharing their “passions” and connecting with readership demonstrated that this type of work generates a significant (and ever-increasing) value and capital.

Although ecological awareness has been on the rise since the 1980s, the impact of natural catastrophes in recent decades has encouraged even more, if possible, this new type of buyer, one that can be defined as conscientious (Lin & Niu, 2018; Ober & Karwot, 2022). All this has built a new vision of sustainable and ecological consumption, which is very much appreciated in purchasing food but also seems to reach, little by little, the world of fashion (Atik & Ertekin, 2022).

Nevertheless, even moderate consumers of organic food are concerned about environmental issues, so targeting only highly conscious buyers could be a mistake since the problem faced by many sustainable fashion brands is to expand their market share to potential consumers who are already concerned but do not know where to buy responsibly. However, it is known that the correct labeling of garments and certifications encourages consumption among those interested in this type of consumption (Chang & Chen, 2022). In this sense, companies not only sell products and services but also give meaning to behaviors and experiences related to consuming branded products and services (Kamin & Anker, 2014).

According to Castillo-Abdul et al. (2020), the promotion of fashion products in social media through influencers is limited exclusively to the aesthetic part, thus ignoring the production processes and the necessary information linked to the social conscience that these clothes bring with them. As a result, there is the phenomenon of eco-influencers, who, according to San Cornelio, Ardèvol, and Martorell (2021), are activists promoting the creation of a social dialogue that questions the division between nature and culture as an element of modernity and, ultimately, propose a reconnection with nature.

In the current postmodern culture, for example, in mainstream cinema produced since the beginning of the 21st century, there has been a thematic repetition of films that show distrust towards companies that sell their products as “eco-friendly”, implying that these brands behave as a showcase of ethical and corporate responsibility, behind which there are monsters at the helm of these companies’ management under greenwashing practices (Fernández-Rodríguez & Romero-Rodríguez, 2021). This seems to explain why

younger consumers prefer the proximity of an influencer to mediate between them and companies, as they tend to distrust the advertising narratives designed from corporate spheres but not the storytelling of other users.

4. METHODS

4.1. OBJECTIVE

This research aims to examine the characteristics of five eco-influencer Instagram accounts from different Western countries whose content is available in English or Spanish and whose common elements are interest in environmentalism and fashion. Likewise, the study seeks to determine what type of content generates the most positive reactions from their audiences. The following research questions (RQ) were used as a guide:

RQ1: are eco-influencers more concerned with advertising products or services or with informing about the sustainability aspect of brands?

RQ2: what type of posts or formats do followers of these eco-influencers prefer?

RQ3: what types of content generate the most positive reactions from your followers?

RQ4: what can give one influencer a greater audience range than another?

In this sense, the present work seeks to contribute to the theoretical understanding of what type of content on environmental issues generates more significant positive reactions and engagement in the followers of these eco-influencers.

This research evaluates whether eco-influencers use ecological discourse as a “bait” to promote products or services and whether these eco-influencers’ social capital and interactions are due more to their environmental activism or other facets and roles.

4.2. SAMPLE

In order to study the behavior of the five eco-influencers in terms of their communication format and content, mixed research combining qualitative and quantitative techniques has been conducted to develop an exploratory and correlational study.

Following Yin (1994) and Castro Monge (2010), the exploratory scope seeks to familiarize with a phenomenon or situation without a well-defined theoretical framework. To this end, a content analysis was conducted to identify the most interesting topics in these eco-influencers. According to Díaz-Herrera (2018), qualitative content analysis is intended to search for certain contents within a *corpus* and find the meaning that these contents possess within the context. Similarly, for Arbeláez and Onrubia (2014), content analysis aims to verify the presence of themes, words, or concepts in content and their meaning within a text, considering the context.

It is worth explaining that this study, being exploratory on the phenomenon of Instagram eco-influencers in the “lifestyle” category, has a non-probabilistic sampling for convenience. On the one hand, the five eco-influencers were chosen based on the

selection criteria that will be indicated in the following paragraphs, while the analysis period yielded a sufficient number of posts to reach sample saturation.

The social network Instagram has been selected as the analysis platform because, at the time of the study, and given the visual peculiarities and reach of the platform in the Western world, it was one of the favorites for creators of content related to fashion and lifestyle.

As for the sample, the posts were selected between November 2021 and January 2022 by five influencers from different geographic regions on Instagram (Table 2), so the sampling strategy was purposive by clusters. The accounts were selected based on the following characteristics: (a) the Instagram account focuses on showing a healthy way of life concerning the fashion and lifestyle world; (b) environmentalist ideas will be represented in some form of advertising or sponsored content; (c) the language used in the posts must be English or Spanish; (d) who had more than 20,000 followers on Instagram; and (e) the geographical diversity of each influencer.

INFLUENCER	INSTAGRAM USER	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	DESCRIPTION OF CONTENT
Evanna Lynch (Ireland)	@evannalynch	4,000,000	Evanna Lynch focuses on veganism, animal rights, and animal cruelty-free beauty products from a very personal and spiritual point of view.
Marina Testino (Peru and the United States)	@marinatestino	52,000	Marina Testino focuses her content on organic beauty products and clothing made sustainably from a personal but discreet approach.
Marta Canga (Belgium and the United Kingdom)	@martacanga	22,800	Marta Canga addresses her content to vegan beauty products, clothing, and food from a personal, cheerful, discreet vision.
Lauren Singer (United States)	@trashisfortossers	366,000	Lauren Singer explores different pathways to zero-waste living in her content, supporting homemade and secondhand products.
Vanesa Lorenzo (Spain)	@vanesalorenzo_	429,000	Vanesa Lorenzo shares in her posts her love for yoga, nature, motherhood, and some organic products from a personal but somewhat distant point of view.

Table 2. Analyzed Instagram profiles

On the one hand, it was decided that an adequate amount of time to analyze the Instagrammers would be three months (November 2021 to January 2022) because all the accounts had different periodicities regarding posting. That is, while some profiles, in the selected research time, had more than 70 posts, others had only 21. In this way, a total sample (*corpus*) of 187 posts was reached. In addition, since this is exploratory research, the intention was to examine a topic or research problem that has not been studied extensively or has not been addressed before, so this sample was sufficient because the intention is not to statistically infer the results to a total population (Hernández Sampieri et al., 2014).

4.3. INSTRUMENT

A content analysis was conducted on the posts mentioned above and their respective Instagram accounts. The variables used in the analysis and observation sheet were as follows:

- the number of account followers (applicable to all posts of an account)
- the influencer's presence in other social networks (applicable to all the posts of an account)
- date
- type of post: photo, video, GIF, reel, or carousel
- the presence or absence of sponsors or the promotion of products or services: dichotomous variable, where 1 equaled presence and 0 equaled absence
- the theme of the post, which describes in an open-ended way what is shown in the post
- the number of likes of the post
- the number of positive comments on the post
- the number of negative comments on the post
- the post's total number of positive interactions (obtained from the sum of likes and positive comments, provided that information on both is available)

This analysis sheet was prepared in a Microsoft Excel file, in which two coders manually recorded the abovementioned variables. The coders also participated in the design of the analysis sheet and were fully aware of the meaning of each variable. At the end of data collection, the analysis sheets of both coders were compared to corroborate that all data had been correctly classified. From these measures, the IBM-SPSS program was used to perform descriptive statistical analysis, mainly means and frequency distribution, and inferential statistical analysis, mainly with Pearson bivariate correlations and one-factor ANOVA tests to measure mean differences and crosstabulations.

5. RESULTS

5.1. DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

Beginning with a general review of the posts analyzed, we see that the distribution of posts among Instagrammers is not equal, as their level of posting is different. Thus, in the period studied, 21 posts correspond to @evannalynch, 33 to @marinatestino, 25 to @martacanga, 71 to @trashisfortossers — which stands out from the rest — and 37 to @vanosalorenzo.

Most of these five Instagrammers are active on other social networks, except for @marinatestino, who is only present on Instagram. Of the other four, all but @vanosalorenzo are on Facebook, and all but @evannalynch are on YouTube. On Twitter are @martacanga and @vanosalorenzo, and @martacanga and @trashisfortossers are on TikTok.

Photos predominate in the posts analyzed, with 96 of the 187 posts in the sample (51.3%), followed by 46 carousels (24.6%) and 31 reels (16.6%). Finally, we found 13 videos (7.0%) and one GIF (0.5%). More than half of the posts, 56.7% (106 of the 187 studied), include the presence of a sponsor or promoting a product or service. This confirms the great relevance of this type of content within influencers' activity on Instagram.

The contents reviewed have an average of 19,422.50 likes ($SD = 51,920,606$) and 99.60 positive comments ($SD = 251.331$). Likewise, the mean number of positive interactions is

19,783.03 (SD = 52,452,840). It should be noted that this mean does not coincide because when one of the two values is not available, the value of positive interactions is not taken into account, as it would be incomplete, so there are more cases in the calculation of the mean number of likes and positive comments than of total positive interactions. Finally, the total number of negative comments is nine, with a mean of 0.05 (SD = 0.435), demonstrating the scarcity of this type of interaction.

5.2. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN VARIABLES

Focusing on the inferential analyses, it is worth noting that the number of account followers plays a decisive role in achieving positive reactions beyond any other factor specific to the message in question. Thus, the number of followers is strongly and significantly positively related to the number of likes [$R(134) = 0.738, p < 0.001$] and, although to a lesser extent, to the number of positive comments [$R(184) = 0.537, p < 0.001$]. With this, the joint positive interaction variable (combining likes and positive comments) also shows a significant positive correlation with the number of followers [$R(132) = 0.737, p < 0.001$]. Thus, we observe that a higher number of followers could explain why the posts have more positive interactions.

It is also possible to see that the number of likes is positively correlated with the number of positive comments [$R(132) = 0.911, p < 0.001$], something that also makes sense since a post that generates positive feelings can do so in more than one dimension so that users can like it but also post positive comments. On the other hand, negative comments did not show significant correlations with any of the other variables.

Neither does the presence of sponsors offer significant correlations, although we could speak of tendentially positive correlations (although weak) between the presence of sponsors in the post and the number of likes [$R(134) = 0.156, p = 0.72$] and the number of positive interactions [$R(132) = 0.157, p = 0.073$]. These data should be further explored, as they could suggest that the audience generally responds positively to the presence of sponsors and sponsored content, although this statement should be made with extreme caution given the absence of significant values.

5.3. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACCOUNTS

Focusing now on the differences between Instagrammers, one-factor ANOVA tests were performed, which showed no significant differences in the presence of sponsors in the posts among the different influencers. Through Welch's F statistic, used given that equality of variances could not be assumed, significant differences were observed regarding the number of positive reactions [$F(4, 34.725) = 40.869, p < 0.001$], the number of positive comments [$F(4, 70.720) = 8.325, p < 0.001$] and the number of positive interactions [$F(4, 34.584) = 39.512, p < 0.001$]. *Post-hoc* tests show differences between @evannalynch's posts and those of the rest of the accounts, partly thanks to this account's much higher number of followers. Figure 1 shows the mean of the different accounts in each category.

	Number of followers of the account	Average number of reactions (likes) per post	Average number of positive comments per post	Average number of positive interactions (positive comments + likes) per post
evannalynch	4,000,000	113,372.95	473.57	113,753.37
marinatestino	52,000	1,910.89	36.3	1,967.22
martacanga	22,800	476.84	44.48	521.32
trashisfortossers	366,000	3,538.71	38.21	3,621.44
vanesalorenzo	429,000	7,226.89	93.86	7,321.83

Figure 1. Average number of interactions per account

Note. All variables had significant differences.

It should be noted that negative comments are not reported due to their statistical irrelevance, although it is striking that all of them are concentrated in posts by @vanesalorenzo.

Concerning the type of post, the Chi-square test indicates some significant differences. Thus, @evannalynch used significantly fewer reels ($2.2 > 1.96$) and more carousels ($2.1 > 1.96$). About @marinatestino, she posted significantly more photos ($2.7 > 1.96$) and GIFs ($2.2 > 1.96$; having posted the only GIF in the sample studied) and fewer reels ($2.3 > 1.96$). The account @martacanga posted significantly fewer photos ($3.4 > 1.96$) and more carousels ($4.4 > 1.96$). For her part, @trashisfortossers posted significantly more photos ($2.0 > 1.96$) and reels ($2.5 > 1.96$) and fewer carousels ($4.4 < 1.96$). Finally, @vanesalorenzo posted significantly more reels ($2.4 > 1.96$).

5.4. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPES OF POSTS

In addition to identifying the post patterns of the different accounts studied, the above data are relevant since the degree of interaction generated by each type of post may be different, as shown by the tests of equality of means performed, although with very small effect sizes.

Thus, given that equality of variances is not assumed in any case, Welch's F tests were performed to measure the differences between the different types of posts, eliminating the posts with a GIF from the analysis due to their statistical irrelevance. Thus, we see that there are significant differences regarding the number of followers [$F(3, 43.414) = 4.293, p < 0.05$], the number of likes [$F(3, 31.022) = 3.964, p < 0.05$], and the number of positive interactions [$F(3, 31.417) = 3.979, p < 0.05$]. The *post-hoc* tests performed, however, do not yield significant results, and, given the minimal significance levels and statistic sizes, these data should be interpreted with caution and subject to what future studies with larger sample sizes indicate. Figure 2 shows the different means according to the different post types.

	Number of followers per type of post*	Average number of reactions (likes) per type of post*	Average number of positive comments per type of post*	Average number of positive interactions (positive comments + likes) per type of post*
Photo	657,354.2	23,274	82.91	23,796.52
Video	829,169.2	3,156.63	240.85	3,199.75
Reel	367,154.8	4,163.48	72.07	4,249.97
Carousel	931	29,205.6	113.35	29,331.28

Figure 2. Average interactions by type of post
 Note. *Variables with significant differences.

It should be noted that these differences, especially in terms of the number of followers, are closely related to the posting patterns of the different influencers, primarily due to the effect of @evannalynch, with a much higher number of followers and interactions than the rest of the influencers. That is why reels frequently appear as the types with the lowest number of followers and interactions (significantly less used by @evannalynch), while carousels are at the opposite pole (significantly more used by @evannalynch).

Regardless of these data and with clearer values, Welch’s F statistic [$F(3, 47.898) = 4.274, p < 0.01$] indicates significant differences in the proportion of posts with the presence of sponsors among the different types of posts. *Post-hoc* tests show that the differences are between videos ($M = 0.85, SD = 0.376$) and reels ($M = 0.35, SD = 0.486$), so the presence of sponsors is higher in the former. Given that there were no significant differences in the presence of sponsors among the different influencers, it can be assumed that the effects of the type of post are clear so that videos seem to be the preferred format for posting promotions and sponsored content (Figure 3).

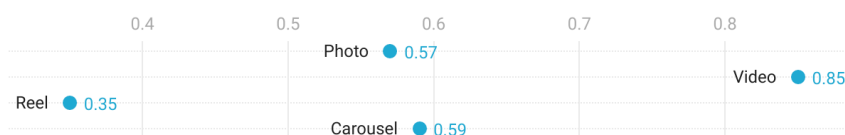


Figure 3. Differences in the presence of sponsors by type of post (M)

5.5. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN TYPES OF CONTENT

5.5.1. EVANNA LYNCH

Evanna Lynch is a celebrity influencer due, in the first place, to her 4,000,000 followers on Instagram and her fame due to her participation in the *Harry Potter* saga. According to Del Pino-Romero and Castelló-Martínez (2017), Evanna Lynch is a celebrity because she represents the tastes, preferences, and inclinations of the target audience with which companies achieve great reach and notoriety.

Evanna Lynch is an Irish-born, United Kingdom-based actress and writer. She has an Instagram account with 4,000,000 followers, and in them, she usually promotes her

new novel, talks about vegan practices, and claims sustainable lifestyles with the planet and animal welfare. Evanna tends to write very long and personal posts, full of adjectives that show excitement and emotion in an overflowing and energetic way.

Lynch receives hundreds of comments for each post; almost all of them refer to the character of Luna Lovegood from the *Harry Potter* saga, whom she interpreted in the famous Warner Bros franchise. In this sense, in her posts' comments, she tends to reference issues related to *Harry Potter*, so it can be perfectly intuited that much of this saga's fandom is responsible for her account's success. In fact, many of her followers do not call her Evanna but Luna.

On the other hand, in the advertising of her books, Evanna often talks about mental health, and in many posts, she promotes spiritual shaman centers that, according to her, have helped her find her true identity as if the writing of her book had been a kind of therapy.

She defines herself as weird and a person who does not always fit in society, and, with such discourse, she intends to bring her profile and sponsored products closer to millions of followers who already love her in advance for having starred in *Harry Potter* movies. On the other hand, Evanna is an entrepreneur, as she is one of the founders, along with Daniela Monet, of Kinder Beauty Box, a vegan and animal cruelty-free beauty product company.

However, in Evanna Lynch's profile, there are usually no interactions with consumers by Evanna, as confirmed by the research of Ryding et al. (2023), which stated that the biggest problem of celebrity influencers is their lack of engagement with consumers so that companies could interpret that this type of profile seems appropriate to give visibility to a brand but not to increase credibility or a sense of authenticity in the audience.

5.5.2. MARINA TESTINO

Marina Testino is a micro-influencer who has 52,000 followers on Instagram. She was born in New York but is of Peruvian descent. However, in some posts, she defines Peru as her native country. Marina is an environmental activist linked to Spanish fashion and a model, influencer, creative director, and entrepreneur. She calls herself an "artist" (art + activism) as she uses her creativity to raise awareness about the issue of garbage and waste entertainingly.

Testino often promotes eco-designed beauty products on her Instagram account, from clothing or recycled Christmas wrapping paper to champagne bottles made from reused materials. She also references readings on circular fashion, promotes varieties such as recycled bags, eco-friendly clothing, and sustainable lab-grown diamonds, and makes political claims related to sustainable development. Specifically, she focused on political petitions to save the Amazon rainforest for the duration of this analysis.

The products she advertises are intended to show a combination of ecological sustainability without sacrificing glamour. In one image, she poses with a sign that reads: "it is time to dress our values in ourselves" (November 23rd, 2021), and it is her second recent post with more positive reactions at the time of this study analysis.

When she is not advertising or endorsing products, Marina Testino takes selfies showing her leisure activities with friends, relaxing on vacation, or simply posing in front of the camera. The tone she usually uses in her posts is personal but discreet.

In her profile, Marina Testino gives visibility to brands beyond her own entrepreneurship, making her account appealing to eco-friendly fashion brands. Generally, the brands interested in Marina Testino's profile are from all types of businesses, such as cosmetics, clothing, and jewelry, dedicated to "sustainable beauty".

5.5.3. MARTA CANGA

Marta Canga is a micro-influencer with 22,800 followers on Instagram. She is an influencer born in Belgium and based in London. Her profile focuses specifically on the advertisement of vegan clothing brands and cruelty-free cosmetics. It is a profile in which capital importance is given to the vegan diet she started in 2015 and an ecological lifestyle in consuming fashion and beauty products.

Canga uses long posts to describe, in a close but not overly personal way, the reasons that led her to be vegan. For example, she shows fake outtake videos in which she poses to make her Instagrammer videos, with which she intends to show her most natural and funny side behind the cameras.

The photo of her wedding anniversary is the second of her account to have more positive reactions at the time of this research analysis, suggesting that the followers are significantly more interested in the influencer herself than in what she promotes. On the other hand, with little difference, there is another post (November, 26th, 2021), apart from the anniversary, which has more than 1,000 likes, being the post with more positive reactions in the period studied, and it is a personal post in which Marta criticizes Black Friday brands that, by lowering prices so much on that date, exploit "human and environmental resources".

Thus, it is possible to glimpse how the success of this influencer is not only based on the promotion of vegan brands for clothing and food but also focuses on her personal life and political claims about the environment.

The case of Marta Canga's profile is that of a micro-influencer who shows more of her personal life than Marina Testino. While Marina Testino hardly chooses to show posts related exclusively to her private life, Marta Canga shows many images with her husband that her followers receive very well. However, it is particularly striking that the two micro-influencers in the study are the ones whose posts with more likes in the duration of the research study are related to political claims (criticism of the multinational Repsol in the case of Marina Testino and criticism of Black Friday in the case of Marta Canga).

5.5.4. LAUREN SINGER

Lauren Singer is a macro-influencer with 366,000 followers on Instagram. She is an American influencer, activist, entrepreneur, and blogger focused on showcasing

zero-waste living (under the slogan “TrashIsForTossers”). Dubbed by her community as “Zero Waste Woman”, Singer went on to give a Ted Talk bringing the concept of “zero waste” to millions of people. She has claimed to have been living a zero-waste life since 2012. Since then, she has been one of the most recognized faces of the #zerowaste movement. According to the movement’s international alliance, the throwaway culture and the unbridled pace of consumption, especially in developed countries, are causing severe environmental problems (Pont, 2019).

Singer’s account focuses almost consistently on recipes for making her daily hygiene products for the body and home, as well as food recipes that the influencer considers healthy. Although Lauren does not explicitly state that she is vegan, no recipes on her account include animal derivatives. Her account encourages the consumption of second-hand products and the making of hygiene products such as toothpaste or glass cleaner. *Spirituality* and *The Communist Manifesto* are among the books she recommends, demonstrating her interest in combining spirituality and politics.

Although Singer recommends sustainable products from major brands such as Prada, she has her own store where she sells eco-friendly products for body and home care. She also often supports United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund campaigns, criticizes acts of everyday consumption that lead to environmental hazards, and strives to inform her followers about sustainability mistakes made in everyday life.

Lauren Singer’s most viewed post is of the influencer posing in a snowy landscape wearing a dress provided by a secondhand clothing store (December 12th, 2021). Therefore, it is clear from this study that the higher the influencer’s position, in terms of the number of followers, the greater the interest in her presence in the post’s image to get likes.

In addition, Lauren Singer is a representative of an environmentalist political movement (#zerowaste) and recommends political and spiritual books, but, essentially, Lauren is almost exclusively dedicated to recommending eco-friendly stores and brands, or fashion, secondhand and to sharing recipes for personal and domestic hygiene products, as well as healthy food. In this way, Lauren Singer is a macro-influencer whose personal life minimally impacts her representation on Instagram.

5.5.5. VANESA LORENZO

Vanesa Lorenzo is a macro-influencer with 429,000 followers. She is a Spanish influencer who has worked as a model, actress, designer, and writer. In her blog, she explains that she has been a model for major international publications and has published a book about yoga.

Lorenzo’s Instagram profile is not overly advertising, unlike the other four influencers in the study. This influencer advertises products of large firms such as Nestlé, has written a book about yoga, prioritizes family and motherhood, and describes the beauty of nature whenever she can. On the other hand, her position as a mother of three daughters allows her to collaborate with child psychologists with whom she talks about empowering children and making them grow up with optimism — all this sponsored by Nestlé.

The images on her profile focus on the spirituality of yoga, which she leverages to promote her book published in 2016, and motherhood, ensuring to present a carefree, calm, and happy image. The account also abounds with images of natural landscapes with the family. Among these images, those featuring her daughters or the former soccer player Carles Puyol, her husband, usually have an average of positive reactions higher than the rest of the account.

The case of Vanesa Lorenzo is particularly interesting in this study. First of all, this macro-influencer stands out, like Evanna Lynch, for her multifaceted career and for writing spiritual books. In this case, Vanesa Lorenzo also has aspects akin to those of a celebrity influencer since she is known as a model and designer and she is married to a famous ex-soccer player, although, based on her number of followers, she could fit squarely within this category.

Unlike the rest of the influencers in the study, Vanesa Lorenzo focuses almost all her posts on boasting a luxurious life, photos of her family (husband and children), and invitations to her followers to practice yoga.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the definition of eco-influencers made by San Cornelio, Ardèvol, and Martorell (2021), similarities are evident in the five accounts analyzed since all Instagrammers have the same inclination to reconnect with nature and to vindicate the incorporation of nature in Western and modern culture as the main discursive element.

The selected profiles demonstrate, throughout the period analyzed, a commitment to fostering a sense of love for the environment, coupled with a spirit of appreciation for beauty and entrepreneurial culture. This is environmental activism related to people outside the realm of environmentalism, that is, activists in the traditional sense. For example, Evanna Lynch is an actress and writer, Vanesa Lorenzo is a model, and Lauren Singer is a businesswoman.

The profile of @evannalynch has the highest number of followers, the highest average number of positive reactions and comments, and, overall, the best average number of interactions with the approval of its followers. Thus, although this is not always the case, this exploratory sample demonstrates that a higher number of followers provides a higher number of positive interactions and, consequently, engagement. This may be due to the celebrity profile of the influencer, being an actress in the *Harry Potter* saga, attracting many fans. Thus, it is observed that the higher the number of followers, the higher the number of likes and positive comments since the follower expresses happy feelings in more than one dimension. The high number of positive comments and the small and insignificant number of negative comments in the five accounts are also relevant, which suggests that most followers comment or react to the posts from their trust towards the influencer.

In response to RQ₁, the themes that these eco-influencers deal with the most are the promotion of veganism as the most environmentally friendly diet (specifically in the case of Evanna Lynch and Marta Canga), spirituality (Evanna Lynch, Lauren Singer, and Vanesa

Lorenzo), political vindication (Marina Testino and Marta Canga), advertising of their articles (Evanna Lynch and Lauren Singer), promotion of products not related to the influencer, in all the accounts, and personal life (all influencers except Lauren Singer). On the other hand, the influencers who most inform their followers about sustainable development are Lauren Singer, Marta Canga, and Marina Testino. Meanwhile, Evanna Lynch and Vanesa Lorenzo are two public figures better known for their roles as actresses and models, respectively. In summary, the most common posts are about personal life and related to spirituality. However, the posts with more likes are related to political claims and personal life.

On the other hand, in response to RQ2, in the five accounts analyzed, the carousel is the type of post with the most positive reactions and interactions, although video (followed by the carousel and photos) is the preferred method for the presence of sponsors. In addition, sponsored content and sponsors are generally well-received by the audience of the analyzed influencers. Not surprisingly, more than half of the posts include a sponsor or promote a product or service, confirming the relevance of this type of content within the activity of eco-influencers on Instagram.

In response to RQ3, the posts that generate the most interest are those related to personal life, as seen in Evanna Lynch and Vanesa Lorenzo; political vindication, as seen in Marta Canga and Marina Testino; and responsible publicity, as seen in Lauren Singer. This variety may be due to the personal interest each one shows more on her profile. For example, although they all show ecological consumption habits and a sense of respect and reconnection with nature, each one focuses more on one aspect. While Evanna Lynch and Vanesa Lorenzo seem more focused on their fandom and “spiritual” life (yoga, writing, or admiration for the beauty of nature), Lauren Singer, Marta Canga, and Marina Testino focus on making eco-fashion attractive, combining intimacy and marketing, advertising and authenticity and, ultimately, beauty and sustainability.

In response to RQ4, what makes an influencer have greater reach than another is the recognition by followers of their work beyond activism itself, in short, being a famous person. On the one hand, Evanna Lynch’s Instagram audience clearly recognizes her as the character Luna Lovegood from the *Harry Potter* film saga. This is evident from the fact that many of the comments on her posts refer to her as Luna rather than Ivanna.

In the same way, Evanna Lynch leverages her fame to promote a spiritual new age book, with which she promotes a mystical, optimistic, and creative vision that aligns closely and gives her a certain resemblance to the character she plays in the school of magicians’ films. In essence, she presents herself as an authentic, sensitive, and original person, in short, committed.

On the other hand, Vanesa Lorenzo’s many followers seem to stem from her love of yoga, a subject she has written a book about, the world of modeling, and her marriage to another famous person. Vanesa Lorenzo’s case highlights the appeal of an image of the natural applied to the spiritual, that is, the more serene and less vindictive image of environmental problems.

In this sense, the two influencers with the most followers in this study do not show as much interest in environmentalism as in themselves. However, the other three influencers analyzed do not consider nature solely from a spiritual, new age, or mystical point of view but from material and physical, that is, political and economic, awareness, which, in our opinion, is more critical since the consumer is guided towards valuable and truthful information about the environment and the brands that advocate it.

Our research contributes to the exploration of the behavior, in terms of marketing, of celebrities who, stemming from the world of cinema, modeling, or born in social networks or new video platforms, pursue the phenomenon of ecological and sustainable awareness for the respect, conservation, and protection of the environment. Thus, respect for the environment is an issue that most individuals are aware of in today's world, although, ironically, a more "ethical" consumption is not practiced in the world of clothing as it happens, more broadly, in the world of organic food. Therefore, this research provides insights into the crucial phenomenon of environmental awareness amid the environmental challenges our planet is currently facing, which, by the same token, concern both the public and the environment.

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MATERIALISM AND MACHINES OF SIGNIFICATION — READING OF THE BOOK *CONSTELAÇÕES: ENSAIOS SOBRE CULTURA TÉCNICA NA CONTEMPORANEIDADE*

MATERIALISMO E MÁQUINAS DE SIGNIFICAÇÃO — LEITURA DO LIVRO *CONSTELAÇÕES: ENSAIOS SOBRE CULTURA TÉCNICA NA CONTEMPORANEIDADE*

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“One of the most striking phenomena of Modernity has been the sudden and unexpected appearance of an immensity of machines” (p. 119) which, standing between a multiplicity of events and historical inlays, reveal the “emergence of technique as a constant presence” (pp. 105–106). This is the point at which the abyss opens up and whose symptoms are analysed in *Constelações: Ensaios Sobre Cultura e Técnica na Contemporaneidade* (Constellations: Essays on Contemporary Culture and Technique). Opening up a fissure in culture, because they work simultaneously with nature and history, we need to think about the machines that produce language sequences: photography, as a machine for producing and reproducing images of nature and history, and the general archive, as a machine for re-distributing the archived, unfolding new possibilities for production and reproduction.

There will be other furtherments to these productive machines. But assuming that every event depends on the way it is seen and how it will be historically inscribed and preserved, this diagnosis opens the way to two epistemologies that co-implicate each other: that of the *constellation* and the *refractions* that its effect in the archival logic. Following the first formula, Bragança de Miranda assumes the constellation approach as a contemporary method. Starting from Benjamin’s reading that “ideas relate to things like constellations to stars” (Benjamin, 1928/2004, p. 10), Bragança de Miranda finds in the potentiality that the constellation’s productive force draws, “the non-calculable instant in which the constellation enters life, which is the mark of its *Jetztzeit* [now time]”¹. Driving and guiding current readings, the constellation effect shatters and adds, because it productively brings into play everything that has been done. The constellation precedes the connection because it makes it possible. To draw the line that lets it be seen, and that makes it function as a figure, is to create a slice to make events reappear as machines

¹ Note 113 of the first chapter “A Constelação Como Método do Contemporâneo” (The Constellation as a Method of the Contemporary): “there is a messianic reading of the *Jetztzeit*, not least because Gnosticism has always been popular in the contemporary - the mortal sin of ethics - but it is the non-calculable instant in which the constellation enters life that is the mark of its ‘now time’” (p. 67).

— there, where images and their event logic “are also part of the struggle for the appropriation of common productivity”².

In the second formulation, as definitive as a sentencing, the constellation programme makes the opening of the archive hang over history — these are its refractions. This is one way, certainly not the only way, of making the archive resonate in the present, to let it produce in a kaleidoscope of images, sounds and words, what we take to be contemporary.

Working under the sign of the constellation and its refractions, the essays gathered here present the final version of conferences and texts, some of which have been expanded, and which give an account of Bragança de Miranda’s thinking in recent years. *Da Constelação* (From Constellation), the first part of this collection, begins with the essay “A Constelação Como Método do Contemporâneo” (Constellation as a Method of the Contemporary). If *the real is the fixation of a fiction* — an aphorism by Mallarmé is used to illustrate the productive potential of the inscription, as it shatters the possibility of achieving totality — this is because the constellation confers a new productivity on what is there, in the general archive we call “history”. Bringing together what is dispersed, capable of simultaneously touching the archaic and the contemporary, the constellation lends itself to “a certain temporality of the ‘now’ [Jetztzeit], which is only possible when history passes from unconscious to conscious, that is, when it can be considered as a total ‘object’” (p. 46). By commenting on the influence of the allegory of the “divided line” in Book VI of Plato’s *Republic*, Bragança de Miranda explains how the dialectical presentation of *Previous History* (*Vorgeschichte*) and *Later History* (*Nachgeschichte*) in Benjamin lives from the power of the “slice” in the *substance of the world* (*Weltsubstanz*), where the absolute present takes priority. The *now*, thus instantiated, reveals how neither concepts nor laws can serve at all times: the criterion for the existence of ideas is the connections that hang over things.

In “O Duplo Movimento da Constelação” (The Double Movement of the Constellation), the following essay, it is with Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs*, which “explodes into a constellation, disintegrating into concept, image and object”, that Bragança de Miranda realises the “logical of the empirical saturation of the concept” and how this is a symptom of the “post-Hegelian moment of art and the general critique of the conceptual distribution of the real that is mistakenly confused with ‘device’” (p. 78). But for a *reconversion* — *Umfunktionierung*, the proposal of Benjamin’s essay “O Autor Como Produtor” (The Author as Producer) for a working activism, based on constellation strategies of assembly, redistribution and also destabilisation — is to carry out the double movement of the constellation “in the object that appears, saturating productivity, and in productivity, which only exists as long as that object sustains it” (p. 84), motivating countless others that interoperate unpredictably.

The “speculative wound” that photography inflicts on modernity is dealt with in “Fotografia e Arqueologia do Materialismo” (Photography and the Archaeology of Materialism), the third essay in the collection. As an event that dictates the end of the symbolic logic that sustained totality as a cement or ligature, photography establishes a radical

² Comment taken from Note 68 of the chapter “A Constelação da Técnica em Heidegger” (The Constellation of Technique in Heidegger; p. 141).

opening. This is a metaphysical shift that “is far removed from the Hegelian pretence of absolute knowledge, which subsumed nature and history entirely under the domain of the concept, of ‘knowing’” (p. 92). Succeeding the rigidity of the symbolic, the fluid or potentiating magma of the speculative shreds the veil that allowed thought to coincide with reality, the so-called “correlationism”, a scheme of thought that photography came to decisively disrupt — “against perspectivism and the insanity of conflict opened up by humanist presuppositions, the new speculative aims at the Absolute, based on a background that precedes humans and will remain even when they disappear” (p. 92). This is photography’s profound materialism: “before it, everything is ‘fossil’” (p. 95).

The essence of technique as *Ge-stell*, that is, as an absolute device that captures everything, is problematised in the essay that closes the first part. In “A Constelação da Técnica em Heidegger” (The Constellation of Technique in Heidegger), the structure that Heidegger had thought of in “The Question of Technique”, a late essay in which he reflects with the greatest reservations on modern technique, will be dismantled. As Bragança de Miranda says, “there is no point in retreating from ‘nature’ to Physis and from Physis to ‘Being’, or in taking the opposite route from ‘forgetting being’ to ‘physics’ and from physics to *Ge-stell*” (p. 141), when nature always exceeds us, and human technique, as production, will always be “a kind of extension of nature within history” (p. 130). Recalling Benjamin (1928/2013) when he says that “technique is not the domination of nature: it is the domination of the relationship between nature and humanity” (p. 68), or Simondon (2014), for whom technique appears as the *third term* that mediates the relationship between humans and nature, Heidegger’s concerns reveal an illusory sense of control. Even so, Heidegger’s essay preserves the aggregating potential of technique as *Ge-stell*, which clearly traces the general productivity brought about by the connection of all the particulars in a technical constellation that the notion of “device” hints at.

The second part, *Refracções* (Refractions), which deals with the plasticity of the materials that inhabit the general archive, begins with the essay “Entre Próximo e Distante, Lógicas da Apropriação” (Between Near and Far, Logics of Appropriation). To present the structure of the “aura” is to note how it corresponds to the departure from a political theology — univocally symbolic and governed by the transcendence of the high-low axis — and how the auratic veil opens up in modernity to the immanent experience of the near-distant. Neither sublime nor divine, the tension is now between the private, distant and untouchable, and the common, close and attainable. But by prohibiting touch, the structure of the aura incites desire — not preventing strategies of appropriation (such as assembly) or operations of re-distribution (such as reproduction). Basically, before the aura, its “profanation, defined as the return of the separate to the common” (p. 166).

“O Fim da Distância: A Emergência da Cultura Telemática” (The End of Distance: The Emergence of Telematic Culture) problematises the most recent effects of the shortening that Paul Valéry (1928/1960) perceived when he predicted that things *will no longer be just in themselves, but wherever a device is*. In an archaeology of distances, Bragança de Miranda notes how the impossibility of approximation that aura establishes is ultimately achievable through an economy of the common: the auratic object is subsumed

in a medial network “that conceals its belonging to the logic of property” (p. 192). It’s a way of liberating them, allowing them to move freely. However, somewhat erratically, this gave rise to “the awareness of a new lightness of objects and subjects, giving the feeling that everything is possible” (p. 203). This is not only a feature of the constellation scheme, but also has the greatest consequence for the archive’s refractions: neither close nor distant, “it is this apparently chaotic coexistence that seems to be the final form of the ‘tele-relation’ that constitutes the experience” (p. 201).

In “A Interatividade: Da Mímesis Tecnológica” (Interactivity: From Technological Mimesis), Bragança de Miranda shows a different reading of interactive arts: as simulacral formations that tend to recover the idea of a total work of art — totally perceived and participable — the strategy is distorted when “the growing integration of technologies into an increasingly immaterial device” wants to determine, through technical mimicry, “the constitution of experience in its entirety” (p. 207). Such an endeavour is, as we know, unattainable. But there is no reason to regret this metonymic error: let the line be retraced and let interactivity be reattached to its materialities — “the ‘immaterial’ are only not ‘matter’ for those who see matter as something ‘dense’, ‘opaque’, ‘resistant’, in other words, according to the old Greek term *hylé*” (p. 209, Note 12). Enabling the connection for a single work, or for total interactivity, if it exists, can only be kaleidoscopic and expandable to all materialities, radicalised in the apostrophe of the documents from the general archive in the vertical moment, or slice, in which they transform the passive spectator into an active operator.

Finally, the archive’s refractions are closed, raising the issue of its permanent updating. In “Da Virtualização do Arquivo” (On the Virtualisation of the Archive”, implementing an epistemologisation of the constellation method, Bragança de Miranda revises his dilation of the digital as a scheme hostage to its classical delineation when “the decisive phenomenon is that of the growing indifferentiation between archive and life, between action already done and action to be done, between the ephemeral and the lasting” (p. 248). To collapse the historical hierarchisation of memory over the archive is to recognise another ontology in absolute exteriority: a mutation of technique already reticulates the remainder of what is to come.

Translation: Linguamundi

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THE ROLE OF TELEVISION IN SHAPING DEMOCRACY: AN OLD DREAM WITH A BIG FUTURE?

O PAPEL DA TELEVISÃO NA DEFINIÇÃO DA DEMOCRACIA: UM VELHO SONHO COM UM GRANDE FUTURO?

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Dominique Wolton (1947) needs no introduction within social sciences and outside the Anglo-Saxon sphere. There are 35 works by the French sociologist spread across 26 countries and 23 languages. Outside the academy, his recognition is equally wide, belonging, for example, to the National Order of the Legion of Honour, the highest French distinction established by Napoleon and limited to only 75 living people. With a PhD in Sociology, he admits that his main objective is to study communication in an interdisciplinary fashion, focusing on the relationship between the individual, technique, culture and society. Among the many books published, the following stand out for discussion: *Éloge du Grand Public. Une Théorie Critique de la Télévision* (In Praise of the General Public: A Critical Theory of Television; Wolton, 1990); *Penser la Communication* (Thinking Communication; Wolton, 1997); *Internet et Après? Une Théorie Critique des Nouveaux Médias* (Internet and Then? A Critical Theory of New Media; Wolton, 1999); *Sauver la Communication* (Save the Communication; Wolton, 2005); *Informer N'est pas Communiquer* (Informing Is Not Communicating; Wolton, 2009); and *Communiquer, C'Est Négocier* (To Communicate Is to Negotiate; Wolton, 2022).

1. A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

In this interview¹, Dominique Wolton reflects on the role of television in the formation of democracy and today's media environment, recalling its function as a popular instrument capable of promoting social emancipation.

Wolton provides a brief historical overview of the phenomenon and discusses some of its challenges over time, highlighting the search for political and financial independence. He also emphasises the importance of preserving diversity in programming and not losing sight of the public interest.

¹ March 1, 2023.

Dominique Wolton also talks about the importance of public service broadcasting and its decline in many regions today. However, he points out that it is vital as it is perhaps the only way to continue to offer programmes that may not have a large audience but are interesting and contribute to cultural diversity.

The interview concludes with a vision for the future of television, emphasising the need for a renewed focus on people and the general interest. Something that today seems to be fading in the current social environment, which more or less directly promotes fragmentation and individualisation. According to Dominique Wolton, television was, is and must continue to be: an opening to the world, a democratic function.

Abílio Almeida (AA): Why did you choose, several years ago, to think about the subject of television?

Dominique Wolton (DW): The first reason is that, after radio, the first mass media is television. In fact, television and radio are inseparable in a project of social emancipation. The written press was undoubtedly very important for the establishment and maturation of democracy, but whether we like it or not, until then, we always spoke of elite democracy, and even more so in the past, with the existence of so many illiterates. Television was and is, therefore, a means and phenomenon of communication that is more democratic than the written press.

When we talk about television, we know: (a) that the masses can be democratic, contrary to what was thought in the past; (b) that it manages to communicate to all social strata; and (c) that it is something that is accessible, open to virtually everyone. Therefore, it was this idea of a project, which today is practically forgotten, of democracy and mass communication that interested me and still does.

Furthermore, the idea of those who started television or those who started radio in the 1920s was fascinating: they talked about educating, educating and educating, but also entertaining, that is, leisure, politics and citizen awareness. Therefore, we were talking about an idea of a very strong social project. And today, we are increasingly aware of this because, somehow, we are all becoming overwhelmed by the individualism of the internet. On the other hand, television was aimed at everyone, wanting to raise the bar through culture and knowledge for everyone. It was enough to look at the programs to see that this ambition existed. There were games, entertainment, of course, but also relevant news and information.

So, the problem, the big problem with television, for years, was that of political independence from the government: that was the first battle. However, today, there is a second one. And, yes, we still talk about independence. It's an equally uphill battle. In my opinion, political independence has generally been achieved. But not financial independence. So, in a way, we've won that battle, but only in part. The war, as a whole, is not over, and it is not only on radio and television but also on the internet and in all cultural and communication industries. There's a lot of money at stake. Therefore, not infrequently, while our so-called freedom is apparently preserved, it is subtly mixed with

other interests. I can say that, nowadays, there is practically no collective vision conveyed by the media. The political norm on the internet today is individual liberty. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that individual freedom, as a concept, emerged in the 19th century. It is fundamental, it is true, but it is less ambitious to acquire than to acquire a mass democracy.

AA: In general, what, in your opinion, still makes television an interesting social phenomenon that is relevant to study?

DW: Two things: (a) the offer and the logic of the offer, which also happens in cinema or theatre; that is, the programmers and producers risk creating demand. But this is a much more complex phenomenon than it seems. While in the early days of radio and television, there was a risk of proposing and generating demand, today, in general, it is offered more in line with what people believe they want and expect, and (b) social ambition, or rather the lack thereof. With the internet today, we talk a lot about individual freedom and cataloguing but not about the notion of “social emancipation”. People used to say that television was the school of the 21st century, which was a bit of an exaggeration, but really, there was this ambition. There was a social ambition.

AA: You talk about changes that are emerging within the television phenomenon. Would you like to explore this subject a little more?

DW: The movement we are witnessing today with television, and even more so with the internet, is that of segmentation, of individualisation. The research’s great discovery is that the same message sent to everyone never had the same impact on everyone, as all receivers are different. The idea that consciences are manipulated is false because, in the end, the receiver takes and rejects what he wants. Therefore, what fascinated me about television was the construction of the logic of the offer and the cultural risk.

AA: Cultural risk? Can you explore it further?

DW: Cultural, political, sporting, whatever you want. The internet does not bring any progress in this regard because the internet is all about the logic of demand. We may be interested in fishing or sex or politics, but there is, in the logic of the internet, the logic of demand, no incentive to expand. In radio and television, as phenomena, there is this ambition.

AA: According to what you tell us, can we say that radio and television have a greater generalist value than the internet?

DW: Yes. And also democratic and egalitarian. Contrary to what people say, the internet is not killing television, just as television did not kill the radio, and cinema did not kill television. In reality, the media are helping each other. However, television’s ambition

remains much stronger than any other. If we compare the internet and television as phenomena, we can see that in one, we have supply, and in the other, we have demand.

Even so, there has been what is called a “fragmentation of supply” in both [internet and television] with the appearance of digital cable television. I believe there are now three phases of communication: mass communication with generalist channels, thematic channels, and the internet. And the most ambitious, intellectually, is the first because we have to have a grid that can please everyone. The false solution is fragmentation. We don’t really bother. We just watch what we want. Therefore, we are already in a demand logic. Moreover, the logic of demand is the internet. Therefore, in fact, depending on the proportion of supply and demand, the level of commitment to one or the other of these means is understandable.

AA: Allow me a little tease. In your work, you talk a lot about “saving communication” (Wolton, 2005), but how can television, particularly the generalist television you just mentioned, contribute to this?

DW: The evolution of the “communication” concept has increasingly been based on an unequal logic of power or silence. Radio and television perfectly illustrate this. Therefore, the first big challenge is to save the logic of the offer and the general interest. This, for the most part, is no longer preserved. With the proliferation of techniques and programs we can access, many might even say: “this is, after all, equality for all”. However, that’s not true because we don’t have programs designed for the population. The offer is much more gigantic, but the democratic spirit no longer drives it. Consequently, there is more and more confusion between the citizen and the consumer. Political will is needed to maintain diversity in supply.

AA: We are, therefore, entering the theme of public service, right?

DW: Yes, and that’s another battle. Only Europe still has an audiovisual public service, which is a pity. Through public service radio and television, we can make programs that may not have a large audience but are interesting. The audience cannot be the only criterion, but unfortunately, it is increasingly the case. Something that can lead to the tyranny of demand.

AA: What is the biggest lesson you learned from your work on the television phenomenon?

DW: The danger of fragmentation, of segmentation. Hence, and continuing the previous topic, the public service’s interest in maintaining a diversified offer for all. Because it is the guarantee of the general interest, which no one seems to care about anymore, as a lesson to learn, we must stress the importance of cultural diversity because the Italian

media is not Spanish, Chinese, or American. The general interest is to be able to make a program aimed at everyone. In reality, the concept of “equality” has not aged. And the same goes for “school” or “health”. These are concepts that transcend eras. Just because there are more advanced technologies does not exclude the fact that they are fundamental.

For example, when the media or the internet say they don’t want to do politics and that it’s a service for everyone, it’s a lie! Because this is obviously a political view. We can easily see it when people say: “this is the goal for young people, for the adult world, etc.”. It is important to emphasise and not forget the following: at the origin of radio, television, and the written press was, first of all, the human being. At the origin of the internet were networks. So, what about the human being?

AA: So, how do you see, or would you like to see, the future of television?

DW: A reversal of the current trend. That is, the focus is on people. The current trend is the internet, segmentation, individualisation, interaction, and diversity of communities and spaces. I think we need to revalue the general interest, the State, and the public service. So, it’s completely the opposite. We’ve always been wary of the audience, saying, “there are too many viewers; will they be influenced?”. Now, with the internet, it’s been great to have many followers. We are, therefore, talking about a political, ideological question.

AA: Can you please be more specific?

DW: In fact, it is mainly a question of ideology, which is more serious. I think the values that motivated the foundations of radio and television in the 40s and 60s have not aged, which isn’t extraordinary because, in a society, great values don’t change every 30 years. What changes every 30 years is the technique. This is where distortion arises since the pace of technological change is perceived as the speed of transformation in the very essence of communication.

AA: In your opinion, will this lead to the extinction of television?

DW: Not at all. Because even if people generally don’t watch television, when there is an important event, everyone wants to watch television after all. Moreover, there is also the memory of time because there are grandparents, uncles, fathers, and so on. Furthermore, following a period of exhaustion in the interactivity of the internet, many turn to television to find a slower pace.

AA: Finally, in a sentence, what is television for you?

DW: Openness to the world. Because most people are the same, and that is a democratic function.

AA: Thank you very much. Is there anything else you would like to add?

DW: Yes, it's up to the people who deal with the media to break the current balance of power, which is this dominant ideology that is all for the internet and against television. It does not make sense. There is room for both media. Television does things that the internet cannot do, and the internet does things, particularly for networks, that television will not do, but one cannot have one over the other and one without the other. Moreover, in any case, television is no less important as a political challenge because it raises the issue of equality and democracy.

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WHEN DIGITAL SOCIAL NETWORKS ARE JOURNALISTIC SOURCES — AN APPROACH TO CODES OF ETHICS

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ABSTRACT

The inescapable influence of social media on journalism has introduced a multitude of challenges that professionals in the field cannot afford to overlook. Increasingly used as sources, social media platforms contribute significantly to the evolution of new dynamics in news production. This is particularly evident in the coverage of unfolding events, prioritising speed of transmission and immediacy as inherent values. This emphasis often encourages the rapid extraction of content available on the internet, leaving minimal time for thorough scrutiny. This article delves into the phenomenon from an ethical standpoint. Through an analysis of 32 codes of ethics — and analogous instruments — that specifically address this evolving reality, it identifies journalistic values and principles concerning information-gathering methods, especially pertaining to digital social networks. The primary emphasis remains on the requirement to verify and validate the material while identifying sources following traditional procedures, given the potential risks to the integrity of journalistic narratives. Most codes in the *corpus* also prioritise safeguarding citizens' private sphere, possibly stemming from the dissemination of material. This concern extends beyond general privacy protection, encompassing the highly sensitive issues associated with it: the vulnerability and emotional distress experienced by authors of social media posts and the presence of victims or minors on social networks.

KEYWORDS

digital social networks, information gathering, information sources,
journalistic ethics and deontology, professional practices

QUANDO AS REDES SOCIAIS DIGITAIS SÃO FONTES JORNALÍSTICAS — UMA ABORDAGEM A CÓDIGOS DEONTOLÓGICOS

RESUMO

A influência dos média sociais no campo do jornalismo, hoje incontornável, manifesta-se em várias vertentes, criando desafios que não podem ser ignorados pelos profissionais. Enquanto fontes, estão a ser cada vez mais utilizados, contribuindo para a emergência de novas dinâmicas de produção noticiosa, em particular na cobertura de acontecimentos em continuidade, nos quais impera a velocidade de transmissão e o imediatismo constitui um valor em si mesmo, incentivando a extração de conteúdos disponíveis na internet, sem tempo para escrutínio. Neste artigo, o fenómeno é enquadrado numa perspetiva ética. Através da análise de 32 códigos deontológicos — e instrumentos semelhantes — que incorporam esta realidade em partes específicas foram identificados valores e princípios jornalísticos neles inscritos acerca

das modalidades de recolha de informação, sobretudo em redes sociais digitais. A exigência de verificação e validação do material e de identificação da fonte, procedimentos tradicionais, é predominante, atentos os potenciais riscos para o rigor de uma narrativa jornalística. Também é detetada, na maioria dos códigos integrados no *corpus*, a preocupação de acautelar o dano na esfera privada de cidadãos, eventualmente decorrente da difusão de material. Não se trata apenas de proteger a privacidade, em geral, mas de ponderar questões de grande sensibilidade a ela associáveis: a vulnerabilidade e dor em que possam encontrar-se os autores das postagens e a presença nas redes de vítimas ou cidadãos menores de idade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

redes sociais digitais, recolha de informação, fontes de informação, ética e deontologia jornalísticas, práticas profissionais

1. INTRODUCTION

No journalist today can be indifferent to the internet and its multiple dimensions: a potentially inexhaustible resource for gathering information, a swift platform for disseminating reports, and a tool that encourages collaboration among professionals, to name but a few. Has the increased accessibility to sources provided by web 2.0 transformed how journalists select and verify information? According to Lecheler and Kruijckemeier (2016), despite their acknowledged impact on professional routines, digital sources have not replaced offline sources.

The diversification of voices in the media is often an argument to justify the use of internet-accessible sources. Is this perspective a reflection of democratisation and inclusivity, or is it primarily due to easier accessibility? Authors like Wheatley (2020) challenge this notion, arguing that news content does not necessarily mirror this supposed democratisation. Furthermore, the scientific literature does not support the assumption that research in a digital environment has eliminated the inherent bias favouring elite sources.

The integration of digital social networks (DSNs) into journalistic practices has been extensively showcased. It is considered a vital element in the internet-induced transformation of the journalism model, a phenomenon explored in various studies (e.g., Silva et al., 2020). However, Paulussen and Harder's (2014) content analysis of articles from two Flemish newspapers in 2013, explicitly citing Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube as sources, reveal that these platforms have not gained dominance in content, and the influence of elite sources has not diminished. In the same vein, Broersma and Graham (2013) argue that even Twitter's potential to foster participation has not changed.

Twitter, as per von Nordheim et al. (2018), is primarily oriented toward professional communicators such as politicians and celebrities. In their comparative analysis of the use of these two networks as sources in newspapers like the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, they note that Facebook showcases a more equitable presence of both elite and non-elite voices. However, the authors caution against the misconception that Facebook exclusively serves citizens while Twitter caters to the elite.

This article focuses specifically on journalists' use of DSNs as information sources. It starts with a theoretical discussion and analysis of the procedures adopted to extract material potentially infringing on privacy, particularly with personal accounts. Subsequently, it delves into an analysis incorporating historically consolidated professional values, specifically addressing the collection of information on this type of platform.

2. THEMATIC FRAMEWORK

2.1. EVOLVING CONCEPTS

Sources are the backbone of journalistic activity. In this field, “trust” and “credibility” inevitably intersect — a topic often debated in the literature, whether these concepts align or stand apart. According to Hovland and Weiss's (1951) classic approach, information garners credibility when sourced from a considered trustworthy origin. Other authors argue that trust in a source is established through repeated displays of credibility. Van Dalen (2020) admits that, while the two concepts should not be conflated, they can overlap. The author revisits the notion of “public-perceived credibility”, which can be assessed through the characteristics of the sender, the channel and the message itself. However, as highlighted by Lecheler and Kruikemeier (2016), theoretical studies on the credibility of digital sources are scarce. The impact on citizens' trust in media due to the use of material from the digital sphere, often lacking scrutiny akin to that applied to offline sources, remains an open question.

There is no unanimous agreement on the terminology for social media. This article adopts the conceptual framework systematised by Bechmann and Lomborg (2013), which identifies a set of characteristics. Described as de-institutionalised communication, users also assume the role of producers. With the ability to transition between these roles, they actively engage by creating, filtering, and sharing content. This interactive process operates within a “network society” (Castells, 1996/1999), eliminating any intermediation or hierarchy.

The influence of this type of platform is widespread. In the United Kingdom, for instance, Facebook has emerged as the third most popular news source, following BBC One and ITV (Jigsaw Research, 2022). The escalating demand for social media as a news outlet is prompting media outlets to view them as sources. A Pew Research Center survey of American journalists substantiates this trend: 94% of respondents incorporate some form of social media into their work. Among the professionals who perceive its inclusion in their practices as positive, gathering reliable information is one of the lowest motivations (49%; Gottfried et al., 2022).

Journalists show interest in DSN material, particularly content created by citizens for publicising purposes, known as user-generated content (UGC). According to a literature review by Naab and Sehl (2017), there are numerous academic contributions exploring the concept of UGC and its integration into news stories. Research by Grosser

et al. (2019) suggests that this integration has a slightly negative effect on the public's perception of information reliability. The growing involvement of non-professionals in news production has prompted the development of normative instruments to guide journalists. As per a directive from the Portuguese state regulator regarding UGC edited and/or incorporated by journalists into news space, it warns that “such content was not, *ab initio*, conceived in accordance with the rules and codes of conduct inherent to the exercise of journalism” (Conselho Regulador da Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social, 2014, p. 2).

The concept of “private territory” is constantly changing. The traditional notion that each individual preserves an inviolable space — intimate, confidential, shielded from others' intrusion — is fading. The process, not entirely new, has gained momentum thanks to new ways of expressing sociability. In a digital environment, the boundaries between the public and private spheres are blurring (Loosen, 2011; Martins, 2019; Primo et al., 2015; von Pape et al., 2017; Whitehouse, 2010). Rather than the erosion of privacy, we are witnessing the dissolution of the private into the public sphere, with DSNs as instruments, since they encourage what Suler (2004) describes as “online disinhibition” (p. 321).

DSNs create an illusion of privacy.

Even if someone restricts access to their Facebook profile, they can never be certain about who is actually reading their posts. The private nature of a message in a closed group can be compromised as it circulates among other people, detached from the original context in which the content was produced. (Primo et al., 2015, p. 529)

In a landscape of public hyper-exposure, “self-disclosure seems to be a condition for being present on networks. Furthermore, the voluntary relinquishment of informational privacy serves as a means to authenticate an individual as a social actor” (Martins, 2019, p. 15). Journalists tend to downplay the private nature of content, as evidenced by a survey on the attitudes of Brazilian professionals: “social networks are like open shelves where you can take what you want, a kind of public domain exempt of permission or authorisation” (Christofoletti, 2019, p. 194).

Research exploring the relationship between journalism and DSNs has delved into issues such as interaction with the public, engagement with institutional and political sources, and the influence of networks as gatekeepers, agents qualified to select what can be turned into news. Two valid criticisms emerge: an overemphasis on the positive aspects of networks and insufficient attention to their negative implications for the journalism profession (Hamada, 2018; Lewis & Molyneux, 2018). The literature review by Lewis and Molyneux (2018) underscores the scarcity of research focused on the specific issue addressed in this article: the use of DSNs by journalists as sources of information. However, the professional field has made its way. Reuters has adopted a general policy of refraining from using photographs from Facebook (Wardle et al., 2014). For the BBC, journalists should abstain from using content that is clearly not intended for widespread dissemination, and the use of content from networks featuring children requires an assessment of the impact of dissemination.

Several studies have demonstrated that journalists acknowledge the utility of digital media for their work (e.g., Gulyás, 2016; McGregor & Molyneux, 2020; O’Sullivan & Heinonen, 2008; Weaver & Willnat, 2016). However, a critical attitude persists, materialising in daily operations aimed at verifying the authenticity of DSN accounts or determining whether they are managed by the person or someone else. Editorial managers are often unaware of the complexity of the ecosystem, and newsrooms are not adequately trained to navigate these platforms. In an investigation examining the use of photographs and videos produced by non-professionals or individuals unrelated to the news organisation — analysing content from eight international television stations (on air and online) and conducting 64 interviews with professionals from 38 media companies — one journalist highlighted the challenge of building a relationship with someone through Twitter. “You see people just hammering [uploaders]. ‘Call me. Call me. Here’s my number’” (Wardle et al., 2014, p. 109).

Digital media inherently influence practices not only in terms of distribution but also in the production of information. As highlighted by Colombo et al. (2023), among others, changes are constant, requiring continuous adaptation. Brandtzaeg et al. (2016) learned that DSNs are frequently used as a primary source of news. Verification strategies encompass five main categories: “(1) Trusted sources. (2) Access to eyewitnesses and authenticating sources. (3) Traditional journalistic methods. (4) Multimodal verification and verification tools. (5) Workaround methods” (Brandtzaeg et al., 2016, p. 328).

The existing organisational contexts within the media do not foster adherence to basic rules. The downsizing of newsroom staff makes all members generalists and requires functional versatility. Permanent news updates, characteristic of what is described as the “24/7 online era”, significantly affect journalistic work. A study on Dutch journalists’ practices in handling digital sources (Lecheler et al., 2019) demonstrates a tendency to prioritise the quantity of information at the expense of quality.

Immediacy has become so deeply ingrained in professional culture that it has evolved into the primary news value. A new paradigm has surfaced: “in the digital era, users are looking for real-time publication, and publishers feel pressure to get out information now” (Elliott & Spence, 2017, p. 21). However, the pursuit of being the first and the fastest detracts from the time available for assessing, interpreting, and confirming information. The fixation on exclusivity, exacerbated by market logic, negatively impacts online coverage, giving rise to sensationalist and even alarmist coverage.

2.2. DIGITAL SOCIAL NETWORKS IN NEWS DYNAMICS

Stories on the platforms have the potential to be newsworthy. However, tweets are often considered in editorial decisions primarily based on topicality, sidelining essential news values such as credibility, objectivity and context (McGregor & Molyneux, 2020). When the potential for virality is also factored in to align with algorithmic criteria, it opens the door to prioritising the interest of the public at the expense of the public interest.

The mediatization of private matters may be legitimate, but it requires additional caution in order to reconcile the rights — to information and privacy — consecrated in

democratic societies. The risk of journalists being exposed to manipulation or misinformation must also be considered. Especially in the tabloids, tweets seem to be taken at face value. There are no signs that the source or other sources were contacted to verify information that was twittered”, Broersma and Graham (2013, p. 461) note. Vinuesa and Nicolás-Sans (2023) remark: “social media is the fastest way to spread fake news or any other element of post-truth” (p. 3).

Journalists use DSNs for information gathering rather than validation or interviewing sources, although they also resort to them for breaking news (Weaver & Willnat, 2016). Additional research — such as Belair-Gagnon’s (2015) examination of practices at the BBC — indicates that coverage of unscheduled events is more likely to involve the use of DSNs as sources. Twitter, in particular, proves to be a valuable tool and, in certain instances, the sole available to cover disasters, crimes, or political unrest (Moon & Hadley, 2014).

Given the unfolding events, journalists’ social responsibility is being more visibly tested. It proves effective for them to concentrate on the information available in DSNs rather than solely identifying the person who posted it, considering that the individual may be in a state of shock or distress. In such situations, the testimonies of victims and those directly affected take precedence. Contrary to previous research, Mayo-Cubero (2020) learned that, under these circumstances, editorial managers tend to equate the credibility of official and unofficial sources. However, the uncritical or reckless collection of content has damaging effects. Making characterisation errors — converting an accident into a terrorist act, for example — is likely to cause panic. It increases the likelihood of disseminating content that is false; authentic content but only showcases one perspective or part of the incident; or pertains to an entirely different event. A video from YouTube showing footage of combat cars being shot down, presented by RTP in 2022 in a report on the use of molotov cocktails by ordinary Ukrainians against Russian troops, actually represented the Maidan Square protests in 2014, according to the Regulatory Council of the Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media (Conselho Regulador da Entidade Reguladora para a Comunicação Social, 2022)¹.

The immediacy of posts fosters the extraction of all information, even when there is no way of assessing its integrity. Lacking the time for critical scrutiny, journalists risk overlooking the fact that they are only accessing fragments of reality and making a comprehensible and coherent narrative impossible. An American study concluded that journalists do not consider incremental updates to be significant, “but they do them anyway” (Usher, 2018, p. 28). This behaviour is motivated by factors such as the “obsessive quest for traffic” and the fear of becoming irrelevant to the public — essentially, the fear of losing professional authority. However, “the changes journalists are making may ultimately destroy what little claim to authority they may have left” (p. 32).

The 2004 tsunami in Southwest Asia marked the first systematic effort to seek out UGC to access eyewitness testimonies, as reported by a participant in the *UGC Hub*, a project initiated by the BBC to monitor this phenomenon (Wardle et al., 2014). During the

¹ A consultation undertaken by the author on the decisions made by the Portuguese Regulatory Authority for the Media from January 1, 2018, to March 31, 2023, using the keywords “Facebook”, “Twitter”, “YouTube”, “WhatsApp”, “Instagram” and “Snapchat”, identified only one report related to Twitter and two reports linked to Facebook, both about the broadcast of images of a murder, shared on video by the perpetrator himself, on a SIC news report.

2005 terrorist attacks in London, the BBC incorporated images not collected by its professionals for the first time. This marked a challenge to the traditional concept of journalism. In recent years, there has been a profound shift in dynamics in monitoring ongoing events. The final phase in the coverage of the 2011 terrorist attack in Utøya, Norway, was characterised by “a hybrid authority (...). Rather than primarily framing social media as a ‘source’, journalists sought to use it as a means of involving the audience in the actual news production” (Konow-Lund & Olsson, 2017, p. 1201).

Comparing the media coverage of the American school massacres at Columbine (1999) and Sandy Hook (2012), Joffe (2004) states that, in the latter case, “what began as unverified social media posts carried over into daily newspapers, perpetuating rumour and erroneous information” (p. 53). A university professor of Communication noted, especially in relation to the “Boston Marathon” bomb attack in 2013, that “Twitter, especially, has put a lot more pressure on news organisations to get it out fast” (Shih, 2013, para. 12).

The misidentification of suspects is a recurring issue in cases such as Sandy Hook and the Boston Marathon. In the latter, mainstream media accepted as verified the name of a student unrelated to the crime, as pointed out on Reddit, leading to the student’s family receiving threatening phone calls. The reproduction of images not only impacts the personality rights of those involved, as seen in cases like the broadcast of a video from DSN depicting an alleged sexual assault on a bus in Portugal (Martins, 2019) or the use of an actor’s photograph as that of a dead soldier by a New Zealand newspaper (Smith & Sissons, 2019). There is also the possibility that journalists, even unintentionally, may contribute to terrorists’ agendas or provide useful information to perpetrators — for instance, revealing the position of police officers during an attack — should not be ruled out as a potential consequence (Rauchfleisch et al., 2017).

Guidelines on the use of digital media, issued by regulatory bodies or media organisations — Associated Press (2013), BBC (Hulin & Stones, 2013), *Los Angeles Times* (Standards and Practices Committee, 2009), Österreichischer Rundfunk (Christophg et al., 2012), *The Washington Post* (Washington Post’s *Social Media Policy*, 2009), among others — manifest duties that are already encompassed in general codes and recommend procedures contingent on the context. These guidelines serve as measures to address risks, as identified in the *Code of Ethics* of the News Broadcasters & Digital Association (United States), which is part of the *corpus* of this research: “‘trending’, ‘going viral’ or ‘exploding on social media’ may increase urgency, but these phenomena only heighten the need for strict standards of accuracy (para. 10).

The safeguarding of privacy is an overarching concern. The Independent Press Standards Organisation (2022) notes that “journalists must not assume that the absence of privacy settings means that information can be published” (p. 9). The impact of re-using images of the deceased is mentioned by this organisation and echoed by the BBC, which also emphasises the importance of ascertaining the original intention of the authors of the posts. The Associated Press (2013) outlines measures focused on verifying the authenticity of the source and mitigating the risk of endangering people. The Source Media Group, according to the American Society of News Editors, mentions approving the use of material by the senior management (Hohmann, J. & 2010-11 ASNE Ethics and Values Committee, 2011).

3. EMPIRICAL STUDY

3.1. REPORTING AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

By enumerating duties, ethical codes embody journalists' social responsibility and their allegiance primarily to the public. This allegiance is evident in their commitment to principles such as the protection of privacy, among the most important guiding principles of professional practice.

Authors such as Hamada (2018) and Ward (2018) have raised questions about the feasibility of establishing universal values that could guide journalists across different countries or platforms. While ethical foundations are expected to remain consistent regardless of the communication channel, proposals like Whitehouse's (2010) advocacy for updating codes gain relevance. This is especially pertinent due to intrusion into private life facilitated by the current media ecosystem, particularly with the growing influence of DSNs. The content of the *corpus* studied here suggests that such a strategy of updating codes is being pursued.

This research originated from an analysis of deontological instruments — specifically self-regulation rather than legal frameworks — that explicitly reference DSNs as journalistic sources. The aim is to understand how the use of content from social networks is outlined within codes, manuals, guides or other types of documents that provide ethical guidelines for journalists, an aspect included in some studies (Ballesteros-Aguayo et al., 2022; Fidalgo et al., 2022), although at a secondary level.

The objective is materialised by identifying the presence of values and principles specifically applicable to the collection of information (text or images) on this type of digital platform, particularly those sourced from personal accounts. For the qualitative analysis, a coding table was created encompassing eight categories reflecting values commonly regarded as essential in professional practice: "rigour"; "verification/validation of information"; "identification of the source/origin of information"; "protection of privacy"; "public interest"; "vulnerability/pain"; "news treatment of victims"; and "handling of cases involving underage citizens". Additionally, "generic references" is included as a category, encompassing elements not covered in the preceding ones.

The *corpus* includes 32 deontological instruments regulating journalistic activity (Table 1), characterised by their broad scope. These instruments were selected from a database created by the author, which includes approximately 250 codes. The selection was based on the following cumulative criteria: (a) inclusion of recommendations on information collection in DSN or UGC, (b) current validity, and (c) availability online. The codes are sourced from various entities (self-regulatory bodies such as press councils, trade union organisations, employers' associations, specific bodies and business groups, state or private). The covered codes are national — sometimes international, such as the *Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists* of the International Federation of Journalists — or exclusive to a particular media outlet.

COUNTRY	NAME	ENTITY	URL LINK	YEAR
Germany	<i>German Press Council</i>	Press Council	https://www.presserat.de/en.html	2017
Argentina	<i>Código de Ética</i> (Code of Ethics)	Forum for Argentine Journalism	https://www.fopea.org/codigo-de-etica-de-fopea/	2022
Armenia	<i>Code of Ethics of Armenian Media and Journalists</i>	Armenian Press Club	https://research.tuni.fi/ethicnet/country/armenia/code-of-ethics-of-armenian-media-and-journalists/	2018
Australia	<i>Code of Conduct</i>	News Corp Australia	https://www.news.com.au/help/code-of-conduct	2016
Austria	<i>Verhaltenskodex für journalistische Tätigkeiten</i> (Code of Conduct)	Österreichischer Rundfunk	https://der.orf.at/unternehmen/leitbild-werte/verhaltenskodex/index.html	2016
Belgium	<i>Code de Déontologie Journalistique</i> (Journalistic Code of Ethics)	Council of Journalistic Ethics	http://www.lecdj.be/telechargements/Code-deonto-MAJ-2017-avec-cover.pdf	2017
	<i>Code de Déontologie du Raad voor de Journalistiek</i> (Raad voor de Journalistiek's Code of Ethics)	Press Council	https://www.rvdj.be/sites/default/files/pdf/code-deontologique.pdf	2019
Brazil	<i>Guia de Ética e Autorregulamentação Jornalística</i> (Guide to Journalistic Ethics and Self-Regulation)	Grupo RBS	https://www.gruporbs.com.br/guias-e-politicas	2011
Canada	<i>Guide de Déontologie des Journalistes du Québec</i> (Ethics Guide for Journalists in Quebec)	Professional Federation of Journalists in Quebec	https://www.fpqj.org/fr/guide-de-deontologie	2010
	<i>Ethics Guidelines</i>	Canadian Association of Journalists	https://caj.ca/wp-content/uploads/Ethics-Guidelines.pdf	2011
United States	<i>Code of Ethics</i>	Radio Television Digital News Association	https://www.rtdna.org/ethics	2015
	<i>Ethics Handbook</i>	National Public Radio	https://www.npr.org/series/688409791/npr-ethics-handbook	2021
France	<i>Charte Déontologique</i> (Code of Ethics)	Mediapart	https://www.mediapart.fr/charte-de-deontologie	2019
	<i>Charte AFP des Bonnes Pratiques Éditoriales et Déontologiques</i> (AFP Editorial Standards and Best Practices)	France Press Agency	https://www.afp.com/sites/default/files/22_juin_2016_charte_deontologique_.pdf	2016
	<i>Charte de Déontologie des Journalistes</i> (Ethics Charter for Journalists)	France Médias Monde	https://www.rfi.fr/fr/charte-de-d%C3%A9ontologie	2017
Greece	<i>Code of Ethics</i>	Online Publishers Association	https://accountablejournalism.org/ethics-codes/greece-code-online-publishers-association-of-greece-ened	2016

Ireland	<i>Journalism & Content Guidelines</i>	RTÉ	https://about.rte.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/21449-RTE_Journalism_Guidelines_2020-Updated.pdf	2020
	<i>Journalism and Contentious Content Guidelines</i>	TG4	https://d1og0s8nlbdohm.cloudfront.net/tg4-redesign-2015/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/JournalismGuidelinesTG4-2019.pdf	2019
Nicaragua	<i>Manual de Estilo La Prensa</i> (La Prensa Style Guide)		https://espacioculturayarte.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/manual_de_estilo_la_prensa_2da_edicion.pdf	2005
New Zealand	<i>Code of Conduct and Ethics</i>	New Zealand Media and Entertainment	https://www.nzme.co.nz/media/2elohdmr/nzme_editorial-code-of-ethics.pdf	2022
The Netherlands	<i>Code</i>	NRC Media	https://nrccode.nrc.nl/	2017
Portugal	<i>Código de Conduta dos Jornalistas do Expresso</i> (Code of Conduct for Journalists of Expresso)	<i>Expresso</i>	https://expresso.pt/expresso/nota-da-direcao/2019-07-30-Alteracoes-ao-Codigo-de-Conduto-dos-jornalistas-do-Expresso	2019
	<i>Livro de Estilo</i> (Style Guide)	Lusa — Agência de Notícias de Portugal	https://www.lusa.pt/Files/lusamaterial/PDFs/LivroEstilo.pdf	2019
United Kingdom	<i>Editors' Code of Practice</i>	Independent Press Standards Organisation	https://www.ipso.co.uk/editors-code-of-practice/	2021
	<i>Editorial Standards</i>	BBC	http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/pdfs/bbc-editorial-guidelines-whole-document.pdf	2019
	<i>Standards & Values</i>	Reuters Agency	https://www.reutersagency.com/en/about/standards-values/	n.d.
	<i>Code of Conduct</i>	<i>The Independent</i>	https://www.independent.co.uk/service/code-of-conduct-a6184241.html	n.d.
Sweden	<i>Code of Ethics for Media</i>	Media Ombudsman	https://medieombudsmannen.se/english/	n.d.
Switzerland	<i>Charte du Journalisme</i> (Journalism Charter)	Swiss Broadcasting Corporation	https://gb.srgssr.ch/archiv/fr/2017/qualite/la-qualite-plus-importante-que-jamais/index.html	2017
	<i>Charte Déontologique</i> (Code of Ethics)	Swiss Radio and Television	https://www.srgssr.ch/fileadmin/dam/documents/qualitaet/RTS_Charte_Deontologique_et_Valeurs.pdf	2021
Uruguai	<i>Código de Ética Periodística</i> (Journalistic Code of Ethics)	Uruguayan Press Association	http://etica.cainfo.org.uy/codigo-de-etica-periodistica/	2013
Global	<i>Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists</i>	International Federation of Journalists	https://www.ifj.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Global_Charter_of_Ethics_EN.pdf	2019

Table 1. Corpus of analysis

Several codes advocate the adoption of procedures typical of offline operations in a digital environment. Some codes allocate specific sections for using the internet or, more specifically, social media. Notably, the Canadian Association of Journalists and the BBC have dedicated instruments directly addressing professional practices on the web, which serve as complements to their general guidelines.

The *Guia de Ética e Autorregulamentação Jornalística* of the Brazilian group RBS emphasises that “in digital culture, everyone needs to continually learn, update, and share” (p. 35). The warning is all the more relevant given the frequent changes in this field — especially in technology. The code of the Greek Online Publishers Association of Greece underscores that “tweet or a Facebook post can be visible to ten, hundred, or thousand people” (p. 8), acknowledging the diffuse characterisation of the recipients, as academic research also suggests: “it’s more appropriate to think of Twitter as a public, rather than the public” (Lewis & Molyneux, 2018, p. 17).

The Independent’s Code of Ethics highlights that the internet “can present an ethical vacuum, and you should not assume that simply because something appears online, it can be published by us” (para. 120). The NRC (Netherlands) approaches the issue from a similar perspective, stating that the popularity of a subject on the internet can be a consideration but not necessarily an argument for publishing a news item.

In this context, transparency in the relationship with sources and consumers of information becomes even more crucial. A subject of general interest broadcast in a digital environment must be clearly attributed “so that our audiences can assess the information and its source” (TG4, p. 47). In its *Ethics Handbook*, American National Public Radio pledges to disclose both confirmed and unconfirmed information and to challenge those who publish information on social media to provide proof. Explaining to witnesses of events who produce UGC where and how the content will be included is part of the work of Agence France Press, whose *Charte AFP des Bonnes Pratiques Éditoriales et Déontologiques* embraces the principles established by the Eyewitness Media Hub. This organisation investigates the media’s broadcasting of images captured by witnesses of events.

While the risk associated with spreading rumours through the internet is explicitly mentioned in only six codes — Agence France Press highlights that the provision of accurate and verified information “becomes more important than ever as ‘noise’ and rumours grow on the Internet” (p. 5) — this does not mean that the others neglect indispensable procedures. Both technical and deontological procedures are highlighted across most deontological instruments in the *corpus*. These measures aim to prevent journalists from being conduits for disinformation and to ensure the production of an accurate narrative. In fact, around two-thirds of the deontological instruments that make up the *corpus* fall into the category “verification/validation of information”, and half relate to the category “identification of the source/origin of the information” (Table 2). Collectively, these measures aim to achieve the desirable “rigour”, even if the term is not explicitly used in the codes.

CATEGORISATION — VALUES AND PRINCIPLES IN THE CODES	NUMBER OF CODES	EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES
Rigour	8	“The role of providing accurate and verified information becomes more important than ever as ‘noise’ and rumours grow on the Internet and social media increase” (<i>Charte AFP des Bonnes Pratiques Éditoriales et Déontologiques</i> , Agence France Press, France, p. 5)
Verification/validation of information	21	<p>“The source or sender of images should be verified, if possible, through personal contact” (<i>Verhaltenskodex für journalistische Tätigkeiten</i>, Österreichischer Rundfunk, Austria, p. 5)</p> <p>“The speed of these networks should not blind us to the need to ensure that the facts are true and to put them into context” (<i>Guide de Déontologie des Journalistes du Québec</i>, Professional Federation of Journalists in Quebec, Canada, p. 10)</p> <p>“And we always ask an important question: am I about to spread a thinly-sourced rumor or am I passing on valuable and credible (even if unverified) information in a transparent manner with appropriate caveats?” (<i>Ethics Handbook</i>, National Public Radio, United States, “Accuracy”)</p> <p>“We must check this content scrupulously, and bear in mind that social media have become the preferred platforms for belligerents to spread false photos and videos and to disseminate their propaganda” (<i>Charte AFP des Bonnes Pratiques Éditoriales et Déontologiques</i>, Agence France Press, France, p. 17)</p>
Identification of the source/origin of information	16	<p>“The press bears responsibility for all its publications, including user-generated content, which must be clearly labelled as such” (<i>German Press Council</i>, German Press Council, Germany, p. 4)</p> <p>“Do not limit contact with sources solely to social platforms, especially if it is a source you have never had contact with before. While initial contact can be made through social platforms, journalists should prioritise face-to-face interactions” (<i>Código de Conduta dos Jornalistas</i>, <i>Expresso</i>, Portugal, Point 4.b)</p>
Privacy	9	<p>“Limitations are imposed on the use of personal information and data from public websites due to variations in context, scope, and the potential impact of disseminating journalistic information” (<i>Code de Déontologie du Raad voor de Journalistiek</i>, Press Council, Belgium, p. 10)</p> <p>“The inherently social nature of these media means that every word exchanged on them has the potential to become public despite the availability of privacy settings” (<i>Guide de Déontologie des Journalistes du Québec</i>, Professional Federation of Journalists in Quebec, Canada, p. 10)</p> <p>“There is an impression that anything that is posted publicly is up for publication (...). However, what is public and what can be published are two different things, and publication is an intentional action that must be treated with caution” (<i>Code of Ethics</i>, Online Publishers Association, Greece, p. 8)</p> <p>“Remember that a person’s right to privacy is not automatically lost simply because material about them has circulated online to some degree” (<i>Code of Conduct, The Independent</i>, United Kingdom, para. 94)</p>
Public interest	4	<p>“When the person concerned has limited access to information or images on their social media or private websites, use is generally not permitted. The journalist must demonstrate a significant public interest that warrants any use. If not, seek permission from the individual” (<i>Code de Déontologie du Raad voor de Journalistiek</i>, Press Council, Belgium, p. 10)</p> <p>“Is there sufficient public interest to justify a possible invasion of privacy?” (<i>Code of Conduct, The Independent</i>, United Kingdom, para. 93)</p>

Vulnerability/pain	3	<p>“Journalists shall pay particular attention to the rights of persons unfamiliar with the media and persons in fragile situations such as minors or victims of violence, disasters and accidents” (<i>Code de Déontologie Journalistique</i>, Council of Journalistic Ethics, Belgium, p. 11)</p> <p>“We should also consider the potential impact of our re-use, particularly when in connection with tragic, humiliating or distressing events” (<i>Editorial Standards</i>, BBC, United Kingdom, p. 127)</p>
News treatment of victims	2	<p>“Where an alleged victim in an ongoing situation puts information into the public domain on social media, we need to weigh up very carefully whether our reporting of their situation creates further danger for them” (<i>Editorial Standards</i>, BBC, United Kingdom, p. 218)</p>
Handling of cases involving underage citizens	6	<p>“We should be particularly careful when the images have been captured by minors with their smartphone. We should not use them without legal advice” (<i>Charte AFP des Bonnes Pratiques Éditoriales et Déontologiques</i>, Agence France Press, France, p. 24)</p> <p>“We take special care when using any material posted to social media by minors, as they may not understand the public nature of their postings” (<i>Ethics Guidelines</i>, Canadian Association of Journalists, Canada, p. 2)</p>
Generic references	15	<p>“Greater caution is required with user-generated content” (<i>Verhaltenskodex für journalistische Tätigkeiten</i>, Österreichischer Rundfunk, Austria, p. 5)</p> <p>“The trending nature of a topic on Twitter or other social media platforms may be a newsworthy factor but not necessarily an argument for publishing a story” (<i>Code</i>, NRC Media, Netherlands, p. 21)</p>

Table 2. Content of the codes

The concern for privacy, which is explicitly mentioned in nine documents, is given greater prominence than the public interest, which, despite its centrality in professional culture, is only noted in the *Code de Déontologie du Raad voor de Journalistiek* of the Press Council of Belgium, in a directive on the use of information and images from DSNs and private websites; TG4’s *Journalism and Contentious Content Guidelines*; and the *Editors’ Code of Practice* (Independent Press Standards Organisation) and *Code of Conduct (The Independent)*, both from the United Kingdom. Other sensitive topics — the treatment of victims and minors and situations involving vulnerability or pain — also intersect with dimensions of personal life. When combined with the “privacy” category, references to these issues are found in 20 codes.

The *Guide de Déontologie des Journalistes du Québec* (Canada) notes that “the speed of these networks should not blind us to the need to ensure that the facts are true and to put them into context” (p. 10). Accuracy and context are overarching concerns in the codes. It involves safeguarding against exposure to propaganda or hidden agendas circulating in digital media while also upholding values such as privacy. Journalists are thus required to assess the potential harm to individuals’ reputations and image, particularly when dealing with people in vulnerable situations — such as minors, victims of crime, disasters and accidents, as cited by the Belgian Press Council. This ethical provision limits the use of personal information and data on public websites, acknowledging “the differences in context, scope and impact of the dissemination of journalistic information” (p. 10).

Concerning the conduct of individuals sharing personal information online, the Independent Press Standards Organisation incorporates digital communications into the

privacy section, emphasising the need for appropriate protection. In line with the British model, it mandates editorial executives to justify invasions in this field. The assessment of legitimate expectations of privacy includes considerations of self-disclosures and the fact that the material is already in the public domain or will be. This approach, used in the United Kingdom to assess media conduct, prompts journalists to ponder essential questions as outlined in *The Independent's* code: what is the nature of the material (is it intrinsically private)? Who uploaded it and why? Did they intend that it be widely published? How widely has it been/can it be seen? Has that person waived their right to privacy in whole or as regards this particular aspect? Is there sufficient public interest to justify a possible invasion of privacy? The scrutiny underlying these questions is irrespective of the status of those involved. Nevertheless, the *Global Charter of Ethics for Journalists*, endorsed in 2019 by the International Federation of Journalists, and the Swedish Media Ombudsman code both refer to “non-public persons” who expose themselves on social media. That underscores an awareness of the potential involvement of anonymous citizens in the news process, whose repercussions are not always properly understood by them.

A more detailed examination of the array of professional practices outlined in the codes shows that the recommendation to exercise particular caution in scrutinising the information obtained is a recurrent theme in the six codes that refer to the UGC. The imperative to identify the author is explicit in both the *German Press Council* and the *BBC Editorial Standards*. The British public broadcaster permits the use of anonymous posts on social media for information purposes but prohibits quoting and demands clarity about what is or is not confirmed.

The use of content extracted from unauthenticated accounts and profiles on digital platforms is explicitly forbidden, according to Agência Lusa. *Expresso*, in the version updated in 2019, mandates a meticulous accuracy analysis, while the BBC demands the verification of platform manager identities along with confirmation of material authenticity. However, merely citing the source may not suffice to ensure the reliability of the information. “how do you prove that the person who apparently tweeted, commented or uploaded a photograph actually did so themselves?” (p. 87), *The Independent* asks. The fear of manipulation prompts the Group New Zealand Media and Entertainment to underscore in its code the fundamental principle of multiplying sources, for “in this era of text messages, social media, and emails, our journalists are required to make sure their sources are legitimate and not an ‘imposter’” (p. 5).

The fact that websites, even reliable ones, have not been updated for years raises the need, as TG4 notes, to resort to trusted sources who are qualified to corroborate information. Direct contact with sources circulating on the internet is advised in six codes to verify their identity, confirm the authenticity of the material, or gain a better understanding of the meaning of the material concerned. These steps become particularly crucial when a post on a DSN is considered news in itself or when seeking consent to extract material, especially photographs.

In the continuous coverage of events, reports on unfolding situations vary constantly. “Speed and accuracy are fierce rivals” National Public Radio (United States) summarises in the section of its manual dedicated to “Accuracy” in a digital context. In a news agency, this “rivalry” can have disastrous consequences. Hence, the charter of Agence France Press (France) intensifies the verification rules to be applied to content disseminated by DSNs — including the authenticity and authorship of videos, the date, and the place where they were produced. The key moment or the triggering of an event can be captured in images by witnesses, who share them online. The agency highlights that “these images often play an essential role in our account of the event, and sometimes they are the event itself” (p. 22). Such content cannot fail to be scrutinised, not least to understand the motivations of those who disseminate it. According to the BBC, information provided through social media by alleged victims must be carefully considered because incorporating it into reports could put them in greater danger.

Listed in various codes, securing consent for using social media material (i.e., DSN) is rarely feasible during the monitoring of breaking news, a situation in which the speed of broadcast is of the utmost importance. This constraint does not rule out — but rather reinforces — the need for verification as thoroughly as possible. In the case of content that is not considered open access — that is, protected by privacy settings — the ethical considerations take on new contours. According to the Belgian Press Council, there is no doubt that only the demonstration of significant public interest or the consent of the individuals themselves can override the rule, inhibiting the use of information or images from private platforms.

Sharing personal information, possibly recklessly, reduces the expectation of privacy of those who have done so, making it permissible to extract content. According to the BBC, this is applicable when individuals demonstrate an understanding of the impact of their posts or adopt privacy controls. However, it may not apply to other citizens, especially children whose image is publicised. When individuals under the age of 18 submit UGCs online, the BBC does not categorically exclude them. However, it imposes the condition of obtaining adequate parental consent, considering the subject matter and the age of the individual. The charter from Agence France Press recommends exercising particular caution concerning content such as film footage and photographs featuring children. Additionally, images taken by minors using smartphones should be subject to legal advice before dissemination. Age, therefore, emerges as an unavoidable factor, as minors may not fully comprehend the public nature of their posts (*Ethics Guidelines of the Canadian Association of Journalists*).

Given the risk of spreading rumours on DSNs, some codes explicitly address news about people’s deaths — echoing the sentiments expressed in the guidelines of France Media Monde and Agence France Press. Mistakenly identifying a deceased person is so detrimental to a media outlet’s reputation that it cannot forego absolute confirmation obtained either from the family or another authorised source or with direct knowledge of the situation. In a digital environment, where information is often disseminated rapidly,

obtaining such confirmation becomes more challenging. However, that is not the sole dimension to consider: TG4 emphasises the negative impact on family and friends when using images from DSNs to illustrate news of someone's death should be assessed. Journalists should exercise a similar level of caution before linking to an online video related to the deceased.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Changes in the media landscape, marked by both threats and opportunities, have the potential to impact the legitimacy of traditional media outlets. As these outlets contend with various sources of information, their ability to stand out and make a significant impact may decline. The dynamics of journalistic production influenced by social media, such as the promotion of immediacy as the primary news value — undermine adherence to ethical standards. That is particularly evident in so-called breaking news, where there is a greater motivation to consult digital platforms to feed successive updates. The codes of ethics examined in this study generally recognise and address the challenges associated with the increasingly ethically complex nature of professional practices.

While the non-probabilistic sample used in the study limits the ability to make generalisations, the findings suggest that a relatively small number of codes explicitly reference social media as sources of journalistic information. The empirical study demonstrates the significant emphasis placed on operational aspects of the profession, such as verifying and validating information (mentioned in 21 codes) and identifying the source (mentioned in 16 codes). In reality, both of these aspects serve as means to ensure adherence to important values — rigour, protection of the privacy of victims and minors, and consideration of the vulnerability and pain of those who make material available on DSNs, for example. This aligns with the concerns raised by Christofolletti (2019):

in the age of new media, the crisis of journalism, and the empire of platforms like Facebook and Google, we need to consider network privacy as an active process of managing and negotiating with people and technical processes. (p. 193)

Journalistic activity must adapt to changes in the media ecosystem, regardless of their impact. However, this adaptation cannot compromise the trust of citizens, a risk heightened by the permeability of news content circulating on the web, particularly through DSNs, often disseminated without proper consideration of the issues it is likely to raise. In this regard, the codes analysed also provide valid guidelines for preserving the credibility of journalism.

Acknowledging the lack of consensus within the journalistic community on fundamental ethical principles, Ward (2018) highlights the open questions concerning issues to be brought into the public sphere, including the amplification and global impact of messages in the digital environment. This discussion is crucial, as it touches on the

nature of journalism and democracy itself. However, it must be approached while recognising certain constraints: “verification in a digital world of instant ‘sharing’ of information is vastly more difficult than the traditional and, by comparison, ‘leisurely’ pace of verifying stories for tomorrow’s printed newspaper” (Ward, 2018, p. 10).

Journalists and scholars cannot remain on the sidelines of this debate. Future research should aim to provide a greater understanding of the ethical challenges faced by journalism, particularly in light of the “partnership between news professionals and their target audience” (Castilho, 2022, para. 9), which presupposes engagement. It is necessary, for example, to conduct further analysis of journalists’ perceptions regarding the need to update codes of ethics and produce explicit guidelines for the use of digital platforms such as DSNs. It is noteworthy that only a few of the 60 journalists from three different countries interviewed by Suárez Villegas and Cruz Álvarez (2016) considered it essential to follow this path.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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JOURNALISTIC QUALITY AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY IN TIMES OF CRISIS: EMPIRICAL REFLECTIONS FROM SPANISH NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

In today's social and political landscape, marked by the rise of neopopulist social players and heightened democratic uncertainty, it becomes imperative to understand the quality of journalism in post-democratic frameworks. The infodemic witnessed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the pitfalls of relying on social media as a primary information source able to facilitate the development of fundamental skills necessary for active citizenship within liberal democracies. Given these circumstances, it is essential to analyse the pivotal role of mainstream journalism in countering disinformation and fostering critical thinking among citizens, thereby elevating public interest concerns onto the societal agenda.

The primary objective of this research is to assess the quality of the content produced by prominent Spanish newspapers and disseminated to the public via social media. Employing both qualitative and quantitative paradigms as a methodology within the epistemological framework that guides them, we analyse the content's tendencies and political biases concerning rumours about the coronavirus published by leading national and regional newspapers on their Facebook profiles.

The findings of this investigation indicate minimal audience engagement with the posts, prompting further discussions on the kinds of stories that capture public interest while also nurturing critical thinking skills among citizens.

KEYWORDS

journalistic quality, citizenship, democracy, post-democracy Spanish newspapers

QUALIDADE JORNALÍSTICA E ESTABILIDADE DEMOCRÁTICA EM TEMPOS DE CRISE: REFLEXÕES EMPÍRICAS DE JORNAIS ESPANHÓIS

RESUMO

No contexto social e político em que vivemos, com um incremento de atores sociais neopopulistas e um cenário de instabilidade democrática, é fundamental entender a qualidade do jornalismo na pós-democracia. A situação de infodemia, que vivemos durante a pandemia da COVID-19, ressaltou os aspetos negativos do uso das redes sociais como ferramenta de informação que ajuda a desenvolver as competências básicas para exercer uma cidadania ativa na democracia liberal. Nestas circunstâncias, é fundamental analisar o papel do jornalismo de referência no combate à desinformação e a sua importância no fomento do pensamento crítico da cidadania, para, desse modo, inserir na agenda pública temas de interesse público.

O objetivo principal desta investigação é analisar a qualidade do conteúdo produzido por jornais espanhóis de referência e disponibilizado aos cidadãos por meio das redes sociais. Para isso, utilizamos como metodologia os paradigmas qualitativo e quantitativo, centrados no quadro epistemológico em que estão circunscritos, para realizar uma análise ao conteúdo, a sua tendência e viés político relativamente aos boatos sobre o coronavírus publicados pelos jornais de referência no cenário nacional e regional nos seus perfis do Facebook.

Os resultados desta investigação revelam uma baixa interação da audiência com as publicações e abrem novas discussões sobre o tipo de matérias que atraem a atenção do público e que, ao mesmo tempo, podem cumprir com a formação e o fomento do pensamento crítico da cidadania.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

qualidade jornalística, cidadania, democracia, jornais espanhóis pós-democracia

1. INTRODUCTION

Technological progress in communication and information has contributed to a global landscape that exacerbates democratic crises, characterised by the proliferation of neopopulist political figures, widespread use of post-truth narratives, and the pervasive influence of digital social media platforms on the public discourse. This phenomenon, often termed “post-democracy”, has implications across various regions, including Latin American countries, the Arab world, Europe and the United States. For Ballestrin (2017), key features of post-democratic societies include unstable political-institutional environments and the emergence and participation of new players espousing anti-democratic rhetoric on the public stage. In this context, mainstream journalism assumes a critical role as a vital institution for upholding democratic principles and safeguarding human rights.

Some researchers in the field of communication regard the media as a cornerstone of society, as they play a pivotal role in shaping public discourse and constructing the narratives that define our realities. The concept of “counter-power” inherent in public action

serves as a safeguard for democracy within the framework of freedoms and values upheld in Western societies (Romero-Rodríguez et al., 2016).

According to Picard (2004), quality journalism is an essential and highly influential element in addressing cultural, social, and political issues within democratic States. Schulz (2000) further underscores the importance of independence, objectivity, diversity of content, and accessibility in the provision of quality information, thereby reinforcing democratic values. In light of these concepts, it becomes imperative to engage in discussions regarding the quality of journalism as a means of safeguarding liberal democracies.

Prominent theorists of contemporary representative liberal democracy, including Giovanni Sartori and Robert Dahl, highlight the indispensable role of the press in both exercising and consolidating democracy. Dahl (2006) posits that citizens in liberal and representative democratic societies require civic competence — a condition cultivated through the unrestricted dissemination of information, which will facilitate the formation of an autonomous and independent public opinion.

However, access to different communication tools has changed the role of leading newspapers since citizens have various platforms to stay informed. In Spain, 44% of readers rely on social network algorithms and search engines to access news, whereas direct access to traditional media accounts for 39% (Amoedo et al., 2020). This shift may have implications for the democratic State (Feenstra et al., 2016).

This passive access to information fosters what Pariser (2011) termed a “filter bubble”, where internet users receive information tailored to their predictions, collected by algorithms analysing their search history and social network interactions. Within this framework, internet users can easily disregard information conflicting with their pre-established opinions, leading to the formation of ideological and cultural bubbles, effectively isolating themselves.

Nonetheless, during times of crisis, such dynamics can shift. During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a notable surge in information-seeking behaviour from the press, with Spanish citizens predominantly turning to digital versions of leading newspapers (83%) and television (71%) for updates. Social media ranked third in popularity (63%). Particularly during the April 2020 lockdown prompted by the public health emergency, the primary sources of information were the media (74%), followed by the national Government (39%), scientists, doctors, and specialists (39%), and global health organisations (33%; Kleis-Nielsen et al., 2020).

Beyond academic debates regarding the influence of social media on citizenship, amid theories from both “cyber-optimists” and “cyber-sceptics”, society is undergoing a profound technological revolution, accentuating the need for fostering critical thinking. Consequently, the role of quality mainstream journalism becomes increasingly crucial for democratic stability. As noted by McQuail (2013), while rooted in practicality rather than philosophical or normative underpinnings, the expectation for media to provide quality information stands on par with fundamental principles such as equality, freedom, and diversity.

2. STATE OF THE ART

News stories highlighting the perceived threat to democracy have become increasingly prevalent in the Spanish press, with headlines such as: “La Democracia Amenazada” (Democracy Threatened) — *El País*; “Cómo Internet Se Convirtió en una Amenaza Para la Democracia” (How the Internet Became a Threat to Democracy) — *El Mundo*; “Las Fake News, una Amenaza Para la Democracia” (Fake News, a Threat to Democracy) — *La Vanguardia*; “El Futuro de la Democracia Española: Cara o Cruz” (The Future of Spanish Democracy: Heads or Tails) — *La Voz de Galicia*.

However, the *Democracy Index 2019 - A Year of Democratic Setbacks and Popular Protest*, conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (2019), identifies Spain as one of the 22 countries classified as enjoying a fully democratic State. This assessment is based on indices achieved in five categories: “electoral process and pluralism”, “functioning of Government”, “political participation”, “political culture”, and “civil liberties”.

If the country is classified as one of the best democracies in the world, what accounts for the headlines about the threat to the democratic system? The factors contributing to Spain’s ranking as 17th out of 22 countries enjoying full democracy may offer some insights into this situation. These factors suggest areas where the country can improve both the functioning of its Government and the political participation of its citizens.

Adam Przeworski’s (2019) examination of the fundamentals of democracy, as outlined in the book *Crises of Democracy*, sheds light on this context. According to Przeworski, threats to democracy are not solely political but also deeply rooted in economic and social spheres. The author emphasises that polarisation, exacerbated by neo-populism, poses significant challenges to the health of democracy.

2.1. A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE THREATS TO DEMOCRACY

In order to understand the correlation between polarisation and the growing emergence of political leaders with totalitarian profiles and democratic stability, it is crucial to delve into the concepts expounded by the German philosopher Hannah Arendt. Arendt advocates for the establishment of democratic political arenas as spaces for the free expression of opinions and the challenging of established truths, thereby facilitating dissent and consensus through strategies of persuasion and dissuasion. In her work, *As Origens do Totalitarismo* (The Origins of Totalitarianism), Arendt (1951/1989) emphasises that “the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction no longer exist” (p. 312).

According to Arendt (2003), cinema and radio played crucial roles in facilitating the spread of totalitarianism during the first half of the 20th century. Although dictators also resorted to violence to suppress truths that resisted manipulation, the German philosopher underscores the power of communication and emphasises the need for a free and responsible press to uphold the democratic system. At this point, it is noteworthy that our super-connected lifestyle has exponentially amplified the possibilities for manipulation.

For the philosopher Óscar Barroso Fernández (2020), we live in a world where the obliteration of truth no longer requires silencing witnesses but rather drowning their voices amid a sea of lies or hoaxes. The author argues that we are trapped in a “perverse dynamic based on lies, where under the guise of a false freedom of expression, uncomfortable factual truths are distorted into opinions with which one may or may not agree” (Barroso Fernández, 2020, para. 6).

Drawing from the concepts of Arendt (1967), who contends that “freedom of opinion is a farce unless factual information is guaranteed and if the facts themselves are not in dispute” (p. 49), one can appreciate the pivotal role of quality journalism in combating disinformation and threats to democracy.

2.2. PUBLIC TRUST IN DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

In democratic societies, journalism can be seen as a key element in the articulation of the public sphere (Habermas, 2006), serving as a mediator between the State and society, ensuring the population access to information of public interest. As Casero-Ripollés (2020) points out, access to information impacts not only citizens’ understanding of their immediate reality and their commitment to public affairs but also the very concept of “democracy”, given the intimate connection between information and the democratic State.

As a dynamic and adaptable concept, democracy changes as the social, cultural and political frameworks of society evolve. Within this evolutionary paradigm, the media and citizen participation are the driving forces behind this development. For Dahl (2006), in a country where the right to vote exists but where its rulers repress the opposition, representation and participation, essential axes in democratic societies, may suffer. Hence, the significance of one of journalism’s primary objectives: provide citizens with socially pertinent information, enabling them to form opinions on the subject and fostering civic competencies for social and political participation (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007).

The concept of “democratic citizenship”, established by Hannah Arendt (2005/2008), posits that citizens should have a civic competency nurtured by a free and equal public space. A place that gives them a voice and allows them to develop a political culture grounded on dialogue aimed at forging agreements and peacefully resolving conflicts in the public arena. Instilling these attributes of civility demands dedication and engagement from citizens alongside transparent and trustworthy public institutions.

According to the report *La Calidad de las Instituciones en España* (The Quality of Institutions in Spain; Lapuente et al., 2018), the trust population’ demonstrates in the administrations that provide public services is remarkable, in contrast, the trust rate in the political system is the lowest in Europe. Only 13% of individuals express trust in politicians, while 20% express trust in political parties. Alberola (2018) states that in “Spain, political scandals have eroded citizens’ trust in public institutions and their satisfaction with the functioning of democracy” (para. 2).

The lack of trust in politicians among the Spanish people has been particularly evident during the COVID-19 crisis. In a survey conducted in the country, only 31% of respondents expressed belief in the information about the coronavirus provided by politicians, and 45% believed the information provided by the Government (Kleis-Nielsen et al., 2020).

Distrust of public institutions and politicians is also evident in the data on fake news. A survey of internet users indicates that 49% of Spanish people identify the Government, politicians and national parties as the primary sources of disinformation, followed by journalists (15%), citizens (11%) and other political actors or foreign activists groups (8%; Amoedo et al., 2020).

During crises such as that generated by the coronavirus pandemic, it becomes imperative for governments to demonstrate transparency and trustworthiness to garner citizen support and participation in addressing the social emergency. In this scenario, the press plays a crucial role in explaining to the public unfolding events and engaging them in finding solutions, serving as a vital ally in the political, institutional, and health management efforts of governments (Costa-Sánchez & López-García, 2020).

2.3. THE CONCEPT OF “QUALITY IN JOURNALISM”

As a starting point, we have relied on international studies highlighting the absence of a universally accepted concept defining quality journalism, even though there is a consensus on the existence of fundamental criteria for this practice. Primary research on this topic predominantly centres on academic analyses and the perspectives of professionals to delineate categories indicative of “quality journalism”, often associated with the designation of “leading newspapers”.

Researchers such as Shapiro et al. (2006) suggest that current literature has assessed quality in journalism by employing criteria rooted in values such as accuracy, impartiality, the reputation of the news organisation, sources of information and the content of the reported stories. Lacy and Rosenstiel (2015) propose that while each individual may have their interpretation of quality in journalism, it likely aligns with that of a collective group sharing common experiences.

Most recent studies examine quality from either the demand or production perspective. In the demand approach, emphasis is placed on the interaction between citizens’ needs and the news content. On the other hand, the methodology that analyses production focuses on the characteristics of the content (Lacy & Rosenstiel, 2015). Drawing from the concepts advocated by the researchers above, it is possible to infer that in the content-focused approach, the public assesses the news based on their own standards, thereby determining whether it meets quality criteria or not. McQuail (2011/2012) suggests that quality measured through demand is tied to how journalism is perceived in fulfilling the needs and desires of citizens, adopting a relativistic approach that may reinforce arguments suggesting that quality cannot be objectively measured due to its inherent subjectivity.

A study conducted by McQuail (2013) highlights some fundamental requirements for the quality of information, including comprehensive coverage of relevant news and general information concerning local and international events; objective, factual, accurate, reliable information that aligns with reality; balanced and fair information, reporting alternative perspectives and interpretations soberly and impartially.

According to Vehkoo (2010), there are no universal criteria to ascertain the quality of journalism, as it is contingent upon factors such as socioeconomic and educational contexts. Nevertheless, in light of the standards and codes of conduct shared by professionals globally, the researcher affirms the notion that a well-functioning democracy requires an informed public.

Theoretical discussions generally indicate that journalistic quality can be directly influenced by the social and cultural background of the community surrounding its production, thereby emphasising the importance of observing its context within the specific space-time continuum (Santos & Guazina, 2019).

2.4. CONSUMPTION OF MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS TODAY

In recent years, there has been a decline in readership and credibility for mainstream newspapers, jeopardising their social relevance (Carlson, 2017). Moreover, they now compete for the limelight with other social players (Casero-Ripollés, 2020). However, the coronavirus outbreak has underscored the importance of traditional media during crisis. In April 2020, 56% of Spanish people acknowledged that the media had helped them understand the pandemic. Meanwhile, 64% stated that traditional media explained the measures they could take in response to the coronavirus (Negredo, 2020).

The heightened interest in news stemming from the coronavirus pandemic has resulted in a surge in the volume of reports on the topic. Lázaro-Rodríguez and Herrera-Viedma (2020) note that the number of news articles published in online newspapers in Spain rose by nearly 50% in the first 30 days following the implementation of mobility restrictions in March 2020.

While the use of social media to access information is growing (Newman et al., 2019), it is important to acknowledge their limitations in order to generate a well-informed and civically engaged citizenry (Zúñiga et al., 2017). Apart from fostering the “filter bubble” phenomenon, the possibility of consulting multiple digital platforms promotes an environment impregnated with information, potentially leading to confusion regarding the factuality of each one. This saturated environment contributes to the proliferation of misinformation (Bennett & Livingston, 2018) and reduces trust in traditional media while encouraging political polarisation (Van Aelst et al., 2017).

Despite the surge in the consumption of mainstream newspapers during the coronavirus pandemic, there is a prevailing trend of low trust in the press. Only 36% of Spanish internet users report regular trust in the news. This marks the lowest level of news credibility since 2015, reflecting political and social events that polarise citizens (Amoedo et al., 2020). Data from a survey conducted in Spain in 2020 reveals that 48%

of respondents favour obtaining information from impartial sources, while 30% opt for media aligned with their ideologies, and 10% declare following channels that offer diverse viewpoints. Among readers at the opposite ends of the political spectrum (both left and right), more than 40% express a preference for media outlets that echo their perspectives (Amoedo et al., 2020).

A survey conducted by the Reuters Institute (Kleis-Nielsen et al., 2020) discloses additional significant findings: 60% of users who seek information in mainstream newspapers (online or offline) state they value the social function of journalism. However, among those who rely on social media to stay informed, this figure drops to 45%. In light of these insights, media organisations are compelled to invest in economically sustainable business models that allow them to fulfil their social role while concurrently rebuilding trust among citizens.

2.5. SOCIAL MEDIA AND DISINFORMATION

Theorists such as Loader and Mercea (2012) underline that, despite its potential, the use of the internet is not always as positive as it should be. As an example of the negative use of technology, we can cite the avalanche of disinformation caused by the spread of rumours on social media, which can lead to political and social instability, posing a threat to democracy. In the political sphere, we experienced the spread of fake news in the Brexit vote (2016), the United States presidential elections (2016) and the Brazilian presidential elections (2018). Furthermore, in the realm of health, the zika virus outbreak in 2015 is an example of disinformation, as is the coronavirus pandemic.

Social media facilitate a significant flow of information, where it is possible to find genuine news, written and verified through basic journalistic techniques, and navigate between rumours and biased information imbued with ideological messages, each presenting truth from particular perspectives (Wood, 2018). Specifically concerning the coronavirus pandemic, the dissemination of news was so widespread that the World Health Organisation (2020) declared the situation as an “infodemic”, indicating an overwhelming abundance of information that made it difficult to identify reliable sources and accurate guidelines.

As the disease progressed globally, misinformation also spread rapidly, despite the efforts of platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Google to mitigate its dissemination. Likewise, many social network users took to flagging suspicious content, contributing to the fight against misinformation (Pérez-Dasilva et al., 2020). During the first two months of the pandemic, the Spanish fact-checking organisation Maldita.es verified and debunked 586 rumours about COVID-19.

According to a report by Blanco (2020) in the newspaper *El País*, the National Police attended to more than 7,000 individuals in a single day who expressed doubts regarding the accuracy of messages received on social media. Such a high level of misinformation is particularly concerning given the context of a public health crisis. In these situations, it is not enough for people to be well-informed; it is imperative that they also cooperate to mitigate the spread of the disease.

The proliferation of fake news increases distrust in institutions, leading to social instability and instilling confusion and anxiety among the population (Waisbord, 2018). This impacts governments and politicians, as disinformation has the potential to sway the beliefs of even those who are supportive of the ruling administration (Casero-Ripollés, 2020), fostering an environment that is detrimental to democracy. According to several studies, the profusion of rumours is fuelled by the availability of diverse alternative sources of information. It is often linked to populism and radicalism, which exploit this strategy to garner support (Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

The “infodemic” resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled paradoxical scenarios wherein social players tasked with combating the spread of fake news have become purveyors of disinformation. Examples include a Chinese Government spokesperson disseminating the rumour that the virus originated from the United States, a claim echoed by Chinese State media. Russian media suggested that COVID-19 was engineered in a laboratory in Georgia, United States of America. Additionally, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro speculated that the virus could be a potential biological weapon targeting China while also promoting natural remedies to cure the virus in a tweet that was flagged on Twitter (Pérez-Dasilva et al., 2020).

2.6. COMBATING DISINFORMATION

The combat against disinformation and its repercussions on democratic societies involves various approaches, with different disciplines playing a role in alleviating the situation. In the book *The People Vs Tech*, author and journalist Jamie Bartlett (2018) argues that governments should establish effective regulations for social media, targeting oligopolies, and exercising oversight over algorithms.

Online search platforms, instant messaging companies, and certain social media are also actively engaged in developing tools to curb the dissemination of false information. Google has forged partnerships with verification firms and is enhancing its algorithm-based filtering system for search results. In response to the coronavirus “infodemic”, WhatsApp has implemented a new measure to restrict the frequency with which messages can be forwarded. Facebook has started sending pop-up notifications to users who have interacted with questionable content related to the coronavirus (García, 2020).

In fulfilling their social role as contributors to the consolidation of democracy, news organisations are tasked with implementing measures to counter the proliferation of misinformation, including the use of verification tools and heightened vigilance in verifying news accuracy (González-Fernández-Villavicencio, 2014). Meanwhile, the primary challenge lies in recovering and consolidating public trust by delivering high-quality content. Most Spanish internet users (64%) perceive that the media effectively disseminates timely information, but only half (56%) believe that leading newspapers provide in-depth analysis and insight (Newman et al., 2019, p. 24).

In an effort to restore the industry’s credibility and establish standards of trust, an international media consortium, *The Trust Project* (<https://thetrustproject.org/>), collaborates

with technology platforms to reaffirm journalism's commitment to transparency, accuracy, inclusion and fairness, thereby empowering readers to make informed decisions. The project involves the participation of 121 media outlets worldwide, including prominent names such as *The Economist*, *The Washington Post*, *La Repubblica*, *Corriere Della Sera*, *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, as well as Spanish newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo*. Additionally, search engines and various social media are engaged in the project as external partners, as they have become important distributors of news.

The Trust Project's guiding principles stem from those developed in 1947 by the Hutchins Commission, spelling out the commitments a free and responsible press must follow. In order to establish trust indicators, they are committed to:

- fairness and accuracy: publishing corrections or clarifications as promptly as possible
- disclosures that explain their mission, source(s) of funding and the organisation behind them
- insight into their methods and where they get their information
- a diversity of voices and perspectives
- opportunities for public engagement

Combating disinformation also relies on fact-checking platforms, which are dedicated to identifying false information and disseminating accurate data. In Spain, the most prominent companies in this field are Maldita.es, B de Buló and Newtral. Their objective is to equip citizens with the tools to discern between fake news and legitimate news. To achieve this, they monitor political discourse and information circulating on social media, analysing messages using data journalism techniques. Additionally, they encourage citizen participation by soliciting verification of suspicious content via WhatsApp, thereby providing a valuable service to the public (Palomo & Sedano, 2018).

3. METHODOLOGY

Given the pivotal role of journalism in countering disinformation and its consequential impact on democratic stability (Casero-Ripollés, 2020), coupled with the significance of the social network Facebook in citizens' information access (Amoedo et al., 2020), this study aims to assess the quality of content provided to citizens. The focus is on production, examining the publishing trends of leading national and regional newspapers on their Facebook profiles regarding rumours about the coronavirus. Accordingly, the study seeks to address the following questions (Q):

Q1: does the ideological bias of newspapers influence their treatment of fake news related to the coronavirus?

Q2: does the content of coronavirus rumours follow a consistent pattern?

Q3: does the content generate interactivity with the public?

To address these questions, we propose hypotheses (H) aligned with the theoretical framework underpinning this study:

H1: the ideological bias of mainstream newspapers can influence the perception of publication quality from the production approach, where diversity, plurality of opinions and impartiality should be paramount.

The research conducted to address the presented hypothesis was grounded in both qualitative and quantitative paradigms within the encompassing epistemological framework (Arellano, 2013). This study involved an analysis of the content, emphasising its trends and political biases, specifically concerning rumours about the coronavirus disseminated by prominent newspapers across the national and regional scene on their Facebook profiles.

To meet the objectives, we opted to examine the social network content of five Spanish newspapers spanning the period from January 30 to April 30, 2020. Specifically, our focus was on analysing posts on Facebook, given its status as the most used social network by the Spanish people for general information, particularly regarding the coronavirus (Kleis-Nielsen et al., 2020).

National and regional newspapers were selected based on a correlation between their online audience leadership, the number of Facebook followers, and the ideological orientation of the media. Figure 1 illustrates the leading online newspapers in Spain, while Figure 2 shows the number of fans/followers on the Facebook profiles of these newspapers.

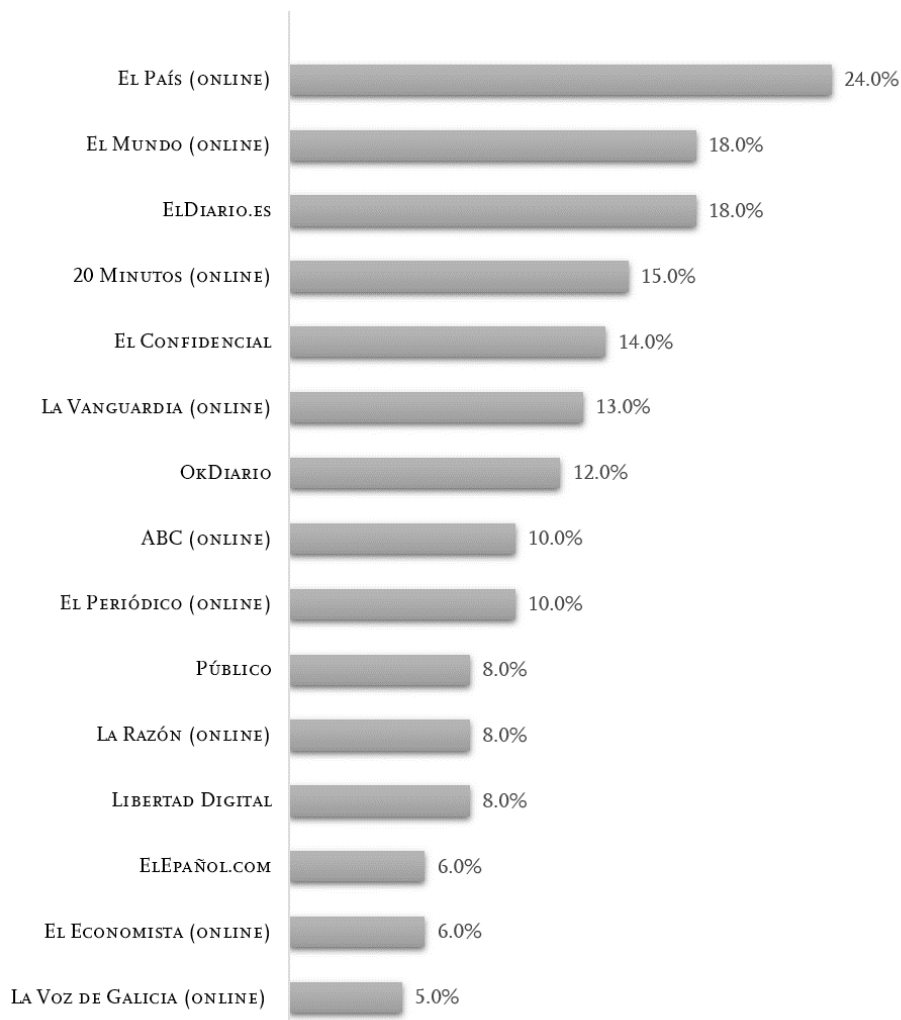


Figure 1. Leading Spanish newspapers in terms of audience (online versions of traditional newspapers and digital natives)

Note. Data sourced from *Digital News Report* (Newman et al., 2019).

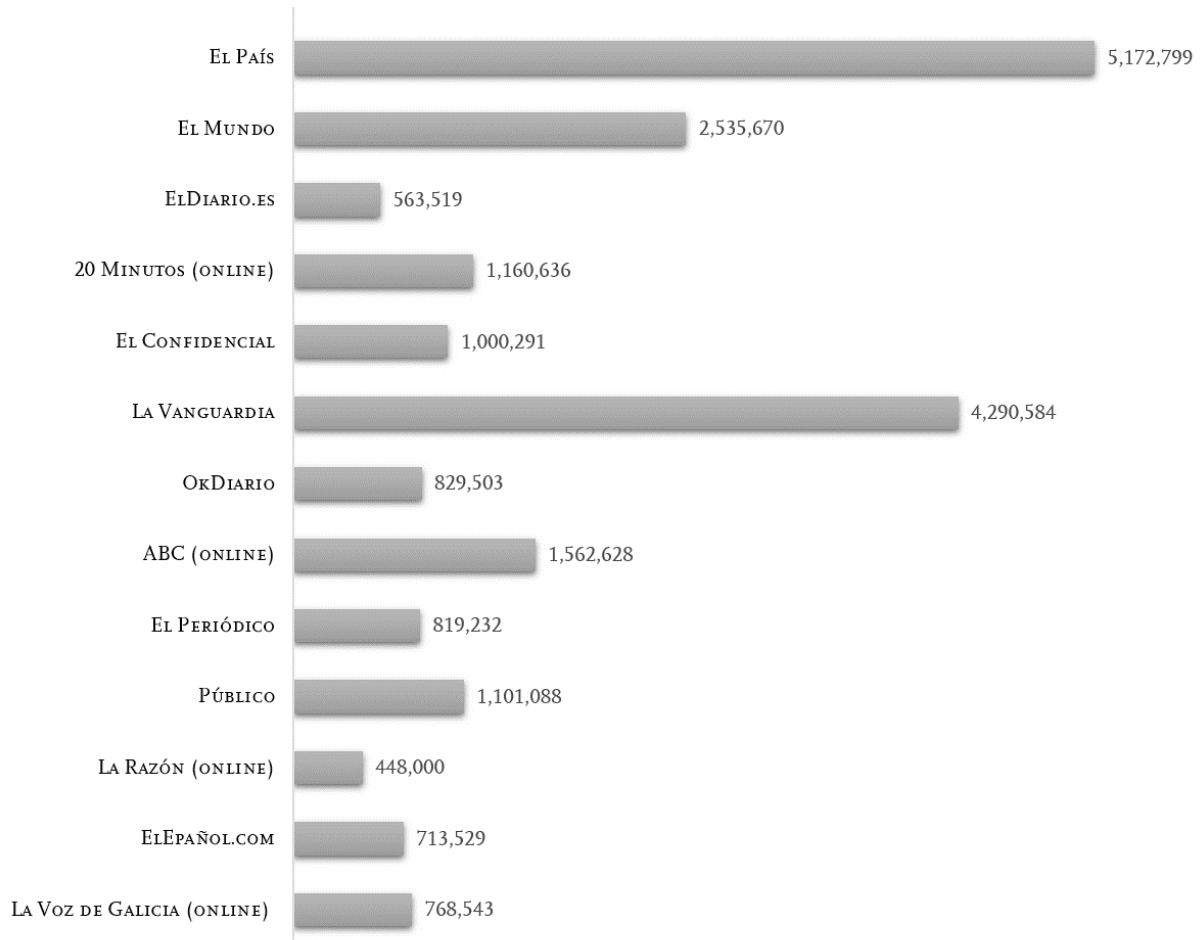


Figure 2. Number of followers on the Facebook profiles of the top Spanish newspapers

Note. Data sourced from Facebook, April 2020.

Based on this data, the following newspapers were selected: *El País*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo*, *El Periódico* and *La Voz de Galicia*. In order to analyse the data compiled, an *ad hoc* form (Fontecoba et al., 2020), gathering the main characteristics of the publications relevant to the study was used.

To analyse user interaction with the posts, we employed the theory of uses and gratifications as a framework, which delineates the disparity between clicks and comments on posts. Clicks are often associated with entertainment, whereas comments are more prevalent in content that elicits citizen participation in issues of public interest (Bengoa et al., 2020).

The posts were analysed using the search engine available on each of the Facebook profiles under study, employing two sets of keywords. The first set (“sars-cov-2”, “covid-19”, “coronavirus”, “pandemic”, and “state of emergency”) was used to identify the number of posts on the topic, while the second set (“rumours”, “fake news”, “misinformation”, and “fact-checking”) was employed to scrutinise the content. It is important to note that the search engine does not differentiate between uppercase and lowercase letters. Results were obtained for each newspaper from the data extracted from the posts, and comparative conclusions were drawn among them.

4. FINDINGS

In the quantitative analysis of posts spanning from January 30, 2020 (the date of the World Health Organisation's declaration of the coronavirus as an international public health emergency) to April 30 (the period when the lockdown relaxation began, allowing children to go out on the streets), a total of 395 posts were identified regarding the coronavirus, while 112 posts focused on fake news about the virus. Specifically, between January 30 and February 4, 2020, only six news pieces related to COVID-19 rumours were published across all the newspapers under study. However, following the declaration of a state of emergency on March 14, the number of posts on this topic surged by 85%.

The number of posts identified through the Facebook search engine shows a consistent average across the five newspapers analysed, but there are differences in the topics covered. Regarding independence, objectivity, diversity of content, and accessibility, it was evident that national newspapers dedicated more attention to posts with a political or ideological bias compared to regional newspapers. Conversely, regional newspapers posted fewer updates about guidelines, prevention measures for contagion, or messages aimed at reassuring the population. Posts with a political or ideological slant were further categorised into three sub-themes, with only the Catalan newspapers featuring news pertaining to regional-specific issues such as fraud.

Overall, the qualitative analysis of the content indicates minimal audience interaction with the posts, with an engagement rate of less than 0.58% — a percentage deemed satisfactory by the advertising industry. Nonetheless, each newspaper achieved at least two posts with engagement rates surpassing this threshold. *El País* had the highest rate at 1.67%, closely followed by *La Voz de Galicia* at 1.40%. Conversely, the other newspapers failed to reach the 1% mark, as illustrated in Figure 3.

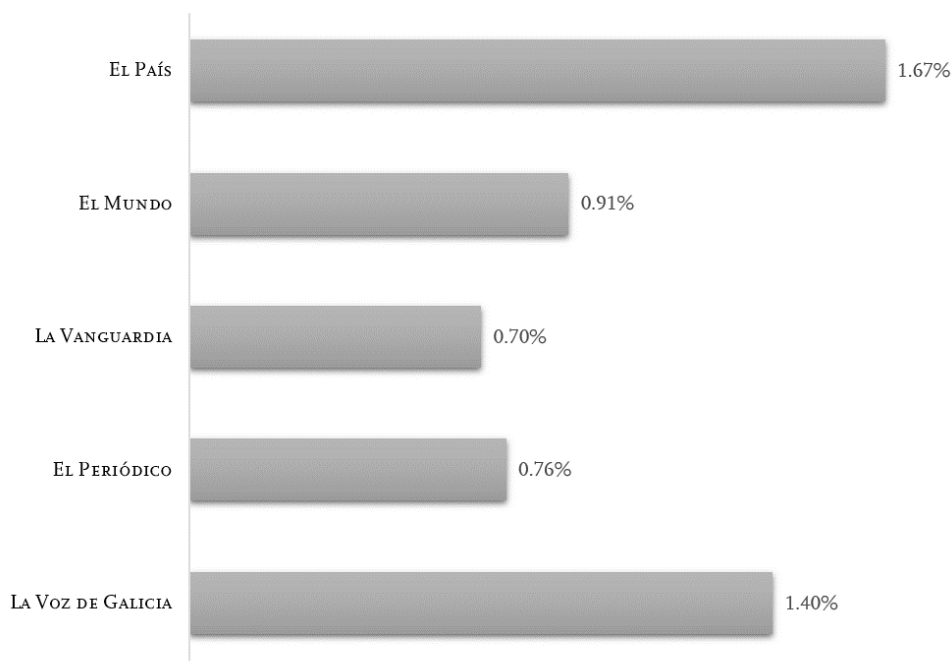


Figure 3. Posts exhibiting the highest interaction metrics

Regarding accuracy and impartiality, the posts that garnered the highest interaction rates from readers (reactions, comments, and shares) are primarily associated with content featuring a political or ideological bias across most of the newspapers analysed, except for *El Periódico*, which achieved significant reader engagement with a post discussing Iranians intoxicated by industrial alcohol after reading on social media that it cured the virus, as depicted in Figure 4.

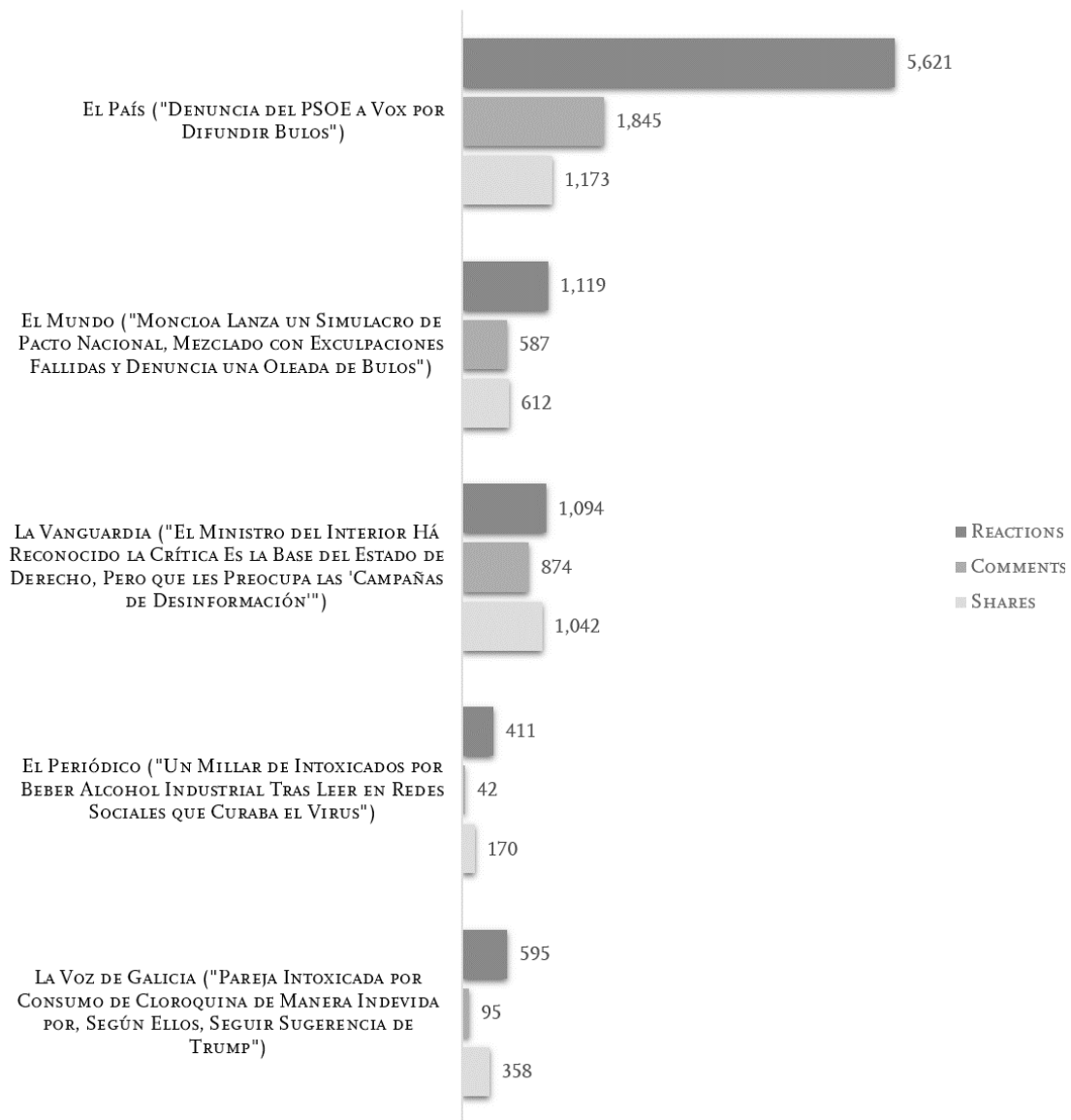


Figure 4. News stories with the highest level of interaction

As previously explored in this study, certain fundamental criteria contribute to the quality of information, including comprehensive coverage of relevant news and general information concerning local and international events; objective, factual, accurate, and reliable information consistent with reality; and the presentation of balanced and fair

perspectives. Despite the paramount importance of “impartiality” in journalistic quality, news concerning the pandemic’s political or ideological dimensions garnered the highest levels of audience engagement across all five newspapers analysed, except for *El Periódico*, which achieved its peak interaction through a video debunking coronavirus-related myths. Moreover, we observed varying approaches to the same news topic across newspapers with different ideological orientations. For instance, the coverage of the Attorney General’s Office investigation into the propagation of coronavirus rumours was portrayed differently by *El País* and *El Mundo*.

Concerning the textual content, it was observed that there is no consistent writing pattern among the newspapers examined. Typically, national newspapers feature more comprehensive and explanatory texts. Conversely, regional media tend to be more concise in their publications, particularly the Catalan newspaper *El Periódico*.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In summary, our study reveals that newspapers aligned with the Government tend to emphasise the opposition’s potential errors in disseminating rumours. In contrast, outlets more aligned with the opposition tend to highlight the Government’s potential missteps in crisis management. These tendencies hinder an objective analysis of content quality from a production standpoint, as proposed in this research. Additionally, we observed that the writing style of news related to fake news about COVID-19 lacks a consistent pattern that would facilitate immediate identification of such publications by the audience.

Following the demand approach, which establishes the quality of journalism based on audience interaction, our findings suggest that despite the public interest in the topic, the publications often failed to capture sufficient attention to generate significant interaction. However, it would be inaccurate to conclude that citizens lack interest in the news altogether; rather, our study indicates a lack of engagement with the specific publications analysed here.

The empirical reflections facilitated by this work underscore the ongoing challenge of establishing measurable criteria for analysing journalistic quality. Similarly, media organisations have yet to find a way to rebuild audience trust and improve interaction with the public. The theoretical significance of journalistic quality for maintaining democratic stability during a crisis has been corroborated in practice during the coronavirus pandemic, underscoring the need for leading newspapers to strike a balance between economic sustainability and their social responsibility to foster critical thinking among citizens.

Newspapers have played a crucial role in informing the population about fake news, thereby helping to mitigate the effects of rumours on the public. However, content displaying ideological biases runs counter to one of the principles advocated by *The Trust Project*, which emphasises impartiality as essential for journalism to contribute to civic education effectively. In this sense, coverage of significant topics such as a health emergency could benefit from dissociation from political affiliations expressed in editorials, fostering greater diversity and plurality of viewpoints.

Indeed, incorporating methodologies that assess quality through journalistic added value, emphasising journalism significance and contribution to analyse the reliability of sources and the hierarchy and relevance of the facts reported, could offer a more comprehensive assessment of the coverage during the specified period in terms of journalistic quality. Additionally, it underscores the importance of promoting journalistic quality to foster critical thinking in the digital age, where audience trust in traditional newspapers wanes, and the filter bubble prompts the pursuit of ideologically-driven content.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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PARTICIPATION AND TRUST IN COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION: THE CASES OF *VELA NOTÍCIAS* AND *JORNAL DA ALDEIA*

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ABSTRACT

This research seeks to delve into the dynamics of participation within news platforms curated by non-professional journalists residing in inland Portugal. Through an exploratory study, two initiatives originating from communities located in the country's inland areas are analysed: *Vela Notícias*, in the Centre region, and *Jornal da Aldeia*, in the Alentejo region. These initiatives serve as empirical objects illustrating a phenomenon that reflects the shift away from traditional media, the community's eagerness to disseminate locally pertinent knowledge, and the citizens' yearning for social and cultural representation. Both initiatives have emerged in ageing and sparsely populated regions, with fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, according to the 2021 Census (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021).

To understand and address these concerns, alongside a thorough review of pertinent literature, semi-structured interviews were conducted as a methodological approach involving participants engaged in information production for the two community media outlets. The significance of this study lies in unravelling the intricacies of proximity communication dynamics spearheaded by non-journalist citizens.

The residents of both parishes actively contribute to content creation, topic selection, editing, and distribution of the newspapers. Production operates outside the norms of journalistic selection, filtering, and hierarchy. Nevertheless, interviewees exhibit keen interest and confidence in the published information. The motivation for participation stems from a desire to share common values and cultural connections, fostering a sense of belonging and social responsibility.

KEYWORDS

community communication, trust, participation, *Vela Notícias*, *Jornal da Aldeia*

PARTICIPAÇÃO E CONFIANÇA NA COMUNICAÇÃO COMUNITÁRIA: OS CASOS DO *VELA NOTÍCIAS* E DO *JORNAL DA ALDEIA*

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo compreender as dinâmicas de participação presentes em veículos informativos produzidos por cidadãos não-jornalistas, no interior de Portugal. A partir de um estudo exploratório, são analisadas duas iniciativas desenvolvidas por comunidades localizadas no interior do país, o *Vela Notícias*, na região Centro, e o *Jornal da Aldeia*, na região do Alentejo. Estas são entendidas como objetos empíricos de um fenómeno que reflete o distanciamento e os constrangimentos dos média tradicionais, o desejo das populações destes territórios de partilharem conhecimento de interesse local e a necessidade de os cidadãos se sentirem representados social e culturalmente. As duas iniciativas surgiram em regiões desertificadas, com menos de 1.000 habitantes, e envelhecidas, segundo os Censos 2021 (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021).

A fim de compreender e discutir tais questões, além da revisão da literatura pertinente ao tema, realizaram-se entrevistas semiestruturadas, como procedimento metodológico, aos participantes envolvidos na produção informativa dos dois média comunitários. A importância do estudo consiste em compreender dinâmicas comunicacionais de proximidade que envolvem cidadãos não-jornalistas.

Os cidadãos das duas freguesias participam na criação de conteúdos, na escolha dos assuntos, na edição e na distribuição dos periódicos. A produção não está submetida às lógicas de seleção, filtragem e hierarquização jornalísticas. Ainda assim, os entrevistados demonstram interesse e confiança nas informações publicadas. O interesse em participar relaciona-se com o desejo de partilha de valores comuns e vínculos culturais, que contam ainda com o sentimento de pertença e de responsabilidade social.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

comunicação comunitária, confiança, participação, *Vela Notícias*, *Jornal da Aldeia*

1. INTRODUCTION

This article aims to understand the communication dynamics involved in community news production conducted by non-journalist citizens in rural Portugal. Specifically, it seeks to explore the impact of participation on mobilising populations residing in territories characterised by desertification and ageing (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021) and how proximity and shared interests influence the establishment of trust in the content produced and disseminated. Two community communication initiatives in the Centre and Alentejo regions help us in this work: *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*.

They both have characteristics akin to traditional newspapers despite being entirely produced by citizens with no academic training in journalism. What binds them together is their strong connection to their parish and community. In these areas, where most of the population is elderly (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021), many individuals do not frequently access the internet or engage with social networks. Consequently, there

is a recognition that “older media consumers tend to opt for the stability of traditional formats, often due to difficulties in keeping pace with technological innovation and disruptive and/or evolutionary dynamics inherent in the media ecosystem” (Quintanilha et al., 2019, p. 148). Therefore, communication in printed form, such as *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*, holds even greater significance.

These publications disseminate topics of common interest across a wide array of subjects and are distributed directly to households. As Paiva suggested in an interview, community communication has reinvented itself, seeking different spaces and approaches in recent years, but at its foundation is individuals’ capacity to get involved, claiming new spaces of power (Bertol, 2017).

Despite its exploratory nature, this study holds significant value due to its contribution to the literature on community communication, a topic that remains relatively under-explored and under-discussed in Portugal. Midões (2021) investigates this subject with a focus on Portuguese community radio stations. The author underscores that “historically, the facts show that public debate involves a limited number of citizens, with higher education and easier access to the media” (Midões, 2021, p. 7) and highlights that community communication initiatives encourage “civic participation, strengthen community cohesion and explore local identity” (p. 9).

In the cases of *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*, these traits also appear to be conspicuous, particularly as citizens express a desire to see themselves represented in the information they read and an interest in sharing knowledge with their fellow citizens in a spontaneous and participatory way. From the theoretical perspective of participation (Carpentier, 2012), it becomes apparent that, in both cases, citizens collaboratively decide what to write and how to write it, which ultimately contributes to the credibility of the publications and building trust in the disseminated information.

From the perspective of this exploratory study, the presented cases offer insights for more comprehensive research, including “news deserts”, which entails identifying municipalities lacking traditional media outlets (Jerónimo et al., 2022). Although the parishes of Vela and Ciladas may not fall under the category of “news deserts”, there is recognition of a correlation between territories devoid of media presence and those less visible in news coverage, as those exemplified in this study.

This article is divided into four sections. The first one delves into the concept of participation in the context of community communication. Subsequently, the correlations between proximity and trust will be addressed, paving the way for a detailed examination of the case studies and the expansion of the intended discussions. In methodological terms, the literature review was fundamental to the development of this research. The findings also reflect the qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews with five participants in the two initiatives conducted between September 11 and 14, 2022.

2. ABOUT COMMUNITY COMMUNICATION

Conceptually, *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* are regarded as community communication initiatives that, while recognising the distinct contexts of each location,

represent broader endeavours aimed at fostering spaces for dialogue, social transformation, and political influence. However, before delving into the particular perspective of community communication adopted in this study, it is essential to briefly address the notion of “community”, although without intending to explore it extensively.

Whether driven by the pursuit of better living conditions, the exploration of new places or the intention to promote cultural exchanges, people — individually and collectively — are increasingly on the move. Concurrently, technological transformations have facilitated the preservation of “bonds of belonging” even without a physical presence in a given territory, transforming the concept of “being in common” to one driven more by shared ideas and feelings rather than mere cohabitation in the same physical space (Saldanha et al., 2014).

These changes challenge us to transcend the notion of community as a simple clustering of people within a delimited geographic space, moving towards the concept of a “generative community” (Saldanha et al., 2014). Here, community is understood as the link between individuals, with the aim of fostering organisational expansion in harmony with historical and social realities, where cooperation and solidarity are foundational principles.

Generative community refers to the collective actions (driven by the pursuit of the common good) which can be undertaken by a group or a community of citizens. This concept is grounded in the recognition that the prevailing characteristics of contemporary society – such as the failure of “project-based politics”, the decentralisation of power, and the prominent individualistic and cosmopolitan tendencies – prompt a quest for alternative approaches. (Saldanha et al., 2014, p. 7)

In this sense, the term “generative” refers to the community’s capacity to unite around common objectives, proposals, and endeavours, with community communication serving as the conduit for this exchange of experiences.

Examining the shifts in the communication landscape brought primarily by the proliferation of digital platforms and the newfound potential for interaction and dialogue transcending geographical boundaries, Paiva (2023) advocates for an expansion of the scope of community communication. She argues that there is no longer a single platform that can accommodate the diverse needs of communities, emphasising instead the significance of community-centric communication initiatives operating across various environments.

The author also suggests that the emergence of community media is directly related — though not exclusively — to the need for information. In other words, a “pressing need to produce their own narratives since the mainstream media is unable to incorporate the daily life and cultural aspects of peripheral populations given the economic and power centres” (Paiva, 2023, p. 23). Providing a global overview of community communication as “peripheral political action”, Custódio (2016, p. 139), echoing Paiva’s perspective, states that the creation of community initiatives is driven by the demand for two central spaces of

power: the space to speak in the media and the institutional spheres for defining public policies. In this sense, community communication is an expression of the political struggle to gain inclusion within existing power structures or establish informal spheres of influence.

Drawing from a comparative analysis of newspapers and radio stations across communities worldwide, Custódio (2016) delineates three categories of community communication in Europe: one characterised by political-ideological resistance, one arising from the pursuit of ethnic diversity, and a third centred on the valorisation of local cultures and daily life.

In Portugal, Midões (2020) provides a significant contribution to the understanding of community communication by identifying five fundamental concepts: “community”, “proximity”, “empowerment”, “power”, and “participation”.

For the author, an essential feature of community communication lies in the existence of “a sense of closeness among its members, whether it be geographical or emotional, fostered through shared traditions and customs, which may manifest in face-to-face interactions or through digital resources” (Midões, 2020, p. 11). From this sense of closeness, the author underscores that processes of participation and power relations are established with the potential to enhance connections among community members.

While Midões’ (2020) primary focus is on mapping community radio stations, his exploration of objectives, management practices and, above all, participation contributes to a broader understanding of community communication. This framework helps in analysing the initiatives under discussion here.

Thus, given the characteristics outlined below, it is evident that *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* align closely with the perspective of community communication that emphasises the appreciation of local cultures and everyday life. This approach involves citizen participation in communication processes and the cultivation of trust to facilitate the creation of spaces for dialogue, as will be further discussed in the following section.

3. PARTICIPATION AND TRUST IN COMMUNITY MEDIA

As demonstrated earlier, the concept of a “generative community” hinges on the notion of shared goals and collaborative actions. Thus, it is safe to say that there is no community communication without the participation of its members.

Carpentier (2012) grounds participation in democratic theory and the inclusion of people in decision-making processes. This involvement can happen to a lesser degree when, for example, participation is associated with the right of citizens to elect their representatives or to be elected, maintaining centralised decision-making, or to a greater degree, when citizens play a more significant role than simply electing their representatives and leading to more balanced power relations. However, the author argues that in contemporary societies, the meaning of participation transcends the realms of democratic theory since various stakeholders engage in political practices, thus broadening the scope of politics to the spheres of representation, which includes culture and the media.

Regarding content production processes, Carpentier (2012) outlines three levels of participation. The first level is access, defined as the presence of individuals within media organisational structures, whether physically or through machines and technologies, to provide opportunities for them to be heard. The second level is interaction, which involves the establishment of socio-communicative relationships within the media sphere, facilitating the collaborative production of content within a group or community. The primary distinction between access, interaction, and the third level, actual participation, lies in the degree of equalisation in power relations. In participation, citizens are not merely interlocutors or co-producers but also co-decision-makers and content creators.

In other words, at the level of access, people can be heard, but they have no power to determine what and how content will be produced; at the level of interaction, people have limited power as the final decision on what will be created and distributed still lies with the media organisations; finally, in participation, the decision on content is made collaboratively. Participation itself and its correlations with the community are important aspects of this study, as they offer insights into the communication dynamics developed in the cases of *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*.

In *Media e Participação* (Media and Participation), published in Portuguese in 2017, Carpentier once again delves into a comprehensive interdisciplinary examination of the connection between media and the concept of “participation”. This includes analysing case studies across various fields such as cinema, radio production, and television. In his critical review of the work, Montargil (2017) contends that by employing five secondary analytical dimensions in these case studies, Carpentier effectively offers an encompassing overview of the discussions pertaining to quality content and the concept of “participation”.

In the cases examined in this article, participation serves as the cornerstone for establishing trust. In community communication, individuals engage because they seek platforms for dialogue and sharing, driven by their familiarity with others involved, their stories, and their shared values. This relationship differs markedly from that which individuals have with traditional media, be it national or regional journalism.

In traditional journalism, trust and credibility are instilled by certain expectations. In essence, the reader/listener/spectator trusts the information disseminated by the media because they believe in the expertise and accuracy employed in producing the news (Aguiar & Rodrigues, 2021). Trust in the adherence to the facts (Lisboa & Benetti, 2017) makes media information credible because it is supported by institutionalised “credibility devices” (Serra, 2006b, pp. 5–6), such as objectivity, factuality and veracity. In the case of community communication, specifically in the cases studied in this article, trust is not inherently bestowed; it is not a given. Instead, it is a predicate built through participation.

Hence, in community communication, credibility is perceived as a characteristic of what is deemed trustworthy (Lisboa & Benetti, 2017). Viewing trust and credibility as attributes perceived by individuals helps elucidate why readers place trust in blogs (Serra, 2006a) authored by non-journalists (Rosen, 2005), as well as in communication platforms created by citizens, for instance.

Certainly, when discussing participation, we cannot ignore the tensions and challenges arising, especially in communication through digital platforms. Companies like Google, Apple, Facebook, Microsoft and Amazon are part of a powerful group of platforms whose control and profits dictate information flows, not to mention the development of labour exploitation systems that make thousands of people and journalists precarious worldwide (Figaro & Marques, 2020). Sometimes, the content consumption mechanisms of these platforms inadvertently foster what is termed as “dark participation” (Quandt, 2018, p. 40), where the participant’s goal is to insult, threaten, spread hatred or simply cause harm to other people. This stands in stark contrast to the kind of participation envisioned in community communication.

In models such as community communication, people tend to favour local and hyperlocal information (Jenkins & Graves, 2019) that pertains to common interests. Zago (2009) observes a growing trend towards informative hyperlocality, fuelled by the widespread adoption of mobile devices and the possibility of journalistic production on digital networks. Within this context, the specificity of news seeks to meet the needs of individuals in circumscribed territories. This is because, in the scenario promoted by the development of the world wide web and mobile devices and by globalisation, where information tends to be overly generalised and focused on events of national or international interest, “knowing what’s happening around the corner” is as important, if not more important, than knowing what’s happening in the world. Hyperlocal news takes this specificity a step further, covering “a community, a neighbourhood, a street or even a specific block” (Zago, 2009, p. 1).

In this way, as in community communication, the essence of news and information pieces lies in the bond and proximity among individuals, usually focused on the experience of a particular community, intended for consumption by its members (Aranha & Miranda, 2015). In this sense, ordinary citizens play a pivotal role in building information networks and engaging in the production and dissemination of content (Holanda, 2008). In contrast to the “deterritorialisation” proposed by the global information order, which can separate the centre of the action and the seat of action, with a degree of reliance on external factors, the local information order “reterritorialises” as, based on internal logic, it brings together people, companies, institutions and social forms in favour of common interest (Barbosa, 2002).

According to López-García (2017), this proximity fosters interest in the information, which in turn leads to the awareness necessary for decision-making by each citizen. Although López-García’s perspective primarily focuses on grassroots journalism, it offers insights into the mechanisms for cultivating trust and credibility in community communication, which differ from those in conventional journalism, as previously discussed.

When examining trust in online communities, Donath (1996) identified that trust is not solely determined by the identity of the speaker but especially their claims of real-world experience and their track record of accurate contributions are directly related to the trust placed in them by the participants. This aspect is crucial in understanding how trust is established in communication models managed by individuals, as the correlation

between the accuracy of information, facts, and accounts elevates the credibility of the participants, making them more trustworthy and accepted by others. Such communication models are usually motivated by a sense of responsibility, a willingness to share knowledge and mutual assistance (Broncano, 2008; McMyler, 2011) as they separate competence from technical ability.

4. VELA NOTÍCIAS AND JORNAL DA ALDEIA: GEOGRAPHICAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

This exploratory study examines two community initiatives in Portugal: the newspaper *Vela Notícias*, situated in the parish of Vela within the municipality and district of Guarda, and *Jornal da Aldeia*, located in the parish of Ciladas within the municipality of Vila Viçosa and district of Évora.

The Centre and Alentejo regions share similar geographical and demographic features. Geographically, they are both located in the inland of Portugal, where there has been a notable decline in population over recent decades, attributed primarily to two factors: firstly, the migration of young individuals to coastal areas and emigration to other countries, and secondly, the ageing of the population. These migratory patterns are largely influenced by economic factors, as individuals seek job prospects and higher salaries (Castro et al., 2020).

As the working population migrates, businesses and services in these territories become increasingly scarce, exacerbating their desertification and isolation. Data from the latest census helps illustrate this situation (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021). Young people are leaving these areas, and those who remain are the oldest: in Vela, around half the population is over 65, with only 20 young individuals under the age of 14. In Ciladas, there are 46 young people for every 259 residents aged over 65 (see Table 1).

PUBLICATION	<i>VELA NOTÍCIAS</i>	<i>JORNAL DA ALDEIA</i>
Parish	Vela	Ciladas
Municipality	Guarda	Vila Viçosa
District	Guarda	Évora
Total inhabitants	423	816
Area (km ²)	21 km ²	107.54 km ²
Inhabitants aged 65+	219	259
Inhabitants aged 0–14	20	46
Population density	20 inhabitants/km ²	8 inhabitants/km ²

Table 1. Geographical and demographic characteristics of the two towns

Note. Data retrieved from the 2021 Census (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021).

The two parishes currently have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants combined. Notably, Ciladas spans approximately 108 km², while Vela has just 21 km². So, Vela has an average population density of 20 inhabitants/km², whereas Ciladas has only 8 inhabitants/km².

According to the 2021 Census (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2021), over the last decade, Ciladas experienced a population decline of 23.8%, while Vela's population

decreased by 13.7%. This demographic shift is described as “both a cause and a consequence of social, economic, and environmental dynamics” (Castro et al., 2020, p. 10), with implications extending to the information landscape.

4.1. DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY

Vela Notícias and Jornal da Aldeia were chosen as the objects of this study due to their status as publications generated by non-journalist citizens and their location within the inland of Portugal. In both initiatives, citizens voluntarily undertake tasks spanning information gathering, topic selection, writing and editing texts, and distribution to their fellow citizens’ letterboxes. The publications seek to leverage participants’ knowledge, specialisations and areas of expertise in content production.

In both cases, content production deviates from the conventional logic of selection, filtering, and prioritisation typically observed in traditional journalistic outlets. Nevertheless, despite their non-professional status, they are presented with names and graphics designed to align them closely with journalism at large and conventional newspapers in particular (Figure 1 and Figure 2).



Figure 1. Format and content organisation of Vela Notícias. Note. Copies collected by the authors.

(Medicine) section, and a language teacher shares insights on “Pontapés na Gramática” (Grammar Tips) and “Curiosidades da Língua Portuguesa” (Portuguese Language Trivia). The president of the Parish Council pens “A Mensagem do Presidente” (The President’s Message), expressing concerns about current affairs, both local and global. Other sections include “Nós por Cá” (About Us), authored by Parish Council members, highlighting parish activities and initiatives; there is also the “Obituário” (Obituary), acknowledging recent deaths; and “Os Novos Filhos da Terra” (The New Kids in Town), celebrating recent births (see Table 2).

PUBLICATION	VELA NOTÍCIAS	JORNAL DA ALDEIA
First Edition	October 2000	August 2022
Format	Printed	Printed
Print run	500 copies	400 copies (first edition)
Frequency	Bimonthly	Monthly
Printing and graphic layout	Parish Council	<i>Motor Social</i> project and Parish Council
Participants	General community	Young people aged 12 to 16

Table 2. Characteristics of the mediums

Vela Notícias is issued every two months with a print run of 500 copies per edition. Citizens distribute the copies door-to-door and mail some copies to their fellow citizens residing abroad. Proofreading is undertaken by one of the participants, a retired Portuguese teacher. A member of the Parish Council manages text coordination and layout.

The inception of *Jornal da Aldeia* dates back to August 2022. The newspaper was initiated through a collaboration between the Ciladas Parish Council and the *Motor Social* project. It aims to contribute to the education of young people, encouraging citizenship through participation in topics of community interest. Young individuals aged 12 to 16, with the guidance of two adults, are involved in selecting topics, writing and editing texts, as well as printing and distributing copies door-to-door in the village. The *Jornal da Aldeia* is published on a monthly basis and has a circulation of around 400 copies.

While *Jornal da Aldeia* may feature fewer pages and a simpler aesthetic compared to other publications, its content is rich in local narratives, village anecdotes, folk traditions, interviews, community events, and cultural highlights (see Figure 2). Young participants actively contribute by proposing topics and generating content, which is refined collaboratively with the involvement of adults in the initiative. A member of the *Motor Social* project oversees the editing, coordination and layout of the texts. This type of participation fosters a sense of citizenship, community and local identity (Midões, 2021).

In both cases, the Parish Council serves as the printing outlet for the newspapers. What sets apart *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* from municipal newsletters is their community-driven content. Aside from the designated sections like (“A Mensagem do Presidente”) and (“Nós por Cá”), the information shared in these newspapers is authored by various members of the community, irrespective of local political power. Camillo (1998) defines municipal communication as a “global, coherent and continuous set of

communication initiatives conducted by the institutional structure of the municipality” (p. 15), which includes the City Council, the Municipal Assembly and the mayor. This form of communication is a resource the municipality uses to address specific issues. The informative nature of municipal communication is corporate in the sense of disseminating the deliberations and decisions of the municipality. The municipal notice and bulletin, akin to the *Diário da República* (Official Gazette) at the central government level, are instrumental in fulfilling these objectives.

Hence, despite one of this article’s objects of study features sections with institutional messages, the overarching attributes of both *Jornal da Aldeia* and *Vela Notícias* preclude their categorisation within the realm of municipal or autarchic communication. Consequently, these initiatives align more closely with the principles of community communication.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study favoured a qualitative methodological approach and selected two community communication tools: *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*. In order to understand the dynamics of communication, information production and public participation within these publications, we employed complementary methodological strategies. Firstly, we collected and qualitatively analysed the newspapers. Here, we tried to understand what kind of content was published, who wrote it, how the articles were graphically presented, and whether there were calls for participation in the editions. We then contacted the individuals accountable for the publications and conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Duarte, 2005) with the participants. A total of five participants were interviewed between September 11 and 14, 2022, via video calls on the Zoom platform and telephone conversations (Table 3). While the sample size may not be extensive, the insights provided by the interviewees significantly contributed to the exploratory nature of this study, prompting new inquiries and potential avenues for future research.

REFERENCE	ROLE	ORGANISATION	DATE OF INTERVIEW
Interviewee 1	Collaborator and layout coordinator	<i>Vela Notícias</i>	September 11, 2022
Interviewee 2	Collaborator	<i>Vela Notícias</i>	September 13, 2022
Interviewee 3	Collaborator	<i>Vela Notícias</i>	September 13, 2022
Interviewee 4	Collaborator and layout coordinator	<i>Jornal da Aldeia</i>	September 14, 2022
Interviewee 5	Collaborator	<i>Jornal da Aldeia</i>	September 14, 2022

Table 3. Participants interviewed for the study

All the interviewees authorised the recording of the interviews for scientific purposes. However, it was decided not to disclose their identities. The responses were analysed qualitatively and interpretatively without the use of software. Three analytical dimensions were addressed: (a) participation process; (b) perceptions of trust in vehicles; and (c)

transmission of values and sense of belonging. The interviews covered 11 questions related to the establishment of these community media and their objectives. Participants also answered questions such as: “what does it mean to you to participate, and how do you contribute to this initiative?”; “does knowing that other people in the community participate in the newspaper enhance trust in the content?”; “does the absence of journalists interfere with this trust/credibility?”; “to what extent does this initiative succeed in conveying the values, culture and way of life of the parish residents?”, among others.

Duarte (2005) highlights that the individual in-depth interview has become the classic method for delving into a subject by seeking out information, perceptions and experiences of the interviewees/informants in order to analyse and present them in a structured form. A key strength of this approach is its flexibility, as it allows the interviewer to adjust their questions while leaving the interviewee free to define the timing of their responses.

In the view of Stokes and Bergin (2006), this flexibility provides the conditions for the interviewees to express their beliefs and feelings on a given subject, which is why interviews lead to greater contextualisation and comprehensive research. Boyce and Neale (2006) suggest that this technique is particularly suitable when researchers seek detailed information about individuals' behaviour, aiming to gain a deeper understanding of a phenomenon or situation and uncover the reasons behind it. In this way, “narratives allow researchers to go beyond the transmission of information or content, making the experience revealed, which involves fundamental aspects to understanding both the subject interviewed individually as the context in which she/he is inserted” (Muylaert et al., 2014, p. 188).

6. FINDINGS

Analysing the interviews provided insights into how participants relate to the community and the publications, as well as how trust is built in this community communication model. At *Vela Notícias*, participants suggest some topics and contribute various types of content, presented in the form of chronicles, interviews, short stories or poems. In the *Jornal da Aldeia*, primarily involving young people aged 12 to 16, the work is developed by the youth with the support of two adults. One of the initiative's coordinators views participation as a means of “contributing to the young people's training, facilitating the acquisition of skills in the area of reading and writing” (Interviewee 4). On the other hand, although some young participants may see producing the newspaper as a “holiday hobby”, they perceive it as an opportunity to learn “more about the world of journalism” and to get to know “the village and its people better” (Interviewee 5).

It was also possible to ascertain the motivations behind participation and how they contribute to the dependability of the information disseminated. Overall, alongside “participation”, terms such as “representation”, “belonging”, “social responsibility”, “proximity”, and “trust”, commonly used to rationalise involvement in the production of publications, were frequently mentioned.

In this sense, both initiatives reflect a common aspiration among the population of those parishes to be represented and informed about local and hyperlocal issues. The latter does not always have adequate coverage in conventional media. In a study of journalists in the Centre of Portugal, the respondents highlighted some challenges in gathering information, such as: “finding credible sources”, “defining what is important due to a large amount of information”, and having “time to research outside the agenda” (Morais et al., 2020, p. 73). This is noteworthy because, despite the existence of regional media outlets in both municipalities (Vila Viçosa and Guarda), the interviewees emphasise the need for specific communication that can reflect the challenges and virtues of the localities, aiming to “shed light on what is going on in the parish and reach out to the entire community” (Interviewee 1).

These testimonies indicate that the participation of residents in collective decision-making regarding issues and topics of local interest increases trust in these vehicles and the information they provide. This is evident in the following statement: “the news is exclusively about the village and issues that are of interest to the residents” (Interviewee 4).

Moreover, this statement underscores an interesting aspect regarding the understanding of the disseminated content, which also relates to the format and structure of the texts. In essence, the absence of journalists does not seem to affect the perception of the quality of the information and the structure of the narratives. Hence, the term “news” is used to describe the content produced by citizens.

Based on this rationale, the interviews suggest that the participants perceive both initiatives as “local newspapers” due to their proximity-based characteristics, their role in mediating between the population and the political power, and their informative presentation: “there is an informative nature here in the relationship with the parish and in the close relationship between the population and the politicians and the newspaper also bridges this gap” (Interviewee 2); “it is a means of communication dedicated to the daily life of the village, its history and people” (Interviewee 4). Additionally, it becomes apparent that the fundamental concepts of community communication are implicitly present in these statements, even if unintentionally.

The meaning of the statements highlighted above becomes more evident when considering other testimonies: “I consider it a newspaper, without a doubt, because it provides information on issues related to the parish” (Interviewee 3), “I think the newspaper is made by journalists (although amateurs) and it is a newspaper, I have no doubt about that” (Interviewee 2), but also: “it is a printed media outlet, publishing news and opinions on the most diverse areas of interest to the inhabitants and young people” (Interviewee 4).

We acknowledge the potential value and benefits that the participation of professional journalists could bring to both initiatives. However, it is noteworthy that the non-professional aspect of the publications was only emphasised by one of the interviewees who viewed the newspaper as the product of journalists’ work: “I don’t consider it a newspaper, as we’re not journalists” (Interviewee 1). On the other hand, the non-involvement of professional journalists in the publications seems to be compensated for by a very specific verification dynamic facilitated by the proximity of the people involved. It appears

that the fact that participants and readers know each other and maintain social, cultural and emotional ties streamlines the processes of verifying the information disclosed. This is evident in the following statement by Interviewee 2: “information has to be verified in any case, and here I can verify this information because I go to my neighbour and ask if it’s true or not. I do fact-checking almost immediately”.

Hence, the interviewees unanimously underscored that the absence of journalist involvement in the publications does not affect community trust. They attribute this to the perceived relevance and significance of the information disseminated. Moreover, they elucidate that familiarity with the individuals behind the content enhances both interest and credibility. This sentiment is encapsulated in statements such as: “if I know the person, I’m more interested in reading, or I’m especially interested because I know I’m listening to a person from my community” (Interviewee 2).

The newspaper is produced by community members, and we think that this instils confidence in the news and information being conveyed. We believe that the fact that people know who is writing gives them some credibility and empathy. (Interviewee 4)

This sentiment leads us to conclude that the egalitarian nature of communication, coupled with proximity and the alignment of common interests, is considered a benefit by the participants. This attribute is evident in the statements of all five interviewees: “the newspaper is by the people for the people, both residents and outsiders” (Interviewee 1) or “the fact that it gives people a voice and that the newspaper isn’t made by just one person or just the Parish Council, it’s more representative of the whole community” (Interviewee 2).

It is also evident that the interviewees attribute a representative nature to the publications, reflecting the sense of belonging to their territories and the cultural heritage of those regions. This feature appeals to both residents and those who no longer live in the area but maintain an emotional connection with it. This is noticeable in testimonies such as: “this newspaper is really written for the people who live in Vela or for those who, although they are from Vela, don’t live here, but live in other parts of Portugal or abroad” (Interviewee 3); or: “this dissemination abroad is very important because people feel closer to home. They feel their roots when they receive information about what’s happening in their locality” (Interviewee 1); and: “the newspaper has a lot of impact in the sense that those who are away can follow the news about Vela, from a vehicle of information that gets to their homes” (Interviewee 2).

In summary, the disseminated information holds significance for the residents of both parishes as it combines representation and belonging with local interest. “The newspaper reflects the desire to have a place that could gather information from the people of the village” (Interviewee 2). “In an ageing village, in this case, the oldest and most geographically isolated in the municipality, this newspaper is a means of providing information that is important to the community, most of whom don’t have social networks” (Interviewee 4).

Finally, the wish to contribute to the community's development and the sense of social responsibility reflected in the intention to share knowledge seem to be among the main motivations highlighted by the interviewees.

If we have things to share and we think the rest of the people will be interested in it, I think it's a responsibility. And above all, as a member of an association, I believe that a village association has an obligation to participate in and support the newspaper. (Interviewee 2)

"My contribution to this newspaper is to help people speak better and to know the origin of various commonly used expressions" (Interviewee 3).

Furthermore, certain interviewees express a feeling of contentment in their ability to contribute and share information. This encourages them to continue participating and reading these publications. Statements such as "I think people feel useful and happy when they write about subjects they like" (Interviewee 1); "I'm happy when people ask me if I know what I'm going to write about in the next edition" (Interviewee 3); and "I feel great joy because we're making the village famous and we're helping more people to get to know it" (Interviewee 5) make this sentiment quite clear.

7. DISCUSSION

Whether through the participation of parish citizens in the content production process, editorial decisions and distribution processes, by strengthening relationships of affection and trust between community members, or even through the valorisation of local cultures, *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* are two initiatives that reflect the relevance of community communication in places of low population density in the inland of Portugal. It is also worth noting that in both villages, Vela and Ciladas, the population is mostly elderly and does not often access the internet, so information is disseminated essentially through traditional media such as television and the printed press.

Interviews with participants offer valuable insights into the emotions and significance associated with engaging in a collaborative content production process. These media outlets, produced by non-journalists, align with the concept of "community communication" by reflecting a shared aspiration to reinforce the cultural heritage and values integral to local identity (Midões, 2021). Moreover, they address the demand for local information exchange, often overlooked by national and regional media outlets (Paiva, 2023).

The interviews indicate that residents see these initiatives as a means of preserving the values of their community and disseminating the main events in their parish, both for other residents and for those who have relocated abroad.

Overall, interviewees expressed a sense of fulfilment in sharing their knowledge and talents. They also exhibited a strong sense of belonging to the village, responsibility and social commitment, as well as an affection for the community that binds them together. These factors can be listed as the primary motivations for participating in *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*.

It is important to highlight that both outlets strive to align themselves with traditional journalistic media, not only in their format but also in the names they adopt. The interviews also revealed that the participants try to establish this association by frequently using terms such as “newspaper”, “news”, and “information”. However, unlike traditional media, where trust in the information is assumed, in these cases, trust is constructed over time. It is nurtured through close relationships, shared interests, and bonds within the community. Additionally, information is verified almost immediately as it is received, given the proximity between the reader and the writer, who often happens to be a neighbour, family member, or friend. This immediacy in verifying information further strengthens the bond of trust.

The two regions where the media outlets studied in this paper are situated share similar territorial and demographic characteristics, which further distance them from the centres of power where mainstream media are typically based. Despite Portugal’s long-standing tradition of regional journalism, recent years have witnessed the closure of numerous newsrooms, a shortage of financial and human resources, and a precarious labour market for journalists (Jerónimo, 2015). In a way, this contributes to the emphasis on events of journalistic interest occurring in urban centres and more densely populated areas, leading to a certain detachment of journalism and journalists from towns and villages, as observed in the cases under scrutiny here.

In initiatives such as *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia*, citizen involvement can be classified as the highest level of participation or participation itself (Carpentier, 2012). Here, individuals are not merely invited to be present within the organisational structures of these media; they are not mere spectators waiting for the opportunity to be heard and to express their desires and demands. The purpose of citizen participation in *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* also extends beyond interaction, with a focus on co-production, as typically occurs in traditional journalistic media.

Through their involvement in thinking, organising, writing content, contributing to the graphic structure, distributing, and even mobilising other participants, citizens establish a profound bond with the “newspapers” and their communities. They transcend being merely interactive agents and become participants with a degree of decision-making authority. According to the scales identified by Carpentier (2012), this places them squarely in the realm of actual participation, as “the key defining element of participation is power” (p. 170), whether in production or reception. In the “newspapers” examined in this article, individuals have a say in determining the content they will work on, collectively select the individuals, issues, and actions they will address, and ultimately decide on the most appropriate organisational strategies for the success of the two initiatives.

Studies of this nature are significant because they highlight the constraints of the vertical, hierarchical and somewhat detached mode of traditional journalism. These constraints can impact citizens’ desire and commitment to engage in producing and disseminating their own communication. However, they also point towards potential avenues for collaborative production between citizens and journalists, particularly in regions

deemed “news deserts” (Jerónimo et al., 2022). Initiatives like *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* demonstrate that community communication can address gaps in information dissemination and provide valuable insights, particularly on topics that receive limited attention from traditional media but are important to local inhabitants.

In this scenario, the traditional vertical model of one-to-many transmission in media is being replaced by a horizontal logic, where information flows in multiple directions continuously. This shift in communication practices has led to the emergence of a new type of individual: the *pro-am* (professional-amateur), as noted by Ramonet (2011/2012). *Pro-ams* engage in amateur activities but uphold professional standards in their endeavours. Consequently, citizens are no longer passive readers, listeners and viewers of media; instead, they actively participate by writing, speaking, photographing, filming, and even analysing conventional journalistic productions.

Hence, citizen-led production presents challenges to professional journalism in certain aspects, as it can establish credibility and trust through the development of decentralised communication dynamics. Analysing community communication initiatives like *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* enables us to delve deeper into this type of debate, particularly as they originate from regions underrepresented in the media and illustrate the vitality of citizen-driven information production in sparsely populated areas within Portugal’s inland. As discussed earlier, the absence of professional journalists does not appear to diminish individuals’ commitment, willingness to participate, sense of responsibility and trust in the information disseminated by these tools.

All stages of the information process, spanning from collecting information to distributing printed material, are undertaken by citizens with no academic training in journalism or prior experience in the media sector. What binds these participants together is a shared aspiration to disseminate pertinent information with their fellow citizens while also seeking to stay informed about the events within their community and parish in detail.

8. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an era where digital platforms dominate communication channels, *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* persist in delivering information through traditional print formats. These “newspapers” serve as a window into the challenges, culture, events, and strengths of communities in Portugal’s inland, where residents are predominantly elderly and have limited digital literacy. Two interviewees underscore the significance of disseminating information in print, particularly to those without access to social media, a demographic that comprises the majority of *Ciladas*’ population. Additionally, the content featured in these publications diverges from typical regional journalism by offering in-depth coverage tailored to specific communities, thereby fostering greater reader engagement.

Hence, citizens use *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* as mechanisms for self-representation, finding in them vehicles for sharing knowledge and shouldering social responsibility for their communities. This study thus serves as an indicator of an under-explored

communication reality warranting ongoing scholarly attention. In a country where 166 out of 308 municipalities (53.9%) are totally or partially without traditional news coverage or face the risk of such coverage depletion, it is crucial to note that the Centre and Alentejo regions are two of the most affected, bearing 80% of this news desertification burden (Jerónimo et al., 2022).

If we scrutinise these figures, can we inquire about the extent to which community communication endeavours such as *Vela Notícias* and *Jornal da Aldeia* mitigate the impact of this desert? Can collaborative work between journalists and citizens bridge the news gap in these territories, promoting closer integration between professionals and residents? What insights does community communication provide in response to these questions?

In this work, we leave these questions open-ended, offering glimpses into the evolution of communicative and participatory dynamics aimed at counteracting the myriad facets of desertification in Portugal's inland villages.

Translation: Anabela Delgado

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THE HYPERTELEVISION IN THE BRAZILIAN MEDIATIC SCENARIO: AN ANALYSIS OF STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE STREAMING PLATFORM GLOBOPLAY

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ABSTRACT

This article endeavours to examine how Brazilian television has responded to technological trends in the context of media convergence within the realm of Brazilian television, with a specific focus on the streaming platform of Globo Group, the largest media conglomerate in Latin America, known as Globoplay. The central argument of this paper revolves around the various forms of engagement employed by the organisation as it seeks to adapt to the changing landscape of media. Using the case study method (Yin, 2015), this research correlates the theoretical framework with three central points aimed at discussing engagement in the era of media convergence as a foundation for television's relationships with its advertisers, the creation of audiovisual products and projects, and, most importantly, its relationship with the contemporary audience. The analysis underscores the use of techniques such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, which aid the platform in reshaping its strategies and decision-making processes. In light of the findings and subsequent discussion, it can be inferred that the primary goal of these initiatives is to foster engagement among both its audience and advertisers.

KEYWORDS

Brazilian television, hypertelelevision, Globoplay, streaming, TV Globo

A HIPERTELEVISÃO NO CENÁRIO MEDIÁTICO BRASILEIRO: UMA ANÁLISE DAS ESTRATÉGIAS ADOTADAS PELA PLATAFORMA DE *STREAMING* GLOBOPLAY

RESUMO

Este artigo visa examinar como a televisão brasileira tem respondido às tendências tecnológicas no contexto da convergência mediática, com foco específico na plataforma de *streaming* do Grupo Globo, o maior conglomerado de mídia da América Latina, conhecida como Globoplay. O argumento central deste artigo gira em torno das várias formas de engajamento empregues pela organização enquanto procura adaptar-se ao cenário de constante mudança dos mídia. Utilizando o método de estudo de caso (Yin, 2015), esta pesquisa correlaciona o quadro teórico com três pontos centrais destinados a discutir as noções de engajamento na era da convergência dos mídia como base para as relações da televisão com os seus anunciantes, a criação de produtos e projetos audiovisuais e, sobretudo, a sua relação com a audiência. A análise destaca o uso de técnicas como inteligência artificial e aprendizagem automática, que ajudam a plataforma a remodelar as suas estratégias e processos de tomada de decisão. À luz dos resultados e discussão subsequentes, pode-se inferir que o objetivo principal dessas iniciativas consiste em

adaptar-se ao contexto hipertelevisivo e ampliar o modo como o Grupo Globo se relaciona tanto com o seu público como com os seus anunciantes.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

televisão brasileira, hipertelevisão, Globoplay, *streaming*, TV Globo

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has introduced significant challenges in contemplating contemporary television within the context of audiovisual transformations in the era of streaming, as Livingstone (2019) notes. With the advent of new media, numerous authors have raised questions about the potential extinction of television. The steep decline in broadcast television audiences, coupled with the migration of viewers to streaming services, appears to intensify this debate. In truth, there exist additional matters that warrant critical consideration within the field of media studies rather than unquestionably subscribing to the belief that television is becoming obsolete (Shapiro, 2020). Indeed, for how long have these discourses been circulating in our discussions?

In this sense, we recognise the necessity of keeping abreast of changes, trends, and transformations in the digital landscape to grasp how these shifts can aid us in reimagining television in the context of datafication, platformization, and algorithmisation (Livingstone, 2019). We are not asserting that these discourses should not be discussed in the field. However, we also contend that studies should advocate for transdisciplinary approaches, comprehending the ramifications of contemporary television and its interaction with new devices and convergent technologies. Based on these analyses, informed by empirical data or case studies, we can draw inferences or pose some provocations regarding the decline or resurgence of television.

As Moe et al. (2015) contend, new media studies must rearticulate the question of the audience in response to the emergence of new media in order to examine fresh dimensions of engagement between viewers and advertisers within the realm of hypertelevision. The guiding principle of this reconfigured television landscape appears to lead us toward considerations centred on engagement. Not only within the context of networking conversations but also across various other domains influenced by the culture of convergence, we embark on this paper with a concerted effort to comprehend the concept of “engagement” within this theoretical framework. We aim to explore how engagement can catalyse significant transformations in the interactions involving television and its key stakeholders, namely the audience and advertisers. We endeavour to gain insights into the utilisation of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and other facets of the culture of convergence within the current television landscape, particularly within the context of Brazilian television.

Therefore, this article endeavours to examine how Brazilian television has responded to technological trends in the context of media convergence, with a particular

emphasis on the initiatives undertaken by Globo Group, the largest media conglomerate in Latin America. Competing with giants such as Netflix and HBO Max, Globoplay, Globo Group's streaming platform, boasts over 30,000,000 subscribers, surpassing both Netflix and Amazon Video in terms of subscriber numbers (Melo, 2023).

By building upon these developments, the article examines how the concept of “engagement” becomes evident in the strategies adopted by Globoplay with its consumers and advertisers. Primarily, by examining these movements, we provoke a clear understanding of the transition processes from television to digital, whilst these insights provide valuable contributions to television studies in various global contexts. The following analysis is divided into three parts, each accompanied by a research question. They are: (a) in what ways does Globo Group understand engagement as a necessary convergence in its modes of relating to its advertisers?; (b) how does engagement enable Globo Group to promote and create audiovisual projects and products in the offer of its attractions?; and (c) how can these reconfigurations in the media ecosystem help to rethink the audience in the context of hypertelevision in Brazil?

To provide clarity to this discussion, we present empirical data and case studies that illustrate how the organisation's streaming platform has leveraged new technologies for strategic adaptation to the digital landscape. By harmonising the theories presented herein with the empirical evidence, our research posits that these strategic moves underscore Globo Group's alignment with the evolving media ecosystem. Consequently, we contend that actions adopted by the platform, which consider engagement in their decisions, transcend the realm of the relationship they aim to establish with their audiences, also reflecting the organisation's commitment to effecting substantial enhancements in optimising the commercialisation of its advertising spaces. The application of data science techniques plays a pivotal role in facilitating this adaptation to the new media landscape.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

In recent years, a plethora of authors have presented arguments to contemplate the future of television from diverse viewpoints. Among the most extreme theorists, there is a prediction of television's imminent extinction. In contrast to this line of thought, others argue that such a perspective appears overly reductionist and diminishes, based on this understanding, the significance of television's achievements and ongoing efforts to adapt itself to contemporary times. To introduce the concept of television in a state of decline, countless tabloids and a multitude of websites worldwide leverage fluctuations in audience ratings points as an argument to bolster the assertion that broadcast television is in a state of decline. In Brazil, television industries consistently grapple with these discourses. This compels us to engage in a discussion that necessitates a focus on

our argument grounded in the progress and challenges confronting Brazilian television within the context of global reconfigurations that circumscribe the media landscape.

Santos Neto and Bressan Júnior (2023) contend that there have been notable shifts in recent years in the modes of production, circulation, and consumption of televisual products within convergent environments. Among numerous alterations, we observe, for example, the experimentation with new aesthetic languages in the *modus operandi* of television, the utilisation and recycling of digitised audiovisual archives, the implementation of fresh audience engagement strategies within their editorial approaches, and the shift from broadcasting consumption to narrowcasting through streaming platforms. Based on these changes lies the scepticism of authors such as Scolari (2023) and Livingstone (2019) precisely pertains to the misinterpretation of the current state of television, as discerned through a meticulous examination confined to classical theories.

Within the realm of television research, with a specific focus on Brazilian television, a discernible trend emerges towards decentralised consumption, facilitated by video-on-demand platforms, the second screen phenomenon, networking conversation (social TV), and the seamless integration of audiences into the development of audiovisual narratives (Bignell & Woods, 2022; Fehine, 2017). According to Bignell and Woods (2022), we are currently witnessing an expansion of consumption possibilities within new media and, concurrently, in the ways traditional media establish connections with their audiences. This evolution, highlighted by Scolari (2023), entails the integration of television with new systems and devices, enabling interactivity and connectivity across various levels. These insights correspond with the previous perspective articulated by Jenkins (2006), and they continue to hold contemporary significance: media convergence extends beyond mere technological aspects.

With the advent of video-on-demand sharing platforms, made possible by streaming services, viewers have started to transition to digital platforms and consume television content on-demand, at their convenience, and from any location. This phenomenon reinforces the concept of “TV-Everywhere” (Tussey, 2014). Lipovetsky and Serroy (2007/2009) are theorists who have provided support for the theory that delves into the decentralisation and autonomy of individuals in their decision-making processes concerning what to consume, where to consume, and when to consume. Hypermodernity expresses a new societal *status quo* in which individuals seek more personalised experiences and fewer collective ones (Lipovetsky & Serroy, 2007/2009). Media experiences constitute an integral component of these ongoing reconfigurations.

Nonetheless, a point of contention shared among these authors, including Scolari (2013, 2023), pertains to the attempt to construct a critical theory that undermines these advancements and, most notably, the concentrated efforts of traditional media in adjusting to new languages and aesthetics. It is undeniable that what we have witnessed are reconfigurations that directly disrupt modes of production, circulation, and consumption. However, in accordance with Santos Neto and Bressan Júnior (2023), television remains engaged with its audience, even as it evolves away from live broadcasts, and respects viewers’ autonomy regarding what and when to watch. These changes, comprehended

from a technological standpoint, exert a transformative influence on international and social dynamics and processes, aligning with the perspective articulated by Scolari (2023) regarding interactivity and connectivity.

For instance, in 2021, one research indicated that Brazil is the second-largest consumer of streaming services in the world (Ramos, 2021). At least 65% of Brazilians have a streaming service subscription. According to Meimaridis et al. (2020), recognising the substantial potential of the streaming market in Brazil, other national television industries, such as Record TV (Play Plus) and SBT (SBT Vídeos), have also started launching their own platforms. Nevertheless, Globo Group continues to maintain its hegemony in the Brazilian streaming landscape with Globoplay. To these authors, the presence of streaming platforms in the Brazilian audiovisual landscape has fundamentally altered the manner in which Brazilians engage with foreign and domestic productions and, most significantly, television as a whole.

However, in light of these changes induced by the culture of convergence, it is not unusual to encounter authors who are bolstering the notion of television's demise. It appears that the advent of novel devices, emerging technologies, and tools contributes to the potential cessation of television by presenting these transformations to the television industry as formidable challenges that pose a threat to established business models. Academic approaches and even television experts face specific challenges in cultivating a more profound understanding of this subject.

In accordance with Gunn and Syvertsen (2016), the proposition that television is becoming obsolete appears unduly exaggerated to warrant acceptance as a plausible hypothesis. Initially, it is noteworthy that the television model continues to drive industries across various scenarios, thus demonstrating significant profitability. The authors assert that, given the economic magnitude of television, it is evident that there are interested and enthusiastic parties keen to endorse modifications that facilitate television's adaptation amidst ongoing reconfigurations. It is through these adaptive measures that contemporary television may ultimately attain a certain level of stability and success in fulfilling its role as a communicative medium, reinventing itself and contemplating television praxis.

From our standpoint, the authors' argument concerning the "end of television" paradigm emerges as a universal critique that implies a disagreement with this assertion. Gunn and Syvertsen (2016) assert that "TV is influenced not only by technological and economic factors, but also by political, historical, and cultural factors" (p. 149). In this context, there is no clear linearity in these transformations. Each country and region exhibits unique characteristics that contribute to this discussion. As Jenkins (2006) contends, media convergence hinges on a cultural shift, not solely on technological means. Based on this perspective, the contemporary consumer habits concerning media consumption on these platforms serve as crucial indicators directing television's adaptation, aligning with cultural and social shifts while demonstrating resilience amidst comprehensive structural transformations.

Bringing this discussion into the context of Brazilian media, it is evident that

television still maintains a certain dominance compared to other forms of communication. Television in Brazil has become an integral component of our daily experiences. Even when we are not watching television in front of the screen, we tend to consume content produced by television on social media or during our everyday conversations with others. This dominance is evident in the specific ways television engages with its audience, aiming to communicate with all segments of society. This socialising nature of television is advocated by the French sociologist Wolton (1989). According to the author, the primary characteristic of television is its socialising nature, in which an invisible and subtle social connection is formed. However, Wolton acknowledges that some historical, social, and economic peculiarities influence the presence of this social connection in various regions across the globe where television operates.

Besides serving as a medium of communication, Brazilian television plays a significant role in the constitution and maintenance of identities. As stated by Wolton (1989), until the mid-2000s, mainstream television was perceived as a reflection of society. With the advent of fragmented television, such as pay-television channels offering diverse content, this reflection shattered, breaking down social reality into smaller fragments. However, television has not ceased to mirror society. In addition to being an industry, Brazilian television is also viewed as a significant creator of audiovisual content, producing material in various media languages, aesthetics, and formats, all with the goal of reflecting society (Meimaridis et al., 2020) — in which it not only serves the mainstream audience but also produces and distributes its content conceived from these reconfigurations in the contemporary media landscape, focused on diverse and segmented audiences.

In this regard, authors like Scolari (2009, 2013, 2023) reassess television theories through the contemporary lens, considering the transformations that not only reshape the new forms of television consumption but also the dynamics of communication. They primarily explore the interaction of new technological and convergent devices that integrate and amalgamate, consequently reconfiguring television practice. Based on these interpretations, contemporary studies must delve deeper into how new tools, metrics, and data analysis techniques enable television to reinvent itself within its economic framework and create the conditions for its continued existence. We are residing in an era of hypertelevision, hyperconsumption, and hyperconnectivity (Scolari, 2009).

The term “hypertelevision”, as advocated by Scolari (2009), must not be interpreted as a phase in which there is merely a transfer of television industry content to repositories and digital spaces, with an emphasis on hyperlanguage. There is a spectrum of intricate reconfigurations within the communication context. Actually, the primary concern should revolve around how television industries harness these reconfigurations to adapt their operations and integrate into new communication dynamics for the purpose of engaging both consumers and advertisers and thus becoming part of them. The response may be straightforward on the surface but necessitates a more thorough analysis.

Following this argument, in the next topic, we aim to raise questions about the notion of “engagement” in the next section, with the intention of also considering a perspective intertwined with the utilisation of information technologies, AI, and machine

learning as means of reevaluating engagement within this communication context. To facilitate our understanding, we will briefly explore the concepts of “engagement” to guide our discussion.

2.2. THE NEW STAGE OF TELEVISION AND NEW WAYS OF ENGAGING

According to Grohmann (2018), the concept of engagement in communication research can stem from various origins, as well as from specific challenges and varied interpretations depending on the context. We recognise the need to define the concept of “engagement” to steer our discussion. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (n.d.), the English word “engagement” can encompass various meanings. Nonetheless, we would prefer to consider it in a sense associated with the idea of active involvement or interaction. The term “engagement” has often been employed in research concerning social media. In the realm of fan studies, this concept signifies a phenomenon connected to participatory culture and fan communities, as posited by Jenkins et al. (2013/2015).

In contemporary times, engagement appears to be a crucial metric in the business sphere, enabling companies and organisations to establish connections with their consumers and promote interactive exchanges between these social actors (Carlson et al., 2018). However, sustaining a robust engagement between companies and consumers is not always perceived as a straightforward endeavour. Several social, cultural, and economic factors intertwine and constitute part of these relationships.

Poell and van Dijck (2015) argue that real-time connectivity serves as an essential tool for monitoring and comprehending how individuals engage with institutions and organisations. This comprehension serves as a foundation for industries to formulate their technological, editorial and marketing strategies, subsequently enabling them to redefine the interests and objectives of the organisation and optimise user involvement, whether they are audiences or advertisers. For example, when we observe an individual actively engaging with a specific brand or organisation on social media, such action expresses the user’s intention to establish a connection with that brand.

In the realm of social media, we typically associate engagement with the actions an individual takes, such as commenting, liking, or sharing content related to that brand or organisation. Nonetheless, engagement can take on various forms, each carrying distinct implications, particularly within the context of hypertelevision.

On social media platforms, our interactions leave behind traces and imprints that can be rich in meanings and significance, as posited by Jenkins et al. (2013/2015). As the authors contend, the louder the buzz, the greater the likelihood that the platform’s algorithm will deliver the content to other users. The activity of other users can initiate what is commonly referred to as a “herd effect”. In this regard, when users engage in specific actions on a platform, these interactions inadvertently generate valuable insights, offering a wealth of data that can unveil habits and behaviours. This data can then be integrated with the strategies the company plans to implement, for instance.

In the realm of marketing studies, a company’s market share can also be perceived

as a form of engagement. This metric quantitatively represents how effectively a company has engaged with a particular audience. Multiple interpretations form the basis for scrutinising the concept of “engagement”. Consequently, in recent years, many companies have been actively exploring innovative solutions and technologies to assess this engagement, with the aim of comprehending the qualitative and quantitative aspects that enable industries to gather precise information for use in their decision-making processes.

Based on this theoretical framework, it appears feasible to approach discussions about the concept of “engagement”, as articulated by authors in the field of convergence culture studies. After all, what television industries aspire to achieve is engagement, not only with their end consumers but also with other stakeholders such as sponsors. The idea of engagement is not entirely new when we contemplate television, even in the context of traditional television, as we frequently do. Engagement was also previously understood as a means of connecting with the audience. However, discussing engagement in a less technologically mediated environment entails considering the methods and technologies that were predominant at that time. As we progress toward a future increasingly dominated by technology, it becomes imperative to reevaluate these aspects.

The progression of AI has ushered in transformations that, within the framework of hypertelevision, introduce technological and convergent advancements, thus offering fresh perspectives to the television industry (Scolari, 2023).

In the context of platformization, algorithmisation is reshaping the means of production and distribution, as well as bringing about changes in how users are approached on social networks and video platforms like Netflix and YouTube. According to Shapiro (2020), contemporary television confronts challenges that go beyond merely questioning the survival of traditional media in the era of new media. The author suggests that we should move beyond this debate and concentrate on what Rouvroy (2012) highlights concerning the concept of “data behavioralism”.

In this context, modern AI is developed by industries to understand the media and content preferences of viewers and subsequently recommend relevant content based on how these users engage with the platform. By analysing this trend, algorithms also appear to influence the methods by which audiovisual industries formulate and shape their editorial and marketing strategies in the creation of their television offerings. One of the significant factors contributing to Netflix’s success is the utilisation of algorithms (Khou, 2023). Through the Netflix recommender algorithm, the platform collects data using AI to comprehend the user’s interactions with their audiovisual content, thereby offering a tailored viewing experience to the user.

In addition to employing big data to comprehend users’ consumption habits, as highlighted by Uricchio (2017), the platform has also utilised the acquired data to offer insights to its screenwriters. This data can aid in the creation of new television productions based on narratives that have achieved notable success on the platform, as well as in understanding user behaviour concerning the available content for consumption. According to Davis (2022), there is considerable debate surrounding Netflix’s global influence, which appears to be fraught with numerous challenges. Nonetheless, the use of AI

by the North American giant seems to serve as a significant strategy for generating new understandings regarding the use of emerging technologies, optimising performance, and turning engagement into a profitable and lucrative venture.

As demonstrated, industries have a vested interest in fostering a more pronounced engagement on these networks, given that the potential reach can influence and reshape the editorial and marketing choices of these organisations. In the context of our analytical exploration and in accordance with the parameters presented, the understanding of engagement appears to unveil, from a quantitative standpoint, varying degrees of user satisfaction concerning how the audience interacts with a television product or a stance adopted by the organisation.

In addition to AI and the utilisation of machine learning, since these communities actively voice their opinions on social networks, it is understood that these expressions are also subject to analysis and can be valuable for comprehending mobilisation and modes of interaction. However, how can the television industry delve into the issue of engagement on television beyond social media? Moe et al. (2015) argue that social media platforms “are becoming increasingly central to the television audience experience, and it is crucial to thoroughly examine how audience participation manifests in various cultural and techno-commercial contexts” (p. 106). Nonetheless, there is a need to go even further. It is imperative to explore the myriad ways facilitated by the use of disruptive technologies and, in this context, the reasons why contemporary television seeks to engage not only its audiences but also its advertisers and the means by which they intertwine.

The forthcoming chapter aims to explore the concept of “engagement” within the activities conducted in the context of hypertelevision, building upon this theoretical framework. In this study, we narrow down our focus to the analysis of the streaming platform of Globo Group, the largest media conglomerate in Brazil, known as Globoplay.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present study was designed using the case study method (Yin, 2015). In order to construct the dataset for analysis, this research utilised various sources of data related to our subject of study: the Globo Group. This included news articles, interviews, and information the organisation itself disclosed during events sponsored by the Globo Group, highlighting the strategies implemented by the organisation.

For data collection, a search engine like Google was employed in incognito mode to ensure that there were no algorithmic influences that could alter the ranking of the obtained data. Following the data collection process, the subsequent step involved systematically summarising this information using an analytical summary sheet for the gathered data.

Within the realm of engagement, this study addresses three major aspects that specifically explore the impact of engagement on the organisation’s decision-making process. These aspects revolve around its relationship with advertisers, the development

of television products and projects, and how the organisation conducts audience measurement in the platformisation context.

In order to structure the analysis framework, three research inquiries were formulated: (a) in what ways does Globo Group understand engagement as a necessary convergence in its modes of relating to its advertisers?; (b) how does engagement enable Globo Group to promote and create audiovisual projects and products in the offer of its attractions?; and (c) how can these reconfigurations in the media ecosystem help to rethink the audience in the context of hypertelevision in Brazil?

A qualitative approach was adopted for the analysis. This study primarily focuses on understanding actions and strategies adopted rather than statistically inferring their quantitative aspects. By building upon the foundations of the theoretical framework, our objective was to establish connections between the concept of “engagement” and the key findings documented throughout the analytical process. The amalgamation of the theoretical framework with data obtained from external sources allowed for a more tangible understanding of the initiatives undertaken by the Globo Group in the context of Brazilian television. This, in turn, provided a reflective dimension for the broader field of television studies in the digitalisation era.

4. RESULTS

To systematise the results obtained through the undertaken case study, the findings of this research are summarised in three topics in accordance with the raised questions.

4.1. ENGAGEMENT AS THE FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE INTERACTIONS WITH ADVERTISERS

The tensions between the internet and television have evolved into an intriguing phenomenon that compels us to reconsider communication strategies. Amidst the rapid expansion of social networks like Facebook and YouTube, video advertisements have gradually shifted away from traditional mass media channels, such as television. Part of this transition can be attributed to the measurement capabilities afforded by platformisation, which enable the real-time assessment of user engagement with ads (Poell & van Dijck, 2015). According to Meimaridis (2023), the emergence of video streaming in the Brazilian context triggered certain concerns within the television industries, leading TV Globo to reevaluate its programming strategy and adapt to evolving market dynamics. As part of Globoplay’s initiatives to respond to the transition of advertisers from conventional media to digital platforms, we observe that, in conjunction with the audience’s migration to the streaming platform, there are market indicators that emphasise the platform’s commitment to redefining television beyond a simple shift from live to recorded content.

With the objective of harnessing the capabilities and techniques facilitated by digital platforms, Globoplay has announced the introduction of a new solution designed to enhance advertiser integration in 2023. Initially conceptualised in 2018, this solution is

known as “Globo dynamic ad insertion” (Ferreira, 2022). In light of this new advertising opportunity, advertisements can be segmented across the organisation’s *simulcasting*¹ channels based on the subscriber’s platform profile. During the commercial break of live streaming programming, users are impacted by personalised ads, using AI and machine learning to understand the habits and consumption patterns of the user subscriber. Indeed, this new tool expands advertisers’ horizons. Now, advertisers can monitor the performance of ads on “traditional media” in real time and fine-tune their investments in campaigns targeted at streaming television.

According to data reported by the organisation during the “Up Front Globo 2023”² event, this signifies a globally unique solution that merges AI with the same video-enhancing metrics employed in traditional platforms, now adapted for digital television, similar to how it functions on platforms like YouTube Ads and Facebook Ads (Globoplay, 2023). In contrast to programming on traditional broadcast television, the streaming platform enables ad segmentation by product categories (such as telenovelas, news, sports, and entertainment), customisable modules based on demographic categories (including gender and age), as well as supplementary targeting options (such as income, content segmented by regions, and areas of interest, among others).

Another innovation on the platform to assist advertisers in connecting with their audience, as also reported on “Up Front 2023” (Globoplay, 2023), is the GAMA Ad Marketplace, a programmatic media buying platform. This service combines Group Globo’s data using machine learning and AI, as outlined in the advertiser’s briefing (Rosa, 2022). The tool automates programmatic media space purchases across various windows of the organisation, including the streaming platform, Globoplay, and other registered third-party repositories linked to the platform. With these configurations, advertisers have the flexibility to tailor their advertising efforts to align with the requirements of each campaign and define key performance indicators. This service bears a notable resemblance to Google’s Marketplace Ad services.

As previously mentioned, these transformations also reshape the dynamics between advertisers and marketing agencies. By facilitating the decentralisation of media procurement, advertisers themselves now have the ability to customise their actions and strategies in alignment with their values and objectives, which are defined within the procurement platform provided by the organisation. The company perceives this method as “self-service” and offers training programmes, e-learning, and training to empower advertisers. Furthermore, data matching from subscribers’ consumption with the companies’ goals contributes to the enhanced performance of advertisers’ campaigns by optimising delivery and reducing audience dispersion.

This aspect underscores how Globoplay has employed algorithmisation as an ally in the platform’s growth prospects within the Brazilian television landscape. Its goal is not solely to serve the audience but also to evolve in supporting its advertisers. After all,

¹ Live streaming of channels subsidized by Globo Group, in addition to TV Globo.

² The “Up Front” is an event sponsored by Globo Group that aims to present to the advertising market the news, new products, and services of the organisation.

without advertising revenue, the sustainability of these industries becomes unattainable. In the case of Globo Group, advertisers have the capacity to initiate media purchases through the Globo Ads platform. All audience and engagement information, as well as strategies, are readily accessible on the platform, drawing from data generated by AI. This AI-driven approach provides concrete and precise real-time data that is available at any time and from any location.

Additionally, the organisation has been investing in a streamlined advertising platform that offers efficiency in media procurement, known as Globo SIM. In this service, AI is harnessed to develop media plans based on concise information provided by advertisers with limited experience (Sacchitiello, 2022). Advertisers also have the option to segment their campaigns based on geographical coverage (local, regional, or national). Moreover, the service features a video creation tool utilising AI. This service appears to be a simplified version of GAMA, designed for advertisers who may not have pre-existing video content or lack expertise in media procurement. With this, all campaign planning processes, video creation, media plan definition, and payment can be managed within the platform.

From a marketing perspective, these examples represent significant advancements in how Globo Group focuses its efforts on commercialising its advertising spaces, granting autonomy to both large agencies and small to medium-sized businesses. We note that these changes are aligned with the reconfigurations of the convergent landscape discussed earlier. The consumption habits of each viewer have become a valuable focal point for these organisations, as this data is monitored in real-time, utilising metrics and algorithms to prevent audience dispersion and thereby deliver a more tailored experience and results in line with advertisers' requirements.

With the growth and refinement of AI utilisation, factors such as gender and age, for instance, are no longer the sole parameters for analysing an individual's consumption habits. These new tools introduce additional parameters for campaign targeting. Thus, we verified that these encompass attributes like sexual orientation, interests, and behaviours. Nowadays, it is possible to conduct intricate analyses of each user and group them into micro or macro segments to optimise advertising efforts.

Platformization has emerged as one of the significant distinguishing factors for Globo Group in Brazil, positioning the organisation at the forefront of technological initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between the "traditional" television business model and information and communication technologies in the era of media convergence. Actions such as these underscore how Globoplay has been closely aligned with technological transformations that are reshaping the media landscape. This alignment promotes shifts in its underlying principles and premises, allowing the platform to function as an extension of television within the context of media convergence. Based on this comprehension, it is expected that these initiatives not only validate the transition from analogue to digital but also elevate the broadcaster's quality standards. Moreover, they provide unique experiences to their subscribers and advertisers, as articulated by Lipovetsky and Serroy (2007/2009).

4.2. ENGAGEMENT AS THE FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPING TELEVISION PRODUCTS AND PROJECTS

In this section, we will elucidate how data acquired through digital platforms also empowers the television platform to reconceptualise and design its television products by extracting feedback from its viewers on social media. This capacity for interaction via “social TV” (Fechine, 2017) enables broadcasters to receive immediate input from their audiences, including suggestions, critiques, and other observations that can inform the broadcaster’s decision-making process (Tussey, 2014). This is particularly valuable when considering the conception of television products and projects, encompassing both traditional broadcast television and specific products tailored for streaming platforms.

Therefore, since 2020, Globo Group has been implementing a more integrated brand strategy, advocating for an all-encompassing consolidation of its brands (Sacchitiello, 2019). The goal of this unification is to foster a closer connection with Globo Group’s users by integrating content, television products, and platforms in a way that facilitates a notable synergy between its social actors and activities across the organisation’s omnichannel channels. Consequently, the platform has been investing in the development of specific formats in the conception of audiovisual products with an emphasis on communication, thereby promoting the integration of the circulation of its products across both TV Globo and its subsidiaries (in cable-TV channels) as well as multi-platform initiatives (Ramos & Borges, 2021).

In an effort to encourage the transition of the broadcast television audience to streaming, Globo Group has employed compelling strategies in this ascent of the platform within Brazilian territory. Amongst these efforts, we highlight the launch of its television productions, which include the exclusive presentation of unreleased episodes of audiovisual content on the Globoplay platform before their broadcast on TV Globo. Furthermore, as part of initiatives exclusively tailored for the platform, the company has started investing in products under the “Originals Globoplay” (originals Globoplay) seal, which are audiovisual productions exclusively created for the platform. An example of this is the telenovela *Todas as Flores* (All the Flowers), which premiered in October 2022 (Duvanel, 2022).

In Brazilian broadcast television, telenovelas are aired continuously on a programming schedule for a specific duration. Muanis and Svartman (2018) highlight that these productions are considered the most popular audiovisual products on Brazilian free-to-air television. With a daily broadcasting schedule, the episodes of telenovelas are typically aired from Monday to Saturday. However, in order to align with the format of serialised audiovisual productions, the first telenovela created for the streaming platform adopted a broadcast schedule (appointment viewing) similar to American television series. This entails releasing one episode per week and having a break between seasons. In this instance, the break occurred between the spring season and the fall season.

It is important to bear in mind that the telenovela *Todas as Flores* was conceived and scripted exclusively with consideration for the aesthetic of audiovisual language and the framing of social media dynamics. Within this context, the broadcasting schedule

implemented by Globo Group, wherein the unreleased telenovela was made available on a weekly basis, generated substantial reverberation and commendations from both specialised critics and the audience. Such an approach disrupted the established conventions of the television genre traditionally associated with the consumption of telenovelas — in the case of *Todas as Flores*, this approach blurs the line between theoretical-conceptual definitions of the format understandings of a telenovela or a conventional television series. Indeed, the success of the production on social media constitutes an intriguing case for the platform. It is noteworthy that user mobilisation on social networks had a more pronounced influence on engagement compared to the prime-time soap opera broadcast on TV Globo at that time, *Travessia* (Crossing; Goes, 2022).

In Brazil, the telenovelas airing between 9 pm and 10 pm can be regarded as the primary flagship of Globo Group, as it garners the highest television viewership and engagement on social networks during the day. The engagement surrounding the “Originals Globoplay” production reveals an intriguing observation, demonstrating how the audience is attuned to the initiatives undertaken by the platform. Furthermore, it underscores the audience’s preference for a narrowcasting consumption model over the synchronous flow of simulcasting on free-to-air television. This phenomenon reinforces the concepts of “hypertelevision” proposed by Scolari (2009) and Lipovetsky and Serroy (2007/2009).

By redefining this behaviour in the ways Brazilian viewers watch and consume telenovelas, *Todas as Flores* played a pivotal role in generating numerous memes on social media. This phenomenon amplified the buzz surrounding the production and created heightened expectations among the audience regarding the storyline and developments between seasons. With this strategy, the platform successfully expanded its subscriber base by mobilising viewers to advocate for the show. Moreover, the telenovela’s substantial impact on social media and the platform exerted significant pressure on Globo Group to broadcast the production on TV Globo’s schedule instead of confining it to the streaming platform.

In addition to television products specifically crafted for streaming, another noteworthy aspect is the special projects undertaken by the platform, which exhibit a connection with the audience. Among these initiatives, one that stands out is the revival of past telenovelas from Globo Group’s archive. As evident, telenovelas are regarded as quintessentially Brazilian cultural products and exhibit widespread popularity, both on social media and in public sentiment. In this realm, TV Globo can be readily perceived by the Brazilian audience as a trailblazer in the realm of soap opera production, having created and broadcasted these audiovisual productions on a daily basis since the 1950s.

A study conducted by Santos Neto et al. (2023) highlighted that the audience’s desire to revisit old telenovelas from Globo Group’s television archives, given the significant buzz generated by these users on social media, was promptly addressed through the project to reintroduce these contents. This initiative commenced in April 2020 during the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic. According to reports made available by the organisation itself, the return of the telenovelas to the platform’s catalogue effectively mobilised the audience to the detriment of certain productions available for consumption.

Furthermore, Santos Neto and Bressan Júnior (2023) propose that thanks to the platformisation of television, the endeavour to enable the return of these titles became feasible due to the existence of an exceptionally mobilised and engaged participatory culture around the affective economy that drives the consumption of these products. In this context, the platform “facilitates a more personalised consumption experience guided by the principles of narrowcasting” (Santos Neto & Bressan Júnior, 2023, p. 16).

At this juncture, engagement assumes a noteworthy significance for Globoplay and exemplifies television’s adjustment to the culture of convergence. In this context, the platform’s objective consists of fostering particular content and initiatives that stimulate audience mobilisation through engagement on social media. This strategy creates an environment where the buzz generated by these users on social media tends to impact the platform’s algorithms and reach a progressively organic audience.

In an effort to align its strategies with the consumption patterns of these users, audiovisual products are also reimagined based on the data collected by the platform itself. Several productions originally aired on broadcast television acquire exclusive formats and spin-off products on the platform, promoting a transmedia integration among the Globo Group’s exhibition circuits. This rationale underscores the consolidation of the organisation’s all-encompassing brand unification. A prime example of this phenomenon is evident in entertainment shows produced by TV Globo, such as *Big Brother Brasil*, the highest-rated reality show on Brazilian broadcast television since the 2000s.

Within the landscape of Brazilian television productions, this program engages with its audience on multiple levels. On social media, users mobilise to support or put out their favourite participants from the reality show. On the Gshow portal, the organisation’s entertainment platform, fans participate in polls to determine the outcomes and future developments of the show. On Globoplay, eliminated participants engage in exclusive webcasts and live sessions to answer questions from the audience, and viewers can even access real-time camera feeds through pay-per-view channels. Additionally, there is a cross-promotion strategy wherein eliminated participants appear on shows aired by broadcasters subsidised by Globo Group, such as the pay-TV channel Multishow.

4.3. ENGAGEMENT AS THE FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEMPORARY AUDIENCE

The Brazilian television landscape appears to be undergoing profound transformations within its media ecosystem, with indications of a shift driven by disruptive technological and informational advancements that have become evident along this journey. Nevertheless, in the case of Globoplay, it becomes evident that the platform still retains certain distinctive characteristics that emphasise Globo Group’s engagement with its stakeholders. Through the utilisation of AI, Globo Group explores various avenues to uphold the quality of its productions while stimulating the audience through innovative and technological methods and tools (InfoQ Brasil, 2018).

In this context, as the Globoplay platform continues to extend its presence throughout Brazil, engagement takes a central role as a guiding principle influencing the organisation's decision-making processes, as previously detailed in the preceding sections. To foster closer connections with its audience, in 2022, Globo Group announced a partnership with Twitter that primarily focuses on brands and advertisers (Matos, 2022). This landmark agreement marks the first collaboration of its kind in Latin America, where a television broadcaster joins forces with a social network through a structured mechanism aimed at translating engagement on social media into profitability.

According to statements from Globo Group executives, the organisation recognises that these actions aimed at engagement are an essential catalyst for the sustainability of its operations. Beyond the real-time conversations occurring on networking platforms, where users express their sentiments about what they are currently watching, there exist additional strategies to ensure that content becomes viral, enters the circulation flow of networks, and impacts new users. As exemplified by the possibilities of transmedia consumption, these strategies generate discussions and, consequently, expand the reach of the organisation's productions beyond its loyal consumers (Ramos & Borges, 2021).

Furthermore, it is worth noting that engagement is mobilising various segments within the audiovisual industry to develop more precise methods and techniques for analysing contemporary television. As discussed previously, times have evolved, and the means of comprehending contemporary television must adapt to safeguard not only the economic viability of organisations but also television's fundamental characteristic that constitutes it as a communication vehicle par excellence: its role as a means of socialising.

To measure streaming audiences, Kantar Ibope, a global leader in media intelligence, has overhauled its processes and tools for assessing viewership on digital platforms. Since 2022, the company has been employing a new device in the country called "Focal Meter" (Melo, 2022). With this device, the company tracks data on video consumption across all devices within a household. The data collected by Kantar Ibope can be accessed in real-time by television broadcasters in Brazil, enabling these companies to utilise it for self-promotion and the sale of advertising space.

Audiences also take on new significance when we discuss this decentralised consumption made possible by the narrowcasting model. When viewers consume a television product directly on the Globoplay platform, Globo Group receives specific insights and can measure the performance of its productions, as well as the genres and types of products most sought after by its subscribers. In this sense, the platform can better target its audience for its productions and brainstorm new ways to continue mobilising and attracting new viewers. While there are no specific details available regarding this landscape, it is hoped that future research will delve into this algorithmic relationship with Globoplay, as Uricchio (2017) has explored in the context of Netflix and the use of algorithms to recommend and gather data in the conception of new audiovisual products.

Among the innovations in the Brazilian platform context are recommendation algorithms similar to those used by Netflix. During a conference at "QCom São Paulo" in

2018, Tiago Albineli Motta, who was the technical leader of Globo.com's growth hacking³ team at the time, mentioned that the platform was integrating machine learning and data science techniques to reduce churn rate⁴ (InfoQ Brasil, 2018). By employing these tools, the company aims to prevent users from cancelling their subscriptions to Globoplay in various ways, using clustering⁵ techniques. Through these tools, the platform gathers precise data on how users interact with the content available on the platform, their viewing habits, and their preferences, which then allows content suggestions based on these parameters.

It is noteworthy to note that every user action on the platform provides valuable data. This scenario underscores how television audiences can be reimagined in the culture of interactivity and connectivity in various ways. The broadcaster's consumption of various productions has become increasingly fragmented. With this information, it becomes possible to better plan the organisation's actions with the goal of enhancing the television audience. Under these circumstances, it is notable that the organisation has strategically employed technology not only to adapt to the hypertelevision context and the ways in which the contemporary viewer has come to consume audiovisual production but also to serve its specific interests and objectives.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article endeavoured to examine how Brazilian television has been responding to technological trends in the context of media convergence within the realm of Brazilian television. In the field of television studies, there exists a notable gap in investigations that seek to establish correlations between engagement and audience beyond the scope of social media. Many of these discussions are conducted in isolation, exploring particular facets of convergence culture, such as the second screen, social TV, and participatory culture. While numerous studies touch upon the topic of engagement facilitated by media, they often fail to delve into a comprehensive understanding of engagement in a correlated manner and its broader implications on television.

Given the questions that guide this discussion, it becomes evident how considering actions aimed at engagement has emerged as a fundamental factor in formulating communication strategies within digital environments. Through the utilisation of data science, the figures derived from datafication and AI do not merely signify a quantitative measure of interactivity within a publication. They also signify potential phenomena, practices, and social and cultural processes influenced by participatory culture facilitated

³ The growth hacking sector of an organisation involves identifying and implementing creative and scalable strategies to drive business growth, especially in the digital environment. The actions involve the use of data, analytics, and rapid experimentation to find effective ways to acquire, retain, and engage customers, increase revenue, and expand the user base.

⁴ Churn is a metric used to measure the number of subscribers who cancelled a service within a specific period of time.

⁵ Clustering techniques involve organizing data objects with similar characteristics into separate groups, using data mining to uncover patterns and underlying structures within datasets.

by the active engagement of viewers in these networks. The presence of these elements essentially engages with our initial inquiries focused on understanding how TV Globo perceives the power of engagement in its actions as a fundamental convergence in its approaches to also engage with advertisers.

In order to comprehend how the current technologies enable TV Globo to promote and create audiovisual projects and products within its line-up of attractions, with a focus on actions that stimulate engagement at various levels, our research highlights several interesting points. In contrast to the paleotelevision era, as emphasised by Eco (1984/1984), wherein industries had to conduct extensive audience research to gauge popular opinion regarding their product offerings, the contemporary communicational grammar appears to offer real-time measurement of responses. In the present day, hypertelevision has reached a stage where it is feasible to analyse and comprehend all forms of interactivity within these spaces. These reconfigurations grant television industries a degree of autonomy in reshaping their interactions with viewers, transcending the traditional metrics of audience share or rating points. Thanks to the process of datafication, digital platforms furnish us with more precise data and novel tools for comprehending the social bonds of television in this new communicational paradigm. Consequently, this facilitates deeper insights capable of substantially reconfiguring the relationships between television industries, advertisers, programming strategies, and the creation of audiovisual products.

In this context, our last inquiry pertained to how these reconfigurations in the media ecosystem can contribute to a reevaluation of the audience within the realm of hypertelevision in Brazil. Based on our analytical journey, what we have come to contemplate in this investigation is that quantitative data concerning television audiences gathered through “traditional” techniques and tools appear inadequate for comprehending this contemporary television *ethos*. Isolated data fails to facilitate a comprehensive rethinking of television in the era of media convergence. This line of thought must be revisited and reframed to encompass new discussions and challenges, as proposed by Scolari (2023), in our pursuit of understanding contemporary television.

In terms of the subject of analysis, it is apparent that Globoplay has adeptly adapted to these changes and transformations, and the platform appears to be an important instrument aimed at preserving (or attempting) the hegemony of Globo Group in the Brazilian audiovisual landscape.

In this context, we find ourselves discussing a television praxis that not only prioritises aesthetic experiences but also underscores the incorporation of information technologies to optimise processes, enhance experiences, and strengthen relationships with its audience and advertisers.

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