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EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL número 26 Communication Papers

Carmen Echazarreta Soler
Editora Communication Papers

El número 26 de Communication Papers acoge un total de seis artículos de investigación, cinco temáticos y uno de contenido general, que incluyen valiosas investigaciones teóricas y empíricas del ámbito de la comunicación, de los medios y de los estudios de género. Como saben, el tema principal de este número es “Plataformas digitales y género como espacios potenciadores y desafiantes”.

Las plataformas digitales están surgiendo como espacios a la vez potenciadores y desafiantes para las representaciones y relaciones de género. Si bien estas plataformas dan voz a las mujeres, a las personas LGBTQ+ y a otros grupos marginados, también pueden allanar el camino para la reproducción y el refuerzo de los estereotipos de género. Este impacto bidireccional de las plataformas digitales es fundamental para la igualdad de género y su representación. En este contexto, el presente número de Communication Papers, el 26 ya, pretende analizar, en profundidad, estas dinámicas y desarrollar nuevas perspectivas en los estudios de género. Creemos que el trabajo de los investigadores ayudará a explorar el impacto de las plataformas digitales en el género y a aumentar el corpus de conocimientos en este campo.

En este número, presentamos interesantes estudios de investigación de España, Turquía, Rumanía, Alemania, Uzbekistán y Méjico. El artículo que abre el número 26 es: Uso del lenguaje emocional de Donald Trump como estrategia comunicativa eficaz, del que son coautoras, Silvia Espinosa-Mirabet y Mónica Punti-Brun. En su estudio, las autoras analizan las emociones utilizadas por Donald Trump en sus discursos para determinar su eficacia comunicativa. Para ello, analizan las palabras (y las asociaciones emocionales) de 185 citas directas del expresidente estadounidense publicadas por The Wall Street Journal.

La obra de Azamjon Oltmishevich Dadakhonov, titulada Exploration of Foreign Aid Forms and Impact on Media and Information Literacy Initiatives in Central Asian context examina el papel, las formas y la sostenibilidad de la ayuda exterior en la alfabetización mediática e informacional (MIL), en la región de la Asia Central. La alfabetización mediática e informacional es vital en una época de sobrecarga de información y desinformación. Sin embargo, los países de Asia Central se enfrentan a retos únicos a la hora de desarrollar e implementar programas de alfabetización mediática e informacional, dados los limitados recursos, la presión política y los diferentes contextos culturales. Para explorar la sostenibilidad de estas iniciativas, este estudio examina el impacto de la ayuda exterior en la creación de marcos sólidos de MIL en los distintos contextos socioculturales de Kazajstán, Kirguistán y Uzbekistán.

El tercer estudio de este número es de Ayşegül Akaydın-Aydın y Nur Emine Koç. Las autoras de The Empowerment Of Female Tv Series Characters On Digital Platforms: An Analysis Of The 2023 Blu Tv Series, se centran en las series turcas originales emitidas en Blu TV, la plataforma digital más vista en Turquía en 2023. El estudio se basa en el argumento de que el contenido de las series de las plataformas digitales es más independiente y las ficciones de los personajes están basadas en el conflicto.

Analizando los personajes femeninos de estas series bajo los epígrafes de actuación, los equipos, comportamientos territoriales, coerción de roles, fuera de personaje y el arte de la gestión de la impresión a través de la teoría de la autopresentación, de Erving Goffman, las autoras afirman que los personajes femeninos emergen en el entorno libre de lo digital, su desarrollo de carácter y los conflictos sobre sus identidades debidos a sus experiencias pueden ser fácilmente sentidos por la audiencia.

El cuarto estudio del número es el trabajo de investigación del que son coautores Cansu Arısoy-Gedik e İlkay Ceyhan, y se titula The Gender Gap In The Digital Era: Reaching Algorithmic Fairness And Technological Inclusivity In Network Society. En su estudio, los autores examinan la persistente brecha de género en las competencias y alfabetización digitales, poniendo el foco en el sesgo en tecnología que sufren las mujeres. El estudio concluye proponiendo esfuerzos concentrados para eliminar la brecha de género en las competencias digitales, para reducir los sesgos en los algoritmos y promover la inclusión en la era digital. Asimismo, subraya el imperativo de empoderar a las mujeres en la tecnología para capitalizar sus talentos y perspectivas con el fin de promover la innovación y el desarrollo socioeconómico equitativo.

El quinto estudio del número es de Diego Corpus y Miguel Sánchez Maldonado. En Discursos transfóbicos en redes sociodigitales: un análisis de comentarios en grupos de Facebook, los autores, a través de una etnografía digital y un análisis multimodal del discurso, identifican las formas en que los discursos transfóbicos, en los grupos latinoamericanos de Facebook, se expresan en las modalidades verbales y no verbales de los posts y memes de las redes sociodigitales; lo que sirve para explicar la regularidad temática presente en el lenguaje despectivo. El estudio muestra la presencia de discursos transfóbicos en comentarios y memes, organizados como estereotipos y prejuicios basados en la posición de los interlocutores.

El sexto trabajo del número es Publicidad, logotipo, diseño de marca, imagen y otras pluralidades. Muestra de Rumanía, de Carmen Neamțu. En su estudio, la autora se centra en conceptos, tales como lenguaje publicitario, logotipo y marca, y los presenta teóricamente bajo el paraguas más amplio del discurso publicitario.

Queremos dar las gracias de nuevo al conjunto de autores y autoras y revisores y revisoras que han hecho posible esta publicación, y esperamos que este número sea un recurso útil para toda la comunidad científica.

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Uso del lenguaje emocional de Donald Trump como estrategia comunicativa eficaz

Use of Donald Trump's Emotional Language as an Effective Communicative Strategy

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Resumen

El objetivo principal de esta investigación es determinar la eficacia comunicativa de Donald Trump, estudiando las emociones que usa en sus comparecencias. Para ello, se analizan las palabras (y su relación emocional) de 185 citas directas del expresidente americano publicadas por The Wall Street Journal. El análisis se focaliza en tres momentos álgidos de su trayectoria política (2016-2021): cuando gana las elecciones en 2016, cuando las pierde en 2020 y el asalto al Capitolio en 2021. Aplicando la metodología Geneva Affect Label Coder - GALC (Scherer, 2005), es posible establecer una relación entre sus palabras y las emociones expresadas en sus alocuciones. Estos resultados se han cruzado con los parámetros que definen a un comunicador eficaz, atendiendo de nuevo al peso de las emociones. Así, Trump es un comunicador fuerte que usa en sus comparecencias públicas muchas más emociones positivas que negativas y una mayoría de términos, asociados a sentimientos cariñosos (feeling love).

Palabras clave: comunicación política; comunicación emocional; comunicación eficaz; comunicación pública; Donald Trump; inteligencia emocional.

Abstract
The main objective of this research is to determine the communicative effectiveness of Donald Trump by studying the emotions he employs in his speeches. To achieve this, the words (and their emotional relationship) from 185 direct quotes of the former American president published by The Wall Street Journal are analyzed. The analysis focuses on three pivotal moments of his political trajectory (2016-2021): when he won the elections in 2016, when he lost them in 2020, and the assault on the Capitol in 2021. By applying the GALC methodology (Scherer, 2005), it is possible to establish a relationship between his words and the emotions expressed in his speeches. These results have been compared with parameters that define an effective communicator, emphasizing the significance of emotions. Thus, Trump is a strong communicator who utilizes a higher number of positive emotions than negative ones in his public appearances, with most terms associated with feeling love.

Keywords: Political Communication; Emotional Communication; Efficient Communication; Public Communication; Donald Trump; emotional intelligence.

1. Introducción

Este artículo pretende estudiar de forma aplicada, las relaciones entre comunicación política y emociones para observar la eficacia de éstas en un proceso de comunicación pública. El trabajo se centra en observar el peso de las emociones en la comunicación política, tomando como eje central la personalidad de un líder tan contundente como el ex-presidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump. Por tanto, el objetivo de este artículo es determinar la eficacia comunicativa de Trump a partir del análisis de las emociones que usa en sus comparecencias y que recoge la prensa.

El uso de las emociones es una estrategia estudiada en el ámbito de la comunicación política (Caramelo-Pérez, 2020; Mendieta-Ramírez, 2019; Bruni, 2018; Tarullo, 2018). Ponte Torrel, (2022) habla de la polarización afectiva y González & Ferré-Pavia, (2021) de la construcción de emociones políticas. Por tanto, la relación entre la ciencia política, que analiza cómo la política se relaciona con los políticos, los medios de comunicación y sus públicos, no puede apartarse del foco emocional.

Analizar las emociones no es una tarea fácil (Cebreiros-Fernández, 2017). Para el neurocientífico Antonio Damasio (2001: 781) emoción es «una colección modelada de respuestas químicas y neuronales que produce el cerebro cuando detecta la presencia de un estímulo emocionalmente competente, por ejemplo, un objeto o una situación». Hay diferentes corrientes que analizan la expresión de las emociones. En el campo de la psicología social se agrupan en tres líneas de investigación: el modelo bifactorial, el programa de expresión facial y el modelo constructivista (Cebreiros-Fernández, 2017: 112). En esta investigación, partiremos de la teoría de las emociones básicas o emociones modales.

La teoría de las emociones básicas (Ekman, 1992a) estipula que existen seis emociones básicas: tristeza, ira, sorpresa, miedo, asco y alegría. Posteriormente se añaden la angustia, relacionada con la tristeza, y el desprecio y la repugnancia, relacionadas con el asco (Ekman, 2017). Un aspecto interesante para esta investigación es el concepto familia de emociones (Ekman, 1992b). Tracy y Randles (2011) reducen a cuatro, los modelos de emociones básicas: «Todos están de acuerdo en que una emoción básica debe ser discreta, tener un conjunto fijo de componentes neurales y corporales expresados, y un sentimiento fijo o componente motivacional que haya sido seleccionado a través de interacciones duraderas con estímulos ecológicamente válidos» (Tracy & Randles, 2011: 398).

En este sentido, y para analizar las emociones, Scherer (2005) creó un sistema, el Geneva Affect Label Coder (GALC), que relaciona categorías de emociones con raíces de palabras: Sugiero una solución pragmática, basado en un programa macro de Excel que intenta reconocer 36 categorías afectivas comúnmente distinguidas por palabras en lenguajes naturales y analiza bases de datos de texto para estos términos y sus sinónimos (basado en tesauros establecidos) (Scherer, 2005: 713).

1.1. Las emociones y la comunicación política

La relación entre comunicación y emociones es un vasto campo de estudio (Cebreiros-Fernández, 2017; Tarullo, 2016; García-Fernández, 2001; Rodrigo-Alsina, 1997) en terrenos como la psicología, la publicidad, el periodismo y, como se decía, en comunicación política. Desde tiempos remotos, los políticos en su oratoria se han valido de cargas emocionales para estimular a los votantes (Tarullo, 2016), obtener el seguimiento de sus simpatizantes (Dagatti, 2017; Gómez-García, 2017), provocar el odio hablando de los adversarios (Ott, 2017), conseguir votos (Mendieta-Ramírez, 2019) o un determinado comportamiento electoral (Bruni, 2018).

Las emociones son importantes para la narración de historias (storytelling), el relato político y la persuasión (D'Adamo & García-Beaudox, 2016). Emociones como la ira son elementos poderosos en política (Weeks & GiL-de-Zúñiga, 2021) puesto que se relacionan con la desinformación. También han sido utilizadas para analizar la polarización y el discurso de odio en el ámbito de la política (Blanco-Alfonso et al., 2022); o para referirse a las teorías de las inteligencias múltiples (Briz, 2016): la inteligencia lingüística, la interpersonal y la intrapersonal. La primera se vincula al análisis de palabras, fonemas, y a la capacidad creativa del hablante. Se relaciona con, por ejemplo, el gusto por contar historias y se da en oradores y periodistas. La interpersonal define a políticos, actores, docentes o comerciales puesto que se vincula a la capacidad para percibir a los otros. Y, finalmente, la intrapersonal se daría entre, por ejemplo, filósofos, psicólogos o teólogos ya que se caracteriza por dirigir el autoconocimiento.

Aunque las diversas modalidades de inteligencia intervienen en el contenido, la forma o el uso en los procesos comunicativos, hay que resaltar el papel de la inteligencia práctica que facilita la actuación adecuada y adaptativa en el medio y, más concretamente, el papel de la inteligencia lingüística y emocional, personal y social (intrapersonal e interpersonal), pues estas se proyectan en determinadas conductas comunicativas (Briz, 2016: 423).

1.1.1. El caso Trump

Desde que el expresidente de los Estados Unidos, Donald Trump, irrumpiera en la primera línea de la esfera mediática, especialmente a través de la autónoma gestión de su descontrolada cuenta de Twitter, muchos han sido los analistas que desde ámbitos diferentes se han acercado a su figura (Elayan et al., 2020). Sobre el impacto de sus tuits se ha concluido que inspiraba odio y violencia (Ott, 2017) y/o prepotencia, arrogancia e inseguridad (Ahmadian et al., 2017). A menudo, la prensa internacional se ha hecho eco de sus increíbles titulares (Swinford, 2019; El País-EFE, 2016).

La denuncia de fraude electoral que Trump repetía desde que perdió las elecciones, y que ahora parece probado que provocó el ataque al Capitolio, ha sido un tema muy estudiado. Pérez-Curiel et al. (2021), por ejemplo, se han fijado en cómo los medios de comunicación informaron sobre ese proceso electoral en Twitter y en cuáles fueron las estrategias para contrarrestar el discurso del fraude, llegando a la conclusión de que la prensa evita el sesgo partidista y la polarización. Por lo que se deduce que los medios presentan al expresidente de forma neutral, rebajando así toda su fuerza emocional, que es objeto de estudio de esta investigación.

De sus comparecencias televisivas, los medios han deducido en buena parte del mundo, que es un hombre políticamente incompetente, errático y arrogante (Peredo-Castro, 2018). En una jornada de debate sobre la figura de Trump como comunicador eficaz, los participantes[1] concluyeron que era ególatra, extravagante, provocador y auténtico, pero que supo conectar con la gente (Canaleta et al., 2016).

En un análisis del comportamiento de Trump en Twitter (Elayan et al., 2020), se observa que cuanto más negativo es el contenido de un tuit más probable es que sea retuiteado y marcado como favorito. El estilo de los tuits de Trump es, según estos autores, mayoritariamente negativo o con connotaciones negativas, aunque tenga palabras positivas, pues usa un tono acusativo (Kreis, 2017), con insultos, mayúsculas y signos de exclamación para llamar más la atención (Ott, 2017) y por tanto, su lenguaje es altamente emocional (Elayan et al., 2020). Los autores añaden que el público en general responde más activamente al lenguaje negativo. A pesar de todo, la emoción más utilizada por Trump en Twitter es la felicidad (Elayan et al., 2020).

Caramelo-Pérez (2020) estudia el uso del miedo en sus discursos con un análisis crítico de la comunicación no verbal, a partir de 7 vídeos de la campaña electoral de Estados Unidos de 2017. Trump, a través del miedo, consiguió ganar las elecciones de 2016 ya que supo interpretar el contexto socioeconómico, sociodemográfico y sociocultural de Estados Unidos (Caramelo-Pérez, 2020). «Las emociones negativas tienen una mayor capacidad de persuasión que las emociones positivas a corto plazo, sin embargo, son las emociones positivas las que consiguen a medio y largo plazo mejores resultados», explica la autora.

Otros investigadores han definido el estilo de comunicación de Trump de gran-

1 Antoni Puigverd, escritor y articulista participó en la Jornada de debate sobre Trump en la Universidad de Girona en 2016 junto con los expertos en comunicación política, Verónica Fumanal y Pau Canaleta (Canaleta et al, 2016).

dilocuente, informal y dinámico (Ahmadian et al., 2017), atributos propios de una fórmula populista. Su uso de pronombres en primera persona (I-talk) y el uso de un lenguaje con palabras no-estándares y de baja complejidad (Ahmadian et al., 2017) corroboran su relación con su estilo auténtico y provocador (Kreis, 2017). Es una comunicación muy identificable y los periódicos difunden sus mensajes más contundentes (Tabla 1) tal como demuestra este resumen con algunas de sus afirmaciones más controvertidas.

***Tabla 1. Titulares polémicos de Donald Trump. 2016-2021*[2]**

Pais	Medio de comunicación	Fecha	Titular
Estados Unidos	The Wall Street Journal	04/01/2021	Trump critica a algunos republicanos como “caucus de rendición” (Wise & Hughes, 2021)
		04/01/2021	Trump presionó al secretario de Estado de Georgia para que “encontrara” votos (McWhirter & Wise, 2021)
Reino Unido	The Times	09/07/2019	Donald Trump ataca a la enviada “estúpida” y a la “tonta” Theresa May (Swinford, 2019)
		21/12/2020	Trump “consideró la ley marcial” para mantener a Joe Biden fuera de la Casa Blanca (Zeffman, 2020)
Francia	Le Monde	06/11/2020	Donald Trump: ”Si cuentas los votos ilegales, pueden intentar robarnos las elecciones (Le Monde, 2020)
		08/10/2020	Donald Trump evoca “un regalo del cielo” tras su contagio de Covid-19 (Le Monde avec AFP, 2020)
España	El País (EFE)	28/01/2016	Trump: “Podría disparar a gente en la Quinta Avenida y no perdería votos” (El País – EFE, 2016)
Italia	Il Corriere de la Sera	16/12/2017	Trump veta las palabras “transgénero” y “feto” (Sarcina, 2017)
Alemania	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)	20/03/2018	Donald Trump: “Los narcotraficantes deberían morir. Matar a los traficantes, ¿y luego?” (Steffens, 2018)
		01/11/2020	Donald Trump: “Alemania quiere deshacerse de mí” (FAZ, 2020)
Argentina	Clarín	18/09/2020	Donald Trump: educar sobre racismo en las escuelas “es una forma de abuso infantil” (Clarín, 2020a)
		15/06/2020	Donald Trump revela que quiso matar al líder sirio Bashar Al Assad, pero no lo dejaron (Clarín, 2020b)
México	El Universal	07/10/2020	Biden ha sido un “chiflado” desde años y todos lo saben, dice Trump (El Universal, 2020)

Fuente: elaboración propia

Incluso diversos portales, con tendencias políticas muy distantes, coinciden en señalar su efectividad, a pesar de ser un comunicador inusual, con estilo propio “que conoce a su audiencia y conecta con ella del modo que muchas marcas son incapaces” (Brooke,

2 Se han traducido las declaraciones al español.

2019). Otros añaden: “Quizás no es un comunicador convencional pero su mensaje llega a la gente que le importa” (Heer, 2018).

1. 2.¿Un líder político es más eficaz si es más emotivo?

«Las investigaciones previas indican que el estímulo a la emoción, tanto en términos de palabras emotivas como en un encuadre emotivo del mensaje, influye en el grado de atención que se le presta», concluye Tarullo (2016: 35). También ayuda a recordar los mensajes políticos o estimula a los votantes a participar. Por tanto, un líder político puede ser más eficaz si es más emotivo, aunque hay otras condiciones que también son importantes como la narrativa del discurso (o storytelling) y el relato político (Gómez-García, 2017; D’Adamo & García-Beaudox, 2016).

Uno de los ejes fundamentales del storytelling de Trump es, como ya se ha visto anteriormente, el uso del lenguaje emocional. El miedo y la ironía son emociones que Trump utiliza de forma recurrente sobre todo cuando se refiere a inmigrantes y a medios de comunicación (Sarasqueta, 2017). «Trump demostró gran habilidad para canalizar dos emociones peligrosas pero poderosas: el miedo y el odio», escribe Gómez-García (2017: 311) y añade: «Lo que entre algunos sectores de la población era considerado como ‘racismo’ y/o ‘misoginia’, para sus seguidores era autenticidad o rebeldía» (310).

En una investigación (Rodero, 2022), se analiza la persuasión y la credibilidad que afectan a la actitud de la ciudadanía hacia los políticos. En este sentido, Trump está peor valorado que sus homónimos de Inglaterra o España en términos de atractivo cómo speaker cosa que afecta a su credibilidad y a su capacidad de persuasión. Rodero (2022) apunta que la percepción más agradable para el público de un orador es la felicidad, seguida de la confianza. También se han revisado análisis sobre el discurso del odio en las redes sociales en el ámbito de la política, trabajos que aconsejan: «avanzar en el estudio de la relación del discurso del odio con las estrategias de desinformación y los desórdenes informativos» (Blanco-Alfonso et al., 2022).

Para Gómez-García (2017), un buen comunicador en el campo político es alguien que hace uso del poder de la narrativa. Lo ejemplifica con Donald Trump y Boris Johnson quienes utilizaron «una narrativa clara y sencilla, comunicada de manera directa y con una gran carga emotiva» (Gómez-García, 2017: 315). En una jornada, Puigverd afirmó que la razón había desaparecido de la argumentación. Extremo que compartieron, Canaleta y Fumanal, afirmando que ahora son las emociones y las historias las que rigen los debates políticos (Canaleta et al., 2016).

Para Manuel Campo-Vidal (2018), un buen comunicador es capaz de conjugar emoción, escucha, palabra y silencio. Castells (2009) añade, la tecnología, pero también las características culturales del entorno y las propias de emisores y receptores para asegurar un buen acto de comunicación. El informe Future leaders muestra que “destacan por abanderar un liderazgo más emocional, por preocuparse por los demás y por ser altruistas” (LLYC & Trivu, 2020). Además, también son importantes la responsabilidad y los valores comunitarios (Muñoz Vita, 2020).

1.3. ¿Cuál es el perfil de un buen comunicador?

Para acercarse a la definición y partiendo de la base de que la comunicación es un elemento transversal aplicable y necesario en todo tipo de contextos, hace falta abordar su explicación atendiendo como mínimo a dos pilares fundamentales: las aportaciones de la Academia, por tanto, el abordaje desde la psicología, el periodismo y las relaciones públicas y, la mirada del sector profesional.

Eileen McEntee, ya resumía en 1996 las habilidades y los conocimientos que debe tener un comunicador eficaz y, a pesar del paso del tiempo y de la transformación del entorno comunicativo con las nuevas tecnologías, su propuesta continúa siendo válida. Para ella, un buen comunicador es simplemente quien tiene la credibilidad de sus públicos. Además, sabe escuchar y posee tanto habilidades personales (controlar el nerviosismo, comprometerse con sus ideas y ser receptivo) como conocimientos técnicos «maneja la comunicación no verbal (la voz, la acción y los gestos corporales y faciales), 2) analiza al público, 3) selecciona el tema, 4) prepara el mensaje, 5) busca información, 6) practica el discurso y 7) contesta las preguntas» (McEntee, 1996: 399). La psicología social (Hogg & Vaughan, 2010) también determina los rasgos definitorios de un buen comunicador. Codina y Pestana (2012) los simplifican en el siguiente esquema:

Extraversión: sociabilidad que incluye locuacidad, energía y entusiasmo. Amabilidad: afecto, calidez y consideración hacía los demás. Escrupulosidad: organización, eficiencia y esmero en el trabajo. Estabilidad emocional caracterizada por la seguridad, serenidad y confianza. Intelecto o apertura a la experiencia: inteligencia y curiosidad con dosis de creatividad, ingenio y perspicacia (Codina & Pestana, 2012: 89).

Para Vilà y Castellà (2014: 56): «el buen orador, a diferencia del charlatán, sabe de qué habla, conoce voces autorizadas y planifica sus intervenciones». Añaden que comunicar implica persuadir a la audiencia con elegancia y respeto, sin mostrar superioridad, aplicando estrategias de cortesía: «Los buenos oradores están centrados en la audiencia. Saben que el propósito primordial del habla en público no es mostrar lo que uno ha aprendido o mostrar superioridad, sino obtener la respuesta deseada de los oyentes» (Lucas, 1995, citado en Vilà & Castellà, 2014). La cortesía lingüística es otro de los atributos del buen comunicador. Esto es, el uso de formas verbales de modalización y el saber decir ayudan a crear mejores ambientes de comunicación y minimizan la fuerza imperativa de los mensajes.

La buena comunicación es la efectiva y un buen comunicador debe saber manejar 10 habilidades básicas (Deusto Formación, 2020): persuadir al interlocutor, la inteligencia emocional y la empatía, la concentración para centrarse en el objetivo que se transmite, saber escuchar a la audiencia e interaccionar con ella, tener un mensaje bien estructurado, manejar el lenguaje verbal y no verbal, así como los silencios y la lengua y finalmente, tener práctica en comunicación.

Desde el terreno de las relaciones públicas, el foco se amplía para abarcar la relación entre un buen comunicador, un líder y los medios de comunicación. En este sentido, Ordeix y Botey (2012) destacan que lo peor que puede hacer un líder es mentir a los medios. En comunicación política, el valor de un candidato aumenta si la audiencia le percibe creíble. Polo (2012), como DIRCOM añade que la eficacia de la comunicación reside en la construcción de ideas sencillas repetidas muchas veces, sin faltar a la verdad y con la adecuada puesta en escena. A estas claves hay que sumarle mensajes interesantes y nuevos apoyados en datos. El mensaje debe ser corto y sencillo y su núcleo es la conclusión. Se deben seleccionar tres mensajes y repetirlos, puesto que, según el autor, un número mayor dificulta la retención por parte de la audiencia: «El mensaje debe huir de frases alambicadas, de jerga profesional de oraciones o conceptos complejos. Deben centrarse en el sustantivo y amortiguar el empleo de adjetivos y adverbios. Debe incluir un tono emocional, pues es lo que llega al corazón de la gente. Y debe pensar en la perspectiva de la audiencia, de la opinión pública» (Polo, 2012: 337).

En resumen (Tabla 2) y a partir de las diferentes disciplinas, un buen comunicador es un individuo que comunica de forma clara y sencilla unos mensajes que previamente ha pensado, estructurado y ensayado. Es la persona que habla de lo que conoce, con educación y sin autoritarismos, que no miente y que repite el núcleo de su mensaje central. Un comunicador es eficaz si sabe escuchar a su público para poder construir mensajes emotivos que los lleve a su terreno. Es una persona fiable y con más carga positiva en su haber que negativa, tanto en la forma de comunicar, que se presenta como más extensa y por tanto más importante, como analizando lo que explica cuando comunica.

Tabla 2. Atributos eficaces para la comunicación oral

	Sobre el control de la forma	**Sobre el control del fondo**
1	Saber escuchar/ser receptivo	Comprometerse con sus ideas
2	Controlar nerviosismo	Saber de qué se habla
3	Ser creíble	Usar la cortesía lingüística (verbos modales)
4	Manejar la comunicación no verbal	Estructurar el mensaje
5	Analizar al público	Usar las conclusiones como recordatorio de los puntos clave
6	Contestar preguntas	Usar lenguaje sencillo
7	Practicar/ensayar/planificar	Construir ideas sencillas y repetirlas
8	Ser locuaz	Construir mensajes interesantes apoyados en datos
9	Tener energía/entusiasmo	Mensajes cortos, sencillos y con conclusión
10	Ser amable/ considerado/ elegante y cortés con los demás	Usar nombres, rehuir adjetivos y adverbios
11	Transmitir seguridad	Conseguir un tono emocional
12	Ser perspicaz	No mentir
13	Ser ingenioso	
14	Ser empático	

Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de las aportaciones de Mcentee (1996); Codina & Pestana (2002); Polo (2012); Ordeix & Botey (2012); Vilà & Casellà (2014); y Deusto Formación (2020).

2. Metodología

Para analizar el uso de las emociones en la eficacia comunicativa de Trump, objetivo de este trabajo, es necesario plantearse algunas cuestiones de arranque. En buena parte se remiten al reflejo en los periódicos de algunas polémicas afirmaciones del expresidente: ¿Se pueden arrojar titulares cómo los de la Tabla 1 y ganar unas elecciones? ¿Un liderazgo fuerte puede permitirse tales afirmaciones? ¿Es Donald Trump un buen comunicador? ¿Qué papel juegan las emociones en sus apariciones públicas? ¿Cuáles son las emociones que determinan la eficacia en comunicación? En política, ¿un buen comunicador es el que sabe comunicar bien su victoria tanto como su pérdida o no necesariamente?

La metodología que deberá analizar si la expresión oral de Trump se corresponde con lo que los especialistas en comunicación definen como un buen comunicador se basa principalmente en el uso de un instrumento de análisis creado por Scherer (2005) denominado GALC. A partir de un Excel, fruto de una exhaustiva investigación, el autor permite vincular palabras con las emociones que representan[3].

Para asumir el principal objetivo de esta investigación, se usará una semana construida ad hoc, en 3 momentos álgidos que definen el mandato de Trump como presidente de los Estados Unidos:

1. Gana su primer mandato presidencial (8 de noviembre 2016)
2. Pierde las elecciones (13 de noviembre de 2020)
3. Ocupación del Capitolio (6 de enero de 2021).

Son ocasiones importantes de su carrera política que vienen definidas por una gran carga emocional «se trata de experiencias que tienen sentido en su relación con los demás» (Chóliz & Gómez, 2002: 3).

Así pues, para obtener las unidades de análisis se han buscado, en esas situaciones, las declaraciones directas de Trump publicadas por el periódico con más tirada de Estados Unidos, T*he Wall Street Journa*l[4]. Aplicando el método GALC (2005) se estudian nombres, verbos, adjetivos y adverbios, es decir todas las formas con significado pleno empleadas y transcritas directamente por el rotativo. El hecho de que las unidades de análisis excluyan las citas indirectas es para evitar la contaminación del periodista al interpretar o contextualizar. Se descartaron, a su vez, palabras como pronombres o preposiciones.

Para hallar las citas directas referidas se realizó una búsqueda online a través de Google en el sitio web de The Wall Street Journal con la palabra clave: Donald Trump. Se añadió a la búsqueda un filtro con las semanas construidas alrededor de los 3 momentos cruciales de la presidencia de Trump. En total, se analizaron 185 citas literales (Tabla 3). Para ello se tuvieron en cuenta los siguientes criterios:

1. Palabras clave en el titular. Todas las unidades de análisis (citas directas)

3 Las asociaciones entre palabras y emociones se han realizado con la versión inglesa de los términos.

4 Según los datos más recientes de la Alliance for Audited Media de abril-septiembre (2021), The Wall Street Journal tiene una tirada media en la versión en papel de 730.440 ejemplares diarios (no fin de semana) y de 2.722.000 en la versión online.

mencionan a Donald Trump en el titular. De esta forma, todas las unidades se centran en Trump, sus actos y sus declaraciones.

2. Género del texto: noticia. Se busca la reproducción más fiel (objetiva) de la declaración. Se excluyeron artículos de opinión o entradas en los blogs hospedados por el periódico, así como unidades que solo tuvieran elementos multimedia.

3. Citas directas en el cuerpo de la noticia. Se seleccionaron citas literales entrecomilladas, independientemente de su longitud, para poder analizar las palabras exactas y se excluyeron las citas indirectas y las citas repetidas.

4. Citas directas independientemente de la fuente. Se incluyeron citas literales de ruedas de prensa, actos públicos o de la campaña electoral, de entradas o posts en redes sociales (en la mayoría de las ocasiones procedentes de Twitter) o de notas de prensa o comunicados públicos que *The Wall Street Journal* publicó en las fechas seleccionadas.

Tabla 3. Número de noticias recogidas para el estudio y unidades de análisis seleccionadas

	Número de noticias recogidas	Número de noticias seleccionadas a partir de los criterios	Unidades de análisis (citas literales)
Elecciones 2016	97	11	83
Elecciones 2020	175	10	34
Asalto al Capitolio	217	15	68
Total	489	36	185

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Una vez, los términos fueron asignados a la tabla de emociones GALC, se clasificaron según su valencia, es decir, si eran emociones positivas o negativas, siguiendo la categorización de Turney (2002): «Una frase tiene una orientación semántica positiva cuando tiene buenas asociaciones (por ejemplo, ambiente romántico) y una orientación semántica negativa cuando tiene malas asociaciones (por ejemplo, eventos horribles)». Para evitar confusiones lingüísticas, se han traducido los términos de la tabla GALC (Scherer, 2005) del inglés al español[5].

3. Resultados

Cruzando los datos obtenidos se observa que de las 38 categorías de emociones que propone Scherer (2005), Trump usa vocabulario relativo a 15 tipos de emociones diferentes. En la tabla 4 se resume el tipo de vocablos empleados y su relación con la emoción que describen. Para poder interpretar mejor los resultados obtenidos, se pintaron en verde (tono positivo) y en rojo (tono negativo) las emociones según su modalidad (ver Figura 1), siguiendo el ejemplo de Tarullo (2016).

5 A continuación, se puede ver la correlación lingüística de las emociones analizadas:
a) Emociones positivas: amusement (diversión o entretenimiento), beingtouched (emocionado o conmovido), feelinglove (sentimiento cariñoso), hope (esperanza), interest/ enthusiasm (interés/ entusiasmo), longing (nostalgia o añoranza), pride (orgullo), relaxation/ serenity (relajación/ serenidad), surprise (sorpresa) y positive (positivo).
b) Emociones negativas: anger (ira), disappointment (decepción), fear (miedo), tension/ stress (tensión/ estrés) y negative (negativo).

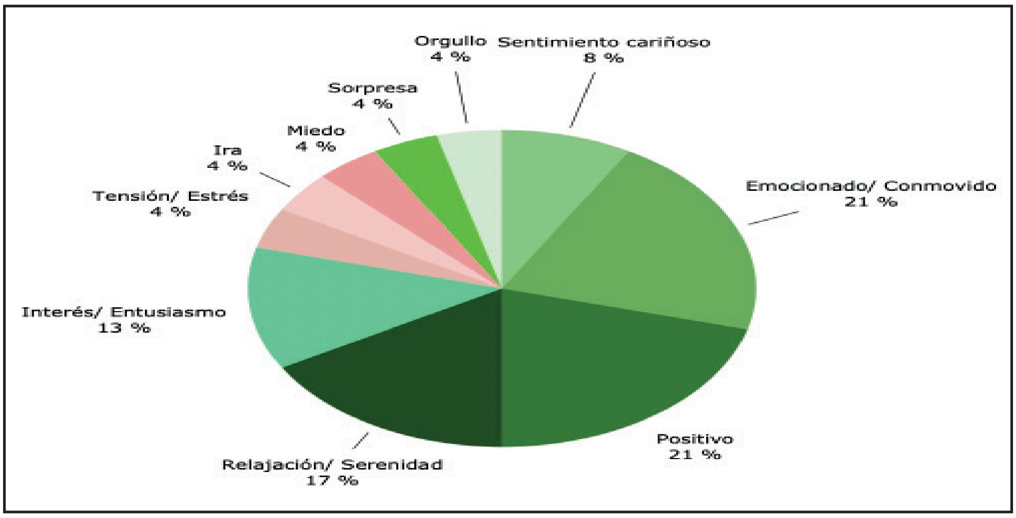
Tabla 4. Emociones positivas vs negativas

	Nombres	Verbos	Otras palabras	Total
Positivo	5	0	1	6
Emocionado/ Conmovido	5	2	0	7
Interés/ Entusiasmo	3	0	0	3
Sentimiento cariñoso	2	7	0	9
Tensión/ Estrés	1	1	0	2
Nostalgia/ Añoranza	0	1	6	7
Miedo	1	0	0	1
Sorpresa	1	0	0	1
Decepción	0	1	0	1
Ira	1	0	1	2
Relajación/ Serenidad	4	0	0	4
Orgullo	1	0	0	1
Esperanza	0	1	0	1
Diversión/ Entretenimiento	0	1	0	1
Negativo	0	0	1	1
Total	24	14	9	47

Fuente: elaboración propia.

Por lo que respecta a los nombres usados, se han detectado 24 palabras y las emociones más utilizadas son positivo, emocionado/conmovido con 5 nombres en cada categoría. Si nos fijamos en los verbos, los más frecuentes son los que se relacionan con la emoción sentimiento cariñoso (7 verbos) y emocionado/conmovido (2 verbos). La figura 1 permite apreciar como los sentimientos positivos (en verde) son más numerosos.

Figura 1. Emociones más empleadas por Trump en las citas de The Wall Street Journal



Fuente: elaboración propia.

Según los datos recopilados, se aprecia una clara tendencia a ser positivo, asunto que se incrementa con el paso de los años. Trump siempre usó más palabras con significado positivo que negativo. Concretamente 40 palabras (nombres, verbos, adjetivos y adverbios) de raíz afirmativa contra 7 vinculadas a emociones negativas (Tabla 4). Emplea raíces muy potentes para crear imágenes con sentimiento cariñoso: «Quiero un país dónde se amen unos a otros» (Langley & Baker, 2016). Con esta cita, maneja perfectamente la forma y el contenido de su mensaje. A partir de la tabla 2, vemos como se compromete con sus ideas, sabe de qué habla, usa una cortesía lingüística, emite un mensaje corto con lenguaje sencillo, con ideas claras, consigue un tono emocional y no miente. Estamos ante un buen comunicador que controla el fondo de su discurso.

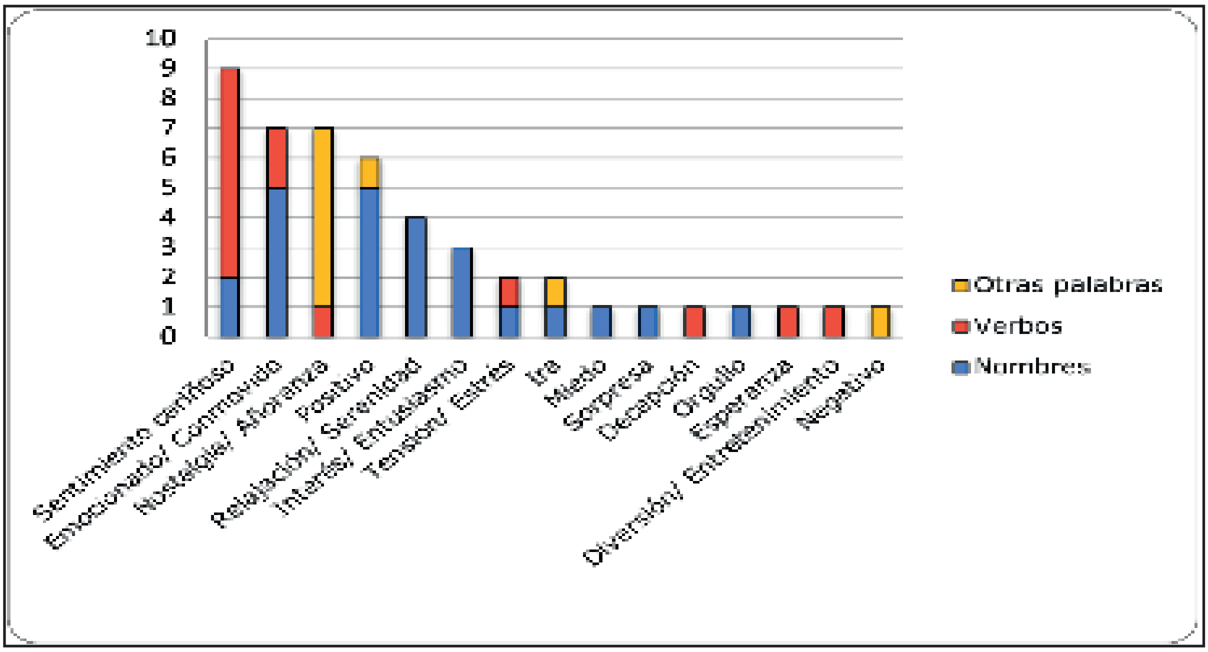
En un segundo ejemplo de la campaña de 2020 exhibe un sentimiento cariñoso que le muestra un tanto tiránico: «Mujeres de los suburbios, ¡tenéis que amarme!» (Jamerson & Lucey, 2020). Y en el asalto al Capitolio (2021) dice: «Así que volved a casa, os amamos, sois muy especiales» (Wise et al., 2021). Estas citas, no sólo se vinculan al sentimiento cariñoso, una de las emociones más utilizadas, sino que también transmiten interés/entusiasmo y una personalidad imperativa y narcisista. Y, además, cumple con la mayoría de los epígrafes esgrimidos en la tabla 2.

Contextualizando sus citas literales se constata como el expresidente no usa las palabras en positivo para generar ironía ni sentido figurado, Trump habla a su público buscando empatía directa. Por ejemplo, en las elecciones de 2016, dijo: «Nunca ha habido un movimiento como este... No va a volver a suceder» (Reinhard, 2016). La palabra movimiento tiene una raíz que se relaciona con emocionado/conmovido con valencia positiva para empatizar e incluir a la audiencia dentro de esta emoción. Otra emoción muy utilizada es el interés/ entusiasmo: «Mi único interés especial sois vosotros» (Reinhard, 2016).

Cronológicamente su etapa más reciente es la más emocional. Lidió con su exposición pública más grave. A pesar de que el sentido de su alocución es el resentimiento, el análisis GALC demuestra un tono más positivo que negativo: «Estas son las cosas y eventos que suceden cuando una sagrada victoria electoral aplastante es despojada sin ceremonias y con tanta saña de grandes patriotas que han sido tratados mal e injustamente durante tanto tiempo. Iros a casa con amor y en paz. ¡Recordad este día para siempre!» (Wise et al., 2021)[6]. Aquí las correlaciones son relajación/serenidad con la palabra paz, sentimiento de amor con la palabra amor y nostalgia/añoranza con las palabras tanto tiempo. Sólo usó una palabra negativa: mal.

Trump es capaz de controlar su nerviosismo, es creíble, mostraba conocimiento a su público, era locuaz, transmitía seguridad con energía y era empático. Son 7 de las características que definen el control de la puesta en escena que todo buen comunicador debería controlar. Si analizamos el fondo, Trump se mostró comprometido con sus ideas, usó cortesía lingüística, sabía de qué hablaba, recordó los puntos claves, usó un lenguaje sencillo, repitió ideas claves, utilizó un mensaje corto con conclusión, más nombres y consiguió un tono altamente emocional. Únicamente, omitió el epígrafe no mentir de la tabla 2. Por lo cual, se puede afirmar que fue un buen comunicador.

Figura 2. Tipología de palabras por emoción



Fuente: elaboración propia.

6 El periódico The Wall Street Journal reproduce esta cita que es un mensaje publicado por Donald Trump en sus redes sociales.

Al observar cronológicamente las unidades de análisis, se deduce que, en 2016 se han recopilado más nombres (12 palabras) que verbos (3) u otras palabras con significado pleno (2). La emoción más utilizada en los nombres es emocionado/conmovido. Por lo que respecta a los verbos, hay 2 palabras que representan las emociones positivas: sentimiento cariñoso y nostalgia/añoranza. Solo una de las emociones detectadas fue de negativa: tensión/estrés.

En las elecciones de noviembre de 2020, se han recopilado 5 nombres, 4 verbos y 3 palabras más, con significado pleno. En resumen, la emoción más utilizada fue emocionado/conmovido con 3 palabras. A pesar de que la mayoría fueron positivas, en esta ocasión aparecen más emociones negativas, pero con una sola palabra vinculada a cada una: miedo, tensión/estrés, decepción e ira.

Finalmente, si nos fijamos en las emociones detectadas en el momento del ataque al Capitolio (2021), momento con más variedad de emociones, tenemos 4 nombres relativos a relajación/serenidad (la más utilizada) y 3 verbos relativos a sentimiento cariñoso. Primando la valencia positiva, también se han detectado en negativa: ira y negativo.

4. Discusión

Si solo se analizan las palabras que transmiten emociones, se observa como el discurso de Trump es mayoritariamente positivo. Si se correlacionan con los parámetros que definen a un buen comunicador (inteligencia lingüística), Trump lo sería. Pero el estudio ha demostrado que es necesario entender el contexto en el cual se expresan las emociones para poder tener una dimensión exacta de la comunicación del personaje político (inteligencia interpersonal e intrapersonal). El análisis del lenguaje en un contexto emocional es importante, pero no suficiente puesto que puede construir una imagen sesgada de la figura examinada. Si sólo se atendiera al recuento de vocablos y emociones que estos expresan, mayoritariamente positivas, Trump sería un comunicador efectivo. También lo es, si nos fijamos en el empleo de vocabulario sencillo y directo, repetido cuando es necesario. Pero estamos ante un comunicador controvertido, que no sería tampoco un ejemplo de comunicación oral elegante, respetuosa o cortés, atributos que evidenciarían el atractivo de un buen comunicador político (Vilà and Castellà, 2014). En este sentido las conclusiones del presente estudio se asemejarían a las de un trabajo reciente (Rodero, 2022) dónde se demuestra que Trump es menos creíble que otros líderes políticos.

Este trabajo ha puesto de manifiesto que Trump, en sus comparecencias públicas recogidas por la prensa, presenta una imagen muy distinta de la que exhibe en su cuenta de Twitter. En sus alocuciones públicas usa vocabulario y sentimientos de valencia positiva, distanciándose así de sus publicaciones en Twitter donde predominaba una tendencia negativa.

La relevancia de las emociones en la política, no solo en las campañas electorales sino también en momentos cruciales de la legislatura de un gobierno, son aspectos imprescindibles para determinar el grado de eficacia comunicativa y, por ende, de credibilidad de un político. Se ha podido determinar cómo Trump utiliza una gran variedad de emociones en sus intervenciones en las campañas electorales analizadas y cómo resultaron muy eficaces durante la semana construida alrededor del ataque al Capitolio. De hecho, ahí es dónde Trump se expresa con un mayor abanico emocional (9 emociones distintas) prevaleciendo siempre las positivas.

Las alocuciones transcritas directamente por The Wall Street Journal demuestran una tendencia, in crescendo, en el uso de vocabulario más emocional, con el paso del tiempo. Asimismo, se percibe una relación directa entre el uso de más emociones y el uso de más emociones positivas: el 48,94% de los conceptos emocionales empleados por el líder norteamericano lo son. Además, continuando con el análisis del vocabulario empleado en los tres momentos escogidos, Trump repite los mismos vocablos, nombres y verbos, varias veces, característica que también le da el barniz de comunicador eficaz. Otro de los atributos que sitúan al expresidente en la tribuna de comunicador competente es el hecho de emplear más cantidad de nombres y de verbos que adjetivos, adverbios o pronombres. Trump sigue esa regla. La norma que no sigue es la de usar verbos modales para significarse como un orador cortés. Trump se aleja de ese atributo, así como de la normativa que reclama construir mensajes certeros apoyados en cifras o datos. En ninguna de las transcripciones recogidas por la prensa, Trump se dirige a su público con el apoyo de datos, extremo que tiene su lógica pues sería la antítesis (razón) de un orador emotivo.
La investigación se perfila eficaz para resolver las preguntas de arranque de este trabajo. Así, la respuesta a la cuestión: ¿Cómo se pueden arrojar titulares de semejante envergadura y ganar unas elecciones? Sería porqué como buen comunicador se llevó a la audiencia a su terreno (Vilà & Castellá, 2014). Además, jugó con las emociones positivas que son las que más empatía producen. Según Puigverd (Canaleta et al., 2016), en las elecciones de 2016, Trump conectó con la gente, fue él mismo, mostró su autenticidad y enorme personalidad, demostrando que conocía al electorado y le habló de forma directa, apelando a un sentimiento cariñoso.

¿Un liderazgo fuerte puede permitirse semejantes afirmaciones? A tenor de los resultados de Trump en las elecciones está claro que sí. Nuestros datos se asemejan a los esgrimidos con anterioridad a partir del análisis del Twitter de Trump. Para sus partidarios no es un personaje arrogante, sino auténtico. Otros estudios ya han mostrado que Trump tiene un estilo provocador (Kreis, 2017) y de rebeldía (Gómez-García, 2017). Fumanal advirtió que un candidato imperfecto muestra autenticidad y esta se traduce en credibilidad y liderazgo fuerte (Canaleta et al., 2016). Para ello es necesario no esconder los defectos. Trump conduce a su público en sus comparecencias y se posiciona con emociones que denotan añoranza/nostalgia. Se muestra emocionado y conmovido ante sus votantes, aspectos que lo humanizan enormemente. Se diría que no ejerce un autocontrol emocional en sus alocuciones, que exhibe su propia autoestima y que la empatía no es uno de sus puntos fuertes, rasgos que evidencian un sesgo en sus competencias sociales y laborales en su relación con los demás.

¿Es Donald Trump un buen comunicador? ¿Sus comparecencias se ajustan a los decálogos vistos anteriormente? Si se le aplica la tabla de los epítetos (Tabla 2) y analizando su presencia a través de The Wall Street Journal, se deduce que Trump reúne 11 de los 14 ítems referidos al control de la forma en que se comunica. Por tanto, lo sería puesto que controla la inteligencia lingüística (Briz, 2016). Pero no domina ni su inteligencia interpersonal (empatía, capacidad para resolver conflictos), ni intrapersonal (capacidad para dar consejo o trabajar en equipo).

Si el estudio se efectúa mirando el contenido de sus citas publicadas, Trump cumple con 9 de las 12 características propuestas. En este caso, la conclusión también es clara: es un buen comunicador, a pesar de que no cumple algunos de los ítems más significativos como por ejemplo no mentir o usar la cortesía lingüística. La emotividad positiva desplegada puede enmascarar sus carencias.

¿Qué papel juegan las emociones en sus apariciones públicas? Los datos demuestran que sus intervenciones públicas son altamente emocionales y con el paso de los años, más. En este sentido, el asalto al Capitolio fue, seguramente, la situación más emocional con la que el expresidente tuvo que lidiar. Por ello, se podría justificar que fuera cuando Trump usó mayor disparidad de emociones. Pero incluso ahí, Trump se sirve sobre todo de un vocabulario sencillo relacionado con emociones de tono positivo, cosa que, a ojos de sus partidarios, le permite mostrar su lado más humano y le convierte en un personaje cercano y genuino a pesar de no saber escuchar, no ser ni empático, ni reflexivo y de mentir, tal como la investigación por el asalto al Capitolio ha revelado.

El estudio del uso de las emociones en el discurso de Donald Trump y de su figura política como buen comunicador es relevante por el impacto que tuvieron sus estrategias comunicativas en la política contemporánea. La comunicación de un líder político puede afectar la percepción y la opinión pública, pero no solo esto: también puede influir en los futuros líderes políticos, las estrategias comunicativas que estos utilizan para llegar a un amplio espectro de audiencia y ayudar al entendimiento del contexto político y social actual. Finalmente, estudiar a Donald Trump como buen comunicador puede permitir una evaluación crítica de sus acciones y decisiones.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Exploration of Foreign Aid Forms and Impact on Media and Information Literacy Initiatives in Central Asian context

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Abstract

This article explores the role, forms, and sustainability issues of foreign assistance in the field of media and information literacy (MIL) in Central Asian region. MIL skills are vitally important in an era dominated by information overload and disinformation. However, Central Asian countries face unique challenges in developing and implementing MIL programs given limited resources, political pressure, and diverse cultural contexts. Foreign aid has become an important source of support for MIL initiatives in the region. In investigating the sustainability of these initiatives, the study delves into the impact of foreign assistance on the shaping of robust MIL frameworks within the unique sociocultural contexts of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. By analyzing specific aid programs, policy implications, and local responses, the article contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on the enhancement of MIL in these transitional societies. This study also examines the potential challenges associated with foreign aid in Central Asian countries and highlights the importance of context-specific approaches to MIL development.

Keywords: Media and information literacy (MIL); Central Asia; forms of foreign aid; MIL projects; training courses; financial support; educational resources; sustainability; context-specific approach.

1. Introduction

Media and information literacy (MIL) has gained increasing recognition as an essential competency for navigating the modern information landscape. Central Asian countries have diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and they face distinct challenges in promoting MIL among their populations. Limited resources, political pressure, and rapid digital transformation further complicate the development and implementation of comprehensive MIL programs. In this context, foreign aid has emerged as a significant source of support for addressing these challenges and promoting MIL in Central Asia.

In today's "Information and Knowledge Society," education is the best investment for a country's future and development. Since 2010, foreign donor organizations have offered various forms of foreign aid in the MIL field in Central Asia. Foreign aid is defined as the voluntary transfer of resources from one country to another. This includes any flow of capital to developing countries. Foreign aid can take the form of a loan or a grant. Aid may be bilateral, given from one country directly to another, or multilateral, given by the donor country to an international organization such as the World Bank or a United Nations agency (e.g., UNDP, UNICEF) to be distributed to developing countries (Thapa, I., 2020: 1-2).

With the globalization of information and media technologies, the flow of information has accelerated throughout the world. As a result, the need to improve the medical and information literacy of the population in the Central Asian region is increasing. MIL development is particularly important in this area to protect the population (1) from external information attacks and (2) from internal information noise (such as fake news on social networks).
Therefore, the purposes of this study are as follows.

First, this article discusses projects, grants, and scholarships in the field of MIL, which are offered as multilateral aid. Second, this article investigates the role, sustainability, and forms of foreign assistance on MIL initiatives in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. It explores how foreign aid plays a crucial role in developing and enhancing MIL initiatives by providing financial and technical assistance. Additionally, it delves into the various forms of foreign aid, such as capacity-building programs, infrastructure development, and policy support, and analyzes their effectiveness in promoting MIL in the region. Third, the article emphasizes the importance of sustainability in foreign aid programs, considering the long-term impact of MIL initiatives beyond the initial project implementation. It examines the challenges and opportunities associated with sustaining MIL efforts in Central Asian countries, considering factors such as funding stability, institutional support, and community engagement. Fourth, it highlights the importance of context-specific approaches to MIL, considering the unique sociocultural linguistic and political dynamics of each country.

Overall, the analysis presented in this article contributes to the understanding of the role of foreign aid in supporting MIL in Central Asia, identifies the most effective forms of aid, and sheds light on the sustainability and challenges of these programs. By doing so, it provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners involved in MIL development in Central Asian countries.

2. Literature review

In examining the landscape of foreign aid and its implications for media and information literacy (MIL) initiatives in Central Asia, existing literature offers valuable insights. The interplay between foreign aid and MIL initiatives underscores the complexities inherent in fostering information literacy within diverse socio-political contexts.

Numerous scholars have delved into the realm of media education and the cultivation of media literacy across Central Asian nations. Their findings, predominantly disseminated in Russian publications, encompass articles, manuals, books, and textbooks, with some works available in English and local languages. A cohort of researchers, spearheaded by A. Fedorov (Fedorov & Levitskaya, 2018; Fedorov et al., 2020), has contributed extensively to various publications, while in Kazakhstan, a research teams under L. S. Akhmetova's leadership (Akhmetova et al., 2015a; Akhmetova et al., 2015b) have produced collective monographs, focusing on mass media education processes and foreign media education theories.

In the article entitled "Media Literacy Education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan", Chelysheva (2019) explored the landscape of media literacy education in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, scrutinizing its evolution, objectives, key concepts, structure, content, developmental stages, and models within the post-Soviet period.

The research titled "Measuring Media Literacy Level: A Case of Central Asia" (Zadorin et al., 2023) underscores the evolution of media literacy since the 1970s across various disciplines. However, there remains a gap in comparative studies of media literacy at the national level. This research addressed this gap by presenting findings from cross-country studies conducted in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in 2019 and 2021. The authors examine key communicative practices and characteristics of media literacy among the populations of these countries, presenting a methodology for measuring media literacy that includes two consistent models of the media literacy index suitable for cross-country research.

In Uzbekistan, media education is undergoing gradual evolution. Notable works such as "Uzbekistan on the Path of Developing Media Education"(Mamatova & Sulaymanova, 2015) and "Media and Information Literacy in Journalism" (Muratova et al., 2019) serve as pivotal resources for journalism departments and institutes. The "Instructional Manual on Media Literacy for Teachers of Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan" (Sulaymanova & Osmanova, 2021) offers a comprehensive modular educational framework, drawing from both domestic and foreign expertise, catering to university educators, students, journalists, cultural center employees, and educational associations.

In sum, the literature underscores the multifaceted nature of foreign aid and its impact on MIL initiatives in Central Asia. Moving forward, a holistic approach that integrates donor support with local capacities and priorities is essential for advancing information literacy and media education in the region.

While various specialists in Central Asia contribute to the scholarly discourse through research articles, reports, manuals, and textbooks on media and information literacy (MIL), this research stands out for its examination of the sustainability and efficacy of international donor organizations' projects and grants in MIL. It represents the first comprehensive analysis of foreign assistance types in the region, highlighting achievements, shortcomings, and offering practical recommendations.

3.Materials and Methods

Research Purpose. The study aims to scrutinize various forms of foreign aid within MIL initiatives in Central Asia, assessing their impact in enhancing MIL.

Research Objectives:
1. Identify and categorize forms of foreign aid and primary donors in Central Asian MIL initiatives.
2. Specify the resources and services allocated within MIL projects.
3. Evaluate the anticipated outcomes of foreign aid and assess its accomplishments and setbacks in Central Asian MIL development.
4. Formulate recommendations to enhance media literacy across diverse population segments, taking into account foreign donors' contributions.

Materials and Data Collection:

The research utilized a quantitative data collection methodology, comprising:
- Conducting case studies on MIL projects, grants, and training courses in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.
- Undertaking content analysis of donor companies' and organizations' websites.
- Engaging in in-depth interviews with 15 MIL trainers, media experts, and researchers, employing purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives on foreign aid sustainability in MIL.

Interview Methodology:

Interviews were conducted both in-person and digitally to comprehensively explore participants' experiences and insights. Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility for elaboration on experiences and perspectives, focusing on participants' encounters with foreign aid in MIL, its impact on their work, and perceptions of sustainability challenges and opportunities. Ethical Considerations. The research adhered to ethical principles, obtaining informed consent from each participant prior to interviews. Researchers provided explanations on the study's purpose, voluntary participation, and confidentiality measures, assuring anonymity and securely storing all data. Ethical clearance was secured from relevant institutional review boards.

Research questions:

Today, in every Central Asian country, the MIL sector is developing mainly because of foreign aid projects and grants. Considering this, the following research questions were proposed:
1. Who are the main donors to Central Asian countries?
2. What kinds of resources and services are transferred in MIL projects?
3. How much has the Western world transferred in terms of resources, projects, and servi-

ces?
4. What is the expected goal of foreign aid and to what extent is it being achieved in reality?
5. What are the main issues of sustainability in foreign aid MIL projects in Central Asian context?

To answer these questions, the author investigated the impact of foreign aid, especially the role of foreign organizations in the sustainable development of MIL projects in Central Asia, focusing on the cases of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

Limitations:
This study focused specifically on the perspectives of trainers and experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts within Central Asia. Additionally, the study's reliance on qualitative data may restrict the ability to draw quantitative conclusions about the sustainability indicators of foreign assistance initiatives in MIL.

4. Analysis and results

4.1. In-Depth interview results

At first, the respondents were asked about the importance of the development of the MIL sector for the Central Asian region. In response to this, the respondents' definitions of the MIL field show the strong influence of the field on people's family and work activities, in particular, from situations such as sharing information with others, ensuring the digital security of themselves and their loved ones, to becoming an active social citizen in society. talked about. Below are some of the responses given:

"MIL serves as a torch for people to find their way in the media and information bush".
(Journalist, media trainer, senior lecturer project manager, 50)

"In today's accelerated and globalized information exchange, MIL plays an important role in protecting Central Asian countries from external and internal information threats and attacks."
(DSc, professor, director, media trainer and MIL expert, 50)

"MIL is important to increase the citizenship position."
(PhD, associate professor, media trainer, 33)

During the interviews, the interlocutors were asked "What does foreign aid in the field of MIL include?" was addressed with a question. Media trainers and experts spoke about various project forms and formats that they observed based on their experience:

Foreign donors can allocate funds for conducting training courses on media literacy among journalists, managers in education and other industries.
(DSc, professor, media trainer, 53)

The need to consolidate the international community for the spread of media education is indisputable. In view of this, "foreign assistance" can be viewed both as an exchange of experience in the field of information and media literacy, and as the creation of joint educational programs, methodological and practical manuals, the organization of partnership projects in the format of conferences, seminars, training courses, master classes.

(DSc, professor, media trainer, 64).

In the Scandinavian countries, for example, MIL have been practiced since the second half of the last century. And many other countries have come a long way in understanding MIL and implementing its components at all levels, especially with regard to media education. In Uzbekistan, only this year (2022) the issue of integrating MIL into the school curriculum entered the practical mainstream. Undoubtedly, international organizations can accelerate the process of introducing MIL in Uzbekistan through the implementation of projects aimed at specific areas where it is difficult for the state system to develop, since non-profit organizations are more flexible in this regard, and they work in this direction in cooperation with government agencies.

(Media and MIL expert, trainer, 47)

While answering to the question "What projects of foreign organizations and countries in the field of MIL are you aware of?" the respondents talked about projects in which they participated as trainers or participants, foreign donor organizations that offered grants. Here are some of them:

Central Asian program MediaCAMP (I am its participant) under the initiatives of Internews, projects of the Centre for the Development of Modern Journalism in Uzbekistan (participated as a trainer) in partnership with UNESCO, Kazakhstan's project on media literacy "Know Media! (I was a consultant), School of Media Literacy (Kazakhstan) under the auspices of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "Mediasabak" projects (Kyrgyzstan) on the introduction of MIL in education, etc.

(DSc, professor, media trainer, 64).

UNESCO (as a pioneer in the development of MIL in the world) conducts training courses and research in this area), IREX, USAID, Internews organized training courses for journalists, bloggers, university teachers and faculties of journalism. One of the latest OSCE roundtables on MIL was in the context of freedom of speech.

(Journalist, editor, media trainer, project manager, 50)

I am aware of and participate in the training of foreign organizations such as Internews, USAID, KazMediaNetwork, OBSE in the field of MIL.

(Journalist, media trainer, senior lecturer, project manager, 50).

U.S. Agency for Global Media (USA), Internews (USA), Deutsche Welle Akademie (Germany), UNESCO.

(Candiate of Philological Sciences, Associate Professor, media trainer, 52)

According to the answers we can classify foreign donor organizations and as well as, their national partners in the country, in the field of MIL are listed in the following table (Table 5). These organizations have been actively implementing various projects, grants and training courses in the field of MIL in Central Asia since 2015.

Table 1. Foreign donor organizations and national NGOs in the field of MIL (Uzbekistan)

#	Organization Type	Name of foreign organisation	Name of national organizations
1	International organizations	UNESCO, USAID, Internews Kazakhstan (USA), UNICEF	
2	Media Institutes	Deutsche Welle Akademie (Germany)	
3	State organizations	U.S. AGENCY FOR GLOBAL MEDIA (USA)	Ministry of Education of Uzbekistan
4	NGOs	Media SABAK projects (Kyrgyzstan), School of Media Literacy (Kazakhstan) etc.	Center for the Development of Modern Journalism, International Community Center for Retraining of Journalists, The non-governmental non-profit organization “NEW MEDIA EDUCATION CENTER”, Media literacy House (Tashkent)

4.2. Results of Case studies and analysis of MIL projects in the Central Asian region.
4.2.1. Media literacy development programs and their main donors

In recent years, significant progress in digital technologies has led major international organizations and developed countries to initiate numerous projects and grants in the field of media and information literacy (MIL) for Central Asian countries. Developed nations, including the United States and Germany, have provided various forms of foreign aid to the region, with support from organizations such as UNESCO, the European Union, and Deutsche Welle Akademie (DW Akademie).

According to Gulnar Asanbaeva (2021), a regional consultant on media literacy for the MediaCAMP Program of the Internews Representative Office in Kazakhstan and a Candidate of Philosophy and Associate Professor, this trend is notable:

The topic of media literacy in the countries of Central Asia has long been a subject of discussion exclusively in academic circles. Despite regularly held university conferences and a solid list of scientific publications, its discussion did not come to the fore in the socio-political discourse. Training courses and courses on teaching media literacy to residents of remote rural areas, university professors, and teachers began to be conducted about five or six years ago by non-profit civil sector organizations with the financial support of UNESCO, Internews, IREX, the Deutsche Welle Akademie, as well as using grant funds allocated by embassies a number of foreign states within the framework of cultural cooperation. (p. 21)

4.2.2. Classification of foreign aid to Central Asia in the field of MIL
4.2.2.1. Training courses, educational programs, and courses.
In most cases, the organization of professional development courses, training courses, and short-term training courses for teachers and specialists of educational institutions based on various grants and projects are the most effective forms of foreign assistance. Through such courses, educational innovations and international experiences are rapidly gaining popularity.

Many training courses have been organized by all the donor organizations that have allocated funds for grants and projects in the field of MIL to the Central Asian region. Until now, trainings have been organized for school and university teachers, journalists and bloggers, librarians and employees of information research centers, filmmakers and documentary film makers, pupils and students - for each level separately.

The “IREX Europe Annual Report 2018” stated, “In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan we’ve trained over 400 teachers, university professors and librarians in MIL, so that by using our locally adapted MIL manual they can go on and run their own MIL workshops. We’ve also developed media literacy curricula in languages such as Russian, Kirghiz, Kazakh, and Tajik. In 2018 our curriculum for high schools was approved by the Kirghiz Ministry of Education and is now part of the national curriculum as a ‘mandatory supplement’ for students aged 12 to 16” (p. 9).

a) International and regional conferences on MIL issues. Such conferences are organized with the participation of more scientists, researchers, leading media experts and leading media trainers of the Central Osip countries. They have a great role in mastering the news and innovations in the field, exchanging experience, and connecting practical experiences with the achievements of theoretical research.
As an example, the Central Asian international conference on MIL was held in Bishkek on November 15-16, 2019. At the conference venues and panel discussions, the participants were able to establish cooperation and to exchange experience and new ideas for the further promotion of MIL in the education system. International experts shared their experience and success stories based on national and global educational strategies for introducing MIL into the education system. In total, about 200 participants from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, Finland, and Germany took part in the conference. One of the main outcomes of the conference was the creation of the CAMIL network to promote media information literacy in Central Asia and Mongolia. “A Memorandum of Cooperation” was signed by the Media Support Center (Kyrgyzstan), the Center for the Development of Modern Journalism (Uzbekistan), the International Center for Journalism “MediaNET” (Kazakhstan), Gurdofarid (Tajikistan), and the BAYAR Media Foundation (Mongolia). This “Memorandum” aims to establish cooperation between these organizations in the field of supporting civil initiatives to provide the population of the region with quality media products, developing people’s MIL level and critical thinking (Mediasabak, 2019).

b) MIL Festivals. Media literacy festivals have been held to involve the widest circles of the population in the promoting of main MIL issues across the region. For example, in 2021, online festivals were held in 12 regions of Kazakhstan and six regions of Tajikistan. The right to hold them was won by non-profit organizations that showed themselves to be the most creative and proactive in the first two years of MediaCAMP's activities. All of the participants were trained at training courses and Eduton, an innovative Internews seminar on the development of media literacy, and they developed their projects under the guidance of experienced mentors and trainers from Central Asia, as well as from Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus (Asanbayeva, 2021:30).

c) A traditional democracy and media literacy camp. The MediaSabak Foundation's summer media camps have become well known not only in Kyrgyzstan, but also in other Central Asian countries, as they have been among the most fruitful projects in the field of MIL. The MediaSabak Foundation, DW Akademie's long-time Kyrgyz project partner, hosted a summer media camp at Lake Issyk-Kul in northern Kyrgyzstan with a focus on MIL. In the summer of 2019, in partnership with other civil organizations, a traditional democracy and media literacy camp was held in Issyk-Kul for high school students from all regions of the country. For 10 days, at various interactive sites of the youth camp, 72 participants learned the basics of democratic governance, critical perception, and analysis of information. At the end of the camp, the graduates entered the field, conducting training courses and seminars, and they passed on their experience and knowledge to more than 200 students. In August and November, Media Laboratories continued its work in the region, training schoolteachers and representatives from regional education departments and teacher retraining centers in the basics of media literacy and the introduction of MIL elements into the educational process. In August, 42 teachers from 10 schools in the Naryn region were trained. They in turn trained more than 100 of their colleagues at the end of the Media Lab (Kut Bilim, 2020).

d) Training courses abroad and working trips. In October 2019, 10 schoolteachers from Kyrgyzstan became acquainted with the experiences of their colleagues in Germany as part of a working trip organized by DW Akademie and the Media Support Center. The participants were selected based on the results of a competition among teachers at pilot schools who completed a 3-day course on MIL within MediaLAB. The teachers were able to hear the experiences of their German colleagues regarding the promotion of MIL in the education system. The working tour participants visited German organizations promoting MIL to see firsthand how such lessons are carried out and what their colleagues in Berlin and Leipzig emphasize (Kut Bilim, 2020).

e) Online and hybrid training courses. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, in certain periods of 2020 and 2021, some MIL training courses were conducted in a purely online format. This contributed to the formation of skills regarding the active use of Internet technologies in training and conferences. Today, remote online participation by speakers and trainers in international conferences and trainings has become popular.

For example, Internews plans and manages its MIL projects through its office in Kazakhstan. Participants, project managers from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan must go to the city of Astana at the invitation of the organizers. However, this is not always easy. Problems related to multiple-day travel times and border crossings prevent some participants from attending. It is not always practical to gather all applicants and MIL experts from three countries in one place. This does not facilitate the popularity of the MIL project and its ideas in these countries. For these reasons, 4 out of 18 sessions of the Eduton-2021 innovation seminar, organized by Internews on February 2-6, 2021, were held as open sessions that were available for anyone to watch via the Internet. The seminar thus aimed to inform the general public who could not attend but who were interested in this field about the scientific news of the training.

The program of these open sessions (see Table 2) was announced on the organization's website and through Telegram channels (Khodoreva, 2021a).

Table 2. The program of open sessions of MediaCAMP Eduton 2021 of Internews. (Source: https://ru.internews.kz/2021/01/mediacamp-edyuton-2021-priglashaem-na-otkrytye-sessii-po-mediagramotnosti/)

MediaCAMP Eduton 2021: We invite you to open sessions on media literacy
"Media literacy online: attraction of creativity!" – Under this slogan, Internews will hold an innovative seminar Eduton-2021 on February 2-6.
- The goal of the project is to train existing teachers, media literacy trainers, NGO representatives, librarians, and those who have shown an interest in media literacy for the first time in online skills. - Of the 18 sessions, four will be open, and everyone can watch them. - Calendar of open sessions: - February 2, 15:30–16:45 Vsevolod Pulya, "Digital philosophy as the basis for the development of media literacy," with a question-and-answer session - February 3, 15:00–16:30 Vsevolod Pulya, "New media trends and the development of media literacy" - February 4, 17:15–18:15 Sergey Shturkhetsky, "Algorithms for disseminating information in social networks" - February 5, 17:00–18:00 Sergey Shturkhetsky, "Interactive methods for teaching critical thinking online" - Open sessions will be broadcast live on the Internews Facebook page in Russian. - Session times are given in Nur-Sultan time.

4.2.2.2. Resources, manuals, and other publications

One of the most important factors in the stability of international projects and grants is the creation of educational resources and their accessibility to all. Manuals will be effective if they include important topics related to the field of MIL, demonstration materials, case studies, and assignments. Many educational resources have been created under the influence of foreign projects.

a) Publications. In various years, manuals in the field of MIL have been published in several languages under the auspices of UNESCO in Central Asian countries. Some of them are presented in the "Literature Review" section of this article. They are freely available on the

UNESCO website and on the websites of the local organizations directly involved in the project. Four MIL manuals have been produced and adapted to the Central Asian, Moldovan, and Tunisian contexts with specific curricula for different audiences: universities, schools, youth, and the general public (IREX Europe Annual Report 2018: 8). Kyrgyzstan is a pioneer in this area throughout Central Asia because unlike in neighboring countries, the project to introduce elements of MIL in education received state support from key partners. In 2020 alone, several major events were implemented under the Mediasabak project that have made substantial contributions to the promotion of MIL in education (Kut Bilim, 2020).

The Media Support Center will continue to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Kyrgyz Academy of Education in introducing elements of media information literacy, innovative methods, critical thinking skills, and the use of new technologies, programs, and applications in the field of education as part of the state program for the digitalization of all areas of life for citizens.

Sulaymanova and Osmanova 2021, specialists at the Modern Journalism Development Center of the Republic of Uzbekistan NGO, have been actively contributing to the development of the mass media sphere in Uzbekistan with the support of foreign partners for several years. They published Media Literacy Training Manual for Teachers of Higher Education Institutions of Uzbekistan (Sulaymanova and Osmanova, 2021), which was prepared as part of the MediaCAMP project with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

b) Implementing MIL as a school curriculum and publishing textbooks for schoolchildren. Educational programs and courses, which range from several days to several months, show greater effectiveness compared to training. However, the most lasting impact is seen when international projects and grants integrate MIL into the curricula of general secondary education and higher education systems. According to the "Central Asia Media Program Fact Sheet" (2022) from the USAID-funded CAMP (Central Asia Media Program), in the 2020-2021 academic year, 29 universities in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan incorporated modules from Internews' Media Literacy Manual in Russian, Kazakh, and Tajik to teach MIL and journalism to more than 1,500 students (2 p.).

The greatest achievement of MIL projects in Kazakhstan has been the introduction of such courses into school education.

Khodoreva (2021b), one of the experts in the field, stated,

The introduction of media literacy in school education is one of the key points of the MediaCAMP project, which Internews has been working on since October 2018. From the first days of its existence, the project team announced a competition for the creation of learning resources adapted to the local context. The creation of modern textbooks, moreover, in new, only emerging disciplines, is not an easy task. The competition received several applications from university professors, NGOs, and other civil society organizations.

The first textbook on media literacy for schoolchildren in Kazakhstan was approved by the state expert commission and recommended for use in educational institutions.

According to the expertise of the Republican Scientific and Practical Center “Textbook” under the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the educational and methodological manual on media and information literacy, developed under the Internews project by the International Center for Journalism MediaNet with the support of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), are recommended for use in educational institutions of Kazakhstan. “The content of the textbook corresponds to modern scientific ideas about the system of media and the media sphere,” – from the official conclusion of the center of “Uchebnik.” (Khodoreva, 2021c)

A team of experts from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, and Lithuania developed a textbook for students in grades 9-11/12 and a methodological manual for schoolteachers published in Kazakh and Russian to instruct students in media literacy, critical thinking skills, how to recognize fake news and media manipulation, and how to use the Internet safely.

Such education has already been implemented in numerous foreign countries. For instance, in the United States, European nations, and many other countries, media literacy is a mandatory component of secondary education.

c) Online resources and platforms as a main and innovative way of promoting MIL concepts. The Media Support Center in Kyrgyzstan is considered a pioneer in the development of MIL in Central Asia. It created a mechanism for integrating MIL into the education system. This center plays a leading role in the development of curricula and reference literature for teachers. It also creates and tests programs for high school students. The most innovative part of the project is the online platform for students and teachers, “Media Sabak: Developing Critical Thinking for Youth through MILEducation.” This platform provides opportunities for learning and testing MIL online, and it enables participants to share learning outcomes and receive course completion certificates. The goal of an upcoming project is to establish regional media literacy centers to provide mentoring support.

In 2020 in September, a new platform of the Mediasabak project was launched at http://mediasabak.org/, where all the lessons on media information literacy in Russian, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Tajik are uploaded. In the future, it is planned to translate these lessons into Uzbek. Each video lesson is accompanied by a detailed development of the lesson in Power Point and in text form. They are duplicated on the official channel of the project on YouTube, @MediaSabak. (Kut Bilim, 2020)

In 2020, a series of animated films was prepared to explain various aspects of MIL to children in an accessible and playful way. On the new platform, users can take a test to assess their level of media literacy. In addition, a trial version of the online textbook on the subject “Man and Society” (http://onlinekitep.kg/) developed by the expert group of the Media Support Center, the Kyrgyz Academy of Education, and the Ministry of Education and Science, has been uploaded here. This new type of teaching aid is the first of its kinds in the history of education in Kyrgyzstan, with interactive tasks and tests that take into account the physiological and psychological aspects of the development of fifth graders.

4.2.2.3. Financial support.
UNESCO, with the financial assistance of international donors, such as the European Union, has launched several projects totaling almost 13 million USD aimed at reinforcing technical and vocational education and learning in rural areas, supporting teachers, increasing social harmony among youth and strengthening gender equality through the public education system of Uzbekistan (UNESCO, 2021). How much does the Western world transfer for resources, projects, and services?

The five-year, $15 million USAID-funded Central Asia Media Program was implemented by Internews and ran from October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2023 (MediaCAMP Fact sheet, 2023). The UNESCO project "Enhancing the Capacity of Uzbek Media to Serve the Public Interest. Phase II" received $190,450 in funding from the UK government. The project was launched in March 2019 and focuses on enhancing the capacity of Uzbek media to produce more objective and inclusive high-quality media content (UNESCO, 2020).

In January 2022, Internews declared that non-profit, public, educational, and non-governmental organizations, non-governmental theater and art groups, and associations interested in promoting media information and digital literacy in in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan are eligible for financial assistance for the following activities during the year:

- creating media literacy content in various genres (e.g., interviews, short videos, comics, memes) by stable professional journalistic organizations on the topic of media information and digital literacy;
- staging entertainment forms (e.g., theater pieces, plays, musicals) that promote media literacy through the active participation of the audience;
- organizing film literacy training courses for different segments of the population;
- creating visual tools and games, questions and answers, quizzes, etc. on the topic of media information and digital literacy;
- creating and producing MIL and digital literacy posters for distribution on social media networks and public places for different population segments.

4.2.2.4. Commodities. In many cases, foreign aid in the field of education takes the form of educational materials (books, notebooks, pens, etc.), information and Internet technologies, and the opening of fully equipped centers in institutions for specific educational purposes.

In MIL projects and grants, commodities often include notebooks, pens, various handouts, and educational resources for participants in conferences and training courses. Examples:

* Providing technical assistance: According to the "Central Asia Media Program Factsheet", Internews has provided capacity-building and technical assistance to support nine media organizations in Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, aiming to enhance their advocacy efforts, reinforce self-regulation in the media community, and ensure media representation in legislative

* *Material promotion of activity in the field of media and MIL.* In November 2020, the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan hosted the second national competition of school media corners, attracting 100 participants from across the country who showcased over 60 school media corners. Winners of the competition were awarded with laptops and Wi-Fi routers as a means of promoting media and information literacy activities (Kut Bilim, 2020).

* *Helping to open media editorial offices, educational and creative laboratories in the field*. The establishment of the new radio studio at the Journalism and Mass Communication University, a project by DW Akademie, represents a significant development in Uzbekistan, providing hands-on training for aspiring journalists. This initiative demonstrates a positive step towards press freedom in the country, offering practical learning opportunities for the next generation of reporters (Bodine, 2022).

The opening of the radio studio provides both professional skills and increases media literacy among young people. Students who conduct a live broadcast in the studio increase their practical experience, and listening to programs prepared by others also shapes their understanding of MIL. This can be seen in the provision of technical technologies for the development of mass media in various regions by foreign donors, particularly DW Akademie. The technical development of mass media enables the preparation and transmission of better-quality information. This makes it possible for residents to use faster and more saturated information distribution channels.

4.2.2.5. Opening of Media Literacy Houses

Media Literacy Houses have been established to promote the effective use of information technologies and techniques to ensure information security among all age groups of the population, supporting their development of critical thinking, logical thinking, and information filtering skills and increasing their digital technology, advertising, and film literacy.

The regional consultant on media literacy of the MediaCAMP Program of the Representative Office of Internews in Kazakhstan, associate professor Gulnar Asanbaeva (2021) discussed the importance of these Houses in her article:

A new area of work for MediaCAMP was the creation of Media Literacy Houses. These are centers for the development of media literacy, formed by university professors, librarians, media literacy trainers, youth leaders, civil activists who received media literacy training in Internews projects. Now they are constantly working with all categories of the population in the regions. Media literacy houses independently form their activity programs based on the needs of local communities, closely cooperating with each other, exchanging resources and ensuring systematic work on the development of media literacy. We hope that Media Literacy Houses will gradually appear in each of the regions of our countries and will be able to independently participate in competitions of various funds to support the development of media literacy. (p. 30)

It is important to support the work of Media Literacy Houses in the context of adult literacy, without which our efforts to develop media, information, and digital literacy will not lead to a strengthening of critical attitudes toward information or the ability to recognize misinformation and propaganda.

Muhayyo Saidova, the founder of the Media Literacy House in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, expressed the following:

I have been working on media literacy projects for several years, organizing seminars and trainings with the financial support of foreign partners. When I participated in the international media literacy festival held in Kazakhstan in May of this year [2022], my colleagues from Tajikistan and Kazakhstan spoke proudly about the establishment of "Media Literacy Houses." Modern information fields sometimes serve for good, sometimes for evil. In such a situation, it is very important that people have the skills to get quality information. For this purpose, I preferred to start media literacy work in my neighborhood. Jamshid Rikhsiyev, the youth leader of the New Beltepa community assembly, and Gulnora Yusupova, the head of the Shaikhontohur district vocational school, helped me in this regard. Thanks to such enthusiastic pedagogues, today 20 teenagers will have their first training in media literacy. (Xabar.uz, 2022)

The subjects of the trainings in these Houses are media literacy (e.g., activities on social networks, standards of information consumption, safety activities on mobile apps and messengers, fact-checking), media use skills and digital literacy (e.g., proper use of the capabilities of mobile communication devices, efficient use of Internet equipment, computer literacy), film literacy (e.g., formation of thinking skills regarding plot, character, and problem issues in film works), and the advertising of literacy skills.

4.2.2.6. Other projects

Foreign aid in the field of MIL is manifested in various forms, such as supporting the creation of various media platforms, contributing to the improvement of the content and quality of media products etc.

For instance, during the period from 2018 to 2023, as part of the MediaCAMP initiative funded by USAID, representatives of the organization collaborated with Central Asian media, academic institutions, and civil society partners. Their aim was to enhance the quality of content and engagement on both traditional and digital media platforms, improve the financial sustainability of media outlets, elevate the professionalism of journalists, bloggers, and citizen reporters, boost media literacy among the public, and fortify the legal and regulatory framework supporting media in Central Asia. Program activities were tailored based on feedback and needs from local partners, adopting a flexible approach to adapt to the rapidly evolving media and socio-economic landscape. Leveraging the demographic trend of a youth bulge in the region, the program focused on promoting digital media production and consumption to foster innovation, broaden the reach of local media, and promote openness to diverse perspectives.

Through the Central Asia Media Program, Internews and its partners trained over 2,050 media professionals from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in the initial three and a half years of the program. Additionally, they provided support to 160 non-state-funded news outlets, individual journalists, and civil society organizations, resulting in the creation of over 3,900 pieces of locally relevant content in various engaging formats, delivering timely and socially significant information in Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, and Uzbek languages. Furthermore, nearly 6,100 individuals from the target countries participated in media literacy initiatives, festivals, and training courses organized by Media and Digital Literacy Houses, equipping them with critical thinking skills when evaluating information. (United States Agency for International Development, 2023, 2 p.)

At the end of 2019, IREX Europe started an EU-funded project to strengthen the resilience of youth in Central Asia to misinformation and hate speech online by promoting critical thinking and media literacy. An online game was launched in the summer of 2020 (IREX Europe, 2019, p. 8).

As media and information technologies progress, the types and forms of projects in this field are increasing year by year. Types of foreign aid in the field of MIL identified through observations are summarized in ***Table 3*** below.

Table 3. Classification of foreign aid in the field of MIL in Central Asia (Source: Author's own creation according to the research results).

Forms and types of foreign aid				
1. Training courses, educational programs, and courses	**2. Resources, manuals, and other publications**	**3. Financial support**	**4. Commodities**	**5. Opening of Media Literacy Houses**
International conferences on MIL issues	Publications (manuals, guidebooks, etc.)	Finance the creation of media literacy content in various genres, such as interviews, short videos, comics, memes, etc.	Provide participants with notebooks, pens, various handouts, and educational resources during conferences and training courses	These are centers for the development of media literacy, formed by university professors, librarians, media literacy trainers, youth leaders, and civil activists who received media literacy training in foreign aid projects
MIL festivals	Implement MIL into school curricula and publishing textbooks for school children	Finance the staging of entertainment forms (e.g., theater pieces, plays, musicals, etc.) that promote media literacy and the organization of film literacy training courses	Provide capacity-building and technical assistance to media support organizations	

Training courses abroad and working trips	Online resources and platforms on MIL as a main and innovative way of promoting MIL concepts.	Financial support for creating visual tools and games, questions and answers, quizzes, etc.	Resources for organizing school media corners	
Online and hybrid training courses		Financial support for the creation and production of media information and digital literacy posters for distribution on social media networks and public places for different population segments	Financial support to provide media schools and editorial offices with modern technical equipment	
6. Other projects				
Supporte to improve content quality and audience engagement across traditional and "new" media platforms	Strengthen media outlet financial sustainability and the professionalism of journalists, bloggers, and citizen reporters	Strengthen the legal and regulatory enabling environment for media in Central Asia	Launch online games and contests	

5. Discussion

5.1. Resources and services transferred in foreign MIL projects

Foreign aid has been an essential tool for the socioeconomic development of developing countries since the 1960s. It has been described by OECD as financial and technical assistance and commodity flow to countries that are on the list of the Development Assistance Committee (Farah et al., 2018: 7).

As Howard White (1998: 69) stated, "Aid flows consist largely of three types: (i) project aid, (ii) programme aid (including commodity aid, which has largely been food aid), and (iii) technical assistance."

According to Williams (2021), these resources can take the form of grants, projects, or concessional credits. Table 1 presents the types of foreign aid.

Table 1. Types of foreign aid (Source: Author's own creation according to the research results)

Types of foreign aid			
Financial resources	Commodities (e.g., technological equipment)	Technical advice	Training courses

In their article "*Broadening the Approach: The Importance of Partners and Research for MIL*," Reineck and Lublinski (2015) cited the classification of DW Akademie projects, as follows:

1. Organizing isolated workshops, although this is not sufficient for longer-term development projects.
2. Upscaling to the regional or even national level by developing curricula and integrating them into school syllabuses, with support from local and international partners.
3. Developing educational content and programs suited to individuals and the educational system by working in cooperation with local teachers, school administration and education ministries.
4. Working with university lecturers who educate future schoolteachers to multiply the effects.
5. Establishing institutions such as competence centers that support MIL in schools.

According to the authors, all of these are being pursued in various DW Akademie projects (Reineck & Lublinski, 2015: 7).

The "IREX Europe Annual Report 2019," which was developed in the MIL sphere, the following classification of sources was given:

"We work in Moldova, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Uzbekistan and in 6 European countries to promote media literacy. IREX Europe has developed a package of MIL tools and activities adaptable to local circumstances including:

• **MIL training of trainers workshops** in libraries, universities, schools and community centres.
• Developing **MIL courses and curricula**.
• Creating an **online platform** for MIL resources and **media corners** in libraries.
• **Public discussions** on reports focused on social issues and **media manipulation** and propaganda.
• **MIL summer fairs** to share good practices among stakeholders.
• **An online game (website and app version)** to build resistance among young people to **hate speech and misinformation**.
• **Media tours** to raise awareness on how the media works.
• **Media monitoring** to identify country-specific misinformation, hate-speech, fake news and propaganda" (p. 8).

MIL projects have become increasingly popular in recent years, and all of the above types of assistance have been provided in various forms.

5.2. Issues of sustainability in foreign aid MIL projects

Foreign aid plays a crucial role in supporting the development of MIL in Central Asian countries. These countries often face significant challenges in terms of access to quality information media freedom and the ability of their populations to critically analyze and evaluate information. This section explores the main donors involved in supporting MIL initiatives, their roles in the development of MIL, and the sustainability of foreign aid in this context.

One of the main donors contributing to MIL development in Central Asian countries is the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO has been actively involved in promoting MIL in the region, having recognized its importance in fostering democratic societies and enabling citizens to make informed decisions. Through various projects and initiatives, UNESCO has provided technical and financial support to improve media literacy education, promote media pluralism, and enhance media regulatory frameworks in Central Asian countries. Its contributions have been instrumental in building the capacity of media professionals, educators, and policymakers and in raising awareness of the importance of MIL among the general population.

Another key donor in the field of MIL is the European Union (EU). The EU has actively supported initiatives aimed at fostering MIL in Central Asian countries through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights program. These initiatives have focused on strengthening media independence, promoting fact-checking, countering disinformation, and enhancing digital skills among citizens. The EU’s involvement has not only provided financial resources but has also brought valuable expertise and best practices from European countries, which have served as a catalyst for positive change in the region.

Initiatives funded by international organizations have aimed to improve media professionalism, promote press freedom, and strengthen the legal and regulatory environment for media. These international stakeholders have also funded projects focused on digital media literacy to empower citizens to critically assess the information that they consume online.

While foreign aid has been instrumental in jumpstarting MIL development in Central Asian countries, the sustainability of these initiatives remains a challenge. Long-term sustainability requires local ownership of MIL programs and a supportive national policy environment. It is essential for governments in Central Asia to recognize the importance of MIL in promoting democratic societies and to actively invest in its development. This includes allocating financial resources for MIL education in schools, providing ongoing training for media professionals, and fostering an enabling environment for media freedom. Without robust local commitment and investment, foreign aid alone cannot ensure the long-term sustainability of MIL efforts.

Furthermore, partnerships between international donors, civil society organizations, and local stakeholders are crucial for sustaining and enhancing MIL development in Central Asian countries.

These partnerships can leverage expertise, resources, and networks to develop innovative approaches, share best practices, and create platforms for collaboration. By involving key stakeholders at every level from government institutions and educational institutions to media organizations and community groups, the sustainability of MIL initiatives can be maximized.

Donors such as UNESCO and the EU and bilateral aid from countries such as the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom have provided essential resources and expertise to improve media professionalism, promote media freedom, and enhance critical thinking skills among citizens. However, to achieve long-term sustainability, it is crucial to foster local ownership, develop supportive national policies, and nurture partnerships between international donors and local stakeholders. Only through such collaborative efforts can Central Asian countries achieve sustainable and impactful MIL development, enabling citizens to navigate the complex information landscape and actively participate in democratic processes.

Foreign aid plays a crucial role in addressing global poverty, inequality, and other development challenges. However, like any other programs, foreign aid projects encounter sustainability issues, particularly in MIL projects. Some of the main sustainability issues that can arise in this context are presented in ***Table 4***.

Table 4. Main sustainability issues regarding foreign assistance in the field of MIL (Source: Author's own creation according to the research results)

#	Sustainability issues	Definition
1	**Funding and Dependence**	MIL projects heavily rely on external funding. In many cases, these projects are dependent on foreign aid, making their sustainability uncertain. When funding is unpredictable or limited, it becomes challenging to maintain the continuity and effectiveness of such projects.
2	**Capacity Building**	MIL projects often seek to build the capacity of local communities and institutions. While these efforts can be successful in the short term, sustainability becomes a concern when there is inadequate follow-up support or a lack of investment in building and maintaining local capacity. Without ongoing training, support beneficiaries may struggle to sustain the outcomes of the project.
3	**Technology Access and Infrastructure**	MIL projects frequently use technology such as internet access, computers, or mobile devices to enhance learning experiences. However, unequal access to technology and infrastructure can hinder the sustainability of these projects. Limited access to technology or unstable infrastructure may prevent communities from fully benefiting from the resources and tools provided, making it difficult to sustain the impact of the project.

4	**Cultural Relevance and Local Ownership**	Sustainable MIL projects require a strong level of cultural relevance and local ownership. In some instances, externally designed projects may not fully align with the local context language or cultural preferences. Failure to acknowledge and incorporate these aspects can lead to limited acceptance and relevance among the target audience, jeopardizing the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the project.
5	**Policy and Political Instability**	MIL projects are greatly influenced by the policy and political environment in which they operate. In regions with political instability, changes in government or policy can have significant implications for the sustainability and continuity of these projects. Political interference or a lack of regulatory frameworks to protect media freedom can undermine the project's success and long-term impact.

To ensure the sustainability of foreign aid projects in MIL, it is crucial to address these issues. Emphasizing local ownership, building long-term capacity, investing in technology infrastructure, designing culturally relevant initiatives, and promoting supportive policy environments are key steps toward creating sustainable and impactful programs. In addition, diversifying funding sources and working toward self-sufficiency can help reduce dependence on foreign aid, making projects more resilient and sustainable in the long term.

6. Conclusion

Because of foreign aid, a number of achievements have been made in the field of MIL in the countries of Central Asia, as follows.

1. Knowledge and skills in the field of MIL and their importance have been developed among a certain segment of the population.
2. As a result of the provision of grants and scholarships by foreign donors, MIL training is being provided in many educational institutions to increase participants' MIL.
3. A group of MIL trainers has been formed in each country.
4. In the field of MIL, books and manuals adapted to the region have been published, and scientific research is being carried out.
5. MIL is now being taught in some universities in these countries.

To further enhance the progress made with the support of foreign donor organizations in the area of media and information literacy (MIL) and to improve the efficiency and long-term impact of foreign aid, the following recommendations can be offered:

1.While continuing cooperation with NGOs, it is worthwhile to strive to establish strong relations with state organizations and educational and cultural institutions and to organize grant contests in cooperation with them. It is necessary to introduce the basics of media, information, and digital literacy in school so that children can competently analyze, compare, and search for the information they need for education.

decisions (United States Agency for International Development, 2023, 2 p.).

2.To advance the development of MIL curriculum, training of educational staff, and the creation of teaching resources through organizational exchange, it is important to visit countries with established MIL and media education programs.

3. MIL programs and projects should aim to enhance the public's understanding of how media is funded, regulated, and distributed, to educate individuals about their rights and responsibilities regarding data and privacy, and to improve their understanding of how social and search platforms operate.

4. Different groups of people will require different MIL interventions at different points in their learning styles, so in the formation of groups of trainers, it is necessary to consider the formation of trainers from each region of the country. In the future, one responsible person should be appointed to continuously the MIL project in each region.

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The Empowerment of Female TV Series Characters on Digital Platforms: An Analysis of the 2023 BLU TV Series

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Abstract
This study focuses on original Turkish TV series from 2023 on Blu TV, the most watched digital platform in Turkey. Blu TV, Turkey's first digital platform, ranked first as the most-watched platform in 2023 with a 38% viewership rate. It was followed by Netflix with 27% and Prime Video with 19%. In the study, the female characters of two series that started to be broadcast on Blu TV in 2023 are analyzed. These series are 'Magarsus' (2023) and 'How Do I Fill This Emptiness?' (2023). Female characters in Turkish TV series broadcast on digital platforms are structurally different from the characters that appear in traditional television series. Digital female series characters are at the forefront with their different professions, sexuality, and power. Whether they are ballerinas, writers, cleaners, or the head of a traditional family, these characters are framed as free and independent. The study is based on the argument that the serial content of digital platforms is more independent and the fiction of characters is more conflict-based. The female characters in these series are analyzed through Erving Goffman's theory of self-presentation, under the headings of performance, teams, regional behaviors, role strain, out-of-character, and the art of impression management. It is determined that the female characters analyzed emerge in the free environment of digital, their character development and conflicts about their identities due to their families and societies can easily be felt by the audience in the frontstage and backstage themes.

Keywords: *Turkish original series, Blu TV, Female Characters, Self-Presentation Theory*

1. Introduction
Television broadcasting in Turkey has transformed from an analog era to a market dominated by digital broadcasting platforms. The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), a public broadcaster, was founded in 1964 and for a long time dominated the screens as a single channel. TRT, which has great importance in terms of Turkish television history, started broadcasting in Ankara in 1968. Nowadays, TRT broadcasts to the Balkans, the Middle

East, and many parts of Europe. This public broadcaster, which has thematic channels in different languages, also has an internet broadcast and a newly established digital platform named '*Tabii*'.

Turkey's television broadcasting adventure, which began in 1968, continues today with many national and international channels and digital broadcasting platforms. In 1997, the American internet broadcaster Netflix opened up to the world and entered the Turkish TV series and movie market, introducing different content to the audience in the digital space. Characters who could not find a place in traditional TV series came to life in the digital space. Thus, the audience had the opportunity to watch different characters and original content. Following Netflix's success with the Turkish audience, local digital platforms started broadcasting. According to 2023 data from Justwatch, a search engine for internet broadcasts, Blu TV, a domestic platform, was the most watched TV series-film platform with 38 percent. Blu TV is followed by Netflix with 27 percent. Amazon Prime Video ranks third in this ranking with a viewership rate of 19.

This study is based on the hypothesis that female characters in original Turkish TV series broadcast on digital platforms are designed more independent than female characters in traditional TV series and reflect themselves and inner conflicts more realistically. The motivation for this study is to identify that as digital platforms have transformed our daily viewing experiences, the construction of female characters in TV series has also changed. The character Duru in the series '*Fi*', one of the popular series of its period, broadcast on Puhu TV, and the character Meryem in the series 'Bir Başkadır' broadcast on Netflix are strong female characters that have come to life in different aspects. Atiye, the main character of the series '*Atiye*', also made for Netflix, is a woman in search of the meaning of her own life.

In this study, the original content on Turkey's most watched digital platform Blu TV is taken into consideration to explain that female characters in TV series broadcasted on digital platforms are presented as strong individuals. To limit the study, the leading female characters in the original Turkish TV series that started to be broadcast on Blu TV in 2023 are analyzed.

These character analyses are based on sociologist Erving Goffman's theory of dramaturgy. At the center of Goffman's ideas is the concept of self. Asserting that the individual's self is active in daily life, Goffman (2009) applied this idea to daily life. According to him, individuals act in everyday life. Everyday life is a stage. This idea of Goffman is used in the analysis of characters in movies and TV series. The method of this study is character analysis by applying the elements used in Goffman's theory to the female characters in the selected series.

In the first part of the study, a summary of digital platforms in Turkey is presented. In the second part, Erving Goffman's theory of self and dramaturgy is explained. In the third and final part of the study, the leading female character of the series '*Magarsus*' and '*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*', which started to be broadcast on Blu TV in 2023, are analyzed.

2.Local Digital platforms in Turkey and Turkish Series on BLU TV in 2023

Turkish TV series are known to be successful in foreign TV markets (Ruiz-Cabrera nd Gürkan, 2023). Along with these successes, digital platforms have a widespread audience in Turkey and original content has started to be produced for these platforms. With Netflix's entry into the Turkish TV series-film market in 2016, different foreign content on this platform broke viewership records and domestic producers' interest in digital increased. Netflix's first original Turkish series was '*Hakan: Muhafız' (The Protector)*. This series, which contains mystical historical elements.

In 2016, Turkish audiences were introduced to Blu TV, a local digital platform. Promoting itself as 'Turkey's internet television', Blu TV was founded by Doğan Holding, which is involved in many production areas (automotive, finance, tourism etc.). However, in 2018, the holding withdrew from the media sector and left its place in this field to Demirören Holding. In 2021, Blu TV was acquired by Warner Bros. Discovery (Dikkol, 2020: 486).

The first Turkish series of this local digital platform, which stands out with its different series and movies, is 'Innocent'. Later on, Turkish series with different themes such as '*Zero One*', *'The Living Ones', 'Dudullu Postası', 'Bozkır'*, 'Yeşilçam' were streaming on Blu TV. This platform, which operates on a subscription system, allows viewers to consume uninterrupted content without ads.

Another platform that continues to broadcast only local productions without a subscription is Puhu TV. The most popular original Turkish production of this platform is the 'Fi' series based on Azra Kohen's famous novel. Starring Serenay Sarıkaya, Ozan Güven, and Mehmet Günsür, the series is a thriller-drama. A rerun of the series was later broadcast on Show TV. However, the audience did not show as much interest in this series as on the digital platform.

Exxen has made a name for itself with its football broadcasts and was founded by Acun Medya in 2021 (Biga, 2023). In addition, the platform also broadcasts names that broadcast on YouTube and become social media phenomena. Gain, another local digital platform, broadcasts news content and documentaries unlike the aforementioned platforms (marketingturkiye, 2021).

Netflix's popularity among Turkish viewers has been decreased as local digital platforms have started to take over the market. Each platform produced different content and created its fan base.

The Turkish series on the Blu TV platform, the subject of this study, features unique characters and different production types. In 2023, two new Turkish series started to be broadcast on the platform. One of these series, 'Magarsus', tells the story of the internal conflicts within the Kurak family, who are citrus traders in Adana. The series takes its name from the ancient city of Magarsus, founded in the 7th century BC in the Sarıtaş area of Adana. In the series, the character transformations of family members are particularly striking.

Another series titled 'How Do I Fill This Emptiness?' tells the story of Derin, a character trying to get used to the death of his father. Derin is a writer in the 2023 series, which deals with the theme of death. In addition to this theme, this series also portrays a father-daughter relationship. In 2023, audiences watched different women's stories on Blu TV. In these series, the struggle of women and the evolution of these characters during the series are watched.

3. Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy and Character Analysis

One of the 20th century's most important sociologists, Erving Goffman was born in Canada in 1922. With his book '*Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*', first published in 1956, he drew attention to the concepts of self, everyday life, and interaction (San Nicolas, 1997).

Goffman used the concept of symbolic interaction in his studies. Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead, prominent sociologists of the Chicago School, also worked on symbolic interaction. On the other hand, Cooley is also known for his 'Looking-Glass Self' theory. According to him, what other people in society think about an individual is related to how that individual feels about oneself (Aslan-Yılmaz, 2016: 83).

In this socio-psychological approach, Cooley argues that interpersonal interactions in society are predominant in the development of an individual's self and identity. There are three main components of the 'Looking Glass Self' theory. These are,
- Imagining how we should appear in front of others,
- Imagining and reacting to judgments about our appearance,
- Developing ourselves by judging others (Siljanovska, Stojcevska,2018: 63).

The individual develops self through verbal and non-verbal communication with other individuals in daily life (Gürkan et al., 2023). George Herbert Mead is another thinker of Cooley's self-theories. According to Mead, the self is a constantly developing structure, which develops and transforms within another process, social experience (Longhofer, Winchester,2023: 120). The events we encounter in daily life or the way we communicate form our experiences. Mead mentions two selves when individuals form these experiences. These are the 'knowing self' and the 'known self'. Mead refers to these as the behaviors we exhibit in society and the behaviors of the individual when he/she is alone (Özbey, Tan, 2022: 1001).

Influenced by these theorists and ideas of the self, Goffman put forward the theory of dramaturgy. Analyzing the symbolic forms of interaction and communication between individuals in everyday life, Goffman used the concept of theater of ideas. Goffman's theory is based on sociologist Anthony Giddens' theory that there are two types of interaction: unfocused and focused. According to Giddens, people are in constant communication with their postures, gestures, and mimics on the streets, in cafes, in short, in the presence of others. This is called unfocused communication. Focused communication is communication in which one individual pays direct attention to what the other is saying about them. This interaction in everyday life is called an encounter (Giddens, 2016: 318).

Goffman states that our social experiences are formed through forms of communication in everyday life. According to him, face-to-face communication is the most important form of communication in daily life. Later Goffman also focuses on the interaction with communication tools in his theory (Güngör, 2016: 342). In this theory, which Goffman explains with theatrical concepts, the concepts of frontstage and backstage are the main elements. On the theater stage and in social life, actors are concerned with their appearance, they wear costumes and use the space. On the other hand, there is a backstage where this performance is prepared. Here the actors can step out of their roles and be themselves. In this theory, Goffman states that all individuals are watching each other and that all people play their carefully constructed roles to sustain this theatrical play (Joshi, 2022). These roles are socially defined expectations that a person plays. There are societal expectations such as a woman taking on the role of a mother or a teacher behaving in certain patterns.

In this theatral practice called everyday life, people use the impression method to shape other people's reactions to them. The way a student behaves at school according to certain rules and has different responsibilities towards their parents at home is a method of impression (Giddens, 2016: 320). These are different social selves. According to Goffman, there can be conflict between these selves.

In Goffman's theory of dramaturgy, in which he interprets everyday life, there are basic elements such as frontstage, backstage, performance, and conflict. When Goffman builds his theory on content producers and audiences, he states that these two components interact. Also, he emphasizes that content is not produced independently of the audience and that the expectations of the audience shape what is produced. He has researched gender representations in the media. According to his research on gender representations in advertisements, he explaines that they apply the known norms in society (Güngör, 2016: 343-344).

According to Goffman, an individual's experiences shape their lives. At the same time, the content produced by the media comes to life through social norms. However, the characters on digital platforms can go beyond social norms. Female characters on digital platforms exhibit a strong and extraordinary transformation. Considering that the series is inspired by society and people, the sharp turns in the development of the characters in front of the stage and backstage are noteworthy, as Goffman states in his theory of dramaturgy.

Goffman's Self-presentation is the conscious and unconscious activities carried out to determine and shape others' impressions of a person. For self-presentation, individuals generally create an appropriate image of themselves and this image has a positive effect in creating a certain identity, facilitating social interaction, and gaining material and social rewards. The image created or revealed in self-presentation is frequently used in interpersonal relationships as well as in business life or social relations (Goffman, 1959: 56). It is not possible to draw a clear boundary between the concept of "self", which carries the basic characteristics of personality, and personality in terms of structure and development. Although personality and self are intertwined, the self has different characteristics from personality. The individuals may not be able to assimilate the external reflection of their personalities. However, the individuals have an opinion about their personalities. This conviction is called the way of recognizing and evaluating oneself. With the concept of self, the individual creates a special space for themselves by separating from others (Gollwitzer, 1986: 46). For this reason, the individual makes efforts to position, develop, and protect this space in social interaction. When we look at the structure of the self, the way the individuals define themselves, their formation in the awareness of how others define them, and the personality they want to be in the future are important.

4. Findings

This study seeks to analyze two series on the Blu TV platform through the lens of Self Presentation Theory. This theory, detailed in the book “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,” is categorized under six headings: Performance, Teams, Regions and Regional Behaviours, Role Strain, Out of Character, and The Art of Impression Management. By applying these categories, the study will explore how characters in the series navigate and manage their self-presentation in various social contexts, offering insights into their interactions and the underlying psychological dynamics.

Performances: The first concept related to the presentation of the self is called “performance”, which is an activity that a person performs in front of certain observers during the time they are in front of them and influences them. The play is realized through performances. While performing, one can believe in one’s play, sincerely believe that the real one is staging, or one can exhibit a cynical approach, not believing in one’s play and not caring much about what others think (Paulhus, 1982: 839).

A fundamental concept related to performance is the showcase, which is defined as “standardized expressive equipment used intentionally or unintentionally by the performer during a performance”. A “set” is one of the standard elements of a showcase. It is used to describe the visual aspects of the means of expression. Goffman considers the “personal showcase” as the means of expression that is associated with the actor and continues to be a part of the actor at different times and places. Age, gender, origin, height, weight, image, gestures, and facial expressions are the components of the personal showcase. The personal showcase is “appearance” and “attitude”(Goffman, 1959: 70).

In “Magarsus” especially Beton character has a very nice performance when he has the speech to convince the audience about the election of the mayoralty. He has almost convinced people that he can manage Magarsus but the American firm does not let him win and makes him withdraw his candidacy by blackmailing him with his cousin. His acting reflects reality but it does not work because of his cousin, Turgut. He is a real performer when he is with his family playing the role of a leader being ready to take the place of his father’s kingdom, but this is just the tip of the iceberg. He has existential problems and conflicts about his place in his family, on the other hand, he shows himself as a strong character to society and his girlfriend Damla. Within six chapters, the audience sees the conflict of his inner self when his double personality is shown during the series. He has credible performances with his friends convincing all of them and showing off himself as a leader.

Tansu is also an important performance character that enables people to believe what she says. In reality, she is just acting what society wants her to be, but in reality, she rejects everything that both her family and her society believe. She is a lesbian but cannot tell anyone about it, afraid of her society and the family. She wants to be the new leader and has her performance on behalf of all the people in Magarsus. Although she has new ideas, because of being a woman, she is not accepted to be the new leader of Magarsus. That is why she has the burden that she will always act on a character that she does not believe, in as long as she wants to stay in her region.

Damla character is Turgut's girlfriend. First of all, we see her in the American firm which wants to get rid of the Kurak family and tries to get the kingdom. She is firstly closer to Tansu and then she meets Turgut and loves him. She has a very good performance in convincing people, especially Turgut. Her aim is never understood because she dies in chapter seven. In "How Do I Fill This Emptiness?", Derin character is the real performer convincing all the people writing a book about her family and upsetting every character in her family. All the family members give reactions except her father. Her mother and her sisters say that she writes a fake story about her family, never thinking about what the other family members feel about it. Yet she is so selfish that she never understands the reaction of her family and believes what she wants to believe. She is an actor, performing different kinds of characters inside her persona. The key point is she believes in what she performs. She believes that she is a good daughter, and is loved a lot by her father, but she rarely speaks with the mother and we see the mother scenes as not a woman not interested in her daughters, living with another man, leaving her daughters and the father because of her. It can obviously be said that Derin, the protagonist of the series has the Oedipus complex, loving the father and hating the mother. As we follow the series from her perspective, that hatred can be seen deeply as the series comes to the end of the season.

The father figure in the series is also a very important performer of the series. It should be remembered that we see the ghost and the memories of the father only from the perspective of Derin, which is a subjective one that can never be analyzed objectively. We only see the father figure as a ghost from the beginning of the szeries but the performance of the father is seen always from the eyes and memories of Derin, so we can never analyze the real character of the father. He just performs as a very understanding, polite, and extraordinary father to Derin, forgiving everything she does.

Team: The second concept related to the presentation of the self is "team". A performance usually aims to express the characteristics of the staged task, not the characteristics of the performer. The set of individuals performing a performance is called a performance team. There is a mutual dependence between members of the same team and obligations of trust (Greenberg, 1983: 44). Teammates are bound together by familiarity and camaraderie does not have to be something that is built up over time, it is a formal relationship that develops automatically as soon as a person joins the team and involves secrets that must be kept secret within the team members. At the same time, there is a dependence on cooperation (Goffman, 1959: 75).

As Teams in "Magarsus", all the brothers/cousins and sisters become a part of a team against their enemies to get revenge for their fathers' dead and having the municipality's mayor.

Even though they do not want Beton to be their leader, for the sake of Yellow Garden, the children behave as a team and show Beton as a candidate for mayor.

In "How Do I Fill This Emptiness?", we can never see the family as a team but Derin and his boyfriend Mete have unique team soulmate activities together, understanding and seeing the dark sides of each other. Mete says he only takes drugs when he feels safe and from the first moment they meet with Derin, they take drugs together.

Region Behaviour/ Authenticity of the series: The third concept related to the presentation of the self is "region and regional behaviors". A region is defined as an area surrounded by barriers to perception. When we talk about a particular performance, the place where it is presented is called the showcase zone. The standards for a performance in the showcase zone relate to how the person behaves to the audience with gestures and facial expressions when speaking. The rules of decorum are divided into two subgroups: moral and instrumental. Moral ones are the goal and include rules such as non-interference with others, sexual decency, and respect for sacred places, while instrumental conditions are not the goal (Goffman, 1959: 80).

"*Magarsus*" is the name that symbolizes the ancient city of Magarsus, located in the Dört Direkli area, in the west of Karataş District, closer to Adana. The history of Magarsus Ancient City dates back to the 5th to 4th centuries BC. In inscriptions, coins, and other official documents from the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods, the city's name is always mentioned as Mallos.

In "*Magarsus*", authenticity is seen very clearly. Citrus activities in Yellow Garden, the coastal district of the ancient city of Magarsus are famous for that region, so the producer of the series, Ozan Korkut uses oranges and other traditional food, fruits, diner tables, and drinks so as to give this authenticity. From the first scene, till the end, we see the Yellow Garden and the regional customs and traditions of that area, even the natural disaster that the Magarsus region experienced in 1998, a big earthquake happened around 7 magnitude and the effects on people remains. The deep impact on people, we see in the eyes of Beton character. He gets trapped in the wreckage for hours when he is a small boy, so he has trauma about getting inside the apartments. Because of his trauma, he cannot save his uncle and this also causes a new trauma for him.

In "*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*", from the beginning of the first chapter, we can see the funeral of Derin's father and till the end of the last chapter, we can observe the regional traditions like wearing black, serving food, praying in the funeral house and the cemetery. Although there is always a denial of Derin to these traditional routines, in the last chapter, we see her praying in front of her father's grave.

Distinctive Roles: The fourth concept related to the presentation of the self is "distinctive roles". This concept is about the secrets of a team and the privileges of those who are aware of these secrets. A team aims to conform to its performance and this conformity can be achieved by emphasizing or suppressing certain facts depending on the situation. In other words, a team has secrets and their disclosure negatively affects performance. These are dark, strategic, internal, and escrow secrets (Goffman, 1959: 83).

In "*Magarsus*", Damla character wants to work with both the opposing vendors and the Kurak family. She observes both sides, realizes the shortcomings of both sides, and ensures that the Kurak family suffers. But then she falls in love with Turgut and passes on the secrets of the American company to the Kurak family. This situation results in her death.
In "*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*", Derin and Mete as a team know their secrets of each other. Using drugs can be given as an important example of what negatively affects each other with this habit.

Out-of-Character Communication: The fifth concept related to the presentation of the self is "out-of-character communication". It includes types of communication in which the actor participates and which contain information that is inconsistent with the official impression maintained during the interaction (Goffman, 1959: 89).

In "*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*", Derin draws attention to her inconsistencies and recklessness from the very beginning of the series. At the funeral of her beloved father, she constantly plays with her false fingernails in contrast to her reckless behavior. She knows that her clothes do not fit the funeral at all. She deliberately sings loudly and takes drugs on the way to the funeral. This shows that she is aware of her incongruity. With her timid glances around, her hand gestures trying to get rid of her nail polish, and the black sweater she wears over her mismatched outfit, it is as if she has accepted her nonconformity. The indifference in her character, and the social pressures she sees as rules are her taboos that she cannot get rid of. Trying not to show her sadness to people when she is sad, and not being able to mourn during the death process shows that she behaves out of character and even the opposite of her character. In the last episode of the series, she reads "Surah Yasin", which she could not pray after her death, at her father's grave in the last scene. Since the serial is also about Derin's inner journey, realizing her character, and how she will get out of her father's protection is also seen. The sentences in the series show how a female character is caught between tradition and modernity. When analyzed according to Freud, Derin is unable to find the balance between her id and superego. She repeats the words: "I have decided to be traditional", "I couldn't manage to be traditional", and "I have decided to get engaged to you" to Mete. By using these words, she departs from her character and confesses both to herself.

In “*Magarsus*”, we observe that Tansu character is lesbian, but since she cannot reflect this to her society, she has to act like a person she is not. That becomes a huge burden for her. Their younger sister Fatoş, on the other hand, is running away from marrying her cousin, whom she loves, and gets into a relationship she does not want. It has been observed that the Kurak family members feel obliged to hide their selves as.

Art of Impression Control: The sixth concept related to the presentation of the self is the “art of impression control”. An actor must possess the necessary qualities to successfully portray a character. The actor must have a sense of expressive responsibility (Goffman, 1959: 92).

Derin in “*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*”, always has a defense mechanism for what she does. She even creates a ghost for her father to approve her thoughts. In “Magarsus”, the father is a very dominant and rough character, causing irreversible damage to his children. He has control of everything and defends this attitude by protecting his children but when he dies, they do not know what to do and how to defend themselves, like in “How Do I Fill This Emptiness?”.

Similarities of the two series: Both in “*Magarsus*” and in “*How Do I Fill This Emptiness*”, the father dies in the early episodes. In both series, the mothers are less mentioned and loved. In “How Do I Fill This Emptiness”, the mother leaves the family for another man and has suicidal attacks like all the women in the series.

Both protagonists of the series, Derin and Tansu are seen as strong characters but have family issues inside and feel themselves alone and incomprehensible.

Excessive use of drugs, cigarettes, and alcohol can be seen through “*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?”* whereas “*Magarsus*” has less. Every time the characters feel insecure, they use drugs. In both series, although there is too much usage of drugs and alcohol, they both give the idea of quitting drugs, and struggling against it is also issued. Furthermore, there is excessive use of sexuality especially in “*How Do I Fill This Emptiness?*” from the first moments of the series.

Both in two series, the important female characters, Tansu and Derin live the lives that they do not want to live and cannot find a way to fill this gap inside their souls. They try to fill their family love emptiness with sexual relationships and define them as love. Derin tries to fill her father’s gap first with drugs, then with Mete, and always tells him that he has to protect himself from her because he is older than Derin. In the series, she repeats this five times. Tansu tries to fulfill the father’s love by replacing herself in the place of her father. She wants to prove to her father; even if he is dead; and her society that she can be a good leader to Magarsus.

Symbolizms in series: In "*Magarsus*", the first chapter begins with the blooded oranges scene, warning the audience about what will happen in the series from the beginning. Orange or citrus fruits symbolize the power of that region. Who holds possession of the oranges the most, owns the kingdom. The brothers and sisters of the Kurak family fight to be the new king/queen of Magarsus, even before their father is in charge. There is always a quarrel between the despot father who is one of the most powerful citrus sellers in the region and the children, the Kurak family, and the other citrus sellers. Oranges during the series play an important role in emphasizing the power of nature connecting with money. Especially when the American citrus seller puts drugs in oranges, the innocence of the natural fruit collapses. Citrus also symbolizes the original fruit and by putting drugs in the original fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, humans are again defeated by Satan like in the original sin and fall from the Garden of Eden, which can be taken as Magarsus, Yellow Garden, and never become the same like they used to be in the past again.

The father of the Kurak family also can be taken as a guide and a trusted leader and when he is murdered in front of all the people in Yellow Garden, it is easily understandable that the king is dead and the new king has to be selected. That scene also can be taken as Julius Ceasar's "You, too Brutus?" scene, without any hesitation accepting all the presents in a celebration, the Kurak father is stabbed behind and every citrus seller and people see his death. This is both a warning, a threat, and a show-off to all the other people. Later the children of the Kurak family fight for the Kingdomship of Magarsus, believing that they will run the Kingdom as their father does. However like in Shakespearean stories, when the important powerful character dies suddenly, his/her place cannot be fulfilled easily and everything turns upside down as if there is a deus-ex-machina balancing the justice.

In "*How Do I Fill This Emptiness*", again the father figure is a powerful figure gathering all the family with the symbolism of justice, love, and trust. The series is about how to heal their souls without their father. Without him, all three daughters are lost and cannot find their ways to move on. They try different ways to survive, waiting for a reason to value their existence; or else Derin always talks about committing suicide and how miserable her life is after the death of her father.

Conclusion

Digital platform series have become very popular nowadays. Both the less censored nature, the bold and confident portrayal of the characters have attracted the attention of viewers. In this study, the female characters of two remarkable series of Blu TV, Turkey's most popular digital platform in 2023, are analyzed under the six headings of Goffman's theory of self-presentation. As a result of the analysis, it is observed that both female and male characters on digital platforms exhibit themselves in a bolder, more realistic framework. It has been observed that family problems and the oppressive attitude of the social environment have an impact on the formation of the self and that this situation is broadcast more independently and visible on digital platforms. In both series, it is observed that strong women characters are used in digital platforms leading their ways while interpreting their life journies.

It is an undeniable fact that the series on digital platforms are prepared with a libertarian understanding. However, considering that Turkish TV series are largely inspired by real life, the place of women should be strengthened in every field. In mainstream media dramas, women are largely portrayed as subordinate, powerless and dependent on masculine ideology.

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The Gender Gap in the Digital Era: Reaching Algorithmic Fairness and Technological Inclusivity in Network Society

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Abstract

Despite women's early contributions to computer science, the field became seen as male-dominated, especially after 1980s marketing of computers mainly to men, reducing female participation. Yet, figures like Ada Lovelace and the female ENIAC programmers, with backgrounds in math and physics, significantly influenced the digital world. This article explores the ongoing gap in digital skills and literacy between genders, focusing on how biases in technology affect women. It highlights the achievements of notable women in tech, from Angela Robles, who created the first e-book reader in 1949, to Hedy Lamarr's work on GPS and Wi-Fi, and Margaret Hamilton's role in the Apollo 11 mission. The article shows the importance of including women in technology, supporting the idea that their participation is key to fair and dynamic digital societies, as suggested by Manuel Castells' network society. The article reviews the McKinsey report on job changes due to automation, showing a likely rise in technology-related jobs, and discusses the World Economic Forum's (WEF) forecast of increased tech spending from 2015 to 2030, noting many new jobs in IT services. This study highlights the shift in future job skills towards creativity, critical thinking, and negotiation, along with technical skills, and notes the WEF's prediction of 6.1 million new jobs in areas like data science, AI, and cloud computing. In conclusion, the article advocates for concerted efforts to bridge the gender gap in digital skills, mitigate biases in algorithms, and support inclusivity in the digital era. It underscores the imperative of empowering women in technology to harness their talents and perspectives for driving innovation and equitable socio-economic development.

Keywords: Algorithmic Bias, Gender Gap, Network Society, Digital Skills, Digital Divide

1. Introduction

The widespread use of digital technologies is significantly changing how people learn, understand their world, interact with others, and use these technologies effectively. People will increasingly need to filter through large amounts of digital content, choose and understand the important information, and keep learning new knowledge as digital advancements continue (Gürkan et al., 2023). To take advantage of the opportunities and address the challenges that digital technologies bring, individuals must develop a range of skills. These skills are crucial for understanding and making meaningful use of technology, as well as for recognizing its impact on different areas of life (Colbert and George, 2016; Draft, 2017).

Technology must serve the entire populace, reflecting the diverse requirements and needs of all individuals. Women, constituting half of the global population, are imperative to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) objectives. Specifically, Goal 5 (United Nations: 2023) aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, underscoring the necessity of their integral involvement in the pursuit of these aims. Despite the foundational contributions of women academics in the inception of computer science, the field has long been perceived as a male-dominated domain. This perception was exacerbated in the 1980s with the marketing of home computers predominantly to men, leading to a divergence of women from computer sciences and a surge of male participation. However, historical figures like Ada Lovelace, the first programmer, and the all-female team behind ENIAC's programming challenge this narrative. These pioneers, predominantly from backgrounds such as mathematics and physics, played pivotal roles in shaping the digital landscape.

Addressing the digital divide based on gender is imperative for a multitude of reasons (Antonio and Tuffley, 2014; Fang et al., 2019). In the contemporary era, digital competencies and tools have become increasingly vital for accessing a range of services, including healthcare, education, social security, and financial services. Furthermore, digital technologies serve as a conduit for the creation of employment opportunities, particularly on a continent experiencing a burgeoning workforce.

Studies have shown (OECD, 2018) that using digital technologies more at work means there is a higher need for basic skills, digital literacy, critical thinking, as well as social and emotional abilities. Therefore, to address the digital gender gap and support efforts to close it, it is important to know whether girls and women have the skills needed to succeed in the digital economy. This knowledge is crucial for helping make digital communities more inclusive.

In this sense this article explores the enduring gender disparity in digital competencies and literacy, highlighting the impact of gender-specific algorithms and biases. It scrutinizes the contributions of distinguished women in the realm of technology, tracing from Angela Robles' pioneering development of the first e-book reader in 1949 to Hedy Lamarr's seminal contributions to GPS and Wi-Fi technology. Moreover, it accentuates Margaret Hamilton's pivotal role in programming the Apollo 11 mission, underscoring the critical importance of women in driving technological progress. Through this analysis, the article aligns with Manuel Castells' concept of the network society, illustrating how the integration and recognition of women in technological domains are essential for the equitable development and dynamism of networked, knowledge-based societies.

Network Society and Digital Skills

The political, economic, technological, and social changes of the second half of the twentieth century have brought human history into a process of development in which information is at the forefront and this accumulation of knowledge has evolved into a more accessible structure.

As a result of this development process, innovations such as the development of mass media, the Internet, the irreversible adaptation of mobile phones to human life and social networking applications of all shapes and sizes have created a global communication infrastructure. This global communication infrastructure has brought about social, productive, political, and cultural transformations. The new global communication infrastructure has completely changed social functioning by affecting the structures for coordinating social activities and organising social interactions, especially the activity of communication. Although this change has fundamentally increased the capacity of many social functions, it has not prevented the emergence of new problems at various points. It has also created new problems that were not previously part of social functioning, such as who has access to digital networks and how, who is entitled to use the new mass media and their derivatives, and the use and manipulation of information.

The structure of the network society operates on a common denominator formed by the network of evolving mass communication and social sharing tools. The network in question is the cornerstone of social movements, shaping perceptions, causing organisational and cultural change, and establishing the relationship between economic, political, and cultural ties. Manuel Castells explains the network society as follows:

A network society is a society whose social structure is made around networks activated by microelectronics-based, digitally processed information and communication technologies. I understand social structures to be the organizational arrangements of humans in relationships of production, consumption, reproduction, experience, and power expressed in meaningful communication coded by culture. Digital networks are global, as they have the capacity to reconfigure themselves, as directed by their programmers, transcending territorial and institutional boundaries through telecommunicated computer networks. So, a social structure whose infrastructure is based on digital networks has the potential capacity to be global. However, network technology and networking organization are only means to enact the trends inscribed in the social structure. (…) Thus, the network society is a global society. However, this does not mean that people everywhere are included in these networks. For the time being, most are not. But everybody is affected by the processes that take place in the global networks that constitute the social structure. The core activities that shape and control human life in every corner of the planet are organized in global networks: financial markets; transnational production, management, and the distribution of goods and services; highly skilled labor; science and technology, including higher education; the mass media; the Internet networks of interactive, multipurpose communication; culture; art; entertainment; sports; international institutions managing the global economy and intergovernmental relations; religion; the criminal economy; and the transnational NGOs and social movements that assert the rights and values of a new, global civil society (Castells 2009, 59-60).

Also, Jan A.G. M. Van Dijk stated that:

The network society concept emphasizes the form and organization of information processing and exchange. An infrastructure of social and media networks takes care of this. So the network society can be defined as a social formation with an infrastructure of social and media networks enabling its prime mode of organization at all levels (individual, group/organizational and societal). Increasingly, these networks link all units or parts of this formation (individuals, groups and organizations). In western societies, the individual linked by networks is becoming the basic unit of the network society. In eastern societies, this might still be the group (family, community, work team) linked by networks (Van Dijk, 2006, 20).

From all these perspectives, it has become inevitable to define the twenty-first century in an interconnected and interdependent world. Van Dijk explains this situation in the following way:

At the individual level the use of networks has come to dominate our lives. Counting the time spent on broadcast networks, telephony and the Internet we can add between five and seven hours of leisure time a day on average in a developed society. Not to mention the hours spent with them at work and at school. Observing social networking by individuals we could add several hours spent in all kinds of meetings. Individualization and smaller households packed with technology to make us more independent from others, have not made us less social human beings. Almost every organization in the developed world has become completely dependent on networks of telephony and computers. When they break down, the organization simply stops working. Long before they became so dependent on these media networks organizations had already split in separate organizations, departments and teams that still worked together in an extensive division of labour. These days organizations do not finish products or services all by themselves. This is done in cooperation and competition inside and between economic networks (Van Dijk, 2006, 1-2).

The new transforming social structure is information intensive. The concept of the network society emphasises the form and organisation of information processing and exchange. Individuals therefore need to acquire new skills and change their basic organisational patterns to benefit from social interaction. The use of information and knowledge links all parts and units of social functioning, forming an "information society" (Castells 2009, Van Dijk 2006). In an information society the information intensity of all activities becomes so high that this leads to:

• an organization of society based on science, rationality and reflexivity;
• an economy with all values and sectors, even the agrarian and industrial sectors, increasingly characterized by information production;
• a labour market with a majority of functions largely or completely based on tasks of information processing requiring knowledge and higher education (hence, the alternative term knowledge society);
• a culture dominated by media and information products with their signs, symbols, and meanings (Van Dijk 2006, 22).

The process of information work is the defining structure of the network society. This process is determined by the qualities of the production process. These qualities are value added, innovation, work performance, the organisation of production activities, the structure of information technology and the management of production processes (Castells, 2013, 327-328). Value added is the element generated by the innovation of products and processes. Innovation depends on the potential of research and its visibility. In the network society, new knowledge must not only be discovered, but it must also be applied organisationally/institutionally in a specific context. This application structure ensures the efficiency of functioning, as it provides feedback on the execution of tasks. Therefore, information technology provides flexibility and adaptability in its ability to develop innovations and correct errors in the execution of work.

The intensity of information processing in the social base of the twenty-first century is the basis for defining the network society as a new type of society. The common denominator of the new social activities is that the information density is high, and the information processing actions have a semi-autonomous character. Within this structure, information is an independent source of productivity and power. Therefore, the concept of network society emphasises the way information is processed and the organisational structure. The network society links individuals, groups, organisations, and social organisations with the structure of social and media networks. The individual thus becomes the basic unit of the network society within the social structure. For this reason, individuals need to acquire various digital skills to adapt to the network society.

While the Network Society obliges individuals to acquire new digital skills, it also defines concepts like Algorithmic Fairness, artificial intelligence, and gender segregation in automated decision-making systems as important societal problems to solve. Ensuring gender equality in the training and development of algorithmic systems is an important step towards achieving fair and inclusive outcomes. Strategies such as gender-sensitive data collection, increased transparency of algorithms and diversity-focused training programmes should be adopted to ensure algorithmic fairness. Therefore, addressing the gender gap in digital skills is crucial for overcoming barriers in technology and ensuring that advancements like artificial intelligence are developed with fairness and inclusivity in mind.

Understanding the Gender Gap in Digital Skills Within the Network Society

This part of the study serves as a crucial framework for recognizing the significant yet often overlooked contributions of women in the realm of technology and innovation. This exploration begins with Angela Robles, whose foresight and ingenuity led to the creation of the first e-book reader in 1949, a pioneering step that foreshadowed the digital revolution in reading and education. Similarly, Hedy Lamarr's seminal work laid the foundations for modern GPS and Wi-Fi technology, illustrating how female creativity has been integral to the connectivity that defines our contemporary world. Moreover, Margaret Hamilton's pivotal role in programming the Apollo 11 mission exemplifies women's capacity for critical thinking and problem-solving in high-stakes environments, showcasing the indispensable role women have played in critical moments of technological advancement. These examples not only highlight the remarkable achievements of women in technology but also point to a broader narrative of female contributions being critical to technological progress.

However, despite these significant contributions, the persistent gender gap in digital skills suggests a dissonance between the capabilities of women in technology and their representation within the field. This gap not only undermines the potential for innovation but also reflects broader societal biases that limit access to opportunities and recognition for women in technology. Addressing this gap is not merely a matter of equity but also a necessity for harnessing a diverse range of perspectives and skills essential for driving technological progress forward. In essence, by understanding and bridging the gender gap in digital skills, the full spectrum of human talent can be acknowledged. Doing so not only pays homage to the trailblazers like Robles, Lamarr, and Hamilton but also paves the way for a more inclusive and innovative future in technology, where gender is no longer a barrier to contribution or success.

In this respect The McKinsey report (2017:8) on workforce transitions in the age of automation, indicates a potential expansion of jobs related to the development and implementation of new technologies.

Automation technologies including artificial intelligence and robotics will generate significant benefits for users, businesses, and economies, lifting productivity and economic growth. The extent to which these technologies displace workers will depend on the pace of their development and adoption, economic growth, and growth in demand for work.

Additionally, the World Economic Forum projects a significant increase in technology-related expenditures from 2015 to 2030, highlighting that a substantial portion of new jobs will emerge in information technology services: "the transition to the new world of work will be both human- and tech-centric" (WEF, 2020: 18). Moreover, it is important to underscore the evolving nature of future job requirements, emphasizing the growing demand for creativity, critical thinking, persuasion, and negotiation skills alongside technical expertise.

Thus, this aligns with the WEF's anticipation of 6.1 million job opportunities in emerging fields, including roles in data science, artificial intelligence (AI), engineering, cloud computing, and product development.

As societies evolve to become more intricately reliant on digital technologies, the exclusion of women, along with their wider communities and national economies, from full participation in digital economies poses a significant risk. This means that if everyone would not be fairly included in digital activities, good things that it can bring might be missed. If the gap between men and women in digital skills would not be fixed, technology could make gender inequality worse instead of better. So, technology can be both good and bad for gender equality—it is like a two-sided sword.

Also, the gender gap in the digital sector has significant implications for the economy. Occupational segregation, characterised by the over-representation of women in informal jobs, low-productivity sectors, and occupations at risk of automation, as well as under-representation in leadership positions and technology-related fields, affects women's autonomy and economic opportunities (UN - the Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2023).

According to the OECD report (2018: 13), hurdles such as "access, affordability, lack of education, inherent biases, and sociocultural norms" significantly prevent the ability of women and girls to benefit from the opportunities offered by digital transformation. Additionally, the relatively lower educational enrolment of girls in disciplines critical for excelling in a digital world—such as "science, technology, engineering, and mathematics", along with "information and communication Technologies"—combined with the more limited use of digital tools by women and girls, could lead to widening gaps and greater inequality.

Digital technologies are crucial to achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda (United Nations: 2023), which includes the full development and active participation of women in today's world. Specifically, one of the objectives of the fifth Sustainable Development Goal urges the international community to increase the use of supportive technologies, especially information and communication technologies, to advance women's empowerment.

The Network Society refers to a social structure in which interactions are increasingly mediated by digital networks, affecting various aspects of life, including education, work, and social relationships. The Network Society emphasises the importance of adapting to this networked environment, which requires the acquisition and use of digital skills. This need implies that individuals, especially women, need to develop digital literacy to succeed in a networked world and to participate fully in social and professional life. Therefore, in the context of the digital gender gap, where women are under-represented in technology-related fields, it is crucial that this gap is understood and addressed in the context of the networked society.

Research shows that women's leadership in defining and mainstreaming the Networked Society is critical to closing the gender digital divide (Moreno-Romero, Carrasco-Gallego, 2012). Although digital literacy levels are similar across genders in Europe, women are under-represented in ICT professional jobs and related fields (Levorato, 2021). This inequality underscores the need to empower women in technology and ensure their active participation in shaping the digital environment.

The main causes of the gender gap in the digital age include factors such as access, education, labour force participation and attitudes towards technology. The digital gender gap consists of three elements (Kuroda, 2019: 2): access and use of digital technologies and the internet; development of the skills needed to use digital technologies and to participate in their design and production; advancement of women to visible leadership and decision-making roles in the digital sector.

Women's difficulties in accessing and using digital technologies deepen gender inequality and limit women's participation in technological developments. Hence, the gender gap in the digital age refers to the inequalities women face in accessing, using, and benefiting from digital technologies, platforms, and services. This inequality can be addressed by involving women in the design of technology beyond their traditional roles in legacy systems and encouraging their leadership in the networked society. This gap can be prevented by structures such as the digital skills gap and the elimination of gender bias in many areas such as education, employment and social services, welfare, etc. (Wajcman, Young, Fitzmaurice, 2020). This approach will ensure that women have valuable communication and media skills that can be used to overcome long-standing gender inequalities in digital societies such as algorithmic biases. In addressing algorithmic biases, it is crucial to recognize that women's difficulties in accessing and using digital technologies not only deepen gender inequality but also limit their participation in technological developments. This emphasizes the need for targeted interventions to ensure fair and inclusive digital environments.

Addressing Algorithmic Biases

As more reliance is placed on digital technologies, the focus on addressing and reducing algorithmic biases becomes crucial, especially due to the intensification of gender inequality by digital gaps. This effort is closely linked to the issue of the digital gender gap and its societal impacts. By aiming to fix biases in algorithms, the goal is to prevent the widening of gender differences and ensure that digital technology benefits everyone equally. Tackling these biases is a key step in making sure digital tools are fair and offer equal chances and benefits to people of all genders, turning the challenges of technology into opportunities for positive change.

In machine learning and AI, "bias" means that algorithms can pick up and show human prejudices. This problem happens when an algorithm keeps producing unfair or skewed results because of mistaken assumptions built into how it was made. In times when there is a big push for diversity and fair representation, these biases are especially troubling because they can strengthen and spread the biases already present in society.

To accurately capture the essence of algorithmic bias, the context of facial recognition technology algorithm shows higher accuracy for individuals of Caucasian descent compared to those of African descent due to the overrepresentation of Caucasian facial data in training datasets—illustrates how biases in the data used to train algorithms can lead to biased outcomes. This issue is not just a technical problem but has profound societal implications, as it can lead to discriminatory practices that worsen inequality, limit equal opportunities, and perpetuate systemic oppression. The particularly dangerous aspect of these biases is that they are often unintentionally built into algorithms, making them difficult to detect and address until they are observed in use. This underscores the need for vigilance and proactive measures in the development and deployment of AI to prevent and mitigate such biases. This discussion highlights the critical need for thorough examination and corrective actions in creating and implementing machine learning algorithms to reduce their tendency towards bias, thus guaranteeing fair and just technological progress.

A pertinent example of this necessity is seen in the case of Amazon's hiring algorithm. Initially designed to streamline the recruitment process, this algorithm inadvertently favoured male candidates over female candidates due to biases in the training data, which reflected the technology industry's male-dominated employment history. This incident exemplifies how even well-intentioned technological solutions can perpetuate existing inequalities if not scrutinized for bias. Consequently, it reinforces the argument for the importance of vigilance and proactive measures in the development and application of machine learning algorithms to promote fairness and inclusivity in technological advancements.

Despite the high expectations for AI to make unbiased decisions and improve fairness, AI systems can still reflect human biases. This reality falls short of the ideal scenario where AI would help eliminate prejudice, indicating a significant challenge that needs to be addressed. AI has the possibility to help people make more fair and unbiased decisions, achieving this depends on actively working to make sure these AI systems are fair. Often, the biases in AI come from the data used to train it, not the way the AI itself is designed or works.

As a result of analysing resumes for a decade, Amazon's computer models can spot similarities in candidates' applications. Most were from males, reflecting the industry's male dominance. Amazon's algorithm learned that male applicants were preferred. So, it penalized resumes that indicated that the applicant was female. It also demoted applications of those who attended one of two all-female institutions (Larkin, 2022).

Algorithmic fairness is crucial to prevent gender discrimination in artificial intelligence and automated decision-making systems. Ensuring gender equality in the training and development of algorithmic systems is an important step towards achieving fair and inclusive outcomes. Strategies such as gender-sensitive data collection, increased transparency of algorithms and diversity-focused training programmes should be adopted to ensure algorithmic justice. Increasing technological inclusion is essential to support women's access to and use of digital technologies. Policies and practices such as education, promoting labour force participation, supporting women's entrepreneurship, and increasing diversity in the technology sector are important steps to strengthen technological inclusion.

To create a more balanced and diverse digital ecosystem, it is crucial to integrate the concept of the Network Society into discussions on gender inequality in digital skills. This kind of an approach promotes women's empowerment, inclusiveness, and equal participation in technology-related fields. Additionally, ensuring algorithmic fairness is essential, as it addresses the biases in digital technologies that can further impact gender equality in the digital world.

The Role of the Network Society for Eliminating Gender Gap and Promoting Inclusivity

The theme of last year's International Women's Day focused on how innovation and technology can help achieve gender equality. It suggests that the digital age offers a unique chance to get rid of all kinds of unfairness and differences, aiming to build a better future for everyone: "The OSCE as joined efforts to explore the impact of digitalization on widening gender inequalities, how digital technology can be used to support women facing adversity, and how it can open new doors for the global empowerment of women and girls" (Schmid, 2023). In addition to this, Huawei, like many tech companies globally, has initiated various programs to support diversity, encompassing nationality, gender, age, race, and religion. The company is committed to ensuring equal treatment for men and women in the workplace and adheres to all relevant international and local regulations: "For Huawei, closing the gender gap that exists in the digital sector is now a "top priority". Huawei's aim is to inspire a new generation of women to work in technology and encourage the value of diversity, inclusion, and equity in technology" (Ruh, 2020).

In line with the principles of the Network Society, Huawei places a strong emphasis on recruiting women for managerial roles and supporting their career advancement, thereby constructing a more inclusive and diverse digital environment.

Applying the concept of the "network society" to promote gender equality in the digital age requires recognition of the importance of digital literacy, particularly for women's full participation in digital. The digital gender gap is persistent and tends to deepen over time, with women's access and use of ICTs and digital technologies lagging men's. This divide can hinder women's participation in digital trade, as they may lack access to e-services and online platforms, which are increasingly important in both the public and private sectors. The advent of emerging technologies, such as automation and artificial intelligence, also presents opportunities and challenges for women, requiring mitigating measures to ensure no widening of the gender gap, particularly in developing countries (Sicat, Xu, Mehetaj, Ferrantino, Chemutai, 2020).

The underrepresentation of women in technical fields contributes to a feedback loop. This reinforces gender bias in AI and machine learning systems, affecting women's opportunities in the changing world of work (Wajcman, Young, Fitzmaurice, 2020). The introduction of automated decision making in social and welfare services can bring both benefits and risks for gender equality, with the human rights of the most vulnerable women in the digital welfare state particularly at risk. Policies and regulations are needed to ensure the implementation of positive measures to protect rights and strengthen gender equality in the digital age, to address the structural challenges of gender inequality, and to ensure that the benefits of digital transformation are shared equitably. The development of relevant digital skills in all contexts and at all stages of women's life-cycles is crucial to addressing the low labour market participation of women in jobs related to these areas, as the digital divide has the potential to exacerbate existing patterns of gender gap. Developments in the digital sector have significant economic implications, affecting women's autonomy, economic opportunities, and participation in the digital economy. Comprehensive policies and regulations are needed to address the structural challenges of gender inequality and ensure the equitable realisation of the benefits of the digital transformation (UN - The Division for Gender Affairs of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, 2023).

To promote gender equality in the digital age through the Network Society approach, it is crucial to raise awareness, combat gender stereotypes and provide better, safer, and more affordable access to digital tools. Policies should address long-term structural biases and promote cooperation between stakeholders to remove barriers to girls' and women's full participation in the digital world.

There are several strategies to increase women's participation in the Networked Community and to promote gender equality in the digital age. These strategies can be listed as follows:

Lifelong Learning Programmes: Implementing women-specific lifelong learning initiatives to improve women's digital skills and ensure their active participation in the network community (Moreno-Romero, Carrasco-Gallego, 2012).

Participation in Technology Design: Encouraging women to participate in technology design beyond traditional roles, enabling them to shape digital solutions and innovations (Davaki, 2018).

Policy Interventions: Implementing policies that address long-term structural biases, promote collaboration among stakeholders and remove barriers to girls' and women's full participation in the in the digital world (OECD, 2018).

Increase access to digital tools: Provide better, safer, and more affordable access to digital tools to facilitate women's participation in the digital economy (Dannana, 2023).

Digital literacy training: Provide digital literacy training programmes specifically designed for women to close the digital gender gap and equip women with the necessary skills.

Women-specific content: Producing content tailored to women's needs and enabling them to access relevant information and resources through digital platforms.

Government support: Governments can play an important role by creating policies and regulations that promote digital access and participation, provide funding, offer training programmes, and ensure women's affordable access to technology.

By implementing these strategies, it is possible to empower women, increase their participation in the networked society, close the gender digital divide and promote gender equality in the digital age.

Conclusion

The changes in how we use digital technology because of the COVID-19 pandemic have created a big chance to spread education and training more widely, across different countries and time zones, through online programs. This new way of learning is designed to meet the specific needs of women, such as being flexible, easy to access, and more affordable. Also, the ability to work from home provides women with more job options and helps them balance their work and personal life better.

For broader inclusion in the digital world, it is essential to collaborate with educational institutions, organizations capable of providing the necessary equipment, and IT companies that offer Wi-Fi access. Moreover, there is a highlighted necessity for concerted efforts in partnership with national governments and their agencies to ensure that initiatives for digital inclusion are sustained and enduring, rather than being mere temporary fixes. Also, the pivotal role of technological advancements in facilitating support and empowerment for women should be underscored. To elaborate on the strategic employment of digital instruments in the formulation and implementation of legislative measures aimed at safeguarding women from the perils of online violence is also important. Furthermore, there is a need to explore the use of digital platforms for launching informative campaigns aimed at providing capacity-building opportunities. Additionally, it is crucial to challenge prevailing stereotypes and ensure the inclusion and acceptance of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

It is crucial for many women to enter the workforce and for companies to help and promote them throughout their careers. Hiring more women in technology sector is a good and clear solution right now. The demand for technology professionals is not the only or main reason to have more gender diversity in technology. Not having enough women in digital realm can lower performance and profits, missing out on big opportunities for those companies.

Technology plays a vital role in bridging the gender divide and enhancing women's empowerment, serving as a critical tool for levelling the playing field globally. Despite its potential, the ICT sector still presents significant challenges for women, ranging from limited access to digital jobs to experiencing cyber harassment, indicating substantial progress is still required for true equality.

The digital era promises to offer opportunities indiscriminately to all genders.

To break down the barriers that obstruct women's entry and advancement in the technology sector, targeted efforts are needed. These include implementing women-specific lifelong learning initiatives to enhance digital skills, encouraging women to participate in technology design beyond traditional roles, and developing policies to address structural biases and promote collaboration. It is also crucial to provide safer, more affordable, and better access to digital tools and to deliver digital literacy training specifically designed for women. Governments can further support these initiatives by creating conducive policies and providing funding to ensure women's affordable access to technology.

Through the dedicated efforts of companies committed to fostering a more inclusive environment, the goal of enhanced inclusivity and gender equality in the tech industry is achievable. This transformation, although gradual, promises a future where technology equitably benefits all genders, contributing to a more inclusive and empowered society.

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Communication Papers
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Discursos transfóbicos en redes sociodigitales: un análisis de comentarios en grupos de Facebook

Transphobic Discourses on Sociodigital Networks: An Analysis of Comments in Facebook Groups

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Resumen

A través de etnografía una digital y un análisis multimodal del discurso se identificaron en grupos latinoamericanos de Facebook las formas en las que se expresan discursos transfóbicos en las modalidades verbales y no verbales de posts y memes en redes sociodigitales, que sirvan para dar cuenta de las tramas comunes presentes en el lenguaje peyorativo. Los datos mostraron la presencia de discursos transfóbicos en comentarios y memes los cuales se organizaron como estereotipos y prejuicios a partir de las posturas de los interlocutores. Los datos permitieron formular cinco registros que sirven para analizar la transfobia expresada en redes sociodigitales, los cuales organizaron el discurso como deshumanizante, biologicista, psicologista, cientificista y paternalista. Se concluyó que en comunidades virtuales existe un rechazo hacia las personas trans que se expresa por medio del uso de lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo en sus modalidades verbal y no verbal, mismo que configura discursos de odio en diferentes niveles.

Palabras clave: Transfobia; Estereotipos; Prejuicios; Lenguaje peyorativo; Redes sociales digitales.

Abstract

Through digital ethnography and multimodal discourse analysis, we identified in Latin American Facebook groups the ways in which transphobic discourses are expressed in the verbal and non-verbal modalities of posts and memes in sociodigital networks, which serve to account for the common ways of presentation in pejorative language. The data showed the presence of transphobic discourse in comments and memes, which were organized as stereotypes and prejudices based on the positions of the interlocutors. The data allowed for the formulation of five registers to analyze transphobia expressed on sociodigital networks, organizing discourse as dehumanizing, biologistic, psychological, scientistic, and paternalistic. It was concluded that in virtual communities, there is a rejection towards trans individuals expressed through the use of pejorative language in both verbal and non-verbal modalities, shaping hate speech at different levels.

Keywords: Transphobia; Stereotypes; Prejudices; Pejorative language; Digital Social Networks.

1. Introducción

En el presente artículo se muestran algunos hallazgos sobre expresiones y formas de transfobia en redes sociodigitales, concretamente en grupos latinoamericanos de Facebook. Este análisis se concentra en la categorización de expresiones transfóbicas que constituyen y devienen en discursos de odio, donde las redes sociodigitales son empleadas como medios de socialización de las propias ideas sobre las características de una población a través del uso de lenguaje peyorativo.

La lógica aquí vertida contempla el rechazo a la población trans por expresar conductas e identidades que se alejan de lo socialmente asociado al sexo biológico. La transfobia se manifiesta como acciones que van desde agresiones físicas hasta el uso de lenguaje peyorativo verbal y gráfico. Estas expresiones pueden llegar a constituir discursos de odio que se ver reproducidos a través de redes sociodigitales al conformarse como espacios para la socialización de ideas sobre el género.

A partir de observar estas expresiones en las modalidades lingüística y gráfica se tuvo por objetivo identificar las formas en las que se expresa el discurso transfóbico en las modalidades verbales y no verbales de posts y memes en redes sociodigitales, que sirvan para dar cuenta de las tramas comunes presentes en el lenguaje peyorativo, las cuales se categorizan en forma de prejuicios y estereotipos y dan cuenta de tramas transfóbicas. Estos discursos se expresan desde lugares comunes los cuales refieren a cuestiones biológicas, psicológicas, sociales o masculinas.

Como mencionan algunos autores, los trabajos empíricos sobre los efectos negativos de la heteronormatividad en las personas, como el caso de la transfobia, son de reciente interés y estudio (van Eeden-Moorefield, Cooke, Bible y Gyan, 2023), a lo que se puede sumar la relevancia académica y social que han adquirido los estudios sobre personas trans que buscan cuestionar lógicas deshumanizantes (Guerrero McManus y Muñoz Contreras, 2024). Cabe señalar que en este artículo el vocablo trans se emplea como un término que cobija distintas identidades como es el caso de personas transgénero o transexuales.

2. Transfobia

La llamada heteronormatividad puede ser entendida como el conjunto de normas sociales y prácticas culturales que buscan mantener un orden social que privilegia a aquellas personas que son cisgénero y heterosexuales (Kitzinger, 2005). En orden para mantener una realidad entendida como binaria en términos de hombre y mujer, algunas autoras (van Eeden-Moorefield, Cooke, Bible y Gyan, 2023) puntualizan que la heteronormatividad oprime o margina a aquellas personas que cuestionan o se distancian de ella, por lo que puede desembocar en discriminación o agresiones hacia personas cuyas identidades o relaciones no responden a estas normativas.

En este sentido, la transfobia aparece como un abanico de conductas, actitudes y discursos caracterizados por una óptica negativa hacia las personas trans por no corresponder a esta normatividad esperada (Molina Rodríguez, Guzmán Cervantes y Martínez-Guzmán, 2015), donde se muestra como una serie de prácticas discriminatorias que se justifican en la identidad y expresión de género de las personas afectadas. Hablar de transfobia, por lo tanto, implica que existen una serie de valores internalizados que se sustentan en expectativas sociales sobre lo que se considera “normal” en términos de género y sexualidad (Aparicio-García, 2017), es decir, la transfobia representa una serie de expresiones negativas hacia personas que no cumplen con las suposiciones o normas de género socialmente aceptadas que se pueden ver permeadas por miedo, rechazo, inconformidad u odio (Chakravarthi, 2023).

Los casos más extremos de transfobia pueden verse reflejados a través de actos físicos, explícitos o simbólicos, por ejemplo, algunos indicadores (Statista Search Department, 2023) señalan que Brasil y México encabezan la lista de los países con mayor número de homicidios cometidos hacia personas transgénero en América Latina y el mundo, donde en un periodo comprendido entre 2008 y 2022 en ambos se acumularon más de 2300 casos. Tan sólo en México durante el 2022 se presentaron 51 casos de homicidios a personas transgénero (Transgender Europe, 2023), posicionándose como uno de los países más peligrosos para personas que no se ajustan a lo socialmente esperado en términos de sexo y género.

Cabe destacar que las expresiones de violencia y discriminación hacia las personas trans no se limitan a las manifestaciones físicas, como se mencionó más arriba, estas abarcan todo un abanico de prácticas, valores y comportamientos que se caracterizan por el miedo o el rechazo a las personas que no viven bajo los mandatos tradicionales del género, donde muchas veces las instituciones sociales como la familia, la religión y la educación, así como la cultura y la sociedad, juegan un papel clave en la transmisión y validación de los valores devenidos de la heteronormatividad que concibe una realidad dicotómica, binaria y aparentemente inalterable en términos de supuestas ontologías sexo-genéricas (Wittig, 1992), es decir, históricamente las personas trans han sido víctimas de discriminación, estereotipación y prejuicios por no compartir las formas tradicionales de ser hombre o ser mujer (Coll-Planas, 2010).

Aguirre-Sanchez-Beato (2020) explica que los enfoques teóricos entorno a la transfobia pueden ser cognitivos y discursivos. Mientras los enfoques cognitivos sitúan la transfobia en la mente de las personas, viendo las normas de género como un sistema de creencias internalizado, los enfoques discursivos las abordan como prácticas sociales dinámicas y reproducidas. El enfoque cognitivo tiende a individualizar y estigmatizar, a menudo homogeneizando ciertas poblaciones, y trata las actitudes como si tuvieran un contenido estable y medible. En contraste, el enfoque discursivo se concentra en la construcción de significados hegemónicos y sus impactos sociales, aunque a veces cae en el determinismo social. Una perspectiva psicológica discursiva puede superar estas limitaciones, reconociendo la complejidad y la variabilidad en la construcción de actitudes hacia las personas trans, y enfatizando la lucha en la construcción de significados y la posibilidad de cambio en las actitudes.

Por dar un ejemplo, culturas como la latina se han asociado a elementos transfóbicos como parte de sus formas de socialización (Zamudio-Haas, Koester, Venegas, Salinas, Herrera, Gutierrez-Mock, Welborn, Deutsch y Sevelius, 2023), además de que instituciones sociales y sus espacios de representación y significación, como la educación y las escuelas, se han mostrado como sitios donde se reproducen prejuicios sobre las personas trans al hacer caso omiso de las particularidades de sus vivencias (Carvajal Villaplana, 2017) o al facilitar la socialización de los elementos negativos estereotípicamente asociados que pueden verse reflejados a través de comentarios sutiles o explícitos con el objetivo de desacreditar su identidad (McEntarfer y Rice, 2023).

En casos como estos, la transfobia se expresa a través del uso de lenguaje peyorativo que representa intentos por degradar o vulnerar a las personas transgénero a través del uso de frases, apodos, insultos o modismos que reflejan enojo o rechazo y que pudieran incitar al odio (Chakravarthi, 2023). Este lenguaje también se puede caracterizar por inclinarse hacia las amenazas, el acoso sexual, la invasión a la privacidad o invitar a otros a cometer actos de violencia física. Dado el contexto, algunas perspectivas sugieren que el lenguaje transfóbico puede presentarse en términos de abuso, burla a la identidad o comentarios sobre el cuerpo, todos nacidos como una declaratoria heteronormativa oculta tras supuestos naturales, biológicos (Derecka, 2019) o morales.

Un punto que destacar es que la transfobia, expresada a través del lenguaje peyorativo o de la violencia física, se ha visto como factor en el deterioro de la salud mental de las personas trans por la interiorización que estas pudieran hacer de estos prejuicios y estereotipos. Esto puede desembocar en la presencia de ansiedad, depresión, pensamientos negativos, conducta suicida y un autoconcepto disonante entre lo social y lo individual (Owens, Mizock, Ormerod, Nelson, Amand, Paces-Wiles y Judd, 2023).

2.1. Lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo a través de expresiones verbales y no verbales

Como se mencionó en el apartado anterior, una de las formas en que la transfobia se expresa es a través del lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo. Este lenguaje posee propiedades expresivas, donde el estereotipo es central al incluir un componente cognitivo y uno evaluativo, siendo el primero conceptos densos y el segundo una actitud del hablante que muestra una evaluación negativa (Orlando y Saab, 2019), es decir, para el lenguaje peyorativo es clave que el hablante capte y aprenda el estereotipo como una visión prejuiciosa que procede de características pragmáticas que se traducen en insulto hacia el objetivo, que se valida en los valores del grupo.

El contenido del lenguaje peyorativo incluye estereotipos sociales y culturales negativos devenidos de cuestiones étnicas o de clase (Castroviejo, Fraser y Vicente, 2020), a lo cual se pueden añadir el modo de vida, la edad, la religión, la ideología política, la orientación sexual, el género o el cuerpo (Orlando y Saab, 2019).

El lenguaje peyorativo, para este escrito, en términos semánticos se conforma por los semas que las personas utilizan para referirse a las personas trans, la repetición de ideas estereotipadas con la finalidad de la ofensa o la burla. A través del lenguaje peyorativo quedan expuestos los discursos e ideologías de las personas, donde se hacen explícitos los antagonismos y conflictos sociales (Diabah, 2023). El lenguaje peyorativo materializa el binarismo de género y devalúa la relevancia de las problemáticas socioculturales.

La efectividad y poder del lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo como insulto dependen intrínsecamente del contexto en el que se emite. Según Lo Guercio (2021), los peyorativos de grupo están estrechamente vinculados al entorno y la situación específica de su uso, siendo difícil desvincularlos de sus efectos contextuales. Este anclaje contextual permite que los peyorativos no solo transmitan una visión prejuiciosa, sino que también refuercen y perpetúen estas percepciones.

Lo Guercio (2021) identifica cuatro fuerzas ilocucionarias clave en los peyorativos de grupo: propaganda, complicidad, ataque y subordinación. Estas fuerzas actúan como mecanismos para manifestar y reforzar prejuicios, persuadir a otros para que adopten estas perspectivas, y reconstituir la identidad y las acciones de los grupos objetivo. A través de estas fuerzas, los emisores de peyorativos no solo expresan sus prejuicios, sino que también tratan de imponer estos puntos de vista a los destinatarios, en especial a aquellos que no pertenecen al grupo discriminado.

Los peyorativos de grupo pueden entenderse como herramientas que refuerzan sistemas de subordinación discursiva dentro de una estructura heteronormativa. Los emisores de estos insultos utilizan el lenguaje para expresar y legitimar sus prejuicios como categorías morales, a menudo sin enfrentar oposición significativa. Esto permite no solo la expresión de prejuicios, sino también su imposición sobre aquellos destinatarios que no se identifican con el grupo discriminado, contribuyendo así a la perpetuación de la heteronormatividad.

Además de las fuerzas ilocucionarias identificadas por Lo Guercio (2021), se podría considerar una quinta fuerza del lenguaje peyorativo que impacta a los grupos fuera del entorno inmediato de enunciación. Esta fuerza tiene una dimensión tanto constitutiva como prescriptiva, influenciando no solo la percepción del grupo discriminado sino también estableciendo normas y expectativas para aquellos fuera del grupo sobre cómo deberían de ser y actuar las personas del grupo objetivo.

La existencia de un espacio y situación específicos para el uso del lenguaje peyorativo con fines de subordinación y complicidad implica también la existencia de roles definidos para los emisores. Siguiendo a Poppa-Wyatt y Wyatt (2017), estos roles asignan posiciones jerárquicas dentro del grupo, basadas en la relación entre emisores y destinatarios. Esto sugiere una estructura de poder y control dentro de la esfera discursiva donde se emplean estos peyorativos.

La manosfera (Farrell, Fernandez, Novotny y Alani, 2019), un conjunto de espacios virtuales y discursivos centrados en temas de masculinidad y a menudo asociados con actitudes misóginas y antifeministas, sirve como un ejemplo claro de cómo los peyorativos de grupo y sus fuerzas ilocucionarias pueden manifestarse. En la manosfera, el lenguaje peyorativo no solo refuerza prejuicios contra las mujeres y grupos minoritarios como propaganda, sino que también establece jerarquías y roles dentro de su propia comunidad, reproduciendo las jerarquías de masculinidades (Connell, 2015), a través de la complicidad de quienes comparten los mensajes y la subordinación de quienes no los cuestionan.

2.2. Las redes sociodigitales como medio para la expresión de discursos de odio

Las redes sociodigitales se han configurado como espacios para el tránsito del género, donde las identidades se proyectan y construyen. El intercambio de información a través de videos, fotografías y posts representa de alguna manera muestras de la expresión de género de las personas, facilitando la retroalimentación sobre los aspectos que son considerados masculinos o femeninos, lo que permite reforzar ideas, conductas o aspectos culturales que transitan en el internet como parte de la vida cotidiana de los sujetos (Gutiérrez Martínez, 2016). Esto refiere a la forma en que la apropiación discursiva de los individuos no hace una división entre el internet y la realidad material, en el caso del género, las personas pueden apropiarse o transmitir discursos referentes a la identidad y expresión de género o, como ya se mencionó, al mantenimiento de jerarquías sociales (Linnamäki, 2021).

Estos espacios sociodigitales no sólo sirven como medios de expresión, también ayudan a consolidar ideas o encontrar personas que tengan pensamientos similares que, en muchas ocasiones, se vierten sobre elementos que giran en torno a la producción y reproducción del género (Nikunen, Hokka y Nelimarkka, 2021). Algunas ideas sobre la expresión o identidad de género son consolidadas al intercambiar información con pares, se conforma una óptica con la cual se analiza la realidad a partir de códigos heteronormados (Wood, 2018). Las personas hacen de las redes sociodigitales un mecanismo de reproducción que remarca los modelos culturales de género prevalentes, así como parte de la representación y construcción de la identidad, una proyección de la persona misma que se moldea a la vez que se comparte (Oberst, Chamarro y Renau, 2016). Es decir, las redes sociodigitales facilitan la transmisión de ideas heteronormadas sobre el género, donde se establece una relación entre las redes sociodigitales y el género en una construcción discursiva la cual, muchas veces, se ve caracterizada por lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo en claves de abuso o antipatía hacia mujeres o personas género disidentes (Persson y Hostler, 2021) que salen del marco heteronormado desde el que se percibe la realidad.

La construcción de espacios de esta índole ejemplifica contextos de reproducción de género en donde algunos modelos pueden considerarse correctos o incorrectos. El uso de lenguaje peyorativo puede tomarse como una herramienta apropiada al surgir en espacios donde los usuarios no se guían por concepciones éticas o morales, sino que permiten o facilitan su uso (Orlando y Saab, 2019), y donde el aparente anonimato de las redes sociodigitales alienta el uso de este tipo de expresiones (Diabah, 2023).

De acuerdo con Garza Falla (2015), en el contexto actual de México, la polarización social se ve exacerbada por la prevalencia del discurso de odio en línea, un fenómeno que refleja y amplifica las divisiones existentes en la sociedad. Esta polarización se alimenta de factores como la desigualdad, la injusticia estructural y la desconexión entre la clase política y los ciudadanos. La narrativa dominante en las plataformas digitales, caracterizada por una simplificación intencionada y una representación bipolar de la realidad, contribuye significativamente a este escenario. Al presentar los temas y debates en términos de buenos contra malos, entendidos contra ignorantes, y salvados contra condenados, este discurso no solo distorsiona la complejidad de la experiencia humana, sino que también se apropia de la conciencia de los individuos. Este fenómeno de enajenación a través de las redes sociales no solo perpetúa divisiones y conflictos, sino que también socava la capacidad de los individuos para interactuar de manera crítica y reflexiva con su entorno, llevando a una erosión más profunda del tejido social y político del país.

Trejo Delabre (2015) agrega a la reflexión sobre el discurso de odio en línea en México, su prevalencia e intensificación por las características únicas del entorno digital. Estas incluyen la espontaneidad, facilidad, visibilidad, permanencia y expansibilidad de la comunicación en línea. La espontaneidad de la expresión en línea, facilitada por la naturaleza abierta e inmediata de las plataformas digitales, a menudo conduce a comentarios impulsivos enmarcados en el lenguaje peyorativo.

El mismo autor caracteriza las publicaciones en las plataformas sociales también como permanentes que, a diferencia de las conversaciones cotidianas, lo que se expresa en línea adquiere una visibilidad y permanencia significativas. Esta visibilidad es buscada intencionalmente por algunos usuarios, quienes desean ser vistos y escuchados en el espacio público digital. Sin embargo, esta visibilidad también magnifica las expresiones de agresión y odio, que, aunque dirigidas a individuos o grupos específicos, se exponen para el consumo de una audiencia más amplia.

En las redes sociodigitales, las expresiones de odio e intolerancia adquieren una dimensión de ostentación pública, donde los promotores de tales manifestaciones buscan y aprovechan deliberadamente la visibilidad y la libertad que ofrece este medio para difundir sus ideas, incluso cuando estas se basan en falsedades o estereotipos, y así potenciar la fuerza propagandística y subordinadora del lenguaje peyorativo.

Sin embargo, las expresiones del lenguaje peyorativo no terminan con las manifestaciones lingüísticas. Los memes en las redes sociodigitales funcionan con una lógica similar a las palabras, tienen la capacidad de ser utilizados tanto para expresar desde situaciones risibles, críticas sociales, como para reflejar odio y desprecio. Esta dualidad en su uso destaca la agencia de los usuarios en la elección de cómo emplear estos recursos expresivos que reflejan la interiorización del discurso preponderante en los sujetos, manifestando así sus perspectivas y prejuicios personales (Pérez Salazar, 2017).

En el contexto de las redes sociodigitales, los memes se han transformado en vehículos de expresión de conflictos y enfrentamientos culturales. En plataformas como Facebook y Twitter, se ha registrado una gran cantidad de memes que expresan prejuicios y discriminación, particularmente en torno a temas de identidad y orientación sexual. Estos memes a menudo reflejan las tensiones y debates sociales en curso, como los derechos de los grupos LGBTI. Tanto los defensores como los opositores de estos derechos utilizan memes para expresar sus posturas, lo que demuestra cómo estos elementos gráficos se han convertido en una herramienta importante para la participación en debates sociales.

Pérez Salazar (2017) señala que, en muchos casos, se observa una tendencia preocupante hacia la homofobia y otros tipos de discriminación, donde los memes se utilizan para difundir mensajes de odio. Estos memes a menudo contienen lenguaje y representaciones violentas, dirigidas de manera general o específica contra grupos o individuos. Esta forma de expresión, que se caracteriza por su naturaleza inespecífica y a menudo anónima, facilita la propagación de actitudes y creencias dañinas en un entorno digital donde las repercusiones pueden ser menos directas que en interacciones cara a cara.

3. Método

El estudio se sirvió de un enfoque cualitativo a través de una etnografía digital y un paradigma interpretativo. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo por medio de trabajo de campo etnográfico en redes sociodigitales a través de las comunidades digitales de los investigadores. Metodológicamente se busca analizar la forma en que las redes sociodigitales participan en la construcción de imaginarios sobre la comunidad LGBT+ y las personas trans en particular.

La decisión de optar por etnografía digital partió de que este acercamiento metodológico supera la dicotomía entre dentro y fuera del internet y comprende que las redes sociodigitales se integran en la vida cotidiana (Bárcenas Barajas, 2021). El uso de etnografía digital permite dar luz sobre representaciones de los imaginarios sociales (Bañuelos Capistrán y Pérez Restovic, 2020) y comprender la forma en que las redes sociodigitales dan forma a la cotidianeidad misma. Para esta forma de hacer investigación es especialmente relevante comprender que el trabajo de campo se construye a través de conexiones y redes de actores en un espacio diverso (Hine, 2015), donde las interacciones adquieren especial relevancia por el lenguaje, los símbolos y la comunicación, entendiendo el espacio digital como algo socialmente construido que comprende que las posturas individuales representan puntos de vista grupales (Pink, Horst, Postill, Hjoith, Lewis y Tacchi, 2016).

La observación etnográfica se realizó entre los meses de enero y septiembre de 2023. La plataforma explorada fue Facebook, donde se buscaron comentarios y memes relacionados a la comunidad trans en grupos donde la comunidad digital de los investigadores era partícipe. Así se seleccionó el grupo de Progreposteo por la cantidad de miembros que posee.

En la descripción misma de los grupos declaran que se burlan de personas conservadoras, religiosas y las mujeres. Los actores pertenecientes a estos grupos no son los únicos que desarrollan discursos de género o sobre las personas trans. Sin embargo, la elección de este grupo partió de su capacidad de difusión al contar con más de cien mil miembros en el momento de recolección de datos. A esto se suma que son grupos que realizan publicaciones sobre la comunidad trans.
Los criterios de inclusión para los memes y los comentarios partieron de hacer alusión explicita a la comunidad o las personas trans a través de los semas: TRANS y la bandera representativa de la comunidad trans. El proceso de búsqueda de los posts fue manual a través del uso de las palabras clave en el buscador de los grupos en Facebook, posteriormente se empleó la herramienta Export Comments para generar bases de datos con los comentarios, por lo que se recolectaron más de mil comentarios y 45 memes, tras el proceso de curaduría se seleccionaron solo algunos por su representatividad.

Utilizamos el análisis multimodal del discurso como una herramienta que amplía el campo del análisis de los memes más allá del lenguaje verbal, integrando múltiples modos de comunicación y representación gráfica. Este enfoque se fundamenta en la premisa de que la construcción de significado no se limita al lenguaje escrito, sino que se manifiestan a través de una variedad de modos semióticos, como imágenes, gestos, disposición espacial y otros recursos visuales. Kress (2012) argumenta que estos modos interactúan y se complementan, contribuyendo de manera conjunta a la creación y la interpretación de significados en contextos sociales específicos. Este tipo de análisis destaca la importancia de los modos no verbales de comunicación en interacción con el texto escrito, explora cómo los diferentes modos están imbuidos de valores culturales y sociales, y permite abordar la diversidad de las prácticas comunicativas en un mundo cada vez más visualmente orientado.

Sánchez-Sánchez, Ruiz-Muñoz y Sánchez-Sánchez (2023) emplean una metodología de análisis bibliométrico para investigar las tendencias y colaboraciones en la investigación sobre homofobia y transfobia en las redes sociales. Utilizando la base de datos Scopus y el software VOSViewer, se analizaron 203 artículos publicados entre 1997 y 2022. El estudio revela un incremento significativo en la cantidad de publicaciones relevantes desde 2017, especialmente en 2021 y 2022, reflejando un creciente interés en el análisis discursivo de los mensajes de odio. Los hallazgos principales incluyen la identificación de Twitter como la red social más utilizada para difundir discursos homotransfóbicos. Además, se detectaron ambientes propicios para el desarrollo de actitudes homotransfóbicas, como los deportes colectivos, especialmente el fútbol y sus seguidores, así como los grupos de pares. El análisis concluye que la homofobia y la transfobia en las redes sociales es un problema creciente que requiere intervenciones a nivel social, incluyendo el desarrollo de legislación que se aleje de la heteronormatividad y la implementación de mecanismos para la detección automática de discursos homotransfóbicos en las redes sociales.

Condori Quilluya (2021), emplea el análisis del discurso para identificar manifestaciones de transfobia en Twitter. Este enfoque permitió identificar cómo los usuarios de esta red social articulan comentarios negativos hacia las mujeres transgénero a través de diversas estrategias discursivas. La investigación se centró en la forma en que los tuits utilizaban adjetivaciones ofensivas y la minimización de las experiencias y realidades de las mujeres transgénero.

Los hallazgos del estudio revelaron que muchos tuits representaban la transfobia no solo como una exageración sino también como un drama, evidenciando así un esfuerzo deliberado por minimizar y deslegitimar la identificación de género en las mujeres trans. También se presentaba a las mujeres trans como indisciplinadas por desafiar las normas de género convencionales. Este estudio destaca la capacidad del análisis del discurso para revelar las sutilezas y las implicaciones de la transfobia en las plataformas digitales, y cómo estas actitudes contribuyen a la perpetuación de la discriminación y la estigmatización de las personas transgénero.

Desde un enfoque opuesto a la transfobia también se ha utilizado el análisis del discurso en el West, Wada y Strong (2021) para examinar cómo las personas transgénero y de género no conforme construyen su identidad en comunidades en línea. Esta metodología permitió una exploración en profundidad de los procesos lingüísticos implicados en la construcción de la identidad trans. Los hallazgos clave del estudio incluyeron la identificación de tres discursos principales utilizados por los TGNC (transgénero y de género no conformista): sentido interno, autenticidad y legitimidad. Por ejemplo, el discurso de autenticidad implicaba la construcción de la identidad como una verdad personal y genuina, mientras que el discurso de legitimidad se centraba en la esencia biológica de la identidad, presentándola como empíricamente sólida y factual.

En el contexto de memes transfóbicos, el análisis multimodal ayuda a identificar cómo se perpetúan estereotipos y prejuicios, y cómo se utiliza la combinación de texto e imagen para transmitir mensajes que pueden reforzar o desafiar normas y actitudes sociales. Este enfoque permite una comprensión más profunda de cómo los memes, como artefactos culturales, no solo reflejan sino también moldean las actitudes sociales hacia la comunidad transgénero. Al analizar los diferentes modos y su interacción en estos memes, se pueden revelar las estrategias retóricas y semióticas empleadas para crear un impacto específico, así como las implicaciones sociales y culturales que conllevan.

4. Resultados

Las redes sociodigitales se presentan como espacios en los cuales sus usuarios pueden desarrollar prácticas de intercambio de información, donde los procesos de comunicación pueden gestar acuerdos y desacuerdos sobre múltiples y diversos temas. Facebook, en este caso concreto, sirve como vehículo para la socialización de expresiones y representaciones gráficas transfóbicas.

Los resultados presentados a continuación se vierten en dos modalidades: gráfica y lingüística. Cada una representa formas en que la transfobia se vierte y expresa por los usuarios de esta red social y manifiesta las maneras en que se construyen los discursos sobre las personas trans.

La modalidad gráfica consiste en aquellas representaciones que expresan significados sobre lo que es una mujer, hombre o persona trans a través del uso del meme en imagen. Las imágenes se emplean como representaciones de los significados que circundan a las personas trans. El lenguaje gráfico de orden peyorativo u ofensivo se hace explícito al representar estos significados, donde las personas trans son deshumanizadas, infantilizadas o sobajadas. Además, se pueden encontrar algunas tramas recurrentes que apuntan hacia la feminidad, la conducta suicida, los trastornos mentales o la mutilación del cuerpo.

La construcción de discursos visuales sobre estas representaciones desemboca en una feminidad idealizada y naturalizada donde, como se muestra en la Figura 1, se abandonan elementos culturales y se privilegian tramas biologicistas que dan explicación a la identidad femenina más allá de los rasgos sociales de la feminidad.

Elementos socioculturales como el cabello, el maquillaje o los vestidos son colocados en un nivel distinto a lo que se entiende como femenino, se cae en argumento que valida la identidad de las mujeres únicamente a través de sus genitales.

Figura 1. Cosas que te hacen mujer.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/288612642640631

Esto implica, además, una negación de la identidad transgénero por no poseer ciertos caracteres sexuales o haber experimentado algunas etapas de desarrollo que se entienden como clave en la constitución de una identidad femenina. Como se muestra en la Figura 2 a través de una lógica que separa mente y cuerpo, la menarquia simboliza una imposibilidad biológica para que una persona trans viva su identidad. El meme expone la idea de un cuerpo mutilado y hasta ominoso como la representación de una mujer trans. El autor percibe que ese cuerpo sólo puede vivirse como tal a través de la mutilación, un cuerpo trans se entiende como un cuerpo que atenta contra sí mismo.

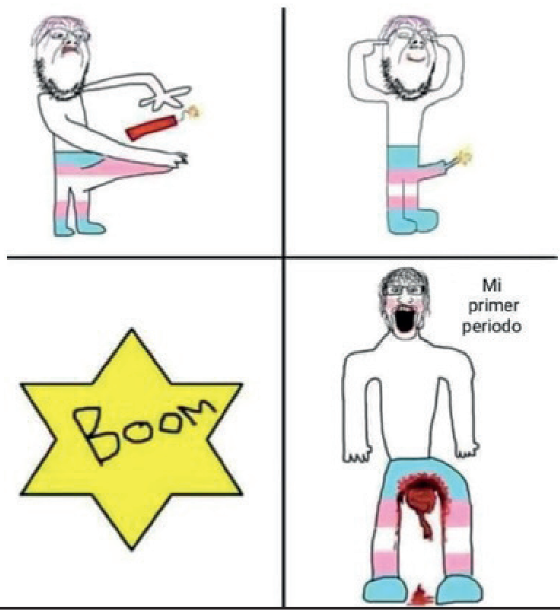

Figura 2. Menarquia.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/288612642640631

En este mismo sentido, la Figura 3 suma a esta supuesta mutilación del cuerpo una capa temporal de deterioro. Los cuerpos se desgastan, pero desde la visión del autor del meme, el deterioro en los cuerpos que han hecho transición de género es particular por la ligereza de sus decisiones.

Figura 3. Modas.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/288612642640631/permalink/809817603853463/

Como otro elemento se encuentra la conducta suicida asociada directamente con la identidad transgénero. Como se muestra en la Figura 3, aparece como un elemento que sugiere que las personas que transicionan desarrollan estas conductas, por lo que la intención de este tipo de memes, además de la burla, recae en una deshumanización de las personas, donde pareciera que sus vidas no merecen ser vividas o son incluso menos que humanas. Se trata de la expresión de una muerte simbólica y la invisibilización de los deseos de un grupo de personas (Caravaca-Morera y Itayra Padilha, 2018).

Figura 4. Suicidio.
https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1167325100890473&set=gm.812338506934706&idorvanity=288612642640631

Esta manera en que se deshumaniza a las identidades trans al relacionarlas con el suicidio expresa, a través de los memes y la animalización, la forma en que sus vidas son consideradas como desechables e indeseables en el espacio público, donde la muerte es el mayor de los silencios para un cuerpo marginalizado (Spencer, 2019). Tanto la figura 4 como la 5 ejemplifican ese silencio esperado al representar individuos que no tienen derecho a réplica ya que están condenados por la forma en que deciden orientar su vida.

Figura 5. Animalización.
https://web.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=977823820234286&set=gm.798105001691390&idorvanity=288612642640631

Otra de las representaciones referentes a la salud mental de las personas trans es la de la patologización. Las representaciones gráficas de esta índole emplean los peyorativos para formular un discurso aparentemente construido sobre una idea de salud mental que termina por verse atravesada por valores heteronormados. Los memes, como la Figura 6, incluyen descalificaciones directas apelando a una idea de normalidad en cuestiones de salud mental. En el nivel pragmático se rechaza su identidad al negar que existan como personas trans y en el nivel semántico se establece que las personas trans no poseen autoridad para hablar sobre la salud mental.

Figura 6. Salud mental.
https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10160885238589835&set=p.10160885238589835&type=3

En este mismo tenor, la Figura 7 emplea un discurso sobre salud mental para justificar una segregación grupal a partir de generalizaciones y el uso de tecnicismos psicológicos para elaborar un diagnóstico apresurado. Como en algunos ejemplos anteriores, aquí se le resta peso a la sociedad como factor en la formación de identidades, dejando la salud mental como elemento individual.

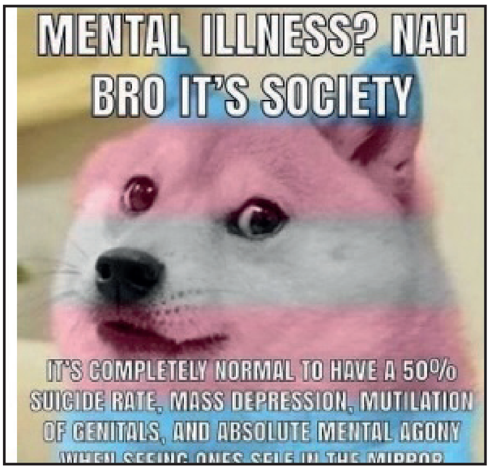

Figura 7. Enfermedad mental.
https://web.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=790938866077748&set=p.790938866077748&type=3

Como segundo apartado, la modalidad lingüística refiere al uso de lenguaje peyorativo a través de palabras que dictan la forma en que personas deberían comportarse en términos de la expresión de género. Al igual que con la modalidad gráfica, aquí se encuentran algunas tramas recurrentes sobre la identidad o corporalidad de personas trans. A las ya vistas se pueden sumar algunas como el paternalismo a través de la protección de las infancias o un discurso pseudocientífico como justificación de los prejuicios.

Un ejemplo claro son las expresiones que desestiman la identidad de personas trans desacreditando sus pronombres como se muestra en la Figura 8. No solo se expresa deshumanización mediante hacer meme el suicidio en un nivel pragmático, sino que transforma los pronombres en expresiones peyorativas al darles un sentido a través de los tiempos verbales que expresan algo que era, pero que ya no lo es. En este caso se emplea el pasado simple del verbo to be para asociar a las personas trans a una presunta tendencia hacia el suicidio.

Figura 8. Pronombres.
https://web.facebook.com/groups/288612642640631/posts/664981028337122/

En el nivel semántico, la apropiación de expresiones o términos de las personas trans —como el llamado lenguaje inclusivo— se vierte de tal forma que se usa como lenguaje peyorativo. En el nivel pragmático el individuo es desacreditado como persona a través de expresiones pseudopsicológicas que patologizan sus condiciones de vida particulares (Butler, 2010), las cuales se perciben infrahumanas.

No entiendo, si una persona tiene delirios de amputarse alguna extremidad debe ser tratada psiquiátricamente entonces porque a estos enfermites se les considera personas mentalmente sanas? (Usuario de Facebook).

Al igual que en la modalidad gráfica aparecen algunas expresiones lingüísticas que refieren a la transformación de los cuerpos, la diferencia radica en el nivel semántico donde, como se ve en el ejemplo siguiente, se asocia una idea masculina de protección con una postura que se contrapone a las identidades trans, una postura que en apariencia busca proteger al cuerpo trans de sí mismo.

Entonces, si criticas el uso de hormonas y de desprendimiento de órganos sexuales funcionales del colectivo LG (T)V si eres un gran hombre porqué estás en contra de la autodestrucción de las personas (Usuario de Facebook).

Este impulso aparentemente paternalista del cuidado de la sociedad forma enemigos en el otro que es distinto, las personas trans se entienden como una amenaza ideológica capaz de reformar las identidades de las personas que han sido biológicamente determinadas en el plano social. En el nivel pragmático, del ejemplo siguiente, se ataca a esta amenaza a través de una prohibición del uso de los recursos del gobierno, en el nivel semántico es una negación del espacio público. El segundo comentario, en este tenor, se adscribe a la protección de la sociedad y el espacio público a través de una negación por la aceptación pública de las personas trans. En el nivel semántico estos peyorativos reflejan la forma en que se prohíbe este acceso al espacio público.

La única cosa que hay que ponerle cuidado es que no compren sus mamadas con nuestro dinero. Nada de andar dando pastillas gratuitas porque gobiernoGod quiera votos de la chaviza (Usuario de Facebook).
Ora esa jalada ,que agan lo que quieran pero que no estén obligando ala gente a aceptar sus pensamientos de cagada (Usuario de Facebook).

Este supuesto impulso de protección, además, busca que los cuerpos infantiles no sean expuestos al discurso armado sobre mutilación y deterioro corporal. Este tipo de expresiones peyorativas en el nivel semántico son ejemplo de un posicionamiento político que busca cuidar una reproducción de mandatos de género heteronormados, esta preocupación por los niños no es gratuita, se trata de una máscara que oculta los esfuerzos por mantener a la cultura heterosexual vigente (Edelman, 2004).

Que horrenda ideología por dios santo, mutilando y convirtiendo niñas sanas en viejos de 50 (Usuario de Facebook).
Osea a ver si entendí, si un nene fuma, bebe alcohol o dice groserías es porque es un niño y no sabe lo que hace pero si el nene dice que quiere cambiar de sexo es porque sabe perfectamente lo que está haciendo (Usuario de Facebook).

La lógica que interpreta los procesos corporales de transición no sólo se elabora a través desde una óptica del desgaste como se muestra en el comentario anterior y como se vio en la modalidad gráfica de resultados, sino que la misma materialidad del cuerpo se usa como un recordatorio peyorativo sobre un esencialismo biológico que recae en una división anatómica de los sexos; a biología se usa como argumento para desacreditar la identidad de personas trans al recordarles una supuesta esencia anatómica. El nivel semántico aparece, nuevamente, a través de una definición de mujer entendida únicamente a partir del plano biológico.

JJAJAJAJAJAJAJAJA Eso les pasa por enfermas,Solo cambia de cara y un poco de voz,pero por dentro son mujeres,No pueden negarlo (Usuario de Facebook).

El comentario siguiente, por ejemplo, busca definir lo que es una persona trans a partir de un argumento pseudocientífico. En el nivel pragmático, el usuario establece algunas pautas mínimas para validad la identidad de alguien que ha hecho transición. El nivel semántico muestra nuevamente la inviabilidad que a ojos de los usuarios tienen las identidades trans, pues así estén conscientes de su existencia, su forma de vida no bastará para ser reconocida. La ciencia médica, al igual que la psicología y la biología, es usada como una herramienta para desacreditar y definir que es o no es una persona trans.

Es común que todos estos tipos se denominen trans sin recibir o estar bajo tratamiento hormonal? Pues trans es transicionar por así decirlo de "hombre a mujer" o viceversa pero con ayuda de fármacos, cirugías y etcétera. Comento esto pues ahora todo el mundo y morrillos principalmente o travestis se dicen ser trans pero sin recibir el tratamiento químico que cambia su estructura física y genética (Usuario de Facebook).

Un elemento que aparece en la modalidad lingüística, a diferencia de la gráfica, son los comentarios que expresan discursos transfóbicos que a su vez niegan que realmente lo sean, es decir, se elaboran discursos incongruentes que apelan a una aparente neutralidad, cuando en realidad son expresiones peyorativas.

Como dijo mi amor Agustín Laje "El querer creerse del sexo opuesto esta condenado a una lucha imposible y ganada de ante mano contra la naturaleza" Aun así hay que respetar (Usuario de Facebook).

Este comentario apela a una autoridad externa -Agustín Laje- para elaborar un argumento biologicista -contra natura- en el que la identidad trans sea desacreditada a partir de una supuesta naturaleza binaria contra quien no hay nada que hacer, una lucha perdida. Sin embargo, al final se elabora una aparente intención de neutralidad que apela al respeto hacia otros.

En esta misma línea, el siguiente comentario busca llamar a la razón a partir de lo que entiende como un mundo donde la verdad puede herir susceptibilidades, considera que aquellas personas que posean un trastorno deberían ser atendidas por profesionales. Además, concibe que las personas trans son incapaces de aceptarse a sí mismas, por lo que les resta capacidad de agencia. El nivel pragmático se muestra a partir de una búsqueda de control en forma de la atención psicológica, el semántico aparece al considerar a las personas trans como individuos incapaces de actuar para su propio bien. En apariencia busca puntos medios para dialogar, pero esta intención se agota pronto.

La Disforia corporal se debe tratar con ayuda psicológico y eso no es ofensa al igual que la depresión, pero se ofenden si se los dices de que sirve que traten hagan berrinche de que la gente los acepte cuando ellos mismos no se aceptan (Usuario de Facebook).

Este análisis de resultados muestra algunos elementos repetitivos que buscan desacreditar identidades de personas género disidentes. Los lugares desde los cuales se enuncian estos discursos ostentan un tono de autoridad en el tema, los comentarios muestran un sentido de urgencia. Los emisores se posicionan como expertos, hablan desde las ciencias y pareciera que tratan de dar un tono de emergencia a las cuestiones relacionadas con las personas trans.

Todo expresado a través de un lenguaje peyorativo orientado hacia la importancia de no reconocer las identidades trans ni en su individualidad ni en el espacio público.

4. Discusión

Los resultados aquí presentados se pueden verter en dos principales vías: como estereotipos y como prejuicios. El estereotipo considera aquellas representaciones que se realizan sobre los cuerpos y personas trans y que son validadas por el grupo en el que se socializan, mayormente en un sentido negativo. Estos estereotipos son una imagen mental simplificada compartida por su carácter cultural. Representan al sujeto trans en sí mismo.

Los estereotipos vistos a través de la recolección de datos se clasifican de dos maneras que manifiestan representaciones colectivas sobre formas de comportamiento, en este caso se entienden como estereotipos prescriptivos y constitutivos. Los estereotipos prescriptivos describen la forma en que las personas deberían actuar, basados en el género ordenan la forma en que los cuerpos sexuados deben comportarse. Esto se ejemplifica a través de los memes y comentarios que apelan a la naturaleza o la biología, así como aquellos que conciben formas estáticas en que se puede expresar el género o que desacreditan las identidades trans por no cumplir con sus expectativas. Los estereotipos constitutivos describen cómo las personas trans se comportan, piensan o viven. Esto se ejemplifica como aquellas expresiones que dibujan al cuerpo trans como ominoso, tendiente al suicidio o lo describen en términos de decadencia o peligrosidad.

Los estereotipos y prejuicios contra personas trans en redes sociodigitales, a través del uso de lenguaje peyorativo y formas específicas de enunciación, no solo transmiten opiniones, sino que realizan actos de habla (Searle, 1994) que refuerzan discriminaciones. Las publicaciones y comentarios expresados de forma prescriptiva funcionan como actos de habla performativos que buscan perpetuar normas y valores transfóbicos. Por otro lado, las publicaciones que se refieren a la persona trans y no necesariamente a sus actos, de tipo «X se considera Y» reflejan cómo se establecen y se normalizan percepciones negativas sobre la comunidad trans, actuando como reglas constitutivas que definen lo que se considera aceptable o no.

Nuestro análisis sugiere que los comentarios transfóbicos en redes sociodigitales aplican la lógica de “Si Y, hagan X” de la siguiente manera: cuando “Y” es igual a una persona trans, “X” representa acciones o comportamientos discriminables. Por ejemplo, si se identifica a una persona como trans (Y), entonces los comentarios promueven excluirla, denigrarla o invalidar su identidad (X), reflejando una heteronorma compartida en esos grupos transfóbicos.

En el contexto de proposiciones constitutivas, donde “X” es una persona trans y “Y” representa las condiciones, características, rasgos o atributos identitarios que se esperarían de una mujer cisgénero pero que se presupone que una mujer transgénero no puede tener, se manifiestan juicios que refuerzan estereotipos y normas de género restrictivas. Ejemplo de esto sería una proposición que implique que sólo las mujeres cisgénero pueden poseer cierta feminidad “auténtica” o cumplir con roles de género específicos, invalidando así la identidad y expresión de género de las mujeres transgénero.

Estos actos, manifestados a través de lenguaje peyorativo, memes ofensivos y discursos que deslegitiman las experiencias trans, no solo refuerzan la exclusión social, sino que también invalidan la identidad y expresión de género de las personas trans, subrayando la necesidad crítica de abordar y contrarrestar estos discursos en la esfera digital.

De igual manera, los prejuicios aparecen como expresiones que reflejan los juicios de valor y las opiniones de los autores de memes y comentarios. Reflejan una actitud negativa hacia un grupo de personas a través de muestras de miedo, rechazo o falta de socialización. A diferencia del estereotipo, aquí se muestra una postura personal que se aprecia a través de tres principales manifestaciones: el prejuicio explícito, el prejuicio implícito y el prejuicio negado.

El prejuicio explícito es una representación directa de la persona trans, a través del uso de verbos como matar, mutilar o tratar, se forman posturas directas que reflejan sus opiniones sin esconderlas. Estos estereotipos se reflejan a través de representaciones gráficas que muestran cuerpos trans agredidos o con conductas suicidas.

Los estereotipos implícitos, por el contrario, recurren a la retórica, metáforas o doble sentido para no expresar de forma directa las representaciones del cuerpo trans, apelan a estructuras sociales, instituciones o a los efectos negativos del tratamiento para encubrir el prejuicio. Aquí entran las expresiones que usan tecnicismos propios de la psicología o la medicina para ocultar el prejuicio, además entran aquellos comentarios que buscan una aparente protección de la sociedad o las infancias. De forma similar, el último de los prejuicios también se esconde, sólo que a través de una negación directa del prejuicio mismo.

Se presenta a través de comentarios que de forma explícita niegan tener una postura transfóbica o en apariencia buscan un consenso entre distintas posturas. Como tal se ven expresiones que llaman al respeto, a la lógica, a la razón o al cuidado, sin embargo, elementos transfóbicos se mantienen al desacreditar o negar las identidades trans.

Derivado de lo anterior, y con el propósito de analizar la transfobia en redes sociodigitales, se formaron cinco registros a través de los cuales se pueden categorizar las expresiones transfóbicas en memes y comentarios. Los registros se entienden como aquellos signos que se utilizan para elaborar discursos y que obedecen a un contexto sociocultural donde la construcción de ideas se da a partir de un campo semántico. Los registros se clasificaron de la siguiente manera: deshumanizante, biológico, psicologista, científico y paternalista.

El registro deshumanizante niega las características humanas en la persona trans a través de animalizarla, infantilizarla, negar su racionalidad o realizar expresiones necropolíticas a través de comentarios sobre el suicidio, la muerte o el daño a cuerpos trans. El registro biológico incluye aquellas expresiones sobre la naturaleza, los cromosomas, el desarrollo físico o los caracteres sexuales. El registro psicologista engloba las manifestaciones que incluyen tecnicismos psicológicos como trastornos, terapia, delirios o conducta suicida, además de elementos que apunten a un psicodiagnóstico. El registro científico apunta a las expresiones gráficas y lingüísticas que toman como punto de partida elementos derivados de la medicina que son capaces de alterar el cuerpo como tratamientos hormonales, medicamentos o procedimientos quirúrgicos. Finalmente, el registro paternalista abarca aquellas muestras que reflejan un cuidado coercitivo de la sociedad, las infancias y los cuerpos, expresiones que pueden devenir de una lógica masculina o violenta del cuidado. Todo lo anterior puede sintetizarse a través del modelo expuesto en la Figura 9.

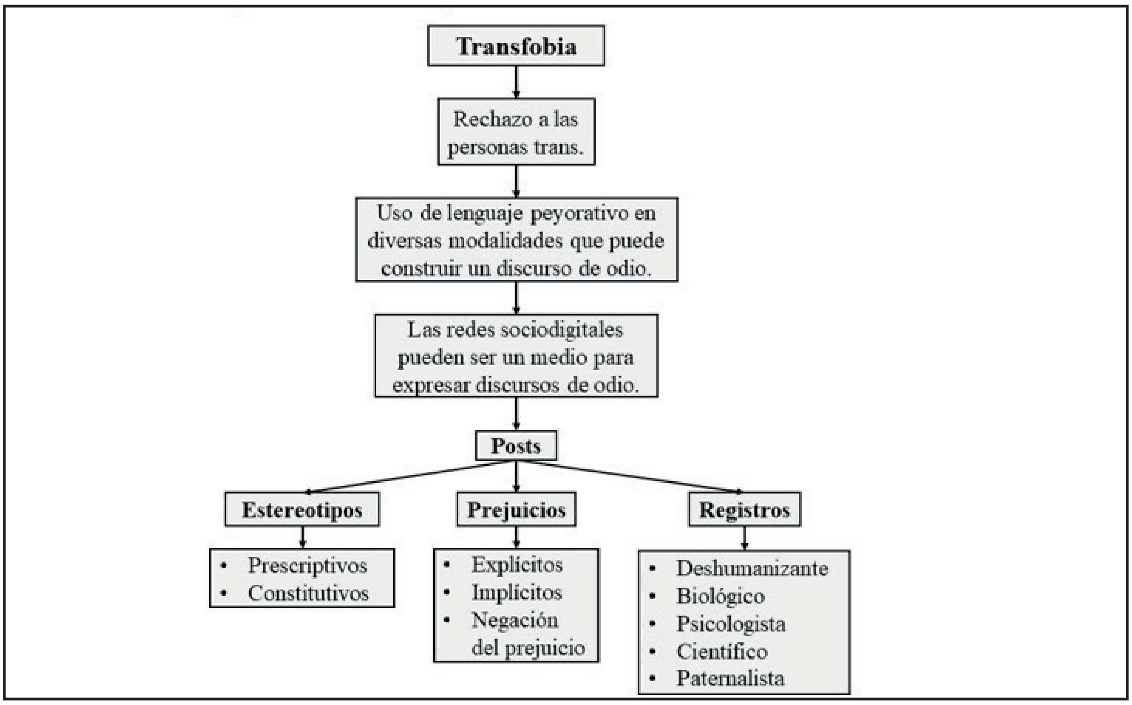

Figura 9. Modelo para el análisis de la transfobia. Elaboración propia.

La ostentación en el contexto digital, según Trejo Delabre (2015), se refiere a la exhibición abierta de expresiones de odio e intolerancia con el fin de ganar relevancia pública. El grupo de Facebook ofrece un espacio para que estos discursos no solo se manifiesten, sino que también se amplifiquen. La construcción del discurso transfóbico ostenta el prejuicio de dos maneras: explícita e implícitamente que podemos encontrar en los niveles: semántico, sintáctico y pragmático del post o del comentario.

En el plano semántico, se identifica la ostentación de opiniones a través de la cuidadosa selección de términos y conceptos de disciplinas como la biología, psicología, medicina, y política. Se observa la invocación de conceptos biológicos y psicológicos para argumentar contra la legitimidad de las identidades trans, utilizando referencias a la “naturaleza”, efectos secundarios de medicamentos, procedimientos quirúrgicos y teorías unicausales de la psicología como la disforia y el suicidio. Esta estrategia busca presentar la transfobia como una posición racionalizada y científicamente fundamentada. Este uso estratégico del lenguaje busca dotar a estos discursos de una apariencia de legitimidad y autoridad, camuflando así el prejuicio bajo una capa de racionalidad científica o preocupación social.

A nivel sintáctico, la ostentación se manifiesta en la forma en que se presentan las ideas, ya sea a través de la expresión directa de opiniones, la paráfrasis de fuentes externas, o el empleo de figuras retóricas que permiten insinuar posturas transfóbicas sin declararlas explícitamente. Este método evita la confrontación directa con el prejuicio, permitiendo a los emisores mantener una distancia superficial de las implicaciones éticas de sus discursos.

Finalmente, en el nivel pragmático, la interacción dentro de este tipo de comunidades digitales con una carga heteropatriarcal dominante evidencia la ostentación de un rol donde el cuidado de la sociedad, la protección de la infancia y la responsabilidad sobre los cuerpos se presentan como obligaciones inherentes al hombre cisgénero heterosexual.

Este registro político se manifiesta en discursos que pretenden salvaguardar el orden social frente a lo que consideran amenazas, apelando al deber de proteger a los más vulnerables y manteniendo una posición de autoridad moral y social.

El uso del prejuicio en el grupo digital sirve para reforzar la cohesión y orientar comportamientos específicos, subrayando el papel activo del lenguaje en la conformación y mantenimiento de normas y valores grupales. La ostentación, en este sentido, no solo es una manifestación de opiniones individuales, sino que se convierte en una herramienta para la construcción y afirmación de identidades colectivas en torno a ideologías excluyentes.

Conclusiones

A partir de este análisis, se entiende que la transfobia en comunidades virtuales, como los grupos de Facebook, se manifiesta tanto de manera explícita como implícita a través del rechazo hacia personas trans por no ajustarse a las normas de género establecidas. Esta transfobia emplea lenguaje peyorativo y medios de expresión verbales y no verbales, incluyendo elementos gráficos, que constituyen discursos de odio en diferentes niveles.

En el nivel semántico, el uso de semas gráficos y verbales desacredita la apariencia femenina de la persona trans o bien critica el uso de lenguaje inclusivo o la elección de pronombres personales por parte de personas trans. En el nivel sintáctico, se elaboran proposiciones prejuiciosas explícitas utilizando registros científicos, pseudocientíficos, deshumanizantes y paternalistas, que refuerzan la discriminación. Además, en este nivel, se recurre a tropos lingüísticos como metáforas para velar la transfobia.

Las plataformas digitales se convierten en medios para la ostentación de discursos de odio, donde la transfobia se comunica y amplifica, afectando la percepción cultural sobre las personas trans. Este ambiente puede llevar a que las personas trans interioricen narrativas sociales negativas, desarrollando sentimientos de vergüenza e inconformidad con sus identidades, con potenciales consecuencias negativas para su salud mental como resultado de un consumo y exposición a contenidos relacionados con estos discursos (Chakravarthi, 2023).

En el plano pragmático, el uso comunitario de representaciones estereotipadas y la repetición de discursos prescriptivos y constitutivos sobre el cuerpo y la identidad trans que perpetúan la discriminación. También se observan negaciones del prejuicio, donde bajo la apariencia de corrección política, se exponen argumentos que refuerzan el rechazo y la exclusión.

El lenguaje peyorativo u ofensivo actúa como vehículo para los discursos de odio, aprovechando sus propiedades expresivas para transmitir estereotipos y evaluaciones negativas. Los estereotipos, que combinan conceptos densos con actitudes negativas, permiten que el lenguaje peyorativo encapsule visiones prejuiciosas, siendo estas visiones fácilmente aprendidas y replicadas dentro de un grupo. Esto facilita la validación y perpetuación de actitudes discriminatorias al alinearse con los valores compartidos del grupo, reforzando así la exclusión y marginalización de las personas trans.

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Advertising, Logos, Brand Design, Imagery, and Other Pluralities: A Sample from Romania

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Abstract

In this study we will dwell on notions as advertising language, logo and brand. I will try to present them theoretically, under the broader umbrella of advertising speech. The topic of the article remains a current one in the context of public communication, highlighting the relevance of the iconic-visual discourse. The identity element with the greatest penetrating power in the consumer's mind is the logo, the combination of the brand name and a graphic symbol. This graphic symbol can become a powerful element of identity. Related to the logo, my analysis consistes of a corpus made up of 13 Romanian logos that entered a competition regarding the image of the country in the centenary year. I will present in the table all the logos that entered the competition and the winning logo for the campaign. The event, called "the Centenary of the Great Union", was the commemoration of 100 years after which all the historical provinces inhabited by Romanians united in 1918 within the same national state, Romania. We will also see the latest logo proposed for Romania, in June 2023, by the well-known BBC journalist, Charlie Ottley. The examples will try to illustrate the theoretical elements presented. My paper uses in a generic way the concept logotype to refer to the combination of brand name and graphic symbol. However logotype refers expressly to the construction of word formations with typography. Isotype refers to the symbolic or iconic part of the brand. Imagotipo is the iconic-textual set that can work separately, and Isologo is the composition where the text and the icon are merged into a single inseparable element, since they could not work properly separately. Based on the analysis of John R. Stuteville and Marc D. Roberts, I will try to integrate the notion of brand into the overall vision of advertising discourse. I used a qualitative research to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences regarding the logo and brand. I followed two levels of analysis: the iconic level and the linguistic level. Thus, we will try to define the brand, to capture its pros and cons in the discourse on the existence of the brand. And to identify some of the elements that lead to the success of a brand and to position the logo within the brand identity.

Keywords: brand image, logo and advertising discourse, logotype.

"The secret of originality in advertising is not in creating new words and images, but in combining familiar words and images into relationships and new structures." (Leo Burnett, 100 LEO's, Chicago, IL: Leo Burnett Company, p.72)

1. Introduction: Brand Nowadays

According to the Oxford Dictionary online, brand is a type of product manufactured by a particular company and under a special name. The Cambridge Dictionary defines brand as a type of product made by a particular company, a given name for a product or service, a specific product or feature "that serves to identify a particular product or a trade name or trademark. Brand is the automatic, strong and persistent association between a product or service (with all related attributes) offered by a company and a unique concept or experience in the minds of its customers.

Former Coca-Cola marketing chief, Sergio Zyman (2008: 62), defines the brand as "a kind of impressionist painting. From a distance, it seems like a single image, but as you approach and analyze it, you find that it is actually made of a variety of elements". Here are some brand descriptions:

- the brand is actually a chest that closes in it the sum of all the experiences a customer has with the product;
- the brand represents a combination of functional and emotional benefits, attributes, experience of use, images and symbols;
- the brand represents the company's connection with the preferences, desires and needs of consumers;
- the brand is what drives the company's loyal customers to return.
- brand is the way to give meaning to the product or service offered by the company.

"Above all, the brand is the company's most valuable asset. Invest a common product or service with meaning that goes beyond the product. Carefully managed, the brand can deliver extraordinary benefits, including one not to be neglected aspect – the possibility of asking for a high price; however, if it is managed foolishly, it can kill you". (Zyman, 2008: 64).

According to Zyman (2008: 62-64), the brand simplifies the buying process by differentiating the product on other criteria than price. Branding has become part of the general commercial culture. "Branding is the real world" observed Wally Ollins (2010: 180), the most experienced practitioner in corporate identity and branding. He has created brands and identities for Orange, Guinness, Renault, Volkswagen and British Telecom. In the public sector he provided for the Portuguese Government and the London Metropolitan Police.

Advertising is a part of branding – not the other way around. Thus, one of the basic tasks of the brand is to differentiate (company, product or service) from others in the crowd. Differentiation is based on the concept of singularity, which creates in the mind of a potential customer the perception that there is no product like your product on the market.

Developing a brand is the effective way to sell something. The old phrase that says "nothing happens until someone sells something" can be replaced by the slogan "nothing happens until a brand is created". The strength of a brand lies in its ability to influence purchasing behavior. Brand researchers observed that branding is a largely an intuitive process. Viewed from the outside, some brands seem to conquer the world, but all brands are permanently unsafe. (Olins, 2010: 180-183).

The concepts of brand and branding present disadvantages. Olins considered that sometimes the brand is defined as superficial, simplistic, vulgar, easy to laugh or easy to despise. Brands are vulnerable in fashion. (Olins, 2010: 188). Fashion is changing very quickly and brands need to change, adapt to the tastes of those who buy all the products. Brands are also vulnerable because they can become too confident, arrogant. They are vulnerable because, despite all the research and focus groups, those who create and manage brands cannot really predict how people will use them, and because they seem unable to anticipate changes in public opinion.

Finally, brands are not only vulnerable to the public's whims, but they also spend a lot of time, energy and money fighting each other, the competition between them being fierce. In other words, brands aren't always as strong as they seem. They are particularly vulnerable to customers. When a brand is pleasant, it is bought, and when it is not, the customer goes to another. The public can be changeable, loyal, fashion slave, trend creator. Above all, customers are unpredictable.

As we have seen in the descriptions of what brand is in advertising (Neamțu, 2012: 191-205), brand is the automatic, strong and persistent association between a product or service (with all related attributes) offered by a company and a unique concept or experience in the minds of its customers. Based on the analysis of John R. Stuteville and Marc D. Roberts (1975: 208-214) speaking of three types of advertising speeches, each creating around them a school of writing in a way centered on: brand image, logical approach to speech and emphasis on visibility elements, I will try to integrate the notion of brand into the overall vision of advertising discourse.

- Brand image: seeks to present an emotional image of the product. Advertising creator David Ogilvy can be considered the "father" of this direction.
- The logical presentation approach: look for a unique, memorable sentence to sell the product.
- Emphasis on the visibility (the visibility school) : the main objective of advertisements is to attract the attention of the public, using humor, visual bizarre, "anything, anything to attract the attention of the consumer".

It is the name that identifies a brand in the long run. Therefore, the most important decision in the branding process is the name of a product or service. A brand needs a unique idea or concept to survive (to be first in a category, to hold a word in the mind of the consumer) while in the long run the unique idea disappears and all that differentiates the brand from those of competitors is the name. The difference is not in products, but in their names and perceptions.

Wally Olins is convinced that "seducers and their brands are shaping themselves as the dominant ingredient in business". (Olins, 2010: 11) A possible answer to the question, "is branding a good thing or a bad thing?" it depends entirely on consumer behavior. The future of the brand is at the discretion of the public. The brands themselves are neither good nor bad. Only the way, place and reason they are used are truly meaningful. Brands, whether in business, art, charity or sports, have become a social and cultural phenomenon with extraordinary power, according to Olins (2010:13).

Once, brands were simple household goods for soap, tea, detergent, shoe cream, boring everyday products that were consumed and replaced. The brand was a symbol of consistency. At a time when products were counterfeit, the quality of production was inconstant, and the price, variable, the brand meant quality, quantity and standard price. The image of the brand designed and supported the product.

These days, all of this has changed radically. Most often, the functional qualities of a product are considered self-evident, and while brands continue to have to do with the image, now it's not their own image, but ours. (Olins, 2010:17). So, the power of a brand is a curious mixture of how it acts and what it represents in the mind of others. When a brand gets the right mix, it makes those who buy it feel like it is adding something to their idea of themselves.

Today there are a few brands, some very large ones, in which functionality dominates. Visa, unusually for a brand today, means more functionality than symbolism. Visa is so impalpable that it is a kind of spectrum. It seems to have no place of origin, being as home in Turkey as in Thailand. It takes on the protective color of financial services organizations with which it is associated, being one of the few brands that practically have no personality and no socio-economic implications. And yet Visa, no matter how colorless it may be, is one of the few indispensable brands today.

Consumers lose confidence and move away from brands in a world of crisis related to the cost of living. Consumers around the world continue to limit their spending amid the challenging evolution of the cost of living, with 94% of them now concerned about rising living costs, while continuing to face inflation. The results of the study from 2023 show that, in both developed and emerging countries, people are adopting dramatic changes in their short-term lifestyles to cope with continuing disruptions. Affordable costs are currently the main concern for 35% of consumers responding globally to the 12th edition of the EY Future Consumer Index (FCI), increasing by 10 percentage points since October 2022. (Iancu, 2023) The study shows that consumers are moving away from brands in search of economically accessible solutions.

Given that current economic uncertainties show no signs of mitigation, 92% of respondents are concerned about their country's economy and 39% the situation is expected to worsen over the next six months. Interviewees take steps to reduce spending in many areas of their lives, with more than a third (36%) planning to spend less on clothes, 44% expects to buy less packaged food and almost half (49%) plan to spend only on essential products. Purchasing essential products also remains a challenge for many responding consumers. More than three quarters (79%) considers that food prices have increased in the last three to four months and 74% noted that some brands have reduced the size of packages without reflecting this in price, which is known as "shrinkflation".

The study shows that clothing brands are no longer considered by most consumers as the only way to communicate the status, as 62% among global respondents say they no longer feel the need to keep up with the latest fashion trends, and half of them would now consider a private brand for clothing, footwear and accessories. A large proportion (67%) now prefers to repair their goods, instead of replacing them, which calls into question the traditional desire of consumers to always own the latest things. 55% of global consumers say that brands are no longer important[1].

Many brands are like amibes, according to Olins. They can be shaped in every way, yet remain recognizable. That's why so many brands can be separated from the products/services they were originally associated with. For example, the man *Marlboro*, the cowboy with the cigarette in his mouth, now appears on the sports clothing of the same brand. On the other hand, the relationships between *Michelin* tires, Michelin green travel guides and *Michelin* red guides for hotels and restaurants have some logic. This does not differ much from the logic of the *Porche* brand, whose name, originally associated with high-performance racing cars, is now applied to watches and a wide range of expensive sports goods that all emanate a *Porche* sensation.

1 see also: https://www.bursa.ro/indicele-ey-future-consumer-consumatorii-isi-pierd-increderea-si-se-indeparteaza-de-branduri-pe-fondul-crizei-legate-de-costul-vietii-08108940, accessed: 22.06.2023.

The markenters who create and support brands call this “brand extension”.(Neamțu, 2002) Brand extension is a remarkable development because it assumes that the brand has its own life and personality and if the emotions surrounding the brand are strong enough, people will accept its new functional capabilities without objection. According to Jean-Noel Kapferer (1994), professor of marketing at the Faculty of Management of the High School of Commerce in Paris, the brand extension is “the direct consequence of recognizing that brands are the true capital of a company”. (Neamțu, 2012:196) This means that many successful corporations shift the focus from producing and selling to being – representing a set of values. The brand was defined as a special name / symbol (Aaker, 1991: 20, see: Aaker, 2011) or as a product adding other dimensions to differentiate the market (Keller, 2013: 62).

If a brand can simultaneously represent cigarettes and clothing, it should come as no surprise that some brands can come to represent the country they come from. Luis Vuitton, Moet & Chandon and Hennessy, despite the Irish appearance of the name, are undoubtedly products that associate with and gain strength from the idea of French chic and luxury. These products come from LVMH, a company after whose initials hide some of the biggest names of French brands. This company, currently the largest and most successful luxury brand business, possesses a lot of such names, many of which are not actually French. With admirable clarity and objectivity, LVMH exploits the national characteristics of all brands it possesses.

So, the best and most successful brands can either ignore the origins of their products and their national characteristics or take advantage of them. They can compress and express simple, complex and subtle emotions. They can make these emotions immediately accessible, overcoming in many cases barriers such as ethnicity, religion and language.

The really interesting aspect of branding is that it seems unstoppable, wherever it goes. Brands, whether in business, art, charity or sports, have become a social and cultural phenomenon with extraordinary power. (Olins, 2010:13)

2. Logo, Brand Name, Graphic Symbol

The element of identity with the highest penetration power in the mind of the consumer is the logo, the combination of the brand name and a graphic symbol. This graphic symbol can become a powerful element of identity of a brand. Branding has become part of the general commercial culture. “Branding is the real world” (Olins, 2010:180) and advertising is a part of branding – not the other way around. Thus, one of the basic tasks of the brand is to differentiate (company, product or service) from others in the crowd. Even if, and all the more so, the members in that crowd are very similar. Differentiation is based on the concept of singularity, which creates in the mind of a potential customer the perception that there is no product like your product on the market.

Developing a brand is the effective way to sell something. The old phrase that says “nothing happens until someone sells something” is now replaced by the slogan “nothing happens until a brand is created”. In conclusion, the strength of a brand lies in its ability to influence purchasing behavior.

According to Neamțu (2012:191-237), branding involves risks and is a largely intuitive process. Viewed from the outside, some brands seem to conquer the world, but all brands are permanently unsafe. (Olins, 2010:180-183). Olins is one of the most experienced practitioners in corporate identity and branding. He has created brands and identities for Orange, Guinness, Renault, Volkswagen and British Telecom. In the public sector he provided for the Portuguese Government and the London Metropolitan Police.

In Romania, he was asked why we buy a brand? He replied:

"Because he's trying to seduce you, saying, love me more, I'm more beautiful. If you join me, if you buy me, your world will be better. It's seduction, even if we don't like to call it that way in business, and we call it marketing instead. In some brands, functionality is stronger than emotion, in other cases it is the opposite. The power of a brand is when creating a perfect blend of the two. A woman buys a Louis Vuitton bag not to carry things in it. For this, they would go directly to Metro or Lidl and buy a plastic bag. With a handbag Louis Vuitton she makes a statement about her own status, about the money she has, about her emotionality, about her sexuality. This is how they identify".[1]

The concepts of brand and branding also have some disadvantages. According to Olins (2010:188) sometimes the brand is defined as superficial, simplistic, vulgar, easy to laugh or easy to despise. Brands are vulnerable in fashion, says Wally Olins. Fashion is changing very quickly, and with it, brands need to change, adapt to the tastes of those who buy them. The most concrete example is the soft drinks Pepsi and Coca-Cola that are attacked by energy drinks as Getorades. Brands are also vulnerable because they can become too confident, arrogant. They are vulnerable because, despite all the research and focus groups, those who create and manage brands cannot really predict how people will use them, and because they seem unable to anticipate changes in public opinion.

Finally, brands are not only vulnerable to public fads, but they also spend a lot of time, energy and money fighting each other, the competition between them being fierce. In other words, brands aren't always as strong as they seem. They are particularly vulnerable to customers. When a brand is pleasant, it is bought, and when it is not, the customer goes to another. The public can be changeable, loyal, fashion slave, trend creator. Above all, customers are unpredictable.

When designing advertising, and therefore also the brand, we must keep in mind the writing style of the texts, that is the journalistic style. What I mean is the style of the ads must be a direct, clear, simple way for the reader to understand the text. The style makes the reading attractive and turns the reader into an indirect witness of the facts reported by the journalist. (Neamțu, 2022:67)

In general, brands have two roles: to convince the outside to buy and the inside to believe. Olins is the researcher who introduces the term *brand architecture* and draws attention to the importance of differentiating the product or service created, which must have something unusual and must be unique.

So once you have the key idea, it has to be creatively animated, taking into consideration the design, names, colors, letter bodies, a strong visual style, sometimes music from which to draw its emotional power. So if we want people to believe in our brand, buy our shares, buy our products, understand us, recommend us to others, then there must be consistency in our actions and credibility. Sergio Zyman (2008:66) talks about the initial components, which anyone who wants to create a successful brand must take into account: establishing a strategy after the company has been analyzed; positioning; differentiating from the competition; focusing on the needs and desires of the consumers; returning to the start and starting over.

1 Interview with Wally Olins, "Romania devine brand fără știrea ei", Cosmin Popan., http://old.cotidianul.ro/interviu_wally_olins_romania_devine_brand_fara_stirea_ei-22131.html, accessed:23.06.2019

"An effective strategy starts with a thorough analysis of the company's DNA, the blockchain that determines how customers perceive you and how your brand interacts with their needs". (Zyman, 2008:66) As Sergio Zyman explains, there are three fundamental methods by which the brand can be differentiated. The first method refers to the concept of "more for more". A higher price of the product for a better quality. This must be repeated at all times to the consumers, otherwise the effort is in vain. At the opposite end is the second method, "more for less". In exchange for loyalty, companies offer products at a low price. This method is adopted by universal stores and generic brands. They use about the same representations as national brands, sometimes even copying the look, size, shape and color of the national brand. However, their marketing, processing and distribution costs are lower. The third method we can called it "less for less". In the case of these products, quality is not representative. Companies that create such products try to give the impression that they offer products or services that are as good as others, only that they are cheaper. These are generic products, those that have written on the label "food" or "beer" without having a name of their own. These products compete with universal store brands and national brands only in terms of price.

In a market with multiple products and choices, with such fierce price competition, it is difficult to get buyers to become loyal to a brand. That is why the image chosen in advertising, the option for eccentricities, for approaches that surprise, shock or excite are always auspicious for attracting the buyer audience.

2.1. Logo, The Element of Identity

We can say that brand is the automatic, strong and persistent association between a product or service (with all related attributes) offered by a company and a unique concept or experience in the minds of its customers. It is the name that identifies a brand in the long run. In the short term, a brand needs a unique idea or concept to survive (to be the first in a category, to hold a word in the mind of the consumer) while in the long run the unique idea disappears and all that differentiates the brand from those of competitors is the name. The difference is not in products, but in their names and perceptions. So, a logo is a symbol or a set of graphic signs, which constitutes the brand of a product or company. The logo is part of the visual identity of a product or service and contributes to the retention of information by the recipients. The logo is the most important tool of visual identity. It is present in all the materials that make up the visual identity of a product pr service, being the first factor on which the differentiation is made. A visual identity is more than a company name or just a logo. The brand encompasses all these elements and is the way a product, service, idea, state, person or company is seen in the eyes of those with whom it interacts, to whom it addresses. A brand is the perception of customers on different products or services. That's why the main goal of a brand is to generate trust, create positive customer interactions (which would translate into the phrase "satisfied customers") and maintain that trust for longer.

In my paper I used in a generic way the concept logotype to refer to the combination of brand name and graphic symbol. However, logotype refers expressly to the construction of word formations with typography. Isotype refers to the symbolic or iconic part of the brand. Imagotipo is the iconic-textual set that can work separately, and Isologo is the composition where the text and the icon are merged into a single inseparable element, since they could not work properly separately.

A brand is a process that remains imprinted on consumers after an experience or series of experiences with a product or service for a long time. "Brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room," Jeff Bezos said in an interview. The audience chooses emotionally, emotions drive our choices, so the logo and visual identity of a product influence our overall perception.

Visual identity is the transposition of brand strategy into visual elements. Here would enter some important elements: logo, fonts (typeface), graphic motifs, colors, layout, chosen photos. Through all these elements of advertising, a product or service manages to successfully speak to customers. That is, he manages to move them, to excite them, not to remain indifferent in front of them. This is the ultimate goal of advertising, to move, to influence, to get excited, to finally buy your trust with the help of the product or service advertised. It is not an easy target, especially since there is a great deal of products and services to choose from.

Therefore, brand identity is a way to communicate with the world, to differentiate yourself from the competition and to create a brand experience that encourages consumers to work with you. The element of identity with the highest penetration power in the mind of the consumer is the logo, the combination of the brand name and a graphic symbol. This graphic symbol can become a powerful element of identity. So the logo speaks about the visual identity of your company or product, differentiates you from the competition and is the basis of a brand identity, that is, it is the basis of your story made to impress, to excite the receivers. The logo will give consistency to your image and remind the audience of you.

In 2017, the Romanian centenary logo[1] was selected. Journalist Iulia Bunea[2] presents who is the author of the winning visual identity for the events around the Centenary of the Great Union of 1918. The FCB agency created the visual identity that will be used in all events, the winning logo being selected from a number of 13 proposals from three agencies, who worked for free for this project. We can see that in all logo proposals there are the stylized flag of Romania and the three colors: red, yellow and blue.

"With a total of 234.64 points, the winning proposal is that of FCB BUCHAREST, called Hora. It was first in the preferences of both the jury and the public, from which it received 27% of the votes. (…) The logo was built from two circles joined by the symbol of infinity. Circles are composed of individual points that grow and develop. The infinite chain dance (called hora) obtained is a living symbol, suggesting continuity together, resistance and growth". (Bunea, 2017)

1 https://centenarulromaniei.ro/ce-inseamna-centenarul-marii-uniri/logo-oficial-centenarul-marii-uniri-hora/ accessed: 29.08.2017.

2 Iulia Bunea, "A fost selectat logo-ul Centenarului. Cum arătau celelalte variante", Pagina de media, https://www.paginademedia.ro/galerie-foto/foto-a-fost-selectat-logo-ul-centenarului-cum-aratau-celelalte-variante-0/2/ , accessed: 1.04.2023.

Logo proposals for the year of the Centenary in Romania	**Text and comments**
	Text: Romania reunited. *1918-2018* *Together again for the next 100 years* In this case, text is too long and difficult to follow. The colors of the Romanian flag are present to send to the idea of country.
	Text: Romania 100 The three colors of the flag are present too, but the image is difficult to perceive, it seems an Islamic mosque in a predominanly Orthodox country. The image is a confusing one, the audience can not clearly decipher the image
	Text: Romania reunited. Together again for the next 100 years In this case, the text is presented graphically bold, but the first letter, **R**, from Romania is visually unclear. The picture prefers the three colors that appear on the country's flag: red, yellow and blue. Graphics for the

	confusion.
	Text: Romania. 100 years together This image prefers a more sophisticated, slightly romantic type of writing, using the three colors of the Romanian flag. The number 100 appears stylized, overall the image is read with difficulty.
	Text: 100. Romania. Together This variant prefers a different graphic writing for the number 100. In my opinion it is the most successful option, even if it was not chosen in the end. 100 is clear, in the picture there are also representative colors of Romania. The chosen text is short and clear and does not eclipse the overall picture.
	Text: 100. Romania. *1918-2018.* *We celebrate together* This was the wining logo of the competition. The variant relies on styling the number 100, consisting of several colored dots in red, yelow and blue.

	Text: 1918-2018 *100* *Together* The image relies on stylizing the number 100. The presentation of the figures, of different dimensions, brings a disproportionate final image.
	Text: 100. Romania. Together for the centenary The image on a negative background, in an oval border, refers to a simple label pasted on any consumer product.
	Text: Romania. Author centenary The name of the country is clearly visible, but the letter C positioned in the upper right, (C for centenary), creates ambiguity.
	Text: Romania reunited. Together for the next 100 years The photo relies on a mirror image, Romania-reunited. The chosen body of letters is difficult to read.

	Text: 100 *Together* The image shows the number 100. It is very erased, which leads to confusion from potential viewers.
	Text: Romania has been home for 100 years. And from now on The image stylized a house with the three colors of the country's flag, red, yellow and blue. The image is loaded with a too long text
	Text: 1918-2018 *Romania celebrates together* In this version, the years of celebration of the anniversary are very difficult to perceive for viewers. The letters resemble a traditional motif that appears on the Romanian folk costume. We have the three colors of the country's flag. Colors seem an abstract drawing and the exact years cannot be distinguished

In June 2023, British journalist Charlie Ottley proposed a new logo for Romania's country brand. "Romania needs a new tourist logo. [...] It is the last truly wild area in Europe, with the largest mixed forest and two thirds of Europe's top predators. Romania is also a country with a complex history of thousands of years and a diverse cultural heritage, dating back to the Dacians. It is also a realm of abundance. For this reason, we have created a new logo to try to reflect these important aspects ", Charlie Ottley wrote on Instagram, for the nearly 19,000 followers. The British journalist proposes a debate on the new country brand, so that Romania's visual identity is accepted by the authorities and promoted abroad. Charlie Ottley is the director of the documentaries *Wild Carpathia* and *Flavors of Romania*, meant to promote Romania abroad and its love for our country. The British also signed materials to promote Transylvania and Brasov, broadcast on national television and on BBC World. He also launched, in 2021, the documentary *Wild Danube*, made in the Danube Delta.

The British journalist's proposal for the Romanian logo, june 2023

What does the proposed image convey and how representative is it for Romania? The daily newspaper "Libertatea" asked and ads expert, Alex Tocilescu. According to Alex Tocilescu:

"The graphic execution is embarrassing, at the level of a fifth grade child who plays with a free illustration program. The elements have no big connection between them, the wolf is drawn in one way, the mountains in another, the font is also from another movie. And third, a logo must be part of the brand and, in order to reach it, you must first define the brand. This is not done in 10 minutes, when you get bored, but it is the result of a long and difficult process, which is better left to professionals, not of enthusiastic amateurs".(Ungureanu, 2023)

Despite these image-level discrepancies, however, the text is very strong and worth exploiting in the future: Romania - The wild corner of Europe.

Through all the examples discussed I tried to highlight the importance of the logo and the text in defining an identity. They are two important and inseparable components in creating a complex image of a product or service. A successful brand is characterized by the fact that resonates at a deep level with the consumer's subconscious, "creating a commercial myth that sum up historical and popular memory" (Thompson, Tian, 2008: 609). Thus the brand is more than a unique culture, but also relies on other cultural phenomena (history, myths, rituals, works of art, film industry, theatre and television etc.) to convey meanings that strongly resonate with the lifestyle of the consumer (Schroeder, Salzer-Morling, 2006: 45)

Conclusion

Brands, whether in business, art, charity or sports, have become a social and cultural phenomenon with extraordinary power. Developing a brand is the effective way to sell something. The old phrase that says nothing happens until someone sells something is now replaced by the slogan nothing happens until a brand is created. The strength of a brand lies in its ability to influence purchasing behavior. The most successful brands can either ignore the origins of their products and their national characteristics or take advantage of them. They can compress and express simple, complex and subtle emotions. They can make these emotions immediately accessible, overcoming in many cases barriers such as ethnicity, religion and language.

As we have seen, just a logo and a color palette do not create a brand identity. The audience chooses emotionally, emotions drive our choices, so the logo and visual identity of a product influence our overall perception. Visual identity is the transposition of brand strategy into visual elements. Here would enter some important elements: logo, fonts (typeface), graphic motifs, colors, layout, chosen photos. Through all these elements of advertising, a product or service manages to successfully speak to customers. That is, he manages to move them, to excite them, not to remain indifferent in front of them. This is the ultimate goal of advertising, to move, to influence, to get excited, to finally buy your trust with the help of the product or service advertised. It is not an easy target, especially since there is a great deal of products and services to choose from.

The brand involves the irritating and sometimes obsessive repetition of a simple, often extravagant statement that is expressed through a motto or slogan, colors and a distinctive logo. The logo is part of the brand in advertising. Brands have been appropriating the practice of advertising to create change, with the objective to generate more sales and profits.

In my paper I used in a generic way the concept logotype to refer to the combination of brand name and graphic symbol. However, logotype refers expressly to the construction of word formations with typography. Isotype refers to the symbolic or iconic part of the brand. Imagotipo is the iconic-textual set that can work separately, and Isologo is the composition where the text and the icon are merged into a single inseparable element, since they could not work properly separately. It is up to the public to decide which brands will resist and which brands will disappear. As with the development of digital era, the consumer is the one who is becoming more vocal about his preferences, including in terms of brands and logo.

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Reseña: De la sociedad-red a la sociedad-plataforma

Castells (1998) citado por Uriarte y Acevedo (2018) hablaba del concepto "sociedad-red" para explicar cómo internet se había convertido en la base de las formas de relación, de trabajo y de comunicación de las personas. Veintiséis años más tarde, esta obra de Van Dijk, Poell y De Waal, que es una secuela del libro The culture of connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media (Van Diijk, 2013), parte de este concepto, así como de la teoría del actor-red desarrollada por Bruno Latour, Michael Callon y John Law, para introducir el término de la "sociedad plataforma", que define mejor el fenómeno que ha inundado la sociedad actual.

La obra invita a una profunda reflexión sobre el papel de las plataformas digitales en las sociedades occidentales, transformando la economía, la comunicación y los valores públicos esenciales en democracia. Sus autores afirman que estas plataformas han influido notablemente en el conjunto de la sociedad y de las instituciones. En este sentido, realizan un análisis exhaustivo cuyo objetivo es entender el rol de estas plataformas y, para ello, se centran en sectores específicos, tales como el sanitario, el educativo, el transporte y el periodismo.

El libro está estructurado en siete capítulos principales que abordan diferentes aspectos de la sociedad de plataformas. El primero de ellos, con carácter introductorio, explora el concepto de "plataforma" destacando su falta de neutralidad, ya que está formada por datos, que están organizados por algoritmos, que dependen de empresas con modelos de negocio determinados y, a su vez, de los acuerdos pseudolegales con los usuarios, ya que son los que define cómo será la relación entre "usuario" y "plataforma" (Van Dijk et al., 2018, p. 9). En este mismo capítulo también se hace referencia al concepto de "platform ecosystem" para poner de manifiesto el hecho de que la infraestructura de las plataformas está en manos de unas pocas corporaciones, poniendo como ejemplo el ámbito informativo europeo y norteamericano que está controlado por cinco empresas tecnológicas (Alphabet-Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon y Microsoft). El segundo capítulo se centra en los mecanismos mediante los cuales funcionan las plataformas, destacando sobre todo la datificación, mercantilización y la selección. En definitiva, lo que viene a explicar el capítulo es que los datos se han convertido en un recurso preciado y una valiosa fuente de información, y las empresas e instituciones lo saben. Por ello, los datos son recopilados y analizados sistemáticamente para obtener el máximo de información sobre el usuario. De esta forma, es posible mostrarle solamente una selección del contenido y, además, se crea un mercado de datos en el que se venden aspectos como el tiempo que los usuarios consumen ciertos contenidos.

A partir del tercer capítulo, los autores van diseccionando las plataformas de distintos ámbitos, lo que se conoce como "sectoral platforms". En el número 3 se centran en el ecosistema informativo haciendo una reflexión que, muy probablemente, más de un profesional de la comunicación y el periodismo se ha planteado. De entrada ponen de manifiesto el vínculo de la democracia en las sociedades occidentales con el ejercicio periodístico, y esto unido al alcance de la datificación, les lleva a formular cuestiones, tales como el tipo de contenidos noticiosos a los que tiene acceso el usuario o la capacidad de éste para distinguir publicidad e información.

En el capítulo 4 se analiza el sector del transporte poniendo el foco en plataformas como Uber, que han supuesto un revuelo en el sector público, ya que se sitúan fuera y, por lo tanto, operan de forma más rentable y sin contribuir. Esto lleva a los autores a profundizar en temas como los derechos laborales de los trabajadores de este sector.

Los capítulos 5 y 6 se centran en la sanidad y la educación, dos ámbitos especialmente importantes en la sociedad y con un fuerte valor público. En el quinto capítulo, los autores analizan el auge de las apps vinculadas a la salud, desde las fitness apps como Fitbit o Runkeeper a las apps médicas, cuyo propósito es monitorizar síntomas y hacer un autodiagnóstico. El capítulo destaca cómo estas plataformas obtienen una ganancia privada, pero lo "disfrazan" de bien público, ya que afirman que los datos médicos recopilados son de gran ayuda para, por ejemplo, la investigación médica. Y de nuevo, vuelven a tener un papel importante las empresas tecnológicas que mencionaba al principio, ya que la mayoría de estas apps son distribuidas por las app stores de Apple y Google. El capítulo 6 habla de la plataformización de la educación, otro de los sectores tradicionalmente público. El crecimiento de plataformas educativas ha sido tan notable como las médicas; hasta tal punto que está cambiando los procesos de aprendizaje y las prácticas de enseñanza. El capítulo analiza con bastante profundidad el modelo de Coursera y su impacto en la educación superior.

El último capítulo, después del análisis sectorial realizado en los anteriores capítulos, apuesta por construir plataformas más responsables y vinculadas a los valores públicos; es decir, los autores proponen reescribir el conjunto de normas que configuran la sociedad plataforma para que ser más justa y democrática y, para ello, es necesaria la participación de los estados, los gobiernos, las instituciones y la sociedad en su conjunto.

Cabe destacar de esta obra el análisis exhaustivo del fenómeno de la plataformización, con un enfoque muy cercano a la actualidad, gracias al estudio de empresas y modelos de negocio mundialmente conocidos. Se trata de una aproximación crítica sobre la tecnología, pero sin llegar a ser apocalíptica. Además, en todo momento, tiene un tono constructivo, especialmente al final, cuando aboga por una nueva estructuración de las plataformas. En definitiva, la obra de Van Dijk, Poell y De Waal es una lectura necesaria para cualquier persona que forme parte de la sociedad occidental, ya que invita a la reflexión con una mirada realista, y es, además, una digna secuela del libro The culture of connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media (Van Dijk, 2013), que ya mencionaba al inicio de esta reseña.

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