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Phenoadvertising and genoadvertising: a semiotic reflection on cause advertising

A feno-publicidade e a geno-publicidade: uma reflexão semiótica sobre a publicidade de causa

Bruno Pompeu

Resumo: *Este trabalho configura-se como modesta contribuição às investigações que se dedicam às complexas relações da comunicação publicitária com a esfera política, social, econômica e cultural, materializadas naquilo que se costuma chamar de publicidade de causa. A partir dos conceitos de feno-texto e geno-texto, propostos por Julia Kristeva e ampliados nas suas possibilidades de aplicação por Roland Barthes e Byung-Chul Han, sugerimos um enfrentamento teórico com a hodierna publicidade dita engajada, procurando revelar o que é potência de transformação e o que não passa de artifício mercadológico. Além disso, procuramos oferecer parâmetros comparativos entre o que chamamos aqui de feno-publicidade e geno-publicidade, menos como um meio de classificação do que como instrumento de reflexão.*

Palavras-chave: *publicidade; linguagem publicitária; publicidade de causa; feno-publicidade; geno-publicidade.*

Abstract: *This work can be seen as a modest contribution to investigations dedicated to the complex relationships between advertising communication and the political, social, economic and cultural sphere, materialized in what is commonly called cause advertising. Based on the concepts of phenotext and genotext, proposed by Julia Kristeva and expanded in their application possibilities by Roland Barthes and Byung-Chul Han, we suggest a theoretical confrontation with today's so-called engaged advertising, seeking to reveal what is possibility of transformation and what is nothing more than a marketing artifice. Furthermore, we aim to offer comparative parameters between what we call here phenoadvertising*

and genoadvertising, less as a method of classification than as an instrument for reflection.

Keywords: *advertising; advertising language; cause advertising; fenoadvertising; genoadvertising*

Introduction

This work is an extension of previously published papers on so-called cause advertising (POMPEU, 2021b; SANTAELLA; PEREZ; POMPEU, 2021; POMPEU; PEREZ, 2020) and, at the same time, a partial result of predominantly theoretical recent research on the signifying and language nature of advertising communication, privileging the intertwining of its inherent commercial and market condition with its recent supposed vocation to address political issues and agendas. Hence, the paper takes part in the collective efforts of a group of researchers who, in the growing academic field of advertising studies, seek to assume a critical, reflective, and interpretative perspective on contemporary advertising production.

Regarding the theme of this work, it is essential to note that it is part of an increasingly broad and dense current of researchers dedicated to exploring the complex relationships between advertising communication and the political, social, economic, and cultural instances of contemporary life. In the academic field, this paper is close to the research that links advertising with consumption as a means of discussing its limits and most current dilemmas (PEREZ, 2020; COVALESKI, 2020; COGO; ROCHA; HOFF, 2016; ROCHA; CASAQUI, 2012; BACCEGA, 2008, for example). It is not far, in epistemological and general terms, from publications focused on identity issues or adopting more broadly critical positions (MORENO FERNANDES, 2023; CASADEI, 2022; MOZDZENSKI, 2020; LEITE; BATISTA, 2019; FREIRE, 2018; SALDANHA, 2018; BURROWES, 2014; MACHADO, 2011, among others). Essentially, it is still an attempt to respond to and advance what Ricardo Zagallo Camargo (2007) envisioned when writing about “advertising as a possibility.”

In this article, we are once again dealing with the so-called “cause advertising,” which we can define as any communication action inserted in the advertising ecosystem that, although having more or less evident commercial and marketing objectives, expresses the advertiser’s position or action relative to a given public issue or political agenda (social,

environmental, identity-related, etc.), improving upon a previously proposed definition (SANTAELLA; PEREZ; POMPEU, 2021). Here, we offer a proposal for reflection on that advertising modality characteristic of our time, which mixes private market interests with political and social agendas. We seek not only to participate in the conversations that are already growing on this topic, as seen above, but also to reiterate the importance of language theories – especially semiotics – in these discussions (SANTAELLA, 2020, POMPEU, 2018; CHIACHIRI, 2011; SANTAELLA; NÖTH and 2010; MCLUHAN, 2007; BARBOSA, 2005; VESTERGAARD; SCHRODER, 2004; DEL-GADO, 2003; KERCKHOVE, 2003; VOLLI, 2003; CARVALHO, 2000; MATTELART, 1991, among others).

Julia Kristeva: from biological sciences to language studies

Julia Kristeva is an intellectual in language studies who later embraced psychoanalysis, feminism, and literary studies. Although of Bulgarian origin, she is known for her academic production in the legendary French cultural context of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s alongside names such as Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault, and Roland Barthes, who I will discuss later. Two of her works serve as the basis for this paper: *Séméiotiké: Recherches Pour une Sémanalyse*, originally published in 1969, and *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984), first published in French in 1974.

Some decades after the path had been paved for conceptual and terminological exchanges between the areas of biological sciences and human and social sciences – especially concerning communication (MATTELART; MATTELART, 1999, p. 30), Kristeva turned to Sebastian K. Saumjan and P. A. Soboleva, authors of *Le Modèle Génératif Linguistique Fondé sur le Principe des Transformations dans la Langue Russe* from 1963 and *Fondements de la Grammaire Générative de la*

Langue Russe from 1968, who used the expressions “phenotext” and “genotext” for the first time.

Kristeva writes “phéno-texte” and “géno-texte” in French with a hyphen. Translations of her works into English apply “phenotext” and “genotext” without a hyphen. Barthes keeps the hyphen when writing “phéno-chant” and “géno-chant” in French. Translations of his work to languages like Portuguese keep the hyphens in these terms. The Portuguese version of this paper adopted the hyphenated form as was done in the translation of the work of Byung-Chul Han, also cited below, in “feno-camada” and “geno-camada.” I, therefore, propose “pheno-advertising” and “geno-advertising” with a hyphen not as words already integrated into the language that would define something that exists in its own right but as academic concepts that define internal elements incorporated into the phenomenon under study.

Kristeva summarizes the two concepts in her 1969 book:

The genotext/phenotext distinction pushes the discourse that invests against the significant functioning into a constant unfolding that defines two planes in every linguistic statement: the linguistic (the structure), dependent on the sign and susceptible to being described by the mechanism of structural semantics that the thought of the sign supposes, and the significant generation (the germination) that is no longer subjectable to the sign but organizes itself by the application of differences of a numerical nature. (KRISTEVA, 2012, p. 283)

Later, in the chapter Genotext and Phenotext in the 1974 work, Kristeva offers an even more complex view:

In light of the distinction we have made between the semiotic chora and the symbolic, we may now examine the way texts function. What we shall call a genotext will include semiotic processes but also the advent of the symbolic. The former includes drives, their disposition, and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social system surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oedipal relations with parents. The latter encompasses the emergence of object and subject, and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields. (...) We should use the term phenotext to denote the language that serves

to communicate, which linguistics describes in terms of “competence” and “performance.” The phenotext is constantly split and divided irreducible to the semiotic process that operates through the genotext. The phenotext is a structure (which can be generated in the sense of generative grammar); it obeys communication rules and presupposes a subject of enunciation and a recipient. (KRISTEVA, 1984, p. 86)

Here, we must resist simplistic reductionisms that, in this case, would transform an enormous intellectual wealth into an unproductive dualism. Kristeva’s genotext and phenotext do not oppose each other, nor do they cancel each other out. They are perhaps layers or levels of a process of signification captured by the author in its due complexity, passing, of course, through language itself but also articulating with sociopolitical, economic, and subjective issues. However, we need to recognize, albeit with some didactic simplification, that while the phenotext seems to (cor)respond to well-defined linguistic rules (having a relationship with what the author calls “semiotic”) and, therefore, linked to a more objective and schematic conception of communication processes, the genotext reveals its power – not always achieved, almost always limited by contextual forces – of reaching other levels of meaning (close to what the author calls “symbolic”) when expressing and transferring drives.

The genotext is thus the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic. Instead, the space it organizes is one in which the subject will be generated as such by a process of facilitations and marks within the constraints of the biological and social structure. (KRISTEVA, 1984, p. 86)

We can only understand the author’s thoughts more clearly, summarized in the above quotations, by reading the other chapters of the entire first part of the book, called “The Semiotic and The Symbolic.” In that part, the work allows us to recognize the distinctions between what Kristeva calls semiotic and symbolic and the concepts of heart, enunciation, drive, etc.

In this sense, it is worth mentioning the two books by Julia Kristeva referred to in this paper date from the same historical context in which the field of language studies disputed terminologies and concepts with emphasis on the distinctions between “semiotics” and “semiology.” If we assume that it was only an event of the International Association for Semiotic Studies in 1969 that defined the word “semiotics” as the one that should designate the field of study encompassing all research related to signs, languages, and processes of signification (COELHO NETTO, 2001; NÖTH, 1999), it is not surprising that publications of the time still used the terms and concepts with some degree of indistinction.

In an attempt not to overextend into details beyond the specific purposes of this paper, it is worth highlighting the contribution of Leon Z. Roudiez, author of the introduction to the work, who helps us to shed light on the issue.

Those [threads of the text] woven by drives and in semiotic arrangement constitute what Kristeva defined as a genotext; they actualize in poetic language. Those that arise from social, cultural, syntactic, and other grammatical constraints constitute the phenotext; they ensure communication. (in KRISTEVA, 1984, p. 5)

In any case, Kristeva’s words that best serve the purposes of this article are the following: “The genotext adds volume to the surface of the phenotext. To the communicative function of the phenotext, the genotext opposes the “production of meaning” (2012, p. 283). Precisely, these two concepts of genotext and phenotext allow us to reiterate the need to awaken to a more attentive look at language, at the sign - no longer just at the text - that reaches its other layers of meaning in its power not only to communicate but also to generate senses, meanings.

From Kristeva to Barthes, from Barthes to Han

In an article published in 1971, Roland Barthes, recognized for having inaugurated in 1961 the analysis of ads based on theories of language, makes a “transposition” of Kristeva’s phenotext and genotext to the

universe of music and, more specifically, of singing, coining the terms “pheno-song” and “geno-song”.

It is here in song, then (pending the extension of the distinction to all music), that we first discern the two texts of which Julia Kristeva writes. The pheno-song (if I may be permitted to make this transposition) covers all the phenomena, all the features which derive from the structure of the sung language, from the coded form of the melisma, the idiolect, the composer, the style of interpretation: in short, everything which, in the performance, is at the service of communication, of representation, of expression (...). The geno-song is the volumen of the speaking and singing voice, the space in which the significations germinate “from within the language and in its very materiality (...)”. (BARTHES, 1990, p. 239)

We are not interested in exploring the many discussions that arise from Barthes’ transposition and its most varied questions. Most of them concern singing, music, and musical language – few address the validity of this conceptual instrument (the pheno/geno distinction) as evidence of the multiple and complex possibilities inherent in the processes of signification. Hence, two aspects of Barthes are important to us in this work: first, of course, the chance to freely expand this conceptual instrument of scrutiny of language, allowing us to reach, later, the language of advertising. But also, its contribution to the clarification of the differentiation between these two dimensions of signification.

By stating that geno-song is “a signifying game alien to communication, representation, and expression” (BARTHES, 1990, p. 239), the author shows us that there is something in meaning – in the generation of meaning or semiosis, as one would say in different semiotic currents – that escapes the grammatically established sign, what is factually said or communicated. The word “background” used by the author to designate geno-song is especially interesting as it points to something underneath, behind, beyond that other dimension of language, more visible, predictable, and open to scrutiny. Kristeva and Barthes agree there is a power in geno-text and geno-song that reveals a considerable transformative dimension when located (or pursued) in other languages.

Byung-Chul Han, a South Korean philosopher, brings the conceptualization of language theories to contemporary philosophical discussions. The author understands Barthes' thought as follows:

Barthes distinguishes between two forms of song. "Geno-song" is dominated by the pleasure principle, by the body, by desire, while "pheno-song" is dedicated to communication, to the transmission of meaning. In pheno-song, consonants predominate, working on meaning and significance. Geno-song, on the other hand, uses consonants 'only as a springboard for the admirable vowels.' (HAN, 2022, p. 113)

The excerpt is part of *Non-things: Upheavals in the Lifeworld* (2022), a work in which Han (2022), recognizing the value of this same conceptual instrument, brings the discussion to the present day, identifying the effects of dematerializations caused by digital technologies in contemporary art.

The work of art has two sides, one that is leaning toward representation and the other that is turning away from it. We may call them the pheno-layer and the geno-layer, respectively. Art that is leaning towards discourse, art that moralizes and politicizes, has no genolayer. It has opinions but no desire (HAN, 2022, p. 120)

In yet another gesture of simultaneous simplification and clarification of the distinction we are dealing with here, the author abandons theoretical details and focuses on the imperative of not losing sight of the sensitive layer of seduction, secrecy, silence, and meaning in artistic productions.

Pheno-advertising and geno-advertising

Han's critical words allow us to arrive more confidently at the field of advertising, establishing a relationship of analysis and reflection with this communication modality typical of capitalist societies and with increasing power in the present day. The following excerpt, in which the author, as already mentioned, deals with art in contemporary times, also contains special details for advertising studies.

The problematic about today's art is its inclination to communicate a preconceived opinion, a moral or political conviction; that is, its inclination to communicate information. Conception precedes execution. As a result, art degenerates into illustration. (...) Art allows itself to be put in service of communication. It becomes lopsided; it leans towards information and discourse. It wants to instruct rather than seduce. (HAN, 2022, p. 118)

First, given the traditional discussion about the eventual art status that advertising could have achieved in our times, and if it is possible to apply the reflections arising from the pheno/geno instrument to art, why not also to advertising? As Piratininga tells us in his book *Publicidade: Arte ou Artificio*, “the achievement, in the case of advertising as an artistic manifestation in the service of the market economy, is in directing the consumer, its final user, to completing of the act of consumption” (1994, p. 74) through this same instrument we can think about the other possibilities of meaning that advertising brings with it.

Whether it is art or not, perhaps advertising is only fulfilling in the current consumer society a role that art has already played in the past – different from the one it plays today, even – but undeniably as an expression that

develops or appropriates the techniques that best suit it, intertwines traditional forms of art with those that are characteristic of it, and prepares new conditions of existence for the consumers who receive it and who, through it, have their worldview, expectations, and personal, interpersonal, or group behavior changed (PIRATININGA, 1994, p. 73). Contemporary advertising communication needs to be scrutinized in an academic environment as was done primarily with texts, then with songs, and finally with art. We can only recognize its true abilities to transform behaviors and forge worldviews by understanding its power that goes beyond what is said and communicated. In other words, if we expect something more from advertising than incitement to consumption and incentive to purchase, we can only find this additional power in what we call here geno-advertising, those elements unrelated to advertising technique and the grammar of advertising that, regardless of what is sold or offered, generate meaning, signify, transform.

And, as it has been argued for some time (POMPEU, 2021a, 2021b; GOMES, 2008; BARBOSA, 2005, among others) and in accordance with what many researchers maintain (SANTAELLA, 2007; KERCKHOVE, 2003, among others), we can also understand this dimension as language – advertising language. In other words, it is not simply verbal language or language in the strict and instrumental sense of the word, not just language as a limited set of resources or codes used by certain professionals. Instead, it is language in the broad sense, with all its transformative power derived from its direct relationship with human sensitivity and thought. Or, as Kerckhove argues, it is language as “a system for the articulation of the mind. (...) Language has a close and intimate relationship with our most internal sensitivity and with the content and structure of our minds” (2003, p. 1).

Another important word used by Han is “information.” The author states that contemporary art, especially engaged art, transforms itself into illustration, communication, and information. And here is another interesting parallel to establish, this time with Grant McCracken’s anthropology, when he defends a “signifying model” of advertising in opposition to the predominant “informational model” (2012, p. 174). When he tells us that “the individual is the recipient not only of information but also of meaning” (2012, p. 178), McCracken aligns himself with Han and once again favors an understanding of advertising that transcends its most obvious objectives – necessarily linked to the purchase of this or that –, achieving the type of effect that it most profoundly and sensitively promotes, whether we like it or not. In other words, recognizing the existence of geno-advertising implies accepting that every advertising action will “mean” something, promote meanings, establish standards, and propose worldviews, not only to consumers, in their characteristic individuality, but to citizens, to the subjects of contemporary societies. It is crucial to ensure that this real and obliterated power of advertising is not neglected by researchers, professors, and advertising professionals, at the risk of compromising what the surface of pheno-advertising says with what is unsaid but felt and signified in the deep and distant layers of geno-advertising.

Han also states that this engaged art, like much of today's advertising communication, aims to instruct instead of seducing (the author uses "instead of" suggesting an opposition between the terms). This work cannot say, within its scope, whether seduction is a constitutive intent of the nature of art. However, we can confidently state that there would be no advertising without seduction. Indeed, seduction, the seductive impetus, in a broader sense, is constitutive of the nature of advertising because it is necessarily directed at the other, the public, expecting an attitude of consumption from them. Now, if, like Santaella and Nöth, we take seduction as one of the stages of the three fundamental intents of advertising, between suggestion and persuasion, the issue becomes more complex and even more revealing of the great possibilities that geno-advertising holds.

While suggestion inhabits the uncertainty of the figures of the possible and persuasion walks along the tracks of argument, seduction speaks through corporeality by capturing the receiver in the meshes of desire. While suggestion activates the capacity to feel, and persuasion pleases the thought, seduction captivates the sensitivity of the senses. (SANTAELLA; NÖTH, 2010, p. 95)

In other words, advertising stops working as such if it abandons seduction in favor of instruction, like the art discussed by Han. Advertising remains as such because it cannot fail to be since an advertiser (of any institutional nature) pays an agency (or something of the sort) to prepare it, media (whatever it may be) broadcasts it, and it addresses the public as consumers. However, aiming at other types of articulation with its public of mere information, instruction, and prescription, advertising degenerates in its sensitive, cultural, and artistic power as it fails in its commercial purposes and declared engaged intentions. The negative effects of privileging pheno-advertising over geno-advertising are evident if we conceptually assume that seduction and instruction are circumstantial links between two subjects – in the case of advertising, between a brand and its audience. While seduction functions as a vector of irresistible attraction to the public based on sensitivity, taste, and enchantment

towards advertising itself, towards its sensitive power of transformation, instruction becomes an authoritarian vector that compels the public through guilt, compensation, and, often, self-complacency, towards something absent from advertising itself and that, may not even be part of the reality of the public. That is, advertising fails twice by ceasing to be seductive and becoming prescriptive. Firstly, advertising fails to promote consumption because, without seduction, it does not achieve persuasion. Secondly, since it cannot stop being “just” advertising, it prescribes very little and mobilizes almost nothing.

Still concerning this referentiality of song, art, and, by analogy, advertising, we must consider another aspect. If Barthes speaks of “background” in geno-song, and Han refers to the “far” in geno-layer of art to suggest the origin or residence of additional meaningful power in these linguistic manifestations, we can conclude something in geno-advertising is also alien to it or invisible but responsible for its most urgent meaningful force. Now, is that not precisely the practice that underlies advertising, its indefectible procedural, industrial, and managerial dimension, whether as a marketing communicational expression of a productive institution or as the product of countless processes?

In other words, geno-advertising also involves a link between what is said and done, between what occupies its superficial expressive dimension and the processes that give rise to it. It is not enough for the advertising message to have impregnated the eventual best political aspirations of an institution framed as an advertiser. The subtly intricate web of advertising signs requires articulation in a way that is coherent with the effective practice of that institution. It is not enough for advertising discourse to perfectly combine commercial strategy, linguistic sensitivity, and social conscience; its production process must respect the values, rules, parameters, and principles defended in its content.

More objectively and schematically, we can attribute that to the four dimensions of advertising as a language. (1) The strategic dimension covers everything from the guiding principles of the advertiser and companies involved, such as vision, mission, and values, to definitions of the

target audience, attitude toward audiences, construction of positions, relationship with competitors, etc. (2) The creative dimension links more closely to the development of concepts and ideas, the elaboration of content, arguments, persuasive approaches, and narratives. (3) The executive dimension covers processes such as illustration, photography, production, filming, casting, voice-over, art direction, etc. (4) The media dimension accounts for the multiple dissemination processes currently offered as possibilities for advertising. In other words, it is about recognizing that the transformative power of geno-advertising passes directly through decisions and choices throughout its production processes. There is no doubt that advertising, especially in the contemporary context, plays a decisive and powerful role in building a fairer reality in the design of a less perverse society and proposition of a better world. The challenges are countless, limits exist and require recognition, but the so-called cause advertising would not demand diligent study in the academic environment if there was not the conviction that advertising does indeed play a role in this process. What this paper defends is a point of view on this type of advertising that goes beyond the expressive layer of what is effectively said, of what is in its content, of what constitutes advertising discourse – pheno-advertising, to reach what is embedded in its language, in its sensitive dimension, in that type of sign that, not being prescriptive or argumentative, is infallible in its power to awaken sensations and, thus, contribute to the redesign of imaginaries, the re-configuration of patterns – in short, geno-advertising.

Assuming we can also understand advertising communication from this reflective instrument, I argue the true and effective transformative power of advertising would be in its portion of geno-advertising (that which encapsulates processes in the invisibility of language, carries seductive heterogeneities, forges silent challenges). Differently, most cause campaigns limited to content and discourse are pure pheno-advertising (information, instruction, cynicism, talk, and fallacy).

As paradoxical as it may seem, we can see from the reflections that it matters little if advertising promotes the anti-racist struggle or soap,

women's self-esteem or ice cream, or environmental preservation or disinfectant. A flag or agenda will not work if it does not contain in its sign network and countless production processes the defining meanings of a given worldview committed to values like solidarity, inclusion, and respect. The observation is confirmed if thinking in the opposite direction and retrospectively. It was not by raising flags for racial discrimination or the objectification of women, for example, that advertising became bigoted and sexist. That happened in reverse through language, a language impregnated with discriminatory and exclusionary values, and through processes, all of them supported by decisions and choices expressive of a petty, competitive, and authoritarian worldview.

In this sense, we should also say that advertising becomes irresistibly powerful, convincing, and even transformative when it becomes transparent in its promotional and marketing intentions. Advertising has for decades shaped aesthetic standards by presenting itself as an instrument to incite consumption without pretending to be a political pamphlet, establishing relational parameters, and projecting desirable ways of life, with a power unattainable by any other type of discourse (MENNA BARRETO, 2006, p. 55). Making this essential condition of promoting the capitalist system opaque, without understanding where its powers and limits lie, is to operate on the plane of cynicism, perversity, and naivety.

Reiterating that these are not two types of advertising but rather two portions, two layers, two dimensions that complement each other and coexist in different proportions, the following table offers a proposal for a comparative summary.

Table 1 – Comparison between pheno-advertising and geno-advertising

PHENO-ADVERTISING	GENO-ADVERTISING
Follows the information model	Follows the signification model
Mechanistic conception of advertising, based solely on persuasion.	Semiotic conception of advertising based on suggestion, seduction, and persuasion.
Expresses preconceived opinions (causes and agendas as opportunity/opportunism, based on the consumer-citizen).	Expresses genuine values (causes and agendas essentially related to the advertiser, its public, and society based on the consumer-citizen).
Limits itself to discourse.	Derives from practice.
Deals with the content of political issues (causes as themes or the object of “cause advertising”).	Deals with political issues in its language (cause as an effect of meaning – “post-cause advertising”).
Disguises and conceals the interests of the advertiser.	Combines the interests of the advertiser with social urges.
Makes the processes that generate advertising opaque.	Imbues the generating processes of advertising with the cause.
Submits causes to the rules of the capitalist system.	Defends causes in the spaces opened by the meaning-making power of advertising language.

Source: elaborated by the author

Final considerations

There is still much to explore in general terms regarding an engaged and cause-related type of advertising that is aware of its responsibilities, committed to purposes that transcend its marketing objectives, and specifically to what we call here geno-advertising. Within its limited space, this paper highlights the theoretical genesis of the concept and points to some promising paths both for expanding and deepening the reflections it gives rise to and for its more practical application, for example, in teaching, analyzing, and producing advertising.

Despite what may unfold from this work – which depends on the dynamics of the field of advertising itself, we would like to highlight the importance of theory in contemporary studies of advertising. Far from wanting to rehash the worn-out dispute between theory and

practice, what I want to stress is the validity of research of an eminently theoretical nature – even before the need for empirical investment – to approach and deepen the daily practice of advertising communication as a critical and, consequently, elucidative, clarifying, and emancipatory resource.

This work also sought to be an investigative gesture of approximation towards the reflections proposed by authors recognized as linked to the field of advertising, demonstrating their possibilities of relevance, whether on a more theoretical level, on contemporary conceptions of advertising, or a more practical level, on the dynamics of advertising communication as a professional activity and communication modality.

Ultimately, the theoretical-conceptual proposal presented in this work serves much more as a stimulus for reflection than a technical instrument. It seeks to favor an analytical distinction between two types of advertising. One type tries to pretend to be transparent, hiding its interests and deceiving consumers and scholars with its opacity in the face of its unequivocal commercial and capitalist impulses. Another type, not associated with political engagement or social causes, hides in its invisible sign-semiotic plot the possible seeds of social transformation through language, sensitivity, and the indisputable capacity to articulate in the mind.

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New times will always come: artificial intelligence as a market strategy in the volkswagen film “gerações”

“O novo sempre vem”: inteligência artificial como estratégia de mercado no filme *gerações da marca Volkswagen*

Leonardo Alexsander Lessa
Mario Abel Bressan Júnior

Resumo: *Na conjuntura atual das indústrias criativas, recursos de inteligência artificial vêm sendo amplamente utilizados na concepção e criação de peças publicitárias. Em 2023, um comercial da marca Volkswagen recriou digitalmente a imagem da cantora Elis Regina, mais de 40 anos após sua morte. Diante disso, apresentamos, como objetivo deste trabalho, analisar o uso de inteligência artificial como estratégia mercadológica no filme publicitário *Gerações* e os seus efeitos no público. Como procedimento metodológico, utilizamos a Análise de Conteúdo para investigar comentários publicados na rede social X por pessoas que foram expostas ao comercial. Os resultados apontam que esse tipo de recurso é capaz de despertar emoções positivas que são impulsionadas pela memória coletiva, mas também gera questionamentos, especialmente por conta de dilemas éticos envolvendo o uso da tecnologia.*

Palavras-chave: *Propaganda; Memória Afetiva; Inteligência Artificial; Deep-fakes; Elis Regina.*

Abstract: *In the current conjuncture, artificial intelligence resources have been widely used as a creative solution in the conception of advertising pieces. In 2023, a Volkswagen commercial digitally recreated the image of singer Elis Regina, more than forty years after her death. Therefore, the objective of this work*

is to analyze the application of artificial intelligence as a marketing strategy in the advertising film “Gerações” and its effects on the public. As a methodological procedure, we used Content Analysis to investigate comments published on social network X by people who were exposed to the commercial. The results indicate that this type of resource is capable of provoking positive emotions that are driven by collective memory, but also raises questions, especially due to ethical dilemmas involving the use of the technology.

Keywords: Advertising; Affective Memory; Artificial Intelligence; Deepfakes; Elis Regina

Introduction

In the contemporary context, we are experiencing a moment of unprecedented informational acceleration that has significantly impacted corporate marketing efforts. Nevertheless, Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021) argue that it is necessary to use new technologies (artificial intelligence, sensors, robotics, augmented reality, etc.) as tools so that marketing professionals can create, communicate, deliver, and increase value throughout the customer journey so that technology fulfills its role without losing humanity in the relationship between company and consumer.

From this perspective, artificial intelligence (AI) presents a variety of resources, such as creating customer service robots, automating repetitive tasks, and applying augmented and virtual reality experiences, besides enabling data analysis processes and new strategies for optimizing user experience. Sectors such as technology, healthcare, finance, retail, manufacturing, automotive, agriculture, and public services use these applications, consolidating AI as a rapidly spreading tool and an established reality. In this context, the technique known as deepfake, which uses AI resources to create audio and video that simulate reality, has been used as a creative solution to design audiovisual pieces.

As an example, we brought up for discussion the advertising film *Gerações* [Generations] released by Volkswagen (2023) to celebrate the brand's 70th anniversary in Brazil, which shows singer Elis Regina, more than 40 years after her death, alongside her daughter, singer Maria Rita. By using AI to recreate Elis' image, the brand appeals to consumers' collective and emotional memory, mobilizing a new path for marketing strategies by bringing to the present personalities and icons of popular culture who have already passed away but were successful in the past.

However, the campaign generated contradictory reactions. While some of the public felt moved by the reappearance of one of the greatest voices of Brazilian music, others reported feeling awkward about the film, considering it disrespectful to the artist's memory. Given these mixed reactions, we present the following research problems. 1) How

does using AI as a market strategy affect the (re)creation of personalities who died years ago through deepfakes? 2) What memories does this type of strategy evoke in the public when promoting brands?

That said, the objective of this paper is to analyze the employment of AI as a marketing strategy in the advertising film *Gerações*, by the Volkswagen brand, in light of the (re)creation of Elis Regina and its effects on evoking collective and affective memories. On a theoretical basis, we mobilized authors such as Halbwachs (2006), Sant'Anna (2007), Mori (2012), Benjamin (1987), and Eco (1984).

As a methodological procedure, we used Content Analysis (CA) to analyze comments published on social media X¹ by people exposed to the commercial. According to Bardin (2011), CA consists of a set of techniques that allow us to attribute meaning to discursive manifestations through a series of systematic procedures that include exploring the material and interpreting results.

We emphasize that the combination of memory and technology studies, such as AI, offers an innovative perspective for understanding the future of the advertising market, consumer relations, and ethical issues related to the use of attributes of famous deceased people. Furthermore, we highlight that, besides the repercussions among the public, the Volkswagen campaign impacted the academic community with publications in the area of law (FIGUEIRA; RENZETTI FILHO; LUCA, 2023; KHAUAJA, 2023) that raise questions about the use of images by AI and propose ways of thinking about this dilemma legally, reinforcing ethical concerns regarding the technology.

Given this, we seek to raise a current discussion that contemplates, at the same time, the trends of marketing 5.0 (KOTLER; KARTAJA-YA; SETIAWAN, 2021), the use of collective and affective memories as a market strategy, and the challenges imposed by the use of technologies such as deepfakes.

1 The social media previously named Twitter.

Affective memory and advertising

Advertising has the unique power to evoke deep and lasting emotions in the minds of consumers as a discursive genre that articulates communication and consumption. In such competitive markets, advertising must engage the target audience to motivate them to act. As Sant'Anna (2007) states, the object of an ad will only capture the public's attention if it presents compellingly, impressing or motivating viewers. One of the strategies to achieve this goal would be the adoption of affective arguments. In this context, we believe that affective memory can be crucial in shaping how people perceive, remember, and relate to brands and products over time.

In a previous study (BRESSAN JÚNIOR; LESSA, 2018), we argued that affective memory occurs through a drive that changes the subject's state based on the emotional experiences that arise with remembrance. We need to enjoy experiences of this nature since, according to Le Breton (2009), we are emotionally present in the world. This way, we see ourselves intrinsically connected to our emotions, constantly affected by them, whether in relationships with people, objects, the environment in which we find ourselves, or our own experiences and memories.

Parallel to this, we consider that memory is not only linked to individual experiences but also collective ones. Hence, Halbwachs (2006, p. 71) presents us with the concept of collective memory.

Let us assume, however, that we could organize memories in two ways, either grouping them around a particular person who sees from their point of view or distributing them within a large or small society of which they are partial images. Therefore, there would be individual memories and collective memories, so to speak.

Thus, besides the memory that is unique to each individual, we have collective memories shaped by our coexistence in different groups and the experiences we share in each of them. According to the author, that is possible because "to evoke one's past, a person generally needs to resort to the memories of others and transports oneself to reference points that

exist outside of them, determined by society” (HALBWACHS, 2006, p. 72). We use the memories of others as “support” to access our memories.

From this perspective, Huysen (2000) observes that the emergence of memory constitutes one of the main phenomena of recent years, becoming a cultural and political concern in Western societies. In our previous work (LESSA; BRESSAN JÚNIOR, 2018), we added that there is also a strong marketing appeal in the issue of memory since we are increasingly nostalgic, and the sale of products related to the past has generated profitable business. Fashion, cinema, television, design, architecture, and advertising reflect this trend.

Recently, we have come across successful examples of advertising pieces that explored the emotional nature of consumers’ memories. “Advertising that provokes emotions in individuals aims to drive their latent desires so strongly that they feel compelled to work to satisfy them” (Sant’Anna, 2007, p. 85). That happened in campaigns for brands such as Oreo, which, in 2022, launched a series of marketing efforts inspired by the series Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum (1994-1997), and Renault, which, in 2019, made a commercial inspired by the classic animation Dungeons & Dragons (1983-1985). Both campaigns generated results that exceeded the brands’ expectations.

However, we should note that searching for a total memory cannot be successful since we can idealize the return to the past but never truly realize it. In this sense, Spinoza (2009, p. 122) states, “He who remembers a thing, in which he has once taken delight, desires to possess it under the same circumstances as when he first took delight therein.” It is not just a matter of reviewing what has happened. For the feeling of affection to be completely positive, the person remembering yearns for authenticity. Otherwise, affection can come with sadness or frustration, which can be dangerous for brands.

A tool used in this search for an “authentic” memory is artificial intelligence, as we will see in the next section.

Artificial intelligence and the act of remembering: from the uncanny valley to the loss of aura

Drawing from Kotler, Kartajaya, and Setiawan (2021, n.p.), we understand AI as a type of technology that “[...] uses computer algorithms to perform specific tasks that previously required human intelligence”. Besides allowing companies to automate a large part of their processes (fraud detection, payment security, loan approval, customer service, risk management, etc.), AI offers a variety of creative solutions to the field of marketing, especially if integrated with other technologies.

Röhe and Santaella (2023) describe different types of AI. The Classification type categorizes things automatically through machine learning. Predictive AI identifies patterns in past events and predicts future events. Generative AI produces synthetic texts or images by imitating patterns from a database. When we talk specifically about Generative AI, we observe the rise of the controversial phenomenon of deepfakes. This type of technology challenges the limits of visual perception by allowing the creation of hyper-realistic artificial media generated entirely by AI software. “In practice, they are artificial media generated from a large number of real files of a given person and using a machine learning algorithm” (ESTADÃO, 2022, n.p.).

There was a time when editing audio, photos, and videos was restricted to the domain of experts. However, technological advances have made audiovisual manipulation widely available to the general public. Some employments of deepfakes are already easily created by mobile apps and shared extensively on social media. Examples include an image of Pope Francis wearing an oversized white designer jacket and a photograph showing the police arresting former US President Donald Trump (Figure 1). The two imaginary scenes created using the Mid-journey platform, which generates images from text commands, went viral on the internet in March 2023, demonstrating the high degree of accuracy and realism that AI can achieve.

Figure 1 – Deepfakes generated from an AI image creation service



Source: X (2023), captured by the authors.

Different media, like video games, cinema, television, and advertising, have gradually incorporated deepfakes. In these scenarios, the good use of deepfakes can generate content that delights the public. The film *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) digitally recreated the image of actress Carrie Fisher for an appearance of the young Princess Leia.

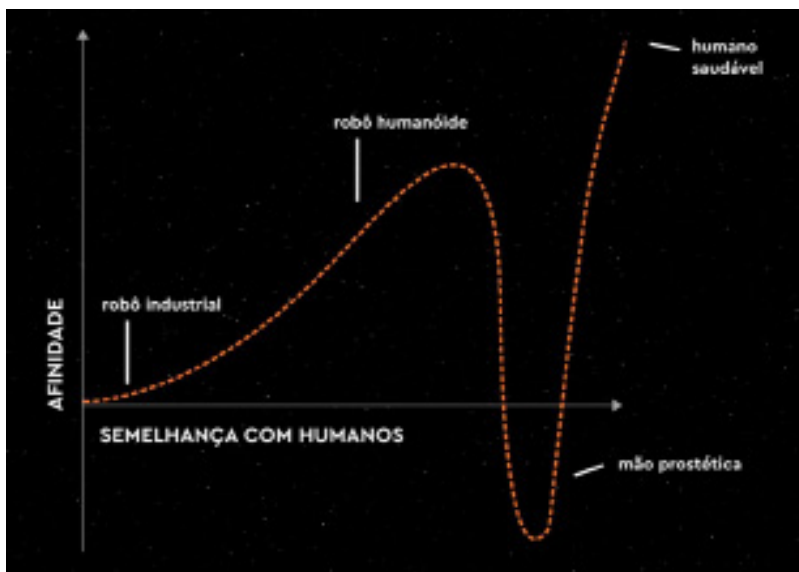
However, this technological revolution brings psychological, cultural, ethical, and social implications. In this context, we highlight that this level of image manipulation is capable of generating problems such as disinformation campaigns, distrust, loss of credibility by the media, production of pornographic material, and identity fraud. Moreover, manipulated images generate controversy due to their artificial aspect, which could create “illusory realities.” In light of such concerns, we present the concept of “uncanny valley,” proposed by robotics professor Masahiro Mori (2012). According to him, the greater the similarity between a robot and a human being, the greater the affinity and empathy of those who observe it. Industrial robots, for example, have a design based on functionality and bear little resemblance to the human form. Therefore, people do not feel affection for them. On the other hand, toy robots whose forms consist of two arms, two legs, a torso, and a face can enchant and bring children closer, given the playful dimension they achieve.

However, Mori (2012) argues the initial feeling of empathy tends to turn into discomfort and even strong repulsion when a robot reaches a certain point on the scale of similarity to a human being. In this sense, the peak of estrangement would be when an object is very similar to a person but still falls within the realm of almost identical. It is in this “almost” that the uncanny valley resides. To exemplify this concept, the author talks about prosthetic limbs, which cause estrangement despite presenting a high realistic degree.

One might say that the prosthetic hand has achieved a degree of resemblance to the human form, perhaps on a par with false teeth. However, when we realize the hand, which at first site looked real, is in fact artificial, we experience an eerie sensation. For example, we could be startled during a handshake by its limp boneless grip together with its texture and coldness. When this happens, we lose our sense of affinity, and the hand becomes uncanny. (MORI, 2012, p. 99).

We can see the same thing happens with deepfakes, given their high degree of verisimilitude. However, technology is not yet capable of replicating the image of human beings perfectly, leaving us adrift in the uncanny valley. Still, the author states that observers’ reactions become positive again, overcoming the uncanny valley if realism increases to the point where a robot is effectively identical to a healthy human being. The graph below (Figure 2) shows the uncanny valley represented in the relationship “affinity x similarity with humans”.

Figure 2 – The uncanny valley represented in the relationship “empathy x verisimilitude”



Source: YouTube (2023), captured by the authors.

Benjamin (1987) allows us to think about the issue of deepfakes from the perspective of our relationship with reality and authenticity in a world where digital manipulation is increasingly present. The author argues that mechanical reproducibility, through techniques such as photography and cinema, has fundamentally changed people’s relationship with art. In the current context, deepfakes represent a radical evolution of this idea of reproducibility.

“In even the most perfect reproduction, one thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence in a particular place.” (BENJAMIN, 2019, p. 167). According to the author, the aura of the work of art stems from the “here and now,” the sense of singularity and authenticity that each work carries within itself, which is present in the moment of contemplation.

What, then, is the aura? A strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be. To follow with the eye-while resting on a summer afternoon-a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch. In the light of this description, we can readily grasp the social basis of the aura's present decay. It rests on two circumstances, both linked to the increasing emergence of the masses and the growing intensity of their movements. Namely: the desire of the present-day masses to "get closer" to things, and their equally passionate concern for overcoming each thing's uniqueness [Oberwindung des Einmaligen jeder Gegebenheit] by assimilating it as a reproduction. Every day the urge grows stronger to get hold of an object at close range in an image [Bild], or, better, in a facsimile [Abbild], a reproduction. (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 170)

Thus, Benjamin's analysis of technical reproducibility resonates in the context of deepfakes, especially in cases such as the Volkswagen campaign, which reproduces the image of a deceased person. In line with what the author tells us, the commercial reinforces this desire to make things "feel closer." In this case, it is not a physical approximation but a temporal approximation with an unrecoverable past. From this, we understand that the reproduction of Elis Regina's image also has no aura since the AI cannot capture and represent her real presence.

Huyssen (2000) reinforces this argument by stating that we are in an era of obsession with repetition that creates a culture of copying. In the same sense, Eco (1984, p. 12) tells us that "[...] there is a constant in the imagination and taste of the average North American for whom the past must be preserved and celebrated in the form of an absolute copy, real format, one-to-one scale: a philosophy of immortality as duplication." With this, it is as if there were a desire to replace memories with representations of the past: since one cannot go back in time, we revisit these pasts through the culture of copying. However, just as Benjamin criticizes the loss of aura, Eco (1984) tells us that, in these cases, what we are savoring is nothing more than a lie.

Furthermore, we must consider the ethical implications of using deepfakes in advertising. We understand the act of digitally recreating the image of public figures or celebrities after their death can lead to situations in which these personalities are portrayed inappropriately or appear involved in messages that contradict their beliefs and values. In the case of the Volkswagen campaign, CONAR (National Council for the Self-Regulation of Advertising) opened an ethical process against the company. However, the council archived the action since the company had the consent of the artist's heirs to use her image. Nevertheless, we believe that the advancement of AI tools presents significant ethical challenges related to transparency, privacy, and respect for individual rights. In this context, the use of Elis' image in the Volkswagen film led to the creation of Bill No. 3592/23, which is currently in the Senate² and aims to establish guidelines for the use of images and audio of deceased individuals through AI to preserve the dignity, privacy, and rights of individuals even after their death.

Given this, in the next section, we present an analysis of the advertising film *Gerações* based on the impact among consumers on social media through comments published on social media X.

Analysis of comments on the film *Gerações* by Volkswagen

The two-minute film *VW 70 anos | Gerações | VW Brasil* was released on the YouTube channel of Volkswagen Brazil on July 3, 2023, and has over 30 million views.³ The video begins by showing an ID.Buzz, an electric version of the popular Kombi, with Maria Rita driving it through an open field as she sings *Como Nossos Pais*. At one point, a classic blue and white model of Kombi appears with Elis Regina as the driver. Mother and daughter drive and sing together side by side on the road.

² Data refers to March 2024.

³ Data refers to March 2024.

Figure 3 – The commercial shows Maria Rita and Elis Regina driving and singing together



Source: YouTube (2023), captured by the authors.

The commercial quickly generated a great deal of attention on the Internet. That said, we analyzed messages published on the social media X. To collect data, we used the platform’s search tool, looking for posts in Portuguese that simultaneously contained the terms “Elis” and “Volkswagen” and were published the day after the film was released. In total, we recorded 1,059 messages.

Next, through a semantic analysis, we determined a series of indexes and indicators to classify the messages. This procedure resulted in the data presented in the table below.

Table 1 – Classification of collected messages by indexes and indicators

Índices	Indicadores	Quantidade
Positivo	Descreve emoções positivas, relata memórias afetivas, elogia a marca	309
Negativo	Expressa preocupações éticas com o uso da IA, questiona as decisões criativas da campanha, demonstra estranheza diante do <i>deepfake</i> , apresenta uma má aceitação do filme	247
Neutro	Se refere ao filme sem demonstrar opinião favorável ou contrária	270
Notícia	Notícia ou repercute o lançamento do filme (geralmente portais de notícias ou páginas de entretenimento)	151
Não se aplica	Apresenta os termos “Elis” e “Volkswagen”, mas não faz referência ao filme lançado pela marca	82

Source: Elaborated by the authors (2024).

After defining the indexes and indicators, we selected the documents by applying the rule of relevance, according to which “the documents retained must be suitable as a source of information to correspond to

the objective that incites the analysis” (BARDIN, 2011, p. 128). Thus, to constitute the research corpus, we selected only messages that bring positive and negative indexes, reflecting consumers’ feelings, opinions, and perceptions about the campaign. We present the most relevant ones according to the proposed objectives in the analysis here.

Initially, we highlighted publications that demonstrate uncanniness in the face of the appearance of Elis Regina, digitally recreated with the help of AI, more than 40 years after her death. Some terms appear in bold to highlight what we will address in the following paragraph. We kept the spelling errors to preserve the content of the messages.

*that’s absurdly **uncomfortable** that **doll** they made of Elis is **BIZARRE**, the commercial being for Volkswagen is even more bizarre.*

*I found that Volkswagen’s commercial with elis regina looking like a **stuck doll bizarre***

*I felt more **scared** than moved by that Volkswagen commercial. I imagine they could have done a beautiful campaign using old videos of Elis without using artificial intelligence but the impact of seeing her with her daughter is really moving. Ps. Each day, I am more **averse** to ai.*

The highlighted terms in the comments reflect the uncanny valley phenomenon (MORI, 2012). The use of expressions like “uncomfortable”, “bizarre”, “scared,” and “averse” reveals that, despite resembling the image of the singer, the deepfake representation of Elis Regina causes repulsion. After all, the technology cannot yet replicate human expressions perfectly, sometimes creating the impression that she is a “doll.” Furthermore, we interpret that this uncanniness occurs, in part, due to the absence of aura (BENJAMIN, 1987). In this sense, the replica of Elis’s image attempts to recreate her original artistic aura. However, there is a lack of authenticity since the aura does not lend itself to replicas. In this way, technology use compromises the emotional connection, as we can see in the last message, which says: “I felt more scared than moved.”

From this uncanniness, it is also possible to establish a connection with Spinoza's theory (2009) that, thinking about the theme of memory, states that those who remember something that generated pleasure in the past want to have that experience under the same circumstances in the present. Thus, when viewing a representation of Elis Regina that is not faithful to reality, viewers are disturbed by negative feelings.

In parallel, we observed comments that raise ethical questions about using the image of a deceased person through AI.

Everyone is melting over Volkswagen's new commercial, and all I can think about is how would Elis feel if she saw a deepfake of hers singing an anthem against the dictatorship in a commercial for a company that collaborated not only with the military regime but also with the Nazi regime?

Regarding the Volkswagen controversy, I'll take another point here, and I'm not even going to question the lyrics and the commercial. Would Elis, if she were alive, have given up her image to make the commercial? It's kind of crazy to think that her image could be used after her death without her consent.

Volkswagen's ad is atrociously bad taste. That pedestrian interpretation of the song, pardon the pun, is a truly profane use of Elis' memory and what it means for national memory. And it's still lining the pockets of the same old crowd, the same one from 64...

Considering Elis Regina's image, consumers identify different aspects of the advertisement that raise ethical concerns. First, they question the recreation of Elis through a deepfake to promote the product of a company with a controversial history, such as Volkswagen. The singer was a relevant voice in the fight against the military dictatorship in Brazil, which would make her association with a company that collaborated with authoritarian regimes problematic.⁴

4 According to the National Truth Commission, Volkswagen actively collaborated with the dictatorship's repressive apparatus with acts that included denouncing and handing over employees to repressive bodies and donating or lending vehicles for persecution activities (CARTA CAPITAL, 2021).

Another factor highlighted in the comments is that the use of the image of a public figure after her death (and, therefore, without her consent) also poses a relevant ethical issue. “Would Elis, if she were alive, have given up her image to make the commercial,” asked the author of the second message. Some posts present other ethical dilemmas in this context.

*Controlling the past is a weapon of the elites. The dictatorship persecuted Elis. She supported the ABC strikers. Volkswagen supported the dictatorship. There are reports of torture with the support of this company. They want to clean up their image and erase the past. **Money can even buy a past for a false present.***

*There are several ethical dilemmas in this commercial with Maria Rita and Elis Regina for Volkswagen, but what stressed me the most was thinking **we can no longer die in peace.** If they put me up for a car sale in memoriam, I'll come back to pull their legs.*

In these cases, the highlighted phrases suggest something that different authors have pointed out: an obsession with repetition (HUYSSSEN, 2000), a desire to make things closer (BENJAMIN, 1987), and a philosophy of immortality as duplication (ECO, 1984). It is as if we can no longer preserve the past through memory alone. Instead, we are constantly feeding the culture of copying, yearning for ever more accurate reproductions of the past, but that are nothing more than falsifications, as Eco (1984) states.

However, we emphasize that not all reactions to the commercial are negative, especially when we direct our attention to messages that reflect the public's affective memories, as we will see in the following comments. In this sense, we emphasize that, besides appealing to the image of Elis Regina, the film uses other resources to evoke the past with scenes that bring an old aesthetic, always presenting Volkswagen vehicles in moments starring families or groups of friends, which could reinforce the emergence of a collective memory.

Figure 4 – Images with an vintage aesthetic appeal to consumers' memory of the brand



Source: YouTube (2023, captured by the authors).

In this regard, we observed comments from viewers who shared their memories awakened by the commercial in posts on the social media X.

*AI allows us to “travel” through time. Watching Maria Rita and Elis together in the new Volkswagen ad is **moving**. Until very recently, that video would have been very difficult or near impossible to make.*

*Dude, it's not about Volkswagen... It's about our **childhood memories, going on rides in a Kombi or a Fusca. It's about Elis. It's nostalgia. It's loving the past** and living like our parents. Let us get a little emotional without turning it into a problem that won't get us anywhere!*

*This Volkswagen commercial **touched** me on a certain level... **It brought back memories of my mother, a longing for the hug she gave me while listening to Elis.** Growing up hurts, and many times we lose some privileges.*

*Volkswagen, this 70-year-old video deserves all the applause. **Beautiful, moving, forever Elis Regina.** Artificial intelligence is **wonderful**. Congratulations to everyone.*

The first message emphasizes technology used to activate affective memories, highlighting the commercial provides a “time travel” that one can only achieve through AI. In the same perspective, the other messages reinforce that this memory also occurs through relationships with others and with the environment in which we are. We observe that in comments such as “childhood memories,” “going on rides,” and “memories of my mother” in the second and third posts. Such feelings are

only possible because, as Le Breton (2009, p. 111) states, “man is affectively present in the world.”

Furthermore, these memories reinforce the collective nature of memory. As Halbwachs (2006) points out, our memories become more easily accessible through collective memory. After all, the relationship with others determines how we constitute memory. As a result, the images we remember link and mix with reflections of the people and groups around us, strengthening the emotional relationship with the nostalgic elements presented in the film.

In the second post, by stating that “growing up hurts,” the viewer shows that the feelings evoked by memory are not always positive (SPINOZA, 2009). The impossibility of recovering the past, a mother’s hug, and the good time of childhood generates sadness and frustration.

From a marketing perspective, it is interesting to note that the ad is not only based on memories of Elis but also on the brand through the cars that were part of the lives of many Brazilians, visible when the author of one of the posts mentions “the Kombi and the Beetle.” Thus, advertising appears as a powerful tool capable of evoking positive feelings. That is what we see through expressions such as “moving,” “beautiful,” and “wonderful.” In view of this, we return to previous work (BRESSAN JÚNIOR; LESSA, 2018) to highlight that affective memory awakens impulses that change the subject’s state. That change makes viewers feel emotional and touched when watching the commercial.

Finally, we present posts that highlight the effectiveness of nostalgia as a sales tool.

What matters is that the Volkswagen commercial with Maria Rita and Elis’ virtual spectrum worked, at least for the fool speaking to you. I feel like buying an old Kombi and the new electric version. But it’s only a wish because I’m poor.

Oh, people, I am not problematizing the commercial with Elis. If I had money, I would have bought the new Volkswagen Kombi. Forgive me.

I loved the Volkswagen commercial with Elis Regina, and now I want an electric Kombi to zap around.

In these posts, consumers report a desire to purchase Volkswagen products based on the feelings aroused by the campaign. As Sant'Anna (2007) states, using affective arguments in advertising activates emotions capable of driving purchases. A consumer public is willing to pay for products and services from brands that, in some way, provide an experience of "returning to the past." Thus, we understand that appealing to consumers' memories can represent a competitive advantage for brands that know how to explore the affective factor in their campaigns.

In view of the data presented, we understand the effects caused by the use of AI in evoking affective memories from the film *Generations* by VW Brazil. Despite the "uncanniness" factor generated by deepfake technology and the ethical questions raised by AI, we emphasize the positive feelings that stem from collective memory. In view of the above, we present the final considerations of the research in the next section.

Final considerations

When analyzing the current situation, it is notable the advertising industry is using AI as a powerful tool. At the same time, issues related to memory and nostalgia are increasingly reinforcing its importance. Once combined, these factors can generate successful advertising campaigns, allowing companies and brands to connect with their consumers emotionally.

In this context, our analysis met the objectives of the research. Initially, we highlight that, when exposed to the Volkswagen advertising film, the public brings up questions and reflections for understanding AI as a marketing resource. There are positive reactions, especially due to the emotions triggered by memories the commercial incites, a factor that becomes even greater in light of the phenomenon of collective memory, which enhances the emotional connection with the music, the image of Elis Regina, and the other nostalgic elements present in the film. Thus, we emphasize using AI to appeal to consumers' memory can represent a good strategy in the context of advertising.

Among the negative comments, we highlight concerns regarding the ethical dilemmas of using images of deceased people in the creation of deepfakes. In this sense, we argue there needs to be regulation for the ethical use of artificial intelligence, especially in media such as advertising, which uses this type of image for commercial purposes. We recognize that AI brings both opportunities and challenges, and it is essential to address these issues responsibly, promoting the ethical development of technology to maximize its benefits and mitigate its risks. Furthermore, phenomena such as the loss of aura and the uncanny valley contribute to the rejection of the commercial by a portion of consumers, as we could observe through the comments published on social media X. Finally, we understand the use of artificial intelligence in creating representations of the past symbolizes a new moment for the act of remembering. If, in the past, resources such as photography could record moments and evoke memories, AI allows us to elevate representations of the past to another level, transcending the limits we knew until now. It is a technology capable of recovering the past and creating new experiences, building new bonds, and producing new meanings. Such considerations lead us to reflect on how these technologies can influence our perception of memory and our relationship with different temporalities. Given these considerations, we aim to contribute and inspire new perspectives on the subject so that the results presented here contribute to unprecedented discussions in memory studies and, consequently, in the academic environment.

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Mobile application usage behavior among adolescents: a comparative study of preferences and trends among students

Comportamento de utilização de aplicativos móveis entre adolescentes: um estudo comparativo das preferências e tendências entre estudantes

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Resumo: *O objetivo principal foi identificar os aplicativos mais populares e analisar como os adolescentes utilizam categorias específicas de aplicativos em suas vidas. O estudo é observacional e transversal, envolvendo adolescentes de 12 a 18 anos. A pesquisa utilizou uma amostra de 168 adolescentes de duas escolas em Porto Velho-RO e coletou dados por meio do aplicativo Meu Celular, Meu Vício. Os resultados indicam uma clara preferência dos adolescentes por aplicativos de bate-papo e redes sociais. Embora tenham sido observadas variações entre as escolas, a tendência geral de uso de aplicativos por categoria foi semelhante. Este estudo fornece uma visão abrangente do uso de aplicativos e consumo digital por adolescentes em contextos escolares. Confirmou-se a influência das redes sociais e aplicativos de mensagens na vida dos jovens.*

Palavras-chave: *Consumo e Comportamento Digital; Uso de Aplicativos; Adolescentes; Escolas; Redes Sociais.*

Abstract: *The main objective was to identify the most popular apps and analyze how teenagers use specific categories of apps in their lives. The study is observational and cross-sectional, involving adolescents aged 12 to 18. The research used a sample of 168 teenagers from two schools in Porto Velho-RO and*

collected data by means of the application Meu Celular, Meu Vício. The results indicate a clear preference among teenagers for chat applications and social networks. Although variations were observed among schools, the general trend of app usage by category was similar. This study provides a comprehensive view of adolescent app use in school contexts. The influence of social networks and messaging applications on young people's lives was confirmed.

Keywords: *Digital consumption and behavior; Use of applications; Teenagers; Schools; Social media*

Introduction

The growing wave of digitalization that has swept the world in recent decades has brought the proliferation of mobile devices and applications, triggering a fundamental transformation in our everyday lives. The ubiquity of smartphones and internet connectivity has opened new frontiers of access to information, communication, and entertainment, shaping the way we interact with the world around us (SHI; WANG; ZHU, 2023).

This phenomenon has become particularly evident among young people, who have quickly adopted smartphones as ubiquitous extensions of their identities and communication (SHI; WANG; ZHU, 2023). The ability to access a wide range of applications, offering everything from social media to games and utilities, has become an intrinsic part of the fabric of modern society, especially among students (SOHN et al., 2019).

However, a fundamental question arises and presents deep concerns with this digital revolution and the proliferation of apps: how are students using their smartphones? More specifically, which categories of apps dominate their time and attention? Answering these questions is crucial since these technologies' unrestrained or inappropriate use can significantly impact adolescent development (TWENGE; CAMPBELL, 2018) and academic performance (ABBASI et al., 2021).

The present study seeks to address this question, analyzing the use of applications by category among 168 students from two different schools. This study assumes particular importance at a time when the education and well-being of young people are interconnected with the use of mobile devices (MIN KWON; PAEK, 2016).

The inappropriate or excessive use of technology can potentially interfere negatively with academic performance and the mental and social health of students, even though it offers unprecedented educational and socialization opportunities (STOJILJKOVIĆ; STANKOVIĆ, 2018). Throughout this study, we will examine application usage patterns among students in two schools, comparing their preferences and

trends. The aim of this article is not only to describe these patterns but also to contribute to the debate on how mobile technology is shaping students' lives in different school contexts.

We expect that the results of this research will contribute to a deeper analysis of the use of applications among students and generate insights that can guide educational and political decision-making for promoting healthy and productive usage of mobile devices in school environments. Understanding these usage patterns can help educators, parents, and policymakers develop effective strategies for balancing the advantages of technology with the challenges it presents for adolescents' development and academic performance.

Method

This observational and cross-sectional study results from extensive research with adolescent students in middle and high school in Porto Velho, the capital of the state of Rondônia. The research used a random sampling of adolescents aged between 12 and 18 enrolled in 2022. It is worth mentioning that Porto Velho has an estimated student population of 39,669 students (data from 2023, BRAZIL).

Before starting data collection, we submitted the research protocol to the Federal University of Rondônia Research Ethics Committee, obtaining approval under review number 5.118.084, with CAAE registration 53306221.2.0000.5300 CEP/CONEP. Additionally, we obtained authorizations from the management of the selected schools. To include adolescents in the study, parents or legal guardians provided written consent, besides the adolescents themselves.

We selected schools in a random draw, including two state primary and secondary schools as institutions participating in this study. Calculations performed in the Statcalc program (Epi Info) determined the sample size. Considering an estimate of 50% of students in the target population, a margin of sampling error of 5%, and a confidence interval of 95% (95% CI), the calculations indicated the need to collect data from 380 adolescents for this study. However, the final study

sample consisted of 168 adolescents due to factors not controlled by the researchers.

We collected data, including demographic information and answers to specific questionnaires, between March 21 and April 8, 2022. To collect data on smartphone usage habits, we installed the *Meu Celular Meu Vício* (My Cellphone My Vice - MCMV) application on teenagers' smartphones. Amorim and Corso (2020) developed and validated this app in Brazil, allowing data collection on smartphone usage, including time of use, frequency of application use, blocking, and unblocking, among other actions (AMORIM; CORSO, 2020).

It is worth mentioning that the data discussed in this article corresponds to one week of smartphone use. Then, we grouped the data from all 168 students by school and calculated the total number of executions and time spent using the applications, which we divided into categories: social media, chat, songs, videos, browsers, and games. We conducted all analyses using SPSS software, version 27.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA).

The application remained installed on students' devices for 15 days, but the research only used data from the second week to mitigate a possible behavioral bias introduced by monitoring. The choice of this longer period aimed to allow students to get used to the presence of the application, reducing potential changes in their usage patterns due to the newness of the tool.

Results

Table 1 presents a detailed analysis of the sociodemographic data of the student population in Middle School and High School at Barão de Solimões and Rio Branco. The variables examined include the participants' age, sex, race, and family structure.

Table 1: Representation of Sociodemographic Data by prevalence, % (n) in Barão de Solimões and Rio Branco schools.

Characteristics	Barão de Solimões (84)	Rio Branco (84)
Age		
Average	14,65 (14.31-15.01)	15,15 (14.79-15.50)
Sex		
Male	49 (58.3%)	45 (53.6%)
Female	35 (41.7%)	39 (46.4%)
Race		
White	25 (29.8%)	25 (29.8%)
Black	6 (7.1%)	9 (10.7%)
Brown	52 (61.9%)	46 (54.8%)
Indigenous	1 (1.2%)	4 (4.8%)
Family structure		
Father	6 (7.1%)	5 (6,0%)
Mother	28 (33.3%)	30 (35.7%)
Father and mother	47 (56.0%)	39 (46.4%)
Uncles, grandparents or others	3 (3.6%)	10 (11.9%)

Source: Elaborated by the authors

As Table 1 shows, regarding distribution by sex, we observed that most students in both schools were male. Regarding ethnic-racial self-declaration, the majority of students in both schools identified themselves as mixed race. Concerning family structure, most students in both schools reported living with both parents. Below, we present the main results, highlighting the total time spent and the total number of executions for each application category over one week (seven days), as indicated in Table 2.

Tabela 2: Report on one week of mobile app use by 168 students, apps separated by category.

App Category	App Name	Amount executions	of Hours
Social media	Instagram	11,809	388.46
	Twitter	1,936	55
	Facebook	1,449	46.03
	Pinterest	353	9.99
	Snaptube	734	7.12
	Snapchat	75	2.8
Chat	WhatsApp	29.504	619.3
	Discord	2.493	41.12
	YoWhatsApp	1.193	14.51
	Telegram	380	5.28
	WhatsApp Web	427	3.92
Music	Music player	434	47.3
	Spotify	817	14.6
	YouTube Music	126	4.75
	Lark Player	190	1.27
Video	TikTok	8,137	687.16
	YouTube	6,012	384.77
	Video player	665	7.5
	Netflix	374	37.92
	Twitch	11	1.05
Browsers	Chrome	4.687	114.15
	Google search	4.480	50.96
	Samsung Internet Browser	598	9.71

App Category	App Name	Amount of executions	Hours
Games	<i>Roblox</i>	308	37.52
	<i>Free Fire</i>	413	37.14
	<i>Subway Surfers</i>	207	11.76
	<i>Pou</i>	137	7.83
	<i>Ball Pool</i>	98	3.49
	<i>Cartola FC</i>	101	2.08
	<i>Gacha Life</i>	28	1.25
	<i>Clash of Clans</i>	29	0.53
	<i>Candy Crush Saga</i>	22	1.24

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Among social media applications, Instagram was the most popular in both schools, with 11,809 executions and a total usage time of 388.46 hours. Twitter also had considerable usage, with 1,936 executions and a total usage time of 55 hours, as well as Facebook, with a total of 1,449 executions and a total time of 46.03 hours. Pinterest, Snaptube, and Snapchat, although less popular, were used frequently.

Regarding chat applications, WhatsApp stood out as the most used, with 29,504 executions and 619.30 hours of use. Discord, Telegram, and WhatsApp Web were likewise popular apps in the category.

Among music apps, Spotify led the category, with 817 plays and a total usage time of 14.60 hours. The cell phone's own Music Player has fewer plays, a total of 434, but showed a much higher usage time with a total of 47.3 hours. Students used YouTube Music and Lark Player frequently but to a lesser extent.

In the video category, TikTok and YouTube dominated, with 8,137 and 6,012 plays, respectively. Netflix was the third most popular app in average usage time, at 37.92 hours. Other video applications, such as Twitch and the cell phone's own Video Player, were also used by students.

Chrome was the most used browser, with 4,687 executions and an average usage time of 114.15 hours. Google search was also widely used, with 4,480 executions and 50.96 hours of use.

Regarding games, Roblox and Free Fire were the most popular games. Roblox had 308 executions and 37.52 hours of use, while Free Fire ran 413 times with 37.14 hours. Other games, such as Subway Surfers, Pou, Ball Pool, Cartola FC, Gacha Life, Clash of Clans, and Candy Crush Saga, also had a significant presence.

The results in Table 3 compare the use of applications between Escola Rio Branco and Escola Barão do Solimões. The table highlights the most used applications in hours in each category and the difference in executions and hours between the two schools.

Table 3: Comparison of application use over a week between Escola Rio Branco and Escola Barão do Solimões.

App Category	App Name	Escola Rio Branco (Hours)	Escola Barão do Solimões (Hours)	Escola Rio Branco (Executions)	Escola Barão do Solimões (Executions)
Social media	Instagram	242.9	145.56	6,054	5,755
	Facebook	19.05	26.98	525	924
	Snaptube	6.4	0.72	569	165
	Pinterest	6.55	3.44	236	117
	Twitter	4,5	51.5	304	1,632
	Snapchat	1,55	1.25	51	24
Chat	WhatsApp	317.25	302.05	15,122	14,382
	Discord	19.55	21.57	1,861	632
	Telegram	1.01	4.27	104	276
	YoWhatsApp	14.51	-	1,193	-
	WhatsApp Web	3.92	-	427	-
Music	Music player	33.05	14.25	305	216
	Spotify	4.4	10.2	386	431
	YouTube Music	3.55	1.2	55	71
	Lark Player	1.27	-	190	-

App Category	App Name	Escola Rio Branco (Hours)	Escola Barão do Solimões (Hours)	Escola Rio Branco (Executions)	Escola Barão do Solimões (Executions)
Videos	TikTok	395.45	291.71	4,952	3,185
	YouTube	179.57	205.2	3,379	2,633
	Video player	4.51	2.99	356	309
	Netflix	24.5	3.42	279	95
Browsers	Chrome	54.22	59.93	2,078	2,609
	Pesquisa Google	no 25.51	25.45	2,311	2,169
	Samsung Internet	6.27	3.44	379	219
Games	<i>Roblox</i>	20.59	16.93	143	165
	<i>Free Fire</i>	8.06	29.08	108	305
	<i>Subway Surfers</i>	7.57	4.19	139	68
	<i>Pou</i>	1.75	6.08	19	118
	<i>Gacha Life</i>	1.25	-	28	-
	<i>Clash of Clans</i>	0.53	-	29	-

Source: Elaborated by the authors

In the Social Media category, both schools presented Instagram as the application with the most hours of use. Escola Rio Branco recorded 6,054 executions and 242.9 hours of use. The Barão do Solimões School had slightly fewer executions, 5,755, but with a much shorter total time, 145.56 hours. Students also used other social media but with a much shorter number of executions and usage time: Facebook, Snapchat, Pinterest, Twitter, and Snapchat.

In the Chat category, WhatsApp also led in both schools, with Escola Rio Branco recording a total of 15,122 executions and 317.25 hours of use and Escola Barão do Solimões with 14,382 executions and 302.05 hours of use. No other application came close to these results. Students also used Discord and Telegram as chat applications. Only Escola Rio Branco uses YoWhatsApp and WhatsApp Web.

Regarding the Music category, the cell phone's music player was used the most in hours in both schools, with 33.05 hours and 305 plays at Escola Rio Branco and 14.25 hours and 216 plays at Escola Barão do Solimões. Regarding executions, Spotify led in both schools, with 386 at Escola Rio Branco and 431 at Escola Barão do Solimões. However, students spent less time on this application, 4.4 hours at Escola Rio Branco and 10.2 at Barão do Solimões School. Two other applications, YouTube Music and Lark Player, are only used at Escola Rio Branco.

In the video category, TikTok led in both schools, with 4,952 executions and 395.45 hours of use at Escola Rio Branco and with 3,185 executions and 291.71 hours of use at Escola Barão do Solimões. Students use three other applications to watch videos: YouTube, the smartphone's video player, and Netflix.

Regarding Browsers, Chrome was the most used in both schools, with a total of 2,078 executions and 54.22 hours of use at Escola Rio Branco and 2,609 executions and 59.93 hours of use at Escola Barão do Solimões. Students also used Google search and Samsung Internet.

In Games, there was a notable difference in the most used applications in hours between schools. Roblox led at Escola Rio Branco with 143 executions, totaling 20.59 hours of game use, while Free Fire led at Escola Barão do Solimões with 305 executions and a total of 29.08 hours. Students from both schools played Subway Surfers and Pou, but only those from Escola Rio Branco played Gacha Life and Clash of Clans.

Our analysis of the results highlights the significant variation in app use between the two schools and the importance of considering the school context when examining patterns of mobile device use among adolescents.

Discussion

The results of the analysis of app usage by category provide important insights into the mobile behavior of teens. The main objective of the research was to investigate how students use their smartphones

and, more specifically, which categories of applications dominate their time and attention.

Regarding the first research question, which aimed to identify the most popular applications among students, the results indicate that students considerably use chat applications, especially WhatsApp, and social media, especially Instagram, in terms of hours. These findings seem to align with indications from the literature on global digital trends. For example, in the United States, a recent survey involving 200 young people aged 11 to 17 (RADESKY et al., 2023) intensively monitored smartphone use for a week through an app, confirming these observed preference patterns among students. A report by the consultancy YPulse, which studied young people in Western Europe, observed similar results (YPULSE, 2022).

Additionally, a recent national survey conducted with 1,617 parents of children and adolescents aged 13 to 16 revealed that WhatsApp and Instagram were the applications most mentioned by parents (PANORAMA MOBILE TIME/OPINION BOX, 2023). This alignment of perceptions between young people's preferences and parents' observations consolidates the consistency of these usage patterns and highlights the relevance of these platforms in different contexts.

This preference for communication apps reflects the importance of social networks and instant communication in young people's lives. These platforms offer a convenient way to stay in touch with friends and family, share moments and information in real-time, and feel connected, especially when virtual communication has become crucial, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic (MCAFEE, 2022).

Existing literature supports this trend, highlighting that social media play a significant role in building identity, forming relationships, and seeking social validation among young people (SILVA NETO; TAVARES, 2019). An increasingly connected world that values quick responses and continuous availability sees constant communication provided by chat applications as necessary (TANG; HEW, 2022).

These results have important implications for the education and health of young people. Excessive use of social media and chat applications can lead to mental well-being concerns such as anxiety and depression due to social pressure and constant exposure to digital content (TWENGE, 2017). Therefore, educators and parents must promote a balanced approach to smartphone use, encouraging breaks and offline activities.

The second research question sought to understand how the use of applications varied between the two schools, Barão de Solimões and Rio Branco. Although schools differed in specific preferences, the general trend of app usage was consistent across schools, with chat and social media apps dominating.

The implications of the results are relevant for theory and the practical school context. Firstly, in theory, the findings reinforce the idea that adolescents are deeply involved with mobile technology, particularly with social media applications, which have already been the subject of several studies (CHI '23, 2023). This highlights the continued need for research into the psychosocial and educational impact of dependence on mobile devices.

In the school context, the results have significant implications for school administration and teachers. The prevalence of social media and chat applications can raise questions about students' attention during classes and academic performance. Educational strategies can incorporate mobile devices as learning tools more effectively, taking advantage of students' natural interest in technology (ÇELIK, 2016; UYSAL; BALCI, 2018).

This analysis aligns with previous studies that identified chat/social media applications as the most popular among adolescents (RIDEOUT; ROBB, 2019; PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 2022). This similarity suggests a consistent trend in young people's behavior regarding mobile device use.

We can attribute app usage patterns to several factors. Firstly, the role of social media in the lives of teenagers as a tool for socialization

and personal expression is a significant motivator (ODGERS; JENSEN, 2020). Furthermore, the availability of easy access to the internet and the popularization of smartphones have made the use of these applications practically ubiquitous among young people (SHI; WANG; ZHU, 2023).

In the school context, students may be turning to chat applications and social media as a form of escapism, relaxation, or even to fill moments of boredom during the school period (SHAKYA; CHRISTAKIS, 2017). That raises questions about how schools can balance the use of mobile devices as educational tools with policies that prevent distractions in the classroom.

In short, the results of the analysis provide valuable information about the use of applications by adolescents in school contexts, highlighting the predominance of chat applications and social media and the theoretical and practical implications of these usage patterns. These findings can serve as a basis for developing educational policies and strategies that help students make the most of mobile technology while maintaining a healthy balance in their school environment.

Conclusion

The present research on digital consumption, more specifically, the use of applications by teenagers in schools in Porto Velho, Rondônia, provided an in-depth view of students' behavior toward mobile devices and different app categories. This conclusion summarizes the main findings, answers the research questions, discusses the broader implications of the study and identified limitations, and offers suggestions for future research.

The analysis revealed that teenagers in both schools, Barão de Solimões and Rio Branco, have a notable preference for chat applications, such as WhatsApp, and social media applications, such as Instagram and Facebook, which also had a significant presence. We explored the categories of music, videos, browsers, and games highlighting the diversity of student interest in applications.

These results validate the first research question, identifying the most popular applications among teenagers in the investigated schools. Regarding the second research question, the data demonstrated that, although there may be variations in preferences between schools, the general trend of application use by category was similar.

The results of this study have significant implications on several fronts. In theoretical terms, they confirm the predominant influence of messaging apps and social media as an integral part of teenagers' lives in the digital age. Deepening this understanding is fundamental for research in psychology and education, especially considering the impact of these technologies on mental health and academic behavior.

In the school context, these findings highlight the need for a balanced approach to the use of mobile devices. Schools can explore strategies that capitalize on students' interest in technology to enhance learning, while promoting policies that minimize distractions in the classroom.

A possibly significant limitation of this study is using the Meu Celular, Meu Vício (MCMV) application installed on teenagers' smartphones for data collection. The fact that participants are aware of their monitoring can influence how they use their smartphones. That can lead to an inauthentic representation of their real usage habits.

For future studies, we recommend a more in-depth investigation to assess the correlation between time dedicated to specific application categories and students' academic performance. Furthermore, we suggest research that addresses the potential effects of intensive use of social media and mobile devices on adolescents' mental health. That would include an analysis of the relationship between prolonged use of these technologies and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Furthermore, it would be relevant to investigate how the excessive use of mobile devices can affect the physical health of adolescents, considering possible associations with sedentary behaviors.

Furthermore, we recommend exploring specific educational strategies to effectively integrate mobile devices into teaching activities

and school policies that promote a healthy balance in application use, besides expanding the study to other regions of Brazil to identify geographic variations in application usage patterns.

Thus, this study contributes to understanding adolescents' behavior toward mobile applications in school contexts. We hope these findings will inspire further research and contribute to improving the education and well-being of young people in the digital age.

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What green are we talking about? Divergences in the nomenclature of sustainable products

De que verde estamos falando? Divergências na nomenclatura de produtos sustentáveis

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Abstract: *The abundance of marketing definitions and criteria creates confusion among consumers when trying to comprehend the impact of supposedly sustainable products and make informed purchasing decisions. This study, based on a survey of consumer behavior literature spanning from 2011 to 2021 where 432 articles were selected, delves into the diversity and potential discrepancies in terminology associated with sustainable products, corporate marketing strategies, and their potential influence on consumers. We highlight several recommendations for marketing practitioners and policymakers, including the importance of conducting long-term awareness campaigns, and establishing standards for sustainable products to enhance product differentiation and enable informed consumer choices.*

Keywords: *Communication; consumption; sustainable products; green products.*

Resumo: *A variedade de definições e critérios gera confusão entre consumidores quando buscam compreender o impacto de produtos supostamente sustentáveis e tomar decisões de compra informadas. Esta pesquisa, baseada em um levantamento da literatura sobre comportamento do consumidor de 2011 a 2021 em que foram selecionados 432 artigos, investiga a diversidade e possíveis discrepâncias na terminologia associada a produtos sustentáveis e potencial influência sobre os consumidores. Destacamos várias recomendações para profissionais de marketing e decisores políticos, incluindo a importância de realizar campanhas de sensibilização a longo prazo e de estabelecer normas para produtos sustentáveis para melhorar a diferenciação dos produtos e permitir escolhas informadas dos consumidores.*

Palavras-chave: *Comunicação; consumo; produtos sustentáveis; produtos verdes.*

In recent decades, a growing debate on environmental and social issues has driven interest and demand for the adoption of sustainable practices and products (SHOVE; SPURLING, 2013; UNRUH; ETTENSON, 2010; ROCHE et al., 2009). The search for ecologically friendly and socially responsible alternatives has been reflected in both individual consumption decisions and corporate marketing strategies, with a growing number of products making these claims (HAWS et al., 2013). However, as the market for sustainable products expands, a critical question arises: the extent to which consumers can purchase products and services that genuinely reduce social and environmental impacts. A derivative question is the diversity of nomenclatures used to describe these products and their attributes. The proliferation of terms can lead to incomplete or erroneous comprehension, jeopardizing the ability of consumers and companies to grasp the features of sustainable products and make informed choices.

The various nomenclatures used to categorize products as “green,” “clean,” “ecological,” “environmentally friendly,” “ethical,” and their variations often result in confusion and uncertainty, given the absence of a clear consensus among consumers regarding these definitions and attributes (LIM, 2017). The inconsistent use of these terminologies, therefore, undermines corporate credibility and perplexes consumers, making informed decision-making difficult. Recognizing these distinctions is vital for establishing shared communication standards between companies and consumers and enhancing marketing strategies within the realm of sustainable products.

Therefore, this exploratory study aims to analyze the diversity and potential discrepancies in the terminologies related to sustainable products in corporate marketing strategies. By scrutinizing the variations in sustainable product terminology, this study sheds light the conceptual intricacies surrounding these products, as well as the decision-making processes connected to them, offering valuable insights for marketing practitioners and policymakers. To accomplish this, we delve into the primary theories applied to consumer behavior, briefly address the

issues associated with the conceptualization of sustainable consumption, and explore the different terminologies employed to describe sustainable products in specialized literature, bolstered by illustrative examples from representative sectors. Finally, we discuss how to address these issues to enhance the clarity and efficacy of communication about sustainable products.

Methodology

This exploratory study begins with a comprehensive examination of scientific articles published in the top 30 marketing journals, as identified by the Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SCIMAGO, 2020). We covered the period from 2011 to 2021 and searched for consumption typologies related to sustainability aspects. By using the terms “green consumption,” “ethical consumption,” and “sustainable consumption” in our search within the databases of the journals, 432 articles were identified. While we provide detailed explanations of these three terms in section ahead, throughout the text, we use the term “sustainable consumption” in a general and inclusive manner to encompass the array of similar terms. This choice is primarily due to its significantly higher occurrence rate, with 235 instances in the aforementioned journals during the specified period, compared to 87 for “ethical consumption” and 110 for “green consumption.” Besides, it encompasses a broader scope, which includes environmental, social, and economic dimensions incorporated into its concept. Following the initial search, other papers, reports, and webpages were included in our analysis through the snowball method. This extension was made specifically to cover product nomenclatures, which is not restricted to academic applications, encompassing discussions on company websites, blogs, magazines, and newspaper articles. To foster a deeper comprehension of the influence of these nomenclature on consumer purchasing behavior, the next sections address an exposition of diverse theoretical perspectives designed to encourage more sustainable consumption practices among consumers.

Subsequently, we delve into an analysis of the variety of nomenclatures and their potential ramifications on consumption.

Purchase intention and consumer behavior

Understanding consumers' perspectives on the purchase of sustainable products is key for marketing practitioners, as it enables the formulation of suitable strategies for developing markets for such products (YADAV; PATHAK, 2017; CHAN; LAU, 2002). The comprehension of consumption dynamics concerning sustainable products has been extensively examined across various scientific fields. Studies within the realms of psychology (CHERNEV; BLAIR, 2020; HAWS et al., 2013), economics (RIBEIRO; VEIGA, 2011), environmental sciences (ANANTHARAMAN, 2018; GATERSLEBEN, 2001), sociology (CORSINI et al., 2019; JACOBSEN; HANSEN, 2019), and marketing (PARDANA et al., 2019; SHARMA, 2021), demonstrate that consumer preferences are not unidimensional and necessitate contribution from various fields for a comprehensive understanding.

Various theories established in the field of consumer studies provide the foundation for comprehending consumer dynamics. According to García-Salirrosas and Rondon-Eusebio (2022), the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which posits that behavior can be predicted by analyzing individuals' attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, is the most widely accepted approach in the literature. The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) (AJZEN, 1985) suggests that consumers act intentionally based on rational decisions and forecasts behavior by analyzing cognitive constructs. TPB establishes a fundamental set of constructs relevant as predictors of purchase intention: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These constructs are extensively employed in studies and experiments with population samples to forecast purchase intentions for specific product categories (TESTA; SARTI; FREY, 2019; KIM; CHUNG, 2011).

The original model has received additional construct contributions aimed at enhancing its predictive capacity in contemporary studies.

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Studies grounded in TPB furnish a foundation for practical applications, such as shaping public policies and creating educational campaigns aimed at mitigating undesirable behaviors (MOUTINHO; ROAZZI, 2010) or promoting desirable behaviors, like the adoption of products with lower environmental footprints. The literature has shown that even though a majority of consumers express a preference for purchasing sustainable products, this does not invariably translate to purchase intention or behavior (MAGNUSSON et al., 2001). Despite the existence of the “attitude-behavior gap” (CARRINGTON et al., 2010), more intricate studies have demonstrated the positive influence of green attributes on purchase intentions when considered in conjunction with other variables and within the framework of general benefits associated with rational choice (SANTOS et al., 2018). In this regard, prior research argues that green product attributes impact is more pronounced when the product aligns with individual consumer needs (such as price and brand value) (ROCHE et al., 2009).

Recent contributions in the field of green/environmental buying behavior provide valuable insights for understanding consumer behavior. The value-belief-norm theory of environmentalism, as proposed by Paul Stern (STERN et al., 1999), opens a specific avenue for studying normative factors associated with sustainable attitudes and behaviors. In line with Theory of Consumption Values (which defines five consumer values¹ that influence consumer behavior), Haws et al. (2013) introduce a scale of *green consumption values* that express consumers’ environmental protection values through their purchasing and consumption behaviors. This scale demonstrates that “green consumption values” are part of a network of principles associated with the conservation of environmental resources but are also linked to the conservation of financial and physical resources.

Different theoretical perspectives have been provided in the literature to encourage more sustainable consumer practices (CONNELLY et al.,

1 Functional, social, emotional, conditional, and epistemic value (SHETH; NEWMAN; GROSS, 1991).

2011). Although, different markets behave differently based on their levels of knowledge and understanding of the environmental aspects of available alternatives. These elements should be taken into consideration when formulating specific national and regional public policies aimed at promoting the consumption of sustainable products (OECD, 2008), and recognize the significance of how attributes are presented and how information is tailored to different consumer groups (RUF et al. 2022).

Knowledge and Information as Decision-Making Elements

Environmental concerns did not significantly influence the field of marketing until the 1970s, a circumstance attributed to the limited scope of environmental regulations in many countries and society's ambivalent stance on environmentalism and corporate social responsibility practices (MENON; MENON, 1997). While this perspective was linked to academic circles and specific niches, the 1990s marked the emergence of environmentally oriented marketing strategies as a more widely accepted business paradigm, with more companies incorporating environmental considerations into their strategic processes (KIRKPATRICK, 1990). Concurrently, marketing professionals have been keen on identifying and profiling environmentally conscious consumers (CONNOLLY; PROTHERO, 2008). Though, there remains ongoing uncertainty among companies regarding the dimensions to consider when developing sustainable products (DANGELICO; PONTRAN-DOLFO, 2010).

An essential factor influencing consumers' decision-making is the level of available information and their knowledge about the attributes of a given product. Studies have explored the impact of consumer knowledge on attitude formation (ELLEN et al. 1991; LEE, 2010; TAN, 2011) and purchasing behavior (WANG et al. 2019). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that consumer knowledge significantly influences

the intention to purchase ethically (DE PELSMACKER et al. 2005; BERKI-KISS; MENRAD, 2022).

Various studies have demonstrated the substantial impact of consumer knowledge on their consumption behavior (COWLEY; MITCHELL, 2003; BETTMAN; PARK, 1980; ALBA, 1983). The influence of consumer knowledge on purchase intention has been highlighted in studies considering various forms of consumer knowledge (such as environmental literacy, familiarity, prior experience, and product-specific expertise) to assess their impact on purchase intention. Moreover, trustiness also serves as a positive influencer, affecting both the intention to purchase and the willingness to pay for personal care products (YILDIRIM et al. 2021).

According to Cerri, Testa, and Rizzi (2018), providing information to consumers is essential for promoting pro-environmental attitudes and the purchase of green products, such as the use of ecological labels, which “can play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward green products by interacting with environmental concern” (p. 3). Combining multiple theoretical perspectives is also essential to comprehending consumer behavior related to sustainable consumption practices (LIM, 2017). To enhance green marketing strategies, ongoing research is needed to understand consumer profiles, focusing on how they access and integrate information into their decision-making process. This includes explaining green attributes using terminologies that are perceived and recognized by consumers. The choice of these terminologies should be based on consumers’ varying levels of knowledge, attitudes toward attributes, and subjective norms.

Sustainable Consumption: Seeking a Definition

When addressing the necessity for a clear and precise definition of sustainable products, it is vital to recognize that the concept of sustainable consumption is still a problematic and evolving field of study (LIM, 2017). While some argue that having a clear and explicit definition of sustainable consumption may not be essential (PEATTIE; COLLINS,

2009), we contend that the absence of a definition hampers practical utility, hindering the identification of common ground for addressing the issue. In this regard, there have been various efforts to establish a well-defined concept of sustainable practices associated with sustainable consumption (LIU et al., 2017)

One of the concepts in use is *ethical consumption*, described as “a conscientious way of consuming and purchasing products that obey certain ethical issues such as the support of fair wages, worker’s rights and safety, and also contemplates the protection of the natural environment” (BERKI-KISS; MENRAD, 2022, p. 1). It encompasses a wide range of consumer behaviors, from abstaining from purchasing products from socially or environmentally irresponsible companies to boycotting those that exploit impoverished producers (STARR, 2009). On the other hand, *responsible consumption* serves as a broad concept that encompasses aspects related to product choices and consumption, including social, environmental, and ethical considerations (LIM, 2016). Another comprehensive term, *green consumption*, pertains to consumption practices aimed at conserving the natural environment (PEATTIE, 2010; TESTA et al., 2021; VERNEKAR; WADHWA, 2011). The term “green” encompasses multiple dimensions, such as ecological, political, corporate social responsibility, fair trade, conservation, nonprofit organizations, new consumerism, sustainability, and equality (MCDONAGH; PROTHERO, 1996). In this context, it is also important to note *sustainable (non)consumption practices*, where individuals reduce their consumption through fewer purchases, prolonging the use and maintenance of goods, and selectively purchasing ethically and sustainably sourced products (MARTIN-WOODHEAD, 2022)

Nevertheless, the approach in terms of *sustainable consumption* is considered broader when compared to other types of consumption mentioned in the literature, such as *ethical* and *green consumption*, because it emphasizes collective actions and political, economic, and institutional changes to make consumption patterns and levels more sustainable (SANTOS et al., 2018). Although the diversity of approaches to the

topic is recognized, Lim (2017) pointed out seven general principles surrounding sustainable consumption: a) meets the basic needs of the current generation, b) does not impoverish future generations, c) does not cause irreversible harm to the environment, d) does not create loss of function in natural systems (ecological and human value systems, environmental and social responsibility), e) improves resource efficiency, f) enhances the quality of life, and g) avoids modern consumerism and overconsumption.

While it can be argued that there is a consensus regarding the significant role of consumption lifestyles in achieving sustainable development (JACKSON; MICHAELIS, 2003), it is crucial to contribute to the consolidation of knowledge about sustainable products and practices from a consumer's perspective. This advancement serves to improve market practices and further develop the consumer decision-making landscape. However, the limitations of this approach must be also acknowledged, as a substantial portion of the global population is unable to make consumption choices due to increasing levels of poverty (UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME, 2022). Furthermore, issues related to social justice remain largely unexplored within the field of sustainable consumption research (ANANTHARAMAN, 2018)

Differences in Terminology Related to Sustainable Products

Various terminologies have been employed to define what constitutes a sustainable product. In this section, we introduce some of these terminologies to underscore their distinctions and overlaps, offering practical examples of their usage in marketing. The following nomenclatures were identified in the articles selected through the literature search: a) green products b) clean products, c) ethical products, d) environmentally friendly products, e) environmental products, and f) sustainable products.

According to Ottman and Paro (1994), *environmentally friendly products* and *green products* are interchangeable terms used to denote products designed to meet consumers' environmental preservation needs, with a lower environmental impact compared to alternatives. *Green product* or *environmental product* usually describe products that "protect or enhance the natural environment, conserve energy, and reduce or eliminate toxic agents, pollution, and waste" (OTTMAN et al., 2006, p. 24). Similarly, Santos et al., (2018), while also considering the two terms interchangeable, stressed that the absence of a unified definition results from the lack of metrics allowing for the satisfactory measurement of the environmental impacts of products in a comparative manner.

However, in the mid-2000s, Dangelico and Pontrandolfo (2010) proposed a matrix that characterizes *green products* and practices across different dimensions. According to the authors, a product can be considered *green* based on one of three types of environmental focus (materials, energy, or pollution) and its level of impact (lower than conventional products, zero impact, or a positive contribution to the environment by reducing the impact of other products). The matrix is a valuable tool for marketing practitioners, enabling them to specify how the impact occurs in their statements, defining when, why, and to what extent a product is considered *green*, thus reducing the risk of greenwashing.

Based on a systematic review, García-Salirrosas and Rondon-Eusebio (2022) present five categories of green marketing practices: (a) green products and services, (b) green corporate image, (c) green advertising, (d) green shopping experience, and (e) green marketing mix. The category of *green products and services* comprises environmentally friendly products and services, which do not harm the environment in their production, content, delivery, and usage characteristics. They make efforts to protect or improve the environment through energy conservation, resource optimization, component reuse, recycling, and the reduction or elimination of toxic agents. Within this category, there are strategies such as (a) the use of ecological labels, (b) the development of high-quality

green products and services, (c) the brand value of green products, (d) remanufacturing strategy, and (e) the use of eco-friendly bags.

In the personal care segment, nomenclatures linked to a lower environmental impact, such as “green beauty” and “clean beauty,” have become important selling points. Despite serving as comprehensive descriptors for various practices, these terms have faced scrutiny regarding greenwashing. As pointed out by Shaw and Tzeses (2023), misleading marketing has been used by companies to make their products seem natural, even they are not actually organic, sustainable or ethically made. The terms “green beauty” and “clean beauty” are recognized as inconclusive equivalents in terms of the processes and inputs they encompass. When it comes to individual-use technological devices, like smartphones, sustainable, eco-friendly, or green phones are those designed for efficient material usage and extended lifespans, incorporating features that facilitate battery replacement and other repairs to ensure prolonged device functionality, whether under initial or subsequent ownership. In the case of durable consumer goods, such as cars, electric options with lower carbon emissions are recognized as “eco versions” within the segment. This attribute directly implies a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions during the usage phase, although not necessarily in other stages of the production-consumption process, such as manufacturing and distribution.

Those examples illustrate the industry’s diverse terminology used to portray a sustainable image, which can potentially confuse consumers and may not always align with actual practices.

Conclusion

Considering the variation in terms and their meanings when promoting sustainable products, marketing practitioners must accurately address sustainability aspects tailored to their target audiences to enhance consumer engagement. The literature in this field recognizes that sustainable consumption encompasses various dimensions, with products

potentially fulfilling multiple criteria simultaneously, like energy efficiency, fair trade, child labor-free, and the use of recycled materials.

If consumers require information to make more informed choices, including opting for non-consumption strategies like boycotts, dedicated companies and public initiatives should launch long-term marketing campaigns aimed at consumer education. This perspective can steer supply and demand dynamics, benefiting companies, consumers, and the environment. Addressing complex issues necessitates integrated solutions that extend beyond the realm of consumption. It requires coordinated efforts across different sectors, including businesses, governments, civil society, and multilateral organizations, working collectively to achieve more ambitious sustainability objectives for the planet.

While there is consensus that current consumption patterns are unsustainable (THØGERSEN, 2014), there are still significant divergences on how to change consumption patterns and levels to reduce their impacts. Psychologists and economists focus on approaches to promote individual-level changes, while sociologists point to structural solutions (BURNINGHAM; VENN, 2020). We believe that actions should be complementary at both individual and collective levels to achieve better results in the consolidation of sustainable markets. Here, we present contributions to the development of marketing strategies for companies and the formulation of public policies based on the discussion undertaken.

Standardizing Terminology in Sectors

The proliferation of terms and definitions hampers conscious consumer choice, as well as companies with real proposals to offer differentiated products. Therefore, terms for presenting sustainable attributes should be as consistent as possible within the same segment, as consumers relate to different terms and sustainability conditions in each product segment. The consumer goods sector encompasses the highest levels of diversification among green products and practices (DANGELICO;

PONTRANDOLFO, 2010). Hence, what can be communicated in terms of food production and personal care items, for example, is greater than what the car and smartphone industry can achieve.

Sustainability-Driven Principles

Basic sustainability principles, as identified by Lim (2017), guide not only communication strategies but also product development and launch strategies, an integral part of the marketing mix (KHAN, 2014). In the absence of standardized definitions recognized in their segments, cutting-edge companies need to innovate and effectively promote “sustainable” attributes that differentiate their products.

Enhancing Knowledge of Sustainable Products

Investment in knowledge-related marketing strategies through “advertising campaigns that educate consumers about the beneficial effects of using sustainable products for the society and environment” (RECKER; SALEEM, 2014, p. 3). This also includes strategies related to experiences that can be achieved using free product trials and promoting hands-on experiences with processes and components as a marketing tool (RECKER; SALEEM, 2014). The use of eco-labels guides companies to increase transparency and consumer knowledge of existing claim labels (CERRI; TESTA; RIZZI, 2018). They can play a significant role in shaping attitudes toward sustainable products, which requires new studies on green consumer profiles based on how consumers access and integrate information in their decision-making to improve green marketing campaigns. Besides, Consumers with low product knowledge often rely on price as the primary determining factor. Therefore, businesses can target these consumers with attractive prices and sales representatives to increase consumer product knowledge and perceptions of sustainable options, resulting in higher purchase intentions (LIU; TSAUR, 2020).

Development and Implementation of Structural Standards

Large industries and retail brands are able to establish standards for their suppliers and projects, making them public for consumers (BROWN, 2021). This is the case, for example, with Sephora's Clean + Planet Positive standards. The development of standards, guidelines, and classifications for sustainable products is crucial (as already available for corporate practices, e.g., GRI, Global Compact) (DANGELICO; PONTRANDOLFO, 2010). As well, the uniformization of national guidelines regarding advertising claims, labeling issues, terminology, among others (ELLEN et al, 1991). This should be carried by consumer protection agencies or technical standardization agencies, making them accessible to consumers and facilitating clear consumer understanding in the purchasing process.

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Gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts

Estereótipos de gênero em textos publicitários ucranianos

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Abstract: *Gender discrimination is an urgent problem that affects various aspects of public life, including advertising. In the context of Ukrainian reality, where transformations and changes are taking place, it is important to identify and understand the presence of gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices in advertising. The purpose of the study is to identify signs of gender discrimination in Ukrainian advertising and develop proposals to overcome it. Methods: analysis, generalisation, systematisation, synthesis. The results of a study of gender discrimination in Ukrainian advertising texts indicate the prevalence of gender stereotypes reflected in advertising campaigns. The study also suggests ways to identify gender discrimination in advertising texts, such as analysing roles, images, language use, and stereotypes. However, now in Ukrainian advertising there is a tendency to rethink views on the advertising product. As a result of the study, the main strategies for overcoming gender discrimination were formed, which included expanding roles, using positive stereotypes, emancipation, cooperation with gender organisations, including self-regulation of the advertising industry, and education to raise public awareness. As a result of the study of gender stereotypes, it was established that modern advertisers tend to understand the importance of building a tolerant and fair society and creating advertising content that positively affects the perception of gender roles and contributes to the development of equal rights for women and men. The results of the study can be useful for*

advertising agencies, creative teams, and marketers working on creating non-stereotypical advertising campaigns.

Keywords: *social media platforms; public life; gender stereotypes; gender roles; discrimination*

Resumo: *A discriminação de gênero é um problema urgente que afeta vários aspectos da vida pública, incluindo a publicidade. No contexto da realidade ucraniana, onde estão a ocorrer transformações e mudanças, é importante identificar e compreender a presença de estereótipos de gênero e práticas discriminatórias na publicidade. O objetivo do estudo é identificar sinais de discriminação de gênero na publicidade ucraniana e desenvolver propostas para os ultrapassar. Métodos: análise, generalização, sistematização, síntese. Os resultados de um estudo sobre a discriminação de gênero nos textos publicitários ucranianos indicam a prevalência de estereótipos de gênero refletidos nas campanhas publicitárias. O estudo também sugere formas de identificar a discriminação de gênero em textos publicitários, tais como a análise de papéis, imagens, utilização da linguagem e estereótipos. No entanto, atualmente, na publicidade ucraniana, existe uma tendência para repensar os pontos de vista sobre o produto publicitário. Como resultado do estudo, foram definidas as principais estratégias para ultrapassar a discriminação de gênero, que incluem a expansão de papéis, a utilização de estereótipos positivos, a emancipação, a cooperação com organizações de gênero, incluindo a autorregulação da indústria publicitária, e a educação para sensibilizar o público. Como resultado do estudo dos estereótipos de gênero, verificou-se que os publicitários modernos tendem a compreender a importância de construir uma sociedade tolerante e justa e de criar conteúdos publicitários que afetem positivamente a percepção dos papéis de gênero e contribuam para o desenvolvimento da igualdade de direitos entre homens e mulheres. Os resultados do estudo podem ser úteis para agências de publicidade, equipes criativas e profissionais de marketing que trabalham na criação de campanhas publicitárias não estereotipadas.*

Palavras-chave: *plataformas de redes sociais; vida pública; estereótipos de gênero; papéis de gênero; discriminação*

Introduction

Gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts are a common phenomenon that can affect the perception and perception of gender roles in society. Men are often portrayed as strong, successful, and active, while women are beautiful, dependent, and designed for family life. These stereotypes can limit a person's ability to express themselves, contribute to inequality and discrimination. Understanding gender stereotypes in advertising texts is of great importance for corporations and representatives of the media industry. It is important to carefully investigate this issue so that corporations and representatives of the media industry consciously approach the creation of advertising texts and avoid establishing harmful stereotypes. The study focuses on identifying and understanding the main aspects of gender discrimination in the context of Ukrainian social reality, in particular, war. One of the main challenges is identifying gender stereotypes and understanding their impact on advertising and consumer perception.

Pavlyk (2021), a Ukrainian researcher, draws attention to various aspects of gender issues in advertising texts, in particular, the use of stereotypes, representation of gender roles, and sexualisation of images. The researcher draws attention to the fact that such elements can influence the formation of gender perceptions in society, affirming inequality and limiting the opportunities of women and men. The author highlights the importance of consciously using language tools, portraying different gender roles, and promoting respect for different gender identities. It is necessary to examine in more detail the gender aspects in advertising texts and their impact on the formation of gender perceptions in society.

Nkem et al. (2020) argue that portraying women in Facebook and Instagram ads often promotes stereotypical roles and unrealistic beauty ideals. Researchers emphasise that this approach can negatively affect women's self-esteem and well-being, contribute to the formation of unrealistic expectations, and cause feelings of dissatisfaction with their appearance. The researchers state the need to create more diverse and realistic images of women in advertising that reflect different types of

beauty and promote positive self-determination and empowerment of women. It is worth investigating these aspects in the context of Ukrainian advertising campaigns.

Pryimuk and Fesenko (2023) note that gender stereotypes in advertising are common in Ukrainian society. Researchers say that many global companies are aware of the need to work more consciously on marketing strategies and advertising materials, but for Ukrainian society, this process is a little more complicated since there is a fixed tradition of using stereotypical gender images – both male and female, and in the media space for a long time such manifestations of discrimination were perceived as the norm. It is necessary to examine in more detail the aspect of stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts and their trends in the context of the ongoing war on the territory of Ukraine.

Butkowski et al. (2020) examined the relationship between gender stereotypes and advertising, focusing in particular, on the role-playing representation of gender identity in young women's Instagram selfies and social media feedback. Researchers claim that gender stereotypes permeate advertising, including the online platform Instagram. Research has shown that women who present themselves in accordance with conventional gender stereotypes (for example, attractive, vulnerable, or obeying beauty standards) are more likely to receive positive feedback and preferences. This shows the interaction between gender stereotypes, advertising, and social media perception, which is worth exploring in more detail.

Golovchuk (2021) is convinced that the prevalence of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising is due to the fact that consumers previously preferred brands that used pronounced stereotypical images of men and women, which helped consumers more easily identify with these images in advertising. However, according to the researcher, now there is a tendency to rethink people's views on marketing since advertising based on gender stereotypes repels consumers, especially the audience to which it is aimed. It is worth investigating this issue more

carefully, as there is a change in the minds of Ukrainian consumers regarding stereotypes in advertising texts.

The purpose of the study is to examine advertising trends in the spread of gender stereotypes in Ukraine and identify effective strategies for overcoming gender discrimination in advertising. In the study, the following tasks of investigating gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts were identified and solved:

1. Identify the main gender stereotypes that are present in Ukrainian advertising texts and analyse them considering the roles of men and women.
2. Analyse the influence of gender stereotypes in advertising on the perception of society about gender roles, self-expression, and personal capabilities.
3. Examine strategies used to overcome gender discrimination in advertising texts and their effectiveness in the Ukrainian context.
4. Develop recommendations for corporations and representatives of the media industry on a conscious approach to creating advertising texts, considering the avoidance of harmful gender stereotypes and the promotion of equality and justice.

Materials and Methods

While examining the gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts, materials were used that helped to obtain objective information and examine this phenomenon in more detail from different perspectives. The study analysed information on the use of social networks Facebook and Instagram by female and male audiences in Ukraine (2023) to create a comprehensive map of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts. In addition to analysing materials from social networks, the very content of these advertising texts and their visual elements were examined (Maranchak, 2022). The analysis identified the presence of gender stereotypes in the wording, descriptions, role characteristics of characters and ideas about gender roles in Ukrainian advertising texts. The study also used materials, in particular, regulatory documents, namely

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Law of Ukraine No. 39 “On advertising” (1996), which prohibits the use of sexist advertising. This is the legal basis for combating gender discrimination in advertising. It is designed to ensure equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their gender.

In the study of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts, methods of analysis, generalisation, systematisation and synthesis were used to identify various aspects of gender stereotypes. Using the analysis method, Ukrainian advertising texts were examined to identify gender stereotypes. Based on this method, it was possible to review various aspects of gender stereotyping, such as: the roles of women and men, their image, considering age, physique, and appearance. This method of research allowed identifying the presence of stereotypes in advertising texts and understanding what specific aspects of gender discrimination they reflect. The use of the generalisation method allowed establishing general trends and characteristics of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts and comparing them with other countries and contexts. The application of the generalisation method has contributed to highlighting the ways in which gender discrimination can be identified in advertising texts, namely:

- the examination of gender images, which allows analysing what stereotypes and biases are used in advertising regarding the roles of men and women;
- evaluation of language and semantics in advertising texts, which may identify the presence of certain connotations that may contribute to gender discrimination;
- analysis of roles and scenarios in advertising texts, which is also an effective method of identifying gender discrimination;
- considering the context, including place, time, social conditions, and target audience, which helps to identify possible views and biases that are transmitted through advertising;
- promoting equality and equity, which is a strategy that helps to emphasise the importance of avoiding gender discrimination in advertising texts.

The study used the systematisation method to classify gender stereotypes in advertising texts, which made the results of the study more understandable and organised. Using the systematisation method, gender stereotypes were examined in Ukrainian advertising texts and various stereotypes were identified that are intertwined with the socio-cultural context, in particular, “woman-mother”, which portrays a woman as a mother who devotes herself to children and family; “woman-housewife”, which restricts the role of women exclusively to household duties; “woman-seductress”, which depicts a woman as an object of desire and attractiveness, aimed at attracting the attention of men. Based on the method of systematisation, male stereotypical images in advertising texts were examined, namely: “man and career”, which focuses on a man as a person striving for success and professional growth; “man and household duties”, which conveys the image of a man taking part in routine household chores; “man and strength”, which emphasises the image of a man as a physically strong and confident person and the stereotype “man and leisure”, which emphasises the interests of men in the field of entertainment and recreation.

Using the synthesis method, it was possible to combine the obtained data and generalised conclusions from various sources to create a comprehensive understanding of gender stereotypes in advertising texts in the Ukrainian context. Based on the synthesis method, the observations were combined with previous research and theoretical concepts to formulate new ideas and perspectives on gender stereotypes in advertising texts.

Results

Advertising is an important element of modern life and substantially affects the psyche of people. It shapes the perception of the world and can influence the consciousness and behaviour of consumers. In some cases, advertising uses manipulative methods, relying on people’s subconscious minds to encourage them to take certain actions or influence their preferences and choices. This is especially noticeable when the products are similar to each other, because in this case, mental analysis

may be less substantial, and subconscious perception and emotions play a greater role in the selection process. It is important to be critical of advertising and distinguish between facts and manipulative techniques to maintain your freedom of choice and independent thinking. Understanding how advertising works with one's subconsciousness can help better understand its impact and be critical of it. Ukrainian advertising is currently undergoing active development and changes, which creates opportunities for introducing new approaches and strategies aimed at overcoming gender discrimination.

It is important to generalise the concept of gender as social roles that are expected of men and women. Gender and sex are interrelated at the level of stereotypes since biological gender affects the formation of expected role models based on stereotypical ideas about physical strength and reproductive functions. For example, women are often perceived as physically weaker than men, and their main social role is related to motherhood. These stereotypes shape the socio-cultural reality and can influence the perception of the roles and opportunities of women and men in society. Understanding and analysing gender stereotypes is an important step towards building an equal and inclusive society where everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential regardless of gender identity (Martsenyuk, 2017). The revision and reinterpretation of stereotypes help to broaden the horizons of awareness and perception and create opportunities for the development of a more diverse and inclusive society where different sex groups can realise their potential and promote mutual understanding and development.

Today, social media can promote objectification, sexualisation, and false portrayals of the individual. The impact of social media on young people contributes to the spread of stereotypes, misrepresentations, and distortions of reality. Platforms can encourage self-objectification, cause feelings of body dissatisfaction, and promote unrealistic beauty standards. In addition, there is a real problem of social media coverage of sexual exploitation and privacy violations (Davis, 2018). Many female advertising images promote conventional stereotypes about femininity,

focusing on appearance, attractiveness, and eye-catching factors. These stereotypes can limit the understanding and expression of various aspects of women's identity and contribute to unrealistic standards of beauty. Young women use social platforms as a means of self-expression and identifying their gender identity, but their posts may be influenced by stereotypes circulating in advertising. In this regard, it is necessary to develop critical thinking in the perception of social media and introduce education and conscious use of social media platforms. It is important to develop media literacy among young people so that they can critically evaluate information, images, and the impact of social media on their well-being and worldview.

As of January, 2023, Ukrainian Facebook and Instagram users continue to show a consistent preference for female audiences over male audiences in the majority of age categories. There are more women than men in all age groups on Facebook, with the exception of 23-year-olds, where men have a slight prevalence. On Instagram, the female audience is dominated by the male audience in all age groups, with the exception of 23-year-olds, where there is an almost equal number of men and women. The general trend shows that the number of male users is decreasing in most age groups, especially under the age of 51. The largest increase in the number of users is observed among 22-year-olds, both among men (+27.5 thousand) and among women (+35.1 thousand). A substantial decrease in the number of users is occurring among 21-year-olds, both among men and women (Facebook and Instagram..., 2023). These data indicate a substantial presence of female audiences on the Facebook and Instagram platforms in Ukraine. This may reflect the popularity of these social networks among women of all ages, which opens up ample opportunities for advertisers and marketers to attract the attention of the target audience, in particular, women, through advertising campaigns and images that meet their interests and needs.

It is worth investigating the classification of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising to highlight inequality and false ideas about the roles of women and men in society (Table 1). Notably, this is only a

general classification, and advertising may contain a combination of different stereotypes or contradict them.

Table 1. Main gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts

Stereotype	Description	Examples of advertising	Examples of advertising texts
Woman – mother	A woman plays the role of a mother and is responsible for the family and children.	Advertising of chocolate “Roshen”, children’s medicines, baby food.	Mother is calm, child is calm (Espumizan L).
Woman –housewife	The woman is portrayed as the perfect hostess, cleaning and cooking.	Advertising of detergents “Persil”, “Domestos”, kitchen equipment.	You are a woman, and this is a dishwasher (Calgonit).
Woman –seductress	A woman uses her attractiveness to attract attention.	Advertising of “Dior” perfume, soap “Dove” soap, “Palmolive”, shower gel.	You are special in Zarina jewelry (Zarina).
Exploited woman	A woman is depicted as an object of desire for men.	Advertising of “Slavutich”, “Marengo”, “Martini Bianco” alcoholic beverages, “Korona” sweets.	Korona – taste of desire (Korona).
Man – career	The man is portrayed as a successful professional, a leader.	Advertising of cars, vacancies for senior positions, banking services.	New Ford Focus Coupe-Convertible. It will surprise you twice (Ford).
Man – household responsibilities	A man rests after work, household duties belong to a woman.	Advertising of furniture, cars, and electronics.	Mission accomplished (Mercedes S-Class).
Man – strength	A man is depicted as a strong and courageous person.	Advertising of sporting goods and military ammunition.	As long as men rotate the Earth, it is in safe hands (Khibnyi Dar).
Man – leisure	The man rests after work and spends time with friends, has fun.	Advertising of beer, fishing equipment, and entertainment venues.	Desant – strong in spirit (Desant).
Man – appearance	A man must meet the standards of appearance, be athletic, and be surrounded by attractive women.	Advertising of barbershops and sports complexes.	Confidence is very suitable for the stronger sex (Nivea).

Source: compiled by the authors based on Y.V. Kiporenko (2022).

Notably, these examples are general in character and ad campaigns may change over time. The ability to identify gender discrimination in advertising texts is of great importance. Gender discrimination in advertising is contrary to the principles of equality and justice. Advertising is a powerful means of forming public opinion and stereotypes, so the use of negative gender images can contribute to the establishment of unequal gender roles and cause social inequality. Identifying gender discrimination protects people's rights and dignity. Advertising texts may contain images that distort reality and put a certain group of people at a disadvantage. Recognition of such situations allows identifying violations of the rights and interference with the dignity of individuals. Identifying gender discrimination in advertising texts contributes to building a fair and equal society. Overcoming gender stereotypes and eliminating discrimination is an important component of the development of a society where everyone has equal opportunities and respect. The identification of gender discrimination in advertising texts also affects consumers. Modern consumers are increasingly aware of the social responsibility of companies and refuse to support products and brands that promote stereotypes and discrimination. Ukrainian sexist advertising campaigns, which are used to promote various stores and brands, demonstrate the spread of gender stereotypes. For example, the Epicenter store chain in its ad "What kind of garden?" portrays women in stereotypical images, limiting their roles to the field of the household (Maranchak, 2022). This highlights the importance of recognising and combating such stereotypes in advertising texts to ensure equality and gender justice in society.

However, now the Law of Ukraine No. 39, "On advertising" (1996), contains provisions prohibiting the use of sexist advertising. According to this law, advertising should not promote inequality between men and women, establish stereotypes that restrict their rights and opportunities. The state advertising service and other relevant regulatory authorities have the authority to take measures to prevent the spread of sexist advertising and impose appropriate sanctions on violators. Thus,

the legislation in Ukraine is aimed at combating gender stereotypes in advertising and protecting the rights of women and men with equal opportunities and decent representation. It is important that advertising agencies and companies consciously adhere to these standards and work to develop progressive, equal and inclusive approaches in their advertising campaigns (Law of Ukraine..., 1996). Identifying and eliminating gender discrimination helps build a positive consumer perception and attract a wider audience. Identification of gender discrimination in advertising texts can be conducted by investigating and analysing various aspects of communication. Some ways to identify gender discrimination are presented below:

1. Examining gender images: it is necessary to analyse which gender images and stereotypes are used in advertising texts, observe whether there is inequality in the choice of images for men and women, and whether stereotypical roles and behaviours are supported.
2. Evaluation of language and semantics: pay attention to the use of language and semantics in advertising texts. Check whether there are hints of inequality, the elevation of one gender above the other, or the use of images that create negative ideas about a particular gender.
3. Role and scenario analysis: evaluate what roles and scenarios are given to men and women in advertising texts; whether they are limited to conventional gender roles, or whether they convey inequalities in responsibility, opportunities, and behaviour.
4. Context consideration: considering the advertising context and trying to understand how gender images and messages fit into social norms and values; exploring what gender roles are popularised and how they can influence audience perception.
5. Promoting equality and justice: evaluating the promotion of advertising texts for equality and justice; do they show gender diversity and identity diversity; do they support inclusivity and equal access to opportunities?

These approaches will help identify signs of gender discrimination in advertising texts. It is important to remember that identifying discrimination is a subjective process and can vary depending on the context and interpretation. Professional analysis and advice from experts in the field of gender equality can also be useful in evaluating advertising texts for gender discrimination. Advertising messages on television reflect and reinforce stereotypes that are associated with the role of women in society. Ukrainian television ads often portray women in conventional stereotypical roles, such as a housewife, an object of attraction, or unable to grow professionally. These stereotypes support the idea of inequality and restriction of women in society. Gender stereotypes in television advertising can have a negative impact on women's self-esteem and self-determination, and contribute to stigma and discrimination. They can affirm ideals of beauty and behaviour that do not correspond to the reality and diversity of women's experiences. Currently, Ukrainian advertising texts are aimed at deviating from gender stereotypes (Kitsa and Mudra, 2020).

Special attention should be paid to advertising materials aimed at masculine, feminine, and LGBTQ audiences that differ in product types and gender stereotypes. Such ads often portray conventional stereotypes about the roles and behaviours of men and women, but less conventional gender images may be presented in the context of ads aimed at LGBTQ audiences. It is important to understand these differences and use more diverse and non-discriminatory images in advertising to consider the needs and identities of different audiences and promote a more inclusive society (Aley and Thomas, 2021). Lesbian and gay consumers show an interest in fashion and fashion trends. This suggests that gender stereotypes associated with fashion preferences may not be limited to heterosexual stereotypes alone. Advertising texts that create stereotypical images of consumers based on their sexual orientation may underestimate the diversity of consumer preferences and needs. In addition, lesbian consumers have their own specific preferences in the style of clothing. This may mean that advertising texts that stereotype the

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lesbian audience and do not consider their uniqueness and diversity may be limited and insufficiently representative (Braun et al., 2015). Therefore, there is a need for advertising texts to be more broadly understood and consider the diversity and unique needs of different gender groups. It is necessary to avoid stereotypical ideas and ensure that diversity is represented in advertising texts to better meet the needs and preferences of consumers.

Gender stereotypes continue to be widely used in advertising texts. Such stereotypes can limit perceptions of the roles of women and men in society, supporting inequality and discrimination. However, a specialised marketing strategy can be an effective way to overcome gender stereotypes in advertising. Such a marketing strategy involves actively considering the diversity of gender identities, supporting gender equality, and creating advertising content that reflects a wide range of gender roles and identities (Antoniou and Akrivos, 2020).

Based on the materials examined in the study, strategies for overcoming gender discrimination in advertising were developed to solve the problem of inequality and ensure a more equal approach to the image of gender groups (Table 2). They are aimed at eliminating stereotypes, reducing the negative impact of discriminatory images, and increasing the representativeness and diversity of gender images. These strategies contribute to creating a fairer, more humane and more inclusive environment in advertising, where each gender group has the opportunity to be represented in a realistic and positive way. Overcoming gender discrimination in advertising contributes to the formation of a tolerant society, where equality and dignity of each person are the basis of communication and mutual understanding.

Table 2. Key strategies for overcoming gender discrimination in advertising

Strategy	Description
Expanding roles	Offering different roles for both sexes, demonstrating different aspects of life and interests.
Using positive stereotypes	Create advertising images that reflect positive stereotypes about both sexes, helping to increase the self-esteem and status of women and men.
Breaking stereotypes	Active use of advertising images that violate conventional gender stereotypes and demonstrate diversity and individuality.
Emancipation	Emphasising the strength and abilities of women, their independence and success.
Cooperation with gender organisations	Establish partnerships with organisations working on gender equality to develop and implement strategies to overcome gender discrimination.
Industry self-regulation	Support and implement established industry standards and codes of conduct that prohibit gender discrimination in advertising.
Education and awareness raising	Conducting educational campaigns, trainings, and informational events aimed at raising awareness about the problem of gender discrimination in advertising and its consequences.

Source: compiled by the authors.

Overcoming gender discrimination in Ukrainian advertising is important for building a fair and equal society. This is especially important in the context of the ongoing war on the territory of Ukraine. War has a substantial impact on society and its stereotypes, including gender ones. Overcoming gender discrimination is becoming one of the means to change people's perceptions and minds, and contributing to the creation of equal conditions and opportunities for all gender groups. This is an important task that contributes to the formation of a tolerant, just, and equal society that is recovering and developing after a military conflict. The use of the results of the study of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts is of great importance for creating equal and non-sexist communication strategies in the field of advertising. Based on the results obtained, a number of recommendations were formed aimed at

improving the situation and introducing practices that will help prevent gender discrimination and support equal treatment of women and men in advertising texts. The following are specific recommendations that can be used to develop regulatory documents or implement them in practice:

1. Development of ethical standards: creation of regulatory documents or a code of ethics that would contain requirements to avoid gender stereotypes in advertising texts. These standards should be implemented and monitored accordingly.
2. Training and education: development of educational programmes aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of gender stereotypes among marketers, advertising agencies, and creative professionals. Special attention should be paid to understanding the impact of stereotypes on the audience's perception and behaviour.
3. Self-regulation and monitoring: the creation of organisations or associations that will be responsible for monitoring advertising materials and drawing attention to cases of the use of gender stereotypes. It is important to establish mechanisms for responding to violations and imposing sanctions in the case of unconscious use of stereotypes.
4. Cooperation with advertising agencies: engaging advertising agencies in dialogue and cooperation with gender equality activists and representatives of women's organisations; joint discussion of standards and development of strategies that will help avoid gender stereotypes in advertising texts.
5. Support for alternative approaches: support and promote the creation of advertising campaigns that counter gender stereotypes and promote equality, diversity, and empowerment of women; involvement of creative professionals and artists in the creation of innovative advertising materials that break down conventional stereotypes.
6. Interaction with media organisations: cooperation with media organisations and establishing partnerships with journalists and

editorial offices to create conscious and non-sexist materials; popularisation of positive examples of equal treatment of gender in the media space.

These recommendations should be supported at the regulatory level by state authorities that will regulate the use of gender stereotypes in advertising texts. The implementation of such measures will contribute to the creation of a more equal and non-sexist advertising environment in Ukraine, where gender stereotypes will not limit the opportunities and self-expression of individuals, but will promote equality and mutual understanding between the sexes.

Discussion

The investigation of gender stereotypes contributes to the creation of a more equal and tolerant society. Overcoming gender discrimination in advertising contributes to the formation of positive changes in the minds of consumers and affects their ideas about gender roles and stereotypes. In addition, advertising has great potential in shaping the information space in which various social groups are represented. It is important to examine and analyse the views of individual researchers on the gender aspects of advertising texts.

The study of gender stereotypes in advertising was conducted by Shinoda et al. (2021). The representation of women in Brazilian print advertising and its impact on women's well-being were examined. Researchers have discovered that there are "missing women" – a group of images that are less common in advertising. The study established that women portrayed as career-oriented, engaged in non-conventional activities, or presented as equal to men were ignored for years. In addition, according to researchers, women who do not meet beauty standards, such as: white skin colour, youth, and slimness, are also poorly represented in advertising, especially when different characteristics are combined (for example, older dark-skinned women). This study demonstrates the importance of critical analysis of advertising materials aimed

at identifying and eliminating gender discrimination. Comparing with the results of the research, supporting advertising that promotes equality, diversity, and reflection of different groups of women can contribute to building a more just and inclusive society in Ukraine.

Varghese and Kumar (2022) argue that there is a growing presence of feminist advertising in the media that focuses on women's talents, focuses on subjects related to women's experiences, and counteracts stereotypes. The researchers identified the main factors that contribute to the development of feminist advertising, in particular, the growth of initiatives to better represent women in advertising, the activation of brand activism and conscious capitalism, criticism of corporate and commodity feminism, raising awareness of gender stereotypes, and increased control by regulatory authorities regarding the gender role in advertising. Compared with the results of this study, femininity in modern advertising is also observed in Ukrainian advertising texts. However, in addition to the five factors mentioned by the researchers of the destruction of stereotyping of women in advertising, it is also worth paying attention to the expansion of roles, the use of positive stereotypes, the violation of stereotypes, emancipation, cooperation with gender organizations, self-regulation of the industry, education, and awareness raising in society, which will contribute not only to the development of female narratives in advertising but also to the destruction of gender stereotypes that concern men.

Falaq and Puspita (2021) focused on the study and critical analysis of the discourse that identifies the concept of male masculinity in advertising L-Men sports nutrition products. Researchers claim that advertising discourse is used to create and maintain certain stereotypical ideas about men, in particular, in the field of sports and physical fitness. They show how L-Men ads actively use the ideas of strength, musculature, energy, and athletic success to create the perfect male image. Researchers also look at the impact of such discourse on the perception and identification of men, especially young consumers. They emphasize that such advertising can influence the formation of stereotypical

ideas about masculinity and self-confidence. It can also contribute to social pressure to maintain and achieve such ideals. Comparing with the results of this study, it is important to note that the identification of such discrete mechanisms encourages a more equal perception of gender advertising and contributes to the development of more inclusive and diverse advertising practices.

In the paper, Wachter (2020) identifies the presence of affinity profiling and association discrimination in online advertising based on behavioural data, which directly affects advertising texts and the way information is presented to the target audience. Affinity profiling, according to this researcher, is used in online advertising to determine the interests and preferences of users based on their behaviour on the Internet. However, the study shows that such methods can lead to discrimination due to associations, for example, if the profiling model associates a user with a certain group, advertising texts can provide a limited set of suggestions and opportunities based on these associations. The researcher emphasises the need to recognise and avoid discrimination through association in advertising texts. In the opinion of the authors of this study, advertisers and marketers should be especially attentive to the use of this type of profiling and the impact of this process on the content of advertising messages.

Heathy (2020) analyses gender stereotypes in advertising through critical discursive analysis. The researcher draws attention to the presence and prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertising texts and their impact on society. The researcher notes that many advertising messages contain stereotypical images and roles of men and women, for example, women are often presented as housewives, objects of sexual attraction, or limited professional opportunities, while men act as strong and successful leaders. These stereotypes, according to the researcher, support inequality, bias, and discrimination based on gender. Notably, gender stereotypes in advertising affect public perception, affirm norms and expectations, and also affect the self-awareness of women and men.

Middleton et al. (2020) are convinced that old cultural stereotypes are an obstacle to changing the way women's roles are portrayed in Brazilian advertising. The researchers examined the representation of women's roles in advertising materials using critical discourse analysis and established that Brazilian advertising still contains outdated stereotypes that limit the role of women in society. It should be emphasised that similar gender stereotypes are inherent in Ukrainian advertising texts, but modern advertisers are gradually moving away from these stereotypes and pay attention to the need to create content that reflects the diversity and equality of women in Ukrainian society.

In turn, Khalil and Dhanesh (2020) note that in television advertising in the Middle East, there are also still gender stereotypes that limit the role of women and perpetuate inequality between the sexes. Researchers have established that female characters are often portrayed in stereotypical roles related to household chores, beauty, and sexuality, while men are portrayed as strong and successful. Comparing with the results of this research, it is worth emphasising the need for marketers and advertisers to actively intervene and change gender stereotypes, offering diverse and equal images of women in advertising that reflect their true role and potential in society, including in Ukraine.

Bhardwaj et al. (2021) conducted a study to identify gender bias in the Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (BERT) machine learning model. Researchers note that artificial intelligence and machine learning models can reproduce and increase gender discrimination because they are based on large amounts of text data, including advertising texts. Researchers claim that gender bias in the BERT model has a direct impact on advertising texts. Since machine learning models such as BERT are widely used for processing and analysing advertising texts, their gender bias can also spread to advertising messages. Advertising texts, according to the researchers, may contain gender stereotypes that can be supported or even reinforced by machine learning models that exhibit gender bias. For example, if the BERT model shows a tendency to associate women with certain roles or images, then advertising

texts processed by such a model may use such stereotypes in their content. Compared with the results of the research, it is necessary to note that, in general, understanding gender bias and stereotypes helps to consciously approach the creation of advertising texts, avoid gender stereotypes and promote more fair and equal values in the advertising field.

The development of awareness and critical thinking about gender roles can contribute to the creation of a more inclusive and fair advertising culture, where everyone has the opportunity to be presented with dignity and without stereotypes.

Conclusions

The investigation of gender discrimination in Ukrainian advertising identifies the importance of identifying and eliminating stereotypes related to the role and representation of women and men. The popularity of such stereotypes can spread social inequality and discrimination that contradicts the values of modern society. Considering this, the practical application of the results of the study of gender stereotypes in Ukrainian advertising texts is extremely important. Through specific recommendations aimed at developing or implementing regulatory documents, the situation can be improved and the approach to creating advertising materials can be changed. It is important to engage advertising agencies in dialogue with gender equality activists and representatives of women's organisations to jointly discuss standards and develop strategies to avoid gender stereotypes. In addition, it is necessary to establish mechanisms for self-regulation and monitoring of advertising materials that will allow responding to violations and imposing sanctions if stereotypes are used. One of the key problems identified in the study is the unequal distribution of roles and representation of women and men in advertising texts. Women are often portrayed in stereotypical roles, such as sex objects, and housewives, or restricted to conventional gender roles, while men are more likely to be presented as active and successful. This creates an unrealistic view of women's roles and opportunities in society and supports gender inequality. The further spread of gender stereotypes in

advertising can have a negative impact on viewers' perception, especially on younger generations who form their own ideas about gender roles and stereotypes. This can lead to self-restraint of women in their career choices or create negative self-esteem if they do not meet stereotypical beauty ideals.

As a result of the study, it was identified that advertising is an influential tool for forming public consciousness and stereotypes. It has a powerful potential to positively transform gender perceptions and stereotypes. Gender discrimination can be identified in advertising texts through critical analysis aimed at identifying unequal distribution of roles, presenting negative stereotypes, limiting women's opportunities, and supporting gender inequality. The study identifies the main aspects of overcoming gender discrimination in advertising. When identifying gender discrimination in advertising texts, it is important to make changes to the content itself aimed at developing an equal and tolerant society. Advertisers and creative agencies should aim to avoid stereotypical images and promote more diverse and realistic representations of women and men. Consumers also play an active role in supporting positive change by refusing to support products, the advertising of which promotes gender discrimination. In general, understanding and identifying gender discrimination in advertising texts is an important step towards building a fair and equitable society. Advertising can be a force for positive change that helps eliminate stereotypes, promote equality and diversity. Future researchers should pay attention to the examination of the socio-cultural context in the advertising field of Ukraine, in particular, the impact of the war on stereotyping in advertising texts and the development of strategies to improve advertising content.

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Analysis of Colombian media coverage on COVID-19: an audience perspective

Análise da cobertura mediática colombiana sobre a covid-19: uma perspectiva das audiências

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Resumo: *Durante abril e maio de 2020, no confinamento por covid-19 na Colômbia, analisaram-se as tendências de consumo de notícias. Através de uma pesquisa online com 2.084 colombianos, identificou-se a percepção de uma saturação de informação sobre a pandemia. Adicionalmente, a orientação editorial dos meios influenciou a cobertura, que muitas vezes foi insuficiente e sensacionalista, provocando uma preocupação social desmesurada.*

Palavras-chave: *Notícias; Audiências; Covid-19; Sensacionalismo; Colômbia.*

Abstract: *During April and May, 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown in Colombia, news consumption trends were analyzed by means of an online survey with 2,084 Colombians. The perception of information overload about the pandemic was identified. Additionally, the media's editorial direction influenced the coverage, which often turned out to be insufficient and sensationalist, leading to excessive social concern.*

Keywords: *news; audiences; COVID-19; sensationalism; Colombia*

Introduction

At the end of December 2019, global media reported that Chinese health authorities were investigating a strange viral pneumonia in Wuhan, Hubei province, after identifying 27 cases related to the virus that caused SARS. (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome), which resulted in the deaths of more than 700 people in 2002 and 2003 (REUTERS, 2019; AP, 2019). A month later, in January 2020, with more than 9,700 confirmed cases and another 106 in 19 different countries, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a public health emergency of international concern due to a new coronavirus initially known as 2019-nCoV identified as the cause of the cases reported in China (PAHO, 2020, p. 1; WHO, 2020a). In February 2020, WHO named the disease caused by this pathogen COVID-19, the coronavirus disease 2019, and the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses named it SARS-CoV-2 (PAHO, 2020, p. 1).

As the weeks passed, the media reported the symptoms and behavior of this disease. The virus has a low lethality rate but is highly contagious (CCDC, 2020) and can congest hospitals. The virus can affect men and women of any age and develop into a severe condition in people with pre-existing illnesses and those over 60, who are more at risk of death (CCDC, 2020). Not everyone who becomes ill shows symptoms, the so-called asymptomatic (KINNEAR, 2020), and they are considered drivers of transmission (CONSALUD, 2020). Some of them may die suddenly. Survivors may have a slow recovery or be left with sequelae indefinitely (BELLUCK, 2020). Initially, specialists considered SARS-CoV-2 was a respiratory virus, as it was its most common manifestation. However, after weeks of observation, they changed the concept to multisystemic, as the virus can also attack the kidneys, intestines, blood vessels, brain, among other organs, producing a variety of symptoms (PUELLES et al., 2020; BBC, 2020).

Initially, the World Health Organization (WHO) resisted declaring the state of pandemic, as it did not consider the virus uncontrollable and wanted to avoid scaring the world even more, affecting travel and

commerce, and stigmatizing those who suffered from it. However, in February 2020, the virus had increased exponentially in other countries, such as Italy, Iran, and South Korea, showing that it had circulated freely and spread quickly to all continents (CARA, 2020). On March 11 of that year, the WHO announced 118,000 cases in 114 countries and 4,291 deaths from the disease. Given the alarming levels of spread, severity, and inaction, WHO declared it a pandemic (WHO, 2020b). This initial management of the situation generated questions about the role of the WHO due to the lack of monitoring, inaction in the face of warnings, cover-up, and preferential treatment for China (COBOS, 2020, p. 37-38). Months later, both WHO and the international scientific community recognized the possibility that COVID-19 would become an endemic disease due to the characteristics of coronaviruses, reinfections, acquired immunity, vaccination programs, and vaccine effectiveness (REUTERS, 2020a; SHAMAN; GALANTI, 2020). By the beginning of 2023, WHO maintained a maximum state of alert due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the situation had improved, the virus had caused 170,000 deaths a few months prior, and the mortality far exceeded the official total number of 6,804,491 deaths (DW, 2023).

The COVID-19 in Colombian territory

In Colombia, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (2020a) reported the first COVID-19 case on March 6, 2020, in a 19-year-old woman who had arrived in Bogotá from Italy. However, a later study by Universidad del Rosario et al. (2020) suggests that the first case probably arrived in Colombia from France on February 17 of that year. A 58-year-old man was the first to die from COVID-19 on March 16, 2020, in Cartagena de Indias. He had a history of untreated hypertension and diabetes. Two Italian tourists he had transported in his taxi days before infected him (MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL PROTECTION, 2020b).

Following similar measures implemented in other countries, the government of Colombia, through Decree 457 of 2020, ordered

mandatory quarantine throughout the country or “mandatory preventive isolation,” starting on March 25, 2020 (PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC, 2020a). However, weeks before, mayors of cities such as Cartagena de Indias and Bogotá had already implemented curfews and measures of social isolation and confinement due to cases detected in these cities (ALCALDÍA DISTRITAL DE CARTAGENA DE INDIAS, 2020; LA REPÚBLICA, 2020). On December 31, 2020, Colombia recorded 1,642,775 confirmed cases, of which 86,777 were active, 43,213 resulted in deaths, and 1,508,419 recovered, according to official data (AS, 2020). The government renewed the state of emergency successively throughout 2020, 2021, and early 2022 under the names of “collaborative and intelligent mandatory preventive isolation” and “selective isolation with responsible individual distancing,” making restrictive social isolation and mobility measures more flexible with each extension, in some regions more than in others, to gradually reactivate services, industry and commerce. Decree 655 of 2022 determined the last extension, which extended it until June 30, 2022 (FUNCIÓN PÚBLICA, 2022). But, days before its expiration, the Presidency of the Republic declared that there were no sanitary or epidemiological reasons to renew again, thus ending this period (LA REPÚBLICA, 2022).

Media communication in times of health emergency

López (1986, p. 93) indicates the media collects and distributes

López (1986, p. 93) indicates the media collects and distributes information relating to events in the environment of a particular society and the most prominent at a universal level. This function allows members of a social group to guide their action according to how events occurring in society are presented [...], and this constant flow of information [...] has positive consequences: for example, the fact of alerting the population about imminent threats and dangers (hurricanes, military attacks, epidemics, etc.).

News, therefore, is the journalistic product that allows this monitoring or supervision of the environment. News is information of general interest to a target audience. Therefore, the criteria of timeliness, impact, proximity, controversy, prominence, topicality, and strangeness (POTTER, 2006, p. 2-6), besides novelty, lack of knowledge, and perception of risk (GÓMEZ 2013, p. 41), determine which events the media will publicize as such.

COVID-19, which resulted in a public health crisis, fully met each of these criteria, thus leading the media “to provide exhaustive coverage in the health, political, social, economic and cultural areas, generating a media turmoil with profound repercussions on public opinion due to the uncertainty it represents” (COBOS, 2021, p. 116). As Gómez (2013, p. 40) expresses, “if society feels fear in the face of a hypothetical threat, the media will focus on this news, and the economic, health, social, and political repercussions will be notable.” Agencies AP and Reuters released the first reports on December 31, 2019, mentioning the situation in Wuhan and its connection to SARS. Given the history of this disease, the media, naturally including those in Colombia, replicated the information and began broad coverage when cases of this viral pneumonia began emerging in other countries (REUTERS, 2020b). In the first months of the pandemic, COVID-19 came to the top of the media agenda with a variety of approaches or framings, especially when the virus arrived in the country, the first death occurred in Cartagena de Indias, and the then President of the Republic, Iván Duque, announced the restrictive quarantine measures.

Audience perceptions, news consumption habits and the pandemic

A public health crisis on a global scale, such as a pandemic, is, without a doubt, a topic that captures the audience’s attention and that, therefore, increases the demand for news about the different aspects related to it: symptoms, expansion, statistics, measures, effects, impacts, etc., particularly in the early stages.

The constant coverage of events perceived as negative, such as a pandemic, triggers news consumption – driven by the need to be informed – but also causes anguish, anxiety, panic, and apathy in audiences, which may result in a reduction or even suspension of this consumption for mental health reasons. (COBOS, 2021, p. 116)

Before the pandemic, audiences were consuming news (both from traditional and native digital media) mainly through digital social media, instant messaging services, and news applications. They did so mainly through their mobile phones (COMSCORE, 2019, p. 7,8), relegating traditional forms to the background (watching or listening to the news, reading the printed newspaper...). In the case of Colombia, in March 2020, the national government reported the first case of COVID-19, the quarantine and confinement order, statistics on infected and deceased people, and other related acts, which led to a significant increase in news media consumption. According to Comscore (2020):

During March 2020, news and information websites recorded an average increase in page views of 37%, with users seeing approximately six million more pages per day compared to the previous month. On the other hand, in 2019, the percentage of change between February and March 2019 was just 2%.

Furthermore, “85% of page view consumption was via a mobile device.” At the same time, according to Kantar IBOPE Media¹, television consumption in 2020 was higher than in 2019. In April 2020, Colombians watched an hour and three minutes more television than in the same month in 2019, with news shows being one of the most watched television genres. Government programs and content about COVID-19 increased during the first months of the pandemic by 300%. Similarly, Cobos (2021, p. 124) states that confinement during the first months of the pandemic – April and May 2020 – meant spending more time at home. The need for information led to higher audience ratings for traditional television (news, opinion shows...), the news vehicle most

1 EJE21 (2020).

consumed by Colombian audiences in that period, along with the digital press.

These consumptions imply a process of evaluation by the audience of the frequency with which they consume news, their impact (emotions, decisions, behaviors...), and the formation of a value judgment or opinion from those who issue them, the media. Masip et al. (2020) addressed this aspect in Spain, where, among others, the perception of Spanish audiences on news coverage was that the media were offering too much information, their ideological lines conditioned their reporting, and they tended towards spectacle, generating social alarm.

In the context of what we have exposed so far, this research proposed to explore the perceptions of Colombian audiences in quarantine during the first months of the pandemic on the media's reporting concerning the volume of production, editorial line, and journalistic treatment.

Methodology

This study is part of the “Media Consumption during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Colombia” project from the Mass Media and Cultural Products Research Center at the Technological University of Bolívar. Our approach was quantitative and had an exploratory and descriptive scope due to the novelty of the topic and the generated contingency, besides the urgency of carrying out the first diagnoses of how COVID-19 impacted the Colombian news ecosystem from different perspectives, including the audiences' perceptions of how the media acted.

To this end, I applied a 34-item questionnaire to collect information on sociodemographic data, the need for information, news consumption habits, credibility and trust in the media, subscriptions, misinformation management, and memes. Digilab - Media, Strategy, and Regulation of the Ramon Llull University (Spain) - designed the original questionnaire, which we adapted to the Colombian context, changing Spanish expressions to Colombian carefully to preserve its meaning and ease the understanding, besides modifying some responses according to the Colombian reality.

I hosted the form on Microsoft Forms and opened it for responses from April 4th until May 14th, 2020, between a week after the start of mandatory social isolation or quarantine in the country and a few days after its third extension. Therefore, ours was a convenience sampling. I distributed the questionnaire through Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and e-mail to reach participants from five geographic regions in the country, including those with low connectivity. According to the BBVA Research (2019), Colombia has around 29 million internet users. The most used services are Facebook and WhatsApp, with more than 18 million users, followed by YouTube with 9.9 million, Instagram with 7 million, and Twitter with 4.1 million. Inequality in Internet access according to income level and location area is significant.

The questionnaire considered several response options: single selection, multiple choice, Likert scale, and, in some cases, “others.” At the end, there was an open question where the interviewee could provide additional information if desired. All questions were mandatory except the last one, the open question. I exported the data from the 2,084 valid responses to Microsoft Excel for analysis. As limitations, the sample contained only people who had access to the internet and were contacted by one of the platforms mentioned, therefore leaving out those who did not meet such conditions. Furthermore, although I sought to obtain responses from people residing in states of the country with little connectivity, the number of responses collected was low. However, we are satisfied that we left no Colombian state without representation.

Discoveries

As indicated, we received a total of 2,084 valid responses from people with internet access and residing in one of the five geographic regions of Colombia, distributed as follows:

Table 1. Sample composition

Age (in years)	Number	Percentage	Sex	Number	Porcentagem
17 or less	13	0.6%	Women	1,065	51,1%
18 to 24	206	9.8%	Men	1,019	48,8%
25 to 34	328	15.7%	Total	2,084	100%
35 to 44	500	23.9%			
45 to 54	575	27.5%			
55 to 64	371	17.8%			
65 or more	91	4.3%			
TOTAL	2,084	100%			
Geographic region				Number	Percentage
Andean Region States: Antioquia (217), Boyacá (45), Caldas (53), Cundinamarca (291), Huila (39), Norte de Santander (61), Quindío (38), Risaralda (44), Santander (93), and Tolima (44)				925	44.3%
Atlantic Coast or Caribbean States: Atlántico (229), Bolívar (251), Cesar (28), Córdoba (42), Guajira (14), Magdalena (34), San Andrés e Providencia (3), and Sucre (57)				658	31.5%
Pacific Coast States: Chocó (5), Valle del Cauca (245), Cauca (59), and Nariño (50)				359	17.2%
Orinoquia or Llanos Orientales States: Arauca (14), Casanare (15), Meta (45), and Vichada (6)				80	3.8%
Amazon States: Amazonas (2), Caquetá (17), Guainía (3), Guaviare (10), Putumayo (28), and Vaupés (2)				62	2.9%
TOTAL				2,084	100%

Source: Elaborated by the author

Table 1 shows that 51.1% of participants are women and 48.8% are men, an almost balanced sample, with a predominant age between 45 and 54 years (27.5%) and 35 to 44 years (23.9%). Most participants are in the Andean region (44.3%) and the Atlantic Coast (31.5%). The states with the lowest participation (between 2 and 17 people) are those with

low internet connectivity. Those with the most respondents (particularly in three digits) have high connectivity and include the main cities in the country: Bogotá (Cundinamarca), Medellín (Antioquia), Cali (Valle del Cauca), Barranquilla (Atlántico), and Cartagena de Indias (Bolívar). These data coincide with the DANE census results (2018) on internet access in the country.

As a background, Lozano et al. (2024) found that 60% of those interviewed expressed a constant need to get information about the evolution of the pandemic. Furthermore, 70.1% of participants increased their frequency of news consumption after Colombia declared the state of pandemic and the subsequent quarantine.

We can attribute this increase in demand for information to the novelty and immediacy of the topic, as well as the significant threat or risk it posed to the population's health that, in turn, motivated the constant generation of news related to the same issue (LOZANO et al., 2024, p. 93))

Subsequently, the questionnaire asked participants about their perception or opinion about how the media were carrying out their informative work concerning the amount of information provided or volume of production:

Table 2. Perception on production volume

I consider, in general, that the media are providing too much information about the COVID-19 pandemic:						
Answer	Women	%	Men	%	Total	%
I totally disagree	83	7.7%	112	10.9%	195	9.3%
I disagree	181	16.9%	159	15.6%	340	16.3%
I do not agree or disagree	256	24%	186	18.2%	442	21.2%
I agree	360	33.8%	386	37.8%	746	35.7%
I totally agree	185	17.3%	176	17.2%	361	17.3%
Total	1,065	100%	1,019	100%	2,084	100%

Source: Elaborated by the author

As seen in Table 2, 35.7% of the public interviewed, with more emphasis on men, agreed that the media were providing too much information about the COVID-19 pandemic. In contrast, 21% had a neutral position, and 16.3% disagreed. In additional comments, some interviewees reiterated that there was a lot, too much, excessive, repeated, exaggerated overexposure or oversaturation of information on the topic. However, others suggested the media was withholding or giving out incomplete information. Some even considered that such excess could serve as a smokescreen or diversion of attention since issues such as political corruption (such as vote buying and others) had stopped appearing on the media agenda. Faced with what they perceived as excess, some expressed having experienced tiredness, stress, overload, fear, nervousness, panic, anxiety, anguish, fear, restlessness, and uncertainty. Therefore, they chose not to consume any more news on the topic in any media outlet.

The following question asked interviewees to assess whether they considered that the media were conditioned by their ideology when reporting on the covid-19 pandemic:

Table 3. Perception on ideological conditioning

I consider, in general, that editorial lines (ideology) condition media reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic:						
Answer	Women	%	Men	%	Total	%
I totally disagree	41	1.9%	80	7.8%	121	5.8%
I disagree	98	9.2%	69	6.7%	167	8%
I do not agree or disagree	212	19.9%	125	12.2%	337	16.1%
I agree	449	42.1%	357	35%	806	38.6%
I totally agree	265	24.8%	388	38%	653	31.3%
Total	1,065	100%	1,019	100%	2,084	100%

Source: Elaborated by the author

In Table 3, 38.6% of the interviewed sample agree, and 31.3% totally agree. In an analysis by gender, 42.1% of women expressed their agreement, and 38% of men totally agreed. In additional comments,

some perceived media coverage as very biased, manipulated, distorted, or weaponized according to their interests, with a high recurrence of official sources (of the State) or vehicles serving the government (“they seem like presidential press releases” or “they inform what the government wants”).

Finally, the research asked interviewees about their perception of journalistic treatment, that is, whether they considered that the media were reporting about the COVID-19 pandemic correctly or whether they were treating information in a sensationalist way:

Table 4. Perception about correct coverage

I consider, in general, that the media are reporting about the COVID-19 pandemic correctly:						
Answer	Women	%	Men	%	Total	%
I totally disagree	133	12.4%	202	19.8%	335	16%
I disagree	336	31.5%	309	30.3%	645	30.9%
I do not agree or disagree	365	34.2%	283	27.7%	648	31%
I agree	209	19.6%	196	19.2%	405	19.4%
I totally agree	22	2%	29	2.8%	51	2.4%
Total	1,065	100%	1,019	100%	2,084	100%

Source: Elaborated by the author

Table 5. Perception of sensationalism and alarmism in media coverage

I consider, in general, that media coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic is sensationalist and generates unnecessary social alarm:						
Answer	Answer	Wom-en	%	Men	%	Total
I totally disagree	69	6.4%	64	6.2%	133	6.3%
I disagree	252	23.6%	160	15.7%	412	19.7%
I do not agree or disagree	295	27.6%	232	22.7%	527	25.2%
I agree	299	28%	322	31.5%	621	29.7%
I totally agree	150	14%	241	23.6%	391	18.7%
Total	1,065	100%	1,019	100%	2,084	100%

Source: Elaborated by the author

As seen in Table 4, 30.9% of interviewees disagreed the media were reporting about the Covid-19 pandemic correctly. However, a slightly higher number, 31%, chose the neutral option, indicating uncertainty or lack of knowledge about the issue. These positions were the same for both sexes. Subsequently, the questionnaire asked participants whether they considered the media sensationalist in treating the issue and generated unnecessary social alarm (Table 5). 29.7% of respondents, more men than women, agreed with the statement, while 25.2%, more women than men, did not know how to answer or were unsure. In other words, although not dominant, there was a perception that the media was not covering the topic correctly and was sensationalist. In this sense, some of the additional comments, particularly referring to television, mentioned, for example, an emphasis on statistics of infected and deceased people instead of focusing on those who had recovered, a lack of scientific information (for example, advances in vaccine research, interviews with scientists, etc.), little positive and friendly news, increased time on television news programs to talk only about the virus, imprecise or incorrect information, sensationalism, insufficient information about self-care (such as the use of hand sanitizer, gloves, facemasks), repetition of information, and misinformation that caused chaos.

Final considerations

As it was possible to observe in this study, it was evident that Colombian audiences interviewed during the first periods of quarantine – or mandatory preventive isolation – in the country had the perception that there was an overproduction of news about the COVID-19 pandemic. (53.1% agreed and totally agreed), which led to overexposure to the topic, generated effects on mental health, and, consequently, led some to reduce or cancel news consumption, mainly television, as noted in the additional comments. That corroborates what Wright (1960 in DE MORAGAS, 1986, p. 77) proposed about the dysfunctions of mass communication, such as the excess of negative news that can generate panic in the audience.

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Furthermore, respondents expressed the perception that media coverage was conditioned by editorial lines (70% agreed and totally agreed) and that, as noted in the additional comments, vehicles seemed to act as spokespeople for the government. Likewise, the perception that the media was not correctly covering the topic prevailed (47%). Finally, the interviewed audiences perceived the media was sensationalist in treating the COVID-19 topic, generating unnecessary social alarm (48.5% agreed and totally agreed). Additional comments give nuance to these last two aspects. Some interviewees differentiated between national and foreign media, mentioning they preferred the latter to obtain information. Others only received information from specific national media and strongly questioned other sources, which shows the degree of trust and credibility placed in them (COBOS, 2021).

In respondents' answers, at times, a given option was more prevalent in one sex than in the other. For example, 42.1% of women agreed that ideological lines conditioned media reporting over 35% of men. 37.8% of men agreed that, in general, the media was providing too much information about the COVID-19 pandemic, while 33.8% of women did so.

To conclude, these findings invite us to reflect on the social responsibility of the media, especially in global public health crises. As we saw in this study, the interviewed Colombian audiences do not consider that the media are fulfilling their social responsibility.

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A critical approach to identities in Media Reception Studies

Uma abordagem crítica das identidades nos estudos de recepção

Veneza Mayora Ronsini

Resumo: *O artigo apresenta discussão teórica acerca dos obstáculos – criados no manejo de conceitos adotados nos estudos de recepção e consumo de mídia – que impedem a compreensão da vinculação entre experiência sociocultural e práticas de comunicação nos processos hegemônicos de estruturação do tecido social. Observamos que falta nos estudos que tematizam as identidades de classe e gênero a articulação entre diferença e desigualdade, pois usualmente as questões identitárias são problematizadas como questões de diferenças entre indivíduos e grupos sem que a questão estrutural da desigualdade econômica seja abordada. O conceito de classe social é a principal via para retomar a problemática das relações de poder nas apropriações da mídia enquanto também sugerimos os conceitos de reconhecimento e redistribuição propostos por Nancy Fraser.*

Palavras-chave: *Estudos de Recepção; Reconhecimento; Redistribuição; Identidades; Classe Social.*

Abstract: *The article presents a theoretical discussion concerning the obstacles - created in the management of concepts adopted in studies of media reception and consumption - that prevent the understanding of the link between sociocultural experience and communication practices in the hegemonic processes of structuring the social fabric. We observed that studies that focus on class and gender identities lack the articulation between difference and inequality, as identity issues are usually problematized as issues of differences between individuals and groups without the structural issue of economic inequality being addressed. The concept of social class is the main way to return to the issue of power relations*

in media appropriations, while we also suggest the concepts of recognition and redistribution proposed by Nancy Fraser.

Keywords: *Reception Studies; Recognition; Redistribution; Identities; Social Class*

Introduction

A key question in research on media reception and consumption is to reflect on the link between sociocultural experience and communication practices in the hegemonic processes of structuring the social fabric. In that line of inquiry, identities are among the central themes for understanding the relationships between how identifications with worldviews and lifestyles endorse or not the hierarchies that divide social groups into positions of dominance or subalternity. However, as we will see, the issue of hegemony – crucial to Anglo-Saxon or Latin American Cultural Studies, which are fundamental paradigms for reception studies in Brazil – has been losing strength in research.

Escosteguy (2009, p. 4) applied this diagnosis to identity studies within reception research, observing the omission of power relations and the regulation of the personal and private spheres by the media. In other words, “the uses and appropriations of media texts by the receiver without the necessary observation of the limitations imposed by the more general social structuring and even by the media texts themselves” are reiterated.

Returning to this problem, the purpose of this paper is to develop a theoretical hypothesis about the origin of uncritical approaches to identity in studies of media reception and consumption, extended today to investigations that consider the scenario of digital convergence that we refer to here as research on media uses. Uncritical approaches to reception are those that 1) describe interpretations or uses of the media without problematizing the differences found between the recipients in terms of the power relations to which they are subject based on gender hierarchies, ethnicity, generation, class, etc.; 2) do not understand the emphasis on the receiver’s resistance to dominant encodings in the light of power relations. The resistance we refer to is what cultural studies define as symbolic resistance, a way of facing contradictions unreconcilable in the spheres of work, family, and so forth.

In our understanding, one of the shortcomings of research is to consider only the cultural or symbolic factors that constitute identities,

disregarding or placing in the background the material factors that direct identifications and dis-identifications according to cleavages arising from the context and the social structure.

García Canclini seems to be the first intellectual to propose a double agenda for the study of identities that considers difference and inequality, accentuating the notion of a narratively and politically constructed difference. This double agenda is necessary for resuming identity conflicts generated for structural reasons, where difference is the tip of the iceberg called inequality. At least for the phenomenon under analysis here, primarily class and gender identities, secondarily ethnic identities, inequality is the hidden element when we deal with social and cultural differences.

For the Argentine anthropologist and philosopher, identities (2001; 2004) do not have a set of traits we can see as the essence of the group – a nation, an ethnicity, etc. Identities emerge from a series of selection operations of elements from different eras articulated by hegemonic groups in a narration that gives them coherence, drama, and eloquence. Furthermore, Canclini's contribution is to deconstruct the notion of identity insofar as intercultural hybridity is the basis for his discussion on identities in Latin America and the role of the media in the decoupling between culture and territory. Among other elements present in the author's work, commented by Escosteguy (1997), we have the loss of the natural relationship between culture and a geographic territory or the process of deterritorialization, as well as the collapse of borders between cultural strata (scholarly, popular and massive) and diverse cultures (local, regional, national and global).

Identity cleavages in Brazilian research are studied separately in investigations focused on gender, ethnicity, generation, and social class. Using Nancy Fraser's classification between identity and class studies (AMADEO, 2014), we have the problematization of identity recognition, on the one hand, and the problematization of inequality, on the other. In this paper, I propose identity recognition in its articulations with media reception can be seen in terms of differences and

distinctions to encompass inequalities, with distinctions being forms of economic discrimination.

In reception research¹ differences can relate to the interpretation of the media mediated by gender, ethnic, and generational identities, interactions on the internet, worldviews shaped by their presence in everyday life, and identifications with certain lifestyles, among others. Such ways of appropriating the media may relate to differences purely in situations of social equality or in the classic sense adopted by supporters of identity politics as a claim for their cultural standard against a normative cultural standard. The notions of cultural difference and class inequality or gender difference and class distinction demarcate this dissociation between the issue of recognition and distribution. In other words, regarding recognition, the intention is to understand the search for the right to difference. As for distribution, the aim is to understand the search for equality.

The paper begins with a synthesis of surveys of theses and dissertations in the field of Communication in Brazil dedicated to the study of identities. Then, the subsequent section discusses the concept of identities and the categories proposed by Fraser, which supports my position about the categories of difference and distinction and explains the importance of treating them as irreducible dimensions in critical approaches to the issue of identities in the field of communication. In the same topic, I exemplify the treatment of identities in the terms proposed in this paper in research on appropriations of the media. I conclude by endorsing the dialectical perspective between economy and culture to understand the formation of identities in their relationship with the reception, consumption, and uses of the media.

1 The debate in anthropology is between the right to difference and the right to equality, admitting that anthropological thought has not created solid foundations to integrate the notion of difference with those of equality/inequality (HOFBAUER, 2011).

The approach to identities in reception studies

Diverse studies on the relationship between media and audience have investigated the category of identity since the 1990s (JACKS; MENESES; PIEDRAS, 2008; JACKS et al., 2014; JACKS et al., 2017): reception, consumption, or uses. If media consumption studies focus on the broader relationship with the media, reception studies are interested in the interpretations and appropriations of media content (RONSINI, 2007; TOALDO; JACKS, 2013; SCHMITZ, 2015). Here, the third nomenclature of the uses of the media, linked to the work of Jesús Martín-Barbero (ESCOSTEGUY; JACKS, 2005), can serve to define those that incorporate the transit of audiences between traditional media and interactions on the internet. Given we can associate Barbero with reception and consumption studies, we reserve uses for studies in the convergence scenario. That is, those investigations that, as Jacks et al. (2017, p. 14) comment, expand the practice of reception or consumption to digital platforms, maintaining “a link with media production.”

At this point, it is worth explaining this evolution in the treatment of terms. My proposal to adopt the concept of uses to encompass works that combine the examination of reception or consumption with audience interactions on digital platforms seems more appropriate in the current context of the development of studies, as reception and consumption became better characterized in their particularities than in the first moment when associated with Canclini and Barbero. In the presentation of the two aspects of the study of audiences within the cultural studies approach, I partially followed this association by linking the study of reception with Barbero’s theory of mediations and because the majority of reception studies proceeded in this way, and those on consumption followed Canclini’s approach. This division began to fade because I combined both authors or tried adopting the perspective of mediations in studies on media consumption and internet uses.

So, I return to Escosteguy’s diagnosis and resort to research into the state of the art of theses and dissertations in the field of reception and consumption, coordinated by Jacks (2009; 2014; 2017), which maps the

themes, media, and approaches studied and, at the same time, points out the methodological and theoretical shortcomings of the field. From these references, we can ask to what extent some of these failures may be related to the non-problematization of power relations, as pointed out by Escosteguy.

According to Wottrich (2014), in the 1990s, the theme of identities was little explored. However, in the period 2000-2009, there was a significant increase in studies, both in the quantity of works and in the variety of approaches and focuses: gender, ethnic, regional/territorial, youth identities, etc. The author points out that the processes of negotiation of meanings are the focus of the discussions, and there is no indication that the constructed objects aimed at understanding issues of power, which, in our view, is what allows us to study inequalities. In this phase of consolidation of reception and consumption studies, the term appears associated with the internet, the reception of soap operas, “gender” identities and their relationship with series, soap operas, advertising, and talk shows.

In the most recent phase (2010 to 2015), studies on television focused on the theme of identity formation. The category appears in discussions on the role of identities in traditional media appropriation processes and new ways of using media based on interactions between receivers on digital platforms. During this period, the lack of explanation of the receivers’ experiences to understand the appropriations of the media is notable.

Regarding the issue of gender identities (TOMAZETTI; CORUJA, 2017), whether considered in studies of women from a feminist perspective, or in queer studies, in investigations of homosexuality and masculinity, it was the one that most evolved into a treatment that addresses gender asymmetries as a product of power relations, even if the tendency to use genders as demographic data or sample constituents remains. Here, we point out two factors that hinder the understanding of the diversity of appropriations of culture as originating in the positions of subjects in the sphere of production and in cultural reproductions that

hierarchize social groups: the lack of depth in capturing the experience of receiver and the gender approach as a sample selection criterion or as a demographic criterion.

Even if not addressing economic injustice, successful studies partially understand cultural injustices in their relationships with media reception, rooted in social patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication. Defined not by their position in production relations, “but by relations of recognition, the lesser respect, esteem, and prestige they enjoy in relation to other groups in society distinguishes them.” (FRASER, 2003^a, p. 13).

On the other hand, taking into account the social class indicator is practically disregarded (RONSINI, 2012; GROHMANN, 2014; JACKS; SIFUENTES; LIBARDI, 2017), one may argue one of the most relevant forms of studying inequalities is almost absent. On the other hand, taking into account the social class indicator is practically disregarded (RONSINI, 2012; GROHMANN, 2014; JACKS; SIFUENTES; LIBARDI, 2017), one may argue one of the most relevant forms of studying inequalities is almost absent in Brazilian theses and dissertations in the communication field, leading to the conclusion that the issue of difference must appear when it comes to describing the relationships between media and audiences. Finally, the very direction of research to highlight the recipients’ capacity of resistance (JACKS et al., 2008) can also affect researchers’ attention to the issue of power relations.

Thus, in most reception and consumption studies, identities are defined based on their association with cleavages of class, ethnicity, generation, nation/region, or gender. Cultural and social cleavages, markers, or processes are how such studies define identity processes. We defend here that the deepening of the concept is precisely carried out through the discussion of categories such as class and gender, class and ethnicity, and so on, according to the research theme. The justification is that the split between class and other categories linked to identity recognition does not allow to address inequality correctly. If the understanding of class inequality and gender injustice is expanded by

combining the two forms of attribution of privileges, we can also treat gender “differences” as the result of cultural and economic injustice. In Brazilian theses and dissertations in the communication field, leading to the conclusion that the issue of difference must appear when it comes to describing the relationships between media and audiences. Finally, the very direction of research to highlight the recipients’ capacity of resistance (JACKS et al., 2008) can also affect researchers’ attention to the issue of power relations.

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The concept of identities: recognition and redistribution

Canclini argues that identity cannot be defined with the same rigor as culture because it is not objectifiable (2001). The author discusses how to approach identities without presenting a pure concept, but always associated with another term or problem. For example, when reflecting on national identities, he defines identity based on interculturality and the phenomenon of cultural hybridization.

Having no fixed or concrete attributes, they are constituted or take shape based on processes regulated by the interests and values of the groups that compete for the privileges associated with certain identities. In this sense, the formation of identities involves identity policies

translated into struggles for redistribution and recognition to achieve parity with other groups.

With class identities in mind, it was Bourdieu who, even without using the term identity or consciousness² defined the markers that define social class as economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals. They constitute class affiliations through the complex mechanisms of naturalization of social position and moral recognition or (mis)understanding. Economic and cultural capitals are central to structuring class domination “because modern society does not primarily base its functioning on social capital” (SOUZA, 2007, p. 65). We can infer that the symbolic does not determine this structuring either because the maintenance of economic advantages and cultural assets are the bases for the reproduction of class position. With the exception that capitals are integrated, as for Fraser (2003b), issues of recognition are not epiphenomena of the distributive issue. We believe that it is possible to bring the notion of symbolic capital closer to that of recognition insofar as it signals the value attributed to an individual.

The debate here is limited to the thinking of Nancy Fraser (2003a and b) and related to Bourdieu’s ideas, as the focus is to consider the perspective of difference based on the notion of social class. The conjunction of these perspectives is justified because Bourdieu thinks about social class in a way that is more or less equivalent to that of Nancy Fraser due to the centrality of the economic and cultural dimensions for domination. While, for Fraser, cultural norms block participatory parity (2009), for Bourdieu, culture hierarchizes and reproduces domination at the symbolic level. Here, we do not discuss his concept of justice as participatory parity because it does not pertain to the objects of reception research.

In Fraser’s initial reflections, according to Lawler (2014), the philosopher understood that class division deals with the issue of redistribution, and the gender and race division encompasses the lack of material and

2 These terms are absent because, for Bourdieu, the incorporation of the techniques of conduct, thoughts, or feelings that guide actors are not conscious but a kind of personal history “naturalized in a spontaneity without consciousness.” (SOUZA, 2007, p. 59).

“symbolic” or identity resources. However, from 2001 onwards, the author states that unequal distribution and non-recognition of individual/group value characterize inequality in any form. Gender is – in Fraser’s (2003a and b) analysis – a clear example of a type of social subordination that has two dimensions. It is not simply a question of class or status but of simultaneous rooting in society’s economic structure and status order.

However, there is no validity in considering that gender-inflicted damage results from a lack of cultural recognition or appreciation and class-inflicted is the result of a lack of resources if recognition and distribution characterize both. Class belonging encompasses damage caused by unemployment, work, underpayment, and the suffering of being seen as having an intellectual disability or moral deficit. In other words, these normative criteria may not determine class position, but they interfere with professional opportunities and participation, affecting agents’ economic position. Of course, for demands for distributive justice, the strategies generally used are related to implementing changes in the economic structure. For recognition claims, the objective is to remove cultural impediments and develop policies that allow the construction of the intersubjective prerequisites of participatory parity and economic policies for minority groups.

Having established the theoretical bases of the debate, we need to articulate them with research on the relationships between class and gender identities and their modes of appropriation mediated by the media. Research into the reception of soap operas observes media outlets are problematic sources of individual and collective recognition because they pay little attention to debating class and gender inequalities. There is an avoidance or obscurity regarding the topic.

Usually, receivers and consumers appropriate these meanings in the direction intended by the dominant ideology (RONSINI, 2012; RONSINI et al., 2017; RONSINI et al., 2019), as the majority of the audience reproduces class hierarchies and gender. Revisiting these investigations in the light of the categories of “recognition” and “redistribution,” one realizes that the concealment of inequality and the

exaltation of difference by soap operas forms worldviews in which the recognition of femininity or social class draws from individual idiosyncrasies or, at best, cultural models.

The research did not develop from Nancy Fraser's theoretical categories of recognition and distribution. However, I approached this theme and these concepts through other means and authors. Firstly, through the debate on identity recognition with authors such as García Canclini and Martín-Barbero, among others. Secondly, through the debate on the category of social class, whether with cultural studies authors such as Murdock (2009) or Morley (2006; 2009) or with Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of reproduction. Then, I articulate the reception of soap operas with identifications or disidentifications related to class and gender attributes connected with everyday experience based on the material conditions of existence systematized by the categories of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Like Nancy Fraser, we understand that gender differences lead to exclusion, loss of rights, and unequal treatment, and economic division generates an unfair division of labor according to gender. Thus, this study could think about the role of media reception in the devaluation of status, the normalization of androcentric standards, the denial of full rights to women, the devaluation of wages for work performed by women, etc.

Recently, Honneth's³ category of recognition inspired research on the motivations of middle-class individuals for living in rural ecovillages and their relationships with the uses of the media. Subsequent research adopted Fraser's recognition and redistribution in conversation with Honneth's categories, dealing with the reconfigurations of urban middle-class identity in the transition to rural areas. In the first project, on the Uses and Non-uses of Communication Technologies and the Meaning of Life in Common, we were interested in discussing the relationships between social esteem and self-esteem through this search for a "good life" in sustainable communities in rural areas. The second (in

3 In the field of Communication in Brazil, the works of Rousiley Maia (2018; 2019) and Bruno Campanella (2021; 2023) stand out for their adoption of Axel Honneth's ideas to think about the relationships between media and recognition.

progress), entitled *Communication Practices and the New Identity of the Middle Class*, deepens the “redistribution” category to understand a practical struggle for the preservation of rights such as housing, food, health, and leisure, which also required the lowering of middle-class consumption standards and the adoption of a way of life based on simplicity and that evokes the virtues of traditional communities and small farmers. The study uses the tripartite characterization of recognition – affection, rights, and social esteem – proposed by Honneth to emphasize the last two: the middle class seeks recognition, on the one hand, for the realization of rights taken away by the impoverishment generated by the Brazilian economic crisis and, on the other, by emulating the virtues of an ecological way of life.

Conclusion

In short, we cannot study identity only as an abstraction because the substrate of the identity we construct is the social and material organization itself. One way is to understand it as a process constituted by difference and inequality; that is, epistemologically, by examining the modes of recognition and the modes of unrecognition. A question that needs better assessment in future studies concerns the practical results in the fight for equality, whether class or gender. We need to ask whether, as Federici (2023) states, we cannot change our identity without changing our material condition of life and that this implies ending capitalism or, inversely, if we can change our identity because, in some cases, equality comes without changing the class condition, such as for middle-class women who may identify with libertarian models of femininity, whether or not inspired by media standards, assuming that cultural changes will occur and translate into gender equality even within capitalism.

In Barbero’s (2009) thinking, identity is the social bond that connects us to others. That idea can support the argument developed in this paper that there is no abstract bond but only those originating from political, economic, cultural, and media power structures and the potential opened by the struggles for recognition and distributive justice. If

Canclini is the author who dedicated himself most to showing the issue of inequality, from our perspective, resorting to Nancy Fraser's concepts is a fruitful way to approach situations of non-recognition and denial of rights that interconnect for a complete understanding of the formation of identities.

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Variations on the cliffhanger: serial narrative and consumption

Variações sobre o cliffhanger: narrativa seriada e consumo

Márcio Serelle

Resumo: Neste artigo, investigo o recurso do cliffhanger como um dos elementos distintivos da forma seriada. Da literatura às séries audiovisuais, o cliffhanger tem sido utilizado para administrar o desejo do público, levando-o a consumir o próximo episódio, prolongando o prazer narrativo. Abordo as dualidades e os sentidos desse recurso e a permanência e a atualização da técnica nas séries contemporâneas, cujo contexto de distribuição e lançamento muitas vezes abole o tempo de espera entre os episódios. A análise dos exemplos demonstra que, nas séries atuais, o cliffhanger é um expediente que permite a exploração da complexidade narrativa e um modo autoconsciente e irônico de se jogar com o espectador.

Palavras-chave: Streaming; Narrativa Seriada; Consumo; Cliffhanger.

Abstract: In this article, I investigate the cliffhanger as one of the distinctive elements of the serial form. From literature to audiovisual series, the cliffhanger has been used to manage the audience's desire, leading them to consume the next episode and prolonging the narrative pleasure. I address the dualities and meanings of this feature and the permanence and updating of the technique in contemporary series, whose distribution and release context often abolishes the pending time between episodes. The example analysis demonstrates that, in current series, the cliffhanger is a device that allows the exploration of narrative complexity and a self-conscious and ironic way of playing with the viewer.

Palavras-chave: streaming; serial narrative; consume; cliffhanger

Introduction

In the sixth episode of the series *The Book of Boba Fett* (2021), which is part of the Star Wars fictional universe, Jedi master Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) offers Grogu two options: gain the knowledge of light, which belongs to Yoda, or a Beskar armor, an extremely resistant metal alloy, a gift from Mando (Pedro Pascal), the Mandalorian protagonist of the series of the same name that intersects with this one. Grogu will become Skywalker's first Jedi student if he accepts the saber. If he chooses the armor, he must return to his Mandalorian friend. The episode ends with Grogu anguished between options, and the viewer who watched the series during its release period must wait a week to find out what the character decided.

We are faced with a profuse transmedia and trans-fictional narrative (RYAN, 2013; SAINT-GELAIS, 2005) and updated technology, which allows us to insert into Skywalker the face and synthesized voice of its actor at a young age. At the same time, we witness the persistence of an old technique, the cliffhanger or hook – the name given to the resource in Brazil –, which critic Emily Nussbaum (2012) defines as a climax split in half. In her study of the soap opera, Rosane Svartman (2023, p. 46) describes the hook as “a critical scene with high emotional impact: a moment of reconciliation, sadness, revelation, or devastating action – an accident, for example – intentionally cut in the height of the action.” A series like *Alias* recurrently constructs the cliffhanger, as Jason Mittell (2015) describes, through a traditional four-act arc, transferring the final act to the opening minutes of the subsequent episode and prolonging the viewer's pleasure through waiting, encouraging them to follow the fiction.

In this article, I develop a path based on the genesis of this “cutting technique” (ISER, 1989) to investigate the permanence and some variations of the cliffhanger in contemporary series and the meanings linked to the resource in a context of distribution through streaming platforms in which these narratives are no longer necessarily marked by waiting (BUONANNO, 2019). Streaming series seek narrative effects

(MITTELL, 2015) that escape predictable schemes but do not renounce the cliffhanger completely, even if they aim to renew it or even work on it ironically.

This article has three parts besides this introduction and final considerations. First, I recover the initial uses of the cliffhanger in literature and discuss how the resource is a cultural artifice that operates on desire by postponing the reader's pleasure. The technique, as appropriated by the commercial literature of the 19th century, followed the rhythm of the newspaper and attracted, with its dose of suspense, a popular reading public while stimulating a specific type of reading. Next, I address the presence of the cliffhanger in audiovisual serial fiction, the dualities of the device, and its recurring strategies. Compressed assistance is among the current issues raised by streaming platforms, as it can eliminate the gaps that the cutting techniques of serial fiction traditionally provide by meeting the immediacy of contemporary life. Finally, I describe how serial fiction is released today on streaming and analyze some examples of cliffhangers in recent series. The aim is to reflect on the current nature of this resource, its use to transition between layers of a complex narrative, and the ironic awareness in the proposed play with the viewer.

The adoption of the word cliffhanger in English in research on series justifies its use in this paper instead of the term gancho [hook] in Portuguese. The Spaniard Toni de la Torre (2016) refers to cliffhangers as jargon from the world of serial fiction. The expression, which literally refers to the condition of being on the edge of a cliff, derives from a scene in the novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* by Thomas Hardy, published in parts in Tinsley's Magazine during 1873. In that story, a character finds himself during a walk at the edge of the abyss at the end of the episode and is saved, in the next episode, by the woman who accompanied him, who tears her clothes to make a rope and rescue him (NUSSBAUM, 2012). The term thus carries, in the image it projects and in its link with Victorian-era literature, a certain degree of suspense and drama serial fiction has explored since then.

The reign of desire

Studies generally locate the matrices of audiovisual serial fiction in the 19th century in the delivery narrative of Victorian England or the French serial novel (cf. DE LA TORRE, 2016; TORRES, 2012). The use of the cliffhanger is much older, however, and dates to Eastern chain narratives, among which the book *One Thousand and One Nights*, which had its core stories developed in the 8th or 9th century, is the best-known example in the West. The *Thousand and One Nights*, of Persian and Arabic origin, is a framework narrative that structures a cycle of stories. In the narrative, Sultan Shariar is betrayed by his wife and, convinced of the malice of women, decides to marry virgins and kill them the morning after their wedding night. Scheherazade applies to marry the Sultan to save the women in the kingdom. After the first night, with the Sultan's permission, she tells her sister a story and interrupts it at its most exhilarating moment. The tale arouses the Sultan's curiosity, and he allows Scheherazade to live so that she can continue the story the next night, which she then interrupted again to resume the next day. Scheherazade repeats the strategy for a thousand and one nights until the Sultan, transformed by the narratives, gives up on killing her and suspends the barbarism.

The interruptions in the stories transition to the framework narrative, in which we have the meetings and dialogues between Shariar and Scheherazade. "Here, the technique of interruption is used to fulfill one of the main functions of literature: the connection of fictional worlds to the realistic world, from representation to reality, from allegory to life experience" (LEEuwEN, 2007, p. 7). This genre, known as the mirror for princes, is situated between entertainment and pedagogy, as the situations and images of good and evil represented in the tales were also aimed at preparing rulers. (LEEuwEN, 2007).

In the well-known essay in which he affirms the impurity of cinematographic art, André Bazin (2018) comments on how the slicing of stories in episodic films from the beginning of the 20th century is due to

the strategies of the serial novel. However, Bazin develops his reflection from *One Thousand and One Nights*:

If Scheherazade had told everything at once, the king, as cruel as the public, would have had her executed at dawn. Both need to feel the power of enchantment due to its interruption, to savor the delicious wait of the tale that replaces everyday life, which is nothing more than the solution to the continuity of the dream. (BAZIN, 2018, p. 129)

The cliffhanger is a narrative technique that seduces the audience and moves them from the position of executioner – the one who can decide the fate of a film – to that of a captive. The viewer's involvement conditions the survival of the series. (In the case of *Sultan Shariar*, it is necessary to ensure that he continues to listen so that he is transformed by the power of the narrative. That is Scheherazade's plan). The interruption of the story highlights the fictional fascination subjugating the audience. The public is left to wait for the new part, which, for Bazin, is a form of waiting experienced as fun in anticipation of the dream continuing.

“Satisfying curiosity for the Sultan means pleasure. Postponing it means culture,” says literary critic Adélia Bezerra de Meneses (1987, p. 120), possibly based on the Freudian notion of postponing pleasure. As Leeuwen (2007) points out, many interpretations of *One Thousand and One Nights* refer to psychoanalysis and produce readings that identify in *Shariar* the man governed by desire, the Id, and in Scheherazade, the Ego, which balances reason and passion and adjusts us to the principle of reality. For Meneses (1987, p. 120), “one of the things that differentiate the man from the animal is exactly the postponement of pleasure.” Scheherazade skillfully manages *Shariar's* desire. “Her suspense technique” (MENESES, 1987, p. 120) involves the Sultan.

The management of desire through the narrative techniques of seduction was turned into a business by the serials and other forms of

delivered fiction of the 19th century, a context in which a market for literary entertainment emerged with a broader audience. Conservative critics at the time disparaged the dosed form, which met the newspaper's demands, accusing the serial of being industrialized literature (MEYER, 1996).

Among the various resources of this nineteenth-century fiction, which radio and television series incorporated in the 20th century, Toni de la Torre (2016) indicates the cliffhanger as the most significant device to generate suspense and retain the viewer. As in the motto of Wilkie Collins, a writer from Victorian England, the serial narrative should make the reader laugh, cry, and hope. Collins “was known for the psychological portrait of his characters but also for his complex plots, which always left the reader hanging on the resolution of a scene” (DE LA TORRE, 2016, p. 15-16, our translation).

The narrative structure of the serial aims to win over the popular reader habituated to brief forms. The fragmented text enables the uninitiated reader to move from the short story to the more intricate plot of the novel. For Jesús Martín-Barbero (2003), one of the seductive elements of the genre is the interruption and suspense produced by the cliffhanger, which develops through the balance between surprise and planned redundancy. “Each episode must be able to capture the attention of the reader who, through it, has their first contact with the narrative and must at the same time sustain the interest of those who have already been following it for months: it must continually surprise, but without confusing the reader.” (MARTÍN-BARBERO, 2003, p. 194).

Suspense is an effect of the narration and not of a language that turns on itself, considers Martín-Barbero (2003). Just as popular narration marks the presence of a listener, the serial involves its readers. The pauses between episodes invite them to fill in the gaps in the story. If this form of reading breaks with the aesthetic enjoyment of the work, as 19th-century critics maintained (MEYER, 1996), it demands a specific type of participation from the reader. For Wolfgang Iser (1989, p. 11), the cliffhanger is an editing technique that encourages the reader

to imagine how the action will unfold. “How is it going to go on? In asking this question, we automatically raise the degree of our own participation in the further progress of the action. Dickens was well aware of this fact, and that is why he considered his readers to be coauthors.” (ISER, 1989, p. 11). If every text relies on the reader’s collaboration to fill in indeterminacies, serial fiction, according to Iser (1989), proposes an even more active role for the public, as it strategically provides them with additional gaps.

From serial cinema to streaming

Audiovisual entertainment explored the resource for the first time in serial cinema in the first half of the 20th century. Like in serials, the imperative was marketing: to make the viewer return to the following week’s matinee. In the emergence of the film industry, the serial form established a safe bridge between the first short films and the feature films. For Scott Higgins (2016, p. 73), the cliffhanger gave rise, out of commercial motivation, to “[...] a unique blend of experiences unavailable in other popular cinema: spectacular cataclysm, engaging suspense, and the parameters of an inescapable dilemma left unresolved for an entire week.”

Higgins exposes some dualities of the resource, the main one being the fact that the cliffhanger at the same time traps spectators in the events of the story, submerging them in the film plot and making them aware of the mechanisms of the narrative since the forced interruption denounces the artificiality of the serial condition. Niklas Luhmann (2005) considers that the gimmick must not draw attention for a reader or spectator to indulge in entertainment. Production mechanisms must fade so the observer can focus on the fictional experiences. Against this, the cliffhanger operates as a link between the story events and the gimmick, between transparency and opacity, providing the spectator with a double pleasure related to the act of following the narrative and the perception of the narrative mechanisms. As Higgins (2016, p. 84) describes, “While we are engaged in weighing the possibilities of the hero’s

survival at one level, at another we identify the game being played and anticipate (even appreciate) the cliffhanger's contrivances."

The examples of cliffhangers described by Higgins in serial films are mostly narratives interrupted at moments when the lives of the protagonists are in danger. The interruption point is a little beyond the moment in which the threat presents itself because, in these films, according to Higgins, the device does not leave the hero hanging on the cliff but pushes him towards the (almost) fall. Accustomed to the formula, the spectator knows that the heroes will save themselves. Therefore, the appropriate question that voice-overs can even verbalize at the end of episodes is "how."

The solution to saving the hero is often beyond the possibilities highlighted in the sequence. However, as Higgins points out, the answer to the outcome must appear among hypotheses that the viewer can elaborate from the narrative so that it does not seem like cheating. Higgins considers, in dialogue with Gerrig's (1996) reflections on suspense, that, despite being formulaic, the cliffhanger is effective due to the resilient nature of the type of emotion it provokes, capable of involving us even when we know that the episodes are, invariably, structured for this final interruption, with a favorable outcome – but which may bring consequences not yet foreseen – in the subsequent episode. As the author proposes, the fact we know the protagonist will not die does not relieve us of the fear that he will die or the apprehension about the consequences arising from extreme situations. In contemporary series, we can also argue that, although the protagonist often prevails, there is no longer a guarantee of the survival of core characters since this stability has been subverted to make the plot more unpredictable (MITTELL, 2015).

The cliffhanger in serial films, as in serial narratives in general, aims to build the wait, which begins as dramatic excitement and extends into a period of prolonged pleasure. The device reinforces the continuity and consumption of the new part in an explicit market relationship. "Cliffhangers are the point when the audience decides to keep buying,"

states Nussbaum (2012, p. 3), who considers the device a blatantly manipulative test of the relationship between creators and audiences.

The cliffhanger became ritualistic in soap operas and telenovelas. In the Brazilian case, the fact that telenovelas are, since their origins, indebted to the French serials and radio soap operas made the cliffhanger one of the crucial narrative devices of these fictions (SVARTMAN, 2023). Brazilian telenovela author Aguinaldo Silva considers that telling a story in chapters is like a “set-up game” that always takes the viewer to the next part, whether a section or a chapter (FIUZA; RIBEIRO, 2009). Aguinaldo Silva’s ability to create hooks, initially in miniseries, led to his recognition and hiring as a telenovela writer.

The cliffhanger and its waiting rhythm are a seduction device that constitutes the identity of serial fiction. But how can the device survive in the streaming era, where platforms often make all episodes available at once and encourage viewers to “marathon” and eliminate the wait? Given this context, Milly Buonanno (2019) questions whether what she calls the Netflix paradigm does not cause a break with the serial form. For the author, compressed assistance leads to the loss of the “dialectical pattern” that resides in the overlap between restriction – the power that the work exerts over the reader/spectator/listener by making them wait – and freedom and activity, in the act of imagining possible continuations to the story and filling in the gaps in the text.

“The way we watch affects the form and impacts the hermeneutic processes of creating meaning” (BUONANNO, 2019, p. 48). Buonanno refers, at this point, to the text by Iser (1989), cited previously in this paper, which states that the way we produce meaning in the relationship with a narrative offered to us in parts is different from that in the interaction with a work that presents itself in full, like a novel or film. The forced intervals lead us to speculate about the development of the plot and create narrative possibilities. Like Iser (1989), Buonanno (2019) emphasizes that this does not mean that the fiction that forces us to wait has better quality but that it implies a specific type of fulfillment in which the reader is called upon to play a role.

The reduction in waiting, made possible by the archiving logic of streaming platforms, serves contemporary temporality well. As Emília Araújo (2012) notes, several theorists have pointed out the tendency today towards a more immediate social life. “The number of processes subject to techno-scientific temporality is infinite, which, ultimately, replaces social and biological temporality with mechanical and robotic temporality” (ARAÚJO, 2012, p. 17). That eliminates waiting, which, according to Araújo (2012, p. 11), “is an essential condition for the organization of the social and natural world”. According to the author, waiting has several functions in sociability, such as ritualizing passages, providing time for analysis and debate, building expectations, and allowing the cultivation of hope.

Cliffhanger, narrative complexity, and irony

In streaming services, two ways of launching series stand out today, with strategies that combine them. The first, the Netflix paradigm, meets the contemporary immediacy mentioned by Buonnano (2019) and Araújo (2012). The strategy aims for the viewer to go from one episode to another and consume the season in one sitting. The intention is for the viewer to focus their attention on the platform, and, when finishing one series, they move on to another and so on through an algorithmic system that operates, in the case of Netflix, with a profuse catalog. However, a series with all its episodes available at once may not do without the cliffhanger, as the device is important to take the viewer from one chapter to another. What changes significantly is the imposition of the waiting time since the gap may last only a few seconds. Evidently, these conditions refer to an idealized spectatorship willing to “marathon,” complying with the platform’s strategies.

The second form of release is the one that preserves the intervals, usually a week, between one episode and another, as on HBO Max, the streaming service linked to HBO, and on Disney+. For television critic Maurício Stycer (2022), this strategy increases the “lifespan” of the show since hiatuses fuel conversations between viewers, welding

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communities of fans that promote the series. According to Stycer, a successful example was season two of the HBO series *Euphoria* (2022), which reverberated on socio-digital networks. Season two of *White Lotus*, aired that same year, is another example of a narrative that generated a lot of speculation among viewers on the social media. For critic Patrícia Kogut (2022), *White Lotus*, like all good serial narratives, stimulated “a parallel soap opera, written by fans, on social networks.”

It is worth noting, however, that even these series released at intervals are later available on streaming services and become part of a catalog. Therefore, it also becomes possible to “marathon” them, which implies another form of relationship with the narrative outside the dynamics foreseen at their release.

As mentioned, there are also hybrid forms of releasing series that combine the first two strategies. *The Dropout*, released on the Star+ platform in Brazil in 2022, made its first three episodes available simultaneously and released the other five at weekly intervals. Even telenovelas released on streaming, such as *Verdades Secretas 2* (2021), today adopt the strategy of releasing episode blocks, which viewers can consume at their own pace.

Given these aspects, relating both to the narrative economy of contemporary series and current forms of distribution and spectatorship, I will address some examples of the use of cliffhangers today. The objective is to expose variations of the technique present in the current series so we can reflect on the persistence of the device, used creatively in conversation with tradition as a trace of seriality, while it is updated, sometimes with ironic awareness, due to changes in the serial form and its circulation.

A first form of cliffhanger that forces the viewer to wait, even when all episodes are available, interrupts the action but does not resolve it in the next episode, as it opens a digression and lets the narrative move away from its central axis and only later find its way back in a type of relationship between episodic and seriality that characterizes the complexity of contemporary fiction (MITTELL, 2015). Episode seven

of *The Haunting of Bly Manor*, Mike Flanagan's adaptation of the 19th-century novel *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James, ends with a frightening scene: the Lady of the Lake, an entity that haunts the property, drags au pair Danielle Clayton by the neck. Episode eight begins by repeating the scene but does not resolve it. Instead, the black screen, which usually follows the action suspended in a cliffhanger, transitions to the origins of the Lady of the Lake, adapted from the short story "The Romance of Certain Old Clothes" by Henry James and inserted into *Bly Manor*. The end of episode eight also does not resolve the action but returns to the point of tension at the end of episode seven. The outcome will only occur in episode nine, the series finale.

Bly Manor, a Netflix series, knows that "marathoning" demands other interruption strategies to prolong suspense and create waiting time. To manage the viewer's desire, Flanagan makes balanced use of seriality (the progression of the central narrative axis of *The Other Turn of the Screw*) and the episodic (the mythology of the curse of *Bly Manor*) with a digression that stands between the violent event and its outcome. The cliffhanger allows the series to move between narrative levels, connect stories, and expand the universe of *Bly Manor* and its fictional population.

The Last of Us (2023), an HBO series adapted from the video game of the same name, uses a similar procedure from episodes six to eight. At the end of episode six, Joel (Pedro Pascal), who escorts the girl Ellie (Bella Ramsey) in a pandemic and apocalyptic world, is attacked and has his abdomen pierced by a piece of baseball bat. The episode ends with Joel unconscious in the snow while Ellie begs him not to die. Only episode eight lets us know that her guardian survived. Although part seven, "Left Behind," begins with Ellie taking care of Joel, the narrative soon shifts to the past, when the girl lives her relationship with her best friend, Riley (Storm Reid). One night, in a deactivated park, Riley is bitten by an infected person (someone who hosts the fungus that transformed them into a monstrous creature), a painful memory of loss for Ellie. At the end of this story, still in episode seven, we return

to the present of the narrative in which Ellie finds a needle and thread and sews up Joel's belly, who only appears to have recovered at the end of episode eight. "Left Behind" is an adaptation of a story not included in the electronic game version released in 2013 but made available to players as downloadable content (DLC) in 2014.

In this case, the wait was prolonged, given the viewer who watched the show on HBO during its release was already following the weekly viewing rhythm. However, it is worth remembering that, once released, the series enters the logic of the catalog on the HBO streaming service and can be watched at once or in blocks of episodes. Therefore, it is also possible to "marathon" a series like *The Last of Us* after the release period. What is most important to highlight, however, is that, once again, the cliffhanger serves as a passage between the central axis of seriality and the adjacent episodic narratives, which gain prominence and become linked to a web of stories.

The narrative complexity can also be highlighted in a pilot episode through multiple cliffhangers, as in the Brazilian series *Rota 66: A Polícia que Mata* (2023). Adapted from the non-fictional book by Caco Barcelos about murders committed by Rondas Ostensivas Tobias de Aguiar in São Paulo, *Rota 66* is an example of a series with a mixed release. The first four episodes were available simultaneously on Globoplay (free-to-air TV channel Globo exhibited the first two), and the other four came out weekly.

The pilot, titled "Do Bem e do Mal," leaves three scenes in suspense in a triple cliffhanger: the police approach a family man walking back home, mistaking his umbrella for a gun. Meanwhile, the man's son, not far away, waits at the gate for his arrival. Lunga, one of the young people shot by the police and a potential witness, who is in critical condition in the hospital on life support, wakes up in bed. The doorbell rings, and a woman hands a child to the reporter. "If you forgot you have a child, I came here to remind you," she says. Subsequent episodes will develop those three situations, which make part of the series' bundle of stories. The three stories are intertwined in the pilot by

the parallel montage and, in the final minutes of the episode, by the song *Juízo Final*, by Nelson Cavaquinho and Élcio Soares, performed in the series by Arnaldo Antunes. The mix merges the sounds of the hospital equipment that keeps Lunga alive and the distorted sounds in Antunes' arrangement. In the scene in Caco Barcelos' apartment, the sound mixing also superimposes the doorbell ringing and the song. The lyrics speak of a period of darkness that will be overcome - "O sol há de brilhar mais uma vez/ A luz há de chegar aos corações/ Do mal será queimada a semente/ O amor será eterno novamente."¹ That combination sets the clash between good and evil in the series. The police who kill represent evil. Representing good are the victims and the journalist and his team, who intend to shed light on the crimes, investigate them, and expose them.

Finally, without intending to exhaust the variations, I give the example of episode four of season four of *Stranger Things*, released in 2022 in two volumes, which Netflix encouraged viewers to "marathon." In that episode, titled "Dear Billy," Max (Sadie Sink) is by Billy's grave to read a letter in honor of her brother when Vecna, the creature that destroys humans in search of immortality, possesses her. To bring her back from the trance and the inverted world where her mind is trapped, her friends need to play a song that brings back good memories for Max – in this case, *Running up That Hill*, sung by Kate Bush. As the music plays, Max's body rises from the ground, and her bones are about to break. In the inverted world, Max starts to have good memories and tries to escape Vecna, running with all the energy she has left towards the light where her friends are. At the crucial moment, the screen goes black like a classic cliffhanger. The viewer believes they will have to go to the next episode, but the scene resumes after three seconds: Max comes out of the trance safely, and the episode ends.

Therefore, we experience a false cliffhanger. A cut comes precisely at the height of the episode's tension, but the editing leaves none of the

1 "The sun will shine once again/ The light will reach the hearts/ The seed of evil will burn/ Love will be eternal again."

action for the next chapter. The interruption is, thus, an ironic nod to the viewer. It celebrates the suspense mechanisms of serial fiction while subverting them. Here, then, the series' creators suggest they will operate according to the codes of the serial form that viewers are familiar with when, in fact, they dispense with the gap since there is nothing to wait for, as one can immediately access the next episode.

Final considerations

Audiovisual series incorporated a narrative device from literature, the cliffhanger, which became a strategic signature of these shows (NUSSBAUM, 2012). Although the device functions to create unforeseen narrative situations, viewers structurally expect it, which gives streaming series the possibility to ironically announce and suppress it, as in the example of *Stranger Things*. Audiences follow the episode knowing a narrative interruption will arrive, but the variations of how each series constructs this moment often become a narrative effect they appreciate. The device is a type of referent that allows the viewer to go from statement to enunciation or from the story to how one tells it.

The cutting technique, which establishes suspense and governs the desire of the spectator yearning to learn the outcome of the action, has been, since the 19th-century industrial-paced literature, turned into a marketing strategy that extends entertainment and its forms of emotion and pleasure. One of its characteristics is precisely its openly manipulative character, which reveals the method that takes the viewer to the next episode. The cliffhanger performs, in the seriality that still maintains the interval of waiting, an abrupt disengagement with the world of entertainment while at the same time prolonging it in the daily life of the audience, who awaits the continuation of the narrative.

The way in which the cliffhanger exposes narrative artifices and implicates the series' viewers by encouraging them to fill in gaps and imagine the story's continuity indicates its popular matrix. Streaming series have traces of the narrator even though that figure does not express itself through a voice (as in an oral or literary tale). The cliffhanger, an

interruption that creates suspense, indicates a form of conduct whose ability to involve the spectator can activate social reverberation. In a culture marked by conversation on socio-digital networks, gaps stimulate the viewer's imagination and interpretation and the interaction between viewers in digital communities who speculate about possible narrative outcomes and develop parallel stories.

The forms of distribution and release of contemporary series, which generate a compact audience, have altered or even revoked the waiting time that has characterized seriality, at least since the 19th-century serials. However, as discussed above, they do not abolish the cliffhanger. The popular narrative technique serves the complexity of contemporary series by providing, through interruptions and digressions, the transit between the central narrative axis and adjacent stories. Streaming shows renew the device in dialogue with the tradition of serial fiction. As we have seen, contemporary series explore other forms of prolongation and wait and demonstrate the virtues and pleasures of postponing the narrative even under the immediacy of life.

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