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# **Communication Papers**

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& Gender Studies**

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## EDITORIAL Number 28 Communication Papers Editora Communication Papers

We are pleased to present Volume 14, Issue 28 of Communication Papers, an international, peer-reviewed scientific journal focusing on media, communication, gender, and media literacy. Last year, we published thematic dossiers on digital platforms (June issue) and on artificial intelligence and communication (December issue). This current issue was shaped through an open call for submissions.

In response to this call, we publish five original research articles written in English and Spanish, each contributing to ongoing discussions in the fields of media and communication. Following a rigorous double-blind peer review process, our new issue has five research articles and one book review.

The works featured in this issue reflect the multidisciplinary nature of media and communication studies, addressing topics that range from media production and digital audience behavior to gender representations and the critical dimensions of media literacy. We believe this collection will make a valuable contribution to scholarly discourse in the field, offering both theoretical insights and empirical findings.

The first article in this issue is titled *“The Impact of Travel Posts on Instagram on Users’ Travel Orientations: A Qualitative Study from Turkey,”* authored by Esra Çizmeci Ümit and Eymen Berber. In this study, the researchers conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 21 participants from diverse socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds. Their findings indicate that active Instagram users often follow travel influencers or tour companies, yet they interpret the shared content with the awareness that influencers generate income through such posts. The study concludes that while Instagram travel content is useful in providing detailed information about potential destinations, it can also lead to feelings of dissatisfaction or unhappiness among users—particularly those who are unable to visit these places due to financial or time constraints, or whose real-life experiences fall short of the expectations shaped by online content.

The second study, titled *“Jane Austen in the Digital Age: Transmediality and Cultural Expansion”* by Irene Romero González, explores the enduring relevance and cultural growth of Jane Austen's works in contemporary society through the lens of transmediality. By examining adaptations of Austen's novels across various formats—including film, television, video games, and social media—the study illustrates how these reinterpretations engage new generations with the universal themes and values embedded in her work. It emphasizes the role of digital technologies and social media in fostering fan communities and enabling the continuous reimagining of Austen's legacy. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that Austen's works not only maintain their presence in the literary realm but also evolve to resonate with modern audiences, transforming into a cross-generational cultural phenomenon.

The third study, titled *“Examining the Effect of Digital Advertisements on Brand Awareness with the CBBE Model,”* is authored by Aybike Serttaş and Sevda Kocaman. This research investigates how digital advertising models used in the e-commerce sector are perceived and remembered by consumers, and how they influence brand awareness, using in-depth interview techniques. The data collected from face-to-face interviews with 15 consumers residing in Istanbul were analyzed within the framework of Keller's CBBE (Customer-Based Brand Equity) model—particularly focusing on the concepts of brand distinctiveness and brand image. The study concludes that digital advertising strategies contribute not only to short-term brand awareness but also positively influence consumer behavior, strengthen brand loyalty, and serve as essential components of long-term branding strategies.

The fourth article, titled *“Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles: An Instance from Romanian Cultural Journalism”* by Carmen Neamțu, functions as both a theoretical and practical guide for journalists seeking to engage with more sophisticated forms of cultural journalism. The study examines the structure and defining features of reviews, critiques, and literary chronicles, offering practical insights for professionals aiming to navigate these complex genres. By addressing both theoretical frameworks and real-world applications, the article supports journalists in interpreting intricate cultural texts while also reflecting broader trends within the field. The findings offer valuable perspectives on Romanian cultural journalism and may serve as a point of comparison for other media landscapes encountering similar challenges.

The fifth study, titled *“The Importance of Equality Plans and Practices in Higher Education Institutions: Analysis of Equality Plans of Spanish Universities”* by Esra Bayhan-topçu, examines the role of equality practices within universities. The research focuses on the Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) of Spain's top three universities in this field, aiming to outline a comprehensive framework for promoting a culture of equality in higher education. The study aspires to serve as a practical guide for institutions seeking to implement or improve their own equality plans.

This issue's book review section features an evaluative article by Leticia Tobalina-Pulido. The review explores Javier Gil Quintana's book *“Education and Communication in a Postdigital Society: Documentary Research and Analysis of Perspectives,”* which examines the intersection of education and communication in a postdigital context from both theoretical and methodological perspectives. The book is positioned as a valuable resource for researchers aiming to better understand the complexities of today's postdigital communication environment.

We hope this issue will serve as a meaningful resource for scholars and practitioners working in the fields of media and communication. We also look forward to welcoming our valued readers and contributors in our upcoming December issue, which will feature a curated selection of research presented at the *5th MASS International Media and Society Symposium*—organized by the *Faculty of Communication at İstinye University* in collaboration with the *Faculty of Tourism at the University of Girona*—and will, of course, be published following the peer review process.

Finally, we are pleased to share that Communication Papers is currently undergoing evaluation for inclusion in the *Web of Science (WoS)* database, an important milestone in the journal's continued academic recognition and growth.

Best wishes,  
**MARIA DEL CARMEN ECHAZARRETA SOLER**



**Communication Papers**

Media Literacy & Gender Studies

## **The Impact Of Travel Posts On Instagram On Users' Travel Orientations: A Qualitative Study From Türkiye**

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# The Impact Of Travel Posts On Instagram On Users' Travel Orientations: A Qualitative Study From Türkiye

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## Abstract

Today, social media platforms have become an important area of an influence that shapes individuals' lifestyles in many ways. Instagram, in particular, stands out as a medium where travel and trip content, as well as many different contents related to daily life, have become widespread. Travel enthusiasts, influencers and brands use Instagram effectively to share posts about places to visit hotels, restaurants, and activities. This content can be a powerful tool that affects users' travel preferences. With the visual appeal and discovery opportunities offered by Instagram, this content can guide individuals not only in choosing where to travel, but also in what they will do and what kind of experience they will have in these places. In this context, 21 participants who are different from each other in terms of socio-economic and demographic aspects were interviewed in this study using a semi-structured in-depth interview method. When the findings obtained from the interviews were evaluated, it was determined that active Instagram users follow a travel influencer or a tour company, but they take into account the fact that influencers earn income from these contents regarding the content shared. It was revealed that Instagram travel posts were useful for Instagram users in terms of providing detailed information about places to visit, but these posts caused unhappiness in users who could not realize the trips they saw on Instagram due to the fact that the destinations they saw on Instagram did not meet their expectations or due to some material and spiritual impossibilities such as income status and time constraints.

**Keywords:** Instagram; travel; tourism; influencer; Türkiye

## Introduction

Consumption is defined as "using products, services or mass media content in order to satisfy desires and real or imagined needs" at the Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication (Chandler & Munday, 2011). With globalization, everything has become accessible and consumable for everyone in the world, and with the wind it has received from the development of social media, many forms of consumption have been seen, and consumption habits have been redesigned.

Consumption has come to meet emotional needs rather than meeting compulsory needs. In this way, a transition has been made to a sociological indicator system (level specific to consumption) instead of a bio-functional and bio-economic system of goods and products (biological level of need and survival) (Baudrillard, 2023, p. 92). The consumption style that social media encourages users through brands and famous names enables the person to engage in consumption activity without allowing them the opportunity to think about whether they need the product or not. The commodity has not only given way to exchange value instead of usage

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<sup>1</sup>

This paper was presented at "The 7th International New Media Conference by Istanbul Gelişim University, October 10-11, 2024." This version of the paper is a developed version of this presentation.



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value; it has also acquired a second meaning, 'sign value'. Thus, desires fueled by images have taken on an aesthetic form through mass media (Esmer, 2012). People in a consumer society go to bed and wake up with the fear of "missing" pleasure, no matter what kind it is. It is never known whether this or that contact, this or that experience (Christmas in the Canary Islands, eel in whiskey, Prado, LSD, Japanese love) will give a person a "sense" (Baudrillard, 2023, p. 94).

The touristic place images and nature photographs shared on Instagram, often use effects to make them more impressive, make the person feel the need to be there, to visit the same place themselves, and to show that they have experienced this experience by taking and posting the same frame. When social media users make travel plans, they determine the historical places or natural areas they want to see not according to their choices and desires, but according to the places and routes they see in the travel posts they are most exposed to on social media. The person may fall into the illusion that they will experience the same experience they see in the virtual environment in the same way and get the same pleasure, forgetting that the person experiencing it may convey their personal experiences with a sponsor or use the advantages of being a well-known figure.

There are many studies in the literature on the impact of Instagram travel influencers on the travel preferences of followers. When we look at the studies conducted since 2019, when intensive research on Instagram travel influencers began, it is seen that Bilquees and Tholath (2019) conducted interviews with 150 participants in India and found that Instagram travel influencers have a great impact on their followers. In the same year, Barbe, Neuburger, and Pennington-Gray (2019) investigated users' motivations for following travel accounts on Instagram. In later years, Anuar et al. (2021) conducted a study to measure young tourists' trust in Instagram travel influencers and their tendency to travel to promoted routes through a survey method. In the same year, Ünal and İlar (2021) conducted a study to determine social media use and the level of influence of social media on destination preferences of domestic tourists visiting the Kırklareli province Vize destination. Afterwards, Charalambides (2022) investigated the impact of Instagram influencers on the travel preferences of young people in their 20s. Chen et al. (2023) investigated how social media influencers influence the travel behaviors of followers and which elements make them trust them through a survey method. Batın and Kozak (2023) analyzed of the comments on the content of a selected Instagram travel influencer account and found that the influencers were trustworthy. Onan (2024) examined the account of a specific Instagram travel influencer and examined the impact of the posts on this account on the lifestyles of the followers through content analysis. Băltescu and Untaru (2024) examined how Generation Z in Romania is influenced by social media influencers in their travel preferences.

As can be seen, most of the similar studies in the literature have been conducted either through an account content/comments review, or only on young people, or through a survey method. Differently, in this study, 21 adult participants with different socio-economic and demographic characteristics (gender, age, marital

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status, education level, profession) were interviewed through a semi-structured in-depth interview method from qualitative research methods, and the research was conducted from the perspective of consumption culture. In this context, the phenomenon of travel consumption was investigated in the context of Instagram and consumption relationship with the leading role of influencers today, and not only the positive but also the negative results of the subject in terms of followers/consumers were revealed.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Needs, Consumption and Society**

Consumption is defined in the Turkish Language Association dictionary as the use and consumption of things produced or made; the opposite of production. Consumption is not a purely mechanical process, therefore, it is not possible to examine it separately from cultural values, symbols and images (Dal, 2017).

Consumption began to change its shape with industrialization and continues to exist effectively as a subject in which social sciences intensively produce content, contribute to the literature and each discourse has a fair share in its own field and is mostly addressed from a critical perspective. The state of the 21st century, which accelerates globalization with social networks and transforms society, has also redesigned consumption. Although consumption seems to be an activity based on individual preferences, it needs to be evaluated socially, culturally and psychologically within a social structure.

The pyramid of needs shaped by Abraham Maslow, the first name that comes to mind when it comes to needs, results in the need for self-actualization of the needs that are met sequentially (Şeker, 2014). The most important of today's needs and the need for self-actualization that the 21st century man pursues is a need that human beings consider as necessary and important as bread and water. The desire for self-actualization, which is pursued as a magical goal, emerges today as a phenomenon that is shaped and directed by social interaction, rather than an individual existence and positioning. The individuals who choose consumption as a way of self-realization and self-expression attributes meaning and value to everything, they consume, from the goods they consume to even thoughts, while making their existence meaningful and positioning themselves in a certain place. In order for an individual to differentiate himself from other individuals, the style of clothing he uses must be understood and interpreted by other individuals, thus, an individual can differentiate himself only to the extent that he can share some common cultural symbols with others (Bocock, 2009). Today, the goods that consumers buy to define themselves serve the purpose of consumption by creating various images (Dal, 2017). For example, the bag, which offers a practical solution such as easily carrying items by putting them in it, has become a commodity that needs to be seen and obtained, waited for in line, owned by paying a large amount, and therefore, has the purpose of feeling special and showing oneself to be special, rather than serving the purpose of carrying one's belongings. The blessings of daily practical consumption are experienced as a miracle, not as a result of labor or a production process (Baudrillard, 2023, p.24). A bag that provides the need to express



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and position oneself and fulfill one's needs, also meets a need by helping one carry one's belongings.

Media has undertaken an important role in shaping the consumption habits of individuals and societies, both as the producer and carrier of the consumer culture. Media plays a central role in shaping the consumer culture, directing the consumption tendencies of individuals and creating consumption desires. In addition to the important channels of traditional media such as television, cinema, newspapers, radio, individuals are constantly introduced to products and services through the Internet and social media platforms. Due to the limited space of the study, the relationship between consumption and traditional media will not be discussed at this point, but the way consumption takes place in social media will be explained.

### **The Post-Modern Appearance Area of Consumer Society: Social Media**

Web 1.0 is a term that was used between 1989-2005, the early stages of the Internet, and can exist with a standard text markup language (HTML) used to create web pages (Güleç, 2016). In the Web 1.0 period, there were websites where users obtained information and since users did not have the opportunity to contribute or provide feedback, it continued to exist as a limited and passive communication area where there was no interaction. In the Web 2.0 Internet version, users started actively participating in the content.

The concept of Web 2.0, one of the concepts that social media is often confused with, was put forward by Tim O'Reilly in 2004. The numbers "2" and "0" in this concept are used to distinguish new versions of computer software from each other (Eşitti and Işık, 2015). Social media is defined at the Oxford Dictionary of Media and Communication as "A broad category or genre of communications media which occasion or enable social interaction among groups of people, whether they are known to each other or strangers, localized in the same place or geographically dispersed" (Chandler & Munday, 2011). Social media is a place where we exist with our names or anonymously created social identities and can socialize at any time without any distinction of time or place, and even increases the variety of what we can do with developing artificial intelligence, providing users with an endless area.

In recent years, social media has become one of the most dynamic areas of consumer culture. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube and TikTok offer a medium where users are both consumers and producers. Influencers, in particular, directly affect consumption preferences by introducing products and services to their followers (Chen et al., 2024). This process leads to the creation of an idealized consumption world, far from reality, in the lives displayed on social media, and the shaping of consumption behaviors due to individuals' desire to access this world. As part of the digitalization, social media platforms have become one of the indispensable elements of individuals' daily lives. Instagram, in particular, plays a strong role in shaping consumption habits by distinguishing itself from other platforms with its visual structure.

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### **Instagram and Consumption: The Influencer Effect**

Instagram is a photo sharing and editing application that allows free applications of filters and voice-overs on photos (Doğan, et al., 2018). Instagram, one of the most popular platforms of social media, was founded by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010 as a free photo sharing application. This application, initially developed for the Apple iOS operating system, was later made available for the Android operating system and reached many users in a short time (Kıran, et al., 2019). Instagram, which hosts countless content and users according to interests and visual tastes with its photo, video and story sharing feature that disappears within twenty-four hours, has over 58.5 million subscribers in Türkiye (Kumar, 2025).

Since its launch in 2010, Instagram has rapidly gained popularity as a visual platform that encourages users to share photos and videos. Instagram, where aesthetically appealing content is at the forefront, encourages individuals to define themselves and their lifestyles through a specific consumption practice. This process enables individuals to create a consumption identity through social media and reinforce this identity through social approval.

Instagram functions as a visual presentation area of consumption culture. On this platform, users create a kind of "consumption showcase" by sharing their products, travel experiences, food and drink habits and personal style preferences. These posts create a wide consumption network by being liked, commented on and reposted by followers.

A detailed examination of the Türkiye section of the Digital 2024 Global Overview report prepared by Instagram, and We are Social and Meltwater were published in January 2024 are useful in understanding the impact and importance of Instagram in Türkiye. According to the report, Instagram is the most used social media platform in Türkiye with a 91.8% rate, even before WhatsApp. Instagram increases the interest of brands in this platform. They want to use this great market power correctly and effectively by working with professionals who prepare content specifically for Instagram ([www.datareportal.com](http://www.datareportal.com)). Marketing activities carried out via social media are in greater demand than traditional marketing due to the time, money savings and fast feedback provided to businesses (Mert, 2018). This large market, which has the opportunity to reach 66% of the country's population, naturally offers a competitive

environment where all types of advertising can be applied in order for brands and marketers to openly or secretly place products and promote products within the natural flow of Instagram. This competitive environment has given rise to Influencers, an alternative to people who have become famous in traditional media by revealing their famous faces. Influencers, who have entered our lives with Instagram, have become people to be followed by social media users with the photos, videos and information they share. These people also stand out with their ability to direct communities after a certain recognition process on social networks (Mert, 2018).

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Influencer, which Instagram has included in our lives and has been accepted as a profession today, has taken advertising to a new dimension. This marketing technique, which has taken its place in our lives and acts as a bridge between consumers and brands, is called Influencer Marketing. Influencer Marketing is defined as a marketing technique in which a brand's product or service is spread by word of mouth on social media platforms (Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Blog, etc.) via the Internet and awareness is increased (Canöz, et al., 2020). Influencer Marketing, which causes traditional advertisements and campaigns to be inadequate, has difficulty reaching the target audience, and advertising budgets to increase, offers the opportunity to achieve more returns with much less than the budget of a thirty-second commercial film in traditional media.

In the Influencer world, where a new social media celebrity is added every day, standing out and being reliable has become a big issue. Influencers are divided into various fields within themselves according to their interests or their adaptation of the professions they did before becoming Influencers to social media. The number of Influencers who love to travel or who start traveling after reaching certain financial means and because they have to produce innovations due to their job, who travel to attend various invitations and events and turn this into content, is increasing day by day. Influencers sometimes travel with their collaborations and sometimes travel by covering their own expenses.

One of the most obvious impacts of Instagram on consumption is realized through the Influencer culture. Influencers, as individuals with a large follower base, collaborate with brands to promote various products and services. Since these collaborations are usually presented organically and naturally, followers tend to trust these recommendations. Influencers have a high power to influence the consumption decisions of their followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020; Lin et al., 2021). Especially in sectors such as fashion, beauty, technology and travel, the products recommended by Influencers become a consumption guide for followers.

### **I Came, I Saw, I Shared: Travel Posts on Instagram**

Instagram, with its visually-focused structure, has become a platform where travel experiences are showcased and popularized. Travel Influencers have emerged as figures who reach millions of users, introduce travel destinations, make hotel and restaurant recommendations, and even directly affect travelers' consumption habits. There was a 60% increase in airfare expenses compared to the previous year, while car rental services increased by up to 40% ([www.datareportal.com](http://www.datareportal.com)).

Travel Influencers are individuals who reach a wide audience through social media and share their travel experiences. These Influencers inspire their followers by visually presenting the destinations they visit, the hotels they stay in, the meals they eat, and the activities they experience. Since Influencers usually establish a personal bond with their followers, it is noteworthy that their recommendations are considered reliable and that they have the power to directly affect the travel preferences of their followers (Abidin, 2016). Travel Influencers directly affect the decision-making phase of consumers' travel planning process. Studies show that a

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significant portion of travelers shape their travel plans through social media and act according to the recommendations of Influencers (Huh, 2020).

Instagram is one of the platforms that best demonstrates the impact of Travel Influencers. In this medium, the attractive presentation of destinations and touristic products attracts the attention of followers and directs them to certain destinations.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Purpose and Significance of the Research**

Instagram, the most used social media platform in Türkiye with 58.5 million users according to the 2024 statistics (Kumar, 2025), occupies an important place in people's lives with the market and activity it creates. Instagram creates its language, celebrity and culture, thus can influence and manipulate the masses. Instagram, where every experience and activity is displayed, from a cup of coffee drunk in daily life to a meeting with friends, from a daily routine narrative to a traveled country, is the subject of numerous articles and theses in the field of social sciences. Instagram usage, which is considered from many different points, and its effect on users, has been addressed within a more specific region or line in terms of its effect on tourism consumption, or has been evaluated only on young people.

This study is among many studies conducted in Türkiye on how Instagram affects tourism activities among adults with different educational and social levels, through a qualitative research.

#### **Data Collection Technique**

In this study, questions prepared in accordance with the purpose of the research were asked to the participants using the semi-structured interview technique, which is one of the qualitative data collection techniques. Interviewing is a very powerful method used to reveal people's perspectives, subjective experiences, feelings, values and perceptions (Karataş, 2017). Semi-structured interview is a method that provides a balance between structured and free interviews. The researcher prepares questions on a specific topic in advance but can add new questions or focus more on certain topics according to the answers given by the participant(s) during the interview (Bryman, 2012). This flexibility helps the researcher obtain deeper and richer data.

One of the biggest advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they provide flexibility to the researcher. The interviewer uses the questions prepared in advance as a guide but can direct the interview according to the answers given by the participant. This flexibility allows the researcher to uncover unexpected but important information (Galletta, 2013). In addition, semi-structured interviews offer the researcher the opportunity to understand the participants' perceptions and experiences on the subject from a broader perspective. Participants can not only answer predetermined questions, but also touch on new topics as the interview progresses. This method allows the researcher to test hypotheses and questions more flexibly and to reach participants' original perspectives (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Moreover, by paying attention not only to what participants say but also to how they

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say it, the researcher can better analyze participants' thoughts and feelings (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The information that emerges spontaneously during the interview allows for in-depth analysis of the research. This provides a more detailed and rich data set compared to structured interviews. Another advantage of the semi-structured interview is that the researcher can immediately clarify the participant's answers. In cases where the participant does not understand a question or the researcher does not clearly understand an answer, the researcher can immediately ask new questions to eliminate misunderstandings (Flick, 2018). This feature increases the quality of the data and strengthens the validity of the research results. Finally, the semi-structured interview method helps to establish a more personal and trusting relationship between the researcher and the participant. This encourages the participants to give more open and sincere answers (Seidman, 2019). In this way, the participants can share more sincere and in-depth information during the research process. For all these reasons, the in-depth semi-structured interview technique was chosen in this study.

### Data Collection and Analysis Process

In this study, a semi-structured interview form prepared in light of the data on the subject in the literature and observations made in social media environments was used. In order to ensure the validity of the prepared form, the questions were presented to expert academicians who have studies in this field and the interview form was finalized in line with the feedback received from them. Before the interview form was applied to the participants, three people who were not included in the research were asked to confirm that the questions were clear and understandable.

The interview data were evaluated by descriptive analysis by quoting the prominent and remarkable answers of the participants. The descriptive analysis aims to bring the data collected as a result of the interview and observation together with the reader in an organized and interpreted way (Baltacı, 2019).

**Table 1:** Semi-Structured Interview Questions

No	Questions
1	How long have you been using Instagram?
2	How much time do you spend on Instagram daily?
3	What kind of content interests you most on Instagram?
4	Are there any travel influencers or tour companies you follow on Instagram?
5	Does a route/trip/country post you see on Instagram interest you? What attracts you the most, and why?
6	Have you been to a place because you were inspired by a travel post you saw on Instagram? If so, where? How did it make you feel to go?
7	Did a destination you saw on Instagram and visited meet your expectations? What were the reasons why it met or did not meet your expectations?
8	Do you use Instagram when preparing a travel plan/route? In what ways do you use it?
9	Do you think that the travel content you see on Instagram provides useful information? In what way do you find the shared information useful?
10	Does the travel content you see on Instagram answer your questions? For example, what kind of content answered your questions last time?
11	Who are you more interested in when you see travel posts on an Influencer or someone close to you? What is the reason for this?
12	How does it feel to see the posts of people travelling on Instagram?



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The research data was collected in June 2024 from people who had been using Instagram for at least one year and who agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. The interviews lasted an average of 20 minutes. The questions asked in the semi-structured interview are shown in Table 1.

### Research Sample

21 volunteers were interviewed to collect data in the research. Table 2 includes demographic information about the interviewees.

Table 2: Participant Information

Participant	Gender	Age	Status	Education	Profession
P1	Female	24	Single	Undergraduate	Psychologist
P2	Female	31	Married	Undergraduate	Doctor
P3	Male	34	Married	Undergraduate	Officer
P4	Female	35	Married	Undergraduate	Teacher
P5	Male	31	Single	Postgraduate	Engineer
P6	Female	27	Single	Undergraduate	Farmer
P7	Female	31	Married	Undergraduate	Translator
P8	Male	49	Married	Undergraduate	Teacher
P9	Female	34	Married	Undergraduate	Housewife
P10	Female	24	Single	Undergraduate	Unemployed
P11	Male	26	Single	Undergraduate	Tradesman
P12	Female	27	Married	Undergraduate	Cook
P13	Male	31	Single	Undergraduate	Advertiser
P14	Female	26	Single	Undergraduate	Dietician
P15	Male	34	Married	Undergraduate	Engineer
P16	Female	30	Single	Postgraduate	Student
P17	Female	35	Married	High School	Housewife
P18	Male	32	Single	Postgraduate	Lawyer
P19	Female	26	Single	Undergraduate	Student
P20	Male	31	Married	Undergraduate	Officer
P21	Female	30	Married	High School	Housewife

The interviewees consisted of 3 housewives, 2 students, 2 officers, 2 teachers, 2 engineers, 1 lawyer, 1 advertiser, 1 unemployed, 1 translator, 1 doctor, 1 farmer, 1 dietician, 1 tradesman, 1 cook, 1 psychologist. Of the 21 interviewees, 8 were male and 13 were female, and their ages ranged from 24 to 49. When the education levels of the interviewees were examined, 2 had high school degrees, 17 had undergraduate degrees, and 3 had postgraduate degrees. Of the 21 interviewees, 10 were single and 11 were married.



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## FINDINGS

### Instagram Usage Dynamics

- **Long-term usage**

The first three questions asked to understand the participants' Instagram usage practices indicate that they have had an Instagram account for many years, which means that Instagram usage has become established in society and that they are familiar with Instagram content and language. It was determined that the participants have been Instagram users for an average of five years or more. 3 of them stated that they have had an Instagram account for two years, 2 for four years, 4 for six years, 6 for five years, 5 for eight years and 1 for ten years.

- **Daily usage routine**

The fact that the majority of participants spend two hours or more on Instagram indicates that a daily Instagram usage routine has been formed, thus enabling participants to be aware of trends on the platform and that they are up to date. When the average usage time is examined, 7 of the participants stated that they spend one hour a day, 8 for two hours, 6 for three hours, 2 for four hours, 1 for five hours and 1 for an uncountable amount of time on Instagram.

- **Content preferences**

When the answers given by the participants are examined, it is concluded that the most demanded content on Instagram is recipes and tastings, daily practical information, and content that will contribute to personal development. This result shows that nutrition, which is one of the daily physiological needs, is important for users, attracts attention, and that they like to learn from the preparation of food to its tasting and watch every content about food.

It was determined that the content that attracted participants the most on Instagram was mostly food (recipe, place, etc.) content, and there was a variety of content from education to news, from parenting to magazines:

*"Content on topics related to parenting, personal development videos, recipes, news" (P2).*

*"I like to watch funny content, videos of animals and babies and content about food, whether it is making or tasting" (P6).*

*"Educational content, beautiful photos, pet content interest me. There is also content that I can use in every aspect of life" (P19).*

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### **Popular/Desired Routes with Instagram**

- **Following travel influencers**

7 of the participants stated that they do not follow any Travel Influencers or tour companies. The striking answers from the participants who stated that they follow Travel Influencers, travel pages and travel tour companies were selected as examples:

*"I do not follow many Travel Influencers. I only follow the Şeyma Yolda account" (P1).*

*"I follow the Istanbul Kazan Ben Kepçe, Çocukla Geziyorum, Istanbul Event accounts" (P2).*

*"I do not follow influencers; I only follow tour companies" (P9).*

*"Antiksehirler, mugladahayat, Abbieherpert" (P12).*

*"I follow Uğur Kola, Oğuzhan Tıraş, Yolumuz Bir" (P13).*

- **Interest in travel content**

Five of the participants responded that route/trip/country posts on Instagram did not interest them. The remaining 16 participants stated that they did, and the answers of some participants were selected as an example:

*"Sometimes I come across different, unvisited, beautiful places that I say 'wow, I didn't know that there was such a place'" (P9).*

*"Every place that is popular/unpopular and that I like attracts my attention" (P15).*

*"Posts about a country's historical places, food culture and people's lifestyle attract my attention..." (P19).*

- **Visiting places seen on Instagram**

While 10 of the participants answered that they did not see a place on Instagram that they were impressed by and travelled to, the other 10 participants stated that they saw places on Instagram and travelled to, and 1 participant answered that there were places they saw on Instagram and wanted to travel to:

*"I see and like many countries on Instagram in travel content, such as Switzerland, the Balkan countries, Kazakhstan. They are among the places I want to go to, but I haven't had the chance to go yet" (P1).*

*"I saw it on Instagram and went to Eskişehir. The river is very beautiful, I felt like I went to a different country" (P3).*

*"I went to Üsküdar Bican Efendi Street and Kuzguncuk" (P4).*

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*"I went to places in Istanbul. I went to enjoyable places, neighborhoods and restaurants that take a short time to travel. It made me feel happy" (P12).*

*"I went to the Black Sea, I liked it very much" (P14).*

*"I went to Mardin Midyat. Feeling the texture of different cultures, seeing traces of the past made me happy and satisfied my curiosity" (P19).*

According to the participants' comments, it can be seen that the majority of them follow accounts that produce travel content and like this content. This shows that Instagram users are interested in travel content and like to consume this content. The touristic places and venues offered by travel content producers please the users, and the fact that they make them realize an undiscovered or marginal point of the place they know/live in meets the expectations of the users. Watching someone who discovers places for themselves and gains various experiences from where they are sitting allows the users to enjoy seeing and following, to benefit from someone else's experience, to gain ideas and to be informed.

### **Trusted Person Effect on Instagram Travel Routes**

#### **• Trusting relatives over influencers**

A group that can be more effective and much more trustworthy than Influencers is their friends, relatives and close circle. The interviews revealed that most/two-thirds of the participants trust the experiences and recommendations of their relatives more.

In this context, 14 of the participants stated that they find their relatives' travel posts more realistic and that they cannot trust Influencers' posts about the places they have visited because they earn money from this job:

*"The information I get from my relatives interests me more. I definitely do not trust Influencers" (P4).*

*"Because people I know seem more sincere and I believe they give accurate information" (P5).*

*"Since Influencers go for free, they do not give me confidence in terms of transparency and accuracy" (P7).*

#### **• Trusting influencers for professionalism**

On the other hand, 7 of the participants stated that they find the posts made by Influencers on this subject more professional because they earn money from this work, and therefore Influencer posts about travels attract their attention more:

*"It feels more natural when there is an Influencer. They express more clearly whether the place they visited is beautiful or not, whether it met their expectations" (P12).*

*"Influencers interest me more because they show and explain in detail" (P21).*

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### Benefits of Instagram Travel Content

- **Pre-trip preparation**

When the answers given by the participants are evaluated, the benefits that travel content offers to users can be listed as preparing the person for what they will encounter when they go on a trip before they go, allowing them to prioritize how many places to see while traveling, and suggesting preferable local dishes and products.

For example, it has been determined that thanks to Instagram travel content, it is possible to avoid paying more for a product than it is worth, not to suffer losses when exchanging currency, to be informed about Internet use during international travels, to be able to pinpoint what to take with you even when packing your suitcase, or to recommend central or comfortable places for accommodation, making Instagram travel posts useful for participants.

Most of the participants stated that they found the travel content on Instagram useful and used the information in this content during their travels:

*"I try to benefit from every aspect such as transportation process, accommodation, etc." (P1).*

*"I benefit from it, it is useful for making plans before going, to observe" (P13).*

- **Possible future vacations**

*"It satisfies my curiosity. The comments of people who have visited before, their likes or dislikes are included under the posts made, and since they even provide information about the location, they answer the questions asked" (P19).*

*"I was wondering what it was like abroad, thanks to the content I had the chance to see what I was curious about" (P14).*

- **Reducing travel risks**

Instagram travel posts are found useful for some participants because they minimize the risks they could encounter during their travel to an unknown location:

*"Yes, it can be useful. Benefiting from someone's previous experiences can minimize the risks during the travel process. Of course, it is important to have information about transportation, accommodation, food, and places to visit" (P1).*

*"Yes. It offers options for hotels to stay in, places to visit" (P10).*

*"Yes, we learn about places we never knew about, maybe we learn about places right next to us" (P3).*

*"I search the place I will go on Instagram, so that I have some preliminary information from the photos or videos before I go there" (P19).*

### **Disappointments Created by Instagram Travel Content**

- **Unmet expectations**

As an Instagram user, a life where the background is unknown and only what is shown on Instagram is known can make people feel incomplete in every field and cause unhappiness. A person who goes to a destination shown on Instagram can experience that what is shown and what is seen are far apart. Travel routes that are shown as if there is a lot to see sometimes turn out to be only two or three interesting streets, less than expected and the thought that the planned trip was wasted can make the travel experience unpleasant and cause disappointment and dissatisfaction in the person:

*"Every destination is generally exaggerated on Instagram. When we go there, often it doesn't meet our expectations" (P2).*

*"Sapanca was below my expectations, there was no good service, contrary to what I saw on Instagram" (P21).*

- **Economic and emotional impact**

Another reason for disappointment is the sadness and questioning caused by seeing people who are always traveling on Instagram but are always working or spending time at home. Seeing people traveling and vacationing at every opportunity in return for the limited time a person has to spend in their commuting life and the income they can only make at the end of the month can create the feeling that only they are working or that they do not have enough resources to make these trips. In this context, some of the participants' answers are as follows:

*"If I do not have the time and opportunity to travel myself due to reasons such as school, work, etc., then I can sometimes be negatively affected emotionally" (P1).*

*"Recently, I have come across a lot of content that starts like this, 'That secret place in Istanbul that very few people know about...' I have been living in Istanbul for 13 years and I say how come I don't know this place or how come these people travel so much, am I the only one sitting at home?" (P3).*

*"This kind of content makes me feel the economic gap even more" (P7).*

*"I see the posts of the people I follow, and I get sad because I can't go somewhere myself" (P16).*

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### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

With the globalizing world and developing technology, every individual living in the capitalist order has become both a customer, an influencer and a seller. While our smartphones that we never let go of are the greatest witnesses of every moment of our daily lives, our social media accounts have become a part of our identity. In our world where physical gatherings to socialize and communicate are increasingly unnecessary, consuming and finding viewers from all over the world for our consumption shapes our real personality and honors our persona.

In all periods of time and in every period of history, humans have developed and progressed through interaction. From a student who sets off to learn what he does not know to a king who wants to expand his land, from a merchant who wants to develop his commercial activities to an explorer who seeks to find the unknown, every person has left their mark wherever they step and influenced thousands, perhaps millions. Today, it is enough to pick up your phone and lean back to impress millions. With social media, everything from a pair of trousers purchased to a cup of coffee and a hotel stay has become a commodity in demand. Being an Influencer and a guide is a popular and profitable job that every young person dreams of today. Instagram, the social media platform with the most members in Türkiye, shapes our daily lives and our imagination. The content and ads we are exposed to on Instagram reorganize our list of needs. Instagram, which fuels the desire to see more, know more, and have more, sometimes causes positive and sometimes negative effects. Instagram offers various positive benefits such as motivating people to take up a new hobby, do sports, and create a desire to enroll in a new education, and it opens up new horizons, while also making them rush to adapt to rapidly changing trends. While Instagram meets people's desires to learn, have fun, and discover, it creates individuals who know a little bit of everything, see a little bit of everything, consume a lot, have a low attention span, and have high credit card statements.

One of the areas where Instagram affects people is travel posting. In this context, in this study, in order to understand the effect of Instagram, the social media address most preferred for sharing visual content and directed towards consumption in terms of real and artificial needs of the capitalist society, on people's travel activities, certain findings were reached and various results were obtained as a result of interviews conducted with volunteers of various social statuses and ages who are Instagram users.

According to the data obtained in the study, it was determined that all of the participants are active Instagram users and that they use Instagram to follow content related to food the most, as well as many contents related to daily life, from news to magazines. It is possible to read the fact that the most loved and popular content type on Instagram is about food; the rapidly increasing number of restaurants and cafes today, the increase in professional culinary skills acquisition courses and the visibility of chefs, the increase in the demand for ready-made food and the rise of the food ordering trend.



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In the current research, it was determined that most of the participants follow at least one Influencer or tour company account regarding travel content and that travel content attracts their attention. Half of the participants stated that they traveled and experienced routes, mostly domestic locations, after being influenced by travel content on Instagram. Similarly, there are many studies (İsmarışal & Kusumah, 2023; Tešin et al., 2022; Mchavu et al., 2022) in the literature which found that Instagram is an important source of information and inspiration in the destination selection process.

In the following questions of the research, it was observed that although some participants' travel posts from Influencers may be interesting, participants found the travel posts of their close friends and acquaintances more realistic. These participants are aware that Influencers produce content for the purpose of making money within a kind of advertising industry and therefore may produce biased content. This finding shows that "trust" in the Influencer is of great importance when it comes to followers' acceptance of travel routes advertised by travel Influencers and their intention to travel. Similarly, Anuar et al. (2021) found that the attributes of the posts shared by the Instagram Influencers and the followers' trusts towards the influencers influence the followers' intention to visit the places featured by the influencers. Also, Chen et al. (2022) found that highly attractive social media Influencers and similarity with followers can lead to parasocial interactions. When consumers trust and feel parasocial interaction with social media Influencers, they are more likely to consider traveling. Moreover, Yılmazdoğan et al. (2021) found that the trustworthiness and expertise sub-dimensions of source credibility significantly impacted travel intention and played a significant mediating role between the trustworthiness and expertise sub-dimensions of parasocial interaction and travel intention. Relatedly, some participants in the current study stated that they would prefer Influencers' travel posts to those of their relatives, because Influencers create more professional and detailed content as they do this as a job.

The positive aspect of travel details posted on Instagram, whether by Influencers or relatives, is that they guide in terms of showing what to do and how to do it when going to that route. Before the trip, knowing the important points of the destination, places to eat well, and clean and suitable accommodation opportunities can make the trip more comfortable. When you look under a travel photo/video posted on Instagram, it is possible to find comments from many users who have been there before. Comments where everyone writes their own experiences and recommendations can provide a great advantage for the person planning the trip and reduce the possibility of negative experiences such as theft and fraud that may be encountered when going there, while providing the opportunity to use time more efficiently. According to the participants, the travel content produced on Instagram informs people in detail before traveling to that route and actually offers a kind of ready-made planning for users on important issues such as places worth seeing, places to eat or shop. In this sense, travel posts on Instagram are useful in terms of both facilitating people's travel planning and providing solutions in advance for the difficulties they may encounter during their travel to that destination.

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The negative and disappointing aspects of Instagram travel routes for the participants are that the travel posts watched do not meet the dreams and expectations, the financial (income) or spiritual (free time) opportunities to go to those travel routes are not available, and therefore the feeling of “I can’t travel while everyone else can” is created. Related to the last finding, Asdecker (2021) interpreted similar results in his study differently as travel Influencers stimulating their audiences’ wanderlust through “benign envy”. In our study, however, the state of envy is interpreted more as a resentment arising from not being able to make the same trips.

In terms of not meeting the expectations, the fact that the posts made are “polished” as a normal of the media for the purpose of financial gain, in other words, the element of highlighting the good aspects and hiding the shortcomings becomes apparent. Although the travel posts seen due to financial and time-related impossibilities create an enthusiasm in the person, the negative feelings created by not being able to go show that the fact of always feeling that others live a better life than oneself on social media also emerges in travel posts.

In conclusion, the findings of our research are largely consistent with the studies in the existing literature. Instagram and other social media platforms are seen to have a significant impact on users' travel decisions and expectations. However, sometimes social media content does not match real experiences, which can cause users to be disappointed. Therefore, it is important to present social media content in a realistic and balanced way.

The need to travel has increased with the use of social media in addition to various factors such as the rising level of education, increasing economic conditions, and developing awareness. The idea of going on a trip, which comes to mind with Instagram travel content, can become people’s motivation to work or a goal to achieve. It has become a necessity to make a budget adjustment for the whole year, to shop for the planned trip and to show followers by visiting every viral spot without missing it, and to show that these opportunities can be reached like everyone else, along with the desire to live the moment. It should not be ignored that Instagram makes life easier and answers curiosity with a lot of information in a short time, while meeting the need for entertainment and leisure, and offers users the opportunity to momentarily break away from the worries and stresses of daily life, and makes the idea of bringing their lives to certain standards appealing.

Witnessing the trips of Influencers and relatives followed on Instagram is shaped by the current mood and situation of the people and can also encourage people in a positive way and stimulate their sense of curiosity. The fact that the scenery and the play being performed are seen by the audience, not the backstage, can keep the travel content within a certain framework for people and overshadow their negative aspects. Instagram, with its potential as a guiding force today, enables the idea of seeing what you can't see, tasting what you can't taste, and penetrates into every area of people's lives, from what they consume to their habits, and sets an ideal standard of living beyond advertising and collaborations, making everyone the

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same, melting all life diversity and ideals in one pot and selling the same experiences

In the times when there was no social media, the places seen in documentaries and travel programs watched on TV did not make viewers question themselves and their lives and did not have such a negative effect on their emotional state. On Instagram, users share sections of their lives about almost everything they do, and Influencers open up their experiences that they enjoy very much as "one of us" to the public, causing viewers/followers/users to feel many experiences they see as a need rather than a desire. As a result, the "feeling of being left behind" that is induced in people as a result of social life or facing the material and spiritual difficulties of following trends can disappoint people; it can lead to results such as isolating oneself from the environment, blaming oneself, or depression.



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**Communication Papers**

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## **Jane Austen en la Era Digital: Transmedialidad y Expansión Cultural**

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### Resumen

El artículo examina la relevancia y el crecimiento de la obra de Jane Austen en la cultura actual mediante el fenómeno de la transmedialidad. Se analizan las adaptaciones de sus novelas en diversos formatos, como el cine, la televisión, los videojuegos y las redes sociales, subrayando cómo estas reinterpretaciones logran conectar a nuevas generaciones con los valores y temas universales presentes en la obra de Austen. Se investiga el concepto de narrativa transmedia, que amplía las historias a múltiples plataformas y formatos, en el contexto de las obras de Austen. Este enfoque permite una expansión narrativa que involucra a los aficionados como prosumidores, generando contenido propio que va desde fanfiction hasta memes y otros productos culturales. Asimismo, se estudia la comercialización de objetos temáticos y la organización de eventos como el Festival Jane Austen, que consolidan a Austen como un ícono cultural a nivel global. El texto también resalta la importancia de las tecnologías digitales y las redes sociales en la creación de comunidades de fans y en la reinterpretación constante de su legado, evidenciando que la obra de Austen no solo perdura en el ámbito literario, sino que se reinventa para ajustarse a las sensibilidades contemporáneas, dando lugar a un fenómeno cultural que trasciende generaciones.

**Palabras clave:** Jane Austen, transmedialidad, narrativas transmedia, adaptaciones culturales, cultura de masas

### Jane Austen in the Digital Age: Transmediality and Cultural Expansion

### Abstract

The article examines the relevance and growth of Jane Austen's work in today's culture through the phenomenon of transmediality. It analyses the adaptations of her novels in various formats, such as film, television, video games, and social networks, highlighting how these reinterpretations connect new generations with the universal values and themes in Austen's work. The concept of transmedia storytelling, which extends stories to multiple platforms and formats, is investigated in the context of Austen's works. This approach allows for a narrative expansion that engages fans as prosumers, generating their content ranging from fanfiction to memes and other cultural products. It also studies the commercialization of thematic objects and the organization of events such as the Jane Austen Festival, which consolidate Austen as a global cultural icon. The study also highlights the importance of digital technologies and social networks in the creation of fan communities and in the constant reinterpretation of her legacy, demonstrating that Austen's work not only endures in the literary sphere but also reinvents itself to suit contemporary sensibilities, giving rise to a cultural phenomenon that transcends generations.

**Keyword:** Jane Austen, transmediality, identity, transmedia narratives, cultural adaptations, mass culture.

### Introducción

A lo largo de la historia, el impacto de las novelas de Jane Austen ha trascendido el ámbito literario para abarcar múltiples formatos. Su obra destaca por una aguda observación social y por incluir ideas progresistas, muy adelantadas a su época, sobre el papel de las mujeres, las relaciones personales y las estructuras de poder en la sociedad. Su estilo literario, marcado por la ironía y la crítica a las costumbres sociales, ha dado pie a numerosas adaptaciones y reinterpretaciones que facilitan su redescubrimiento por nuevas generaciones.

Este trabajo examina el fenómeno de la transmedialidad como vía de expansión de la obra de Austen más allá de la literatura y el cine, alcanzando otros soportes de la cultura global como son redes sociales, creación y comercialización de objetos temáticos e incluso la realización de eventos conmemorativos sobre la vida que refuerzan un sentido de comunidad y pertenencia que conecta generaciones y culturas.

Jane Austen es una de las autoras del siglo XIX que ha despertado mayor admiración entre el público. Las adaptaciones de sus novelas han permitido que su obra llegue a una audiencia cada vez más amplia y joven, manteniendo su relevancia en la actualidad. Sus historias han sido trasladadas al cine y la televisión, además de reinterpretadas en distintos contextos culturales y religiosos. Sue Parrill (2002), en 'Jane Austen on film and television', señala que las historias de Austen siguen atrayendo porque son accesibles, no requieren de grandes recursos de producción y siguen conectando emocionalmente con el público, especialmente el femenino. De esta manera, se recurre a las historias de esta escritora porque sus personajes siguen siendo relevantes, y las lecciones perfectamente aplicables a la sociedad moderna.

A lo largo del siglo XXI, han surgido adaptaciones tanto clásicas como contemporáneas que, aun siendo diferentes a la novela, incluyen elementos de la historia, la trama o algún personaje de la misma ('Kandukondain Kandukondain', 2000; 'Lost in Austen', 2008; 'Orgullo y Prejuicio y zombies', 2016; 'Christmas at Pemberley Manor', 2018; y 'Modern Persuasion', 2020, entre otras). Estas versiones recurren frecuentemente a la intertextualidad permitiendo que los textos se entrecrucen, modifiquen y enriquezcan, permitiendo que estos textos dialoguen con el contexto en el que se crean y consumen, lo que permite que el público moderno reconozca, compare y reflexione sobre los valores y mensajes originales.

Cuando el concepto adaptación se extiende hacia la transmedialidad, el análisis debe centrarse en cómo la historia de Austen se adapta no solo a través de distintos textos, sino también a través de distintos medios y formatos: películas, series, adaptaciones interculturales y hasta videojuegos. En la actualidad, la presencia de la obra de Austen en la cultura de masas ha sido potenciada por las nuevas tecnologías, sobre todo, con Internet. Las redes sociales, las comunidades de fans, los videojuegos, los productos de merchandising, los festivales temáticos y el contenido digital generado por usuarios (fanfiction, vídeos, memes, etc.) forman parte de esta red de apropiaciones culturales que no solo perpetúan su legado, sino

que lo actualizan y diversifican

Este trabajo se centra en analizar cómo la transmedialidad ha permitido la expansión y resignificación de la obra de Jane Austen en la cultura actual, prestando especial atención al papel de los prosumidores y las comunidades digitales. Además de examinar la adaptación de sus textos a diferentes realidades culturales y sociales, se abordan prácticas participativas como la creación de contenido en redes como TikTok o YouTube, la comercialización de objetos vinculados a su universo narrativo, y la celebración de eventos conmemorativos en su honor. De este modo, la obra de Austen se consolida como una plataforma narrativa abierta, adaptable y continuamente resignificada en función de las transformaciones socioculturales del presente.

### **Metodología**

En este trabajo se incorpora un estudio sobre la transmedialidad a través de redes sociales, eventos conmemorativos, y el impacto de la imagen de la autora en la comercialización de productos. Este análisis resalta cómo la obra de Austen no solo pervive en el ámbito literario, sino que su influencia se expande a la cultura de masas mediante objetos, festivales anuales en su honor, y el intercambio digital entre fans.

Para ello, se aborda una metodología cualitativa fundamentada en el análisis de contenido y la revisión documental de la bibliografía más relevante y actualizada sobre los conceptos de transmedialidad y narrativas transmedia, con especial atención a los planteamientos de Henry Jenkins y Carlos A. Scolari. Este marco teórico permite contextualizar la adaptación y expansión narrativa de las obras de Jane Austen a través de diversos medios.

Posteriormente, se examinan las interacciones y contenidos generados por fans en plataformas como YouTube, Instagram y X, así como en sitios web y foros dedicados a la autora. Complementariamente, se ha realizado un cuestionario a seguidores de Jane Austen para analizar su percepción sobre la comercialización y expansión digital de su legado. Estos datos, junto con el análisis de comentarios en redes sociales y foros, permiten evaluar el impacto actual de la autora en la cultura digital.

### **Transmedialidad y la expansión narrativa**

En el contexto contemporáneo, la relación entre cine y literatura ha evolucionando gracias al concepto de transmedialidad. Mientras que la adaptación se centra en trasladar una historia de un medio a otro (como de una novela a una película), la transmedialidad va más lejos, al expandir un universo narrativo a través de múltiples plataformas y medios, generando nuevas tramas, personajes o perspectivas que amplían la historia original y que varían según el medio utilizado: cine, series de televisión, videojuegos, cómics, redes sociales y otros formatos interactivos. En este punto, autores como Henry Jenkins (2009) y Jeff Gomez (2007) han debatido sobre si las adaptaciones deben ser consideradas parte de las narrativas transmedia, afirmando que deberían ser excluidas de este mundo narrativo. Sin embargo, las adaptaciones tienen el potencial de enriquecer las narrativas transmedia, ya que no

se limitan únicamente a trasladar una historia de un medio a otro, sino que a menudo aportan nuevas perspectivas, capas de significado y conexiones culturales, “contribuye[ndo] con nuevos puntos de vista a nuestra comprensión de la obra, y realiza adiciones o sustracciones que remodelan la historia de manera significativa” (Scolari, 2013:49), lo que las convierte en fenómenos de expansión transmedia de manera explícita.

El concepto “narrativa transmedia” apareció por primera vez en 2003 en el artículo de Jenkins ‘Technology Review’, donde afirmaba que “«hemos entrado en una nueva era de convergencia de medios que vuelve inevitable el flujo de contenidos a través de múltiples canales»” (Scolari, 2013:23). Posteriormente, Carlos A. Scolari (2013), definió las narrativas transmedia como “un tipo de relato donde la historia se despliega a través de múltiples medios y plataformas de comunicación, y en el cual una parte de los consumidores asume un rol activo en ese proceso de expansión” (46).

Jenkins subraya cómo los usuarios, especialmente los niños, han crecido consumiendo discursos narrativos a través de diversos medios como programas de televisión, series, libros y videojuegos, mientras que se involucran en la búsqueda de información sobre las historias y personajes, con el fin de conectarlos con otros textos del mismo tema y se cree una experiencia más rica y participativa para las audiencias. Así, mientras que una novela puede inspirar una película, esta película puede a su vez expandirse en videojuegos, sitios web o incluso en contenido generado por los usuarios en plataformas digitales, lo que genera una narrativa interactiva y expansiva que involucra a los espectadores de manera activa.

La transmedialidad crea un ecosistema narrativo en el que cada medio aporta algo único, complementando la historia y transformándola en un fenómeno cultural que trasciende las barreras de lo textual o lo visual. Manteniendo la perspectiva de Scolari, “cuando se hace referencia a las NT [narrativas transmedia] no estamos hablando de una adaptación de un lenguaje a otro [...], sino de una estrategia que va mucho más allá y desarrolla un mundo narrativo que abarca diferentes medios y lenguajes” en el que “el relato se expande, aparecen nuevos personajes o situaciones que traspasan las fronteras del universo de ficción” (2013:25). Por esta razón, en la transmedialidad se integran diversas áreas de conocimiento como videojuegos, televisión, cine y periodismo, fundamentales para la difusión y el engagement del público.

En esta línea, Jenkins (2006) introdujo el concepto de convergencia mediática como un cambio en los diferentes sectores de medios difuminando la línea que les separa para crear un mismo contenido que fluye por diferentes canales, con formas muy diversas y que impactan en la cultura popular desde varias perspectivas (2008) e involucrar al espectador con una mayor e intensa participación del público-consumidor. Por tanto, la transmedialidad considera las características y ventajas de cada medio para enriquecer y ampliar la narrativa, generando una experiencia global y coherente para los usuarios, quienes participan activamente en la construcción de la historia, creando un universo narrativo más extenso y profundo

de la obra. Además, todas las narrativas transmedia “operan como puertas de entrada a los diferentes universos narrativos” (Scolari, 2013:49).

Estos cambios provocan una reconceptualización de muchos aspectos de la cultura incluyendo las relaciones sociales, la literatura, la política y las problemáticas sociales. Tanto los medios de comunicación tradicionales como los nuevos, como redes sociales y plataformas en streaming, junto con la inteligencia artificial, potencian y expanden las estrategias transmedia. Sin embargo, “las industrias mediáticas no se han esmerado en la colaboración para producir experiencias transmediáticas convincentes” (Jenkins, 2008:112) requiriendo una mayor coordinación entre los sectores de los medios para generar contenidos transmediáticos. Un ejemplo podrían ser las sagas de ‘El señor de los anillos’, ‘Matrix’, ‘Pokémon’ o ‘Harry Potter’, que mediante la utilización de material propio de las producciones cinematográficas facilitaron la creación de videojuegos con una mayor fidelidad tanto a la película como a los libros, además de añadir otras dimensiones que no aparecían en la ficción.

La narración ha evolucionado hacia el arte de construir universos, a medida que los creadores desarrollan entornos cautivadores que no pueden ser completamente explorados ni agotados en una sola obra, ni siquiera en un único medio. El universo es más inmenso que la película, incluso más extenso que las propias franquicias, ya que las reflexiones y creaciones de los aficionados también amplían el mundo en múltiples direcciones. Jenkins creó el concepto prosumidores para definir a aquellos consumidores que se convertían en productores de nuevo contenidos narrativos, contribuyendo al proceso de expansión transmedia. Los fans más apasionados estudian cada detalle de la narración: la vestimenta, el diseño de edificios y paisajes, los enseres que utilizan, los movimientos, la música, la iluminación de las escenas, los comportamientos de los personajes y más. De esta forma, no solo se profundiza en el universo original, sino que contribuyen a expandirlo mediante teorías, creaciones árboles genealógicos, tazas, camisetas, calendarios y relojes y reinterpretaciones propias (fanfiction, cortometrajes y artes digitales), dotando de mayor realismo a estos mundos a la par que los enriquecen y diversifican, siendo fuente de inspiración para nuevas tramas, personajes y escenarios incluso nuevas críticas entre profesionales y usuarios. Internet y las nuevas tecnologías han ayudado a amplificar y proliferar las nuevas narrativas a través de los distintos canales. Si bien es cierto, las leyes de propiedad intelectual y derechos de autor, que existen en todos los países, ponen en peligro las comunidades de fans y las creaciones de ficción de los aficionados, llevando a las propias empresas a comercializar contenidos con las distintas marcas o a controlar todos los bienes o contenidos creados alrededor de dicha marca o narrativa, desde las primeras fases de desarrollo del mundo narrativo. Incluso como apunta Scolari, a crear la “Biblia Transmedia” para definir todas las características, planificar el despliegue transmedia y las reglas de construcción del mundo narrativo, y así evitar la dispersión e incoherencia narrativa.



### Resultados

Al analizar la transmedialidad de grandes obras literarias, resulta imprescindible observar la participación activa de los prosumidores, quienes reinterpretan y expanden los universos narrativos mediante nuevos formatos, incorporando personajes, frases y tramas en productos culturales diversos. Como ha ocurrido con otros clásicos, las novelas de Jane Austen han sido objeto de múltiples expansiones transmedia, entre ellas la creación de contenido fandom.

Según Vicente Luis Mora (2012), “las experiencias artísticas de la actualidad «son cada vez más multidisciplinares y tienden a aglutinar a su alrededor la poderosa iconicidad de los medios de comunicación de masas». El desafío es ir más allá de la oposición entre palabra vs. imagen y pasar a contar con todo el arsenal icónico-textual (Scolari, 2013:123). En esta línea, Javier Celaya (2008) indica “que las editoriales que logren integrar las aportaciones de los usuarios con los contenidos elaborados por sus autores «obtendrán una amplia ventaja competitiva. La participación activa de los usuarios a través de la aportación de contenidos se convertirá en una de las piezas más cotizadas en el mundo transmedia»” (Scolari, 2013:123-124).

En este sentido, los fans desmontan y analizan cada texto para sacar toda la información y generar nuevos contenidos gracias a plataformas como YouTube, Facebook, Etsy, blogs y foros. Aunque este fenómeno se ha intensificado en la era digital, las comunidades de ficción existen desde hace décadas: ya en los años treinta, los seguidores de ciencia ficción y fantasía organizaban clubs y convenciones en EEUU y Europa. Con la llegada de Internet, la aparición de la web y la masificación de la tecnología digital, estas comunidades han crecido exponencialmente, permitiendo la distribución de textos, imágenes y sonidos de alta calidad y fidelidad por todo el planeta, transformando a los consumidores actuales en creadores activos dentro del universo transmedia.

Como señalan Dionisio y Nisi (2021), las narrativas transmedia pueden facilitar una conexión más profunda con los contenidos, al permitir experiencias inmersivas, afectivas y participativas que promueven una relación emocional con los relatos distribuidos. La apropiación de los relatos originales y su expansión en formatos alternativos, desde fanfictions y reinterpretaciones modernas hasta productos derivados, demuestran el impacto del fandom en la cultura popular.

En este contexto, el papel del consumidor ha evolucionado hacia lo que algunos autores denominan “VUPC” (“viewer/user/player/creator”), un perfil activo que no solo consume, sino que interpreta, crea y difunde contenido narrativo desde múltiples medios. Este tipo de consumidor participa en comunidades digitales donde se construyen y reformulan universos narrativos, aprovechando tanto su conocimiento como su acceso tecnológico, aunque esto mismo puede acentuar la brecha digital (Braguez, 2023).

Además, como señalan Baroni, Goudmand y Ryan (2023), el fenómeno fan no debe considerarse una práctica marginal ni inferior, sino una forma de “canon alternativo” o “fanon”, que adquiere legitimidad dentro de la comunidad y permite observar cómo los mundos narrativos se expanden más allá del control autoral centralizado. Estas creaciones se sitúan en la frontera entre la extensión no autorizada y la reelaboración legítima, permitiendo a los estudios culturales explorar nuevas formas de producción simbólica y narrativa en el marco de la cultura participativa y de convergencia. Se relaciona con la idea de una narrativa compartida, expandida y modificada colectivamente. Las comunidades de fans de Austen, presentes en plataformas como Reddit, TikTok o foros especializados, son un claro ejemplo de ello: transforman la narrativa original mediante memes, teorías, reinterpretaciones visuales o escritas, y reelaboraciones narrativas colectivas, aportándoles valores, intereses y debates culturales del presente.

El mundo narrativo de Jane Austen se ha transformado en un ecosistema transmedia más amplio, en el que cada generación de lectores y espectadores participa activamente. Estas expresiones creativas colectivas no solo mantienen viva la obra de Austen, sino que también la adaptan a las sensibilidades y valores contemporáneos, haciendo de su mundo literario una narrativa en continua evolución en sincronía con la cultura global. A esto se suma su indiscutible relevancia dentro del ámbito académico y literario, donde continúa generando una abundante producción crítica y nuevas lecturas<sup>2</sup>. No obstante, por la amplitud y profundidad de este enfoque, su análisis queda fuera del alcance de este trabajo, abriendo la vía a futuras investigaciones.

### **La transmedialidad de Jane Austen en la cultura digital y redes sociales.**

En la actualidad, la influencia de Jane Austen en la cultura de masas ha sido potenciada por las nuevas tecnologías, especialmente a través de Internet. Autoras como Elise Barker (2010) y Sarah Glosson (2020) han analizado su presencia en plataformas como Facebook, así como el impacto del coleccionismo y los eventos temáticos relacionados con la autora. En 2010, existían múltiples aplicaciones en Facebook, que, tras responder a una serie de preguntas, clasificaban a los usuarios como uno de los personajes de sus novelas, tanto femeninos como masculinos. De igual forma, plataformas como Instagram, Pinterest y X son espacios donde aficionados, académicos y museos contribuyen activamente al compartir contenido relacionado con Austen, fomentando el debate, la interacción y la reinterpretación de su obra. Por ejemplo, en X se encuentra el perfil ‘Jane Austen First Drafts’ (@Austen1stDrafts), que se centra en memes y contenido humorístico sobre los personajes de Austen, generando una gran participación.

Además de estas plataformas, existen en Internet existen numerosas páginas web y foros dedicados a la autora británica. En estos espacios, los usuarios exploran aspectos de su vida, sus novelas, su técnica, sus adaptaciones, el periodo histórico en el que vivió, la música que pudo haber escuchado, los libros que posiblemente leyó y, sobre todo, comparten su opinión sobre cualquier aspecto que consideren relevante. Se pueden mencionar dos ejemplos destacados: el primero es fanfiction.net, donde, a pesar de la antigüedad de la plataforma y no estar actualizado, se pueden encontrar más de 640 escritos de fans dedicados a expandir y reinterpretar los universos y personajes creados por Austen. El segundo es el Virtual JaneCon un congreso digital organizado por fans, que permite a los seguidores de todo el mundo participar en charlas, discusiones, transmisiones en vivo y actividades para conmemorar su legado desde nuevas perspectivas.



Tabla 1 @Austen1stDraft (Fuente: X)

Tabla 2 Virtual JaneCon (Fuente: <https://virtualjanecon.com/>)



Como señala Amanda Gilroy (2010), escribir fanfiction y especular sobre el potencial oculto de una historia puede empoderar al lector para involucrarse nuevamente en ella y reclamar el texto como propio, creando un método sutil pero efectivo de romper la disonancia de valores entre el autor y el lector (Omirova, 2019). Este fenómeno también se refleja en España, con iniciativas como 'El Sitio de Jane' fundado por Almudena y Mari Carmen Romero, quienes también gestionan el foro 'El Salón de té'. Según sus creadoras, el objetivo de la página web es "proporcionar información sobre la gran escritora inglesa Jane Austen de forma gratuita y desinteresada". Con el apoyo del foro, los usuarios registrados pueden hablar sobre esta escritora, así como de sus novelas y sus adaptaciones. Las opiniones y críticas que existen son variadas y dispares, además de ser representativas, ya que pueden reflejar la percepción de la sociedad en general. Además, Almudena y Mari Carmen

han realizado varias publicaciones relacionadas con el fenómeno austenita. Uno de sus trabajos más destacados es 'Historia de los Austenitas' (2015), que documenta la evolución del interés en Jane Austen entre los hispanohablantes, explorando cómo Internet y el cine han fomentado la expansión de este fandom en España y otros países. Este libro examina las traducciones, investigaciones y comunidades creadas en torno a la figura de Austen, incluyendo aspectos como los clubes de lectura y los eventos virtuales, así como detalles y análisis de las adaptaciones y de la recepción global de su obra.



Tabla 3 El sitio de Jane (Fuente: <https://janeausten.org.es/blog/>)

Por otro lado, la comercialización de productos que representan a Jane Austen, sus obras, sus películas o su época ha tenido un papel desatado. Según Allison Thompson (2008) estos productos pueden clasificarse en tres grupos: “evocadores” y que funcionan como un indicador de clase social real o deseada, rememoran a la autora o a la época de la Regencia en general (tazas de té, collares, plumas de ave para escribir, jabones o vestidos); productos artesanales y juegos creados por los fans para su comercialización por Internet, aunque no exclusivamente (patrones de costura en lona o en punto de cruz, pendientes y collares, cartas de tarot o juegos de mesa); y, productos que crean una imagen opuesta a la Austen tradicional y romántica (títeres, ropa interior con frases picantes e irónicas o figuritas de porcelana). Thompson determina que incluso

within the Austen fandom there is a great divide, very apparent in the fanfic and paraliterature, between those fans who are primarily inspired by Messrs. Firth and Macfadyen and those who, while enjoying the movies, focus principally on the books and claim, justly or not, some intellectual superiority over the first group. (2008)

Estos productos son elaborados por aficionados o grupos de seguidores como JASNA, lo que explica por qué los países de habla inglesa, como EEUU, Gran Bretaña y Australia, sean los principales productores y compradores. Sin embargo, otros productos, como los juegos y la artesanía, atraen a públicos de habla no inglesa. Esta oferta ha crecido en plataformas como Etsy, donde se pueden encontrar más de 1000 artículos en formato físico y descargas digitales relacionados con Austen.

En 2011, la cantidad de artículos disponibles en esta plataforma era únicamente en formato físico y sumaban 61 artículos. En la actualidad suman más de 1000 artículos en ambos formatos.

Otra tienda online de características similares, en esta vez española y creada en 2014, es 'Superbritánico', ubicada en Sevilla, que ofrece productos diseñados y fabricados por ellos para los amantes de la lengua inglesa y la cultura británica. En lo que respecta a Jane Austen, se pueden encontrar 24 artículos, entre los cuales destacan camisetas, pines, postales, libretas y puzzles.

Asimismo, existen algunos productos elaborados por los fans y comercializados a través de Amazon como juegos de mesa como 'Marrying Mr. Darcy Board Game' (un juego de rol en el que los personajes debe trabajar por mejorar con el fin de conseguir un pretendiente), trivials, naipes con personajes de las novelas de Austen, puzzles, libros de escape room, macetas, pegatinas y libros de colorear, entre una gran variedad de artículos más.

Esta apropiación va más allá de lo literario, sus fans recrean y reinterpretan sus novelas, creando obras de teatro basadas en ellas y convirtiéndose en expertos de la Inglaterra de principios del siglo XIX y sus tradiciones. Esto es especialmente evidente en Gran Bretaña, donde las dos principales asociaciones dedicadas a Jane Austen, 'The Jane Austen Centre Exhibition' y 'The Jane Austen Society', junto con el museo 'Jane Austen's House' en Chawton, organizan anualmente diversos eventos en honor a la autora. Uno de estos eventos culturales es el 'Jane Austen Festival', que se celebra cada año en la ciudad de Bath desde 2001, que congrega a miles de entusiastas que se visten de la época de la Regencia. Este evento ha evolucionado para incluir una amplia variedad de actividades y eventos, como el 'Grand Regency Promenade', donde cientos de personas desfilan con trajes de la época, así como numerosos bailes temáticos que permiten a los asistentes revivir la atmósfera de las novelas de Austen.

Con motivo del 250º aniversario de su nacimiento en 2025, el 'Jane Austen's' House ha anunciado actividades especiales a lo largo del año. Las celebraciones incluirán exposiciones permanentes y temáticas que se centrarán en sus novelas y su proceso creativo. Entre los eventos destacados están el 'Pride and Prejudice Festival' en enero y el 'Sense & Sensibility Festival' en mayo, los cuales explorarán distintos aspectos de su obra y su legado cultural (las entradas ya están disponibles para su compra). El festival que realizará 'The Jane Austen Centre Exhibition' en ese año será más especial que en años anteriores, con una programación ampliada que se desarrollará del 12 al 21 de septiembre e incluirá exhibiciones, conferencias y eventos inmersivos en honor a su legado. Además, el centro ha anunciado colaboraciones y exhibiciones especiales, como la muestra 'Illustrating Austen' en el Museo Holburne, que explorará la evolución de las ilustraciones de sus personajes, desde las primeras interpretaciones hasta las más modernas. Asimismo, se realizarán otras actividades que permitirán a los visitantes profundizar en el vínculo entre Austen y Bath, la ciudad que inspiró parte de su obra.



### Percepciones actuales sobre Jane Austen

Para completar este análisis se diseñó un cuestionario distribuido en redes sociales, foros temáticos nacionales e internacionales, grupos de investigación vinculados a la literatura británica, así como a personas interesadas en el universo de Jane Austen. En total, se obtuvieron 64 respuestas, lo que permite una aproximación cualitativa al perfil y las percepciones de los seguidores contemporáneos. A través de este cuestionario se han recogido datos sobre hábitos de consumo, plataformas preferidas, interés por el merchandising, participación en comunidades online y percepción de la relevancia cultural de la autora. Los resultados revelan una presencia activa de prosumidores que reinterpretan y expanden el universo austeniano en clave digital, evidenciando un compromiso emocional e identitario con su obra.

La mayoría de los encuestados residen en España (58%) y Costa Rica (20%), seguidos de Estados Unidos (5%) y otros países europeos como Reino Unido, República Checa e Italia, lo que confirma el carácter transnacional del fenómeno austenita.

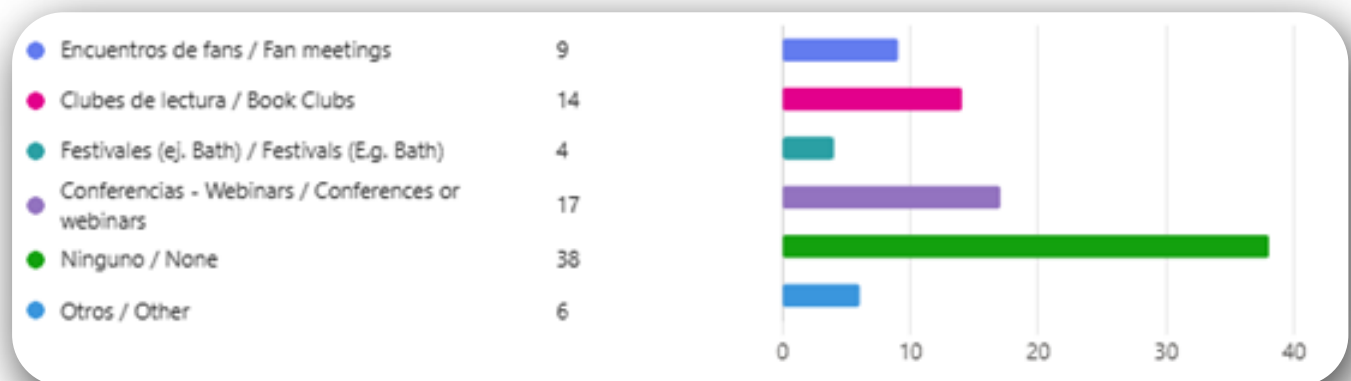
En cuanto a la distribución por edad, la franja de 25-34 años fue la más representada (34%), seguida por los grupos de 45-54 años (28%) y 35-44 años (28%). Estos datos refuerzan la vigencia de la obra de Austen entre jóvenes adultos y generaciones intermedias. Respecto al género, más del 85% de los participantes se identificaron como mujeres, lo cual coincide con estudios previos que apuntan a un predominio femenino en el fandom de Austen.

El descubrimiento de la autora se ha producido mayoritariamente a través del cine y la televisión (48%), seguido por la lectura directa de sus libros (44%), y en menor medida, por redes sociales u otros medios. Este dato respalda el argumento de cómo la adaptación precede muchas veces a la lectura y sigue funcionando como primer canal de contacto con el universo de Austen. Las redes sociales empiezan a desempeñar un papel activo, con plataformas como Instagram, YouTube y foros o blogs especializados, aunque también se mencionan TikTok, X (antes Twitter), Facebook y Reddit, en combinación o por separado. En ellos, los fans no solo consumen contenido, sino que interactúan, comentan y lo reinterpretan desde múltiples perspectivas. La mayoría de los encuestados consumen contenido sobre Austen de manera ocasional o semanal (73%), mientras que un grupo reducido lo hace a diario (19%), lo que implica un público fidelizado y altamente comprometido. En cuanto a la participación activa en el fandom, más del 60% ha leído fanfiction o estaría interesado en hacerlo, aunque solo una minoría declara haberlo escrito o leído habitualmente. Este dato refuerza la inclusión del fanfiction como forma de apropiación cultural dentro del ecosistema transmedia de Austen.

Respecto a la comercialización de productos inspirados en la autora y su universo, la mayoría considera que se trata de una estrategia válida para acercarla a nuevos públicos, siempre que se respete el espíritu original de la autora. Muchas personas afirmaron haber comprado libros, objetos decorativos, ropa o artículos de papelería relacionados con Austen, mientras que otros indicaron que estarían dispuestos a hacerlo.



La participación en actividades o eventos relacionados con Austen aún es limitada: la mayoría no ha asistido a encuentros o festivales, aunque algunos han participado en clubes de lectura, conferencias virtuales o eventos (Ilustración 6):



Finalmente, la percepción general sobre el futuro de la comunidad austenita en la era digital es positiva. La mayoría considera que seguirá creciendo y adaptándose a nuevos formatos gracias a las redes sociales y la creación de contenido digital (podcasts, adaptaciones, videojuegos o eventos interactivos). Se destaca el valor de las comunidades online como espacios de encuentro, reinterpretación y difusión del legado de Austen entre las nuevas generaciones cada vez más diversas.

### Discusión

Jane Austen ha dejado de ser solo una figura literaria para convertirse en un icono cultural presente en múltiples ámbitos de la cultura de masas. Los lectores se transforman en prosumidores y consumidores de los productos derivados de sus novelas y adaptaciones, lo que permite que la imagen de Austen sobreviva no sólo en la literatura y en el medio fílmico, sino que perdure a través de los productos disponibles en Internet y en los museos dedicados a la autora.

La relevancia de Jane Austen en la cultura contemporánea refleja una confluencia de intereses literarios, culturales y sociales que han posicionado su obra en el centro de la narrativa global. Desde las primeras adaptaciones cinematográficas de sus novelas, la literatura de Austen ha trascendido las páginas impresas, conectando con un público diverso y generacionalmente variado que encuentra en sus personajes y temáticas una expresión de valores contemporáneos. Esta conexión, sin embargo, no se limita a la lectura de sus novelas o a la visualización de sus adaptaciones, sino que se extiende a una red cultural de intertextualidad y transmedialidad en la que los medios digitales y las comunidades de fans tienen un rol fundamental.

Jane Austen se ha convertido en un icono cultural que trasciende su contexto histórico y desafía las limitaciones de género, clase y espacio temporal. Las adaptaciones de sus novelas, desde las más fieles a las más liberales, han permitido que sus historias perduren en la mente colectiva y se adapten a las sensibilidades actuales. Como observó Jenkins en 2015, “la propagación de textos mediáticos nos ayuda a expresar quiénes somos, reforzar nuestras relaciones personales y profesionales, fortalecer las relaciones entre unos y otros, y forjar conciencia y comunidad en torno a los temas que nos importan” (313). Esta frase ilustra cómo la obra de Austen ha impulsado diálogos significativos sobre la identidad y los valores individuales y sociales, convirtiéndola en un recurso cultural transgeneracional.

En este contexto, los prosumidores ocupan un rol esencial. Crean fanfiction, memes y videos, y emplean plataformas como YouTube, Instagram y X para compartir sus perspectivas sobre los personajes, tramas y mensajes de Austen. Este fenómeno subraya como, en palabras de Jenkins, “la difusión de contenido a través de fronteras culturales incrementa nuestra oportunidad de escuchar otras perspectivas y desarrollar empatía hacia perspectivas foráneas” (2015:313). A través de la transmedialidad, los seguidores de Austen exploran temas como el feminismo, la clase y la autonomía personal desde ópticas multiculturales, convirtiendo el universo de Austen en un espacio de intercambio y reflexión global.

Otro aspecto significativo de la transmedialidad es la inclusión del universo de la autora en formatos lúdicos como videojuegos, que abren nuevas posibilidades para explorar su obra en entornos interactivos. Videojuegos como ‘Ever, Jane: The Virtual World of Jane Austen’ (2016) o ‘Matches and Matrimony: A Pride and Prejudice Tale’ (2011) ofrecen a los usuarios la oportunidad de experimentar la narrativa de Austen de una forma activa, participando en elecciones que replican la toma de decisiones de los personajes de sus novelas. Estos juegos fomentan el empoderamiento femenino al explorar tanto la independencia como la elección racional en la vida de

## Jane Austen en la Era Digital: Transmedialidad y Expansión Cultural

los personajes, alineándose con las ideas de Austen sobre la autonomía y la autodeterminación.



Tabla 6: Juego Ever, Jane

(Fuente: <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/sep/28/ever-jane-reader-i-clicked-on-him-i-test-drive-the-virtual-jane-austen-role-playing-game> Consulta 04/04/2025)

Traducir la obra de Austen a un formato interactivo de este tipo no solo tiene un valor de entretenimiento, sino que también permite una apreciación de los detalles y elecciones prudentes, incentivando a los usuarios a reflexionar sobre los valores y decisiones de sus personajes, aplicándolos a su propia experiencia vital.

Jane Austen ha pasado de ser una figura literaria a consolidarse como un símbolo cultural que permite comprender y debatir cuestiones fundamentales sobre la identidad y la sociedad. La intertextualidad y la transmedialidad han facilitado una apropiación cultural que adapta su obra a los valores y sensibilidades contemporáneas, enriqueciendo su legado y ampliando su alcance a audiencias que encuentran en sus historias una resonancia continua. Su relevancia en la cultura popular moderna indica que su obra perdurará en el tiempo y seguirá evolucionando y adaptándose a los contextos cambiantes de cada generación.

Por tanto, el fenómeno de Jane Austen es una demostración poderosa de cómo la literatura puede trascender su tiempo y lugar de origen, adaptándose a nuevos formatos y audiencias sin perder su esencia. El uso de tecnologías digitales y redes sociales ha expandido la participación activa de los lectores y consumidores de su obra, demostrando que la narrativa de Austen sigue siendo tan relevante hoy como lo fue hace más de dos siglos. Las historias de Austen, por tanto, no solo continuarán siendo una referencia literaria, sino que seguirán inspirando y moldeando las conversaciones sobre identidad, género y clase en la cultura popular global del futuro.

### Notas

<sup>1</sup>Sue Parrill (2002) señala que la BBC, junto con otras cadenas como BBC 2 (desde 1964), Granada ITV y Channel 4, ha desempeñado un papel clave en la producción y difusión de adaptaciones literarias, ya sea a través de producciones propias o adquisiciones de otras compañías. Un estudio reciente, “Catálogo de adaptaciones en el nuevo milenio: de la literatura al cine británico (2001-2020)”, examina la evolución del cine británico en ese periodo, con un enfoque en las adaptaciones literarias para cine y televisión. Su objetivo es analizar la influencia de estas producciones en la cultura británica y destacar cómo la literatura sigue siendo una fuente inagotable de inspiración.

<sup>2</sup>Jane Austen mantiene una presencia constante en la crítica literaria y en el ámbito académico. Su obra se ha adaptado y reinterpretado en formatos muy diversos, desde ‘Orgullo y Prejuicio’ (1995) o ‘El diario de Bridget Jones’ (2001), hasta mash up como ‘Orgullo y Prejuicio y zombis’ (Seth Grahame-Smith, 2009). También han surgido productos derivados que fusionan el mundo de Austen con otros géneros literarios como el detectivesco (‘La muerte llega a Pemberley’, P.D. James 2012 o ‘Jane Austen investiga’, Jessica Bull, 2024), manga (‘Manga: Jane Austen’, 2023) o recetarios (‘Dinner with Jane Austen: Menus inspired by her novels and letters’, 2023), que muestran su impacto cultural más allá del texto literario. Dada su amplitud, este fenómeno se plantea como vía para futuras investigaciones complementarias.

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**Communication Papers**

Media Literacy & Gender Studies

**Examining the Effect of Digital Advertisements on  
Brand Awareness with the CBBE Model**

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# Examining the Effect of Digital Advertisements on Brand Awareness with the CBBE Model

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## Abstract

Technological developments have expanded the field of trade, and almost no brand has carried its commercial activities to digital media and has continued online. In an intensely competitive environment, brands continue their activities with digital marketing strategies and advertisements. Companies create strategies suitable for the brand by placing the consumer at the center of their digital advertising activities and managing their campaigns with advertising models accordingly. The consumer is in a significant position in this entire process. The main purpose of the research is to analyze how digital advertising models used in the e-commerce sector are perceived by consumers, how they are remembered by consumers and their effects on brand awareness through in-depth interview techniques. The data obtained from these interviews were used to examine the salience (level of importance) and brand image concepts in Keller's CBBE (Customer Based Brand Equity) model is used to examine the impact of digital advertising on brand awareness. The research was conducted face-to-face with 15 consumers living in Istanbul. As a result, data has been obtained that are consistent with the fact that digital advertising models not only create short-term brand awareness but also guide consumer behavior, increase brand loyalty, and become a fundamental part of brands' long-term strategies.

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing, E-commerce, Brand Awareness, CBBE.

## Introduction

E-commerce, the electronic sale or purchase of goods and services over the Internet, has become essential in modern trade. It has reshaped business models, consumer behavior, and markets with the convenience and accessibility it offers. E-commerce has transformed the way products are bought and sold by breaking down market boundaries. The development of technology and its impact on all areas of trade enable businesses to develop traditional trade models rapidly (Sharma, et al., 2023, pp. 1-5).

Where companies will send their products that they produce and sell and how buyers will obtain the company's products determine the general framework of trade, and thanks to the widespread use of the internet, borders are disappearing. It is possible for companies to introduce and send their products and services to consumers all over the world (Marangoz, 2011, p. 183).

E-commerce covers selling products produced via computers, advertising them, providing technical support services after sales, and completing payments. With the development of technology, the intensification of the competitive environment has caused companies to transfer their marketing strategies to digital environments. Companies prefer digital advertising due to its measurable and cus-

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a version of master thesis titled "The Effect of Digital Advertising Models Used in E-Commerce Sector on Brand Awareness: A Research on Istanbul" was completed in the Department of Advertising and Strategic Brand Communication at the Institute of Graduate Education" defended at Istanbul Commerce University in 2024.

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tomizable features. The efficiency and cost of campaigns made on advertising platforms such as Google and Meta can be obtained with detailed analysis (Tuzcu, et al., 2018, pp. 376-378).

Digital advertising emerged with the development of the internet, messaging, online search system, social media channels, and mobile communication systems over time. The opportunities that emerged with the development of technology and the intensity of the competitive environment caused brands to switch their marketing strategies to digital environments. The traces of digital transformation were first seen in the message service sent in 1969. In the following period, e-mail was sent in 1971 and the first website was established in the 1980s. In the 1990s, browser-based cookies that provided personalized marketing opportunities began to be used, e-commerce sites began to be used, and banner ads were published. The number of websites increased in the 1990s and search engines such as Google and Yahoo emerged at the same time. Starting in the 2000s, more effective results were achieved in digital advertisements with Google AdWords, and after 2004, social media tools such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube began to be used intensively in daily life. Thus, these social media channels began to be used as new advertising areas by brands (Tuzcu, et al., 2018).

Digital advertising continues to develop through e-mail, pop-up, search engines, social media and content. Today, brands can reach their target audiences and communicate with them, especially through digital advertising models (Aslaner & Aydın Aslaner, 2020).

Digital advertising includes different media formats such as audio, video, visual and text. Digital advertising, which refers to the marketing process through online channels, is quite young compared to many media areas. Digital advertising has become an important tool for brands to reach their target audiences. It has become one of the important marketing strategies of businesses thanks to its data-based, detailed targeting features and analysis forms (Kartal, 2022).

With the increase in the number of brands, a competitive environment has emerged and brands have started to continue their marketing activities in order to attract the attention of their target audience and gain a place in the minds of consumers. In the 2000s, brands focused on easy access to consumers, quality, trust and customer satisfaction, and aimed to stand out in competition and establish an emotional bond with consumers with these issues (Işık, 2013).

A brand is a combination of names or symbols that users can associate with a product or service (Wilbacher, 1995).

Brand knowledge represents brand image and brand awareness. The stages of brand knowledge can be grouped into a pyramid, with each level forming the basis for the levels above it. Brand loyalty derives from emotional and functional

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associations and consists of realistic and emotional brand evaluations based on brand awareness (Chandon, 2003, p. 1)

Brand awareness is defined as the effect created by the brand in the consumer's mind. Brand awareness, brand recognition levels, and recall performances are effective in the decision-making process for consumers when engaging in purchasing behavior. Brand name dominance, brand recall, brand recognition and being the first brand that comes to the consumer's mind indicate the level of awareness consumers have about the brand (Özbucak Albar & Öksüz, 2013, pp. 421-422).

Brand awareness is the basic level of brand knowledge that includes minimum awareness of the brand name (Çepni Şener, 2023, pp. 80-83). According to another definition, the brand's effect on the consumer's mind is brand awareness. Brand awareness consists of a four-step awareness pyramid (Ekiyor & Durmuş, 2021, pp. 347-349).

This pyramid shows the stages of awareness. Consumers are unaware of the brand at the top of the pyramid. This part is considered the beginning of awareness. At the bottom, consumers are aware of the brand in every way (Özyurt Kaptanlıoğlu, et al., 2019, p. 260).

The target audience's perception and awareness of products are critical for a brand to exist and sustain itself. Brand awareness is the consumer's ability to choose a brand among its competitors. The target audience's first impression of a brand is formed after the awareness process. Brand awareness is about the recognition and recall of the brand among competitors. Suppose the consumer is unaware of the brand when there is a lot of brand density in the developing market. In that case, the consumer will eliminate the brand from its competitors. Brand awareness should create a reflection equivalent to the brand essence (Özyurt Kaptanlıoğlu, et al., 2019, pp. 258-261).



Figure 1. Awareness Pyramid (Aaker, 2007).

A brand can only be fully realized by its target audience. Brand awareness can be achieved by creating awareness. Research has proven that brands engraved in the target audience's memory are preferred by consumers more. (Aktepe & Baş, 2008, pp. 84-85). A high level of brand awareness has various advantages in the decision-making process of the target audience during the purchase, such as the thinking, learning, and choice advantage (Sökmen, et al., 2023, p. 2953)

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Brand awareness is crucial for companies to convey their brands to their target audiences and potential customers. Potential customers determine their first impressions about the brand after completing the awareness stage (Orhan & Akyol, 2023, pp. 339-340). Since brand awareness is essential for e-commerce companies to survive in the sector, create customer loyalty, have a competitive advantage over their competitors, generate value, and direct their target audience to purchasing behavior, in this study, consumer opinions and emotions were converted into data through Keller's (1993) CBBE model.

### Literature Review

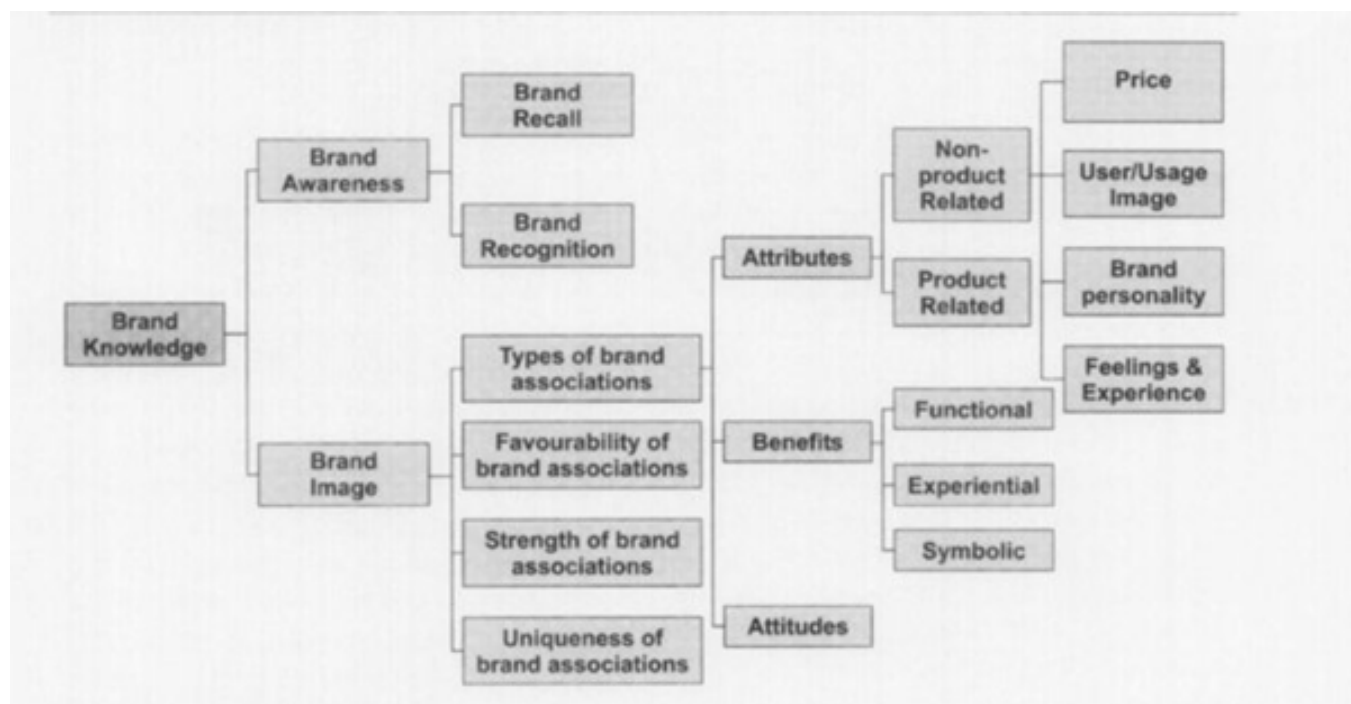
#### K. L. Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model

Before Keller, brand value was examined and evaluated from various perspectives. (Aaker, 1991; Farquhar, 1989; Srivastava & Shocker, 1991). Brand equity is defined as the effects of brand-specific marketing techniques. For example, certain results result from marketing a product or service because of its brand name, but would not have occurred if the same product or service did not bear that name.

Keller (1993) presented a conceptual brand equity model from the individual consumer's perspective. Customer-based brand equity is understood as the differential impact of brand knowledge on consumer response to the brand's marketing techniques. When consumers respond more favorably to an element of the brand's marketing mix than to the same element attributed to a fictionally named or unnamed version of the product or service, the brand is said to have positive versus negative customer-based brand equity. Brand knowledge is conceptualized according to an associative network memory model of brand awareness and brand image. Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer is familiar with the brand and has formed positive, strong, and unique brand associations in his or her mind.

Brand awareness plays an important role in the consumer decision-making process for three key reasons (Keller, 1993, pp. 1-22). First, consumers should prioritize the brand when examining and evaluating a product category. Brand awareness can then influence decisions about brands in the evaluation area, even if there are no associations with other brands. In decision-making environments, even if there is no well-formed attitude, a low level of brand awareness can be sufficient to guide product selection. Brand awareness affects the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image and affects the consumer's decision-making process. The figure below shows the dimensions of brand knowledge. Other brand associations can affect the positivity and strength of a brand association in the consumer's memory. The unity of brand associations indicates how easily an existing association can be recalled and how quickly and easily subsequent additional associations can be connected to the brand node in memory. Generally, information semantically consistent with existing brand associations is learned and recalled more easily than irrelevant information. That is, consumers may have expectations about the likelihood that a product or service will have a particular relationship if it has another relationship. These expectations influence consumers' ability to learn new brand information.

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**Figure 2: Dimensions of brand knowledge (Keller, 1993).**

Consumer-based brand equity can be defined as the differentiation of brand knowledge from consumer responses to the brand's marketing techniques. The definition of consumer-based brand equity includes three important concepts: "differential impact", "brand knowledge" and "consumer response to marketing". Differential impact is determined by comparing the consumer's response to a brand's marketing techniques with the response to a fictional version of the same product or service. Brand knowledge is defined by brand awareness and image. Consumer response to marketing is defined as consumer perception, preference and behavior as a result of marketing efforts. Therefore, if consumers respond more or less positively to the brand's product, price or distribution method than when the same marketing mix element is attributed to a fictionally named or unnamed version of the product or service, it is understood that the brand has positive or negative customer-based brand equity. The consumer's positive response and positive customer-based brand equity lead to increased revenue, lower costs and more profit. Brand knowledge is at the center of this. In particular, the positive, strong and uniqueness of brand associations play an important role in determining differential response.

If users see the brand as the same as the prototype of the product or service in the category, the responses of consumers should not differ from their responses to a product or service. If the brand has distinct and distinct associations, the responses of consumers should differ. The differences in responses depend on the evaluations consumers make of these associations and the marketing mix. Thus, building brand awareness and a "positive brand image" (i.e., positive, strong, and unique brand associations) in consumer memory creates customer-based brand equity, depending on which marketing mix element is being considered.



## Examining the Effect of Digital Advertisements on Brand Awareness with the CBBE Model

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Strong brand awareness and a positive brand image should increase the likelihood of consumer brand choice, build customer loyalty, and reduce vulnerability to competitive marketing techniques. Therefore, the view of brand loyalty here is that positive thoughts and attitudes toward the brand generate repeat purchase behavior in the consumer. Some of these thoughts may reflect the objective reality of the product, in which case there may not be customer-based brand equity. Yet, in other cases, they may reflect positive, unique, and powerful relationships that go beyond the objective reality of the product. (Keller, 1993, pp. 1-22). According to Keller (2003), brand image is the perceptions about a brand reflected by the brand associations in the consumer's memory. Brand associations are other information related to the brand-related information in memory and include the meaning of the brand to the consumer. Brand associations' positivity, strength, and uniqueness are the dimensions that determine brand value.

Achieving the correct brand identity involves increasing brand salience (Keller, 2003, pp. 7-20). Brand awareness is about how often and how quickly the brand is brought to mind by the consumer in different situations. How memorable is the brand, how quickly is it recalled or recognized by the consumer? How widespread is brand awareness? A brand with high levels of awareness has depth and breadth, so that consumers make repeat purchases and think of it first in situations where the brand is expected to be used.

We can conclude this section with the following elements of the CBBE (Customer Based Brand Equity) model: In the CBBE model, which emphasizes the duality of brands; the rational path to brand building constitutes the left side of the pyramid. The emotional path constitutes the right side of the pyramid. Creating significant brand value only comes with the right building blocks and requires reaching the top of the brand pyramid. Brand importance is how easily and frequently consumers think of the brand when making a purchase. Brand performance is how well the product or service meets the needs of consumers. Brand image describes all external characteristics of the product or service, including how the brand meets the needs of consumers. Brand judgments describe consumers' personal opinions and evaluations. Brand feelings are the emotional reactions and behaviors that consumers create towards the brand.





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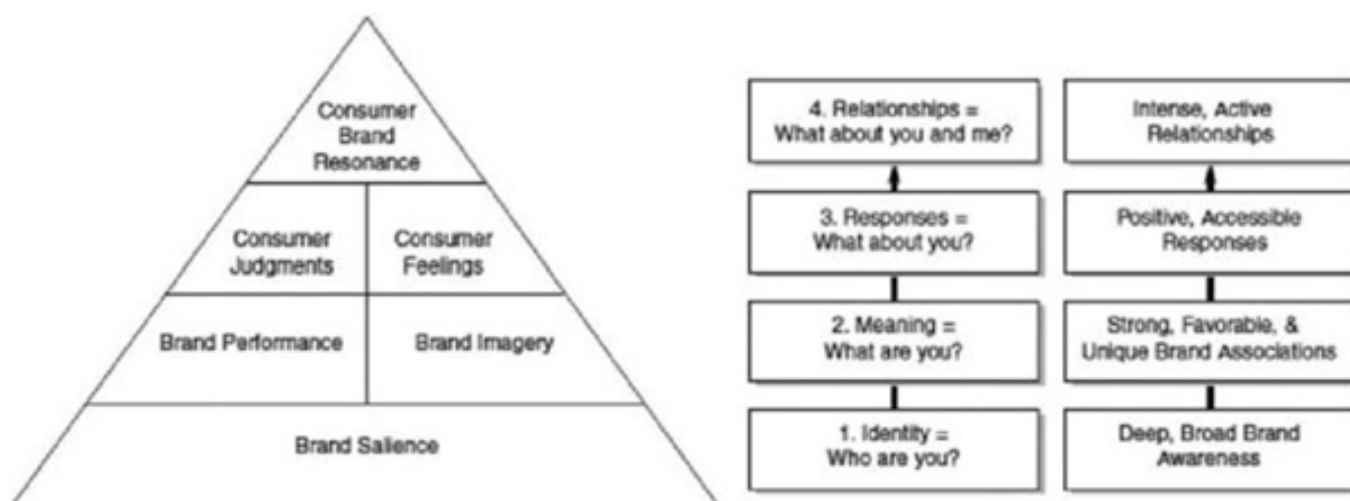


Figure 3: Keller's CBBE (Keller, 2009).

### Analysis of the Effects of Digital Advertising Models Used in the E-Commerce Sector on Brand Awareness

This study aims to analyze how digital advertising models such as display ads, social media ads, and content ads are perceived by consumers, their recall status, and their effects on brand awareness by using in-depth interview techniques. In this way, it aims to understand how and in what way these advertising models effectively create brand awareness. The research universe consists of 15 consumers living within the borders of Istanbul who interact with digital advertising models of companies in the e-commerce sector. The individuals in this universe are e-commerce customers and digital media users who encounter digital ads. As the largest metropolis in Turkey, Istanbul is a center where local and global dynamics intersect. For this reason, digital advertising studies conducted in Istanbul are deeply related to local cultural factors. The demographic structure of Istanbul is complex, where different ethnic groups, income levels, and lifestyles coexist. Many groups of different ethnic origins, such as Turks, Arabs, Greeks, and Armenians, live together in Istanbul. There are also great differences in the income levels of people living in Istanbul. Luxurious neighborhoods are intertwined with more modest neighborhoods. This diversity is also reflected in the lifestyles of people living in the city. While some people live by traditional values, others have adopted a more modern lifestyle. With these differences, Istanbul hosts a rich cultural mosaic and social differences. The young population in Turkey, in general, and in Istanbul, in particular, draws a profile prone to digitalization. Internet and social media use is quite common, especially among young people, offering great potential for digital advertising. Social media platforms allow consumers in Istanbul to interact directly with brands. Therefore, social media ads and content marketing are critical to increasing brand awareness.

The study aims to analyze how digital advertising models affect short-term sales effects and long-term elements such as brand recognition, value, and reliability and to make sense of creating brand awareness in consumers' perceptions of

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digital ads. Digital ads can affect consumers' experiences, perception filters, and personal characteristics differently. For this reason, the variability in consumer perception constitutes a limitation of the research, which is limited to the data collected in the interview.

### Research Method

In-depth interview technique is a data collection technique managed through verbal communication. It is based on asking questions and receiving answers, and it is also essential to learn the individual's beliefs, values, feelings, and experiences in in-depth interviews.

During the research, the participants were asked four questions to analyze the brand awareness of digital advertising models used in the e-commerce sector.

1. How effective are digital ads (ads that appear in search engine results such as Google, Yandex, ads you see on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Tiktok, visual ads on websites, e-mail ads) in remembering a brand? Can you explain with examples from your own experiences? Have you ever remembered a brand you have seen before?
2. Which types of digital advertising models (Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter, Youtube search network, banner, video) do you think increase your brand awareness the most? Can you explain why you think it increases brand awareness?
3. When you encountered a digital ad (social media, search network, e-mail ad), were there situations where the ad you encountered led you to learn more about the brand? If so, what were these experiences, could you tell us about them? For example, after encountering a social media ad, e-mail ad or Google ad, did you wonder about the brand and examine it?
4. Do digital ads create long-term awareness about e-commerce brands? Is this awareness permanent or long-lasting? What do you say?



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### Analysis and Findings

The findings of the study were analyzed with the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model developed by Kevin Lane Keller. The CBBE model consists of four dimensions that explain how brand equity is formed in the mind of the consumer: brand awareness, brand meaning, brand response and brand loyalty. In the analysis of qualitative data, the statements obtained from the interviews were analyzed in line with these four basic dimensions.

While sharing the participants' opinions, each participant was coded by giving them a number starting with P (P1, P2, P3). The demographic characteristics and duration of internet usage of the participants can be seen in the table below.

Participant No	Age Range	Gender	Marital status	Educational Status	Monthly Income Status	Monthly Internet Usage Time	Job
1	25-34	Woman	Married	License	35000	6 - 10 Hours	Full Time Employee
2	25-34	Woman	Married	License	27000	45 +	Full Time Employee
3	35-44	Woman	Married	High School and Below	42000	45 +	Self-Employment
4	35-44	Man	Married	Doctor's Degree	68000	45 +	Full Time Employee
5	25-34	Man	Married	Master's Degree	55000	45 +	Full Time Employee
6	25-34	Man	Married	License	35000	45 +	Full Time Employee
7	18-24	Woman	Married	Associate Degree	25000	45 +	Self-Employment
8	18-24	Man	Single	License	32000	31 - 44 Hours	Full Time Employee
9	25-34	Woman	Married	License	45000	6 - 10 Hours	Full Time Employee
10	18-24	Woman	Married	Associate Degree	30000	11 - 20 Hours	Full Time Employee
11	18-24	Man	Married	Associate Degree	30000	45 +	Full Time Employee
12	18-24	Man	Single	License	33000	0 - 5 Hours	Full Time Employee
13	18-24	Man	Single	Associate Degree	-	45 +	Student
14	25-34	Man	Married	License	45000	45 +	Full Time Employee
15	25-34	Woman	Married	Master's Degree	57000	11 - 20 Hours	Full Time Employee

**Table 2: Demographic Characteristics Distribution by Participants**

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According to Table 3, it is seen that 7 of the participants are man, 8 are woman and they are between the ages of 18-44. One participant is a high school graduate or below, 7 are undergraduates, 4 are associate degree graduates, 2 are graduate graduates, and 1 are doctoral graduates. Three of the participants are single and 12 are married. The monthly income of the participants was found to be between 25.000 Turkish Liras and 68.000 Turkish Liras. When asked about monthly internet usage times, 1 participant stated that they used the internet between 0-5 hours, 2 participants indicated that they used the internet between 6-10 hours, 2 participants stated that they used the internet between 11-20 hours, 1 participant indicated that they used the internet between 31-44 hours and 9 participants stated that they used the internet for more than 45 hours. When the occupational status of the participants was examined, it was seen that 2 participants were self-employed, 1 participant was a student, and the remaining 12 participants were full-time employees. The participants' opinions were evaluated by matching them with the following propositions to compile the data more systematically.

Proposition No	Proposition
1	Digital Ads Increase Brand Awareness
2	Social Media Ads Increase Brand Awareness
3	Search Ads Increase Brand Awareness
4	Video Ads Increase Brand Awareness
5	Banner Ads Increase Brand Awareness
6	When consumers see digital advertising, they want to learn more about the brand.
7	Digital advertisements increase brand awareness of E-Commerce brands in the long term.

### Proposition 1: Digital Advertisements Increase Brand Awareness

As a result of this proposition, 86.67% of the participants stated that digital advertisements increase brand awareness, while 6.67% stated that they do not affect increasing awareness. The majority of the participants believe that digital advertisements have a positive impact on brand awareness. When we examine it based on gender, female participants have reached a consensus on increasing brand awareness, and 100% responded positively. 75% of male participants responded positively, while 25% stated they were undecided. Some of the responses given by the participants are as follows:

**P2:** *"I believe digital ads increase brand awareness—especially social media ads. Since I use them all the time in my daily life, they constantly come across me and remind me when I'm shopping."*

**P4:** *"I agree that digital ads are effective for brand awareness, but this is not always true for every ad. Some ads are very creative and interesting, and I don't forget the brand."*

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**P5:** *"My thoughts on this subject may change. Sometimes, it increases brand awareness, but I have difficulty remembering which brand it is because I encounter many advertisements. The fact that the advertisement is attractive is also an important factor."*

**Proposition 2:** Social Media Advertisements Increase Brand Awareness 66.66% of the participants agreed that social media advertisements increase brand awareness and stated that they increase brand awareness. 33.33% of the participants did not agree with this opinion. 71.43% of the female participants said they decided, while 62.50% of the male participants agreed. Some of the responses given by the participants are as follows:

**P1:** *"I think social media ads are the most effective nowadays. Because I spend more time on social media platforms, when I see an ad for a brand on social media, the ad comes up repeatedly, and I can remember that brand."*

**P7:** *"Social media ads usually don't provide detailed information, and I usually skip over them. It's hard to say that social media ads impact brand awareness."*

**P10:** *"Today, social media ads are essential for brands. Since we spend most of our time on social media, we see ads more frequently. For this reason, I think social media ads are effective."*

**Proposition 3:** Search Network Ads Increase Brand Awareness According to the result of this proposition, all participants stated that search network ads do not increase brand awareness. Some of the responses given by the participants are as follows:

**P8:** *"I usually ignore search ads. I don't think they give me any awareness for brands."*

**P9:** *"Search ads are very general and not very impressive. So I don't think they increase brand awareness."*

**P11:** *"These ads don't grab my attention, so I consider them ineffective."*

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### **Proposition 4:** Video Ads Increase Brand Awareness

66.67% of the participants, 10 out of 15 participants, stated that video ads increase awareness, while 33.33% stated that video ads do not increase brand awareness. 71.43% of female participants noted that video ads affect awareness, while 28.57% said they do not. 62.50% of male participants indicated that video ads affect awareness, while 37.50% stated that they do not. Some of the responses given by the participants are as follows:

**P4:** *"Video ads are more impressive to me. I especially watch the ads that are narrated until the end. Video ads that explain the features of the products also interest me. Video ads are easier for me to remember and harder to forget. That's why I think they increase brand awareness."*

**P6:** *"I think video ads are more effective than other ads. Well-made video campaigns can help me connect with products, and I don't forget those ads."*

**P7:** *"I think people generally skip video ads. So I don't think it has an impact."*

### **Proposition 5:** Banner Ads Increase Brand Awareness

All participants stated that banner ads do not affect brand awareness. Here are some of the responses given by the participants:

**P1:** *"Banner ads don't interest me. They usually appear everywhere, and I block them whenever I see them."*

**P5:** *"I usually ignore these ads. They're usually irrelevant ads. So I don't think they have an impact."*

**P8:** *"These ads are no longer interesting because they appear on every website. That's why they are not effective."*

### **Proposition 6:** Consumers Want to Learn More About the Brand When They See Digital Ads

When asked whether consumers want to learn more about the brand when they see digital ads, 66.70% of participants said they want to learn more about the brand after the ads; some of the participant's opinions are as follows:

**P8:** *"I usually see ads about products that interest me, so I naturally want to click on them and learn more."*

**P13:** *"When a product I see in an advertisement appeals to me, I research that brand and get more information."*



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**P15:** *"Sometimes it interests me, and I want to learn more; sometimes it doesn't. I think it depends on whether the ad visual is interesting or not and whether the product appeals to me, but generally, if it's a product that interests me, I click on it and get information."*

### **Proposition 7:** Digital Ads Increase Brand Awareness of E-Commerce Brands in the Long Term

80% of the participants agreed that digital ads increase brand awareness of e-commerce brands in the long term. 13.33% of the participants had no opinion on the subject, and 6.67% were undecided. Some of the participant opinions are as follows:

**P4:** *"Digital advertisements increase awareness of brands in the long term. Thanks to these advertisements, we learn about brands and research them."*

**P5:** *"I think digital ads are a must for e-commerce brands. We get to know many brands thanks to these ads."*

**P6:** *"Digital ads impact awareness, but sometimes we ignore most ads. So I'm unsure if it will increase awareness in the long run."*

### **Conclusion**

This study examines the effects of digital advertisements used in the e-commerce sector on brand awareness and brand value. The findings obtained in this study are not limited to the effectiveness of digital advertisement models but also provide essential evaluations of consumer behavior, brand loyalty, and long-term brand strategies. Understanding the fundamental dynamics of consumer behavior is critical when examining the impact of digital advertisement models on consumers. Consumers are affected by the digital advertisements they are exposed to, recognize and remember the brand, and shape their purchasing behavior. Models such as search network advertisements and social media advertisements, in particular, allow consumers to directly interact with the brand and develop awareness about the brand. These advertisements can quickly create and strengthen brand perception; however, their ability to profoundly impact consumer behavior is related not only to the content of the advertisement model but also to how it is presented.

According to the findings obtained from the research, most participants agreed that digital advertisements increase brand awareness in the first proposition, 86.67% of the participants. All female participants agreed with this proposition positively, and 75% of male participants supported this proposition, while 25% were undecided.

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According to the research results, it was analyzed that social media and video advertisements create brand awareness. 66.66% of the participants stated that social media advertisements increase brand awareness in the consumer. 71.43% of participants stated that social media advertisements increase brand awareness for women and 62.50% for men. In video advertisements, 66.67% of participants 66.67% stated that they increased brand awareness. While 71.43% of women indicated that video advertisements increase awareness, 62.50% of men said they have an effect.

The analysis observed that search networks and banner advertisements do not affect brand awareness. Participants stated that these advertising models do not increase brand awareness.

In addition, 63.33% of the participants wanted to know more about the brand when encountering a digital advertisement. 80% of the participants said that digital advertisements would increase the brand awareness of e-commerce brands in the long term. This showed that digital advertisements were successful in attracting consumers' attention.

According to the research results, social media and video advertisement models, in particular, strongly affect remembering the brand and creating awareness in general.

Advertisements presented in video format were more memorable because they affected consumers visually and audibly. Video advertisements convey the message of the brands more effectively and attract the audience's attention more than other advertisement models. It has been revealed that advertisements that are shown to consumers repeatedly cause an emotional bond to be established in the consumer towards the brand and contribute to the brand being imprinted in the consumer's mind. It was revealed that search networks and banner advertisements are insufficient in creating brand awareness.

Continuity of advertisements with quality content is critical in creating brand perception and awareness. The continuity of advertisements positively affects the reliability of the brand.

It has been determined that the quality of digital advertisements that appear before consumers, their exciting content, and compatibility with the target audience are the main factors determining their impact on brand awareness.

The interviews revealed that consumers evaluate digital advertisements in terms of attractiveness, continuity, repetition, detailed information transfer, encounters on different platforms, personalization, and having a story. The principle of repetition, one of the most essential advertising principles, continues to be valid in digital. Although the consumers' focus time and intensity are meager, they demand detailed information on the products they are interested in. Coming across an advertisement on different platforms and more than once increases recall. Finally, the advertisement's appeal to the individual rather than the general public, its compatibility with the person's consumption codes, and the establishment of an

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impressive story strengthen the advertisement's effectiveness and the brand's awareness. Integrating digital advertising models with innovative developments will enable brands to achieve more effective short—and long-term results and help them establish a deeper bond with the consumer.

The impact of advertisements on the consumer is not limited to a momentary purchase decision. In the long term, the impressions that brands create on consumers directly affect brand loyalty. Digital advertisements can increase brand loyalty by ensuring consumers constantly interact with the brand. Digital advertisements, especially those supported by content that continually offers value to the consumer and enriches the brand experience, encourage consumers to continue to prefer the brand. At this point, total customer experience comes to the fore. Digital advertisements should create an experience where the consumer can continue to be involved with the brand even after purchasing.

In terms of long-term brand strategies, digital advertising not only increases sales but also affects the future positioning of the brand. Digital advertising models allow brands to constantly communicate with their target audiences and respond quickly to changing demands in the market. Brands' long-term strategies should be based on developing more effective advertising campaigns by analyzing consumer behavior and creating a loyal customer base. It should also be considered how digital advertising campaigns affect the brand's reputation in the long term. As a result, digital advertising models create short-term brand awareness, guide consumer behavior, increase brand loyalty, and become a fundamental part of brands' long-term strategies. Therefore, it is vital for brands to integrate digital advertising into their brand strategies in order to maintain their competitive advantage.

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**Communication Papers**

Media Literacy & Gender Studies

**Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles:  
An Instance from Romanian cultural journalism**

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## Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles: An Instance from Romanian cultural journalism

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### **Abstract:**

This work serves as a theoretical and practical guide for journalists exploring sophisticated journalistic genres. It addresses the concerning trend of culture pages in newspapers and online platforms becoming scarce, often replaced by simple PR news. This decline is partly due to a lack of familiarity with complex cultural texts, as journalism students receive only brief exposure to these genres. In Romania, cultural articles are frequently penned by writers with diverse, non-literary backgrounds, including engineers and teachers, further complicating the landscape. The study examines the structure and specificities of these cultural genres, offering practical guidance for journalists. It addresses both theoretical and practical aspects, offering a guide for journalists navigating more complex cultural texts, while also reflecting on broader trends in the field. The findings may reveal insights into Romanian cultural journalism and offer a basis for comparing with other cultures facing similar challenges.

**Key words:** cultural journalism, review, critique, criticism, chronicle, specificities, writing strategies

### **Introduction**

This study serves as both a theoretical framework and a practical guide for journalists engaging with more sophisticated journalistic genres. It responds to the growing concern over the diminishing presence of culture sections in newspapers and online platforms, which are increasingly being replaced by basic PR content. This trend can be attributed, in part, to the limited exposure journalism students receive to complex cultural texts, leaving them unfamiliar with these genres. The study explores the structure and unique characteristics of these cultural genres, providing journalists with practical strategies for writing and engaging with such content. Additionally, the findings aim to offer valuable insights into the state of Romanian cultural journalism and present opportunities for comparative analysis with other cultures facing similar challenges.

For our study on the decline of cultural journalism we apply several qualitative research methods. These methods help us explore the nuances of how cultural genres are structured, how journalists approach these genres, and the broader context of cultural journalism. We use content analysis and pay attention to the content of cultural pages in newspapers, magazines, and online platforms. This includes identifying themes, patterns, and structures in cultural articles, paying attention to how genres are represented. Thus we look for recurring themes, tone, language, and depth of analysis in the cultural texts.

**Data Sources:** Articles from Romanian newspapers, cultural blogs, and online platforms, categorized by the writer's background (e.g., literary critics, engineers, teachers).

We utilize a literature review, summarizing existing research, theories, and scholarly work relevant to the topic. This involves gathering and synthesizing current knowledge to provide a comprehensive overview of the field while



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identifying gaps or areas that require further exploration. In addition, we conduct a theoretical analysis, focusing on various theories, particularly in areas like literary criticism. This method aims to understand and interpret key concepts, frameworks, and theoretical perspectives. We also compare different theories, assessing their applicability and relevance to the study's focus. Furthermore, we present a range of opinions on the state of Romanian cultural magazines, summarizing insights from those directly involved in the production of these publications - editors, writers, and author-contributors who frequently publish in cultural sections. These subjective viewpoints are essential for assessing the current state of cultural journalism in Romania and demonstrating how it continues to thrive despite the economic challenges facing the broader press industry.

We also used a case study or a personal narrative approach, including personal examples of the author, working on a culture magazine. Using this method, the author reflects on her experiences, providing insights into the practical application of theories, personal observations, or the real-world implications of academic discussions. Thus the analysis includes the personal experience of the author, who worked as a cultural journalist and led the Culture section of the main local regional daily, *Observator*, from 1992 to 2009. Since 1999, the author has been a senior editor at *Arca* cultural magazine. This qualitative research method, incorporating personal and subjective experiences, aims to provide insights into cultural journalism from within the field. The personal examples provided are not absolute models but rather ways to better understand the approach and structure of the discussed cultural texts. These methods collectively aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic by combining theoretical frameworks with personal and contextual insights.

Our goal was to identify the journalistic characteristics of these cultural products and how they differentiate among reviews, critiques, and literary criticism. The study investigated their commonalities and the distinct discursive elements that set them apart. Theoretical support was drawn from significant studies defining these genres and numerous opinions from within Romanian cultural magazines. These opinions concerned the fate of literary magazines, their independence, the role of literary critics, and the importance of book reviews. While subjective, these perspectives from contemporary Romanian writers and critics are crucial for the study because they reflect the internal dynamics of cultural magazine editorial offices. Many of these views may also resonate in the cultural landscapes of other countries facing similar issues.

We analyze the presence of elements specific to cultural journalism, applying discourse analysis. This involves analyzing how language is used in cultural journalism to frame cultural topics, events, and the role of critics. The personal examples provided are not intended as absolute models but as ways to better understand the analyzed genres of cultural journalism.

## **Mastering the Craft of Reviews, Critiques, and Literary Chronicles: An Instance from Romanian cultural journalism**

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The cultural magazine *Arca* from Arad, founded by editor-in-chief Vasile Dan in February 1990, serves as a monthly publication focused on literature, essays, visual arts, and music, under the auspices of the Romanian Writers' Union, and published by the Arad County Council through the Arad County Cultural Center. *Arca* has established itself as a prominent institution in the cultural-publishing landscape of Romania, attracting high-quality contributors from across the country and abroad due to its authentic, original, and contemporary format. Currently, *Arca* is published in triple issues (quarterly), A5 format, and includes a full-color art album by a contemporary Romanian artist, making it a true aesthetic object. The printed edition is complemented by the online version (ISSN 1584-4250), available at <https://uniuneascritorilorarad.ro/revistaarca.html>. The magazine is a member of the Association of Literary Magazines, Print Shops, and Publishers (A.R.I.E.L.), recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Culture, which awarded it the title of "Magazine of the Year 2016." "*Arca*" also participates in the European project "Review within Review," coordinated by the Slovenian magazine "*Apokalipsa*."

Thus, our work aims to address, from multiple directions and perspectives, the shifts that have occurred over time in press texts with cultural subjects. Although the study focuses on a Romanian cultural reality, the situation of cultural journalism, along with the theoretical and practical models discussed, can also be applied to other cultures facing similar financial and value selection issues.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Cultural journalism in cultural publications: theoretical delimitations and the state of Romanian cultural magazines**

Cultural journalism can be included in a variety of formats and publications, appearing in specialized pages, general newspapers and magazines, or in publications dedicated exclusively to culture, both in print and online. These diverse distribution platforms target a heterogeneous audience. The types of texts produced by journalists vary depending on the medium in which they appear. Texts in specialized, exclusively cultural press are longer, more complex, and more focused on various areas of culture, from books to dance, theater, or visual arts. (Neamțu, 2024, 2025b)

Due to limited space, we will focus only on three genres of cultural journalism, as the topic is complex and will be further developed in future articles. Our analysis will focus specifically on a few distinct genres within cultural journalism: book reviews, book chronicles, and literary criticism. Cultural journalism can be included within specialized press. Specialized press encompasses various branches of journalism with specific areas of public interest, such as sports journalism, women's press, popular science press, environmental or health journalism, and so on. The importance of this specialized type of journalism is emphasized by professor Denis McQuail (2010), who highlights the need for acquiring specific skills and knowledge for cultural journalism. McQuail points out that cultural journalism plays a crucial role in society by informing and educating public taste and preferences. However, it faces a significant challenge: maintaining a consistent audience and attracting new readers in today's society, which is experiencing a severe crisis of patience and time. (Neamțu 2019, 2025d).

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Among all types of specialized press, cultural journalism is most comfortably associated with opinion and generous argumentation, as its genres closely resemble those of opinion journalism. This implies a writing style that emphasizes the expressive aspect of the article, allowing for greater freedom in composition. The journalist infuses the article with their own culture, reflecting their personal way of decoding reality through their readings and accumulated tastes over time.

In cultural journalism, many of the daily journalism requirements are suspended. Timeliness, text compression, simplicity, and direct style can be abandoned in favor of increased subjectivity, nuance, wordplay, and rhetoric that seeks to captivate the audience with a text that approaches literature. Indeed, literary criticism has often been viewed by analysts as a "borderline" genre (Iosifescu, 1969: 359), serving as a guide for readers through the intricacies of the author's proposed text.

For didactic reasons, we can classify texts in cultural journalism into two main categories: narrative types (short news, reportage, serialized diary, portrait) and non-narrative types (manifesto and program, essay, analysis and commentary, epigram, review, pamphlet, interview, polemic, open letter) (Neamțu, 2021, 2024). Our study focuses on non-narrative genres.

Romanian media analysts (Armanca, 2021; Neamțu, 2023a; Neamțu, 2025a; Simuț, 2006) discuss a shift in the media paradigm due to migration online, accompanied by newsroom impoverishment and losses in readership and relevant content. Armanca discusses the challenges and responsibilities of cultural journalism, questioning how much cultural content reaches the general public. Online media typically allocate sections for events and rarely for critical analysis or detailed interviews. This gap is filled by cultural press and magazines under the aegis of the Romanian Writers' Union, which capture the editorial pulse and broader cultural events such as performances, art exhibitions, and films.

In this qualitative research we use a literature review or a theoretical synthesis. This approach involves gathering, summarizing, and synthesizing various perspectives, theories, and findings from multiple authors. It provides an overview of the existing body of knowledge on a specific topic, highlights different viewpoints, and identifies trends, agreements, or debates within the field. The goal is to present a cohesive understanding of the subject while potentially identifying gaps or areas for further investigation. It should be noted that the various opinions of Romanian writers and critics are not present in specialized theoretical studies (these are absent in the theoretical landscape of Romanian cultural genres), but rather they are opinions collected from various important cultural publications, magazines that have conducted surveys on various cultural topics. We believe that their responses are relevant and provide a noteworthy perspective on our subject.

Literary critic and historian Ion Simuț believes that cultural journalism and literary criticism are complementary, asserting that traditional forms such as reviews, critiques, and literary chronicle should not appear in local press. He views these as strictly the domain of specialized cultural or literary magazines, which he

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refers to as "traditional" using a generic term. Simuț criticizes these literary unions' magazines, such as the Romanian Writers' Union, for lacking an interest in the "sociology of the creative act," suggesting that this could invigorate their content.

"Traditional literary (or cultural) magazines would become more vibrant if they included more cultural journalism, particularly by paying greater attention to the sociology of the creative act. However, the reverse is not as valid: if cultural journalism incorporates too much literary (or visual, musical, theatrical) criticism, it risks losing its appeal" (Simuț, 2006).

Simuț, former director of the cultural magazine *Familia*, which belongs to the Romanian Union of Professional Writers, published an article in *Familia* no. 5/2019 that sparked multiple negative reactions from colleagues at competing literary magazines. The article provides a sharp critique of the state of Romanian cultural magazines and how cultural topics are integrated into our cultural press.

"We all have two main goals: 1) to write about books, theater, films, concerts, and exhibitions, and 2) to publish poetry, prose, and essays, with or without illustrations. The formula for a literary magazine is simple. Do we care about our audience? Most of us probably don't. We're content if writer X reads the review we wrote about them or if the writers we published come to the office to collect the latest issue. [...] A troubling symptom is the magazines' inability to create literary events that establish values. In conclusion, we have an inflationary, formulaic, homogenized, column-driven, aging, inertial, non-journalistic, indifferent-to-the-public, unsellable, sectarian, and provincial literary press. Solutions or remedies exist for each of these defects, but they first need to be acknowledged. A patient who does not recognize their illness and symptoms cannot be treated effectively" (Simuț, 2019).

Simuț warns that every cultural magazine should have two main objectives: to write about books, theater, films, concerts, and exhibitions, and to publish poetry, prose, and essays, with or without illustrations. In the Romanian professor's view, the formula for a literary magazine is simple and unchanged. Occasionally, the formula may include favorable notes about friends and criticisms of adversaries. Simuț questions the target audience of today's cultural magazines if they are only read by collaborators and colleagues from other magazines. In such cases, the cultural magazine becomes a trade publication with a limited audience. Simuț also highlights a troubling symptom: the magazines' inability to create significant literary events and the distortion of literary awards, which are sometimes granted based on questionable criteria.

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Literary critic Marius Chivu (2019) examines the fate of cultural journalism, which he views as gradually deteriorating and labeling it as amateurish, the simplification of critical discourse is alarming: analysis, reflection, and critical evaluation have been replaced by banal enthusiastic recommendations, sometimes recycling pre-written phrases.

The conclusion is that Romanian literary press is inflationary, standardized, outdated, inert, non-journalistic, indifferent to the public, unsellable, sectarian, and provincial. Although solutions to these problems exist, they must first be acknowledged. Continuing his critiques of Romanian cultural magazines, Simuț publishes two new opinions in the form of journal pages in the cultural magazine *Vatra*. Simuț delivers a harsh diagnosis, lamenting the absence of a hierarchy of literary values in Romanian critical practice.

According to Simuț (2024), there are two types of criticism: diplomatic, kind criticism and probing, interrogative criticism, which is far from being malicious. We will present, in summary, some of the pertinent opinions of those directly involved in the activity of Romanian cultural magazines, whether they are writers who edit them or authors who regularly publish in literary journals. Their opinions, although subjective, are important for gauging the current state of Romanian cultural press.

The cultural magazine *Vatra* has dedicated several issues to a comprehensive investigation of the state of Romanian cultural magazines, as a response to the critical opinion of Simuț, which has provoked numerous comments in the online environment. The investigation includes responses from leading Romanian writers, critics, and literary reviewers who are part of the editorial teams of cultural magazines from the Union of Romanian Writers or who regularly publish in literary journals. Since their viewpoints seem relevant for assessing the current position of Romanian cultural press, we will summarize the main relevant points presented in the four issues of *Vatra*. The investigation is based on several fundamental questions for understanding the Romanian cultural phenomenon: current state of cultural magazines, landscape of cultural magazines, status of collaborators and solutions for more effective dissemination of cultural magazines.

Viorel Mureșan (2024) emphasizes the subjective nature of "selection" in cultural magazines, where choices are often influenced by situational interests. Prestigious contributors are attracted through persuasive methods, while regular columns are entrusted only to trusted individuals to avoid embarrassing

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<sup>1</sup> Simuț, I. (2024, July 16). Jurnalul unui potrivnic. *Vatra*, (5-6), 23-24. Available from: <https://revistavatra.org/2024/07/16/ion-simut-jurnalul-unui-potrivnic-3/> [cited:19.07.2024]; See also:

Simuț, I. (2024, May 14), Jurnalul unui potrivnic. *Vatra*, (3-4), 27-28. Available from: <https://revistavatra.org/2024/05/14/ion-simut-jurnalul-unui-potrivnic/> [cited: 19.07.2024]



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appearances. Occasional contributors, who add diversity and attract readers, are selected based on criteria such as their hometown, age, religion, gender, and connections with the magazine's management. Thus, access from outside the magazine's literary circle is limited.

The writer Ovidiu Pecican (2022) believes that despite the decrease in print runs of literary magazines, there is a constant or even increasing demand for literary and artistic publications. These magazines address a real need of the public to stay connected with original local and international creations. They should be of interest to politicians and sociologists because they reflect the state of living and active Romanian culture. For writers and artists, these magazines represent an essential way to present their work to the public. Books are seen as a less urgent but essential level of creation for long-term dialogue. The author notes that the selection of contributors is based on friendships, affinities, alliances, and momentary interests.

Professor Dan Ungureanu discusses the transition of literary and cultural magazines to the online environment, highlighting their importance in the current landscape. He suggests that traditional literary magazines should evolve to address broader social and cultural topics, similar to publications like *Observator Cultural* or *The New Yorker*. In Romania, cultural magazines are compared to isolated fortress-cities, and he proposes creating an online portal to present them all to readers. According to Ungureanu, it is difficult for young authors outside established literary circles to collaborate with cultural magazines, lamenting that, unlike the communist era, writers and intellectuals no longer have a significant social role. Nowadays, young people's attention is fragmented and oriented towards entertainment and personal development activities, to the detriment of "high culture" (Ungureanu, 2022) which has become merely a pastime for corporate employees.

Cătălin Sturza (2022) reflects on the relevance of cultural magazines in Romania, questioning whether they have a real impact. The author notes the inconsistency of cultural magazines' presence on social media. Many influencers in various fields, including literature, have more followers than all the Romanian cultural magazines combined. The magazines' websites are seen as mere showcases, not updated regularly, and lacking interest in developing as independent entities separate from their print editions. The author is convinced that there is no real interest in either online sites or social media within the Romanian cultural press.

O. Nușfelean discusses the lack of a clear and firm opinion in many cultural magazines. This absence is seen as an element that can give meaning to critical efforts, provoking literary developments or clarifying certain publishing contexts. The author observes a slowness in the willingness to display more confrontations of



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opinions in Romanian magazines. Nușfelean advocates for dialogue rather than exacerbated attacks. Rivalry between publications is acceptable but should occur without below-the-belt shots or negative criticism. Writers, usually mild-mannered, express their opinions and frustrations in restricted circles and often avoid mixing literary disputes with political ones (Nușfelean, 2022).

According to Teona Farmatu, cultural magazines are isolated in their own 'bubbles', each with its own internal dialogue, collaborators, and principles, leading to a fragmentation of communication between them. The interaction between magazines and their audiences is seen as fragmented, influenced by egos, ideological conflicts, and a generalized sterility in thinking. The author also points to insufficient funding in the field of cultural magazines and suggests adopting a 'less is more' principle, even if it means that the magazine will not be as frequent. Maintaining a monthly or weekly publishing schedule is viewed by Farmatu as "extremely difficult and exhausting due to the lack of financial support". (Farmatu, 2022)

From a social perspective, Andreea Pop (2022) notes that the literary environment is marked by divisions, antipathies, malice, and egos, lacking empathy and professional solidarity. However, the cultural environment is dynamic, especially in the context of today's society, with intense activity in the field of poetry. According to Dina Hrenciuc-Pișcu, magazines that rely on public funds often undergo dramatic transformations, while those that secure financial independence are more visible. Ideally, magazines should become completely independent of public funding. However, in the current Romanian context, where fiction is being replaced by reality, it is increasingly difficult to combine literary value with financial efficiency. The author describes the landscape of literary magazines as "relatively impoverished" (Pișcu, 2022).

In Romania, cultural magazines select their contributors largely based on personal appreciation and preferences rather than remuneration, as many contributors are unpaid, according to writer Nicolae Silade (2022). Contributors choose magazines based on their reputation and prestige, and valuable magazines are those that can attract well-known collaborators. The Romanian literary landscape is divided into numerous factions and sub-factions. Despite the pandemic, literary life remains active with many festivals, colloquia, and reading clubs, but participation is often influenced by criteria of age, friendship, and group affiliation rather than genuine values.

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Adrian Grauenfels (2022) shares his experience from Israel, where we learn that the press is divided into four major linguistic spheres: Hebrew, Russian, Arabic, and English, with the Romanian language having an almost nonexistent presence. Magazines are predominantly online, with a focus on politics and current affairs. The only publication dedicated to art and culture is 'Jurnal Israelian' from Editura SAGA. There is a general tendency towards trivialization of writing, tolerance for false texts and misinformation, and a lack of critical and academic mechanisms. The reading time for online magazines is only 3-7 minutes, and the influence of smartphones and inadequate education contribute to the lack of practical solutions. The author believes it is imperative to write for a small cultural elite, and that finding sponsors and government support is crucial for the survival of cultural magazines.

Mihai Iovănel observes that Romanian cultural magazines often select collaborators who are willing to write (almost) for free, noting the prevalence of critics working for minimal compensation. Dan Lungu describes the Romanian cultural landscape as "monotonous"(2022), pointing out that promotion and distribution issues, outdated themes, and lack of editorial coherence contribute to the limited impact of many publications. The broader context shows a small book market and low cultural consumption, with over 70% of individuals aged 16 and older not reading any books in the past year. Additionally, the number of libraries closed has increased, particularly in rural areas, and the remaining ones have not been updated. The rise in internet access and accelerated digitization of administration and education highlight the importance of an online presence for literary magazines. In a few years, print editions will likely be available only to subscribers who prefer them. While there is creative freedom and opportunities for newcomers, the social status of writers has diminished, the number of readers is decreasing, and making a living from writing is very challenging.

According to Alex Cistelean, in the local landscape, there are three types of cultural magazines: literary and cultural studies journals, private cultural magazines, and cultural magazines published by public institutions. Cultural magazines in Romania need to adapt to the rapid changes in the cultural landscape, including transitioning to an online format and updating editorial strategies, in order to remain relevant and visible. According to Nicolae Coade, creating a high-quality magazine requires a determined approach and considerable effort, akin to the "Trojan War" (Coade, 2022). Although everyone desires success, few are willing to actively engage in the process. Contemporary

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These are published by literary faculties and focus on literary theory and history, cultural studies, and so on. They can be very good or they can be insignificant, serving more as platforms for university staff to showcase their work. These journals have a relatively secure future due to the obligation of academics to publish research, but they are less involved in local debates.

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Notable examples are Observator Cultural and Scena 9. These magazines cover cultural reviews and are aimed at a broader audience. They face a more uncertain future, as they depend on corporate funding and are competing with the digital environment (blogs and social media) that attracts the same audience.

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magazines often appear superficial, like "postcards from the seaside" sent by editors on vacation. It is important to make efforts to attract the audience and create relevant offerings, even in the current context of the pandemic. One solution might be to consult students to find out which magazines they read, but a clear response from them may be elusive. It is not the audience's fault for not reading; it is the editors' responsibility to provide engaging and useful content, believes the writer.

Writer Gellu Dorian opines that there are still traditional readers who prefer printed magazines over their online counterparts. He gives a personal example, noting that many collaborators and readers, including himself as editor-in-chief, request the printed version of the magazine even after receiving the PDF. This underscores the importance and physical value of print publications compared to reading on screens, which can be considered less memorable and, paradoxically, ephemeral. However, the trend is to replace print magazines with electronic ones due to economic and convenience reasons. Nonetheless, the author emphasizes that it is crucial for the printed form to remain available for libraries and physical archives to preserve the tradition of research and reading. Discussing Romanian literary life, it is viewed as marked by stubbornness, with the cultural landscape disadvantaged by a political government that unfortunately tends to abandon unpopular cultural issues and make cuts at their expense (Dorian, 2022).

Literary and cultural magazines in Romania are facing extinction due to a lack of institutional support and the absence of adequate cultural policies, with the current crisis revealing the vulnerabilities of this sector. For critic Adina Dinițoiu (2022), the relevance of print media is decreasing, even though books still perform well in print format. Cultural magazines have always struggled with distribution and are now even harder to find, particularly due to the increasing importance of online platforms. Authors active on social media and online publications tend to circulate among the same magazines, including those that also publish in print. This phenomenon reflects a limited cultural space and a lack of diversity, with a desire for quality diversity in the literary landscape.

According to Dumitru Augustin Doman, the 200 magazines that appear in Romania are considered to be too many for their readers, who are "people of a certain age who developed a habit of reading print since the 70s and 80s and are now reluctant to switch to postmodern technology. The latest generations of readers are satisfied with their smartphones, which – in addition to numerous applications – also serve as a portable library. However, from what I see around me, young people do not read literary magazines on their phones but rather many other things". Doman also recalls an "explosion" of magazines that occurred following the anti-communist revolution of 1989 and laments the lack of polemics in cultural magazines, which "indulge in a certain autism" (Doman, 2022).

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These are supported by local councils, county councils, or the Writers' Union. Although they have a long history, the professor believes these magazines face an uncertain future due to political-ideological changes and dependence on public funding. They are often resistant to change and confront pressure to become provincialized, along with competition from other magazines.

### **The Anatomy of the Review, Literary Chronicle, and Literary Criticism**

Continuing, we will attempt to delineate the three genres of cultural journalism: the review, the chronicle, and literary criticism, focusing on the structure of these texts and the constitutive elements of the final discourse in the press. From my own experience, having led the culture section of a local daily, *Observator*, for over 10 years and working since 1999 as an editor for the Writers' Union magazine, *ARCA*, I have noticed that often the distinction between these genres is not clearly understood by cultural journalists. Cultural journalism, along with its genres, is often treated superficially even in Journalism departments studies, being relegated to the section of specialized journalism without a deep focus on the subject. Therefore, we will try to organize these genres, providing examples to illustrate each one.

Attempting to answer the question 'What is a review?', Lindsay Price provides several answers that are worth noting, adapting them to our genres under discussion.

several answers that are worth noting, adapting them to our genres under discussion.

"A review is a subjective but educated response to a piece of theatre, book etc. An informed and credible opinion, owing to the signatory's expertise. What should we learn from a review? A review should describe the subject of a book, without giving too much information about the plot. It should express an opinion supported by a thoughtful analysis. What's the difference between a well-written and a poorly-written review? Is the reviewer able to discern the vision of the author? Is the reviewer able to see the book's value despite his/her subjective response? Is the reviewer able to analyze the book in terms other than like/dislike? Does the reviewer support their views with examples? Does the reviewer let their personal opinion of a book colour their review?" (Price, no year, online)

These questions can assist the cultural journalist in crafting his review. Thus, writing a review, as well as a literary chronicle, involves keeping in mind several control questions (Ruști, 2002:135) that converge towards the question: why should I, as a reader, buy the book?, including other important details. This table is an original creation by the author of the article, who believes that in this format, the information can be more easily understood by readers. The table includes the author's own examples for a better understanding of the journalistic genre discussed. We chose a travel book and an interview with the author, melted in the same text, to provide an interesting, unique approach

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<b>Useful Information for Writing a Book chronicle</b>	<b>An example of writing a book chronicle, travel book:</b> Ion Cristoiu, <i>Crunta exploatare a sânului Julietei</i> , București: Martorul clipei, 2022, 398 pages. [In translation: Ion Cristoiu, <i>The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast</i> ]
<b>General Information About the Author and the Book</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Here, we may include a section from a previous interview with the author, who is a well-known Romanian journalist.</li> <li>• Contextualization of the text/ travel diary.</li> <li>• Statement of the themes addressed by the author.</li> <li>• What is new about this book?</li> <li>• Which countries does the author discuss?</li> <li>• What is the value of the book: the style of his approach?</li> </ul>	<b>The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast and Other Charming Reports - TITLE</b> <p>During the pandemic, I traveled from my own armchair with the latest volume by Ion Cristoiu, "The Harsh Exploitation of Juliet's Breast", published in 2022 by Martorul Clipei Publishing House.</p> <p>Ion Cristoiu remains a significant figure in the history of Romanian journalism not only for the numerous newspapers he founded and developed (such as <i>Evenimentul Zilei</i>, <i>Cotidianul</i>, <i>Zig-Zag</i>, <i>Expres</i>). His analyses on <a href="http://cristoiublog.ro">cristoiublog.ro</a> or on television channels where he is invited combine meticulously documented information with a unique, captivating style. A "historian of the moment," as he likes to call himself, Ion Cristoiu possesses a solid culture that he does not ostentatiously display in his texts. The author has a sense of linguistic balance, which he uses intelligently in a crescendo of arguments that lead to the point he aims to prove. Ion Cristoiu's texts always have a conclusion and provoke thought. His arguments are logical, sometimes surprising, but never boring. Reading him, you might exclaim, "I also believe / feel / think that way (or not?), but 'he write it so well.'" Good journalists are those who find the natural formula to express exactly what they think, regardless of the consequences.</p> <p>The elaborate, direct structure of the storytelling, combined with the reporter's talent for making you see exactly what he</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there a general message of the book?</li> <li>• You may use an interview with the author in your review. After the in-depth interview conducted, a relevant section can be extracted for the presentation of the book at this time.</li> </ul> <p><i>In the year 2000, I conducted a more in-depth interview with journalist Ion Cristoiu. I found the interview on my personal computer, from which I'll share the answers to just two questions:</i></p> <p><b>Interviewer: Carmen Neamțu:</b> Mr. Ion Cristoiu, it is said that if you manage to irritate the interviewee, they will end up shouting the truth out of anger. Let's start our discussion from this point. What irritates you the most today?</p> <p><b>Ion Cristoiu:</b> What irritates me the most is the inability of some people to understand from life, from the past, from books, that everything is transient, including the positions they hold. At some point, everyone behaves as if they will be up there forever. The second thing that irritates me - though I can't quite determine which of these irritates me more, perhaps this one - is the attempt by some newly wealthy Romanians to imitate the lifestyle of what they believe to be the lifestyle of multimillionaires in the West. There, wealthy businessmen live modestly because they don't have time. We have a class of pretentious people in every sense, newly rich,</p>	<p>saw/heard/felt/experienced, is a rare quality in journalism. Ion Cristoiu possesses this quality in abundance, and you can rediscover it in this volume.</p> <p>I have often analyzed Ion Cristoiu's editorials with students, examining the clean, clear way in which he structures his texts. Beyond the analysis, these editorials serve as benchmarks for writing that is both readable and engaging, providing models for younger journalists who wish to enter a profession where the temptation of superficiality is ever-present.</p> <p>This book offers a relaxing journey through various places around the world. Ion Cristoiu's innovative approach involves a reporter's perspective, full of humor, aiming to demystify and break away from the clichés of today's hurried tourist.</p> <p>A traveler abroad carries with them, even from the moment they cross their home country's border, the belief that the country they are heading to is fundamentally different from their own.</p> <p>Naturally, school has taught them that extraterrestrials are so called because they live outside of Earth, and consequently, no matter how costly the tour company is, it cannot offer you extraterrestrials on a platter, not even in Alaska. Nonetheless, somewhere deep in the traveler's soul, there flickers the hope that they will encounter strange people and customs, which they will be able to talk about upon returning, not without a certain pride. Responding to this need, the exploitation of traditions by tourism is booming all around the world.</p>
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uncultured, who only care about imitating what they think Western millionaires do.

**Interviewer C.N.:** One last question. You have been asked for numerous interviews, and you yourself have initiated countless dialogues. Is there a question you wish you had been asked over all this time but weren't?

**I.C.:** That's a difficult question. Maybe I should have been asked what I consider myself to be. And I would have answered: I consider myself a failure in several areas. I could have been a very good philosopher, but I wasn't and am not. I could have been a very good writer. And I am not. I could have been a very good literary critic. And I am not. I am a very good journalist. The sum of mediocrities in various fields has given rise to a good journalist. I think this is one of the keys to my success. That doesn't mean I am satisfied with not being a great writer. I would have preferred to be a great writer, even if I were less of a celebrity, rather than a journalist who is a celebrity, but a fleeting one. People will forget me after I'm gone.

With journalist Cristoiu, you see Hamburg and Baden-Baden with new eyes, fly to New York on the presidential plane, meet the Romanians in the diaspora in Washington, "crushed and irreparably afflicted by the disease of being photographed," discover Verona with Juliet and her balcony, which makes a massive contribution to Italy's GDP, find the crocodile farm in Thailand's Samut Prakan province, near Bangkok, or the Florian café in Venice. You encounter the new Western Japanese, the Russians, in a different light, conquer the fortress of Carcassonne, Pont d'Avignon, and Pythia from Apollo's sanctuary, under the invasion of prosperous consumerism. You observe that the exploitation of traditions is thriving across all the meridians of the world. And you find that, on a journey, you almost always need a relaxed and easygoing perspective.

Ion Cristoiu draws you to his reports with provocative titles. After reading his travel notes, you won't be disappointed by a mismatch between the title and the actual text: *The Dutch Mercedes – The Bicycle, How I Felt in America Just Like in Găgești-Deal, My Victory Over Sexual Tourism, New Year's Eve Like a Battlefield, A Sinner at Mount Athos, Pissing in Paris, How Some Thai Women Stepped on Me, How to Sleep in the Balcony of Europe (on the Costa del Sol) For 7 Euros, Experience an Infernal Allied Bombardment, Thank God They Took Me for an Italian!, A World-Class Tourist Attraction: The Ice Cream Stand, How the Scots Profit from the Fashions of the Times, Nothing About the Ancient Greeks, Everything About the Dogs and Cats of Today*, etc.

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	<p>Ion Cristoiu wraps his writing in a "jacket" of humor and self-irony, and masters the journalistic style he now practices in his travel notes, direct, surprising, and amusing:</p> <p>"Those who can afford to eat as much as they want and those who can't. Among those who can't afford it, there are two sub-groups: 1. Those who continue to fight against calories with a tenacity reminiscent of someone flailing their arms in the vast ocean despite having no idea how to swim. Those who have abandoned the fight, telling themselves: 'A person has only one life and one stomach!' I count myself among the first category, the subgroup of tireless fighters. This is why, at least for me, flying on the presidential plane has always been a test of life. It is not at all easy to see everyone around you devouring food and drinking beer after beer while you chew more aggressively on gum that substitutes for cigarettes, food, and drink" (pp. 41-42).</p> <p>"Nothing is more sacred in a restaurant than the two decisive moments of reading: the menu (at the beginning) and the bill (at the end)" (p. 88).</p> <p>There are 398 pages in which you discover forgotten and overlooked details, often deemed less important by some, from various corners of the world: Pont d'Avignon or the profitability of poorly made work; the bar in the Erotic Art Museum in Hamburg; the difference between Heaven and the Official Salon; the most prestigious toilet on earth, discovered at Edinburgh Castle; the culinary trap of burritos in Cleveland; the surprise of Juliet's balcony not being on the street and the mystery of millions of letters sent despite Juliet being dead for</p>
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	<p>a long time; how Cristoiu became the only customer from 1720 to now who stayed in the famous Florian café in Venice for no more than a few minutes, etc.</p> <p>Ion Cristoiu knows how to give value to trivial information and elevate it to the status of an event that can spark a story or a reader's reaction.</p>
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**Table: Carmen Neamțu, own processing 2025**

Apart from specialized writing (such as literary criticism), there are also brief promotional reviews, summaries, or concise informational pieces. A review should prioritize the information that the general public needs. The information in a review serves to either motivate (regarding the value of the book) or incite readers. The review has both the role of informing and shaping opinions (Neamțu, 2024:573-588). Brief literary promotional reviews most often appear in written or online daily press and are typically sent to the editorial office through the publisher's public relations office or directly by the book's author. This topic will be discussed in detail in a future study, which I am preparing thoroughly. This is a subject that we are going to explore in a future study.

"The main purpose of a review is to provide information about the work in question; to describe, as accurately and completely as possible, its style, content, and ideas." (Randall, 1998, p. 205)

Several important Romanian writers discuss the importance of book reviews in a 2014 survey that starts with the question: When does a book die? I will summarize a few opinions that reflect the current state of Romanian cultural affairs. The writers' responses are relevant not only to Romanian cultural journalism but also vividly illustrate the situation of books and reading in general, regardless of the language in which they are written.

"Books generally do not die, because they are not living things. It is abnormal, counterintuitive, and in a way magical when one of them receives a breath that revives it. Only living books die, because only they live" (Cărtărescu, 2014).

According to writer Ioana Pârvulescu, "when a book is not read, it rather falls into a kind of sleep. It can be awakened from its slumber (even if it's a 'death-like sleep') at any time by someone who reads it after a century or a millennium, by someone who rediscovers it and repositions it into another life, in another world" (Pârvulescu, 2014). According to editor Lidia Bodea, a book dies without readers; "books become nothing more than interior decorations—made of papyrus,

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parchment, or paper—or electronic deposits [...] Books that, spiritually, never die (they are immortal) are called classic books. Unlike books of a few generations, they are considered part of humanity's eternal heritage" (Bodea, 2014).

According to literary critic Cornel Ungureanu (2014), books do not die if they truly exist. Writer, translator, and literary critic Radu Parachivescu (2014) brings to the forefront the issue of the quality of the act of writing a book and the concessions made by authors in the desire to please a diverse audience. Literary critic Bogdan Alexandru Stănescu (2014) discusses how editors and literary historians can extend the life of a book, "a book lives longer the more it is re-read. It is the book you take with you when you move, or the one you feel the need to read from time to time during vacations". The writer and literary critic Marius Chivu (2014) is convinced that all books die once they have been written. And literary critic Angelo Mitchievici considers the term "when" in the question "when does a book die?" to be redundant: "A book does not die at a specific moment, for example, when it is no longer read. Rather, it is dead if it never had readers, if it did not nourish any sensitivity, imagination, or produce any thoughts or reflections at any point. Books are dead if they do not generate any inner movement, do not stimulate intelligence or emotion" (Mitchievici, 2014).

The writer Ioan Stanomir reflects on the life and death of books, suggesting that they are intertwined with our own existence:

"Books can never truly die. They can only transform into that fine dust that becomes one with our dreams. Books do not die because they pass into us, unseen, discreet, and ethereal. Beyond death and endings, they imagine the bridge we cross when our time comes" (Stanomir, 2014).

We could say that through reviews, chronicles, and literary criticism, the life of a book is extended. The book does not die but is explained to the public and introduced to them for further reading. Related to reviews, a chronicle is a genre that "records and comments on the spectacle of film, theater, fashion presentations, etc." (Ruști, 2002:141, Neamțu, 2024:573-588). As an important genre in cultural journalism, chronicles differ when appearing in mainstream press compared to specialized cultural press. Despite the text structure being similar, the complexity is greater in specialized press due to the more demanding audience. Simuț (2006) distinguishes cultural journalism from literary criticism, viewing them as a complementary pair. However, literary criticism is primarily found in cultural journals of the Union of Professional Writers.

For didactic reasons and to make it clearer and quicker for cultural journalists to understand, we present in the table a synthetic overview of the main distinctions we consider relevant in analyzing the cultural genres proposed by our study. The table below is a synthesis based on the author's personal experience of 28 years practicing cultural journalism. In its development, we also drew on a series of important studies that did not directly address cultural journalism. These

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include studies on literary theory (Eagleton (2003); Culler , 2011), semiotics (Barthes , 1972) and literary writing, argument and engaging with sources (Booth, Colomb, Williams (2003), glossary with definitions and explanations of key literary concepts all of which contribute to the crafting of coherent texts for cultural journalism (Abrams , 2014) or a guide to writing clearly and correctly (John Peck and Martin Coyle , 2002). Ultimately, writing for a cultural page is the result of the author's cultural background, which combines multiple disciplines, from criticism to text interpretation and clear argumentation, all necessary for capturing the audience's attention.

So Eagleton, Culler, Barthes, Booth, Abrams, Peck, Coyle, are highly influential in the fields of literary theory, semiotics, and critical theory. However, their work primarily focuses on literary criticism, literary theory, narrative techniques, and semiotics rather than cultural journalism specifically. They don't provide direct opinions about cultural journalism and its genres in the way we might expect from media studies scholars. However, we consider that their theories and ideas can be applied to an understanding of cultural journalism. None of these authors directly focus on cultural journalism, but their theories and insights on literature, writing, and semiotics are applicable to how cultural journalism interprets and presents cultural products to the public. Each author emphasizes elements that can shape cultural journalism, such as clear writing, awareness of genre, the role of myth and symbols, and the importance of understanding the audience. These authors must be part of the cultural background of those writing cultural journalism, in order to better understand the

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Eagleton explores the politics of literary theory and the impact of culture on shaping ideologies. Although he does not specifically address cultural journalism, his insights into the interaction between literature, culture, and power can be applied to this field. Eagleton emphasizes the ideological implications of culture, which can encourage cultural journalists to reflect on how their reviews and critiques influence or represent societal power dynamics. He argues that "all literary works... are 'rewritten,' if only unconsciously, by the societies which read them; indeed there is no reading of a work which is not also a 're-writing.'" (Literary Theory, 2009). This concept can be extended to cultural journalism, as it often reinterprets cultural products for the audience, shaping how they are perceived and understood.

6

Cultural journalists, like literary theorists, interpret the significance of cultural works. Culler's focus on how readers interact with texts (whether literary or cultural) could be applied to how journalists shape the public's interpretation of cultural products.

7

Barthes' semiotic theory of myth examines how ordinary cultural objects and practices are imbued with meaning beyond their literal function. This makes his ideas particularly relevant to cultural journalism, which often involves interpreting and conveying the symbolic significance of art, film, literature, and other cultural products. Barthes' concept of "myth" refers to how these cultural items reflect and transmit societal values and ideologies. Cultural journalists can apply this framework to analyze and decode the deeper ideological messages embedded in cultural products. As Barthes does in *Mythologies*, cultural journalism often uncovers the hidden symbolic layers of a work, helping audiences understand its broader cultural and social implications.

8

Although *The Craft of Research* is primarily a guide to academic research, its emphasis on constructing a clear argument and engaging with sources can be useful for cultural journalists. Good cultural journalism requires careful research, whether in the form of interviews, reviews, or essays. Journalists, like researchers, need to frame their arguments and ideas clearly to effectively engage their audience. This text emphasizes the importance of clarity, coherence, and structure—all of which are essential in producing quality cultural journalism.

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cultural phenomena they are writing about.

For didactic purposes, we have summarized in the table the main distinctions regarding the concepts of literary review, literary chronicle, and literary criticism. We believe that the table provides a clearer understanding of these terms, offering a better overview of the information needed to comprehend the terms being discussed. The table is the result of the author's personal experience in consistently practicing these journalistic genres.



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A Glossary of Literary Terms (2014). Abrams' Glossary provides definitions and explanations of key literary concepts, genres, and critical approaches. While not directly related to journalism, cultural journalists who write about books, plays, or films can use these concepts to enrich their reviews and critiques. Understanding literary and cultural genres is critical for journalists who want to analyze and write about cultural products. Abrams' definitions help clarify the characteristics of different cultural forms that journalists might cover.

10

The Student's Guide to Writing: Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (2002): This book is more of a guide to writing clearly and correctly, rather than a direct commentary on cultural journalism. However, its advice on how to craft well-structured, coherent, and stylistically appropriate writing is crucial for cultural journalists who need to communicate effectively with a broad audience. Cultural journalists need to ensure that their writing is accessible and engaging, and this book's guidance on clarity and coherence in writing can help achieve that. Cultural journalists need to adjust their tone depending on the genre they are writing a review, an interview, or an essay.



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<b>Important Elements for Distinguishing Cultural Journalism Genres</b>  To clarify and facilitate quicker understanding for cultural journalists, the table synthesizes the main distinctions considered relevant in the analysis of cultural genres proposed by our study.	<b>Literary Review</b>  A brief and accessible critical evaluation of a recent work, aimed at a general audience.	<b>Literary Chronicle</b>  A more detailed and contextualized analysis of a literary phenomenon, addressed to a specialized or academic audience.	<b>Literary Criticism</b>  A profound and complex theoretical analysis of literary texts, intended for an academic and specialized audience.
<b>Definitions for the terms</b>	A review is a brief critical evaluation of a recent literary work. The primary goal is to provide readers with a quick assessment of the work's value and interest.	<b>Literary Chronicle</b> A literary chronicle is a more detailed and contextualized analysis of a literary work or a group of works, focusing on a deeper understanding of the text.	Literary criticism is a theoretical and methodical analysis of literature, employing various perspectives and theoretical frameworks to interpret and understand literary works.  A profound and complex theoretical analysis of literary texts, designed for an academic and specialized audience. This involves in-depth examination and

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			interpretation of literary works through various theoretical frameworks.
<b>Content and Characteristics of Cultural Articles</b>	<p>The review describes the subject, analyzes the main themes and the author's style, and provides a subjective opinion on the work. It is typically intended for a general audience and is published in literary magazines, newspapers, or online platforms.</p> <p>It focuses on describing the subject, analyzing the style, themes, and structures, and providing a reasoned opinion on the quality and value of the work.</p>	<p>The critique provides a detailed examination of the literary context, influences, and impact of a work, often comparing it to other works by the same author or to other works within the same genre or period. It is written for a specialized audience, including students and scholars.</p> <p>It includes a deep interpretation of the text, exploring in detail the themes, symbols, influences, and impact of the work. It may discuss the author, their style, and the place of the work in their career or within a literary movement.</p>	<p>It is much more detailed and theoretical than both the review and the literary chronicle. Literary criticism examines works from multiple perspectives (structuralism, post-structuralism, feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, etc.), analyzing symbols, themes, styles, and socio-cultural contexts. It relies on theoretical methods and concepts and often references other critical and theoretical works.</p>

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Length of Cultural Texts	Literary Review:	Literary Chronicle:	Literary Criticism:
	<p>Typically brief, usually ranging from a few hundred to a couple of thousand words. It provides a concise assessment of a recent literary work, summarizing its main points and offering a quick evaluation for a broad audience.</p> <p>It is relatively short, often ranging from a few hundred to a few thousand words.</p> <p>It is usually shorter than a literary chronicle and is written in an accessible style, intended for a broad audience.</p>	<p>More detailed than a review, usually ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 words. It includes a deeper analysis of the work, its context, influences, and significance, often comparing it with other works by the same author or within the same genre or period.</p> <p>It is longer and more elaborate than a review, often ranging from a few thousand to tens of thousands of words.</p> <p>It is longer and more elaborate than a review, often featuring a more complex structure.</p>	<p>Often extensive, ranging from several thousand to tens of thousands of words. It involves a comprehensive, theoretical analysis of the work, exploring themes, symbols, styles, and socio-cultural contexts using various critical frameworks and methodologies. This type of text is typically aimed at an academic or specialized audience and may be published in scholarly journals or books.</p> <p>It can vary from short critical essays to extensive academic studies, journal articles, critical books, or chapters in collective volumes. It is intended for an academic audience and is published in academic journals,</p>

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			essay collections, and monographs.
<b>The Audience for Cultural Texts</b>	Targeted primarily at readers interested in determining whether the work is worth their time.	Targeted at a specialized or academic audience, interested in a deep understanding of literature and literary debates.	It is aimed at an academic and specialized audience, including students, professors, researchers, and literary critics. Literary criticism requires advanced knowledge of literary theory and literary context.
<b>Purpose of Cultural Articles</b>	The purpose of a review is to provide a critical evaluation of a recent work, such as a book, a film, a play, or a concert.	<p>The purpose of a literary chronicle is to provide a more detailed and extensive analysis of a literary phenomenon or a series of works, often offering historical and cultural context.</p> <p>A literary chronicle is published at regular intervals by the same person and features a specific graphic presentation (Husson &amp; Robert, 1991, p.52).</p>	Literary criticism focuses on the analysis and interpretation of literary texts, contributing to the development of literary theory and a deeper understanding of literature. It provides a more advanced level of analysis and theorization, enhancing the understanding and interpretation of literature from complex perspectives.

**Table: Carmen Neamțu, own processing 2025**

## **Typologies of Literary Critics.**

Literary critics are the ones who must give verdicts in cultural journalism, as their opinions are essential in positioning an author on the map of significant contributions to literature. We will now present several distinctions made by an important Romanian literary critic and we will attempt to delineate the categories of literary critics as outlined by one of the most esteemed and highly regarded Romanian literary critics, Nicolae Manolescu. He has written several articles on the importance of literary criticism for a country's culture. I will summarize the professor's views, as beyond Romanian culture, his ideas are pertinent and important for understanding literary criticism and the significance of this journalistic genre in general.

It is important to note that the literary critic typically expresses his/her views in specialized cultural magazines and less in the daily press, where the role of critic, in this case, falls to the cultural journalist. This journalist is not necessarily a professional writer. This distinct topic will be addressed in a future study that we are currently working on.

According to Manolescu (1972), there are five categories of literary critics, with the professor's approach constituting an attempt to characterize the literary landscape of Romanian journalism, including a caricatural note that the author assumes from the start. Thus, we can speak of: the critic from academic backgrounds; the lover of humanities; the refined critic; the combative critic; and the young journalist. Manolescu's synthesis is a direct portrayal, pointing out the wounds of criticism in general. These typologies can also be identified in other linguistic spaces, as Manolescu primarily discusses human typologies. Manolescu (2024) views the literary critic as a barometer of literature, a person who sets the literary opinion of the moment:

According to Maurice Blanchot (1955, 1969), there are two kinds of criticism and critics: traditional criticism and creative criticism. Traditional criticism is centered on evaluating and judging literary works based on established criteria, norms, and standards. The traditional critic is the one who interprets the hidden meanings of the work, explaining and evaluating it within a literary and cultural context. Creative criticism, on the other hand, is the opposite of traditional criticism. It focuses less on explaining/evaluating the work and more on exploring the infinite possibilities that the text offers through the complexity of the analogies that the work evokes. For Blanchot (1969), literature can be an encounter with the unknown within us, and the role of the critic is to mediate the encounter between author and reader as intelligently as possible. Literary criticism is an ongoing exploratory conversation, without definitive conclusions or final interpretations.

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### The State of Reviews and Criticism in Cultural Journalism: Relevant Surveys on the Romanian Literary Phenomenon.

Related to reviews, the chronicle is the genre that records and comments on the spectacle of film, theater, fashion presentations, etc. (see: Ruști, 2002; Neamțu, 2021, 2024). The chronicle, as an important genre of cultural journalism, differs when it appears in daily press compared to its appearances in specialized cultural press. Even though the structure of the text should be the same, its complexity is greater in specialized press due to the more demanding audience. Simuț (2006) differentiates cultural journalism from literary criticism, seeing them as part of a fertile complementarity, although literary criticism is primarily sought in cultural magazines of the Union of Professional Writers.

According to Simuț, the media coverage of a good contemporary Romanian literary book is currently around three reviews per year, whereas, in the mid-2000s, it was approximately one per month. We will summarize some opinions from relevant Romanian writers and literary critics regarding the state of Romanian literary criticism. These opinions are important as they gauge the current Romanian cultural moment and provide insights from those directly involved in the act of literary criticism, the genre we are discussing here.

In summary, we can assert that the growing importance of online journalism, including in the literary and cultural fields, has led to changes in cultural texts. These texts now find themselves competing with the free access to information on the internet, where a heterogeneous public can now express opinions on anything, imagining themselves as experts on various subjects. Disguised as anonymity, a series of comments filled with insults and personal attacks on the authors of the articles have surfaced. Freedom of expression has been interpreted as the freedom to say anything, in any manner, disregarding basic rules of interpersonal decency (Neamțu, 2023a). As a result, the literary critic has lost ground as an authority in the field, being replaced by influencers and eclectic characters who use colorful, often vulgar language to attract an audience at any cost. Writer Adina Dinițoiu (2022) discusses the "erosion of traditional authority" that critics and reviewers once held.

Numerous important literary critics and writers present their relevant opinions in an investigation about the state of literary criticism conducted by the cultural magazine Echinox. We will summarize the most relevant opinions, which are important in the context of outlining the atmosphere surrounding these cultural genres that are the subject of our work. Important questions that were raised include: *What is the relevance of criticism today? What would be the specific*

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<sup>11</sup> Manolescu, N. (1972, May 1). Criticul adevărat acum este. Echinox, (5). Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2010/12/1972-n-manolescu-cinci-tipuri-de-critici-goldmine/> [cited: 3.07.2023] This article, considered a landmark in the study of Romanian literary criticism, has often been revisited in discussions on this topic, as seen in...: Manolescu, N. (2010, December 9). Cinci tipuri de critici. Echinox. Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2010/12/1972-n-manolescu-cinci-tipuri-de-critici-goldmine/> and Manolescu, N. (2021, August 24). Starea criticii: dosar & anchetă. Echinox, (24). Available from: <https://revistaechinox.ro/2021/08/starea-criticii-dosar/> [cited: 3.07.2023]



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*difference in our literary criticism over the past 10 years? What types of criticism can you identify today (e.g., reception criticism, directional criticism)? What do you think is the current methodological, institutional, or even ideological difference between literary criticism and criticism in other artistic fields (film, visual arts, music, etc.)? It has often been said that literary criticism is no longer written, but the question can also be asked in reverse: Is literary criticism still read? Has the relationship between the literary system and the institution of criticism changed in recent years? Do you believe that the function of criticism has been replaced or at least minimized by other dissemination media such as Facebook, Goodreads, or vlogging? Have there been periods in Romanian criticism influenced by external factors (French, American, etc.)? Can we currently talk about influences or dominants from certain cultural geographies in the Romanian space or from specific international critical voices? Or is their supposed hegemony rather a local occasion for debates around imports?*

The investigation started from a paradoxical observation in Romanian cultural journalism, namely that we are witnessing a retreat of important critics to more comfortable zones, such as universities, yet literary magazines continue to have sections for reviews and book critiques. According to Anamaria Mihăilă (2020), "from socialist realism to aesthetic autonomy, protocronism, and postmodernism, Romanian criticism remains largely import-driven, still conceptually dysfunctional, but increasingly gaining self-awareness in relation to the need for method".

In 2014, the cultural magazine *Steaua* initiated an investigation coordinated by writer Alex Goldiș, with the proposed theme: the disappearance of literary criticism? Goldiș questions whether the retreat of contemporary critics represents a more general symptom of the disappearance of literary criticism. If so, what are the reasons: the ascendancy of media culture over traditional culture, the increasing specialization in research (the alternative of ISI/WOS academic publishing)? Is this phenomenon a sign of normality, in line with Western trends? Is it still possible today for a critic to be both a reviewer and a researcher? This investigation is answered by important Romanian writers and critics. The issues presented cross the boundaries of language and Romanian literature and can also be found in other small-language cultures that do not have international circulation like English, French, or German.

According to writer Irina Petraș (2014), the situation should be viewed optimistically because literary magazines "full of reliable critics, both young and old". Literary critic Ion Pop (2014) increasingly feels the futility of literary criticism, which he perceives as an "autistic social game, a useless and minor ritual". Alexandru Matei (2014) views the discussion about the end of literary criticism as "a hysterical response", rooted in humanity's apocalyptic imagination. Iulian Boldea (2014) is convinced that literary criticism is transforming into "a niche phenomenon", but he does not believe it is disappearing. It has lost some of its authority because readers no longer have the patience or time to read about books, and literature no longer dominates the hierarchy of public discourse.

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Writer Jonathan Franzen, visiting Romania, stated in an interview that a cultural journalist must stand out and make themselves noticed, but they cannot do so by praising someone who is already successful:

"A critic gains nothing by praising someone who is already successful. If a critic wants to be noticed, they either praise someone overlooked or tear down someone in the spotlight". (Coliban, 2018: 21)

Summarizing, we can say that the distinction between criticism and literary chronicles largely lies in the frequency of their publication. According to Preda (2006:29), a critical article typically provides a summary of a book, followed by the author's personal opinions. On the other hand, a literary chronicle is published at regular intervals by the same person and features a specific graphic presentation (Husson & Robert, 1991:52). A literary chronicler is a recognized figure within the writing community (Preda, 2006:40). The chronicle circulates ideas and appears with regularity, such as on the same day of the week or in the same section or page (Preda, 2006:41). Both criticism and chronicles have unique perspectives and offer a degree of freedom in their approach and writing style, which is influenced by the author of the article (Voirol, 1992:66; de Broucker, 1995:218).

### Conclusion

The approaches to these journalistic genres differ significantly depending on the medium in which they appear, whether in a daily newspaper or a cultural magazine belonging to a professional creative union. In both cases, cultural journalism faces challenges in the digital age, as well as opportunities to reach a broader audience through new technologies.

In our study we provided a brief overview of several relevant opinions from individuals directly involved in Romanian cultural magazines, including both writers who edit these publications and authors who frequently contribute to literary journals. While their perspectives are subjective, they are crucial for assessing the current state of the Romanian cultural press.

Literary criticism in Romania, as well as elsewhere, encounters several challenges: a limited and highly specialized audience, a lack of paid critics (as many magazines associated with writers' unions, such as ARCA, do not compensate for contributions), and an editorial market with distribution issues (many print newsstands in Romania have closed, with few remaining even in major cities). There is also a lack of appetite for reading among the general public, the migration of the few readers to online platforms, and cultural magazines often have websites that are not regularly updated and contain dense content. Additional issues include concerns about the originality and diversity of articles (with many magazines -

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<sup>12</sup> Coliban, A. (2018, October 25-31). Suntem deja martorii ascensiunii politicii tribale. Interview with Jonathan Franzen, *Dilema veche*, (766), 21. A new investigation on the topic of reception criticism and the reading crisis also appears in Pătrășconiu, C. (2024, May 3). Despre cronică literară, *encore et toujours*, *România literară*, 19-20 (LVI), 16-30.

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having similar structures and failing to offer fresh perspectives) and the influence of social media. While social media allows critics greater interaction with the public, it also risks leading to superficiality in their approaches, driven by the desire to be seen as trendy and appreciated by internet users.

We are thus witnessing an increase in the heterogeneity of cultural arbiters, with the sphere now expanding beyond traditional cultural journalists to include bloggers, celebrities, pundits, academics, and intellectuals. Hence, the question arises: "Everyone's a critic?" We have observed how journalistic authority and critical expertise within the cultural field are being reconfigured. (Neamțu, 2024, 2025b) In conclusion, we can say that cultural journalism, through genres such as reviews, chronicles, and literary criticism, is in a period of transition. It is seeking new forms of expression and adaptation to the changes in the current cultural and media landscape.

We intend for this study to serve as a prelude to more detailed analyses we plan to conduct on cultural journalism genres (Neamțu, 2025c). Due to the limited print space in the magazine, we have focused on only a few aspects of these three genres, with the aim of continuing and deepening our research in future articles.

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## **The Importance of Equality Plans and Practices in Higher Education Institutions: Analysis of Equality Plans of Spanish Universities**

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# The Importance of Equality Plans and Practices in Higher Education Institutions: Analysis of Equality Plans of Spanish Universities

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## Abstract

'Gender equality', 'equal opportunities' and all kinds of 'equality' between individuals are important issues that need to be improved for sustainable development. 'Equality Reports' have an important role in the development of equality practices. The practices of universities, which have direct and indirect impacts on social development through their education and research-development activities, are of key importance in this regard. This research aims to reveal the importance of equality practices in universities and provide a general framework on what universities can do in order to promote equality culture by examining Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) of the top three Spanish universities, known for their high performance in this area. It is hoped that these findings will serve as a useful guide for other universities looking to implement or publish their own GEPs.

**Keywords:** Equality, Gender Equality, Equality Plans, GEPS, Equality in Universities, Higher Education Institutions

## 1. Introduction

Gender equality and all equality issues are within the scope of human rights. Inequalities on earth have persisted since the dawn of humanity. However, over the course of changing historical processes, many positive developments have been achieved for ensuring gender equality. Nevertheless, gender equality has yet to be fully achieved globally, despite being more prominent in certain countries. According to the World Bank Report 2022, globally, women still have only three quarters of the legal rights afforded to men (The World Bank, 2022a). If we look at education figures, one of the most basic levels of equality, latest United Nations (UN) statistics show that girls and boys are equally likely to enroll in primary and secondary education. The dropout rate for girls in primary school is 9%, while it is 7% for boys. The percentage of female students enrolled in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) programs, typically described as predominantly male, is 35%. The ratio of female researchers is 30% (UN, 2020).

Gender equality in terms of educational participation and educational achievement has been achieved in most OECD countries. However, in many developing countries, girls still have poorer educational attainments, especially at the secondary and tertiary levels. Young women are less likely to choose STEM fields than young men and, women who complete these fields are less likely to work in these sectors. Achieving gender equality in education in these countries will not only ensure equality in employment, but will also help to postpone early marriages, reduce infant mortality rates and improve the health conditions and education of future generations (OECD, 2011: 2).

On the other hand, even though statistics are important, numbers can sometimes be indicative. Gender inequality is a perception, a cultural and personal perspective and a code embedded in the socio-political structure. At this point, it is

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reasonable to argue that inequality stems from deeper systemic issues rather than mere statistics. While the number of female students has significantly increased, it is crucial to recognize the structural inequalities that extend beyond numerical representation. Miriam E. David calls these statistical tables, which emphasize numerical equality, the 'numbers game' and states that this is a structure used to mask the power games that continue to be played against women. According to David, the rules of this game need to be transformed to develop a more feminist-friendly or egalitarian future (2015: 23).

In our contemporary world, although women in developed countries have nearly equal rights to men in education, law, economics, politics, and social spheres, gender inequality persists in many other parts of the world. The lower social status and subordinate position of women remain global challenges that must be addressed in the pursuit of gender equality (Bayhantopçu, 2021: 114). In addition, significant steps must be taken to achieve global progress, not only in gender equality but in all areas of human equality. At this point, schools play a crucial role in fostering the necessary changes in awareness and behavior. Universities hold an especially valuable role in driving this transformation.

The issue of gender equality has become an increasingly important policy requirement for academic institutions. University leaders, facing ongoing inequalities between male and female academics and administrators at all levels, are tasked with identifying action strategies to reduce and eliminate gender bias within their organizations (Rosa et al., 2020: 1).

Investing in formal education is essential to promote equal employment opportunities and strengthen economic growth. This investment enhances cognitive and non-cognitive skills and productivity, providing individuals with more abilities to develop their knowledge and skills throughout their lives (OECD, 2011: 2). Therefore, it is particularly important to evaluate and improve women's conditions in higher education. Over the past 20 years, positive changes have occurred with the increasing number of highly qualified women in academia and the labor market (Rosa et al., 2020: 1). According to the latest data provided by THE (Times Higher Education) index in 2022, there is a growing performance and interest in achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including SDG 5 - "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." A total of 938 institutions provided data on their contributions to SDG 5 in 2022, showing a 21% increase compared to 2021 (UNESCO, 2022). However, research indicates disparities such as men receiving higher research funding, publishing more articles, having higher representation in STEM fields, and women facing more difficulties in work-life balance (such as not being able to resume their careers after maternity leave, lack of flexible working hours, lack of childcare support), higher representation of men in senior positions in their careers, and men receiving higher salaries than women in the same positions (Rosa et al., 2020). Research shows that, in proportion to their grades, female students' mathematical skills are underestimated and overlooked, while male students' are overestimated; that female teachers receive less favorable evaluations than male teachers in all disciplines; and that women are less likely than men to

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obtain tenure or be honored with an endowed chair, even if they are equally successful in academic achievement. Additionally, research shows that male academics are more likely to receive research grants or awards and receive more funding, while women spend more time on teaching and committee work and are more likely to receive service awards (Buitendijk et al., 2019: 24). Similar findings have also been highlighted in development reports published by the EU, particularly concerning academia and sustainability.

Universities are powerful institutions for promoting gender equality, diversity and inclusion, not only in their institutions but also in society (Rosa et al., 2020). Universities are in a position to develop measures to break down existing societal biases and counterbalance stereotypes and reduce existing inequalities. By recognizing the problems faced by underrepresented groups in society and academia, universities can help to reduce existing inequalities and close achievement gaps between groups (Buitendijk et al., 2019: 11). In particular, it is essential to change students' perceptions of equality. Raising students' awareness and sensitivity about gender equality contributes to changing their attitudes, behaviors and cultures both within higher education institutions (HEIs) and in other aspects of their lives. It helps to eliminate their gender-based prejudices, if any. Secondly, some students can be drivers of change, in the informal process of change with their perspectives (EIGE, 2022a: 19). By emphasizing equality, diversity and inclusion, universities can create an environment where everyone works together and individuals feel valued. With this understanding, people's sense of belonging, daily satisfaction, performance and innovative capacity can be increased (Buitendijk et al., 2019: 19). At this point, it is important for universities with a holistic approach capable of facilitating comprehensive transformation to address the issue.

This research aims to reveal the importance of equality practices in universities and provide a general framework on what universities can do in which areas in order to establish a culture of equality. To achieve this, the study discusses Equality Plans, which play a crucial role in developing these practices, and analyzes the equality plans of high-performing Spanish universities in this regard. Additionally, the study aims to serve as a valuable resource for universities preparing their own equality plans.

## **2. The Importance of Laws and Protocols Regarding Equality Plans in Universities**

### **2.1. Policies**

A research which has been conducted within the scope of the INVITED project, led by the European University Association (EUA), with the partnership of the European University Continuing Education Network (eucen) and the support of the European Students' Union (ESU) aiming to support universities in developing strategies towards equality, diversity, and inclusivity, aims to establish a database on HEIs' approaches, success factors, challenges, and required support. In a survey responded by 159 HEIs, when asked "How do you support students during their studies to ensure diversity, equality, and inclusivity?", 87% of universities mentioned

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studies to ensure diversity, equality, and inclusivity?", 87% of universities mentioned 'guidance, counseling, mentoring'; 77% mentioned 'accessible structures/activities'; 70% mentioned 'language courses'; 68% mentioned 'psychological support'; 63% mentioned 'inclusive learning and teaching methods and tools'; 62% mentioned 'part-time education options, flexible courses'; 58% mentioned 'financial support'; 39% mentioned 'childcare on campus'; another 39% mentioned 'remedial courses'; 32% mentioned 'housing support'; 8% mentioned 'other', and 1% stated that they did not have specific activities (EUA, 2019: 28). As seen, there are many different methods to ensure diversity and equality. However, specific guidelines are necessary to present these within a cohesive framework.

David argues that despite feminist contributions in academia over the last 50 years, the patriarchy or hegemonic structure in HEIs is still felt and experienced by women, and at this point, the question of how to transform universities to achieve real gender equality among all students and academics should be asked (David, 2015: 1). While there are many answers to this question, it is reasonable to assert that the legal regulations and strategic plans established by countries is the most important factor.

For example, in its 'National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality' report, the United States states that girls' education affects their future economic security and thus the nation's security. It is noted that sexual and gender-based violence, including harassment and abuse, hinders economic and political participation and negatively affects health and well-being. It also undermines women's ability to advance in the workplace and leadership in all sectors. The report states that these strategic objectives are inherently linked and must be addressed in concert to achieve their vision for gender equity and equality (The White House, 2021: 9).

In another example, Swedish Council for Higher Education stated that 'all activities in HEIs must promote sustainable development, which means ensuring a healthy and good environment, economic and social well-being and justice for present and future generations' according to the Higher Education Act 1992 (Swedish Council for Higher Education, 2021). According to the Act, "equality between women and men must always be taken into account and promoted in the activities of HEIs". Furthermore, the 'Swedish Discrimination Act' requires all workplaces in Sweden, including research organizations, to document their active measures to prevent discrimination and promote gender equality between employees and students (EIGE, 2022b).

Six countries in Europe require gender equality planning across all sectors, including HEIs, while 12 countries have specific requirements for higher education. France, Ireland, Spain and Switzerland are among the countries with the most comprehensive requirements for equality plans set by law (European Commission, 2021a). One of the best examples is the Spanish government's legislation requiring institutions to publish equality plans and reports. In Spain, the 'Equality Law', published as 'Organic Law 3/2007', is one of the most important laws ensuring gender equality. One of the most important points of this law is that organizations



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with more than 250 employees have to publish an equality plan (BOE, 2007). Moreover, the new law requires that institutions with more than 50 employees to publish an equality plan (BOE, 2020). Therefore, each university in Spain is required to have an equality plan. Each institution regularly reports its policies and activities in accordance with its own structure in these plans. The Ministry of Universities, which supports these laws, is responsible for promoting the principle of gender equality in university education and aims to guarantee the prioritization of gender equality in all university policies, programs and projects (Ministro de Universidades, 2022). CRUE - The Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities - also encourages gender issues to be on the agenda of many Spanish universities (CRUE, 2022). The importance of the existence of laws is reflected in numerical performances.. According to RUIGEU (Network of Gender Equality Unions for University Excellence), 54 Spanish universities have an equality plan (RUIGEU, 2022).

All research organizations, universities and funding agencies in Spain are obliged to comply with specific legal obligations related to equality and gender equality. Therefore, although legal and policy frameworks differ between countries, violations of existing regulations can lead to fines, legal proceedings and liabilities, reputational damage, loss of attractiveness and/or internal conflicts. Therefore, the existence of laws and internal procedures is important (EIGE, 2022a: 32). At this point, laws, guidelines and expectations of international organizations, SDGs and regulations developed by universities within their own internal systems are important tools to ensure equality.

### **2.2. Networks, Committees & Projects**

There are also different networks that bring universities together to promote gender equality. For example, EQUALITY is a network of 23 HEIs from 18 Latin American countries and 4 European countries to develop strategic measures to promote gender equality and the representation of women in leadership positions in research, academia and society in general (EN, 2022).

Universities also carry out many different activities on equality within their own organizations. For example, at the University of Amsterdam, the Faculty of Science has a special scholarship program for female talents to increase the number of female scientists. The Sorbonne University works to improve the quality of life of disabled students and staff and to reduce the impact of this disability on their careers. The University of Helsinki has had an 'Equality Committee' chaired by the rector since 1990 and the university published its first equality plan for 1995-1999 (Buitendijk et al., 2019: 42, 50, 60). Cambridge University has a full-time 'Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisor' who provides psychological and practical support to students who have been harassed. The 'Breaking the Silence' Initiative, which has been implemented at Cambridge University since 2014 as a result of research conducted by students on the prevalence of sexual harassment in universities, is a campaign to prevent the problem, support victims and improve reporting mechanisms by drawing attention to harassment both within the school and in society. The project's communications campaign for cultural change produced more than 500 media articles, tweets reached five million accounts and the

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accompanying film series was viewed 90,000 times on Facebook. Student incidents reported to the university increased by 1000% in 18 months during the campaign period, with the university receiving 350 anonymous reports of harassment and misconduct. Thousands of students were informed and more than 200 students received training on how to safely intervene in harassing situations. More than 250 staff members received training on how to respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual harassment (Buitendijk et al., 2019: 42-43). University Paris 7 Diderot integrated a mandatory 3.5-hour awareness-raising session on gender equality for incoming first-year students into its orientation program, applicable in every department (EIGE, 2016: 36).

Some of the other projects conducted in this field are as follows: 'GARCIA (Gendering the Academy and Research: Combating Career Instability and Asymmetries)' focuses on promoting gender culture and combating gender stereotypes and discrimination in European universities and research centers. 'Combating Career Instability and Asymmetries' project works on gender-sensitive approaches in education and training. 'INTEGER (The Institutional Transformation for Effecting Gender Equality in Research)' project aims to create sustainable structural change to improve the career paths of women researchers. Similarly, the 'EGERA (Effective Gender Equality in Research and the Academia)' project brings together higher education institutions from 8 countries to develop and monitor equality plans (European Commission, 2022a). Created in 2005 to promote and transform gender equality in higher education (HE) and research worldwide and to encourage a commitment to advance women's careers in science, technology, engineering, mathematics and medicine (STEMM) employment, the UK-based 'Athena Swan Charter' has begun to address gender equality more broadly across the globe. For example, it provides guidelines and roadmaps for monitoring and collecting data on diversity and it facilitates the ease of university management efforts in this regard (AdvanceHE, 2022).

The European Commission argues in the 'Structural Change in Research Institutions' report that gender-responsive management of universities and research organizations will have a positive impact on policies and practices related to the recruitment, promotion and retention of both women and men. The report's recommendations for universities and other institutions are as follows: (1) Integrate a gender dimension into undergraduate and postgraduate curricula across the university (especially in engineering and science); (2) Develop an Equality Plan and include audit results (sex-disaggregated statistics) in annual reports, including gender pay gap, staffing statistics and senior committee membership; (3) Engage in and follow up good practice projects; (4) Develop skills for career development and research content (European Commission, 2012).

Horizon Europe also addresses gender equality at three main levels: (1) Having a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) in place; (2) Integrating the gender dimension into research and innovation content; (3) Achieving the target of 50% women in Horizon Europe-related boards, expert groups and evaluation committees and increasing gender balance in programs. It also proposes five thematic areas: (1) Work-life

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balance and organizational culture; (2) Gender balance in leadership and decision-making; (3) Gender equality in recruitment and career progression; (4) Integration of the gender dimension into research and teaching content; (5) Measures against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment (European Commission, 2021b).

To ensure the sustainability of gender equality measures, it is essential to integrate these practices into the organizations' routine procedures and to establish them structurally. This can be done by introducing new roles/positions, such as a gender equality officer, and modifying or structurally replacing existing routines and procedures in the organizations. Furthermore, creating links with other strategic planning processes and/or embedding the 'Gender Equality Plan' directive in other, broader strategic documents will contribute to its sustainability (EIGE, 2022c).

### **3. Framework for Equality Plans**

According to Hussain et al. there are seven key performance areas of a university: (1) Teaching quality, (2) Research culture, (3) Technological capacity/talent development, (4) Accessibility, (5) Community engagement, (6) Internationalization and (7) Environment. Achieving sustainable excellence requires a university's commitment to transparency, fairness and accountability at all levels of governance, for which visionary leadership is essential. To ensure and advance sustainability, a university needs to establish a quality management system, i.e. a well-defined protocol for documenting, monitoring, evaluating and controlling its processes and systems (Hussain et al., 2019: 10). Equity Plans are one of the necessary tools within this framework.

Horizon Europe requires all public bodies, including national ministries or other public bodies, non-profit organizations, public or private HEIs and research organizations to have Equality Plans in place by the end of 2022 (Horizon Europe, 2021). At this point, Equality Plans are an important tools for universities to mainstream equality practices within their own organizations and then across society. EIGE (European Institute for Gender Equality) describes the preparation of equality plans in six steps: First - analyze the structure of the organization, identify potential experts in the field of gender equality; Second - examine the legal framework, identify different indicators to measure gender equality, map gender-based data; Third - set goals for equality, set specific objectives and indicators, take inspiration from what other organizations are doing, develop collaboration with stakeholders, and prepare a timetable; Fourth - implement these goals and ensure visibility of the work, again involving stakeholders in the process; Fifth - establish a monitoring and evaluation system, define key indicators to measure progress, and share results with the organization on a regular basis; The sixth step is to work on the next plan, decide on priorities and next steps, conduct benchmarking and adapt to changes in legal, national and EU frameworks (EIGE, 2022c: 4).

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Complementing this, according to the roadmap for the implementation of customized Gender Equality Plans by the GENERA (Gender Equality Network in the European Research Area) Project, there are six key steps to sustainable Gender Equality Planning. These are respectively as follows: (1) Learn: Understand the decision structures and rules of the organization and define the institutional framework within which decisions and actions will be implemented; (2) Analyze: Analyze the current situation through the collection of sex-disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data using various gender indicators; (3) Design: Design a customized 'gender equality plan' by identifying specific areas for action and development and draw up a realistic organization-specific timeline; (4) Implement: Work in partnership with decision-makers to promote the implementation of specific gender equality measures and make visible their place in structural changes; (5) Monitor and Harmonize: Monitor progress and how measures are being implemented and align them with measures and targets; (6) Final Evaluation: Making a final evaluation and taking the necessary measures to move forward according to the results. At the core of these steps is the establishment of an active top management leadership, and implementation team at all organizational levels, responsible for overseeing the implementation process and ensuring that all related activities are conducted by this team (Baraban, 2017: 8, 9).

A well-designed legal and institutional framework and good organizational management are essential for mainstreaming gender equality and delivering the expected results. In addition, it is equally important to equip staff with the understanding and tools to enable them to fulfill their gender equality mandate effectively. This is where gender equality competence development comes into play as one of the most important components of a gender mainstreaming strategy (EIGE, 2016: 4).

Based on the literature presented so far and the research content of the study, it can be suggested that the main areas that should be included in equality plans within the scope of the main fields of activity of universities can also be classified under the titles of (1) Governance Mechanisms; (2) Education-Training; (3) Research-Development, Innovation; (4) Equality in the Workplace; (5) Work-Life Balance; (6) Social Participation Activities; (7) Awareness and Communication Activities; (8) Reporting and Monitoring.

### **3.1. Governance Mechanisms**

Evidence from HEIs, and similar research on gender equality more broadly, clearly shows that the engagement and commitment of senior institutional leadership is critical for advancing gender equality. Decisive and sustained action is needed to address gender inequalities. This should be accomplished through consistent, strong messaging that highlights the importance of gender equality and ensures that the issue remains on the agenda, even when other parties or partners may not be particularly interested (Mott, 2022: 14). It is therefore essential to have a strategy and a management presence in the first place. An effective Gender Equality Plan is a strategic document that involves the entire organization. Plans require top management leadership and support and formal commitment but work

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organization, including staff, students and stakeholders (Horizon Europe, 2021). At this point, gender budgeting, which is about identifying ways to redistribute resources for gendered management and financial decisions and ensuring equal opportunities for every individual in the organization (EIGE, 2022c: 45), is an important aspect to consider when setting relevant strategic goals for institutions.

To strengthen this system, it is essential to establish procedures and regulations, create a dedicated unit under the rectorate, form sub-committees, and implement management systems necessary for overseeing equality practices. This should be done within the framework of specific strategies, ensuring that equality plans are followed, and their objectives are disseminated throughout the university. Equality units, for example, are important hubs for Spanish universities to pursue equality goals for women and men. Gosálbez and Merino state that until the creation of equality units at the university, research groups on women, feminism and equality were the primary structures contributing to the issue of discrimination against women, and that now, in Spain, equality plans are the main instrument for transforming the realities of discrimination and inequality in universities (Gosálbez & Merino, 2011: 14). Therefore, the existence of a relevant unit is important for a holistic and realistic implementation.

### **3.2. Education and Training**

It is important to structure the education system from a gender and equality perspective. Education with a gender perspective allows us to identify and problematize how the construction of images, symbols, discourse, regulatory systems, hierarchies and forms of subjectivity expressed in different disciplines reflect gender relations and contribute to the production and reproduction of particular models of femininity and masculinity (AQU Catalunya, 2018: 26).

Mott argues that there is considerable evidence that the curriculum content often constructs men and boys as the default subject. There are many consequences of leaving sex or gender and women/girls out of the curriculum. These include inappropriate and sometimes dangerous overgeneralizations of women from men's experiences and/or physiology, and misrepresentation of women's experiences and needs from what is constructed as 'normal' based on men's lives. Through training, where a more accurate picture of discrimination and disadvantage can be presented, sexist gender generalizations can be used to explain sex and gender differences (Mott, 2022: 9). Therefore, as Köseoğlu et al. note, as a first step, it is important to acknowledge the fact that women have unique struggles and issues that affect their educational journeys, the choices they make and the rewards they reap. With this acknowledgment comes the need to address and evaluate different dimensions of inequality (e.g., vital, resource, existential) (Köseoğlu et al., 2020: 11). Therefore, it is important to consider curricula from a gender perspective and to integrate an equality perspective into curricula by reviewing each department and each course content. At this juncture, there is a clear need for research on how gender equality and other related issues can be integrated into courses and teaching methods. This includes exploring new approaches and transferring relevant findings to academics through training



programs.

Moreover, equal representation of both academics and students in departments should be considered. For example, women continue to be underrepresented among graduates in STEM fields, accounting for just over a third (35%) of the world's STEM graduates. Women are also in the minority in scientific research and development, accounting for less than one-third (30%) of the world's researchers (UN, 2020). Based on this data, it is necessary to regularly report the number of female and male students in each department, especially in these areas, to identify the departments where the differences between the ratios are high, and to develop new strategies and projects to ensure equality in this regard.

### **3.3. Research and Development, Innovation**

Analyzing the research results of a discipline from a gender perspective can help to show the importance of gender in a particular academic and social field. In other words, gender issues should be taken into account when conducting research or other academic work, both in producing the work itself and in benefiting from its results (Gonzalez & Conejo, 2020: 53).

GENDER-NET, the first European Research Area Network (ERA-NET) dedicated to the promotion of gender equality through structural change in research institutions and the integration of sex and gender analysis in research, has set 'Indicators on the Integration of Gender Analysis into Research (IGAR)' as part of the project. IGAR refers to the use of sex and/or gender analysis at all stages of the research cycle, taking into account the biological characteristics of both women and men and the evolving social and cultural characteristics of gender. The network publishes guidelines on this topic for use in research in different fields (GENDER-NET, 2022). Similarly, in a 2015 report, the League of European Research Universities (LERU) analyzed the role of gender and gender analysis in research and innovation (R&I) and recommended that gender should be better integrated into R&I funding, content and implementation. According to the report, taking gender into account in social and other science research leads to more effective and beneficial results. The report emphasized the importance of support, incentives and resources for gender inclusive research and innovation and provided a twenty-point list of recommendations for stakeholders to take action (LERU, 2015). In addition, it is of utmost importance that students who will work on research, projects, applications and undergraduate and graduate projects are trained with gender awareness. At this point, students should learn to use gender as an analytical and explanatory variable when identifying the research question, conducting a literature review, defining hypotheses, choosing the methodological approach, collecting and analyzing data, reaching and highlighting conclusions (AQU Catalunya, 2018: 17).

In addition to conducting research from a gender perspective, assessing research design from an equality perspective and increasing support for equality-based research, it is also important to support women researchers. In most European countries, research funding success rates are, on average, 3 percent lower for women than for male team leaders (European Commission, 2022b). Although



this gap has narrowed over time, gender differences persist (Rosa et al., 2020: 8).

### **3.4. Equality at Work**

Ensuring equal representation of women in management at the same level as men, conducting hiring processes according to equality guidelines and standardized procedures, and revising recruitment, job announcements, and evaluation criteria within this framework are essential steps. Additionally, ensuring that career advancement, appointments, and other matters consider gender equality; reporting the number of male and female employees at all levels within both academic and administrative staff; taking corrective measures to achieve equal representation in positions with significant gender disparities; and reviewing all occupational health and safety issues from a gender equality perspective are crucial for universities to effectively integrate the equality systems they implement in education, research, and teaching into their internal cultures. Additionally, entrepreneurship is largely gender-based. Women have much lower probabilities than men in establishing and managing new businesses, and investors and funders are predominantly male-dominated. Therefore, specific entrepreneurship training for women, promoting innovation and encouraging graduates to start their own businesses have been identified as important areas that need to be integrated into higher education (Mott, 2022: 38). Women entrepreneurs tend to establish and manage firms in different sectors than men, own smaller businesses, operate with lower capital, and have slower business growth rates compared to firms owned by men (OECD, 2011: 6). Therefore, it is crucial to empower women in the field of entrepreneurship and encourage them by providing trainings, developing programs and projects.

### **3.5. Work-Life Balance**

Another important area for advancing equality practices is work-life balance. According to the focus group research conducted at Trinity College Dublin in 2018, it is stated that it is women, rather than men, who prefer flexible working arrangements and take time off for family care. For this reason, it was reported that many female academics returning from maternity leave find it difficult to return to their posts after leave. Some mothers emphasized how isolated or overlooked they felt and noted how difficult it was for them to catch up with their academic research, especially after taking leave. Mothers reported a lack of appropriate support, including childcare, to help bring them back to the level they were at before in their teaching and especially in their research (Drew & Marshall, 2021: 65). Thus, flexible working hours, enabling employees on maternity leave to find a suitable working environment when they return to work and continue their careers, supporting the research careers of academics and researchers who have children, and child-care support should be included within the scope of equality practices.

### **3.6. Community Engagement Activities**

Higher education projects should be engaged with women in local communities and disseminated through online activities to increase their visibility. E-learning projects and modules addressing gender inequality in higher education, including sexual harassment and violence, should be developed and widely

disseminated (Mott, 2022: 14). Universities should carry out joint projects with both public institutions and Nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) and should be involved in relevant networks. They should conduct training on all issues that violate personal rights, particularly sexual violence and all forms of violence and harassment, both within and outside the university. This impact should extend to local communities through training programs and informative materials. Additionally, student clubs should be encouraged to engage actively in these efforts. By doing so, student awareness on these issues will increase, and effective practices can be disseminated. Furthermore, establishing volunteer programs for both academic and administrative staff, as well as students, should be included as part of these initiatives.

### **3.7. Awareness and Communication Initiatives**

Communication initiatives play a crucial role in raising awareness of the issue. Awareness and communication activities that need to be carried out include highlighting the achievements of women and ensuring that they are announced through communication activities, developing volunteering programs, providing regular reminder trainings and communication about the procedures and regulations developed on equality, ensuring the announcement of projects through websites, notice boards within the university and social media, organizing more conferences on the subject, providing trainings to both academic and administrative staff. It is important that this awareness is conveyed to both academic and administrative staff through trainings and seminars that provide information on its inclusion in courses and curricula as well as learning techniques. One important criterion at this stage is the use of gender-sensitive language in the university and all communication activities.

### **3.8. Reporting and Monitoring**

Horizon Europe states that organizations should have equality reports that are published on their websites and signed by senior management; a commitment of resources and expertise on gender equality to implement the plan; annual reporting on staff (and students for relevant organizations) based on sex-disaggregated data and indicators; and awarenessraising/training for staff and decision-makers on gender equality and unconscious gender bias (Horizon Europe, 2021). The existence of such a report can only be effective through monitoring, follow-up and measurement systems. Gender audits of existing and planned projects should be conducted systematically. Standardized reports should ensure that the points where there is (or is not) sex and gender analysis, are revisited and discussed (Mott, 2022: 13).

## **4. Methodology**

This study aims to emphasize the importance of equality practices in universities and to provide a general framework for the types of activities they can undertake in this context. To achieve this objective, the research was structured around the question, "What are the main topics and subtopics in universities' equality plans, and what activities are being conducted in this area?" A multiple case study method, a qualitative research approach, was selected for the research.

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The sample was formed using purposive sampling method to align with the purpose of the study. To maintain the performance standard in this field, the global performance tables assessing universities based on the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically THE index, were used as a basis, and universities were selected according to the SDG 5 Gender Equality Performance Scale (THE, 2022a). Instead of focusing on a single university, the first three universities in the index (in Spain) were selected to access more data. Spain was chosen as the sample country because HEIs in this country are legally obligated to have equality plans, and Spain is among the countries with the highest performance in this area. According to THE 2022 index, in Spain, the 'Rovira i Virgili University (URV)' (70.8) is ranked first, 'Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) University' (70.7) second, and 'Girona University (UdG)' (70.6) third (THE, 2022a). The most recent equality plans and relevant pages on the websites of these universities, which demonstrate advanced performance in equality practices and planning, were analyzed using content analysis method as the data collection tool.

### 5. Findings and Analysis

Rovira i Virgili University (Universitat Rovira i Virgili - URV) published its first equality report in 2007, and its third equality report in 2022. While the first two equality plans included approximately 50 measures, the third plan contains 35 measures since they have achieved most of their targets. The university has established the Gender Equality Unit to ensure the systematic implementation of these initiatives. This unit includes an advisory board, as well as the Gender Equality Observatory and the Gender Equality Commission. Additionally, there are people responsible for gender equality in faculties. The Equality Unit is responsible for implementing the measures outlined in URV's Equality Plan and works to disseminate awareness of gender equality within the university community and society at large. The Equality, Diversity, and Welfare Commissioner aims to promote gender equality, ensure respect for diversity at URV, and enhance the well-being of the university community (Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2022a). The university conducts various activities to promote equality, which are integrated into its equality plans. For instance, the Faculty of Engineering and the Gender Equality Observatory of the University organize a "Girls' Day" to promote engineering as a career choice for girls.

Since 2005, at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona), the 'Equality Observatory' has been operating to cover inequalities between men and women, particularly those groups negatively affected by discrimination or economic and social situations (migration, age and sexual orientation). The University published its first report in 2006 and released its fourth equality plan for the years 2019-2023. Additionally, the University conducts numerous research and development projects on the issue (Universitat Autònoma

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The criteria for ranking are as follows: The university's research on gender equality (27%); the proportion of first-generation female students (15.4%); student access measures such as application, admission, and completion of school (15.4%); the proportion of senior female academics (15.4%); the proportion of female degree recipients (11.5%); measures to promote the advancement of women, including policies against discrimination, etc. (15.3%) (THE, 2022b).

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de Barcelona, 2022a).

The Equality Unit of the University of Girona (UdG) consists of representatives from eight faculties. The University published its first comprehensive plan in 2009 and released its second equality plan in 2021. Additionally, the University is a member of the 'Network of Universities for Diversity' (RUD), which brings together all Spanish universities to work on sexual and gender diversity (sexual orientation, physical and emotional diversity, gender identity, and gender expression) and diversity initiatives (Universitat de Girona, 2022a).

Each new report of the universities concerned has priority areas, and the relevant indicators are determined according to these priorities. According to the most recent reports, the issues and activities addressed within the scope of equality are as follows:

Rovira i Virgili University has compiled its equality plan under five main headings (Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2022b). The first is 'The University's commitment to gender equality.' This section, which highlights the importance of the management process as mentioned above, includes: defining and establishing the Equality Unit and relevant commissions and working conditions; creating protocols to ensure equal representation and integrating a gender equality perspective into all regulations; disseminating online information about the plan and protocols; allocating the necessary financial budget to the unit; creating equality plans consistent with the strategic plan; continuously reporting the university's equality performance; informing students and academics about structures, equality, and abuse protocols; increasing the representation of women experts and academics in various disciplines, management, and the media; promoting the use of gender-sensitive language in all units and providing training on these issues; establishing a corporate profile related to gender equality and using it in official gender-sensitive language in all units and providing training on these issues; establishing a corporate profile related to gender equality and using it in official documents; and conducting the university's communication activities from a gender equality perspective. For example, in addition to all these, the University has included in its plan the goal of developing methods to determine the gender equality stance of its suppliers and to make supplier selection and evaluations accordingly. The second section is on 'Identifying sexism and raising awareness on equality'. This section includes the steps of Creating a culture of gender equality; Identifying people who are discriminated against because of their gender; Informing relevant authorities about equality plan activities; Identifying reports on discrimination cases; Organising and communicating internal and external campaigns on inequalities by using e-mails, digital newspapers, social media; Organising joint campaigns with public authorities, campaigning on these issues in secondary and high schools; Awarding prizes for relevant doctoral and bachelor's degree theses; and Promoting courses on this topic. The University has a protocol on discrimination, violence or harassment. Students who encounter such a situation can report it to the relevant center and receive support by filling out a form on the website. Third section is, 'Equality in selection, promotion and job assignment' and the main objectives under this heading are as follows: Preparing regulations on

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recruitment and ensuring that there is no discrimination in the relevant procedures; Identifying career barriers faced by women at the University, taking measures to address them; Identifying areas of gender bias, taking preventive and corrective measures; Providing training to academics and administrative staff; Identifying occupational and physical risks in terms of gender equality; Taking measures to balance wages; Developing mechanisms and campaigns to ensure work-life balance from a gender perspective; Ensuring that the way of working is organised according to equality; Arranging working hours agreements; Creating a section on campus for breastfeeding and dependent people. The fourth section is on 'Incorporating a gender equality perspective into education'. Under this heading, the main objectives are as follows: Including gender equality in undergraduate and graduate courses; Revising course regulations accordingly; Organising courses on gender equality; Incorporating a gender equality perspective into teaching methodology; Using inclusive language and organising trainings on these issues; Increasing the number of lectures provided to high schools and secondary schools in this field. The fifth section under the heading 'Women, science and gender equality perspective' includes: Including gender equality in research projects and taking it into account in research project evaluation; Promoting relevant PhD programs and theses; Creating incentive mechanisms for women's leadership in research groups; Creating funds to support the research of women returning to work after having children; Ensuring the visibility and distribution of gender perspective research and women researchers; Increasing the number of women in areas such as experts, invitees, speakers, trainers; Organising annual symposia, meetings, campaigns. For example, to highlight the importance of women in science, the University publishes an annual calendar dedicated to women in a specific field of knowledge as part of its communication efforts. This initiative helps to raise awareness of the contributions women make to the advancement of science.

Autònoma de Barcelona University (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2022b), which thoroughly outlines its general principles, the results of its previous report, awareness surveys on relevant studies, and their outcomes, has identified 38 new measures across five different areas compared to its earlier equality plans, based on the progress achieved. In the first area, 'Promotion of Culture and Equality Policies', measures include 'Making visible sexism and inequalities based on gender', which entails reporting the numbers and positions of student and administrative-academic male-female staff by departments; Promoting non-sexist and inclusive language in the University, in classes, and in all external communication channels; Disseminating equality policies and actions, conducting campaigns and activities related to raising awareness about gender-based inequalities. Other measures encompass ensuring the periodic assessment of the implementation degree of measures in the Gender Equality Action Plan, improving the governance of equality policies, and integrating a gender perspective into the University budget under the section 'Guaranteeing the development of the normative framework and equality policies at the University'. The University carries out different activities for all these areas and explains the outcome of each in its report. For instance, regarding the non-sexist use of language in institutional and



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academic communication, the University analyzed the language used in reports and news on their websites. The findings indicated no clear trend in language usage, but the rate of non-sexist language usage in texts was found to be below 50%. The University aims to evaluate all written texts within this scope and presents these rates with graphs in its report annually. The University also reports the number of social media content in order to make the work on equality known to everyone. The second area encompasses the main heading 'Equal Conditions in Workplace Employment, Access, and Promotion', which includes promoting the selection of candidates from underrepresented genders in recruitment processes; Identifying barriers and challenges to equal opportunities in work and education; Promoting regulations and policies for reconciling work, private, and family life at the University; Preventing the reproduction of gender stereotypes. Under the subheading 'Promotion of Gender Perspective in Education and Research', measures include: Integrating an equality perspective into education and research; Providing resources, training, and educational materials to academics for this integration; Increasing the academic recognition of relevant studies and including the University's performance in this area in all reports. For example, the University provides training on an egalitarian perspective and internal equality initiatives to students, academic, and administrative staff and reports the number of these trainings annually. It promotes advancements in this area by awarding prizes for student research on gender equality and equity. The fourth section, 'Equal participation and representation', includes: Promoting women's participation in governing bodies and balanced representation and leadership and creating tools to ensure this; Integrating a gender perspective in students' club and project activities; Encouraging women's participation in cultural and other activities. The final section, 'Promoting of an Organization free from Sexism and Gender-based Violence', includes the following: Developing the actions envisaged in the University protocol to prevent and take action against sexual harassment, harassment based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and male violence; Disseminating existing protocols and resources on gender-based violence at the University; Preventing and combating sexist and gender-based violence in all activities developed at the University; Raising awareness of violence cases; Providing support to victims of gender-based violence among University employees or students.

The University of Girona (Universitat de Girona; 2022b) structures its report under six strategic areas, with the first strategic area focusing on 'Promoting a Culture of Equality throughout the University'. Under this section, activities include: Organizing regular events, awareness programs, and gender equality-based training sessions to demonstrate the University's sensitivity in this regard; Combating gender bias through training and awareness campaigns; Promoting the visibility of women in institutional events and among award recipients; Defining and strengthening a gender equality perspective in the University's quality system and various fields of education; Regulating practices; Making communication language and visuals gender-sensitive; Appointing student representatives for gender equality and supporting student clubs and related networks; Promoting gender-sensitive research and educational methodologies; Organizing training sessions for the effective implementation of equality plans; Creating regular forums



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for discussing and debating proposals; Increasing the University library's collection of books on gender equality and diversity; Promoting equal representation of men and women in management positions and monitoring wage disparities. In the section 'Education from a Gender Equality Perspective', initiatives include: Organizing training sessions for teachers on teaching from a gender equality perspective; Measuring the integration of the subject into various fields; Integrating it into course outlines and curricula; Encouraging innovation in teaching; Sharing experiences and promoting best practices in teaching. Additionally, efforts aim to increase relevant publications. In the 'Research from a Gender Equality Perspective' section, measures involve: Promoting research groups in this field, establishing databases; Providing training to researchers on integrating this dimension into their research; Promoting the topic in doctoral theses and awards. For instance, the University has published a book offering recommendations for integrating a gender equality perspective into teaching. Under the section 'Equal Rights, Access, Promotion, and Working Conditions', efforts include: Identifying and addressing barriers faced by University staff in their personal and family lives; Ensuring non-discriminatory recruitment regulations; Promoting equal representation in all areas; Providing gender-focused training for academics and administrative staff; Creating affirmative action plans to correct gender bias in academic positions; Establishing academic and educational management activities to balance personal, family, and work life, and safeguarding the status of active researchers in parenthood. The fifth section, 'Commitment against Discrimination and Violence', addresses: Disseminating resources and campaigns to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and revising protocols accordingly; Establishing inclusive care services for LGBT+ individuals; Improving lighting in dark areas on campus. Under the last section, 'Social Commitment and Gender-Sensitive Knowledge Transfer', initiatives include: Fostering inter-institutional partnerships to promote a culture of equality; Creating volunteer projects; Organizing awareness campaigns to combat gender biases; Establishing scholarships and awards associated with gender equality values. For example, the University organizes competitions for proposals aimed at developing awareness and training activities, conferences, and other initiatives to promote gender equality, awarding cash prizes for the best proposals. The University has also outlined its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in its plan.

All these indicators highlight the issues that can be addressed within the scope of equality studies. Additionally, the headings offer insights into the scope of related sub-studies. Universities report their performance on these indicators annually and present development graphs for each area. This underscores the importance of conducting this process in a systematic and long-term manner.

### 6. Findings and Discussions

The study reveals that the indicators in the equality plans of the universities considered are aligned with the proposed index indicators for gender equality and sustainability. The indicators proposed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) in its gender equality index (EIGE, 2022e) in line with the indicators identified above are as follows: the gender ratio of employees at all levels; average

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years needed for equal career development for women and men; gender pay gap; number of women in decision-making bodies; distribution of male and female applicants for different job positions; distribution of maternity leave taken and number of returnees; distribution of types of leave taken; number of training sessions provided; distribution of male and female researchers; number of female applicants for research positions; work-life balance; maternity leave policy; flexible working hours, support for childcare, workload management, types and distribution of responsibilities taken; selection, promotion, appointment, and career policies; transparency in the selection of committee members, supportive actions to give women opportunities in management and leadership positions; review of recruitment procedures; examination of the gender sensitivity of announcements and advertisements; identification of areas with low female representation and strengthening of women's positions in these areas; integration of gender/social gender dimensions into research and teaching content; establishment of processes to ensure consideration of gender and social gender analysis in research and teaching design and outputs; support for researchers to develop methodologies that integrate gender/social gender dimensions; support for teachers to develop curricula that include gender/social gender dimensions; methods for reporting measures and policies against gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, disciplinary practices; education and awareness-raising; provision of training for researchers and academics on integrating gender/social gender dimensions into research design and teaching curriculum; continuous communication.

Apart from 'management processes', 'procedures', 'integrating equality into education and research processes', 'organising relevant periodical trainings', 'raising awareness on the issue by disseminating communication activities', 'using egalitarian language in all areas' stand out as common areas addressed in all three reports examined. Universities define relevant performance indicators for all these goals. The performances presented in the research also provide a framework for studies on this subject. However, it is important to note that the reports examined are the most recent ones from the universities. Given that these institutions have been working on the topic for many years, their goals have evolved to much more advanced and comprehensive levels. While it is possible to expand the indicators discussed here, each university can also establish indicators that align more closely with its own structure. It is hoped that this study will serve as a reference for universities looking to develop equality plans and systems, as well as a valuable source for academics interested in researching this field.

Establishing equality practices primarily requires a cultural shift. In addition to gender, individuals with different religion, sect, race, gender preferences or with disabilities may also be exposed to inequality. Therefore, it is important to create a perception of equality that considers intersectionality. Equality and gender equality policies, in addition to ensuring equal representation in all areas, require a holistic approach that addresses the roots of the patriarchal structure. Therefore, it is essential to frame the process within a realistic change strategy and support it with long-term goals aimed at transforming perspectives, habits, and awareness. A change in the perspectives of all stakeholders will enable the measures included in

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the plans to be fulfilled much more easily and sustainably. Universities are among the most important structures that will ensure this change.

Highlighting gender equality in higher education can be a significant driving force for the empowerment of women and girls, as well as for societal development. It is crucial to ensure that both boys and girls have equal and fair access to education, that individuals of diverse religions, sects, races, gender identities, or disabilities do not face violence or discrimination, and that they are not hindered in their career development or lifestyles. Furthermore, it is essential to challenge the notion that STEM fields such as mathematics, science, and architecture are predominantly male domains, and to redefine entrepreneurship as an inclusive space rather than a male-exclusive domain. Additionally, sexist and discriminatory language in all areas must be eliminated, consciously promoting inclusive language in classrooms and across the university and addressing heavy working conditions that disrupt work-life balance for all. Providing opportunities like maternity leave and childcare for both mothers and fathers, creating pathways for career development for employees who give birth, and conducting R&D activities that consider the needs of women and children are vital steps. Supporting women researchers and student clubs within these frameworks, along with raising awareness through communication and campaign efforts on relevant topics, are all necessary for advancing equality processes. The realization of these goals is only possible through the widespread adoption of an egalitarian mindset and culture. At this stage, it is essential to establish a commission and subgroups to coordinate these efforts, ensuring a systematic and centralized operation. Furthermore, the relevant commissions should be directly linked to the rectorate to demonstrate that top management prioritize and lead these initiatives. This connection will highlight the importance of the efforts, allowing progress to occur more effectively and swiftly. In addition to setting strategies and objectives in equality plans and planning operations, it is crucial to regularly monitor and report on these processes. Utilizing communication strategies intensively and effectively at this stage is vital for achieving goals more quickly and confidently, while also garnering support from all stakeholders.

Horizon Europe aims to transform processes and structures in research and innovation to reduce gender inequality, emphasizing that this transformation should be comprehensive, encompassing entire organizations and addressing all relevant stakeholders and gender equality issues (EIGE, 2022e). Jeff Hearn, who conducts critical studies on men and masculinity, observes that many men in academia commonly avoid engaging with gender issues and gender equality. This avoidance is often reinforced by slogans such as 'We are all human; we are all equal,' 'Men and women are not different, therefore...', and 'We are one big happy family here.' Hearn advocates for a perspective that reframes the discussion to view gender as a central focus, rather than portraying women as the sole 'problem' to be addressed or adopting a gender-neutral stance. He argues that this shift in knowledge production will lead to less patriarchal and sexist outcomes, ultimately resulting in more scientifically robust insights (Hearn, 2021:107). Therefore, creating structures that include men in the system is valuable.

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Creating a gender-sensitive university requires both behavioral and attitudinal changes; innovative thought systems, legal frameworks, data measurement, training, and campaigns can be used as tools for both types of change. Therefore, universities should share their equality plans with both staff and students and communicate this issue through methods such as social media, brochures, posters, videos, and seminars. They should expand stakeholder engagement activities by collaborating with various stakeholders such as the private sector, government, NGOs, student clubs, etc. Awareness campaigns and social media are important tools for increasing awareness and consciousness within this framework. Thanks to the advantages of accessibility, ease of use, and speed of social media, information disseminated through social media platforms can reach more people in a shorter time compared to other methods. This can enable support for the work done and create a comprehensive perception change.

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# BOOK REVIEW



**Educación y comunicación en una sociedad postdigital: investigación documental y análisis de perspectivas, Javier Gil Quintana, Ediciones Octaedro, 2023. 268 páginas.ISBN: 9788419690395**

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### **Influencers del aprendizaje. La educomunicación en la sociedad postdigital**

Escrita por Javier Gil Quintana con prólogo de Sara Osuna-Acedo, la obra “Educación y comunicación en una sociedad postdigital” aborda un tema muy en boga como es el de la educomunicación. El autor es profesor titular en la UNED y es, a día de hoy, uno de los referentes del panorama nacional en este tema. La obra se divide en ocho capítulos (numerados del 0 al 7) además del prólogo, las referencias y un apéndice sobre la trayectoria docente e investigadora del autor. El libro se completa con un índice extendido al final del mismo.

El capítulo 0 plantea los objetivos, el método y las diversas técnicas que el autor ha empleado en esta investigación. Además, incluye un apartado donde presenta y describe brevemente los 7 capítulos siguientes que constituyen la parte central de la obra. Estos corresponden, como bien señala el autor, a las categorías investigadas. En el capítulo uno, Gil Quintana analiza cómo la educomunicación, desde sus inicios hasta la actualidad (hace un recorrido histórico desde finales del siglo XIX hasta la actualidad, mencionando algunos de los trabajos teóricos que son referentes todavía a día de hoy), se ha convertido en una herramienta clave para desarrollar una ciudadanía crítica frente a la manipulación mediática. Revisa conceptos fundamentales como la ecología de los medios, el aprendizaje invisible y el interaprendizaje, abordando también la problemática de la desinformación. El objetivo es explicar en qué consiste la educomunicación y subrayar la importancia de un enfoque inter y transdisciplinar en el encuentro entre educación y comunicación, planteamientos que están presentes no solo en la educación sino en todas las disciplinas, dado que estamos en una sociedad cada vez más interdisciplinar. Finalmente, pone de relieve que el profesorado debe utilizar recursos transmedia para captar la atención del alumnado y fomentar su pensamiento crítico y, por ende, una alfabetización mediática.

En el segundo capítulo se centra en los principios de la educomunicación, como son la interactividad, la cultura de la participación y la acción dialógica. El autor explica que en una era postdigital, el aprendizaje debería estar basado en la conexión entre personas, siendo concebido como un aprendizaje en red interconectado. Por otro lado, explica los diferentes tipos de prosumidores (un anagrama entre consumidor y productor en sus términos en inglés, término acuñado por Toffler, 1981), distinguiendo entre cinco perfiles específicos. Tras explicar los roles de los diferentes prosumidores, Gil Quintana enlaza con el concepto de emirec, acuñado por Jean Cloutier (1973), y que plantea que todas las personas pueden ser emisoras y no simples receptoras. Finalmente, el autor cierra esta categoría de investigación con los influencers, los tipos que hay y cómo hemos pasado de prosumidores a influencers. En este sentido, los consumidores, en el momento que emiten sus valoraciones sobre algún producto ya se están convirtiendo en influencers. A partir de ahí, el autor habla de los tipos de influencers y cómo, en el ámbito educativo, en la cultura postdigital, surgen espacios educativos híbridos donde los influencers del aprendizaje actúan como emirecs, promoviendo la interacción colaborativa. Un concepto muy interesante que permite modernizar la educación al mismo tiempo que formar personas de manera más crítica en un mundo en el que las redes sociales están cada vez más llenas de influencers del consumo y de desinformación.

En el tercer capítulo se parte de la importancia de las imágenes en nuestra vida desde la etapa infantil y cómo favorecen el desarrollo sensorial y proporcionan experiencias más enriquecedoras a partir de la observación. Así, Gil Quintana plantea que es importante conocer las diferentes estrategias para leer e interpretarlas. Aborda la estrategia educ comunicativa de construir la realidad mediática a través de la imagen, analizando en primer lugar el papel del cine, series, televisión, publicidad y redes sociales. Se propone abandonar el narcisismo inherente a estos medios y enfocar su uso educativo hacia un modelo que transforme las imágenes en herramientas activistas de denuncia y esperanza que permitan crear una ciudadanía crítica. Para ello, se exploran herramientas del lenguaje visual, como tamaño, forma, color, iluminación, composición y retórica, además de métodos de lectura: denotativa, connotativa y crítica. Partiendo de todo ello, Gil Quintana plantea que las imágenes en educación deberían ser empleadas como objeto propio de estudio, pero también como un recurso que esté al servicio de planteamientos innovadores. En la sociedad postdigital, las imágenes dominan cada vez más todas las esferas sociales. Estamos inmersos en un entorno saturado de estímulos visuales, que además son cada vez más efímeros. Por ello, como docentes, es fundamental aprovechar el poder comunicativo de las imágenes para conectar efectivamente con las generaciones más jóvenes.

En el cuarto capítulo, el autor se centra en la estrategia metodológica educ comunicativa de las redes sociales. La sociedad emplea las redes sociales para proyectar sus ideas, sus acciones sociales, su activismo, actuando estas como escenarios de participación virtuales y, por tanto, pudiendo generar redes y comunidades en torno a un tema o una idea. Sin embargo, como bien señala Gil Quintana, son un arma de doble filo, pues pueden convertirse en una red de mentiras y de consumo y, por tanto, convertirse en un espacio antisocial. Así, en el ámbito de la educación, las redes sociales son un instrumento fundamental desde la educ comunicación (como ya se ha visto en algunos estudios centrados en el análisis de la comunicación educativa de los museos, cf. Navarro, 2021), porque permiten convertir estos espacios en “generadores de cambio social, alfabetización mediática y digital de la ciudadanía y lugar de encuentro entre distintos pensamientos, culturas e ideologías” (p. 141). Las redes sociales, día a día del alumnado, pueden permitirnos, así, facilitar los procesos de comunicación y aprendizaje, pero también conseguir llenar esos espacios de información contrastada, de utilizarlos de manera segura y correcta, así como que ellos mismos difundan conocimiento de calidad y crítico a través de ese medio.

El quinto capítulo se centra en la estrategia metodológica educ comunicativa de la gamificación (ya abordado en trabajos anteriores por el autor: Gil Quintana y Ortega, 2018). Y es que pese a estar en una era postdigital, la infancia sigue dedicando mucho tiempo al juego, sean estos tradicionales (analógicos o digitales) o a través de retos en las redes sociales. Tras un repaso a las metodologías activas y las ventajas que ofrecen las metodologías de aprendizaje basadas en el juego, el autor analiza los nuevos roles educ comunicativos y propone el empleo de diversas herramientas y mecanismos basados en el juego (gamificación, metaversos, etc.) que permiten impulsar la participación, el empoderamiento y una narrativa basada en relacionarse, compartir y colaborar. Así, considera que el uso de juegos y la creación de una nueva narrativa, permiten fomentar la participación activa e interactuar, algo

fundamental en educación.

El sexto capítulo analiza la estrategia comunicativa masiva y abierta como son los SMOOC y tMOOC, un modelo formativo con un gran potencial educativo, ya que ofrece cursos para ser realizados a gran escala y de manera gratuita en línea desde cualquier parte del mundo. Esto ha fomentado una democratización de la formación y del conocimiento, al estar accesible de manera generalizada. Así, Gil Quintana realiza un análisis de los MOOC desde 2004 mediante un análisis de Google Trend, o un análisis bibliométrico a través de VOSviewer sobre publicaciones relacionadas con este formato de enseñanza. El autor plantea las ventajas (de las cuales ya señalamos algunas de las principales) y los inconvenientes de este tipo de formaciones, ya que, por ejemplo, tienen un alto nivel de deserción, pero también la falta de acceso a este tipo de formaciones de las personas que siguen sin tener conexión a la red, lo que sigue acentuando la denominada brecha digital. Un recurso interesante que se presenta en este capítulo es la relación de un amplio repertorio de diez cursos que ofrece la plataforma ECO Digital Learning (pp. 191-192) y otros diez del proyecto tMOOC (pp. 193-194), en todos los casos con el enlace de acceso y un QR. En este sentido, un debate necesario sobre la democratización de este tipo de cursos denominados en “acceso abierto” es lo que comenta Gil-Quintana, la brecha digital, que puede incrementarse todavía más, ya que esta sigue estando muy presente y es más notoria todavía en algunos países latinoamericanos, donde el acceso a la tecnología es más limitado, con elevados porcentajes de personas que siguen todavía sin conectividad o con dificultades para tenerla (Castells et al. 2023)

La obra se cierra con el capítulo siete, centrado en las perspectivas futuras de la comunicación como son los influencers del aprendizaje. Es decir, un modelo que busca ser una respuesta contra la desinformación y las fake news. El autor aboga así por el empoderamiento, el activismo y una pedagogía crítica. Para él, convertirse en influencer del aprendizaje y retomando las reflexiones que el propio autor ha realizado en trabajos anteriores, supone seguir tres pasos fundamentales: “vivir en un mundo de cuento, convertirse en protagonista del cuento, crear y difundir tu propio cuento” (p. 215). Así, en las aulas tenemos que ser influencers del aprendizaje, utilizando el potencial que tiene ese rol de influencer para forjar una ciudadanía más crítica y sólida, convirtiéndonos en “agentes conquistadores de espacios de aprendizaje unidireccionales, verticales y jerárquicos” (p. 223).

Por tanto, podemos afirmar que se trata de una obra muy completa para adentrarse en el mundo de la educomunicación en la sociedad postdigital. Escrito de manera muy didáctica y amena, te invita a reflexionar sobre muchas cuestiones pedagógicas relacionadas con la manera de comunicarnos con el alumnado y la sociedad, planteando estrategias innovadoras que integran educación y comunicación de manera transformadora para formar una sociedad más crítica. A través de sus siete capítulos centrales, aborda cómo las imágenes, redes sociales, gamificación y formatos masivos como los MOOC pueden convertirse en herramientas fundamentales para fomentar el pensamiento crítico, la participación activa y el empoderamiento desde las aulas. Además, invita a repensar los roles de docentes y estudiantes, promoviendo una pedagogía más horizontal y colaborativa,

haciendo hincapié en la figura del emirec. Con un enfoque práctico, el autor propone usar estos recursos para combatir la desinformación y construir una ciudadanía más crítica y comprometida. Así, desde mi punto de vista, considero que es una obra imprescindible tanto para educadores como para cualquier persona interesada en las metodologías de aprendizaje, pero también para estudiantes de periodismo, educación o disciplinas afines, ya que permite comprender los retos y posibilidades de la educomunicación en una era postdigital en la que la desinformación cada vez parece cobrar más protagonismo. Se abordan desde los conceptos más sencillos hasta los más complejos, aportando muchas ideas y líneas de trabajo futura, así como proyectos ya realizados que sirven de base para nuevos procesos de creación.

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