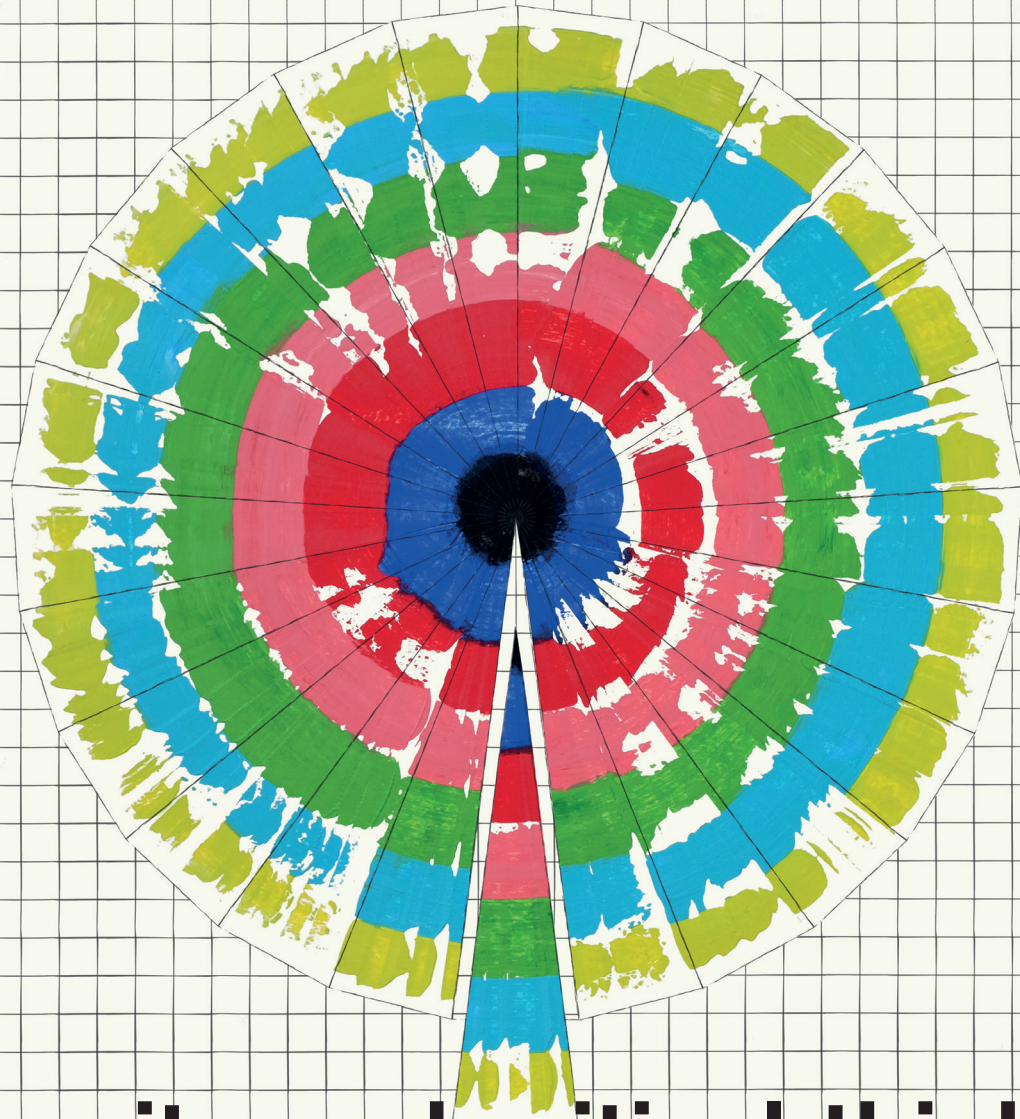


QUADERNS DEL CAC **25**^{years}



**University and critical thinking:
training in communication** © Jesús Galdón, 2023



Consell
de l'Audiovisual
de Catalunya

issue **49**

2023

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Cover illustration design to commemorate the 25th anniversary of *Quaderns del CAC*:

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Quaderns del CAC is a scientific communication journal aimed at the audiovisual sector and published by the Catalan Audiovisual Council. The journal seeks to be a platform for approaching the field of audiovisual communication and culture from different disciplinary perspectives, with a particular focus on European and international research. It aims to contribute to the critical analysis and debate on culture and audiovisuals in the contemporary world.

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Quaderns del CAC is an annual journal published every October entirely in Catalan, Spanish and English. The journal undertakes the correction and translation of the texts in the three languages. There are no article submission or processing charges to submit or publish in this journal.

The articles in the journal are original and unpublished texts that have passed a double-blind peer review process, after an initial assessment of quality and suitability by the Editorial Board. The publication undertakes to inform the authors of the positive or negative result of the evaluation of the articles within a period of one and a half months after the start of the double-blind peer review process.

Quaderns del CAC is in the databases and indexes: [RACO](https://www.raco.cat/), [Dialnet](https://dialnet.unirioja.es/) i [Dialnet Métricas](https://dialnet.metricas.com/), [Latindex](https://www.latindex.com/) (directory), [MIAR](https://www.miar.com/), [Carhus+2018](https://www.carhus.com/), [CCUC](https://www.ccuc.cat/), [REBIUN](https://www.rebiun.com/) and [Dulcinea](https://www.dulcinea.com/).

Historical periodicity: four-monthly (1998-2007), six-monthly (2008-2012) and, since 2013, annual. The journal was published on paper in Catalan from issue 1 (1998) to issue 35 (2010)

The style guidelines for submitting [articles](#) and [book reviews](#) can be consulted online. Citations and references must follow the [APA 7.0 criteria](https://www.apa.org/pubs/authors).

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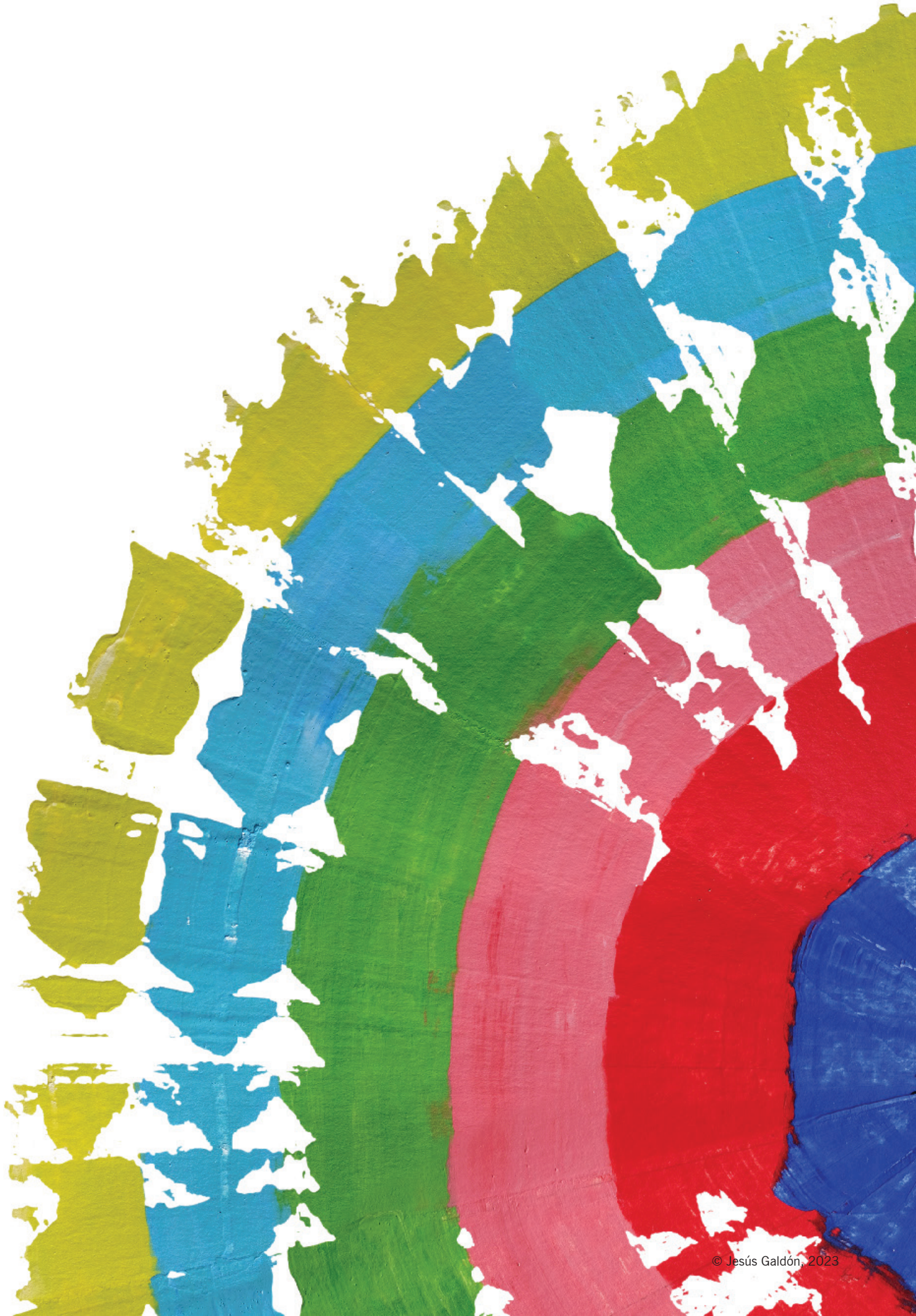
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Legal Deposit: B.21287-2011 (English electronic version)
ISSN (paper): 1138-9761 / ISSN (online): 2014-2242
<https://www.cac.cat/acords-recerca/revista-quaderns-del-cac>
Mail: quadernsdelcac@gencat.cat

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Dialogue, reflection, responsibility

When *Quaderns del CAC* was founded in 1989, the then-president of the Catalan Audiovisual Council, Lluís de Carreras, welcomed the journal in this same space with a text entitled precisely ‘dialogue, reflection, responsibility’.

I wanted to borrow this title for the editorial to this anniversary issue, because twenty-five years later, these words continue to summarise the spirit and foundations of Quaderns’ mission and commitment more powerfully than ever.

As the regulatory body that guarantees the audiovisual regulations and contents for radio and television in Catalonia, the CAC would be unable to do its job without engaging in constant, fluid dialogue with all the companies, organisations, media, professionals and individuals involved.

Within this dialogue, *Quaderns del CAC* continues to contribute to a calm reflection that grapples with the social challenges posed by the uncertain new media scene.

And it does this with responsibility. With the responsibility to strengthen the journal of the Catalan Audiovisual Council as a scholarly publication with a public service mission. With the responsibility to strengthen it as a tool for spreading Catalan-language research in the international arena. And with the responsibility to consolidate it as a lever to propel scholarly research in communication at universities both at home and abroad, especially bearing in mind the new generations of researchers who know better than anyone how to look at the present with an eye towards the future. Over these twenty-five years, the journal has evolved and managed to keep apace with the breakneck transformation that audiovisuals and the world around them have experienced. More than 575 authors have published their research articles in our journal, making an active contribution to fostering critical analysis and debate on audiovisuals. The research has come from not only universities but also research centres, observatories and other organisations, from Catalonia and abroad, with contributions from more than 35 countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas.

Publishing a scholarly journal wholly in three languages—Catalan, Spanish and English—adds complexity to the already complex process of publishing a scholarly journal of this sort. Yet this has not caused us to lower the bar. Year after year, we have improved and added more features in order to adapt to the quality standards of the best scholarly journals.

In recent times, we have also paid off a debt. In all its twenty-five years, *Quaderns del CAC* had never had a female director. With the appointment of Dr Amparo Huertas and Dr Sara Suárez as the co-directors, whose first issue is this one, we wanted to not only rectify this historical shortcoming but also bring together two generations, two vantage points, two ways of seeing and understanding the world, thus multiplying the power entailed in joining sensibilities at this time of such crucial global changes and transformations in the industry.

The existence of a journal like *Quaderns del CAC*, promoted by a public institution, is unquestionably an act of valour, but more importantly a show of commitment to citizens.

On this anniversary, we at CAC are vowing to carry on like this, convinced that working for solid scholarly research is synonymous with progress. This is the only path forward to ensure that the new knowledge society reflects a plural, inclusive, egalitarian society like the one we want.

Rosa Maria Molló

Editor

Vice-president of the Catalan Audiovisual Council

Introduction

Issue 49 of *Quaderns del CAC* is being launched to be a venue to reflect on the university education of future communication professionals within a context of constant change, innovation and reformulation.

We are aware that university organigrams guarantee that this debate happens and that university teaching and research staff is always aware of social, economic, political, technological and business transformations. Within this context, universities are forced not only to update contents and improve the planning of classroom participatory activities but also to know firsthand how these changes are affecting students' activities and routines, which includes making an effort to understand the technology that students use, for example. Bearing in mind this constant effort on the part of the university community, and dovetailing with the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of *Quaderns del CAC*, we believe this is a good time to devote an issue to sharing ideas, experiences and reflections outside of administrative environments, which are often conditioned by criteria and requirements that do not always take the areas of the social sciences and humanities into account, not to mention the everyday pressures that get in the way of the deliberateness that this type of reflection requires.

'**University and critical thinking: training in communication**' was the title of the invitation for authors to contribute to this issue. A few days before our working meetings to decide on the theme of the monographic section of this issue, UNESCO published the book *Reimagining our Futures Together: A New Social Contract for Education* (2021), and at the launch, it posed questions directly related to the university's ability to generate critical thinking, like What type of knowledge is being produced? How is it being generated? Where does it come from? How is it distributed? We at Quaderns del CAC believe that the texts in this issue clearly contribute to this essential debate. In this sense, we believe we have risen to the challenge proposed: to contribute to the debate on the role of universities in educating communication professionals of the present and future and, in a broader sense, to the debate on the mission of higher education in educating and transmitting valuable knowledge for the exercise of critical citizenship. The texts in this issue also contain relevant reflections on the place occupied by the university in today's social, economic and political context, another question of vital importance.

The **monographic section** contains five articles, all featuring an overview of the university degrees as a whole, while each also examines a specific topic.

José Luis Terrón Blanco opens the monographic section with the article 'Mercantile logic: The current underpinning of university studies. A reflection on the Bachelor's in Journalism'. Terrón Blanco has been an Associate Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and now, from a distance (after retiring), he has written a critical view that goes beyond anecdotes and personal perceptions. His account, the outcome of a longstanding dialogue with the specialised literature and his interest—and constant effort—in understanding university dynamics, explains how the neoliberal discourse promoted by the World Bank since the late twentieth century is affecting the way universities operate. According to Terrón Blanco, 'both teaching and research are imbued with the logics of competition, profitability and accountability'.

Lydia Sánchez and **Jorge Franganillo**, Associate Professor and Lecturer at the Universitat de Barcelona, respectively argue that critical thinking is a key tool for both working as a communication professional (it enables one to effectively analyse and weigh evidence, arguments and opinions) and addressing such dangerous phenomena as disinformation and the manipulation of news in the exercise of citizenship. In their text, 'Audiovisual Communication and critical thinking: Challenges for university education', they assert that higher education should be considered a public asset and a human right, given their further concern about universities being in danger of subjugation to market imperatives or political interests.

The third article in the monograph, written by **Marta Civil i Serra**, **Marta Rial Pan** and **Teresa Santos Prados**, is entitled 'The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). Fifty years of public service supporting teaching and research (1972-2022)'. The authors, who are very familiar with the way this library works given that they are on its team, provide a comprehensive overview of this space, which they define as a 'public facility open to society'. Reading this document reveals not only its history but also its general and special collections, like the documents and materials related to contemporary politics in Catalonia and Spain, which can be consulted at the Documentation Centre on Communication (CEDOC).

Professor **María del Carmen García Galera** and Associate Professors **Beatriz Catalina García** and **Manuel Martínez Nicolás** from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos have contributed the text entitled 'Digitalisation, labour market and training. Opportunities and vulnerabilities of Communication graduates'. This article provides two takes on this topic. First, it explores the use of digital platforms to find jobs and concludes that personal contacts (the traditional method) are still the main way of finding one. Secondly, they reflect on the digital competences needed in the communication sector. Specifically, the text questions whether university education is adequately providing students with these competences. The combination does not seem easy, and this leads us to consider the importance of the university's role in lifelong learning for all professionals.

The **monographic section** closes with an article that reflects on the importance of getting students involved in the dissemination of scholarship through the development of final projects at the end of bachelor's degrees. Associate Professor **Patricia Lázaro Pernias** and Serra Húnter Fellow **Ileana Zeler**, both at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, tell about their teaching innovation project in their article 'YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the final project: The case of the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona'. The document does not conceal the difficulties entailed in undertaking this type of project, not only in terms of the challenge of stimulating a proactive attitude among students but also the concern of always guaranteeing that quality knowledge is being disseminated.

The Miscellany section contains two articles, and even though the topics in this section are open, both of them are situated in the field of gender studies, which reveals the unstoppable upswing in this thematic area.

'Homonormativity or marginality: The double pattern in LGTBIQ+ characters in TV series', by **Juan-José Sánchez-Soriano**, Lecturer at the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, reflects on the narrative patterns used to construct LGTBIQ+ characters in TV fiction. Sánchez Soriano analyses the physical, social and psychological dimensions of a random representative sample from Western TV series and finds that historical, stereotypical and distorted patterns that reflect intolerant societies persist.

Secondly, in the article 'The invisibility of women's sport in Catalan public television news in March 2023', **Isaac Pecino Peláez**, graduate of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and **Lorena Gómez Puertas**, Lecturer at the same university, analyse the presence of women's sport on the TV news broadcast in primetime on Televisió de Catalunya's TV3 channel. In recent years, the social recognition of women's sport has risen, and therefore studies like this one can serve as a starting point to check whether this improvement in their social standing is in any way reflected in media content. This study finds that for now, women's sports does not account for even 15% of the sports news on the programmes analysed.

To conclude this introduction, we would like to highlight the fact that this issue contains reflections and studies by people at very different points in their academic careers, a career that entails a long road with phases characterised by specific requirements and challenges, all of which require extraordinary dedication. Hence, the importance of this diverse range of voices.

Amparo Huertas Bailén & Sara Suárez Gonzalo
Directors

The logic of mercantilism, the current basis of university studies. A reflection on the Bachelor's Degree in Journalism

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Paper received on 29 June 2023 and accepted on 29 September 2023

How to cite:

Terrón Blanco, J.L. (2023). The logic of mercantilism, the current basis of university studies. A reflection on the Bachelor's Degree in Journalism. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 7-14. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420925>

Abstract

We set out to show how the neoliberal discourse of the World Bank achieved, since the end of the last century, that the operation and purposes of universities were guided to a great extent by the logic of the market. Universities internalized its discourse, its instruments and its utilitarian reason. Both teaching and research have been traversed by the logic of competition, profitability and accounting. The curricula have been reduced and fragmented, and the fundamental is dissolved in the novelty. At the same time, the how is more deprived than the what. These tendencies increase in professional degrees, as is the case of journalism, which can also easily fall into technocentrism.

Keywords

University, teaching, journalism, neoliberalism, market, subjectivities, research.

Resum

Ens plantegem mostrar com el discurs neoliberal impulsat pel Banc Mundial des de finals del segle passat va aconseguir que el funcionament i les finalitats de les universitats es guessin en gran manera per la lògica del mercat. Les universitats en van interioritzar el discurs, els instruments i la raó utilitarista. Tant la docència com la recerca han estat travessades per les lògiques de la competència, de la rendibilitat i la seva comptabilitat. Els plans d'estudis s'han reduït i fragmentat, i el que és fonamental es dissol en el que és nou. Al mateix temps, a la docència hi preval el com, per damunt del què. Aquestes tendències són visibles especialment en els graus professionalistes, com és el cas de Periodisme, que, a més, pot caure amb facilitat en el tecnocentrisme.

Paraules clau

Universitat, docència, periodisme, neoliberalisme, mercat, subjectivitats, recerca.

1. Introduction

With this writing I wish to explain, with a certain calm and distance, the processes and foundations of teaching in the current university, focusing on journalism studies. As Remedios Zafra wrote (2022: 36-37), "there can be no reflection without 'time to reflect'". And adds: "It is worth noting then that the preconceived ideas on which algorithmic logic usually relies will always be the ones that best tolerate the hyperproductive and fast world of things today, because they were already in us, and they barely require our attention or further study". We are dealing here with a topic crossed by subjectivities, one of the pillars that supports how, why and for what of teaching. Although these are not usually taken into account—perhaps because they seem unscholarly—, in these pages their mention is inevitable and, furthermore, even though I can now write from a distance, they continue to affect the author of these

lines. Your experiences always run through you and you end up drawing upon it.

As the reader may have already noticed, this article is not the result of any empirical work, it is an essay that is based on a certain bibliographic review. The reflections that we will present are based mainly on previous research and analysis, which since the end of the 20th century had been warning us of the neoliberal drift of our universities and the consequences that this would end up having on their functioning (now called *governance*), on research, on teaching, amongst faculty and amongst students (who even then began to call themselves users).

In this article we maintain that this assumption of neoliberal principles by universities, and we think, above all, of public ones, since private ones are already born under that umbrella, materialises in the fact that the rules that govern the market condition the university itself and, therefore, what the university

does: teach, research, disseminate and transfer. It is then when productive logic, productivism and utilitarianism appear as the aim of university activity. Teaching, let's not fool ourselves, is also influenced by productivism. Study plans are nothing more than the embodiment of this logic and, for that reason, they must be seen as a mediation, just like the statutes of universities, evaluation agencies, university rankings or the ecosystem of scientific publications.

Now, in addition to approaching subjectivities, we will also focus on how journalism is now thought of and, especially, its relationship with technology. In addition, we will dedicate a space to the corporate and bureaucratic logics that, by determining a way of focusing the study plans, prevent them from being any other way. It is as if subjectivities, coercion, accommodation and productive logic make it impossible for us to think of other options.

2. Neoliberalism reaches the university, the influence of the World Bank

It is known that the word was at the origin, in the case at hand the words of the World Bank experts.¹ Starting in the seventies of the last century, a discourse began to gain strength that defended that both health and education—two of the pillars of the so-called *welfare state*—should be more effective and efficient. And, to make that possible, they told us how to apply the effectiveness and efficiency of private companies, governed by market values. According to the World Bank, it was about overcoming or subverting the ineffectiveness of public management, both formal and organisational aspects and in relation to the purposes.

Critical voices emerged from those who detected the risk that all of this would lead to the privatisation of health and education. But, from our point of view, what was not so correctly perceived is the way in which these principles would end up permeating the management and purpose of said public services. In reality, it was not necessary to privatise for the public system to behave like the private one: the ideological component of the World Bank's discourse had its effect. This is what happened in the so-called tertiary sector of education, the university, of which the public university would be a subsector.

As Gómez and Saxe (2010) tell us, for the World Bank, the university is a public company that must operate in the market, whether national or global. But legal harmonisation is required for this. Gómez and Saxe (2010: 2) they state that the World Bank “has developed strategies to promote both the rise of the private university and the privatisation of the public university”, and they remind us that this approach is economic and techno-bureaucratising (instrumental rationality). The World Bank recommendations advocate that “the duration and content of the curricula must be in accordance with market opportunities and globalisation” (Gómez and Saxe, 2010: 10) and this, together with the policies of “innovation and curricular

flexibility” (Gómez and Saxe, 2010: 10), has led to the quarterisation of courses in most universities and the reduction of the duration of degrees and postgraduate degrees.

Moreover, the World Bank, by talking about basic competences for the first university cycle (degrees) and through the need for ‘lifelong learning’, extends the offer of specialisation studies (masters or own degrees) ‘for life’. The educational market, far from contracting, no longer has an end. For their part, universities have believed they have found funding in this market that they are always short of, creating an *educational bubble* with an uncertain future. The mega offer becomes, in many cases, an extreme specialisation, although passing fads can also be observed in the journalistic ecosystem, whether as a result of a technological innovation, an ideological positioning that gains strength or a new business proposition. This training offer is considered strategic by universities, who seem to experience crises as temporary or passing moments. And, from the perspective of the teaching teams involved, each proposal is defended as something essential and they consider it outside of commercial interests.

This way of understanding the university managed to gain a foothold globally and in just a few years. As an example, the words of Betancourt (2004: 7), who points out that the “Latin America's university panorama at the beginning of the 21st century would be difficult to recognise for an observer from just twenty years ago” and adds: “I would note that institutions are evaluated by governments, and frequently receive additional resources according to their adaptation to politically established criteria and their results. You would probably notice that your teachers receive disparate and variable remunerations, even when their academic backgrounds are similar, and that they guide their activities according to an externally set menu of priorities. At the same time, I would notice the presence of a multiplicity of new state agencies destined to direct and regulate the sector”. Or, as Broncano (2023: § 10) states, “the liberalisation of higher education in the agreements of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (within the World Trade Organization) (...) implied global regulation to homogenise the university systems, which went from training or education to educational services”. Words count and Broncano emphasises: “In Europe, the Bologna system of homogenisation was one of the stages of that liberalisation”.²

In short, the market has ended up dictating to the university through interposed organisations and it, permeated by neoliberal ideology, has defined what its purpose is, what is useful and what processes lead to that necessary usefulness (what studies, what study plans). This drift causes some people to abandon it, as is the case of Jordi Llovet, who left the University of Barcelona and did so by publishing a bold, wise and responsive book: *Adeu a la Universitat: L'eclipsi de les humanitats* (2011).

Now, what was coming to the university was already being experienced in other educational stages, as Pérez Gómez explains in *La cultura escolar en la sociedad neoliberal* (1998), a work published numerous times, although unknown to the

vast majority of university planners. Generally, the university has thought and thinks that it is a unit in itself and that it has little to do (complaints aside) with basic and secondary education. In our view, it is wrong.

3. The direct effects of neoliberalism in the university

Borja Hermoso (2023: § 6) tells us that, in the acceptance of the honorary doctorate from the Pontifical University of Comillas, Nuccio Ordine, recently deceased, “delivered a vibrant pamphlet in defence of true education (SIC) (...)”. Hermoso (2023) highlights some phrases from his speech: “the entire educational chain has been placed at the service of so-called economic growth, the demands of the market and companies”; “young people are made to believe that it is necessary to study to learn a trade and that success is measured by the bank account”; “teachers cannot be managers or business promoters”; “Schools and universities cannot be companies that sell diplomas. Students cannot be customers”. Going against the current, Nuncio Ordine came to enumerate the effects of neoliberalism on the university. “It was not what is commonly known as a kind and diplomatic intervention” (Hermoso, 2023: § 6)

Irene Lanzas (2021: § 3), in an informative article whose title is eloquent: *La idea de la universidad de Wendy Brown. Una crítica a la racionalidad neoliberal*, she begins her writing by quoting the American philosopher and political scientist: “I join Michel Foucault and others in a conception of neoliberalism as an order of normative reason that, when in ascendancy, takes the form of a governing rationality that extends a specific formulation of values, practices and measurements of the economy to each dimension of the life”. But, when citing Foucault, we cannot help but remember that any university, because it is one, is a normative reason. Now, as Wendy Brown points out, neoliberalism transforms the human being into *homo economicus*, at the same time “that the human being takes the form of human capital to favour its competitiveness and its value is appreciated as a figure of exchange” (Lanzas, 2021: § 5). On the other hand, “your life decisions have to do with improving the future value of yourself, whether through education, training or leisure” (Lanzas, 2021: § 9). And, precisely, although the author refers to a whole, those words tell us about the actions and feelings of the university professor and researcher and their students.

Lanzas (2021: § 11), following Wendy Brown, reminds us that there are four effects of neoliberalism in higher education: “the notion of public goods disappears (...), democracy itself is transformed, requiring human capital with technical skills and not educated participants in public life, (...) subjects are configured as self-investment human capital (...) and knowledge and thought are valued almost exclusively by their contribution to capital improvement.” For the thinker, neoliberalism has brought with it the deterioration of humanist education, but it does not do so by reclaiming the battered humanities but rather

what it aims to do, above all, is to show us that it has put an end to the way in which the university was conceived: “The university is rebuilt following the demands of the market and promoting technical skills” (Lanzas, 2021: § 11). We are not only talking, then, about usefulness (of its value or putting it into value), but we are referring to values that have little or nothing to do with what democratic citizenship expects and allows for autonomous thinking. We are told that without journalism there can be no democracy, but what kinds of journalists are we training in this framework?

University is fast-paced and, apparently, slowing down is understood and experienced as a ‘waste of time’. It’s about producing more in less time. And this happens both in teaching and in research. That is, more graduates (even failures and drop-outs are considered the exclusive responsibility of the teacher), more ‘papers’ (scientific articles) and more transfer (which is sometimes confused with the achievement of patents and the offer of own degrees). We have gone from a university that lived outside of time to a university that lacks time: to settle, to reflect, to dialogue. Zafra (2022: 34) asks “why are these logics of bureaucratisation enemies of culture and knowledge?” and she answers herself: “because they appropriate the old times of life that are not work and swallow up the possibility of creating and researching from the availability of ‘time’ and ‘concentration’, a valuable but scarce good, leading to people’s self-exploitation”.

Furthermore, the more the degrees are devalued in the market, we refer to the loss of value of the degree as proof of knowledge, since, if it is measured, it is by the economic cost of obtaining it, the more the offer of double degrees increase or the range of master’s degrees and degrees grows. In parallel, there is an increase in drop-outs from university studies, which generates economic concern.

3.1 Management language: new administrative and organisational expressions

For Peters Roberts (2017: § 4) “neoliberal ideas found administrative and organisational expression through philosophy and managerialism” and made the language of performance prevail, which implies that everything has to be measured and turns teachers into “products” and students in “results”. And all too often on their own initiative.

Faced with this ideology, based on the fact that knowledge is equal to merchandise, Roberts (2017) vindicates Paulo Freire, who maintained that education can never be neutral, no matter how much the managerialist technobureaucracy denies it and presents its proposal as the only reasonable thing: “In teaching, we cannot help but favour some ways of understanding human beings and the world, some cultural practices, some ways of social life, over others” (Roberts, 2017: § 14)

As can be expected, this management language entails practices that give more importance to the functioning of the organisation than to its purposes. This leads, for example, to the activity of a faculty depending on its operating costs and,

for this reason, the option of attending at night has practically disappeared.

And, on the other hand, the current educational system creates an overwhelming bureaucracy (of mistrust), both in time and effort dedicated. It is not about accountability, but rather tangled forms of standards to be met have to be filled out under the pretext of their usefulness for the organisation, the teachers and the students when, in reality, they are tools for evaluating the teacher's work. or from the centre. Here, we also include the development of teaching guides, which would be just as useful, but more readable, if the teacher could get rid of technicalities and pedagogical idiolect. And, if we think about research (as you know, competitive), the issue is even more complex. In this case, the bases of the calls change from edition and edition, or, even, within the framework of the same call there may be rectifications in response to ambiguous paragraphs, and the calendars and deadlines are short and may coincide with periods of non-working days.

In short, much of the time that should be dedicated to research or teaching is used to justify them. These tools end up being a mere expedient to fulfil, so that their purpose, normally based on the search for quality teaching and research, is nullified. How does the teacher respond to this situation? With anger and resignation. The important thing is to deliver it within the assigned period and, above all, ensure that the application does not detect any errors in any box and allows you to save the document to be sent.

It must be taken into account that, in this framework, teachers do not have the possibility of having support personnel. The university invests centrally in the administrative system that requires this bureaucratisation, since that is where the data that determines the university's location in the sector rankings is produced.

3.2 Research, teaching and subjectivities

We return here to talk about research and teaching, but we do so from a less common perspective, one that takes subjectivities into account. We will start with the investigation. We share with Gómez, Bravo and Jódar (2015: 1738) that "research activity is conceived as a continuous process of self-valuation that requires planning and application of business principles: production, investment, cost calculation. (...) Economics becomes a personal discipline". Gómez, Bravo and Jódar (2015: 1738) add: "Research practice is transformed into an investment in the curriculum itself, which brings the researcher subjective and/or material benefits while hindering processes of collective thinking and reflection, which, when they do occur, run the risk of being capitalised by the logic of individual authorship".

Like Zafra (2022), Gómez, Bravo and Jódar (2015: 1739) make us see that, in this case, "evaluative practices allow individuals to govern themselves under the pressure of competition". Which means, de facto, assuming individualism as the aim and only sharing what strategically benefits the personal curriculum. Thus, science, more than a purpose, is

the procedure to achieve a work goal, only that "the production of knowledge is valued according to an unattainable horizon that involves hyperactivity and constant efforts, none of them completely satisfactory or definitive, but which, however, it forces us to always be in motion, permanently on course and to demonstrate the necessary flexibility to digest increasing amounts of demands" (Gómez, Bravo and Jódar, 2015: 1739).

The same thing happens with the teaching task: teaching does not only mean preparing content. You also have to justify what and how it is done, configure entertaining classes, 'dictate' them, encourage the prevailing morality (remember, for example, the imperative of entrepreneurs), be aware of new technologies (which, in the case of journalism, goes beyond teaching technology and includes all the news that has to do with professional practice), plan the calendar of activities based on the resources and spaces available, tutor internships and final degree projects³ attend teacher training courses, apply new pedagogical methods and respond quickly to the requirements made by students through the virtual campus or email. Outside of this list, there is only the task of evaluating, but, given the limited time remaining, only the test exam is possible, the evaluation of which is also automated. These exams with lists of closed questions are a medium-term investment: initially formulating the questions takes time, but once a pool of questions has been accumulated, it only has to be updated. In addition, this not only frees up correction time, but also from claims for the grades obtained.

Certainly, how the evaluation tasks are carried out would allow a specific article to be written. Here, we will only add that in supervised projects (we are thinking above all of final degree project, but also of master thesis) the teacher directly involved in the process participates in the evaluation. And, of course, we cannot forget that the teaching teams are also evaluated by the students, although, above the results, sometimes more importance is given to the percentages of participation in this type of surveys, since a low index presupposes a bad evaluation (implicit) for the teacher.

4. From subjectivities, an evaluation of teaching and research activities

We have been told, and we continue to be reminded often, that the main function of a university professor is to transmit knowledge to students. However, in practice, we know that research is more profitable for the personal resume and, therefore, for the prestige of professors and universities. We will now stop at some derivatives of what we have just written.

First, since research is more productive for professional development, it stands to reason that teachers would dedicate more effort to it. In many cases, the professor, in addition to arriving exhausted to the classroom, to teaching, assumes this task as a 'sine qua non' to be able to work at the university. It is therefore logical to think that the quality of teaching could

be reduced or called into question. Secondly, it is known that good performance in the field of research entails teaching fewer classes, a kind of reward that makes some people think that a professor with a lot of teaching 'load' is presumably a bad researcher. Thirdly, there is the paradox that those who dedicate the least time to teaching have the most capacity to decide about it, since to advance professionally one cannot stop researching and that promotion can lead to decision-making positions. And, fourthly, research has gone from specialisation to hyper-specialisation, which, at least in social sciences, is not good news. Hyper-specialised knowledge leads to precisely the opposite of what is required in most teaching-learning processes. In social phenomena, the factors involved are multiple.

The neoliberal response to the above has been manifesting for years in the university, but now it is more evident through this phenomenon: there are those who only dedicate themselves to teaching, those who only research, and even those who only manage (and professionals who only manage, under the double pretext of specialisation and having a non-unionist perspective - apparently they are not corporatist). An example of corporatism in which the interests of managers, teachers and students come together is the possibility that each subject only occupies one day of the weekly planning, even if this implies theoretical classes of up to 3 hours in duration.

4.1. Subjective proletarianisation

To think about everything raised here, we cannot forget proletarianisation in the university, which Jordi Llovet (2012) already talked about years ago. Unfortunately, apparently, this is already one of the foundations of these institutions, increasingly based on labour exploitation, that is, on excessive work, poorly paid and without a future. How can teaching not suffer?

We must also add that, thinking about both teaching and research, universities develop moral codes that act as legitimising or ethical discourses.

“our inwardness is shaped by legitimising or ethical discourses (excellence, entrepreneurship, employability, innovation); practices (evaluation, accountability, strategic planning); objectives (rankings, reports, reports); patterns of judgement (continuous and unlimited optimisation of our performance); modes of relationship with oneself (self-regulation, self-control); ideals (self-realisation) and legislative changes. Subjectivation is a process of unification, of relative stabilisation of all these heterogeneous elements”.

(Gómez, Bravo and Jódar, 2015: 1744).

We are talking, therefore, about a stressful and highly vulnerable work situation in which it is easy to feel frustration and helplessness, if not a feeling of failure. It is not in vain that the university is one of the workplaces where the mental health of its workers is the worst. Zafra (2022: 37) clarifies: “For capitalism it is easy to make this ‘enthusiasm’ profitable in a framework of immaterial production, maintaining the rhythms of the productive machinery and the speed and competitive

anxiety. It is like this under the enthusiastic lure of symbolic capital, vanity and the anticipation that, as long as it is born from a vocation, “it will be done anyway”.

5. Bologna Plan and teaching innovation

After the Bologna Plan was firmly defended by the institutions, with a majority of student protest, its development is periodically questioned. The thesis that has been repeated is simple, but not simplistic: the proposal is good, but its application has failed, largely due to poor funding and a reactive, not to say selfish, attitude on the part of many professors. Although it is true that there have been criticisms that have gone beyond the usual arguments, such as that of Pello Salaburu (2014: § 16), who maintains that “the *previous fatigue*, the *lack of information* and, above all, the *bureaucratic pressure* from ANECA have contributed in a special way to the fact that Spanish university students have not felt special sympathy for something as necessary in Europe as the reforms that Bologna demands.”

Let's take it in steps. It is unquestionable that the Spanish public university is poorly financed, but it was already so at the time of the application of the so-called Bologna Plan, therefore, our leaders knew from the beginning that said plan required money that did not exist, so they erred on the side of negligence if not also hypocrisy. Regarding the words of Pello Salaburu (2014), which we share, these deserve certain comments: when he talks about lack of information (to teachers) we think that he should excess of propaganda; the bureaucratic pressure of the ANECA (undeniable) is inherent, as we have been writing, to the commercialisation of university studies, since these require agencies that evaluate, mediate and guide teaching and research, which, in the end, curtail the university autonomy; finally, we do not deny the previous fatigue of the teachers, but, then, we ask ourselves how we should qualify what we are experiencing now with the application and development of Bologna.

On the other hand, when talking about the application of Bologna, the increase in the cost of studies is not usually taken into account; Furthermore, given the organisation of teaching, which requires attending class regularly to monitor continuous evaluation, it is not easy to combine studies and work. Nor is the effect it has had on the way of working in classrooms usually underlined. For example, greater fragmentation of knowledge and reduction of content; greater concern for how, with a high presence of technology in the classroom, than for content; high teacher-student ratio; decrease in the demands to pass a subject or infantilisation of the campuses, by overprotecting and not treating students as autonomous adults responsible for their actions.

All of this clearly has negative consequences on the construction of critical thinking, which is impossible. The content of classes is usually subject to fashion, so reflection is impossible. The teacher's objective is for students to develop skills as if they did

not require knowledge: detecting social problems that require solutions is something more complex than working in a group or organising time. You may think that this is where the university was already heading before the Bologna Plan, but this is only a presumption and, on the other hand, the application of the Bologna Plan is a reality.

From a distance, the Bologna Plan can be seen as the instrument that was needed to commercialise the university, although this idea has not taken root. It is still paradoxical that an institution that prejudices itself as the guarantor of the critical spirit is so uncritical of its deep functioning. Going beyond subjectivities, we should delve into the objective reasons that have led to this situation. And, although this objective cannot be developed in this article, we do want to highlight here that it is a mistake to interpret criticism of the Bologna Plan as a direct rejection for fear of facing changes.

Marina Garcés (2022: 11), when dealing with the question of alternative teachings, tells us: “We already know that capitalism recovers everything and turns it into a commodity. The problem is one of confusion. Nowadays the truth is fought with confusion”. And he emphasises: “The elements of this strategy of confusion are many, but they are specified, I believe, between three axes of issues: management models, the relationship between learning and knowledge and the meaning of pedagogical change” (Garcés, 2022: 12).

The author also points to the problem of the prevalence of how over what: “The current pedagogical shift promotes an idea of learning that is empty of content. These have ceased to matter because, being available in real time through technology, the only important thing is to learn to move agilely and with judgement in that new environment. It is a fallacious idea that contrasts procedures (how) with content (what), as if they could be separated, and even more serious, as if we could learn without knowing anything. It is obvious: learning is learning *something* and only by knowing *something* can we learn more” (Garcés, 2022: 14). It is a pedagogical shift that focuses on the emotional and procedural where teaching innovation “becomes an end in itself, without considering the question of why and, above all, for whom. Pedagogical renewal stops being a social practice and becomes a commercial and mercantile activity” (Marina Garcés, 2022: 14).

For Jaume Carbonell (cited by Pérez Rueda, 2022: 25-26), the so-called pedagogical innovation “is a polysemic concept that lends itself to multiple readings depending on who uses it, in what context it takes place and to what purposes it serves”. According to Carbonell, “innovation is frequently associated with the development or adaptation of the capitalist system; a novelty or seasonal product; to modernity and educational updating; to cosmetic changes or simple partial improvements”. And it ends up linking with what we maintained paragraphs ago, the “how we do it” ends up prevailing over the meaning, the “why”. There is no doubt that this way of understanding teaching innovation is at the service of a conception of a certain university model.

6. The journalism studies market

Nuncio Ordine states that “when this idea of useful knowledge arises, of professionalising the school, of looking only at the market, it means that we have totally lost the idea of the importance of knowledge as an experience in itself: studying to be better” (Loreana, 2023: § 8). We think that this point of view does not apply either to the vast majority of students who choose a degree or to the majority of tertiary academic offerings. In fact, statements of this nature, if not contextualised and carefully developed, can exude classism. Now, as we have been writing, when commercial utilitarianism governs the meaning of studies, they become at the service of the purpose (and logic) of the market, which, by the way, is anything but democratic.

In general terms, we must not forget that studying at university is usually understood as a ‘value’ in which you invest to obtain a return: getting a better-paid type of job with greater social prestige. In a society like Spain, in which the discredit of so-called ‘vocational training’ is more than notable, this ‘university utilitarianism’ grows in two ways: with a disproportionate increase in university students and with the constant incorporation into the university offer of professional studies that claim to be part of the university offering.

When we look at degrees such as journalism, we see that this is conceived as the training requirement for a profession. Therefore, there is no doubt that its useful meaning easily changes into utilitarianism, and defines the good professional that the market needs at all times. From what has been written, it is easy to deduce that it is very difficult for a study plan to counteract, or even diminish, those objective and subjective forces that we have been talking about.

At the same time, we find a hyper-supply of journalism degrees: there is still a great demand and, currently, they are cheaper to organise (due to the reduction in the price of technology and the parallel increase in domestic technology). In other words, they seem increasingly profitable for universities in a double sense: they provide income and silence complaints about lack of places. In this way, the logic of obtaining income prevails over the logic of the demand for jobs, with the result already known for decades: there is no job for so many graduates. And this reality is so palpable that it causes many students to abandon their studies or continue in them disillusioned and, therefore, demotivated.

But, even seeing that the most reasonable thing would be to reduce the offer of degrees and places, there would be other forces that would prevent it, as a result of the dynamics of university departments, which are also producers of ‘goods’, and that operate in continuous competition with other departments. These assets are the teachers: once the staff is stabilised, or in the process of being stabilised, it is impossible to make changes that imply its reduction. In fact, this is also a contributing factor to the increase of the catalogue of increasingly specialised studies in order to achieve a distinctive character to counteract the lack

of autonomy that universities have to develop distinguishable study plans.

In the field of journalism, this breakdown into degrees with which universities seek to differentiate themselves helps to increasingly blur the line between journalism and content. There is no doubt that journalism is content, but it is also undeniable that not all content, the majority, is journalism. And we are supposedly in a journalism degree, aren't we? But we must also warn that students come to the classroom with very different references from those of years ago and the ways of doing journalism often seem outdated or knowledge that they can do without to find a job.

On this question, Laurent Beccaria and Patrick de Saint-Exupéry (2020: § 15) indicate: "In each season, miraculous solutions emerge that are never the same and that is when disappointments follow disappointments. Since, invariably, another question arises: adapt to what?" And they add: "A journalist who spends his time rewriting press releases deserves to be replaced by a computer, estimates the founder of *Journalistic*". The recent closure of *BuzzFeed*'s journalism division and *Vice*'s bankruptcy filing are also market signals.

The market makes mistakes and constantly corrects itself. Shouldn't this be taken into account in journalism degrees? For example, basing teaching discourse on content traffic should mean cutting out more than one teaching guide, cutting out information about journalistic practice. Not having a critical and observant view of the market ends up confusing the fundamental with the peremptory, when it is assumed that a degree like journalism has to be articulated around this differentiation and, therefore, delve into the fundamental. If the fundamentals are not established, we turn journalism into a profession in which skills prevail but one is incapable of discernment, which leads to the journalist being a dispensable mediator.

We agree with Serón (2023: § 12) when he warns us that "study plans must be downloaded with lots of 'specialist details' that, although it may not seem like it, are always easy for a graduate to learn when he/she needs them, if he/she needs them". According to Serón (2023: § 13), the emphasis must be placed on "expanding the student's cognitive field so that they better understand the world in which they live and in which they will develop their professional activity". World, let us not forget, that conditions and in which that professional activity is inserted.

Finally, we must emphasise that technology, thinking about both its use and its understanding, for example, a distinction should be made between technology and technological tools, is necessary in these study plans. But we must be careful not to fall into technocentrism, "the risk of ignoring the teaching of basic knowledge, such as those based on professional deontology, or failing to focus on the development of elementary capabilities, both hard and soft, to professional practice, from writing texts to analysing current events or critical consumption of all types of media" (Rojas Torrijos in Álvaro Luizzi (2023: §. 4). That is, knowledge about technology should always be complementary.

Marina Garcés (2022: 17) states that "one of the many definitions of 'learning' could be, today, the acquisition of that knowledge and skills that allow us, above all, to undo confusion regarding some relevant issue". A statement that seems fundamental to us in the journalism degree: If you don't understand how are you going to explain?

7. As a final reflection

When we talk about the commercialisation of the university, we are not referring to a collaboration with private companies, but rather to the fact that the logic of the market has ended up dictating the functioning, governance, functions, priorities, objectives and evaluation devices of universities. Since the end of the 20th century, neoliberalism has been working with this purpose, managing to transform the being of universities and, furthermore, with little opposition from its members.

Within this logic, teaching, the supposed priority of the university, is undervalued in relation to research, and in both cases they move towards hyperspecialisation. Knowledge is fragmented, content decreases, the superfluous is confused with the fundamental, how (it is explained) matters more than what (it is explained) and knowledge is replaced by skills. To create a global market for tertiary education, in what has come to be called 'mobility', commercial logic has required homogenising content and structures of study plans, curtailing university autonomy. In the European Union, this homogenisation is known as the Bologna Plan.

In other words, what has taken precedence is utilitarianism and this is greater the more professional the degree is, something inherent to journalism studies. In our opinion, they are currently guilty of technocentrism and of falling into the obsolescence of content by confusing what is fundamental with what is superfluous. At the same time, utilitarianism is manifested in the growing discredit of theoretical content and in the accommodation of study plans to what is interpreted as the needs of the market. Even in the journalism degrees themselves, content is confused with journalism, thus stimulating a progressive replacement of "informational references" with "productive references" from the perspective of the students.

We are told, and we believe it, that democracy needs journalism. But for this purpose to come to fruition, and even more so in an increasingly complex society, we should carefully take care of the training of future journalists so that they are able to inform and explain with criteria the what and why of what happens. A journalist must train throughout his or her professional career, even specialising, but the degree provides, neither more nor less, the space to build the foundations of future professional practice. Along with the specific knowledge of journalism and communication studies, which must not be distorted by practical utilitarianism, it seems increasingly important to us to have a greater general culture and, on the other hand, the assumption of values inherent to journalism and

citizenship in order to act in accordance with the common good, since that and nothing else is information.

Notes

1. To delve deeper into these issues, see World Bank (1995) and Lavarde, M. (2003).
2. Similar arguments are supported by Catanzaro, G. (2020), Alves, A. (2019), Giroux, HA (2018) and Lora, J., & Recéndez, C. (2003).
3. The dynamics of final degree projects is a good example of how costs can distort the purpose. Firstly, the actual teaching load of this task takes up many more hours than those officially considered, that is, the cost of the teacher is reduced and they are forced to do more work. But, in response to complaints, the weight of the final degree project in the student's file has been reduced by reducing credits which, in turn, implies a reduction in demands.

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Audiovisual Communication and critical thinking: Challenges for university education

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Paper received on 20 May 2023 and accepted on 27 September 2023

How to cite:

Sánchez, L., & Franganillo, J. (2023). Audiovisual Communication and critical thinking: Challenges for university education. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 15-23. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420706>

Abstract

This work raises the challenge and the need to train Audiovisual Communication students in what we term critical thinking. This way of thinking, which is logical, reflexive and grounded, is a central pillar of audiovisual communication and university training, as it allows evidence, arguments and opinions to be analysed and evaluated in a reasoned way. It is a key skill for citizens in the digital age, where misinformation and manipulation are frequent and decidedly dangerous phenomena. Media and information literacy is an effective strategy for developing critical thinking in the audiovisual field. It is also necessary to face new educational challenges related to the inappropriate use of mobile phones, the internet or video games; the consolidation of gender stereotypes through social networks; the social isolation caused by abusive use of the mobile phone, and the ethical and credibility problems generated by the rapid advances in generative artificial intelligence.

Keywords

Critical thinking, university education, audiovisual communication, media and information literacy, misinformation.

Resum

Aquest treball planteja el repte i la necessitat de formar els estudiants de Comunicació Audiovisual en l'anomenat pensament crític. Aquesta manera de pensar, lògica, reflexiva i argumentada, és un eix central de la comunicació audiovisual i de la formació universitària, ja que permet analitzar i valorar de manera raonada les evidències, els arguments i les opinions. És una competència clau per a la ciutadania en l'era digital, on la desinformació i la manipulació són fenòmens freqüents i perillosos. L'alfabetització mediàtica i informacional és una estratègia eficaç per desenvolupar el pensament crític en l'àmbit audiovisual. També cal afrontar nous reptes formatius relacionats amb l'ús inadequat dels mòbils, d'Internet o dels videojocs; la consolidació dels estereotips de gènere a través de les xarxes socials; l'aïllament social causat per l'abús del mòbil, i els problemes ètics i de credibilitat que generen els ràpids avenços en intel·ligència artificial generativa.

Paraules clau

Pensament crític, formació universitària, comunicació audiovisual, alfabetització mediàtica i informacional, desinformació.

Introduction

In the Spanish context, Audiovisual Communication is an academic discipline that can be studied at 27 university centres (El País, 2023). This broad offering responds to the high demand for these studies, which connect, now more than ever, with the interests and identities of young people. Indeed, the daily life of young people is marked by the presence of the audiovisual field in numerous formats and platforms: social networks, television series, streaming, video games etc. The cinema, which used to be the predominant cultural reference

for this group, now gives way to a wider and more diverse range of options.

Today's young people are not satisfied with the mere role of passive consumers of products made by others, but aspire to be active agents of communicative dynamics. Many dream of becoming YouTubers, streamers, TikTokers or influencers, i.e. content creators for digital platforms. In this context, the audiovisual field has experienced such a major expansion, transformation and penetration in our lives that the decision to study Audiovisual Communication is today a natural and desired choice among young people, despite the difficulties of

job insertion that affects the sector (AQU Catalunya, 2022).

This work defends the university as the most suitable space for the education of a citizen with a critical spirit, a space capable of understanding that at the centre of learning there must always remain solid the basic and fundamental questions that affect individual and collective well-being. While these issues can be expressed today in terms of Sustainable Development Goals, the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and competences in the service of well-being has always been a part of higher education. We believe that the university needs to promote a humanist education, which transcends the needs of the market or consumption patterns, even in highly technical fields, as is the case with Audiovisual Communication.

In this context, it is essential that Audiovisual Communication students are aware of the phenomenon of *information disorder*, which refers to the proliferation of false, misleading or manipulated content that circulates on digital platforms and that makes it difficult to verify and trust sources of information (European Commission, 2018). Information disorder can generate a cycle of media manipulation, which, according to Donovan (2020), consists of a series of stages ranging from the creation of a false or distorted narrative to mass dissemination and influence on public opinion of this narrative. This cycle can have negative consequences for democracy, coexistence and human rights; given that it can promote hatred, racism, sexism, bigotry. or denialism. Therefore, future audiovisual professionals must develop critical thinking that allows them to detect, analyse and combat these dishonest and irresponsible practices.

Our society is suffering from a crisis of values that manifests itself in the communicative practices that are developed through digital technologies, among others. These technologies expose citizens and institutions to urgent challenges, such as disinformation, which threatens democracy; mental illnesses caused by misuse of mobile phones, the internet, social media or video games; gender stereotypes, which are reinforced in young people through social networks; social isolation (“phubbing”) caused by mobile phone overuse, or the ethical and credibility problems generated by artificial intelligence. For this reason, Audiovisual Communication studies cannot be limited to teaching the techniques specific to audiovisual language. They need to go much further: as students and teachers, we must analyse and reflect on these challenges, in order to respond together to the imperative need to have a citizenry with a critical spirit.

This article aims to present a reflection, based on secondary research, on the challenges posed by the phenomena of misinformation, digital addictions, and ethical and reliability conflicts arising from artificial intelligence for Audiovisual Communication courses. In addition, the article wants to highlight the importance of promoting critical thinking as a key competence for future audiovisual professionals, who must be able to analyse, evaluate and create quality content in a complex and changing digital environment.

Rethinking University Education

Llovet (2011: 28) quoted a rather eloquent statement by the philosopher and mathematician Bertrand Russell, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950:

“One of the defects of modern higher education is that it has become a pure training for the acquisition of certain skills and is less and less concerned with broadening the minds and hearts of students through the unbiased examination of the world.”

Then, Llovet himself (2011: 131–132) denounced the fact that universities had sold out to market interests:

“The destiny of the university, in this sense, and this applies to all the faculties, is to become once again a disjointed sum of professional guilds, higher schools for the acquisition of ‘skills’, with the only aim, then, being to prepare students to master a specific and very narrow technique, in line with the specialisation required by the organisation of work in today’s societies. Regarding placement within the main social or political issues, or linkage with the *polis*, despite the fact that this is one of the purposes of the Bologna Plan, none of it will be achieved.”

Russell and Llovet agree in pointing out that higher education has surrendered to the needs, or rather imperatives, of the market and has left aside the university’s own obligation to train citizens with critical thinking. This complaint might seem alien to Audiovisual Communication studies, which are, as we said, highly technical. We, however, think that this criticism also implicates us.

Communication studies are inter and transdisciplinary, and from their origins relate to wide-ranging topics, specific to sociology, psychology, political science or education. Thus, research in communication analyses how the media influence our understanding of the world, culture, society, and our identity; how they interact with political and economic power in the service of a hegemonic ideology and culture; how they affect mental health, or how they shape public opinion. For this reason, these studies encourage epistemological, scientific, political, social, and cultural reflection on the “main social and political issues” involving the media and audiovisual works.

The university has the social function of training citizens who, in addition to acquiring knowledge, develop social, moral, ethical, and social commitment competencies and skills. In fact, universities today are aware of the value of social skills and are looking for ways to recognise them in university education (Arroyo, 2019). In addition to training professionals who leave sufficiently prepared for the world of work, the university also trains individuals with skills and abilities that help them develop values and virtues (Franganillo *et al.*, 2021). This is an inseparable dimension of critical competence.

European universities have taken on the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda and made the Sustainable Development Goals

a fundamental part of their mission as higher education institutions. They have drawn up action plans to integrate them into their training, research, innovation, and governance policies and activities (European University Association, 2020). For this commitment to be effective and viable, however, training must aim to create a citizenry that is aware and committed to the challenges facing society, such as health and well-being (Goal 3) or peace (Goal 16). In this regard, it is vital that future audiovisual communicators understand how the media influence the power structures that cause social and economic inequalities, and how they can promote peace with their communicative practices.

In addition, AQU Catalunya's recent report (2022) on employability in Communication reveals that graduates in Audiovisual Communication must improve, above all, their skills in data analysis, ICT, creativity, and written expression. In particular, 52% of employing entities consider that graduates must improve their skills regarding reading and analysis of texts, data, statistics, and specialised documents on any relevant subject. They also believe that graduates should be able to conceive, plan, design, and execute communicative projects. The report, therefore, emphasises the need to train in investigative, analytical, and reading skills, that is to say, in skills that are not purely technical. Other studies (Armendáriz, 2015; López, 2018) agree on the observation that the media and audiovisual companies are requiring graduates with a proactive attitude and critical ability.

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to reason logically, reflectively, and with arguments about a topic. It is about formulating opinions, beliefs, hypotheses, and explanations of reality in such a way that they can be justified with a process of empirical contrast based on inductive reasoning. This process means that when a belief is contrasted with the evidence, favourable evidence corroborates it, while unfavourable evidence calls it into question. Thus, critical thinking requires us to rectify and change our minds if we cannot objectively and convincingly defend the belief in question. Empirical science is a good example of this kind of thinking. Scientific explanations, no matter how widely accepted they may be, must be revised if new empirical evidence contradicts them or even calls them into question. For this reason, scientific thinking is critical and not dogmatic, and is subject to scrutiny (Sánchez, 2020; Sánchez and Villanueva, 2023). This does not mean that it is an infallible cognitive ability, but it does mean that it is reliable. This reliability is socially guaranteed through the scientific community, which uses rules and control mechanisms to minimise error.

In democratic societies, the media are conceived as facilitators of quality information, necessary to establishing justified opinions on issues of social relevance. The health of democracies, and the exercise of rights and duties, depends

on citizens being well informed and, on that good information, being able to form justified opinions and participate in debates and discussions that affect social and individual well-being. It is only when the information that shapes public (and private) opinion allows justified opinions to be formed, that rights and duties can be exercised under equal conditions, and, consequently, appropriate behaviours can be generated (Sánchez and Aguilar, 2020).

In this regard, some authors emphasise that modern Western democracies have been built on this epistemological model. Dawkins (2006), for example, maintains that, since the Enlightenment, these societies have been organised under what he calls an enlightened moral zeitgeist, based on a consensus on certain universal principles established through critical thinking and justified arguments with empirical evidence and true information. This enlightened view of democracy fits with an epistemological perspective that understands that knowledge, science, and education have the purpose of forming citizens capable of generating justified opinions, and thus participating in political, ethical, and moral discussions under principles of rationality. The education system in general, and university training in particular, must be at the service of this objective: to train citizens in this critical capacity.

However, critical thinking, which is based on inductive rationality and the search for truth, is in crisis in what some call the "post-truth" era. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *post-truth* as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion compared to appeals to emotion and personal beliefs" (Flood, 2016). In this regard, several voices denounce the epistemological deterioration of our democracies. Froehlich (2017) states that we have entered the "age of ignorance" and makes a distinction between false information (*misinformation*), which is merely incorrect or inaccurate, and falsified information (*disinformation*), which is manipulated with the intent to deceive. Goulart *et al.* (2020) speak of collective "imbecilisation"; Desmurget (2020), of digital "cretins"; McKeown (2016), of information poverty; Keyes (2004), of informational dishonesty; and Meneses (2021), of a crisis of truth. Faced with this situation, objectivity, facts, and truth value give way to emotion, intuition, or whatever simply feels credible to us (Cooke, 2018; McDermott, 2019; Strong, 2017; Lilleker and Liefbroer, 2018).

In today's society, the proliferation of misinformation and citizens' mistrust of institutions reveal a crisis of knowledge and critical thinking. This situation, however, is not attributable only to the interests or bad practices of certain agents. The lack of critical thinking also has an origin in our cognitive structure, as cognitive psychology explains. Indeed, Haidt (2001) states that we tend to reason in a biased way, so we can avoid questioning our beliefs and attitudes. Instead of reasoning in order to establish the truth of our opinions, we reason in order to maintain them, even if they are not true. This is a motivated, strategic type of reasoning, used at the service of judgments

that are generated based on emotions and initial intuitions (Haidt, 2001, 2006, 2012; Cook *et al.*, 2017; Strong, 2017; McDermott, 2019).

Disinformation takes advantage of the psychological processes that make us believe what we want to believe, regardless of whether it is true or not. Thus, we give more credence to information that confirms our intuitions, even if the information is wrong, and dismiss arguments and empirical evidence that contradict them (McDermott, 2019). This explains our resistance to changing our own opinions, even when we are presented with irrefutable evidence of our error. An illustrative case of this phenomenon is the false beliefs about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq in 2003, which persisted despite the media proving their non-existence (Lewandowsky *et al.*, 2012).

Therefore, we need a more complex epistemological and educational model, which works on the relationships between critical thinking, emotions, and intuitions. Our mental architecture is not as rational as had been assumed in the Enlightenment. We are agents driven by emotions, who use reason in their service, as Hume had already argued (1748). This is, we believe, a challenge for university education, which often prioritises knowledge above the emotional dimension. As Russell said in the opening quote, modern higher education must broaden not only the minds but also the hearts of students. Critical thinking is not only based on pure rationality, guided only by the search for truth, but also includes the emotional dimension of human cognition. But this does not mean that we have to fall, as post-truth does, into extreme relativism, which denies the truth value of representations of reality, discredits objectivity, invents alternative facts, or confuses reality and fiction. Recalling once again the aforementioned quote from Russell, it is true that higher education must expand the minds and hearts of students, but through an unbiased analysis of the world.

Media and Information Literacy

With degrees in Audiovisual Communication, the university can contribute to developing critical thinking in the two dimensions that are part of it: the rational and the emotional. Media and information literacy (MIL) is a tool that can help achieve this. This is recognised by UNESCO (2011):

“MIL stands for *media and information literacy*, and refers to the essential competencies (knowledge, skills, and attitude) that allow citizens to engage with content providers effectively and develop critical thinking and life-long learning skills for socializing and becoming active citizens.”

In this work, we understand MIL as a set of attitudes that relate to critical thinking (Brisola and Doyle, 2019; Ha Kim, 2019; Meneses, 2021). Training in MIL is a tool to enhance

critical thinking, according to several studies (Craft *et al.*, 2013; Vraga *et al.*, 2020). This means that teachers need to know how to use various media and information resources and extend them to students, as advocated by UNESCO (2011). Wilson (2012) adds that MIL is not only a technical matter but also a critical approach. The systematic review on MIL and critical thinking by López-González *et al.* (2023) confirms that MIL in education improves critical skills.

The European Union considers MIL a key tool to combat the phenomenon of disinformation, which seriously affects democracies. This is the thesis of Sádaba *et al.* (2023), who argue for the need for co-responsible citizenship and coordinated action between civil society, companies, and governments. According to these authors, the deliberate distribution of false information can erode trust in the media, politics, and institutions, and can foster populism and ideological polarisation. In this regard, in the *Media Literacy Index 2022*, for 35 European countries, the five that occupy the top places in the MIL ranking are Finland, Norway, Denmark, Estonia, and Sweden, in that order (Lessenski, 2022). They are the countries with the most capacity to avoid or mitigate the negative impact of disinformation. This is due to three factors: the quality of education, freedom of the press, and citizens' trust in institutions and the media.

The mistrust of citizens towards the information they receive from the media, especially from social networks, is included in the *Digital News Report* by the Reuters Institute (Newman *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, several reports from the European Commission (2018), UNESCO (2018), and the House of Commons (United Kingdom, 2019) point to digital media as agents of disinformation and call for a critical audience in the face of new technologies and social media. To deal with this reality and promote digital literacy, the European Commission (2022) has drawn up guidelines for teachers and educators to promote the incorporation of MIL in education. These guidelines provide practical guidance, advice, activity plans, and some warnings.

Misinformation is difficult to eradicate once it has taken root in our cognitive structure (Morris *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, preventing disinformation is easier, and will be more effective, than seeking afterwards to eradicate it. One way to do this is preventive inoculation (Cook *et al.*, 2017; van der Linden *et al.*, 2020; Apuke *et al.*, 2022), which consists of alerting everyone to fallacies and rhetorical devices used to misinform them. MIL can help citizens protect themselves from misinformation (Jeong *et al.*, 2012), by equipping them with skills and knowledge to evaluate, validate and question information (Meneses, 2021). For example, the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2016) proposed eight simple steps to verify misleading news. The process consists of examining the source, identifying the author, verifying the date, imagining one's own bias, going beyond the headline, contrasting it with other sources, wondering if it is a joke, and consulting the experts.

There are journalistic verification resources, such as *Maldita.es*, *Newtral* or *VerificaRTVE*, which give advice on verifying information and avoiding the temptation and trap of believing without questioning. These tips, however, are not enough to develop critical thinking and protect citizens from misinformation. Neither are MIL nor the data verification tools enough in and of themselves. Critical thinking needs mechanisms that encourage it, such as formal and informal education, legislation, ethical codes, media ethics, market regulation, and a university education committed to this challenge, especially from Audiovisual Communication studies. These are multilevel proposals (Sádaba and Salaverría, 2023) that can help us, but that do not eliminate the cognitive tendency to bias or the resistance to recognising the falsity of one's own opinions.

Training Challenges

The education of critical, active, and co-responsible citizens in the face of disinformation phenomena is an essential function of the education system. Universities play a key role in this area. Audiovisual Communication must not only provide training in the technical use of audiovisual language but must also address socially relevant problems and issues. Media research has often addressed issues such as political propaganda, the persuasive power of the media, its influence on public opinion, its effects on audience behaviour, its role within the political and economic system, the spread of stereotypes, the ability of the audience to interpret content, or the homogenisation of mass culture. Today, however, with the emergence of new media and new communicative practices, these phenomena have acquired new dimensions and new problems have arisen that require a rigorous scientific analysis.

Disinformation is one of these new problems. It is far-reaching, and it is related to another aspect that we want to highlight here: algorithms. Social media and video game companies use intricate algorithms to capture users' attention and get them to spend as much screen time as possible. This brings them economic benefits, but at the expense of the health and well-being of users. These algorithms are perverse, as they can reinforce stereotypes and social gaps, just as they can also reduce users' ability to think critically about the content they consume and about the world around them. In addition, they can cause addictions that alter personal, social, and work life: they can cause isolation, anxiety, depression, violence, and other mental health problems (Rodríguez, 2022). For all this, it is necessary to educate people in the responsible and conscious use of these new technologies.

Some companies become part of the problem, because they exert an influence on education, not only by offering dubious classroom resources, but also by shaping education policy. According to Sánchez-Caballero (2023), these companies have economic and ideological interests that conflict with the principles of public and democratic education. There are energy,

technology, and banking companies that have made themselves a place in the education field without having demonstrated that their proposals actually improve any aspect of the educative process. They offer training for teachers, teaching units, and awards that only reflect the sector's own vision. And what is even more worrying: they have the support or even the complicity of public administrations. These companies present themselves as unquestionable educational agents, without explaining what problems they are seeking to solve. Therefore, letting them decide what is taught in schools, and how it is taught, is fraught with risk. It may not seem so, but this trend is what is hidden behind what is presented as public-private collaboration, which is growing stronger all the time.

Another major current challenge is that of addictions and other mental illnesses resulting from abusive or inappropriate use of social networks and mobile devices, as well as the type of information and content that is disseminated there. Online video game addiction has been classified as a behavioural disorder by both the American Psychiatry Association, which included it in its *DSM-5-TR* manual in 2013, and the World Health Organisation, which included it in its international list of diseases in 2019. Studies show that internet addiction is a cause of loneliness and socially isolating behaviours (*phubbing*), that addiction generates distress and psychological deterioration (Shaw and Black, 2008; Scimeca *et al.*, 2017), sleep disturbances (Kim *et al.*, 2017), and poor academic performance (Fatehi *et al.*, 2016). In general, experts report that excessive use of screens from an early age also leads to physical impairments, such as obesity, and consequently cardiovascular disease, and emotional problems, such as depression and aggression. They also warn of harmful effects on cognitive development, such as lack of concentration and memory.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has entered this scenario with force, which already permeates all sectors of the economy and society. In the audiovisual and cultural sphere, it affects the entire value chain: creation, production, distribution, and relationship with the public. One of the most relevant techniques is generative AI, which allows content to be generated automatically. With this technology, which is already available to everyone, texts, images, sounds, and videos can be produced quickly and realistically, and without the need for technical knowledge.

Its potential is enormous, and precisely for that reason it also carries great risks: generative models are exposed to potentially malicious uses, which can turn this technology into a threat. These tools make it possible to easily produce fake news, manipulated images that look like graphic evidence, and deepfake videos that impersonate public figures, all to spread misinformation, propaganda, or slander (Franganillo, 2023). Such artificial content is so convincing that it can mislead receivers and hinder their ability to check sources, properly reflect on messages, and form their own critical opinion.

Another major challenge is the proliferation of automatic content, which is occurring due to the popularisation of

language models, which simulate the manner, and even the style, of how we write as humans. This technology allows texts to be generated quickly and realistically but also has its drawbacks. Texts produced by a model, without supervision or further elaboration, will always have one deficiency: the human dimension. They will lack the context, narrative, and commentary that only a person, particularly an expert in the field, can provide. In addition, there is the danger that the internet will be filled with automatic texts that could degrade the level of the content and, consequently, impoverish the informational diet of the reading public. In fact, this is a real threat: there are already hundreds of artificial content farms publishing articles en masse, often with false narratives and misinformation (Newsguard, 2023). This new source of disinformation is another front that can exacerbate the epistemic crisis affecting our societies.

It seems clear enough, then, that it is necessary to combat the phenomena of misinformation, the malevolent purposes of algorithms, which induce addictions and mental illnesses, and the new forms of deception that generative AI fosters. It is an essential step in training active, engaged and critical citizens, which are necessary for building a healthy democracy.

Strategies to Encourage Critical Thinking

Audiovisual Communication studies must encourage critical thinking through inoculation strategies and must also involve students in reflective experiences about the media (McDougall, 2019). To achieve this goal, the curriculum must include subjects that allow them to understand the epistemological, social, political, cultural, economic, and ethical dimensions of media content, and that make them aware of the possible consequences of misuse in their consumption. They must be subjects focused on analysing and reflecting on issues such as those mentioned above, that is to say, they must not only provide students with technical knowledge and skills but also help them shape a certain perspective on social reality. Critical thinking requires the development of analytical and argumentative skills that can support hypotheses and explanations of communicative phenomena, instead of resorting to discourses based on post-truth or relativism.

In this regard, we find that it is necessary to encourage the reading and writing of relevant scientific works; this is a high-priority task. Although it may seem difficult to motivate students to learn with methodologies that require time, reflection, and persistence, we believe that reading and writing are essential for critical thinking. Through reading and writing you can develop your own ideas, based on the knowledge accumulated by the scientific community. These methodologies, partly neglected by the current educational system, are inherent in critical thinking. It does not help when the flow of thought is automatically generated by a language model; it must be generated by the students themselves.

Another activity that needs to be promoted is research. This is an essential activity that Audiovisual Communication courses must highlight and encourage. It is necessary to promote educational mechanisms that stimulate students so that they get into the habit of researching and reading up on subjects so they can properly nurture and develop their projects. The research must include the viewing of relevant audiovisual productions and must naturally lead them to improve the quality, diversity, and rigour of what they do. It is well known that the research work contributes to generating more complete and plural audiovisual products, and at the same time has a verifying function that, by checking data, facts, locations, and other elements, increases rigour and promotes the credibility of what it aims to convey.

As an example, one of the challenges posed by this proposal is the verification of content generated by internet users. Unlike traditional media, which generally have protocols and criteria regarding their quality and rigour, users are able to publish any content on the internet without any filters. This can lead to false, decontextualised, manipulated, or biased information that can influence public opinion. Therefore, audiovisual communicators need the tools and skills to verify and cross-check user-generated content before broadcasting or using it as a source.

At the same time, we want to emphasise the relevance of the emotional dimension. As we have argued before, this dimension is inseparable from human cognition and leads us to understand critical thinking in a broad sense, not just a rational one. For this reason, we believe that the students' audiovisual projects should have a social commitment. Service learning (SL) projects are an ideal formula for working on this dimension based on the students' character strengths and the principles of positive psychology (Sánchez *et al.*, 2021). The SL methodology promotes critical thinking from the social needs of the environment and entails, on the part of the students, a civic, ethical, and social commitment, while developing technical and instrumental skills (Franganillo *et al.*, 2021).

It is also necessary to mention the persuasive and explanatory power of audiovisual work. Encouraging students to create works that deal with issues relevant to society, such as gender stereotypes, historical memory, or gambling addictions, for example, is an excellent way to foster critical thinking in the two dimensions that make it up.

Conclusions

It is not superfluous to insist once more, in line with Russell, that higher education must broaden the minds and hearts of students through the unbiased examination of the world. This is the ideal that we have championed in this paper for Audiovisual Communication studies, which aim to educate critically sophisticated citizens. *To communicate*, which in Latin (*communicare*) means 'put together' and 'create community',

is to transmit information, content and message. But it is also about establishing social bonds and creating a shared culture (Carey, 1989; Craig, 1999).

University training must take up this ideal expressed by Russell, and Audiovisual Communication studies, due to their idiosyncrasy, must aim to prepare critically sophisticated citizens. For this reason, we think that Audiovisual Communication students should involve themselves in major social or political issues, precisely because, as Llovet said, they are the professionals and citizens that society needs today. They must be aware of the communication challenges they have to face and their consequences for health, coexistence, and peace. And they must develop critical thinking, which includes both emotions and intelligence, through the reading and elaboration of relevant scientific works, and the viewing and creation of audiovisual productions with social impact.

Some media work with algorithms that cause addictions and other health problems in people. They also polarise public opinion in such a way that can make coexistence difficult. Spreading falsehoods, such as claiming that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, led to the deaths of thousands of innocent people. And it is equally unacceptable, because it is irresponsible, for a president of the United States to tweet on Twitter that Covid-19 can be cured with an injection of bleach. Audiovisual Communication students must be involved in these issues and the university must train them so that they can face them, and then come out of it with flying colours.

Teachers in the field of communication (and other social and human disciplines) have various tools at their disposal to train critical citizens, one of which is MIL, which helps us face the challenges of new communication technologies. These tools alone, however, will not be enough if they are not combined with broad and involved training. University education must not be subject to the interests or imperatives of the market, or to political interests, which often contradict the ideal of empowering citizens and hinder the objective of critical thinking that we have set out. A negative effect could lead the university, science, and knowledge to a dead-end post-truth scenario. A change of approach is needed that positions higher education as a public good and a human right, and that guarantees a critical and civic education in the face of the challenges that the digital society presents us with in the present day.

In these pages, we wanted to reflect on the challenges posed by the digital society for training in Audiovisual Communication and on the need to promote critical thinking as a transversal and fundamental competence. To delve deeper into this reflection, we propose some future lines of research that allow the evaluation of the impact of critical thinking on the training and practice of audiovisual communication professionals, such as: carrying out longitudinal studies that follow the evolution of students; designing and implementing service learning experiences that link content and skills to the needs and demands of society; comparing the academic outcomes and attitudes of students who receive training based on critical thinking with those who

receive other kinds of training, and exploring the possibilities of artificial intelligence as a tool to enhance critical thinking. We hope that this article has contributed to highlighting the importance of this competence for the education of critical, conscientious, and participatory citizens.

Funding

This work is the result of the R&D&I project *La educación mediática y la dieta informativa como indicadores de la capacidad de análisis crítico de contenidos informativos en futuros maestros* (MEDIA4Teach, PID2019-107748RB-I00), which has received funding from the Ministry of Science and Innovation of the Government of Spain.

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The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB): Fifty years of public service supporting teaching and research

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Paper received on 2 July 2023 and accepted on 9 October 2023

How to cite:

Civil i Serra, M., Rial Pan, M. & Santos Prados, T. (2023). The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB): Fifty years of public service supporting teaching and research. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 25-34.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420785>

Abstract

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), founded 50 years ago and closely tied to the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) —the longest-standing communication studies programme in Catalonia— has evolved to become a key actor for students, teachers, researchers and journalists, and for society in general, keeping pace with digitalisation.

This article sets out to further explore the evolution of this facility and the knowledge in its collections, both of which have made it a benchmark in the arena of university libraries and in support for teaching and scholarly research specialising in communication. The quality and uniqueness of the holdings also provide a glimpse into a time period and a country.

Keywords

University libraries, communication research, communication training, critical thinking, digital humanities, innovation.

Resum

La Biblioteca de Comunicació i Hemeroteca General de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), nascuda fa 50 anys i estretament vinculada a la Facultat de Ciències de la Comunicació (UAB) —degana dels estudis de comunicació a Catalunya—, ha evolucionat com a actor actiu per als estudiants, docents, investigadors, periodistes i la societat en general, al compàs de la digitalització.

L'article que presentem es proposa d'aprofundir en l'evolució d'aquest equipament i en el coneixement de les seves col·leccions, que l'han convertit en un referent en l'àmbit de les biblioteques universitàries i també en matèria de suport a l'ensenyament i a la recerca científica especialitzada en comunicació. La qualitat i la singularitat dels seus fons ens permeten, al mateix temps, entendre la història d'una època i d'un país.

Paraules clau

Biblioteques universitàries, recerca en comunicació, formació en comunicació, pensament crític, humanitats digitals, innovació.

1. Introduction

University libraries have traditionally been affiliated with higher education institutions and have unique features based on the merger of three fundamental elements: a specialised human team to serve and support the wide array of users, unique bibliographic and document collections that allow information to be transformed into knowledge, and a specific facility

that guarantees the preservation of the collection in optimal environmental conditions. University libraries have also been a source for the development of scholarly research and journal articles and support for teachers and curricula, with a direct impact not only during bachelor's, master's and doctoral programmes but also in training and lifelong learning.

The purpose of this article is to study the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), which

has become a true driving force, impetus and support for research, development, transfer and innovation in the field of communication studies in its first 50 years of existence (1972-2022).

Even though providing an in-depth definition of the concept of communication studies would be the purpose of another article, we can note that by communication studies we mean the set of scholarly disciplines associated with the social sciences that study and analyse the phenomenon of communication in a broad sense, from social communication to journalism, including the history of communication, institutional communication, marketing, advertising, public relations, audiovisual communication, cinema, the media, communication policy and the communication economy, just to mention some examples.

Over the years, interdisciplinarity and the furtherance of the digital transformation have also made its purview expand to other subjects which may originally seem more closely related to engineering and computer science, like the information and communication technologies, videogames and, more recently, artificial intelligence. However, they also have a component that indisputably links them to social communication.

The research we are presenting in this article has a twofold objective: to analyse the change that this university library has spearheaded as a public facility open to society which is evolving to adapt the needs of its contemporary target users, and to present its document holdings and study their most salient features.

Regarding the collections, the mainstays are the teaching and learning support materials. Via coordination between the faculty and the library's human team, all the publications needed for the classes taught in the faculty are added to the library's collection. This is a deliberate institutional focus to offer students equal opportunities.

This basic collection more geared towards teaching and learning is complemented and enriched with the special collections from institutional or personal donations, documents that enable us to preserve and disseminate the history and culture. Their prime value is their uniqueness.

Both of them are tools that allow users to better specialise, cross-check information and gain the knowledge and skills needed to learn how to be critical with information, both to develop properly during university education and for students' future professional lives

In order to tackle the subject of this study, we first took into account the complete collection of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), to which we have access because of the authors' employment relationship with it.

In July 2023, this complete collection was comprised of 138,016 books, 17,547 doctoral theses and research projects, 29,263 audiovisual and graphic documents and 18,878 periodical publications and communication journals, in addition to the collection of digital documents, which is constantly growing (Servei de Biblioteques UAB, 2023).

At a second level, we drew from primary sources, with six personal interviews with professionals associated with the history of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives.

We first interviewed Miquel de Moragas i Spà, emeritus chair of the Department of Media, Communication and Culture (UAB), founder of the Faculty of Communication Studies, the Communication Library and the then called General Newspaper Archives (UAB), dean of the faculty (1978-1980 and 1982-1984) and vice-rector of research (UAB) (1985-1989). He was also the founder and first director of the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB) (1988-2009) and the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB) (1997-2009), two institutions with permanent partnerships with the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives. He donated his personal collection to this library in 2019.

We also interviewed Enric Marín, current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and secretary-general of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona from 1998-2002; Jaume Soriano, coordinator of Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB); Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives; Oskar Hernández-Pérez, manager of the General Newspaper Archives (UAB); and Martín Becerra, professor at the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina), who has contributed his experience as a library user while pursuing his predoctoral training at the UAB in the late 1990s. We have also consulted secondary sources (bibliographies and periodicals documents), which are listed in the references section.

To develop this article, we have organised the text into four main sections. The first section examines the background and historical context that enabled this public university, a pioneer in Catalonia, to be created. The second focuses on the main collections in the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). Next, the third section focuses on the evolution of this facility as a library open to users. Finally, the fourth section, which contains the conclusions, strives to detect the main future challenges in a changing environment where university libraries are becoming meeting points yet may also be sites that facilitate innovative training and service learning.¹

2. Background and historical context

The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) was founded on 6 June 1968 within a social context of constant upheaval marked by the onset of the late Franco regime and the yearnings for freedom and democracy spearheaded by intellectuals and university students, who were acting against the stream, seeking open spaces that had no censorship while also seeking to avoid ideological control, the constraints placed by the regime and the influence exerted by the Church at different levels of the education system.

Based on the organisation of the first four faculties (Humanities, Medicine, Sciences and Economic Sciences), which had been operating since academic year 1968-1969, the UAB gradually added new official university degrees to the programmes offered by its faculties, first with programmes offered at different sites in Barcelona and later by moving the campus to Bellaterra, in Cerdanyola del Vallès, which would mark the identity of this new public university that took root outside the urban environment.

2.1 The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), a space to foster specialised research

With the founding of the Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB) in academic year 1971-1972, the bachelor's degree in Journalism was launched, which became an official university degree for the first time thanks to Decree 2478/1971 of Spain's Ministry of Education and Science (BOE, 16-10-1971). In practice, this new programme prompted the gradual disappearance of the programmes that had been offered by the School of Journalism of the Church at the Institutí Cultural del Centre d'Influència Catòlica since 1964.²

One year later, in 1972, the Communication Library and Newspaper Archives was founded, along with the bachelor's degree in Advertising in the same faculty. It had initially been housed on Carrer de les Egipcíiques in Barcelona (behind the Library of Catalonia and the Institute of Catalan Studies in Raval neighbourhood), but it moved to the Bellaterra campus in academic year 1972-1973 (Moragas i Spà, 1992 and 2021)

It was an opportunity design with a new public university which sought to exist in a democracy, a plural university with its sights set on Europe, especially on the educational models of French, German, British and Italian universities, as well as those on the other side of the Atlantic, especially in Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentine and Chile.

In the field of research, there was also a desire to learn from benchmark research centres like the International Centre for Higher Communication Studies for Latin America (CIESPAL) created in Quito (Ecuador) in 1959 by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO). This centre became a model worth following due to its research on mass communication, its impact on local regional development and its efforts to build bridges between the practical knowledge of professional journalists and the theoretical and academic output of professors and researchers. The connections with members of academic associations also fostered the international outreach of the Faculty of Information Sciences at the UAB and, by extension, its Library and Newspaper Archives, from the very beginning.

The possibility of students doing curricular internships in the Newspaper Archives was a chance for them to gain professional experience at a time when there were more students than means of doing internships.

The Newspaper Archive was launched as an auxiliary service for the journalistic practice that the bachelor's students were doing, and this allowed it to grow in different journalistic genres',

recalls Miquel de Moragas i Spà, founder of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB). In his opinion, one of the most salient aspects was the possibility of creating a regular and a newspaper library from scratch and to use scientific and scholarly criteria to decide what publications to purchase in order to gradually lay its foundations with the goal of being able to guarantee and maintain entire collections over time (Moragas i Spà, 2023).

The first book purchased for the Communication Library was *El espíritu del tiempo* by Edgar Morin, a volume that analyses mass media and culture written by one of the founders of interdisciplinary communication studies. In the opinion of Miquel de Moragas i Spà, the choice of this book *per se* entailed a reflection and an academic decision, because it was 'viewed poorly at that time by more academic, official sociology'. Regarding newspapers, 'the job was to go to a newsstand on [Barcelona's] La Rambla every morning and buy the daily press for the Newspaper Archives: the Barcelona newspapers and *Le Monde*, the *International Herald Tribune* and *The Times*, among others. These copies which were bound are part of the current holdings of this large periodicals library at the UAB' (Moragas i Spà, 2010).

The diversity of journalistic genres was one of the key factors that helps us to understand the quality and current value of the Library and Newspaper Archives today compared to other university communication libraries. 'Even though it may have seemed strange at first, publications beyond general newspapers and scholarly journals were added, like specialised gossip, travel, automotive magazines and the local and regional press. They are fields where the materials may not be consulted as much, but thanks to the efforts to define the collection at that time, they have been conserved. And I should say that because it has these holdings, [doctoral] theses on gossip magazines and the local press have been defended at the UAB over the years' (Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), in Civil i Serra, 2020).

While laboratories filled with test tubes are the field of experimentation for researchers in medicine, chemistry or physics, 'libraries were the laboratory for making scientific policy of researchers in the humanities and social sciences' (Moragas i Spà, 2019). Thus, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) was a major touchstone, especially for Latin American researchers, who would visit temporarily or do research stays on campus and spend part of their time researching in the reference room. 'In contrast, European researchers had other theoretical influences and access to European publishing trends in Paris and Milan. But I don't recall having been in any university library in Europe—not even in the one in Lugano (Switzerland)—that has a Latin-European collection like ours, because the other European university libraries only contained European works and perhaps works from North America, but only some of them' (Moragas i Spà, 2023).

Between 1972 and 1987, the Communication Library and the then called Newspaper Archives (UAB) was housed in the Faculty of Law, initially on the first floor and later on the ground floor. In 1987 they were moved to the basement of the new Faculty of Information Sciences building, a facility that also included classrooms, laboratories (for writing practice) and radio and television sets. In 1994, its name was changed to the Faculty of Communication Studies (Berrio, 1997; Moragas i Spà, 2021).

The training of journalists in the 1970s and 1980s entailed the consolidation of a professional journalistic and academic model that was comparable to other professional fields within the social sciences and humanities which already had prior university recognition, like law, political science, economics, history and philology.

Within this university context, the Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB) was the only faculty that offered a university degree in communication in Catalonia (Journalism since 1971-1972 and Advertising since 1972-1973, which 20 years later were renamed Advertising and Public Relations). Starting in academic year 1992-1993, the UAB expanded its offerings to include an Audiovisual Communication programme, the same year that Universitat Pompeu Fabra started offering its three classic degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations.³

This was a historic moment when there were institutional efforts to create a unified communication library in Catalonia among all the universities. However, this did not come to fruition, as Universitat Pompeu Fabra and other universities after it wanted to create their own libraries, so this idea became a failed attempt, as Miquel de Moragas i Spà (2023) recalls.

Getting back to the educational programmes offered at the UAB, it is noteworthy that the Faculty of Communication Studies also started offering the second-cycle programmes in the bachelor's degree in Documentation in academic year 1999-2000 for a specific ten-year period.

After joining the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 2010, the faculty made the transition to turn the three degrees into European bachelor's degrees in Journalism, Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations, and in academic year 2019-2020 it expanded its offerings with the bachelor's in Interactive Communication and Communication in Organisations.

However, the growing book and periodicals collection at the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) had prompted a new need on campus in the mid-1990s: the space set aside for the Library and Newspaper Archives was becoming too small and daily practice made it essential to create a new building that would meet the library's needs, thinking not only about the present but more important about the future. This request was defended and approved as one of the priority lines of action of professor Carles Solàs's team during his first mandate as the rector of the UAB (1994-1998).

2.2 The strategic bid for a new building and new name

In 1998, construction began on the new library building in Plaça Cívica, which opened at its new site on 8 April 2002 thanks to the strategic efforts of the UAB's governing team to merge three iconic facilities: the Communication Library, the General Newspaper Archives and the General Library.

The new building needed a name, and at the meeting of the governing team, the then-secretary general and current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), Enric Marín, helped to come up with a solution, with a clear proposal: 'without a doubt, what we have here is the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives; therefore, this should be its new name' (Marín, 2023). 'The desire to turn the current building in Plaça Cívica into the General Library in 1999 would have been an irreparable mistake' (Perona Páez, 2010). Therefore, seen from hindsight, this particular definition of the name has been one of the assets that has assisted in the international outreach of this scholarly facility in teaching and research.

After this historic juncture, with the move to its new site, the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) came to include the local collection, the reserve collection and the doctoral theses from the entire campus as long as they were published on paper.

The new facility also houses the headquarters of the Library Service (UAB) and three research centres: the Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC), part of the library's own structure; the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB); and the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB), which became the Sport Research Institute (IRE-UAB) in 2018.⁴

The turn of the twenty-first century came with new habits that forced the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) to adapt to new environments, with the digital transformation which enabled it to expand open-access to the documentation available until then. It was also headed towards a new structural change in education and research as Spain joined of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA), which entered into force in 2010.

In the field of research, the Budapest Open Access Initiative promoted by the Open Society Institute in December 2001 pushed to accelerate the international efforts for open access on the Internet, which the European Commission had adopted as a priority.

2.3 The avenues of work of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), a public service open to society

As an integral member of the Library Service (UAB),⁵ the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) participates in its seven main lines of work.

First, it processes, conserves and disseminates the UAB's book and document holdings in order to serve the university's teaching, research and innovation needs. Secondly, it organises

activities and promotes the dissemination of its holdings and services (bibliographic exhibitions, training courses for users, new acquisitions, user guides, etc.). Thirdly, it partners with teaching projects and innovation strategies. Fourthly, it optimises support for research accreditation and assessment, an essential task for teaching and research staff who want to consolidate their professional academic careers. Fifthly, it promotes implementation of Open Science and Open Data. Sixthly, it contributes to the visibility of the UAB's entire body of scholarly output. And seventhly, it promotes the community's ability to efficiently and ethically use information, which enables users to be trained in media literacy and know how to be critical in the consumption of the information they receive.

3. Special collections in the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

Special collections and holdings are prized resources for libraries and contribute significant added value to users' research and learning experiences. They afford a unique perspective on history, culture and society and are useful tools for teaching, learning and research. Furthermore, the management, conservation and dissemination of these materials helps to protect the cultural heritage for future generations (Santos, 2010; Farré Fiol & Gómez Escofet, 2013; Calvet Renedo, 2011; Camps i Miró, 1998).

Some of the features of these special collections are:

1. **Exclusive content:** Special collections tend to include unique materials that cannot be found in other libraries: manuscripts, historical documents, photographs, maps, drawings or personal collections with archival materials that afford a unique perspective on history, culture and society and enable us to trace people's lives and activities.
2. **Specialised research:** Special collections are particularly useful for specialised research. Researchers find specific materials there which allow them to more deeply explore a topic and discover details that would not be available otherwise. This can be particularly important for areas of research that require access to original materials.
3. **Teaching and learning:** Special collections are also invaluable tools for teaching and learning. Professors can use materials from these collections to improve their classes and offer their students a richer and more comprehensive learning experience.
4. **Preservation of the cultural heritage:** Libraries that house special collections also play an important role in preserving the cultural heritage. These libraries strive to ensure that the materials are conserved properly and will be available for future generations. By doing so, they contribute to protecting history and culture.

Some of the most prominent collections that are part of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

are the following (the description includes the address where they can be consulted, whenever possible):

- **Marca Collection:** Primarily Catalan magazines on artistic and literary topics (1805-1960) (<https://bit.ly/3PJZRQ2>).
- **Local UAB Collection:** Documents published by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona since it was created (1968-today).
- **UAB Theses:** Theses read at the university since it was created, initially on paper and currently digital (<https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/tesis>).
- **Daniel Jones Collection:** Books, magazines and thematic dossiers on communication compiled by Dr Daniel Jones (1950-2007), a professor in the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Faculty of Communication and International Relations-Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) and an expert researcher in communication structure and policies (<https://bit.ly/46gvEz7>).
- **Joaquim Romaguera Collection:** Books, magazines and thematic dossiers on cinema compiled by the writer, film critic and researcher Joaquim Romaguera (1941-2006) (<https://bit.ly/3RFqJ6x>).
- **Miquel de Moragas i Spà Collection:** Books, magazines, thematic dossiers, manuscripts and personal and professional documentation of professor Miquel de Moragas i Spà (Barcelona, 1943), the driving force behind the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB).
- **Ràdio Barcelona Scripts:** Radio scripts with the daily programming of Barcelona's EAJ-1 Radio España station, later called Radio Barcelona (1925-1958) (<https://bit.ly/46ACGhX>).
- **Radioteatro Scripts:** Scripts of radio plays broadcast in the Radioteatro programme of Ràdio Barcelona, directed by Armand Blanch (19??-1981).
- **Fanzine Collection:** Self-published publications made with few resources. Even though some fanzines were produced individually, the bulk of the collection is comprised of collectively authored works. The contents are heterogeneous, but they share the fact that they address phenomena and bring visibility to actors that do not appear in other media from the same period.
- **Mallorquí Collection:** Creative work and professional and personal documentation of the writer, scriptwriter and translator José Mallorquí (1913-1972).
- **Olympic Study Centre (UAB) Collection:** Specialised documentation on the 1992 Barcelona Olympics and the impact of the Olympics on society (study of the ceremonies and coverage of the Olympics and their economic and urban value to cities, among other topics).

Other noteworthy collections are still being internally processed and described include:

- **Nova Cançó Collection:** Documentation collected between the 1960s and 1980s by Josep Porter Moix, manager of

this artistic and cultural protest movement, which promoted the creation and dissemination of contemporary songs in Catalan during the Franco regime.

- **La Crida Archive Collection:** Documents from La Crida a la Solidaritat en Defensa de la Llengua, la Cultura i la Nació Catalanes (The Call for Solidarity in Defence of the Catalan Language, Culture and Nation), a Catalanist movement that was founded in 1981 and dissolved in 1993.
- **La Voz de España Administrative Collection:** Administrative documentation from the dubbing studio La Voz de España (1936-2010).

All of these collections are connected to and complement each other, and they enable us to delve more deeply into the political, social or trade union movements of each period. For example, the collection of radio scripts from Ràdio Barcelona helps us to hear and experience the history of the first half of the twentieth century, just like the Nova Cançó collection sheds light on a cultural protest movement in the late Franco regime and the start of the transition to democracy.

Also worth noting is the added value provided by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona's (UAB) publications generated on campus, which are part of the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB).

On the occasion of the opening of the new building in 2002, professor Armand Balsebre reflected on the role this university facility plays in preserving the heritage: 'Deposited in the collections of the Library and Newspaper Archives is the legacy of our historical memory and scholarly knowledge of communication in the twentieth century, precisely a century that today we describe, without rhetorical exaggerations, as the century of communication. It has to be protected, because it contains part of ourselves, of us communication professors, students and researchers. This heritage value also dovetails with a value that is more symbolically important: by protecting the conservation and growth of the document collections of the Library and Newspaper Archives, the hallmark of our identity as researchers who process information, accumulate knowledge and then redistribute it to society (through teaching, publications, scholarly conferences, everyday contact with the media), we are also protecting the source of the knowledge that reaches our society' (Balsebre, 2002).

The digital preservation efforts and its associated learning in the field of the humanities led the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB) to create a Digital Humanities network in 2016, a sub-network of the Cultural Heritage CORE (Community Oriented at Special Challenges), with which the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) shares an area of interest.

One outstanding example of the library's work in the field of the digital humanities is the Radio Sound Archive of Catalonia project (<https://arxiuradio.uab.cat>), an initiative of the Institute of Communication (InCom-UAB) and the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) geared at compiling,

describing, preserving and disseminating sound fragments from Catalan and Spanish broadcasters on the radio bandwidths in Catalonia and the Catalan radio stations that distribute their contents on the Internet.

3.1 The uniqueness of the CEDOC section of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)

The Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC) is a section of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) specialising in compiling, classifying, conserving and disseminating documents and materials that analyse the contemporary political situation in Catalonia and Spain.

CEDOC was launched in 1973 by collecting the underground periodicals that were not open to consultation in the UAB libraries. This undertaking was started by professor Eugeni Giral, along with his collaborator Toni Estupiñà. The job of documenting the media got underway at that time, fostered by the centre's location in what was then Faculty of Information Sciences (UAB). This is why it was named the Document Centre on Communication (CEDOC), and today, this acronym recalls its origins.

The transition and attainment of democracy, with the onset of the activities of political parties, trade unions, platforms and associations, led CEDOC towards the conservation, preservation and dissemination of the materials that these organisations produced, which are often quite ephemeral. At the same time, CEDOC has also worked on recovering the testimonies of the political activities of the Franco regime and the anti-Franco movement as the forerunners of the transition and democracy (Giral, 2010).

The most significant volume of documentation at CEDOC comes from the anti-Franco movements and is particularly valuable because it includes publications that originated underground. The documents compiled come from a variety of organisations: political parties, trade unions, neighbourhood associations, nongovernmental organisations, municipal entities and all types of social movements.

CEDOC is the home to more than 45,000 documents. By volume, books are the most common (more than 21,000), along with periodicals (more than 9,000) and paper posters (more than 15,000), although it also includes other types of materials like brochures and stickers.

Noteworthy among the periodicals is the collection of Catalan political press, most of it from the Franco era and the 1960s and 1970s. Part of this collection is digitalised and can be consulted online in the Digital Repository of Documents (DDD-UAB): <https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/ppc>.

The Viladot Collection, which contains anti-Franco press compiled by the journalist Albert Viladot (1954-1993), is a very important part of this periodicals collection (Culla, 1993).

Regarding the collection of political posters on paper, more than 6,000 documents have been catalogued and digitalised and can be consulted online at the Digital Repository of Documents (DDD-UAB): <https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/carpol>.

This collection is one of CEDOC's most important ones and primarily reflects the political activities during the years of Spain's transition to democracy. It contains election propaganda from the different elections (European, Spanish, regional and local) and advertisements from political parties, trade unions and civil society organisations.

The collection of political posters is a living collection that continues to grow today, albeit with newer methodologies, given that nowadays political posters are native digital documents and are compiled automatically via the capture of the publications of political parties on the social media. CEDOC is thus carrying on its original mission of preserving and disseminating this ephemeral documentation.⁶

Other unique collections affiliated with CEDOC are books on poster art, Western Sahara and the Basque Country, along with political stickers (<https://ddd.uab.cat/collection/adhpol>) and the archives of organisations such as the Socialist Party of National Liberation (PSAN) (<https://ddd.uab.cat/record/168400>) and the Party of Labour of Spain/Catalonia (PTE in Spanish, PTC in Catalonia) (<https://ddd.uab.cat/record/144582>).

4. A facility open to society

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), just like the other facilities comprising the Library Service (UAB), offers open access and equal opportunities for everyone.

By turning part of the second storey into the COMTEC Centre, an extension of a usable space shared with the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) has taken yet another step to open itself up not only to students in the faculty but also to society at large (Fabregat, 2021; Hernández-Pérez, 2022). This is an open space with three main areas: an experimentation area, an agora (with modular, movable stands and audiovisual equipment) and a creation-coworking space opened in April 2021, still during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The COMTEC Centre is part of a broader Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) project called the COMTEC Project, which focuses on training teachers, researchers and administrative and services staff. It also seeks to be an environment and space of contact where outside companies can hold demonstrations or new product launches.

Geared primarily at teaching innovation, the COMTEC Centre coexists with students' spontaneous use of it for group work, studying or even as a place to relax. The goal is to 'define the space around the three areas: to host innovation activities from participative perspectives and using codesign and cocreation methodologies' (Hernández-Pérez, 2022).

'Much of the project's success will depend on being able to integrate it into the institutional routine and structures and incorporating innovation into its management', claims Tomàs Fabregat, head of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) (Fabregat, 2021).

Similarly, Oskar Hernández-Pérez, manager of the General Newspaper Archives (UAB), believes that 'the transformation of spaces fosters collective cocreation; in this way, the Library and General Newspaper Archives make the collections available to users so they can participate in codesigning new uses of our holdings. After all, the spaces themselves are not transformative: they have to be defined and the community that inhabits them has to feel like they are theirs' (Hernández-Pérez, 2023).

In the opinion of the current coordinator of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), Jaume Soriano, 'the Library's main strength is the team of people who manage the service, as well as the possibilities afforded by the space'. Regarding the milestones achieved, he believes that one of the most important ones is 'the Library's ability to agilely adapt to the changes in the science system in recent years, especially the addition of digital scholarly literature and services published open-source'. The challenges still facing the library include the optimisation of the periodical collections and the steps started to expand the collection with the hardware and software that would enable it to serve teaching and research in videogames. "On the other hand, I think that it might also be worthwhile to foster partnerships with other institutions and centres within the UAB and off campus. One example is the presentation of the Radio Sound Archive of Catalonia on 13 February 2023, which was held at the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies) headquarters thanks to the Societat Catalana de Comunicació (Catalan Communication Society). This is the type of activity we have to continue doing" (Soriano, 2023).

On the other hand, the current dean of the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB), Enric Marín, believes that 'one thing we don't dare say, even though it is true, is that comparatively speaking our library is better than many American university communication libraries. Why? We are very powerful as a university communication library and general newspaper archive because from our European perspective—and this is thanks to Miquel de Moragas i Spà—it encompasses all the traditions from Europe and Latin America (in addition to those from North America), and these two aspects are virtually non-existent in many communication libraries in the United States. We're not always aware of this, and it is our unique hallmark; it is what enables us to be considered the benchmark communication documentation centre in southern Europe, and that is indisputable. And from the strategic standpoint, we should now be aware of the innovation in communication coming from the Pacific' (Marín, 2023).

In the opinion of Martín Becerra, a professor and researcher at the Universidad Nacional de Quilmes (Argentina) and an expert in the media and cultural industries, in the 1980s and 1990s the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona afforded many Latin American researchers the opportunity to make a personal effort to earn a doctorate there, given that in their home countries only bachelor's degrees and *maestrías* were available (the latter is halfway between a European master's and doctorate).

'The entire Library Service (UAB)—and in particular the

Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB)—was a kind of temple or sanctuary that enabled me to access contents that would otherwise have been impossible to reach. In academic year 1996-1997, when I began my postgraduate degree at the UAB, the Internet was very new and of course the majority of publications were not online. Basically, without this vast number of hours I spent here in the library, I wouldn't have been able to pursue my postgraduate programme. At that time—and I imagine today as well—it was the best equipped communication library, at least in Ibero-America, with an amazing service, as I recall it: you needed a book and requested it, and just a few days later the book had been added to the library's catalogue.' In this sense, Martín Becerra also stresses that 'access to materials in different languages, with different traditions of thinking and authors from a variety of perspectives, was always extremely enriching. Plus, the library was a place for gathering, reference and learning with other classmates, as we shared our readings and interpretations. And thanks to the training at the time, many Latin American researchers in the field of communication were able to be educated at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, and back in our countries we launched doctoral programmes starting in the early 2000s' (Becerra, 2023). In his opinion, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), along with the libraries at the University of Buenos Aires and Oxford University, are the three main international touchstones among university libraries specialising in communication studies around the world.

The Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives' (UAB) focus on supporting students, teachers, researchers and journalists in their daily tasks is still alive and well 50 years later.

5. Conclusions

In the past 50 years, university libraries have been restructured both physically and socially. They are no longer spaces with a collection on physical shelves and have instead become libraries that open their space to the world around them, to society, with the goal of being useful to the users who want to consult them. The reorganisation of the space, with open rooms adaptable to many uses and teaching innovation, have also forced them to reconsider where to store the physical collections that also take up space.

Over five decades (1972-2022), the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB), which has been associated with the Faculty of Communication Studies (UAB) since it was founded, has managed to earn a reputation as an international benchmark in communication research and studies. Its intelligent historical drive from the very beginning to build a collection that encompasses the diversity of European and Latin American thinking and trends, along with those of their North American counterparts, has made it a unique library due to the qualitative value of its unique book, periodicals and

special collections. Regarding its future challenges, it remains to be seen whether it manages to collect the scholarly output of interest currently being developed elsewhere in the world, such as Asia and the Pacific.

In terms of collections, it must continue to support teaching and learning with the acquisition of course materials, which are now primarily digital. This evolution towards a predominantly digital collection will enable spaces to be freed up which can then be adapted to the university community's new needs.

Regarding the special collections, their use as the foundation of academic studies and journalistic research should be encouraged. Furthermore, we must remain alert to the possibilities afforded by incorporating artificial intelligence into the management and dissemination of the heritage collections. Technological advances should help improve the management of the special collections by making it quicker to describe and classify the documentation, thus boosting the accessibility options, as well as by establishing relationships among documents and collections in a quick, efficient fashion.

The library's evolution in this direction will not be possible without the involvement of its staff, a human team that is increasingly multidisciplinary. Ongoing training programmes will be essential in ensuring that their knowledge and skills are up-to-date, which will enable the staff to successfully rise to the new challenges. It will also be increasingly necessary to forge alliances with other university services, as well as outside stakeholders.

The effort of digitalising the collections of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) and making them open-access means that this scholarly facility remains a benchmark as a service open to society which offers equal opportunities. The work in Digital Humanities also leads us to believe that new pathways in preserving the cultural heritage and transforming information into knowledge will continue to arise.

Finally, we must continue to motivate students, researchers, teachers and journalists to familiarise themselves with the document holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) so that they consult and analyse them to contribute new views and interpretations of recent contemporary history.

The innovative approach to ensure that users participate in co-designing new uses of the holdings of the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) will unquestionably expand this university facility's current public service dimension by generating new knowledge, which will also give back to society and enable us to achieve new milestones that have been unimaginable until now.

Notes

1. Service learning (SL) is an 'educational proposal whereby students are trained via participation in a project geared at resolving a community's real need, thus improving people's living conditions or environmental quality. This type of training, which is being implemented in certain classes at the university, is a way of linking education with the territory, with tangible proposals in which students learn how to resolve current social challenges. Source: UAB [online]: <https://bit.ly/3F4fSeS>
2. In Catalonia, Journalism programmes had begun in 1952 as a section of the Escuela Oficial de Periodismo (Official Journalism School) founded in Madrid in 1941. In May 1963, this body closed its doors, which ushered in a period of uncertainty, with the risk this entailed of the country, in the midst of the dictatorship, being left without this type of programme. However, this situation also paved the way for the organisation of new types of programmes 'outside the direct oversight of the regime, and this fortunately occurred' with the creation of the School of Journalism of the Church in the Institució Cultural del CIC, which were founded in Barcelona in 1964 (Berrio, 1997: 24).
3. Later, first-, second- and third-cycle programmes were gradually added in the other universities in Catalonia, both public ones: Universitat de Barcelona, Universitat de Girona, Universitat de Lleida, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, and Universitat Rovira i Virgili, and private ones: Universitat Ramon Llull, Universitat Abat Oliba-CEU, Universitat Internacional de Catalunya, Universitat Oberta de Catalunya and Universitat de Vic- Universitat Central de Catalunya.
4. When the Olympic Study Centre (CEO-UAB) became the Sport Research Institute (IRE-UAB) in 2018, the Communication Library and General Newspaper Archives (UAB) came to house the entire historical document collection of the CEO-UAB.
5. As of July 2023, the Library Service (UAB) is comprised of a network of facilities which work in coordination: the Science and Technology Library (UAB), the Communication and General Newspaper Library (UAB), the Social Sciences Library (UAB), the Humanities and General Map Library (UAB), the Medical Library (UAB) and the Veterinary Library (UAB) on the Bellaterra camps; the University Library of Sabadell (UAB); and the libraries of the Medical teaching unit in Vall d'Hebron (UAB) and the Josep Laporte (UAB) teaching unit in Barcelona.
6. In Catalonia, there is another benchmark political documentation centre, the Pavilion of the Republic (Universitat de Barcelona) which also specialises in political documentation, but its contents focus on the Second Republic, the Civil War and the exile, historical periods prior to the materials housed at CEDOC.

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Digitalisation, labour market and training. Opportunities and vulnerabilities for Communication graduates

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Paper received on 26 June 2023 and accepted on 23 October 2023

How to cite:

García Galera, M.C., Catalina-García, B. i Martínez Nicolás, M. (2023). Digitalisation, labour market and training. Opportunities and vulnerabilities for Communication graduates. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 35-44. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420934>

Abstract

Digitalisation has caused changes in the job search strategies of young people, who are increasingly dependent on specialised internet portals. For Communication graduates, having digital skills is also a requirement to find a job in this professional sector. The present study examines the impact of digitalisation on Communication graduates in both facets of access to the labour market. With this dual purpose, a survey was conducted among recent graduates (N=198) to learn about their job search strategies, and interviews were carried out with professionals in the communication sector (N=11) to identify the competencies and skills that companies require from young graduates. The results indicate that personal contacts continue to be the main way to find a job, and that companies in the sector demand technical/technological skills from new graduates that university training does not seem to be sufficiently providing.

Keywords

Communication, employability, training, digitalisation, graduates.

Resum

La digitalització ha provocat canvis en les estratègies de recerca de feina per part dels joves, cada cop més dependents dels portals especialitzats a internet. Per als graduats en Comunicació, disposar de competències digitals és, a més, un requisit per aconseguir una feina en aquest sector professional. En aquest treball s'estudia l'impacte de la digitalització en els graduats en Comunicació en els dos vessants de l'accés al mercat laboral. Amb aquest doble propòsit, es va fer una enquesta a titulats recents (N=198) per conèixer les seves estratègies en la recerca de feina, i entrevistes a professionals del sector de la comunicació (N=11) per identificar les competències i habilitats que les empreses exigeixen als joves graduats. Els resultats indiquen que els contactes personals encara són la via principal per obtenir un lloc de treball, i que les empreses del sector demanen als nous graduats competències tècniques/tecnològiques que sembla que la formació universitària no està atenent prou.

Paraules clau

Comunicació, ocupabilitat, formació, digitalització, graduats.

1. Introduction

Digitalisation is one of the characteristics of the 21st century and features young people as its leading figures. For both social natives and digital natives (Eddy, 2022), most, if not all, of their existence has taken place in a world in which terms such as

social networks, web platforms or mobile devices are as common as newspapers or television were for previous generations. In this context, young people have sought to make the most of this digitalisation, not only for leisure or entertainment, but also for everything related to work, from looking for employment to developing technological skills on the job.

These last two aspects are what we address in this paper. In the professional world, job search web platforms have become the standard procedure for creating virtual and personal networks (Peterson and Dover, 2014). Gasparèniènè et al. (2021) consider, in fact, that job search web platforms have completely replaced traditional forms of job searching, and that social networks such as LinkedIn have opened the door to interactive CVs compared to which traditional letters of recommendation will no longer make sense.

Once they enter the labour market, these young people in particular are required to have a series of digital skills and competencies that, although still quite recent, cannot be compared to the demands made in previous times. Writing specifically about the field of journalism, Soo Heong (2022) considers that the profile of the professional who wants to access the journalism market needs to combine narrative skills with technological and visual capabilities. That would be the ticket to employability in the communication sector around the world.

Over the last few years we have heard repeatedly that crises are moments for creativity and opportunities. If we focus on the labour context, one of the main challenges facing Spanish society is the employability of its graduates, especially in the digital and technological field, taking into account that we find ourselves in a market in which the number of young people pursuing a university degree is growing and that the labour market is becoming more and more competitive.

According to data from the Spanish National Institute of Statistics (2023), more than three million people are looking for work in our country at the time of this study, of which around one million are young people, defined as being between 24 and 35 years old. But let's add a little more information. In 2021, 48.7% of young people in that same age group held a higher education degree, which is 8.4 points higher than in 2011 and almost 15 points higher than in 2000 (34%). This is a figure which is also above the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development average (46.9%) (OECD, 2022). Nevertheless, there are countries with higher rates of university graduates than Spain, as is stated in this same report. Among the countries with the highest percentage of young people with tertiary education are Japan, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Norway, all above 55%.

Given this look at the employability situation, with high unemployment rates and a significant group of young people that is properly trained and prepared to enter the labour market, it is essential to increase the possibilities or ways through which these young people can obtain employment. Therefore, digitalisation holds a place among these new ways to have a paid job. Digitalisation has brought with it the possibility for these young people to publicly present their academic training and work history through different platforms. LinkedIn, Infojobs and Infoempleo allow journalism graduates to create professional profiles, upload their CVs and search for jobs based on their skills and interests. In Spain, these platforms are

the most commonly used and recommended resource for this purpose (Merino, 2021). At the same time, they have become a work showcase in which it is practically a requirement to have a presence on them to find a job (Komljenovic, 2019).

However, if we talk about digitalisation, one of the sectors most affected by the technological sea change is communication. An infographic about how the COVID-19 virus spreads in a room, a television presenter who, without leaving the set, appears to be reporting the news from the United States Congress, or a radio programme that allows the audience to listen in at any time or place. These are just some of the examples of how digital transformation has brought with it new tasks and, therefore, new professional profiles to companies in the communication sector. People who seek to develop such profiles are invariably asked to have digital skills that can be acquired—or not—in the course of one's university education. Communicators face a new reality that requires skills, competencies and knowledge that previously they did not have or were not necessary (Tuñez López, Martínez Solana, and Abejón Mendoza, 2010; Guo and Volz, 2019).

Therefore, digitalisation has brought about changes at different levels in this context. On the one hand, the possibility of accessing the labour market; and, on the other hand, the need to adapt to the technological contexts that prevail in the communicative context. Both aspects will be addressed in this paper. It is about observing how young people who have studied Communication value the possibilities that digitalisation offers them for finding a job, and, in turn, learn about: (1) technical/technological abilities; (2) the abilities of the profession; and (3) the personal skills that the profession demands.

2. Digitalisation in job searches

As mentioned above, in this process of digital transformation, the presence of tools and platforms that make it easier to find a position in the labour market is now an unavoidable reality. Compared to the traditional sending of CVs by post or delivery in person, technologies have opened up the possibilities of knowing what is happening in the labour market and making oneself a candidate for a job without leaving home.

Among the different functionalities of the internet, beyond leisure and information, job searching clearly figures as one of them (Durán and Feas, 2013). The expansion of social media and digital platforms has inevitably affected the practice and dynamics of job searches (Pais and Gandini, 2015), since it has facilitated or complemented the traditional routes for accessing the labour market. Searching for jobs online has certain advantages over traditional searches, thanks to the ease of access and its relative ease of use. Among these advantages, it seems easy to deduce, for example, the geographical factor—that is, job seekers can access offers, locally, elsewhere in their country, and internationally. Furthermore, Pais and Gandini (2015) highlight that online job searching is relatively

economical and also saves time compared to traditional methods, since it involves a reduction in costs compared to conventional searches (less spending on paper, correspondence, travel by car, among others) (Kuhn and Skuterud, 2004). Likewise, another advantage is the immediacy when sending CVs, since, once the offer has been selected, the job seeker can send their CV in digital format, as well as contact the company or intermediary that is publishing the job offer.

Therefore, if traditionally personal and professional relationships were essential to finding a job, with the digital transformation it is also essential to be present on digital job search platforms. Along these same lines, as Oncina and Pérez (2020) state in their paper, not using the internet today to look for work or not knowing how to do so properly are two of the main barriers to accessing the labour market, and they can become a reason for being effectively locked out of the labour market.

However, currently there is still no clear evidence about the specific weight of each of these elements in obtaining a job, as reflected in the research carried out by Dillahunt et al. (2021) among 768 people actively seeking work. They detected that there was a certain correlation with demographic factors and differences in the use of online platforms between variables such as income, gender, years of education, or even race. The results suggest that those with higher incomes searching for jobs on online platforms were more likely to use different strategies and more likely to receive callbacks than job seekers with lower incomes.

According to the *Talento Conectado 2019* report, prepared by Infoempleo (2019), the first option that candidates turn to when they are actively searching for work are online employment portals, consulted by 98% of those surveyed. This is followed by corporate websites (95%), recruitment companies (93%) and personal contacts (93%). Likewise, the results of the present paper reflect that social networks have allowed 23% of users who have received a job proposal through this medium to obtain a job.

For their part, employment web portals continue to be the most used tool by 95% of companies when they want to recruit new employees. This is followed by personal contacts (94%) and spontaneous applications (76%). This same report shows that increasing the number of CVs received (47%), improving their quality (45%) and diversifying recruitment channels (45%) are the objectives that the different companies that use social networks for recruitment hope to achieve.

Thus, if we focus on the communication sector, the data reflect that in recent decades this profession has experienced a significant decline (Walker, 2021). The first decade of the 21st century was especially difficult for media workers. As seen in the case of the United States, the number of workers employed by newspaper publishers decreased by more than half from the 2000s to the 2010s. Many of these job losses have been the result of the closure of companies in the sector, including 2,500 newspapers that have disappeared since 2005. This situation,

also driven by digital transformation, has led to a progressive adaptation of both the media and the communicators themselves, who have had to develop their digital skills to adapt to the new media ecosystem (Carnevale and Wezinger, 2022). Recent studies, such as Carnevale and Wezinger (2022), show that work in media newsrooms, including the traditional roles of news anchor, reporter, radio news host, editor and television news reporter, will decline by approximately 3% between 2022 and 2031. By 2031, these authors' projections show that the number of journalism jobs will have fallen almost 35% since 2002, a loss of more than 20,000 jobs. However, despite these data that tend towards pessimism, there are those who take a glass-half-full view to the journalistic profession, as long as the perception of journalism is expanded and the new profiles or skills that new media are demanding are taken into account (Molla, 2019). In fact, the communication professionals interviewed maintain, as we will later see, that new graduates are required to have communicative and technological skills that go beyond the degree in communication they have completed.

3. Digitalisation and work in the communication sector

Therefore, if we compare the expectations from two decades ago (Pavlik, 2001) with the most current forecasts (Newman, 2021), we can see the scale of the impact of digitalisation on companies. The communication sector has been immersed, almost since the beginning of the 21st century, in a radical transformation of its productive structures and business models as a consequence of the digitalisation of all the processes involved in the communication circuit (production, distribution and consumption of the products generated by these cultural industries: journalistic information, advertisements, cinema, series, etc.), forcing them to open themselves towards a remaking of traditional job profiles in all the professional fields involved: journalism, advertising, public relations and audiovisual creation (Vivar, 2011; Perlado, 2013: PwC Foundation and Atresmedia Foundation, 2016; Cerezo, 2018).

The work carried out by Goodman and Stein (2017) includes ten case studies, each focusing on a different country, in which it is evident that the disconnect between the university training of future journalists and work in newsrooms is not exclusive to some countries, but that it is a worldwide characteristic, and that the rapid changes the profession is undergoing is at the core of this dissonance.

Likewise, these differences are not new nor have they emerged as a consequence of the digital advent. Since the first school of journalism was established in Missouri, United States in 1908, and a little later, in 1912, when the Columbia Journalism School (New York, USA) opened (Mensing, 2011), or later, after World War II, when the first journalism faculties were established in Europe, the argument between academia and industry has been a constant. As Nygren (2016) states, university training in communication emphasises critical thinking, independence

and flexibility, although the industry raises certain objections in considering that the university does not offer enough practical training.

The changes introduced by technologies in the world of communication have led some authors to speak of a convergence of functions that result in the 'super-communicator' (Spyridou and Veglis, 2016; Lugmayr and Dal Zotto, 2016; Domingo et al., 2007). This convergence involves the publication of news and information on multiple platforms, with integrated news production, a role as a multimedia narrator and with the necessary knowledge of social media and as a platform for the dissemination and positioning of content.

4. Objectives and methodology

In this context, the objective of this work is to ascertain how young people operate in the digital ecosystem, both when searching for employment and when carrying out the tasks inherent to the job -- in this case, in the communicative context. That is to say, it seeks to observe, on the one hand, how young graduates in Communication (specifically Journalism, Audiovisual Communication, Advertising and Public Relations) are using digital tools to search for employment, what results they have obtained and what ease or difficulty they have experienced when searching for work through these web platforms (such as Infojobs or Infoempleo) or social networks such as LinkedIn. The aim is also to observe how journalism professionals value the digital or technological skills of the new generations in their day-to-day work.

To address the first objective, the research instrument used was the survey, and for this an online questionnaire was developed that was adapted to the conditions of social networks. The online survey has some intrinsic characteristics, such as the speed in collecting information, the low cost and the improvement in responses, characteristics that were perfectly adapted to the study carried out here (Díaz de Rada, 2012). For this reason, the quantitative technique of the online survey among young graduates of the degrees in Communication between 23 and 30 years old, specifically from the Community of Madrid, through the online tool SurveyMonkey has been chosen. The sample size includes 198 young graduates, defined as having completed their studies within the last three years. A random probabilistic selection was carried out based on the type of studies.

Through this online survey we have tried to verify the hypothesis that despite the growing importance and prominence of employment web platforms, and the entire digitalisation process, the primary agents that have traditionally played an important role in finding a job, such as friends and family, continue to play a leading role in job placement for graduates.

For the second objective of this paper, the qualitative technique of a structured interview was used. In social research, the interview is a means to access knowledge of social phenomena.

For this reason, in the interviews that we discuss in this work, the interviewee acts almost as a proxy. It can be said that the interviewee is an intermediary that needs to be passed through in order to capture a collective reality (Penalva et al., 2015). This research technique was used in similar studies, such as that of Baranova (2017), who over a period of seven years interviewed 40 media managers in Russia, in order to know what skills and competencies journalists should have in the present day. Previously, in the British context, Saltzis and Dickinson (2008) also carried out research using the structured interview technique with journalists from the BBC, Sky News, the Guardian and the Financial Times.

The interviews were individual and conducted through Microsoft Teams, which allowed for both audio and video recording of all interviews. The industry professionals who were selected for the study had to meet the following requirements: (1) to have been in the same communication company for more than ten years; (2) to be recipients of CVs and responsible or jointly responsible for hiring; (3) to know first-hand the employment needs of their organisations; (4) to have positions of responsibility within the company. Regarding the selected companies, they are owners of media with different intended reaches (national or local) and of different types (agency, press, radio, television), which were the two variables that were taken into consideration for the final selection. Additionally, it was undertaken to avoid redundancy -- that is, to avoid the situation of a saturated sample and new cases not providing new information.. The selected companies were: News agency: Colpisa; Newspapers: El Confidencial, Diario As and La Voz de Cádiz; Radio stations: RNE, Radio Euskadi; Television: Canal Sur, Spanish Television (RTVE), Telemadrid, Television Galicia and La Sexta. Although in some cases (namely agencies and newspapers) the companies are linked to journalistic information, these firms call for not only graduates in Journalism, but also in Audiovisual Communication and in Advertising and Public Relations. And this is not only due to their status as companies, but, as seen in the interviews carried out, due to the changes that the practice of journalism is experiencing in the digital environment, which gives increasing weight to audiovisual narratives and to knowledge of promotion strategies for information products, such as SEO positioning.

For the qualitative analysis of the data, Atlas.ti was used, falling under the umbrella of so-called CAQDAS ('Computer-Assisted/Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software') (Lee & Fielding, 1996) that emerged in the mid-1980s. The Atlas.ti program is a tool designed to help the analyst in the interpretation of textual data. It allows the construction of models through semantic networks. Qualitative research has conceptualisation as its main objective. It is a work of abstraction to discover in an intuitive and inductive way hidden structures of phenomena following the exploration of textual data. The Atlas/ti includes a set of tools that allows the management, extraction, exploration and restructuring of significant elements of the data (Penalva et al, 2015, 127).

5. Quantitative results

Use of platforms and social networks for job searching

The total proportion of respondents based on the type of studies is distributed as follows: graduates in Advertising and Public Relations account for 38% of the total. They are followed by Journalism, with 28%; Audiovisual Communication, with 21%; and the remaining 13% corresponds to students who took other types of degrees in Communication.

On a Likert scale from 1 to 5, the vast majority of respondents (61.76%) agree (somewhat, mostly or completely) that job portals are essential to finding a job today. In fact, 63% of those surveyed consider that employment web platforms or social networks such as LinkedIn are ‘a good place to publish your CV and make yourself known at work’. Along these lines, 89% of young people claim to have a LinkedIn profile, followed by 62% who claim to have their professional and academic profile on Infojobs. These data reflect that a significant majority of young people have their CV published on more than one platform/ social network.

In fact, 48% claim to have published their CV on ‘all the job portals they know’. However, another representative part of the

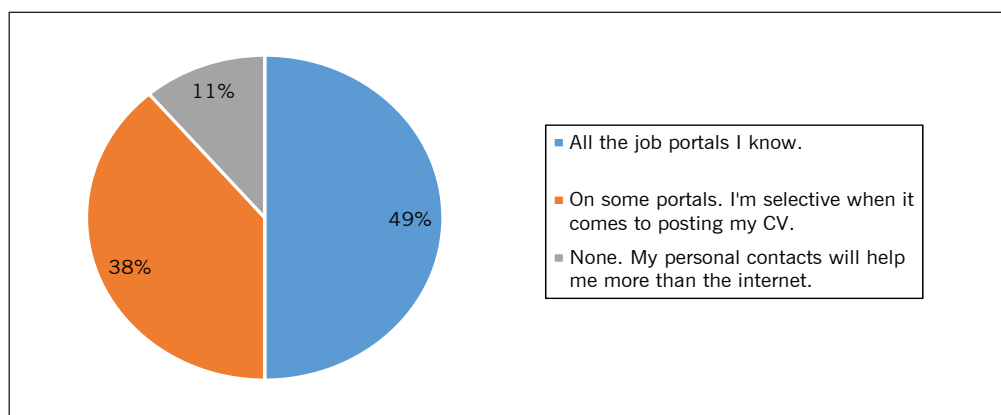
sample (38%) are somewhat more selective and only have their CV published on certain portals. On the opposite side, 11% of young people do not consider it necessary to have their CV published on any employment web platform or social network, since their personal contacts help/will help them more in finding a job than the internet.

Social relationships in job searching

Faced with the possibilities that digitalisation has brought with it for job searching, the experience of young people seems to reflect that family and social relationships continue to play an important role when entering the labour market or moving through it. Thus, 49% claim to have found their first job through family, friends and/or acquaintances, and 70.5% respond that they somewhat or totally agree with the statement that ‘Web employment platforms are important and you have to be on them; however, the truly interesting offers usually come through more traditional methods such as friends, acquaintances or family’.

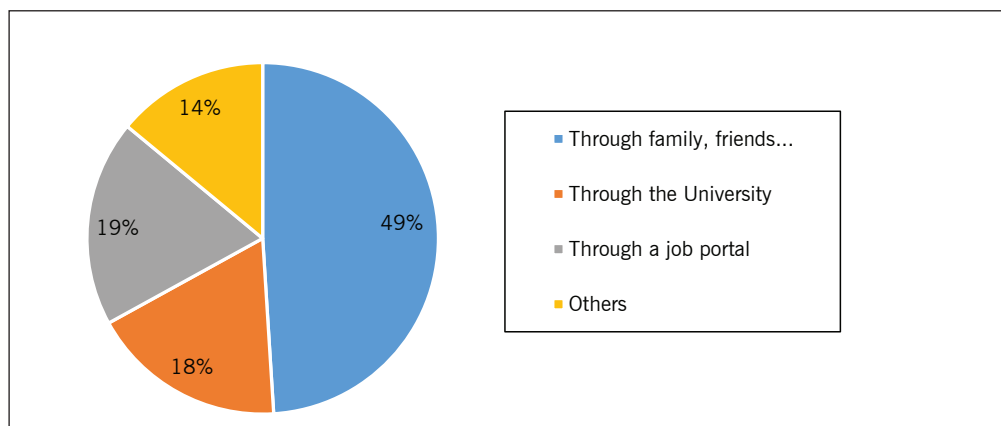
However, 45% of young people surveyed declare that they respond quite frequently to job offers from these portals. As can be seen in Figure 2, 19% obtained a job through an employment

Figure 1. Percentage of publication of CVs by Communication graduates on job search portals/social networks



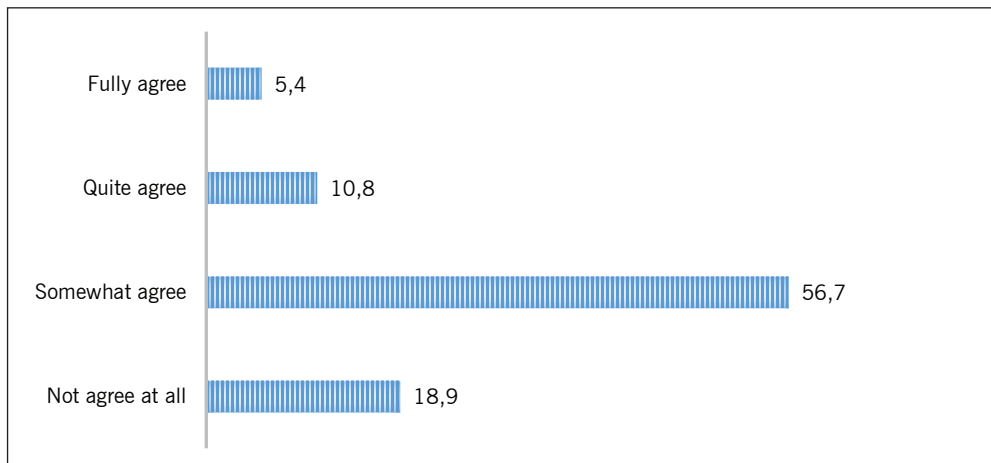
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Percentage of Communication graduates in relation to the way in which they have found employment



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Percentage of respondents who declare that the training being demanded in the labour market today is what is obtained at university



Source: Own elaboration.

web portal, which would mean that 1 in 5 young people access the labour market through internet offers. Furthermore, out of these young people, 48% affirm that they got the job after responding to an offer published on the portal and 34% declare that 'I introduced myself with my CV and they contacted me'.

For their part, 64% of young people surveyed claim to respond quite frequently to job offers advertised on these portals/social networks. However, these young people, 46% of the total, consider these portals/social networks to be overrated for job searches, and one in four agree with the statement 'although there are a lot of them, they are not really useful for finding work'.

Finally, it was also of interest for the study to know first-hand whether the university training that young graduates in Communication have received is responsive to the demands of the labour market. Survey respondents were therefore asked if, in their experience, the training that is demanded in the labour market today is what is obtained at university. As can be seen in the Figure 3, there are few who believe firmly that this is the case. About 60% say they somewhat agree and 19% do not agree at all. This totals to almost 80% of university graduates in the different fields of communication who have verified that the training they received at university is related to the demand of communication companies.

6. Qualitative analysis results

The script on which the interviews are based contained eight questions, out of which we will analyse in this paper the one related to the digital transformation of the communication sector and the one that refers to the knowledge, competencies, skills and abilities that the communication medium requires or demands from workers, especially new hires, a consequence that, specifically, is a result of digital transformation. To analyse

these competencies, we have divided the account into three fundamental parts: (1) technical/technological abilities; (2) abilities specific to the profession; and (3) personal skills.

Regarding the process of change that the communication sector is experiencing, it is recognised that 'it is in the midst of a digital transformation process, I think like most of the media in this country. We are truly undergoing a process of digital transformation within the company, which requires an absolute modernisation and updating of everything to do with the company's professional profiles' (*Canal Sur*); 'Now we need employees who truly master and know how to get around on social media' (*Telemadrid*). It is clear, therefore, that the backdrop has changed. A person who ably uses social media, who is familiar with various technologies, new communication skills and competencies is valued, without forgetting the traditional abilities in the field of communication.

The hiring managers interviewed agree when talking about the technical/technological skills required of new graduates entering newsrooms. In fact, there seems to be unanimity on the part of those interviewed when it comes to affirming that digitalisation is already part of the DNA of young graduates, although it is necessary for them to know how to channel it to the world of work. In television, for example, 'knowing how to handle audio and video formats, such as monitoring, transmedia, SEO, SEM, digital strategy, channel management, artificial intelligence or product development' (RTVE); 'Specific profiles: Multimedia Operator, person with Audiovisual Production and Communication skills, specialising in the management and execution of Multiscreen streaming; Multimedia Designer, as a person with abilities, with skills, in specialised Graphics, Mobile Web and Front-end Design, and Smart TVs' (*Canal Sur*).

The topic of SEO appears quite often in all those interviewed. We are no longer looking for just an employee, but rather an employee 'with SEO knowledge' (*Diario As*). Or on social media: 'We need an employee who truly masters and knows how to

get around on social media' (*Telemadrid*); 'SEO Editor, as the person in charge of executing the optimisation of the content published on the site by the Web Editorial Team, evaluating recommended SEO and social media criteria' (*Canal Sur*).

'To begin with, and to identify, as well as the four or five key profiles, they could be, first, that they had programming knowledge, data analysis knowledge; there we already have two profiles. But there is another front, which is audience development, which is something more evolved coming from SEO, people who have SEO profiles, we are talking here about technical SEO. In newsrooms [...], you need staff who offer you approaches and ideas that no one else is going to offer. In other words, you need people who understand very well what they are covering, who offer analysis, contextualisation, who decipher current events for everyone' (*El Confidencial*).

It is true that today's young people have digital experience that previous generations did not have: 'I think that this is an added value for young people who, if they know how to take advantage of it, have a lot to gain when it comes to joining the labour market' (*Colpisa*); 'People who come from university now tend to come with a higher digital profile than we employees who are already working normally have' (*Radio Euskadi*); 'The biggest difference is that those from the newspaper find the concept of immediacy and technology much more difficult than those who come from university, young kids, who find it much less difficult' (*Diario As*).

However, this digital skill does not seem to bear fruit in the same way in the labour market, since the demand for certain digital skills among employees makes it difficult, according to those interviewed, to find adequately prepared young graduates: 'We are demanding a series of profiles, from a technological perspective, and it is very difficult. They have been published on LinkedIn, and we are having a lot of difficulty completing it. Of the categories that have been presented, many are empty at the moment because we cannot find people' (*RTVE*).

Regarding skills in the communication professions, the digital transformation they are undergoing can be observed in the interviews. It is stated that it is necessary to keep in mind 'the omnichannel sense, we have to be focused on the story, regardless of the window in which we can broadcast it' (*RTVE*); 'Above all, we need people who know the world of communication from the new multiplatform possibilities' (*RTVE*). In a more critical way, some interviewees point out that today's reality gives way to what can be considered as 'one-man or woman band: because you produce programs, you produce your own content, you record it, you write a script, even though you are supervised by your coordinators, and then you edit it together with a director' (*La Sexta*). The professionals interviewed agree that there is a certain lack in the new generations of knowing how to express themselves easily or knowledge of the structure of the communication business. More traditional skills, such as languages, are taken for granted, especially English: 'If someone is not completely fluent in English, they are not useful for us' (*El Confidencial*); as well as the ability to communicate: 'They

should know how to communicate, they should know how to empathise with the story they are telling and they should help us get into that story' (*Telemadrid*); 'Writing and speaking well is not that simple' (*Radio Euskadi*);

The last point is related to cross-cutting skills or also called soft skills or competencies (creativity, communication, leadership, among others), which differ from 'hard' skills in that the former are not teachable and they cannot be learned (Giraldo, 2020). In this regard, those interviewed understand that recent graduates often arrive at the job with little previous professional experience, but that there are other (soft) skills that should be required of them: 'What is asked of them is desire, it is adequate training, they should know how to write, they should know how to do what they need to do in a normal way' (*Colpisa*). But that does not mean they are exempt from knowing 'how things work' when they arrive at a company. Passion for working is one of the elements mentioned: 'Each subject area manager looks for someone who is passionate, who is crazy about it. If you don't have that, it is impossible, because this is a sector where a lot of work is done, it is very intense, there is a lot of wear and tear. So you need someone who is passionate about it. They need to be crazy about this' (*El Confidencial*); 'The fundamental basis is that you like your job, that you want to do your job well, that you are willing to make the sacrifices it requires' (*La Voz de Cádiz*); 'They are required to be creative, creativity is very important' (*Telemadrid*).

In the opinion of those interviewed, those who have recently entered the labour market lack the courage to try to be a little more ambitious: 'In other words, you have to get to a place and not say [that] "I am the best", but say [that] "I can become the best"' (*Colpisa*). Therefore, taking the initiative is essential for all of them, and not waiting for others to decide: 'That is, not waiting to be told to do something, but having the initiative to want to do it' (*Diario As*); 'You have to show some curiosity about something, to have done something, like a podcast, for example, to have had some experience in something, to be active and not just settle for having a degree' (*El Confidencial*). It is in this aspect, again, where certain criticisms appear regarding the graduates who join the professional world: 'In a high percentage of them I do perceive that, well, they are there because they have to complete the hours that are required of them to complete their degree, but they do not take advantage of it as an opportunity to pour themselves into it and to see that I am valid and that I can be useful' (*Colpisa*).

7. Conclusions

The digital transformation in the field of Communication has affected all elements of the classic communication model; that is, the sender, the medium and the receiver or audience. This study has focused on the need for change that the sender has experienced, principally the journalist, who is required to have new skills and knowledge. For long-time workers in the industry,

this transformation has involved adaptation to new tools and ways of doing things, even of communicating. For young people, who were born digital, this adaptation has involved understanding that technologies are not only required for leisure or entertainment, but for something as important as searching for a job or being able to keep it.

The results of the primary research collected in this work show, first of all, that, despite the presence and importance of online employment platforms, one in two jobs among young graduates in some field of Communication is still gained through traditional methods such as personal contacts, family or friends, while one in five is gained through digital platforms. These results are not those expected, since the traditional strategy of joining the labour market through contacts in one's environment has been maintained. Companies are also interested in these digital search tools, but they are not finding what they need either. All this leads us to think of two arguments to justify the low effectiveness of these tools. Firstly, young people do not seem to know how to 'sell themselves' and do not convincingly show the benefits of their profile. In other words, they lack the ability to know how to communicate in an environment other than face to face, a necessary aptitude for the professional practice of the communication professions.

Consequently, despite the prominence that these web platforms are acquiring in job searches, it seems necessary to delve deeper into this line of research to determine their real prominence, whether these digital tools replace or complement traditional agents when it comes to trying to find a job in the field of communication. Although digitalisation, therefore, does not yet appear as the main way to enter the labour market, it is true that, in communication companies, the technological skills that are implicit in the job of communicator today are more than necessary, an aspect that coincides with the results of Soo Heong (2022).

This study has also made it possible to link the current work reality in the communication sector with the effectiveness of the training provided in universities. Although the young people surveyed express their satisfaction with the training obtained at university, companies demand professional qualities that seem to go beyond the training pathway that is taken in university degrees, an issue that should also be a reason for reflection on a restructuring of higher education that is more closely adapted to the demands of the job market.

The competitiveness that has arisen with the forced adaptation of communication companies to the digital environment requires a communicator profile that -without losing its traditional qualities of perseverance, taste for the profession and an adequate ability to communicate- requires digital skills far beyond their knowledge acquired in daily life through the use of the internet and social media. The skills required now point to a much greater preparation than that shown by young job seekers. Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on a greater impact of university training on a much more advanced management of technologies and content hosted on the internet.

Secondly, companies are demanding skills that are practically impossible for a young person to have in their search for a first job and with little professional experience. The immediacy required in current journalistic routines may be the origin of these demands, but, in addition, it must be combined with the creativity exhibited by some of the industry professionals interviewed. However, this creativity must have a basis. Original ideas do not arise from nothing, but from experience and adequate university training.

Therefore, and from this context, several lines of reflection and research emerge: on the one hand, there is the need for a greater link between the university environment and current professional reality. On the other hand, we see the responsibility of the companies themselves to promote the entry into the labour market of young people who are required, to a large extent, to have knowledge and skills that cannot be generated in the educational environment, but rather through experience in a gradually developing work environment. Yes, it is true that competition is increasing and reaches unusual limits until the arrival of new technologies, but one might also wonder how many of the already established professionals actually started out with the preparation that young graduates currently have, although, we insist, this training still has many shortcomings and defects that must be corrected with a closer approach between the university and the professional environment.

Financing of work

This work is the result of the collaboration between the research projects *Nuevos escenarios de vulnerabilidad digital: alfabetización mediática para una sociedad inclusiva* (PROVULDIG2-#CM), funded by Comunitat de Madrid and by European Social Fund (H2019/HUM-5775, 2020-2022), and the project *Empleabilidad y emprendimiento en comunicación en el contexto digital: demandas del mercado de trabajo, oferta formativa universitaria y experiencia laboral de los graduados*, funded by Pla Estatal d'R+D+i (PID2019-106299GB-I00) (AEI/10.13039/501100011033).

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YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the final project: The case of the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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Paper received on 30 June 2023 and accepted on 6 October 2023

How to cite:

Lázaro Pernias, P. & Zéler I. (2023). YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the final project: The case of the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 45-52.

doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420937>

Abstract

This article proposes the use of YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the activities associated with the final project in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Specifically, it examines this formative approach through the creation of video tutorials, while also seeking to promote students' active participation, giving them a prominent role in their own training process by asking them to produce videos to present and defend their final projects.

Keywords

Higher education, video tutorial, video defence, YouTube, final project.

Resum

Aquest article proposa l'ús de YouTube com a eina de divulgació formativa de les activitats vinculades als TFG del Grau de Publicitat i Relacions Públiques de la Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. En concret, recull aquest plantejament formatiu a través de la creació de videotutorials, alhora que busca impulsar la participació activa dels estudiants i els brinda un paper protagonista en el seu propi procés de formació, en proposar-los que produeixin vídeos per a la presentació i defensa dels seus TFG.

Paraules clau

Educació superior, videotutorial, videodefensa, YouTube, TFG.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the use of video as an educational resource has risen significantly, including its use as a complement to face-to-face teaching, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Pattier & Ferreira, 2022; Succar et al., 2022). Teachers at all educational levels, including the university, have chosen to integrate audiovisual materials into their classes. Video tutorials in particular are used as a complement to traditional teaching strategies to facilitate comprehension of the information (Bengochea & Medina, 2013) and make the teaching-learning process more dynamic and appealing. Within this context, YouTube has become the platform of choice to both find and share these resources, thus becoming an invaluable tool for education.

One of the essential reasons for using these resources is to support a generation of students who are increasingly

habituated to consuming content via multiple platforms, formats and digital media and to meet them on their own terms (Bengochea & Medina, 2013). According to Gutiérrez et al. (2018), some students claim that the tutorials available on YouTube are extremely helpful in their learning process because they can watch them as many times as needed and they adapt to each person and their level of understanding. Furthermore, YouTube is a tool that offers students the possibility of creating and disseminating their own educational materials, like projects and research, facilitating other students, professors and people interested in the topic access to these materials. Thus, with millions of videos available on a wide variety of topics, YouTube has become a rich, diverse source of learning.

Despite the increasing use of audiovisual resources in university teaching (Bengochea & Medina, 2013; Placencia, 2015), particularly platforms like YouTube (Gallego Domínguez & Murillo Estepa, 2018; Lozano Díaz et al., 2020; Maraza-

Quispe et al., 2020; Posligua Anchundia, 2020), their specific application within the context of final projects for Bachelor's degrees has not yet been thoroughly explored. The final project is a compulsory subject in higher education in Spain in which the students have to apply the knowledge and competences acquired during their programme in an integrated fashion. Even though there are common guidelines for the design, development and presentation of the final project, as well as guidelines on the different modalities and contents of the different sections (Sierra Sánchez et al., 2018), each university establishes their certain particular rules. In this sense, it may be worthwhile to specify these particularities to both students and professors, especially new ones. No specific class for students or training for their advisors on the final project is currently offered in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB).

Furthermore, after completing the final project, many students have to grapple with their projects' lack of visibility, which limits their ability to share their research. YouTube could play a valuable role in addressing these challenges.

This article presents a teaching innovation project which received funding in an internal call for applications at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. The project was developed by the faculty in the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Audiovisual Communication at the same university. The instructors in this department are responsible for most of the final projects in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations, as well as other Communication degrees.

This project proposes using YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of activities related to the final project. Specifically, it focuses on creating formative video tutorials while also seeking to promote students' participation, giving them a prominent role in their own training process by proposing that they produce videos to present and defend their final projects. This proposal allows students to develop communicative and creative skills while also promoting greater interaction with the academic community. This project also addresses the need to improve the visibility and dissemination of students' work by using a globally known platform like YouTube to facilitate access to and feedback from a broader audience.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 The didactic use of video in the educational setting

The integration of the information and communication technologies (ICT) into teaching has brought about a pedagogical innovation. The availability of digital platforms, resources and teaching materials contributes significantly to students' training in their future competences. According to the recommendations of the European Council, acquiring digital competences is essential in the learning process. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers receive to receive training in this area (Calero Sánchez, 2019) and to use these tools in their own teaching. To this

end, the Ministry of Education and Professional Training has developed the 'Reference Framework for the Digital Teaching Competence', which compiles digital resources and tools to support teachers as they create and edit, communicate, share and collaborate, among other aspects (INTEF, 2017).

Video has become a teaching resource that facilitates teaching and the comprehension of information. The use of videos in the teaching-learning process makes it more dynamic and appealing, as prior studies have highlighted (Choe et al., 2019) while maintaining high learning outcomes in online education. We presented different lecture video styles with standardized material to students and then measured learning outcomes and satisfaction with a survey and summative assessment. We created an iterative qualitative coding scheme, "coding online asynchronous lectures" (COAL). Furthermore, in higher education, there is evidence that the use of videos can improve the learning process (Noetel et al., 2021). However, it is important to note that some authors warn that educational videos can be more effective when they are applied in groups with a homogeneous educational level (Kohler & Dietrich, 2021). Videos can be used both to teach students content and for students to express and communicate what they have learned (García Aragón, 2016). Therefore, this resource not only allows educators to convey and enhance comprehension but also facilitates creative communication of what students have learned.

In recent years, the use of video has experienced considerable growth in educational communities and has been shown to afford major advantages for formal and informal education during crises, such as COVID-19 (Lowenthal & West, 2020; Pattier & Ferreira, 2022). The consumption of audiovisual content through digital platforms has increased, and more and more students are choosing to use these resources for their education (Bengochea & Medina, 2013). Furthermore, the imminent arrival of artificial intelligence is challenging forms of teaching-learning based on interaction, which is leading to the development of more automated and predictive education (Incio Flores et al., 2022).

The diverse video style available in the field of education (Choe et al., 2019; Zacarias Ricardo & Revilla Miguel, 2019) while maintaining high learning outcomes in online education. We presented different lecture video styles with standardized material to students and then measured learning outcomes and satisfaction with a survey and summative assessment. We created an iterative qualitative coding scheme, "coding online asynchronous lectures" (COAL include video tutorials or training clips (Bengochea & Medina, 2013). Video tutorials are distinguished from other from recordings of face-to-face classes because they are designed specifically to be watched asynchronously. They include contents that complement traditional formative strategies, facilitate an understanding of the subject and improve the quality of learning (Bengochea & Medina, 2013; Jiménez Castillo & Marín Carrillo, 2012). According to García Aragón (2016), the use of images in videos may make phenomena or concepts easier to understand

because they allow static and moving images, sound and text to be combined in a single piece. This integration of elements facilitates the expression of the information to be taught and consequently improves the receiver's ability to understand it.

Fyfield et al. (2019) suggest certain principles for the design of video tutorials: they should focus on a single learning topic, be short in length and direct students' attention toward specific elements on the screen. Therefore, while these educational videos can be a significant informative resource for students, their success in the university community depends on the production quality of the content to ensure that it is synthetic, quick and effective (Fyfield et al., 2019).

There is a range of tools and media that allow video tutorials to be created (Placencia, 2015). For example, the INTEF (2017) digital kit includes tips to create high-quality video tutorials, as well as recommendations for tools and media to produce them (like Filmora, Screencastify, Monosnap, Active Presenter) and edit them (like VideoPad, Filmora edición, Openshot, Wevideo). These tools allow educators to design and develop effective video tutorials which can be shared via a variety of digital platforms. Among these platforms, YouTube has become one of the most popular among educators, primarily since the pandemic (Pattier & Ferreira, 2022; Succar et al., 2022,) due its due to its ability to overcome connectivity barriers in certain social and cultural contexts.

2.2 YouTube as a tool for educational dissemination

YouTube is the social media with the fourth highest number of users young users and is ranked second by users in Spain according to the annual study by IAB Spain in 2023 (ELOGIA, 2023). This platform was created as a space to display and disseminate one's own audiovisual contents (Maraza-Quispe et al., 2020). Its mission, according to its creators, is 'to give everyone a voice and show them the world' (YouTube, no date). Users of this digital platform can enjoy a wide variety of content in audiovisual format and create and share their own videos with an extensive audience. YouTube offers the possibility of personalising the experience through the creation of one's own channels, subscriptions to channels of interest and interaction with the contents. Furthermore, it is available in more than 88 countries through a variety of devices, which fosters global connectivity (Lozano Díaz et al., 2020).

The content available on YouTube is considered an invaluable source of knowledge for both students and teachers. For this reason, it is the ideal educational platform, as it offers the possibility of consuming, creating and sharing videos that facilitate knowledge, entertainment and social visibility (Gutiérrez et al., 2018). The use of YouTube videos as teaching material generates positive results in students' learning due to their keen interest in audiovisual contents (Pérez Gómez & Cuecuecha Mendoza, 2020). According to Gutiérrez et al. (2018), some students claim that the tutorials available on YouTube contribute to their learning process because they can be viewed as many times as needed, adapting to the person

and their level of understanding. However, some authors claim that attitudinal factors like perceived utility or ease of use, as well as the quality of the materials, are crucial factors in getting students to appreciate using YouTube videos as teaching material (Harper et al., 2023).

Many professor comment that this social media facilitates the understanding of information when presented in video format (Posligua Anchundia, 2020). However, Harper et al. (2023) stress the importance of professors first choosing the contents in order to avoid the perception of risk among students if they consult inaccurate or obsolete contents or spend too much time searching for appropriate contents themselves.

On the other hand, YouTube facilitates the administration and organisation of collections of online educational videos, which contributes to academic training. Students also have the opportunity to become producers of videos and to disseminate them via the social media. Thus, YouTube is a potentially beneficial option in the field of education (Maraza-Quispe et al., 2020), as well as one of the social media, along with TikTok and Instagram, used the most by higher education institutions and faculty to connect with the university community (Lozano Díaz et al., 2020).

There are many experiences using the social media, and specifically YouTube, as a teaching tool in university education. The literature and a direct search on YouTube itself show a wide thematic range that encompasses language learning, pedagogy, law, medicine and chemistry. Many of these experiences emerged from the faculty's desire to seek effective formulas for teaching innovation and reflect different ways of making the most of the medium's potentialities. Many articles describe how to prepare a repository of selected videos in the medium itself (Farag et al., 2020; Lozano Díaz et al., 2020; Rudenkin & Grushevskaya, 2019). Other experiences are based on faculty developing their own materials. In this case, we can distinguish different modalities: classes or lectures recorded in the face-to-face classroom (with MIT OpenCourseWare as the main referent) or developed specifically for educational channels (Pattier & Ferreira, 2022; Ranga, 2017), and the creation of video tutorials or training clips (Bou Franch, 2021; Zhyrun, 2016). Likewise, we should highlight experiences based on students' role as content creators (Orús et al., 2016).

3. The final project in the UAB Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations

The final project is an essential requirement to earn an official university degree in Spain. It became compulsory through Royal Decree 1393/2007 dated 29 October 2007, which was later amended by Royal Decree 861/2010, dated 2 July 2010, and Royal Decree 43/2015, dated 2 February 2015, which addressed curricular, structural and organisational transformations (Sierra Sánchez et al., 2018). The final project is done towards the end of the degree programme, and its goal

is to assess competences associated with the degree. Each university determines the number of credits (ECTS) assigned to the final project (a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 30 ECTS), as well as the modalities and procedures of the defence and assessment of the project.

At the UAB, these aspects are regulated in the university's academic rules (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2022). Likewise, for the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations, the access requirements and guidelines for developing and assessing the project are specified in a section of the Faculty of Communication Studies website (no date). The final project is a compulsory subject worth 12 ECTS in all programmes in this faculty. It can take on one of two forms (research or project) and can be done either individually or in a group. According to the rules, each project must have an advisor who is an expert in the field, and its assessment must include a compulsory public defence.

4. Objectives of the innovation project

The innovation project presented in this article seeks to use YouTube as a tool of formative dissemination of the activities associated with the final projects in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB. To do so, the following specific objectives were set:

- To promote the creation and posting of video tutorials related to planning, developing and presenting final projects on the official YouTube channel of the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Audiovisual Communication at the UAB in order to contribute to students' complementary training for this project and to help the faculty in charge of advising them.
- To promote the preparation of videos presenting the final projects of students in the Bachelor's degree and to disseminate them via the same YouTube channel

Unlike many experiments using YouTube in university teaching in which the teachers choose videos previously posted in the social media (Lozano Díaz et al., 2020; Oliva Marañón & Gallego Trijueque, 2021), this proposal entails producing in-house audiovisual materials, avoiding the 'lesson' format.

5. Methodological proposal / work method

Based on the specific objectives, a study was planned with two phases which were conducted simultaneously. The first phase focused on creating and posting video tutorials. The second phase focused on compiling videos presenting final projects with marks of at least 8.5 (out of 10) in order to disseminate them. The goal of this action was to promote students' work and turn it into a reference for future students, thus bringing additional value to the final projects.

5.1 First phase

In the first phase, a methodological approach was designed that bore in mind students' training needs and the support that faculty need when advising final projects, especially new faculty that are advising them for the first time.

Initially, relevant topics that could be addressed in the video tutorials were identified, most of them based on the experience of the project team and conversations with other professors in the degree programme. The following training needs were detected:

- needs related to the final project planning process, like the kinds of final projects, academic rules, the role of the advisor, etc
- needs related to developing the final project: structure according to type, methodological tools, handling references and the bibliography, plagiarism, etc
- needs related to the defence of the final project, both face-to-face and on video: length, resources and additional tools.

In addition to defining the topics, the most appropriate formats for the video tutorials were explored. The goal was to generate a communicative style that was appealing to students, considering the use of voiceover to provide the relevant explanations and including images from a variety of sources, like our own recordings, images from free image banks (www.pexels.com), music free of copyright (www.jamendo.com) and screen captures. Plus, institutional images that the UAB makes available to the university community were used to incorporate features of its corporate identity.

Next, scripts were prepared for the first videos produced. The decision to start the channel with these first few videos reflected two criteria: to provide material that was chronologically congruent with the stages in the final project, and to meet the demands of the faculty in the degree who mentioned specific training needs in prior informal conversations. It was considered important to establish a suitable length for the videos (between 1 and 3 minutes) to make them more user-friendly, avoid boredom and discourage students from stopping while viewing them. Later, the production and post-production stage of these materials began (see Figure 1).

The materials were posted on the YouTube channel of the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Audiovisual Communication of the UAB (@departamentpublicitatua853) within a playlist called 'Final Projects – Tutorials'

5.2 Second phase

In the second phase, we enlisted the collaboration and complicity of final project advisors in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations. These professors play a core role in supervising and guiding final projects, so they were sent a letter introducing the project and inviting them to participate actively in it.

The advisors were supposed to act as intermediaries with the students interested in preparing the videos presenting explaining their final projects. To facilitate this process, they were provided with informative materials that they were supposed to share

Figure 1. Stills extracted from one of the tutorial videos published on the YouTube channel



Source: Own elaboration.

with their students, which included detailed instructions, tips and practical tools to prepare the videos. The advisors were also asked to request the participating students to sign a document granting image rights.

Throughout this process, any questions from the collaborating faculty were welcomed and answered. Furthermore, recommendations provided by the advisors were taken into consideration and integrated into the project. This collaboration and feedback were essential to guarantee the success of this phase in order to achieve the project's objectives.

Once the process of writing and defending the final project was over (in the months of June and July 2022 and 2023), the advisors were asked to send in the videos. The team in charge of the project chose the videos that were ultimately posted on YouTube. It is important to note that even though some of the projects earned a mark higher than 8.5 out of 10, not all the videos of the final project defences met the quality standards needed due to flaws in their image and/or sound, which excluded them from the channel.

Having considered all these factors, the material chosen was posted on the YouTube channel of the Department of Advertising, Public Relations and Audiovisual Communication of the UAB, with proper identification of the topic, the authors and the advisors of each project. The material was added to a playlist entitled 'Final Projects' during the months of July and September 2022 and 2023, and this was the responsibility of the team in charge of this project.

6. Results

The preliminary results of this project enable us to highlight several key aspects. Regarding the production of video tutorials, we should mention the difficulty entailed in developing high-quality materials that are appealing and do not fall into the more traditional tutorial formats (polymedia-type videos or PowerPoint presentations with audio). To achieve this, it is essential to apply a professional audiovisual production approach, which requires

technological resources and specialised staff that may be unavailable to some professors. However, scriptwriting is a more accessible task, as it covers contents related to professional team's teaching and research. These videos are brief and dynamic and explain the contents in an appealing, clear and concise fashion, in line with what some authors have suggested (Fyfield et al., 2019).

Regarding students' participation in creating and producing the videos to defend the final project, it is important to acknowledge that the results were somewhat limited. Fewer materials than what we had initially forecast were ultimately produced due to factors that were beyond the influence of the project team: not all the final projects reached the minimal mark of 8.5 out of 10, and those that did do not always provide a video of sufficient quality to be shared on the channel. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the students who decided to participate in the initiative and prepared their video defences for the channel expressed their satisfaction with the proposal and positively rated it.

Consequently, we believe that more work to reinforce the collaboration protocols with the final project advisors is necessary. Even though the professors who were asked to collaborate responded positively to the initiative, actual participation was limited and few of them reminded their students of the possibility of preparing this audiovisual material.

Therefore, it is essential to support both the advisors and the students more closely so that preparing the video defences becomes a common practice within final projects. If the advisors see the usefulness of these materials or the channel in general, they will be more likely to motivate their students to collaborate in creating them. Regarding the students, it is essential to overcome obstacles like the perception that preparing a video defence duplicates the effort of the final project, given that they also have to hold a public defence as stipulated in article 271.1 of Royal Decree 822/2021. The strategy of turning this into a 'routine' could contribute to boosting its use. In this sense, the possibility that the video of the defence contributes to part of the overall grade in the presentation section of the assessment

rubrics or in the award of prizes or mentions for the best videos could be considered.

7. Conclusions

Final projects are an opportunity for students to demonstrate the competences they have acquired during their Bachelor's degrees, as well as their skills at autonomous work and independent learning. In line with previous studies based on teaching innovation experiences, it has been found that the use of video tutorials improves the understanding of contents (Bengochea & Medina, 2013; Jiménez Castillo & Marín Carrillo, 2012) and that YouTube is an effective platform for fostering students' independent learning skills (Posligua Anchundia, 2020; Sandoval Lozano & Rojas Gutiérrez, 2021). Therefore, one of the objectives of this innovation project was to develop specific content for those students who have to do their final project and make it available via the social media used by young people the most. However, the project was not solely limited to this initiative.

Current education laws consider digital skills an essential requirement (INTEF, 2017), especially for future professionals in the field of communication. Moreover, it is important to highlight their value in sharing one's work publicly. Thus, it is considered worthwhile to motivate students who are finishing their final projects to generate content via YouTube, and this matches with the findings of other studies which stress the need to support students as producers of educational content (Lozano Díaz et al., 2020).

The limitations of this project include the lack of technological and human resources available to conduct it. This entailed a major barrier that limited the ability to produce more video tutorials.

Another important aspect is that this project was developed specifically for the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB. This restricted the scope of the video tutorials and the dissemination of the final projects via YouTube. Furthermore, we are not yet able to assess the real impact of the activities proposed. Once the initial period of application has elapsed, an assessment should be undertaken to determine the usefulness of the video tutorials and the true extent of the dissemination of the final project videos available on YouTube.

Therefore, we would like to suggest several future actions that are essential to this project. First, it is crucial to promote the channel among final project advisors in the Bachelor's in Advertising and Public Relations at the UAB so that they recommend it to students. This would help the channel reach its target audience and enable students to benefit from it. Plus, the channel's visibility could spark the interest of other students, which would enable more videos showing final project presentations and defences to be available for general consultation. It would also be worthwhile to consider the possibility of extending the project to other platforms, like Instagram or TikTok, to adapt to young people's changing technology habits.

Secondly, it would be beneficial to assess the suitability and impact of the video tutorials among both final project advisors and students in the process of developing their own final projects. This would help to determine whether the project is truly useful and provide the chance for suggestions regarding contents or topics that could be included in the video tutorials. Ultimately, this assessment would contribute to the constant improvement of the resources and provide more effective support for students doing their final projects.

Finally, the channel and its contents could be extended to other degrees taught in the Faculty of Communication Studies at the UAB, given that the academic rules related to final projects share many points in common, regardless of the programme. In this way, the YouTube channel could also be used by students in the Audiovisual Communication, Journalism, Interactive Communication and Communication in Organisations degrees. In recent years, the use of video as an educational resource has risen significantly, including its use as a complement to face-to-face teaching, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic (Pattier & Ferreira, 2022; Succar *et al.*, 2022). Teachers at all educational levels, including the university, have chosen to integrate audiovisual materials into their classes. Video tutorials in particular are used as a complement to traditional teaching strategies to facilitate comprehension of the information (Bengochea & Medina, 2013) and make the teaching-learning process more dynamic and appealing. Within this context, YouTube has become the platform of choice to both find and share these resources, thus becoming an invaluable tool for education.

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Homonormativity or marginality: the double pattern in LGTBIQ+ characters in TV series

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Paper received on 2 May 2023 and accepted on 7 July 2023

How to cite:

Sánchez-Soriano, J.-J. (2023). Homonormativity or marginality: the double pattern in LGTBIQ+ characters in TV series. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 53-69. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420682>

Abstract

In the last decade there has been an increase in the number of LGTBIQ+ characters in television series, both in linear channels and distribution platforms. This fact, together with the importance of the media and the social problems that this group has historically suffered, raises the objective of understanding the narrative patterns with which these LGTBIQ+ characters are constructed. For this reason, the research carried out a content analysis based on three levels: physical dimension, social dimension and psychic dimension. Thus, a random and representative sample of Western television series has been analysed: Euphoria; Looking; Orange is the New Black; Pose; Sense8; Shameless; Transparent; Élite; El Ministerio del Tiempo; Malaka; Merlí; Sapere Aude; Veneno; Vis a Vis and Vivir sin permiso. The results show, among others, the existence of two opposing narrative patterns, one that places these characters in marginal places, and a second that constructs them with homonormative profiles, with characters who have assimilated socially acceptable standards of heteronormativity. We conclude, therefore, by affirming that stereotypical constructions from other eras are still maintained alongside others of recent appearance.

Keywords

TV series; LGTBIQ+; representation; homonormativity; marginality

Resum

En l'última dècada s'ha produït un augment dels personatges LGTBIQ+ a les sèries de televisió, tant en cadenes lineals com en plataformes de distribució. Aquest fet, juntament amb la importància dels mitjans de comunicació i les problemàtiques socials que ha patit històricament aquest grup, planteja l'objectiu de conèixer els patrons narratius amb els quals són construïts aquests personatges LGTBIQ+. Per això, la recerca realitza una anàlisi de contingut basada en tres nivells: dimensió física, dimensió social i dimensió psíquica. Així, ha estat analitzada una mostra aleatòria i representativa de sèries de televisió occidentals: Euphoria; Looking; Orange is the New Black; Pose; Sense8; Shameless; Transparent; Élite; El Ministerio del Tiempo; Malaka; Merlí; Sapere Aude; Veneno; Vis a Vis, i Vivir sin permiso. Els resultats mostren, entre altres aspectes, l'existència de dos patrons narratius contraposats: un primer, que situa aquests personatges en llocs marginals, i un segon, que els construeix amb perfils homonormatius, és a dir, amb personatges que han assimilat estàndards acceptables socialment de l'heteronormativitat. Es conclou, per tant, afirmant que encara es mantenen construccions estereotipades d'altres èpoques al costat d'altres d'aparició recent.

Paraules clau

Sèries de televisió; LGTBIQ+; representació; homonormativitat; marginalitat.

1. Introduction

TV series, as cultural product, have increased exponentially in recent years (Rojas-Lamorena et al., 2019). This boost has been favoured by the emergence of new distribution and video-on-demand platforms (Higuera-Ruiz, Gómez-Pérez and Alberich-Pascual, 2018). This context has also been accompanied by an

increase in the quality of television series (Waldfoegel, 2017).

This new era of audiovisual growth, both in the number of fictional programmes on linear television channels and SVoD (*Subscription Video On Demand*) and in the forms of consumption, has led to an increase in the number of series with characters and plots from the LGTBIQ+ collective (lesbian, gay, trans, bisexual, intersex and other diverse sexual orientations or

identities, such as asexual or non-binary gender) (Monaghan, 2021). These fictional programmes have undergone a peculiar evolution, from the invisibility of characters due to censorship in countries such as Spain or the United States (Waggoner, 2018), to the present day, where there is explicit representation. In recent years, moreover, the narrative constructions of these characters have been based on numerous stereotypes, such as using LGBTIQ+ characters parodically or in a comical way to provoke laughter in the viewer (McLaughlin and Rodriguez, 2017).

In this sense, the representation of historically invisible collectives, such as LGBTIQ+, is of great importance on a social level, due to the role of the media as agents of socialisation (Sultan and Masood, 2020). This implies that representations in audiovisual media make invisible or show different realities (Ganter and Ortega, 2019) and generate social imaginaries on what the collective perceives about itself and the image that society has of these people's reality (Gilleard, 2018). Therefore, a distorted image is directly linked to negative social beliefs, as indicated by research such as that conducted by Yan (2019). In addition, recent analyses have focused on specific series, such as *Sense8* (Asante, Baig and Huang, 2019). However, more general studies are needed in order to analyse in depth the profiles with which LGBTIQ+ characters are being constructed in current and relevant television series in popular culture.

There are therefore two basic reasons for conducting this research. Firstly, it is based on the importance of minority representation, both in society in general and in the collective's self-image. This is especially important if we are talking about a collective that suffers a high degree of social problems, such as homophobic *bullying* (Moyano and Sánchez-Fuentes, 2020). Secondly, this research is based on the growth of LGBTIQ+ characters and plots in television series, on the appearance of phenomena such as *queerbaiting*, *pinkwashing* or homonormativity, and on the scarcity of specific and general studies on LGBTIQ+ characters. In this way, the research proposes a content analysis of a sample of contemporary television series, produced by both traditional channels and distribution platforms, which are representative of popular culture. The aim is to find out what they are like and which patterns (physical, personality, visibility of their sexual orientation, etc.) these narratives are using when constructing characters from this collective.

1.1 Evolution and trends of representation in TV series with LGBTIQ+ characters

LGBTIQ+ characters in television series have evolved differently depending on the geographical location in which they have been developed. In countries such as Russia, for example, such content is banned as "homosexual propaganda" and as harmful during childhood, as it goes against "traditional family values" (Tolkachev and Tolordava, 2020). On the other hand, in Western countries such as Spain, the United States, Portugal or Italy, there are certain specific and shared patterns (Richardson,

2022). There was an initial period in which LGBTIQ+ characters were censored on television and cinema screens, as they were considered amoral or outright dangerous. This coincided with dictatorships, such as that of Francisco Franco in Spain during the 1960s and 1970s (Melero-Salvador, 2014), and censorship regulations, such as the US Hays Code (Davies, 2016). In these decades, the only LGBTIQ+ representation possible was in two forms, as parodic characters or as villains, with a moralising purpose in both cases for the viewer (Bridges, 2018).

Thus, there was no increase in these characters until the end of the 1970s, represented with the usual stereotypes of previous decades and emphasising sick or criminal characters, though already including explicit LGBTIQ+ characters (Branchik and O'Leary, 2016). In the 1980s, on the other hand, these stereotypes were compounded by linking the homosexual character with the HIV virus, in the face of the pandemic that began at that time, which meant a new stigma for the community (Gross, 2001).

In the 1990s and 2000s, coinciding with several milestones, such as the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses by the WHO in 1990 and the equal marriage law in countries such as Spain and Canada in 2005, there was an increase in the number of LGBTIQ+ characters in Western *prime-time* television series (Monaghan, 2021). This is of particular interest, as it occurs in hit series such as *Grows The WB: 1998-2003* and *Aquí no hay quien viva* (Antena 3: 2003-2006), with characters that were recognisable to the majority of viewers, as they were watched by a large number of people, which allowed certain media stigmas to be broken (Crowley Webber, 2019).

In the 2010s, there was a large increase in the number of LGBTIQ+ characters in Western series, favoured by the arrival of distribution platforms such as Netflix and HBO (Marcos-Ramos and González-de-Garay, 2021), which have two important characteristics. Firstly, they are consumed in different parts of the world and come mostly, though not exclusively, from the United States (Gao et al., 2020). Secondly, they occupied a niche market requested by a section of the public (Shields, 2022), such as series with characters and plots from this collective.

Finally, the US association GLAAD, which analyses the representation of LGBTIQ+ characters in US TV series, highlights some current trends. Firstly, they claim that 2021 was the year with the highest number of characters from this collective in US history, with an increase in bisexual and racialised characters, and where the number of women and men, both cis and trans, were at a similar percentage for the first time. Secondly, and in contrast, they point out that there are still underrepresented realities, such as asexuality, non-binary trans people or people with disabilities (GLAAD, 2022). In the same vein, the ODA (Observatory of Diversity in Audiovisual Media) in Spain infers a null presence of asexual, non-binary, trans non-binary, intersex or non-normative physical characters (ODA, 2022).

1.2 New phenomena in the construction of LGBTIQ+ characters

The increase in LGBTIQ+ characters and plots has led to the appearance of new phenomena related to their representation in television series. On the one hand, with the aim of attracting a general audience, television series began to introduce characters whose narrative constructions resemble the traditional and habitual patterns of heterosexual characters, which is known as *homonormativity* (Sánchez-Soriano, 2022).

Homonormativity, therefore, by differentiating the “acceptable” from the “unacceptable”, provokes the rejection of certain realities of the collective, such as “being camp” or the representation of intersectionalities (Vanlee, 2019). Intersectionalities can be defined as characteristics that are at an unequal social level, such as gender, religion, racialised people, people with disabilities or people with a non-normative body, such as those who are overweight or obese (Al-Faham, Davis and Ernst, 2019). These people are therefore subjected to double discrimination, firstly because they belong to the collective and secondly because of this intersectionality.

On the other hand, and for profit, numerous audiovisual production companies have introduced the technique known as *pinkwashing* into their productions. This is a marketing strategy that consists of showing an apparent favourable position towards the collective solely for economic purposes (Hartal, 2020). This, applied to the audiovisual panorama, means that various productions have promoted the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ characters without this actually being implemented, or where they are reduced to mere anecdotes. The aim is not to lose the potential conservative audience, while attracting the LGBTIQ+ audience, but without showing real actions towards the collective, as analysed by Sánchez-Soriano and García-Jiménez’s (2020) research on Hollywood *blockbusters*.

Again, and as a business strategy, numerous television series have been partaking in the concept popularised under the term *queerbaiting*, which is defined as a way of insinuating, through subtext, a relationship between same-sex couples that is never explicitly stated or mentioned (Brennan, 2018). This has occurred in series such as *Sherlock* (BBC: 2010-2017), through elements such as the sexual tension between the protagonists. The aim of this technique is again to attract an LGBTIQ+ audience eager to see couples in which they can see themselves reflected (Anselmo, 2018).

Thus, most of these new phenomena that have appeared alongside the growth of fiction with LGBTIQ+ characters are related, to a greater or lesser extent, to strategies based on economic profitability under an “LGBTIQ+ friendly” guise, with the aim of attracting the potential LGBTIQ+ audience without losing a conservative niche market. This occurs under the paradigm of “Rainbow capitalism” (Barry and Drak, 2019), which aims to obtain economic benefits from the presumed greater economic capacity of a part of the homonormativised LGBTIQ+ collective, but which ultimately leaves out other realities that do not have this purchasing power.

2. Methodology

In order to fulfil the objectives of the research, to know the narrative patterns with which current LGBTIQ+ characters have been constructed, the methodology used was content analysis. It was chosen because it is a methodology that allows us, among other things, to analyse the basic components of communicative discourses through a systematised process (Neuendorf, 2017).

Television series released in recent years, from 2011 to the date of the research, December 2021, were thus selected, as this is the decade in which there has been a quantitative increase, in addition to the emergence of new concepts related to this matter. Western series were selected as they share the common patterns analysed in the theoretical framework and previous literature review. Therefore, series from Europe, in this case from Spain, and from the United States were chosen. The reason for choosing Spain is because it is the geographical location where the research was carried out, due to the extensive growth in the production of Spanish series in the last decade (Huerta-Floriano, 2020) and due to the establishment of this national fiction abroad, which makes it influential in other markets (Diego and Grandío-Pérez, 2018). The reason for choosing the United States is that it is the world’s leading cultural exponent, i.e. culture produced in the United States is widely consumed in other parts of the world, especially in the West (Gao et al., 2020).

In the selected series, the characters had to be protagonists or recurring secondary characters during the first season, with a relevant role from the pilot episode, and they had to have considerable success with audiences and critics. For this purpose, the IMDB (Internet Movie Database) website was chosen, the most important and best-known database worldwide on television series and other audiovisual products (Canet Centellas, Valero Navarro and Codina Bonilla, 2016). It was also decided that the series should have a minimum of 7.5 points out of 10, in order to obtain series that were relevant in popular culture and among critics due to the importance of their impact. The search date was December 2011 and the following filters were applied (see Table 1).

Table 1. Filters applied for sample selection

Title Type	TV Series
Release Date	2011 to now
User rating	7.5 to 10
Number of votes	Minimum of 15,000 votes
Genre	All
Countries	Spain/United States
Keywords	Gay, lesbian, bisexual; trans, intersex, queer, non binary, gender fluid; lgbt

Source: Own elaboration.

After applying these filters, the results showed 38 US series, eliminating another 10 that did not feature LGTBIQ+ characters from their first episode. With respect to Spanish series, 16 results were found. In this case, the *number of votes* category was removed due to the fact that these series had a lower number of votes than the American ones, due to their national production, although several of them are hits with international audiences, as in the case of *Élite* (Netflix: 2018-now). However, in these Spanish series, *other categories* were applied, including the minimum vote of 7.5 out of 10. Finally, seven Spanish television series and seven American series that met the chosen criteria were selected, so the final sample consisted of the following series (see Table 2).

The content analysis form used was based on an adaptation of the one proposed in the research by González-de-Garay, Marcos-Ramos and Portillo-Delgado (2020). It was divided into three levels (physical dimension, social dimension and psychological dimension) to analyse the patterns of the characters in depth. Firstly, the predominant type of physical representation in the selected sample was analysed (See Table 3).

Secondly, the cultural and social context was analysed (see Table 4).

Thirdly, the more internal variables were analysed (see Table 5).

Finally, after applying these three content analysis sheets to the selected characters in the sample, the results were obtained.

Table 2. Series and characters that make up the sample

Series	Platform	Year of initial broadcast	Character
<i>Euphoria</i>	HBO	2019	Rue
			Jules
<i>Looking</i>	HBO	2014	Patrick Murray
			Agustín Lanuez
			Dominic “Dom” Basaluzzo
<i>Orange is the New Black</i>	Netflix	2013	Piper Chapman
			Alex Vause
<i>Pose</i>	FX	2018	Angel
			Blanca Rodríguez-Evangelista
			Elektra Abundance
			Damon Richards
<i>Sense8</i>	Netflix	2015	Amanita “Neets” Caplan
			Nomi Marks
<i>Shameless</i>	Showtime	2011	Ian Gallagher
<i>Transparent</i>	Amazon Prime Video	2014	Maura Pfefferman
			Sarah Pfefferman
<i>Élite</i>	Netflix	2018	Ander Muñoz
			Omar Shanaa
<i>El Ministerio del Tiempo</i>	TVE/HBO	2015	Irene Larra Girón
<i>Malaka</i>	TVE	2019	Asunción Cortés “La Tota”
<i>Merlí: Sapere Aude</i>	Movistar+/Netflix	2019	Pol Rubio
<i>Veneno</i>	Atresplayer	2020	Cristina Ortiz “La Veneno”
			Valeria Vegas
<i>Vis a Vis</i>	Antena 3/Netflix	2015	Estefanía Kabila Silva “Rizos”
			Saray Vargas de Jesús
<i>Vivir sin permiso</i>	Telecinco/Netflix	2018	Alejandro Lamas
			Carlos Bandeira Moliner

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3. Content Analysis (CA) fact sheet. Physical dimension

Variable	Category
Age	Childhood (0-11 years) Adolescence (12-25 years) Young adults (25-39 years) Mature adult (40-65 years) Older than 65 years old
Physical build	Slim (ectomorphs) Sturdy (endomorphs) Muscular (mesomorphs)
Gender expression	Masculine Feminine Androgynous

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4. Content Analysis (CA) fact sheet. Social dimension

Variable	Categoria
Socio-economic status	High Middle Low
Cultural or educational level	High Middle Low
Profession	Doctor Student Teacher Actor/actress Other
Marital status	Single Single (in a stable relationship) Single in a relationship for money Married Domestic partnership Divorced - separated Widowed
Children	Yes No
Number of children	1 2 3 More than 3
Religion	Catholic Protestant Muslim Jewish Atheist Agnostic Other Not stated

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 5. Content Analysis (CA) fact sheet. Psychological dimension

Variable	Categoria
Personality	Extravertida Introvertida
Sexual or gender identity	Home cis Home trans Dona cis Dona trans Gènere no binari Agènere Altres
Sexual orientation	Gai Lesbiana Bisexual Asexual Altres
External acceptance of sexual orientation	Acceptada Refusada Ambdues No definida

Source: Own elaboration.

3. Results

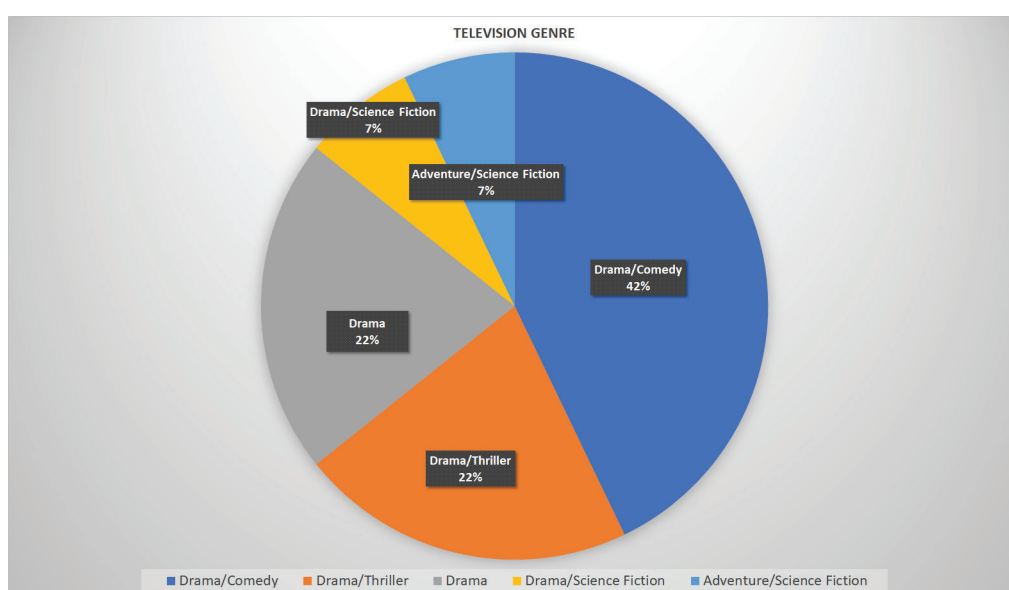
3.1 TV series genre

Most of the series in the sample fall into the hybrid genre known as *dramedy*, which combines drama and comedy plots. This is followed by pure drama and drama with *thriller*. Finally, drama with science fiction and series that combine adventure with science fiction. Thus, it can be observed that the majority of fictional programmes are framed within the comedy or dramatic genre in its different varieties and forms.

3.2 Physical dimension: age and physical understanding of LGTBIQ+ characters

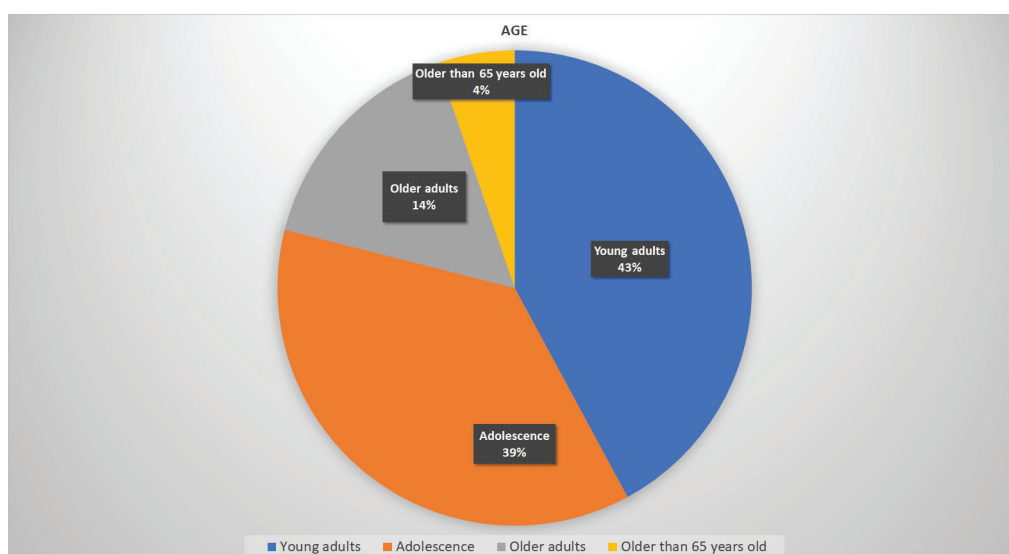
With regards to age, most of the characters analysed are in the *young adult* range between 25 and 39 years of age, as is the case, for example, with Patrick in *Looking*. There is a similar percentage of adolescents, aged between 12 and 25. Far removed from these are the *mature adults*, aged between 40 and 65, and exceptionally, with only one character found, characters over 65, with Maura in *Transparent*. The sample did not find any LGTBIQ+ characters in the childhood period,

Figure 1. LGBTIQ+ TV series genre



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Age of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

up to the age of 11. Therefore, it is clear that the majority of characters are between 12 and 39 years of age, with 82% of the total, and minimal or no presence of characters over 40 or under 11.

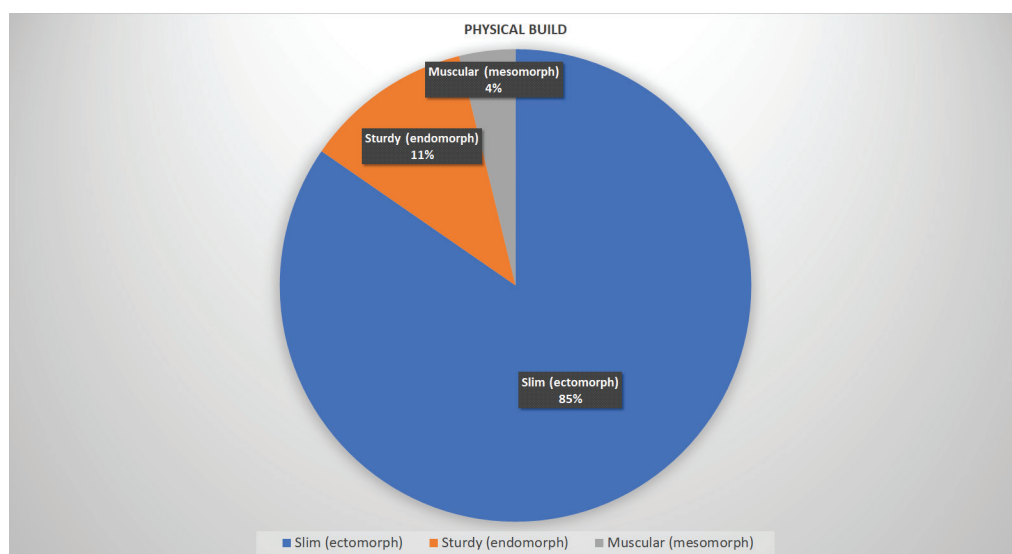
In relation to physical build, the vast majority of characters (90%) have a slim or muscular build, as in the case of Pol Rubio in *Merli: Sapere Aude*. In this sense, the only three exceptions of sturdy or overweight characters are found in a character over 65 years old, a character who has just been released from prison, where he has suffered addictions and physical abuse,

and in a marginal drug context. Therefore, this type of physique manifests itself as an element outside the normality of the rest of the characters.

3.3 Physical dimension: gender expression of LGTBIQ+ characters

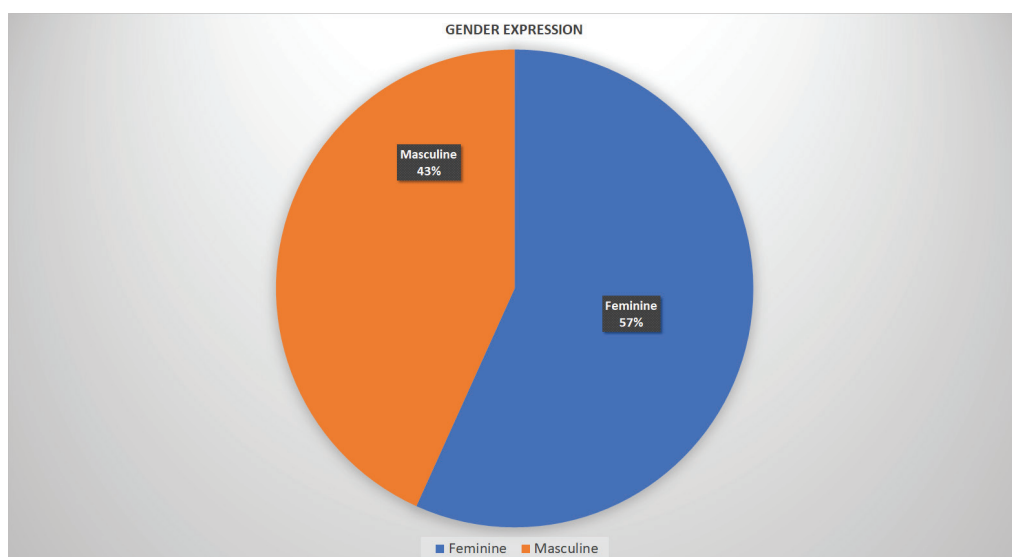
Gender expression is independent of the character's gender identity, which includes the diverse expression of trans or transitioning characters and the way they appear and behave in the world and in society. The results of the TV series analysed

Figure 3. Physical build of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 4. Gender expression of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

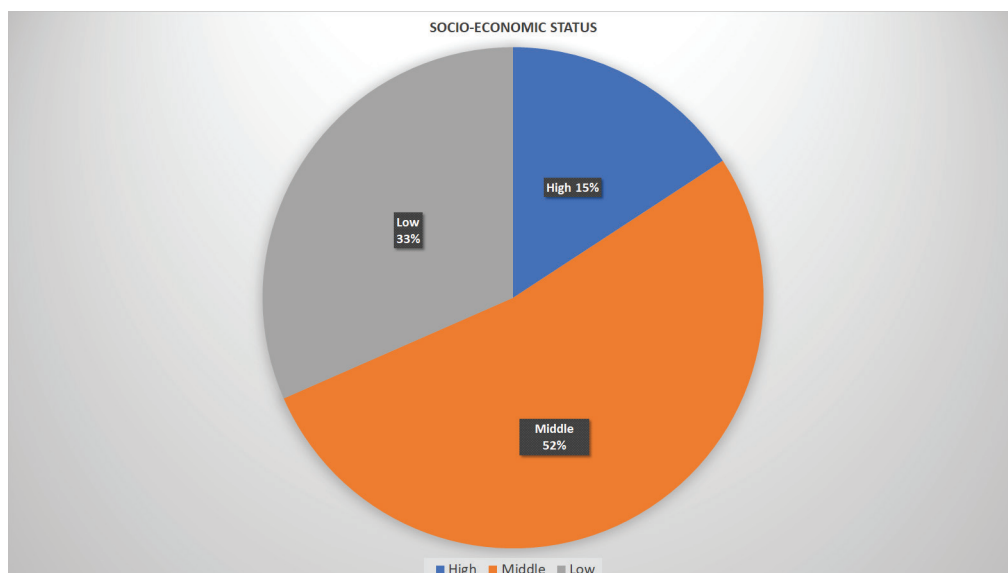
show that 57% of the characters have a female gender expression, while 43% are male and none are androgynous.

3.4 Social dimension: cultural and socio-economic status of LGTBIQ+ characters

With regards to socio-economic level, two out of three characters are in the medium-high socio-economic level. In contrast, 33% are in disadvantaged environments and situations, such as places dedicated to prostitution, drug trafficking or in neighbourhoods with a high percentage of poverty, as in the

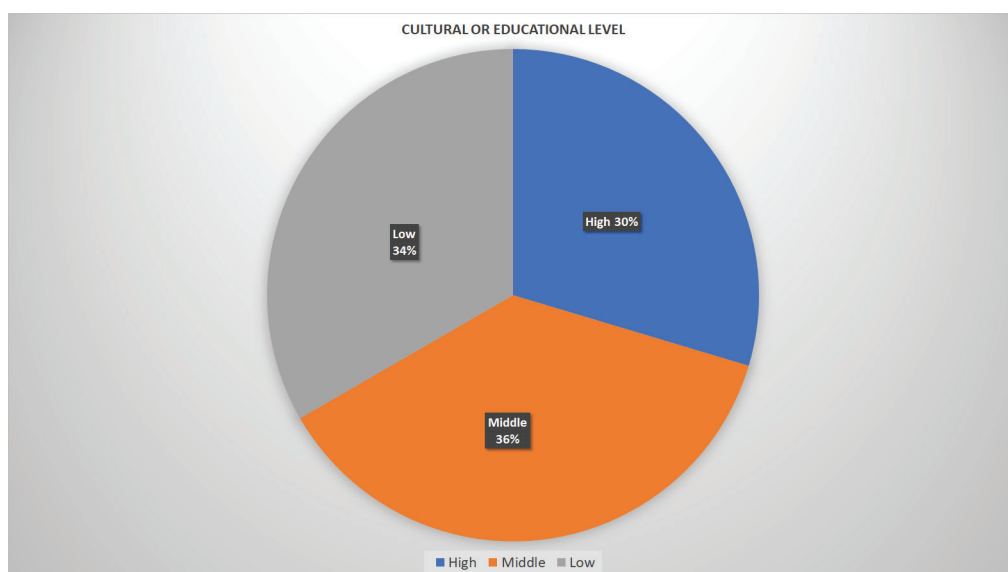
case of the series *Pose* or *Shameless*. A very similar pattern is found when analysing the cultural level. 36% of the characters analysed have an average cultural and/or educational level. One explanation for this is that a large number of the characters are adolescents and are not in a position to have completed higher education or university-level studies. 30% have university studies or similar, while again, one in three have a low level of education, i.e. they are characters that have not completed compulsory secondary education.

Figure 5. Socio-economic level of LGTBIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 6. Socio-cultural level of LGTBIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

3.5 Social dimension: profession and marital status of LGBTIQ+ characters

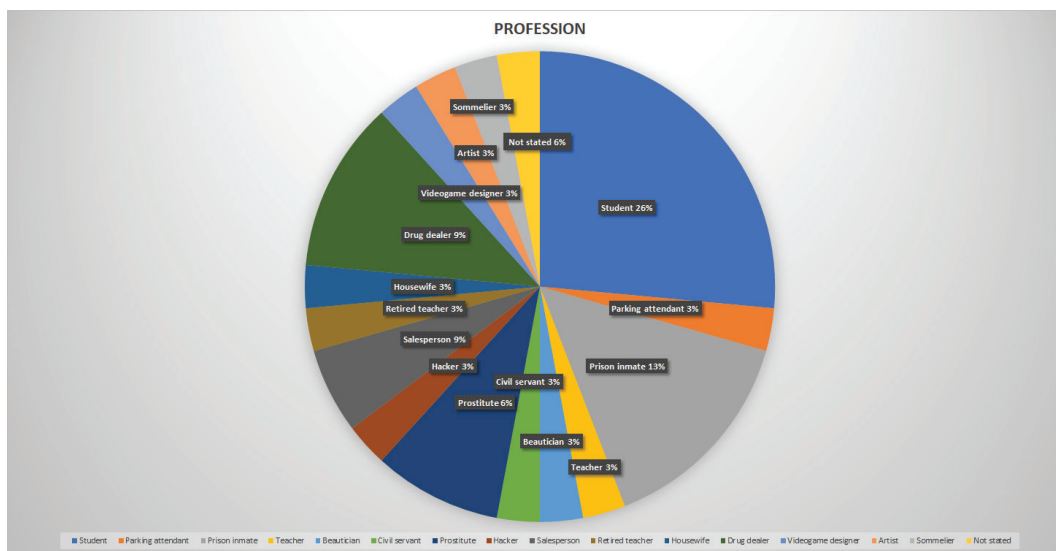
A large number of the characters are *students*, which is indicative of the high percentage who are in their teenage years. This is followed by professions with negative connotations, such as *prison inmates*, *drug dealers* and *prostitutes*, like in “La Veneno”. Lastly, there is a wide range of professions, such as *teacher*, *civil servant* or *videogame designer*. As such, we again find a double pattern in which the characters either have normalised professions in society or jobs linked to marginality or that are illegal.

With regards to marital status, more than half of the characters are single. They are followed, in order, by characters who are single but in an unstable relationship, single in a relationship for economic reasons, married, divorced and characters whose marital status is not stated.

3.6 Social dimension: offspring and number among LGBTIQ+ characters

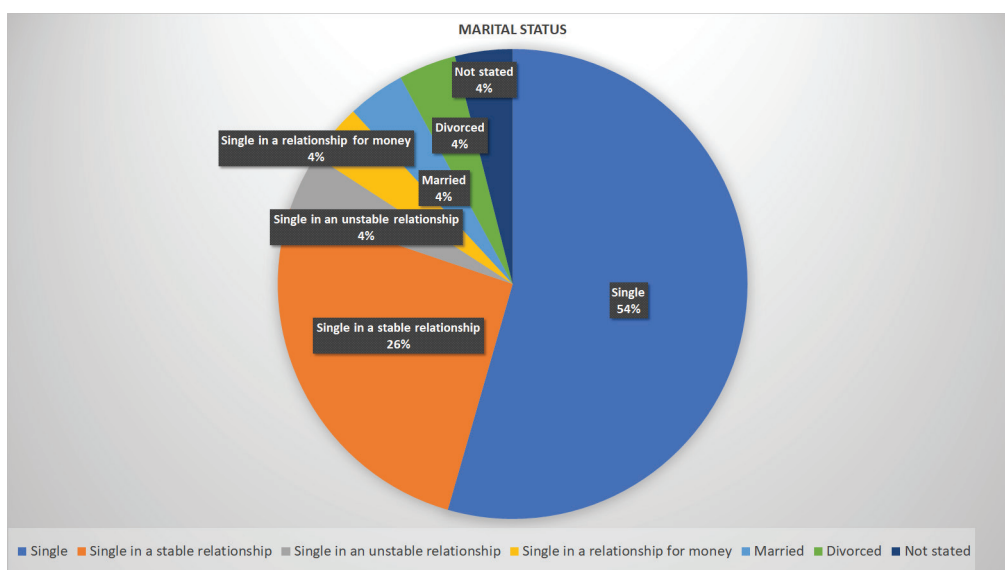
Continuing with the previous section, which covers the analysis of the family ties of LGBTIQ+ characters, the results show that the vast majority do not have offspring, either biologically or

Figure 7. Profession of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 8. Marital status of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

through adoption. One possible explanation for this can be found in the age of the characters, as they are in the adolescent age bracket. Furthermore, this is related to the high percentage of characters who are not in an affective or loving relationship in the series analysed.

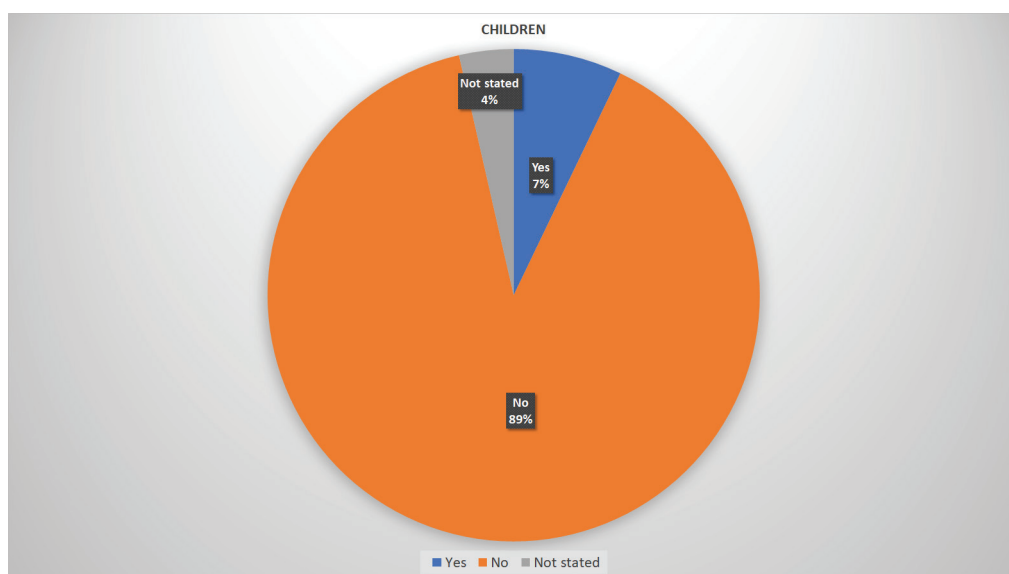
On the other hand, in relation to this, of the two parents found, one has two children and the other has three. In addition, the only two characters with children became parents when they did not identify as part of the LGBTIQ+ collective, as in the case of Maura and Sarah in *Transparent*. Therefore, it can be inferred that, in the sample analysed, once they identify as part

of the LGBTIQ+ collective, the characters do not have plots related to being fathers or mothers in their narrative arcs.

3.7 Social dimension: religion of LGBTIQ+ characters

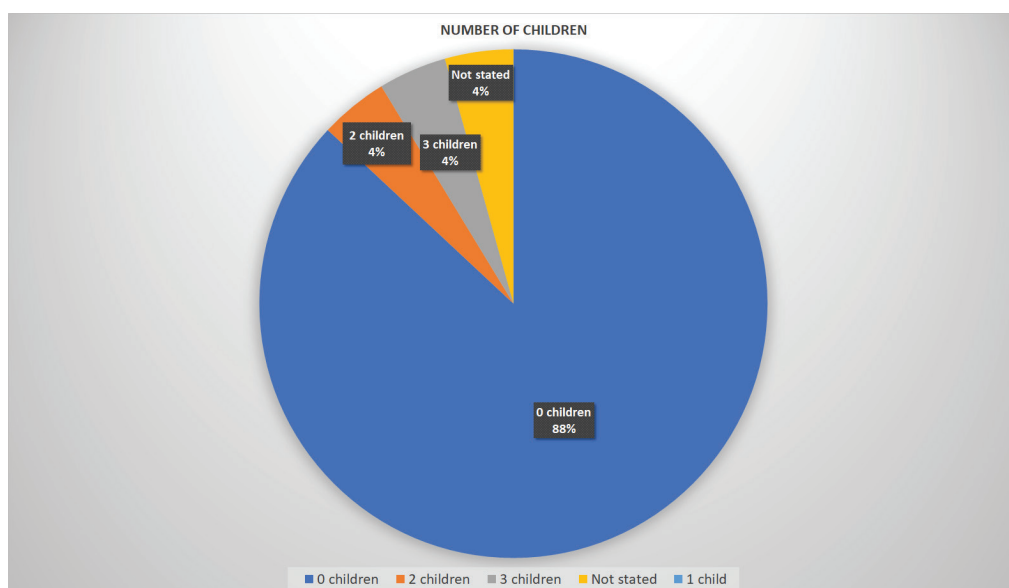
In 89% of the characters analysed, their religion is not stated, followed by 7% who self-identify as Jewish and 4%, represented by just one character, who does not expressly state their religion, as they live in a Muslim family, but no evidence was found regarding whether or not they belong to this religion. Therefore, the religion of the characters is not a major narrative or plot arc in most of the selected episodes, except in the case

Figure 9. Offspring of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 10. Number of sons and daughters of LGBTIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

of Omar's character, with a conservative Muslim family in *Élite*, which marks the concealment of his diverse sexual orientation throughout the season.

3.8 Psychological dimension: personality of LGTBIQ+ characters

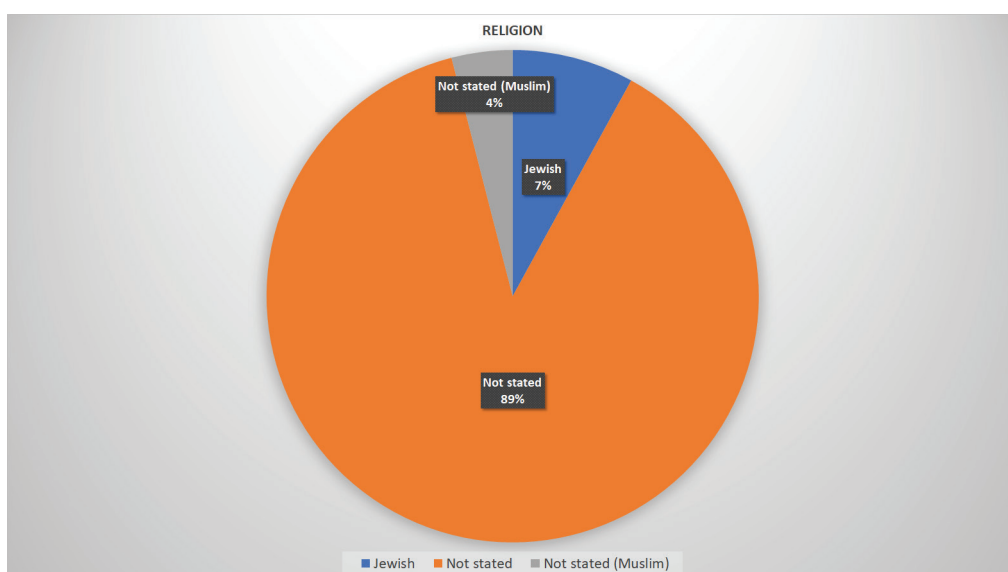
The majority of the characters analysed (67%) have an extrovert personality, i.e. with an inclination towards the outside world and social relations, openly expressing their emotions and feelings, such as Saray in *a Vis a Vis*. In contrast, 33% are

introverted, i.e. characters with a tendency towards their inner world and characterised by their more reserved nature, as in the case of Valeria in *Veneno*.

3.9 Psychological dimension: gender identity and sexual orientation of LGTBIQ+ characters

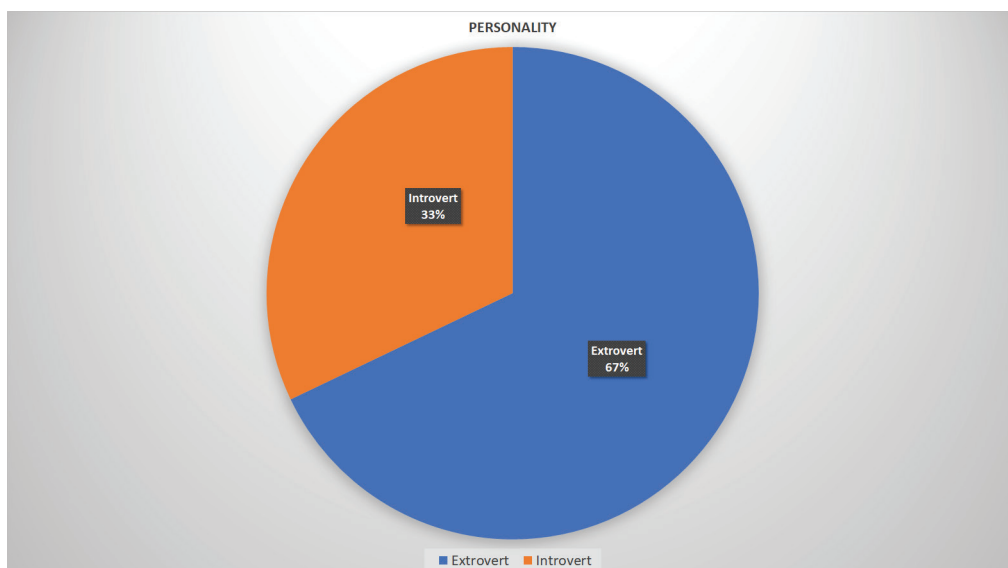
Firstly, related to gender identity, the results show that the highest percentage is found among cis men, i.e. male characters in which their biological sex coincides with their felt gender, such as Agustín in *Looking*, with 37% of the total. However,

Figure 11. Religion of LGTBIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 12. Personality of LGTBIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

if we add cis women, such as Rue in *Euphoria*, with 33%, followed by trans women, such as Angel in *Pose*, with 30%, the results confirm a predominance of female characters. On the other hand, it is observed that, in the sample, none of the characters in the chapters analysed are part of the trans men or non-binary community.

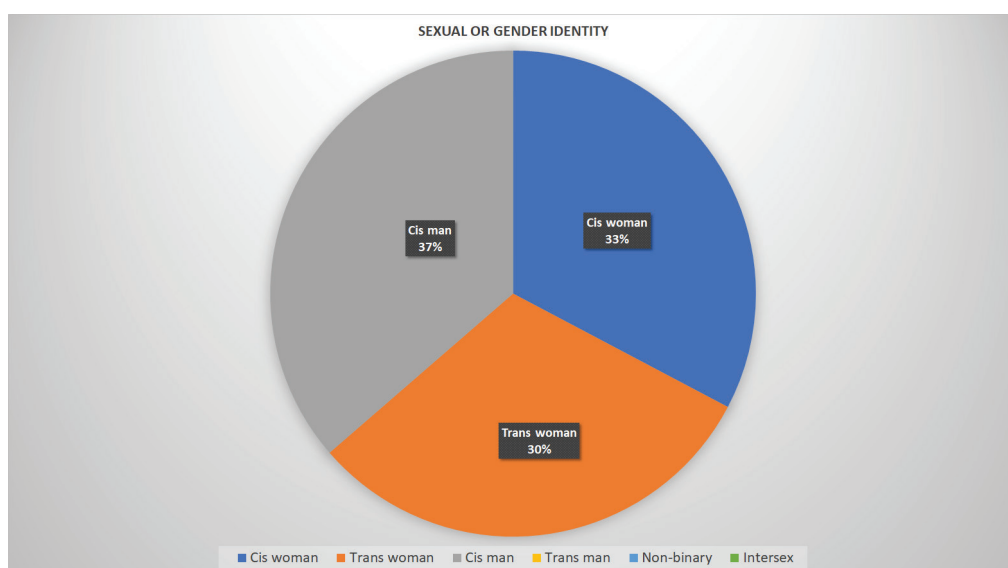
Secondly, the results show that 33% of the characters are classified as having a male homosexual sexual orientation. This is followed by lesbian women with 26%. Thirdly, 22% of the characters are classified as having a heterosexual sexual orientation. This characteristic, despite the fact that the show

is based on LGBTIQ+ characters, is due to the presence of trans gender identity characters, who therefore belonging to the collective, but have a heterosexual sexual orientation. In fourth place, with 19%, are bisexual characters. In last place, with no characters found, are asexuals.

3.10 Psychological dimension: external acceptance of sexual orientation

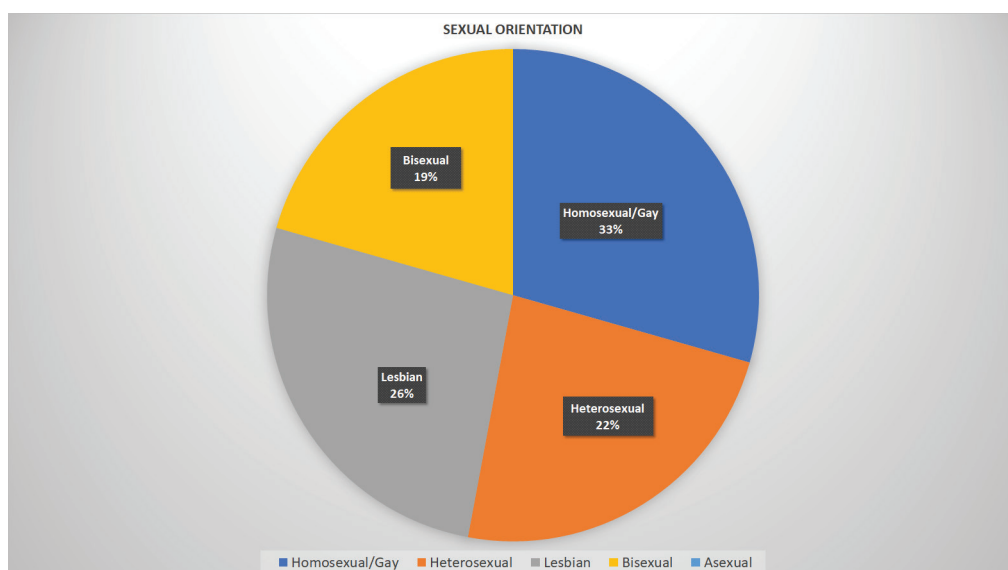
In more than half of the characters (52%), the external acceptance of sexual orientation by other people is not defined and is not clear in the analysed seasons. In second place

Figure 13. Gender identity of LGTBIQ+ characters

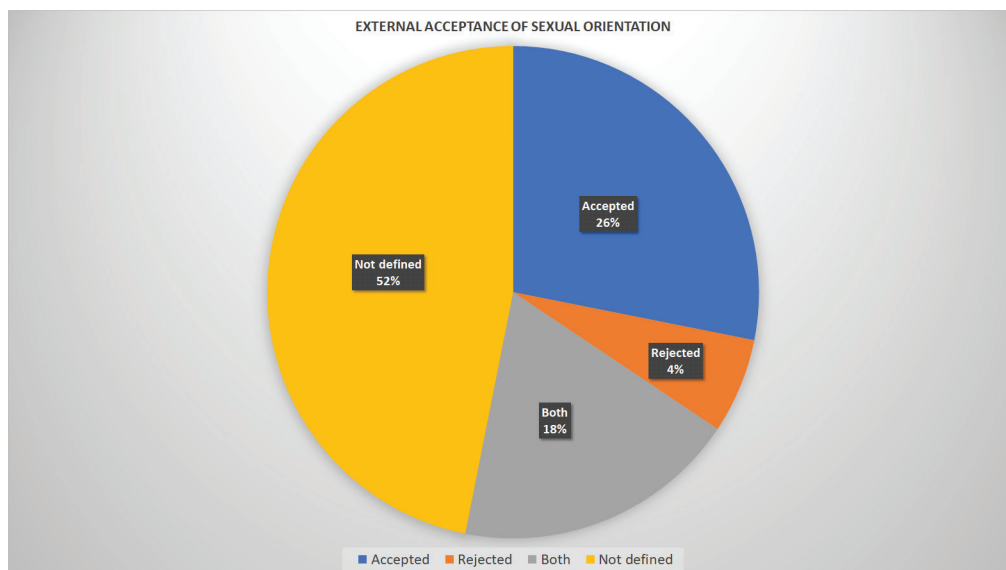


Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 14. Sexual orientation of LGTBIQ+ characters



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 15. External acceptance of sexual orientation

Source: Own elaboration.

(26%) are characters whose sexual orientation is accepted by all the characters with whom they share a plot in the fictional programme. In third place (18%) are characters whose sexual orientation is accepted by some of the other characters in the fictional programme and rejected by others. Lastly (4%) are the characters whose sexual orientation is rejected by all the characters who are aware of it. Thus, for 22%, sexual orientation remains a problem for some or all of the other characters, while it is only accepted for 26% and unknown for 52%.

4. Discussion

The results found can be related to research on LGBTIQ+ representation in serialised fiction. Firstly, these results allow us to discuss the use of homonormative patterns researched by authors such as Vanlee (2019), which link LGBTIQ+ characters to very specific characteristics that are well integrated in society. Thus, there is a wide use of adolescent or young adult characters, as well as slim or muscular ones. Also with regards to the age of the characters, these results are consistent with other studies that infer a considerable use of adolescent LGBTIQ+ characters (Robinson et al., 2014). On a socio-economic and cultural level, there is an equivalence between the number of characters with a medium/high socio-economic and cultural level (approximately three out of four characters), which is again associated with the homonormative pattern of LGBTIQ+ characters (Francis, 2021). However, one in three have a low socio-economic and cultural level, which infers, secondly, a persistence of old narrative constructions that associated characters from this collective with drug environments and with dark and evil characters (Bridges, 2018).

On the other hand, drama and comedy are the two genres most used currently in series that involve LGBTIQ+ characters and plots, as was the case in previous decades. It is important to note that both genres have their origins in the appearance of serialised fiction, during censorship in Western countries such as the United States or Spain, where sexual diversity was presented either as a censurable, evil or dramatic element, or as an element to provoke laughter in the viewer. These two representations continued in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s, with a large percentage of fictional programmes in which coming out, social acceptance or comic relief were the main plot of the LGBTIQ+ character (Branchik and O'Leary, 2016); Bridges, 2018).

With regards to gender identity, the results are along the same lines as those shown by the GLAAD (2022) and ODA (2022) reports in relation to non-binary characters or trans men, confirming their scarce presence. In relation to trans women, the results are in line with the GLAAD (2022) report, which infers an increase of these characters, but not with the ODA (2022) report, which, on the contrary, observes a decrease, but a better qualitative representation of these characters. In this sense, gender expression, which is mostly female, is in line with the US GLAAD report (2022), which infers an increase of female characters in TV series in the last year, setting a new record, although the percentage of this research is higher than GLAAD's results (57% vs 47%). However, the ODA (2022) report, the Spanish counterpart to GLAAD, points to a decrease in female characters this year, with 44.2% in 2021.

On sexual orientation, both the GLAAD (2022) and ODA (2022) reports show an increase of bisexual characters and a lack of asexual characters in current serialised fiction, a fact that is demonstrated in both the report and the results found. With

regards to the external acceptance of this sexual orientation, the fact that it is not accepted by the majority of characters reinforces the idea found in similar research that diverse sexual orientations are not naturally integrated in current television series, with the exception of characters with a homonormative construction (Kerrigan, 2020), who have assimilated socially accepted patterns of their heterosexual counterparts.

It is also possible to observe that the majority of these analysed characters are not in an affective relationship of any kind with other people, and that these characters without a stable partner usually have affective/sexual relationships with a large number of characters. This causes, as research linked to this aspect has analysed, LGBTIQ+ people to be associated with more promiscuous behaviour than their cissexual counterparts (Villanueva-Baselga, 2021). In this respect, the fact that LGBTIQ+ characters do not have affective relationships, as is the case with most cissexual characters, places them in a different symbolic position and sows the seed of distorted social imaginaries about them. As such, research based on analyses of family ties in LGBTIQ+ characters verifies these results and infers that LGBTIQ+ characters tend not to have family ties and that they are more likely to create families, not in a biological or legal sense, but in an affective sense, with other LGBTIQ+ characters or with people who are related to them (Hermann-Wilmarth and Ryan, 2016).

Regarding the personality of the characters, other research confirms the existence of the double and contrasting pattern of the extrovert LGBTIQ+ character, usually associated with histrionics or “being camp”, as opposed to the introvert LGBTIQ+ character, who tries to go unnoticed (Ramírez Alvarado and Cobo Durán, 2013). Finally, it is worth noting that religion is not a differential characteristic nor has it been habitually used in the narrative plots of characters in recent years, as similar research focusing on characters in Spanish television series on SVoD platforms, such as that carried out by Marcos-Ramos and González-de-Garay (2021), has shown.

5. Conclusions

The increase in the number of LGBTIQ+ characters in current Western television series is clear, as is the evolution of their representation, as there has been a journey from an initial invisibility to a more explicit presence in serialised fiction. However, due to the media’s socialisation capacity, if this representation is distorted, it has negative effects both on the self-conception, identity and self-esteem of LGBTIQ+ people, as well as on the image society has of them. We therefore understand a distorted representation as one in which sexual diversities are presented with traditional and recurrent stereotypes in the audiovisual panorama: drug addiction, promiscuity, HIV, etc., and which, therefore, does not allow for a more integrated representation in which a greater variety of arcs and diverse narrative constructions about these characters are shown.

Moreover, it is not possible to know whether this increase is due to a predisposition of solidarity on the part of the production companies or to a strategy of *pinkwashing* as an economic lure on their part, as they are aware that part of their audience is eager to see these realities captured in their narratives. However, in the fictional programmes analysed, it is not possible to speak of *queerbaiting*, as all of the analysed characters have been explicitly from the collective.

In this sense, the existence of a contrasting double pattern was observed in the LGBTIQ+ characters examined, which is a contribution of this research. On the one hand, a pattern that links these characters to environments of exclusion and poverty, with lives in slums, social rejection or involvement in prostitution, among others, where the characters usually find themselves isolated from the rest of cissexual society. This pattern of marginality was found both among trans characters, such as in the *Pose* series and among cis characters, such as Ian in *Shameless* or “La Tota” in *Malaka*. On the other hand, there is a homonormative pattern, in which LGBTIQ+ characters have assimilated socioculturally valued characteristics of heteronormativity. These include belonging to the upper-middle class both culturally and educationally, being young, having a slim or muscular physique, or being in a recognised profession in society, such as a university lecturer. These homonormative characters, unlike the former, do integrate naturally into the rest of the plots.

Thus, the problem with these two patterns lies in the fact that the first one continues to uphold distorted social imaginaries about the LGBTIQ+ collective, linking them to marginal places, prostitution and drugs. And the second one generates precepts about which LGBTIQ+ characters are acceptable and which are not. In addition, it makes realities of the collective invisible or eliminates them, such as lesbians or LGBTIQ+ characters with disabilities or that are overweight, making it difficult to understand these identities. In this respect, there is an absence of asexual or non-binary people in the analysed series, and this is reaffirmed by similar research and reports, such as by the ODA or GLAAD, which represents a challenge for the audiovisual industry, making it necessary to include more diverse identities and orientations that cannot be found in current series.

For future research, on the one hand, it is proposed to extend the analysed sample to include a larger number of television series or countries, which may be a limitation of this research. However, the purpose of this study was to find trends in the patterns of representation and not to carry out an exhaustive analysis of all existing series, due to the large number of series. On the other hand, multidisciplinary studies are proposed to analyse the psychological effects of this stereotypical representation among LGBTIQ+ and cisheterosexual audiences.

In this way, the analysed television series continue to present historical and distorted patterns from other eras. These include the fact that diverse sexual orientation continues to be a problem for a considerable percentage of characters in fiction, or that the characters are not associated with family ties or offspring, which

on many occasions relates LGBTIQ+ characters to promiscuous behaviour, presenting them in an unequal way to their cissexual counterparts. However, this is combined with a certain tendency towards greater integration of LGBTIQ+ characters, but only with the homonormative characteristics analysed, thus presenting models of what the characters should or should not be like in order to be optimally integrated in the context of the series. In this way, this integration only in environments and with specific characteristics does not necessarily imply a greater naturalisation of these realities, which undoubtedly, and due to the role of the audiovisual sector as a creator of social imaginaries, has implications for the reality of both LGBTIQ+ people themselves and the conception of the rest of society.

Therefore, this research raises several shortfalls in representation, which should be taken into account during the process of constructing characters of the collective in television series. The aim is to improve their creation in order to achieve better LGBTIQ+ media representation and improve social imaginaries about them.

Note

This research has been funded by the contract FPU15/04411 of the Ministerio de Universidades of Spain. He has won the first prize of the XXXIV CAC Awards for research in audiovisual communication.

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The invisibility of women's sport in Catalan public television news in March 2023

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Paper received on 2 July 2023 and accepted on 23 October 2023

How to cite:

Pecino Peláez, I. & Gómez Puertas, L. (2023). The invisibility of women's sport in Catalan public television news in March 2023. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 71-83. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id421005>

Abstract

This article investigates, from a gender perspective, the presence of women's sports on primetime television news on TV3 during the month of March 2023 as a whole, and on 8 March in particular, with the aim of quantifying the coverage of sports involving women as compared to men. It is verified that Catalan public television only devotes 14.39% of the time in its sports block to women's competitions. The research also emphasises the fact that football, both women's and men's, is the main focus of the sports section. Finally, it examines the contradiction that means that the news media fails to respect its own style book in terms of issues of equality and gender parity.

Keywords

Female sport, gender, inequality, media presence, public television.

Resum

Aquest article investiga, des de la perspectiva de gènere, la presència de l'esport femení al telenotícies de màxima audiència de TV3 durant el mes de març del 2023 en conjunt, i el 8 de març en concret, amb l'objectiu de quantificar la cobertura dels esports protagonitzats per dones en contraposició al masculí. Es comprova que la televisió pública catalana només dedica el 14,39 % del temps del bloc d'esports a les competicions femenines. La recerca també incideix en el fet que el futbol és el gran protagonista de la secció esportiva, tant femenina com masculina. Finalment, posa sobre la taula la contradicció que suposa que l'informatiu no respecti el seu propi llibre d'estil pel que fa a qüestions d'igualtat i paritat de gènere.

Paraules clau

Esport femení, gènere, desigualtat, presència mediàtica, televisió pública.

1. Introduction

The countries within the European framework recognise the need to continue reviewing and rethinking the role of women in society in order to seek a level of equality that has not yet been achieved today. In this regard, the Sustainable Development Goals defined by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda, include as Goal number 5 achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and “[a]pproving and strengthening appropriate policies and applicable laws to promote equality” (United Nations, 2015, p. 21).¹ Therefore, it is considered that, in many areas, women still suffer unequal treatment compared to men. This is the case in sport, a sector where the gender imbalance is more pronounced, and where women are often

belittled and silenced, not only by part of society, but also (and above all) by the media.

In Catalonia, women's sport has gained greater recognition in recent years. The progressive social support that women's sport receives tends towards consolidating a very significant change in Catalan society. In this context, it is pertinent to investigate what role the media play, and especially how the public television with the largest audience in Catalonia, TV3, participates in the discursive construction of women's sport.

First of all, it is necessary to bear in mind the guidelines that have specifically directed the news coverage of Catalan public television in matters of gender. The decalogue on gender perspective in media content of the Corporació Catalana de Mitjans Audiovisuals (CCMA) (Catalan Audiovisual Media

Corporation), included in its style book, states that a “[p]arity must be applied in all content, both for experts and protagonists” and if necessary, it must be done “by applying positive discrimination”. It is also pointed out that “content that clearly questions gender roles” and “content that addresses issues of gender equality and inequality” must be implemented. The same decalogue insists that “the fragmentation of women’s bodies in images that contribute to their objectification” must be avoided and that “sexist language” must be eliminated (CCMA, 2015).

Secondly, with regard to sports information, the style manual proposes as an objective to “reflect the country’s sporting diversity”, disseminating “sports content of minority modes or categories [...] in accordance with journalistic criteria and attending to our principles of pluralism, diversity, defence of minorities, [...] and gender parity and balance, included in our editorial principles” (CCMA, 2013).

This article evaluates the coverage of women’s sports on TV3’s evening news programme, the programme with the highest audience on TV3, taking into account these precepts and analysing its indicators of gender equality and parity.

2. Objectives

In this context, and focused on the case of Catalan public television, five objectives are established that delimit the research proposal:

O1: To examine the presence and news ranking, in terms of time and number of news items, of women’s sport as opposed to men’s (segregating news items of a non-sporting nature and mixed competitions where men and women compete), on TV3’s evening news.

O2: Identify the most commonly recurring sports disciplines in the coverage of women’s and men’s sports in TV3’s TN news programme.

O3: Analyse the news treatment of women’s sport, paying attention to multimodal discourse, classification and identification of actors and journalistic voice.

O4: To determine whether on 8 March 2023, International Women’s Day, and the previous and subsequent days, the news spaces analysed here dedicated specific news items that deal with the dissemination of women’s sport.

O5: Observe whether the recommendations on gender and sports, contained in the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation’s Style Book, are respected in the coverage and dissemination of women’s sports.

3. Theoretical framework

3.1 Journalistic coverage of women’s sport

Women, more and more, participate and achieve triumphs or outstanding positions in sporting competitions, set up

more female teams in more disciplines and also “play highly masculinised sports, such as football” (Marín & García, 2022, p. 317). Precisely what is popularly known as the “king of sports”, football, has monopolised and continues to monopolise the media agenda in many journalistic contexts. That is what has been termed *footballisation* or the tyranny of football (Ramon-Vegas, 2017; Rojas-Torrijos, 2012; Steen, 2012), understood as men’s football. Now, however, it is “women’s football [which] is experiencing an era of expansion in Spain” (Boronat, 2021, p. 7) and teams such as Futbol Club Barcelona have achieved such important milestones as obtaining the attendance record for a women’s football match with 91,648 spectators.² But despite these data and “the growing number of players, women’s football plays a merely marginal role in the media and in public discourse” (Pfister, 2015, p. 564). It is superimposed by gender bias: women’s football, like other sports played by women, still does not have a sufficient presence in the media.

In the Spanish context, research on journalistic coverage of sports confirms this bias, widespread among the different media - from television news to the specialised press - and sustained over the years. Thus, Núñez and Gordillo (2011) warned a decade ago that 90.9% of the sports that appeared on television news in the sports section focused on men, and the presence of women on screen was anecdotal. These data are similar to those provided by the research of Hernández Sánchez, Galán Arribas and Herrero Gutiérrez (2018), years later, where it was determined that women’s sport in the specific section of TVE1’s news is less than 3%. The report of the Catalan Audiovisual Council (CAC, 2022) on women in sports programming, finds that 10.4% of the sports information on TV3 is dedicated to women’s sports, swimming being the sports discipline with the highest proportion of time spent followed by water polo, tennis, ‘hockey and basketball.

3.2 Women and public space, through sport

This unstoppable rise of women in sport progresses “in parallel with the progressive evolution of their presence in the public space” (Donoso Pérez et al., 2023, p. 559) and, it is from this milestone that the media coverage of women’s sport can also be read as a clear indicator of the changes taking place in a society that aims for gender equality.

From the perspective of feminist criticism, authors such as Celia Amorós (1994, p. 23) highlight that “the private fact and the public fact constitute what we could call a structural invariant that articulates societies by hierarchising the spaces” and by distributing them respectively between men and women, an endemic dichotomous configuration is historically consolidated where the space public is masculine because “the most socially valued activities, those with the most prestige, are carried out by the barons in practically all known societies”.

As we have seen in reviewing previous research in our environment on sports journalistic coverage, in quantitative terms, women have been underrepresented, giving rise to the impression that sportswomen do not exist or have little weight

in contrast to men (Ramon-Vegas et al., 2020). Besides, patterns of exclusion or segregation by gender are reproduced in the sports field that affect both coverage and journalistic treatment. Thus, for example, corroborates it the study by Calvo Ortega and Gutiérrez San Miguel (2016) by observing that male sportspeople in any circumstance are a reason enough for a news item, while the appearance of women is more frequent when it comes to accentuating some non-sporting aspect and is, on the other hand, limited to when they win a top-level championship. This “persistence of gender imbalances in sports coverage is particularly problematic, as it can create barriers to promoting female role models in society, especially among young people” (Rojas-Torrijos and Ramon, 2021, p. 237).

3.3 Challenges for female sportspeople: self-perception and lack of role models

The lack of journalistic support and dissemination of women's sports, together with the media's overexposure and popularisation of men's sports, means that female sportspeople perceive themselves as being invisible as collected by Martínez-Abajo et al. (2020) and/or objectified by a press that puts more emphasis on their bodies than on their sporting prowess. An initial **consequence** of this self-perception is the difficulty in establishing themselves as role models for girls and teenagers.

There are several studies that claim the lack of female sporting role models for girls and teenagers to the media that favour their integration in sporting practice (Gómez-Colell, 2015; Gómez-Colell et al., 2017; López Díez, 2011; Sainz de Baranda Andújar, 2014; Sanz Garrido, 2020). Many agree in recalling the influence exerted on public opinion when journalistic information mostly shows men's sports, which can generate the idea that “only sports played by men are important” (López Díez, 2011, p.14).

3.4 Androcentrism and sports commentary: from sexist language to the lack of voice

When exploring the role of the media in the sporting field from a gender perspective, it is also necessary to bear in mind language, “the fundamental instrument for the journalistic profession” (Vega, 2012, p. 7). As authors such as Bernárdez Rodal (2015, p. 117) point out, the language that is used informatively “is patriarchal and sexist, at the same time as it transmits information, it legitimises sexism” and sport is no exception.

Thus, a widespread practice in sports news is to take it “for granted that when talking about the World Handball Championship, by default, it is male”, so that in the distinction “between ‘sport’ and ‘women's sport’ “is applying an androcentric approach that takes as a rule that the sport played by men subordinates that played by women, considering the latter an exception to the norm” (López Díez, 2011, p.49). There is also a significant tendency to define female sportspeople with diminutives or adjectives that make it difficult to value their participation in competitions and tournaments (López

Díez, 2017) or to show them emphasising emotions as signs of weakness or dependence, so it is also essential to review the images of the media construction of sports.

And in the same way, it is important to note that, even when sportswomen are the focus of newsworthy events, they are not necessarily given a voice. Their relegation as protagonists and speakers is aligned with the image that is often projected of women journalists and their weight in newsrooms, especially in the field of sport. As the study by Bandrés-Goldáraz and Serrano González (2021, p. 125) points out, the labour situation of female journalists “is far from that proposed by the equality labour laws currently present in the Spanish and European legal system” and this is detrimental to journalism with a gender perspective. For these authors, as well as for Salido Fernández (2022, p.2), a greater female presence in news production would reduce gender biases and stereotypes that male journalists “are more likely to reinforce”.

4. Methodological design

To examine the news output of the public channel TV3, an ad hoc model of content analysis has been designed that includes the presence and ranking of information, journalistic treatment, classification and key discursive aspects (Igartua, 2006; Krippendorff, 1990). For data collection, a tested and validated ad hoc model is used (Holsti *intercoder* reliability method >90%) in previous applications,³ which guarantees the acquisition of empirical, objective and reliable data in order to draw conclusions based on the trust and validity of the same (Colle, 2011; Humanes & Igartua, 2004).

The instruments for the collection and analysis of the data include a first identification table where, fundamentally, data are collected on presence, the gender of the professionals who present the sports section (identified by the name that appears marked), and the hierarchy of the news items. The news pieces are classified according to what they cover: women's sport; men's sport; mixed sport (mixed competitions or competitions where there are both female and male categories); or non-sporting news (sporting news items that do not deal specifically with its playing or competition, for example, court cases affecting a sporting body, club meetings, etc.).

The second analytical grid, one table for each news item, is organised into four blocks: analysis of journalistic discourse, analysis of statements by sportspeople, coaches, etc., analysis of images and analysis of non-sporting references to the personal lives of sportspeople. A section for news items identified as mixed is also added.

4.1 Case study. Selection of the sample and the time period being analysed

This research has been proposed from the point of view of analysing public televisions, specifically Televisió pública de Catalunya (TV3), understood as an institution that offers

a public service to society, which can and must be audited. The Audiovisual Communication Law of Catalonia also talks about the missions of the audiovisual public service under the jurisdiction of the Generalitat and, given that the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation is under legislative control, Article 26 of the law also affects the contents of the public television. Section 'H' of the aforementioned article states that the "active promotion of equality between women and men, which includes equal treatment and opportunities, respect for diversity and difference, the integration of the gender perspective, the promotion of positive actions and the use of non-sexist language" (*Law 22/2005, of 29 December, on audiovisual communication in Catalonia, 2012*).

In addition, the CAC, the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation (2020) promoted the #ThoEstasPerdent campaign, together with a report to which TV3 adhered, which contained ten commitments made in reference to media coverage. It was inferred as "giving more visibility to women's sport", devoting more "time and media space to presenting the results and milestones achieved by women in the various competitions" (p. 3). It was also proposed to incorporate "the gender perspective in all aspects of the treatment of news and information", "[r]eflect an image of female sportspeople that is diverse, non-stereotyped and that serves to create female role models and referents of personal, professional and social success", or to highlight "the unequal conditions that exist today between men's and women's sport" (p. 3).

The time period that has been analysed is the month of March 2023, as a representative period that is in the middle of the television season, and for the relevance of the celebration of International Women's Day on 8M (8 March). The thirty-one days of the TV3 broadcast of *TN vespre* (the evening news programme from Monday to Friday) and the weekend programme *TN vespre cap de setmana* (Saturdays and Sundays) were viewed, to select the complete sports sections, which add up to a total of 3 hours, 49 minutes and 49 seconds that was

analysed. The choice of the evening edition is justified for being the news programme with the highest share in the traditional primetime slot, which means it has a significant impact on Catalan society. The cumulative audience percentage in this time slot is the highest of the day, exceeding 66% (General Framework for Media in Spain 2023, 2023, p. 38). According to data published by Barlovento, on most days in March 2023, *TN Vespre* is the programme with the highest screen share on TV3 (Barlovento Comunicación, 2023).

5. Results

5.1 Journalistic coverage of sport according to gender categories

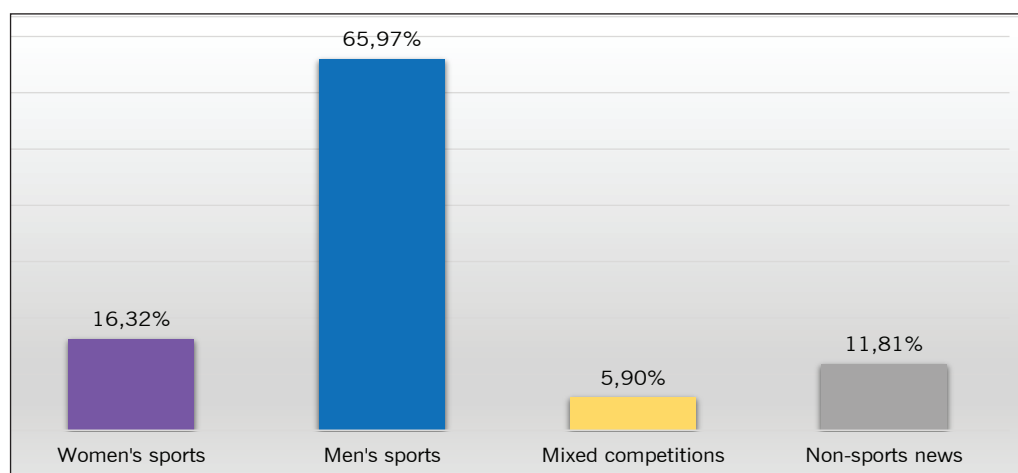
When analysing the sports news broadcast by TV3 on the *TN vespre* news programme, we find that 65.97% of the total (N=288), that is, 190, are dedicated to men's sports, and only 47, which would correspond to 16.32%, to women's sports. Non-sports news accounts for 11.81% (a total of 34 news items) while the remaining 5.90%, 17 news items, is dedicated to mixed competitions [see Figure 1].

In terms of broadcast time, the percentages are similar. Out of the total broadcast time of the sports section (N=03:49:49), 62.87% is allocated to men's sports, 17.88% to women's sports, 14.39% to non-sporting news and 4.86% to mixed competitions. The figure of 140+ minutes dedicated to men's sport contrasts clearly with just over 40 minutes for women's sport in TV3's evening news in March [see Figure 2].

5.2 Distribution by sports disciplines

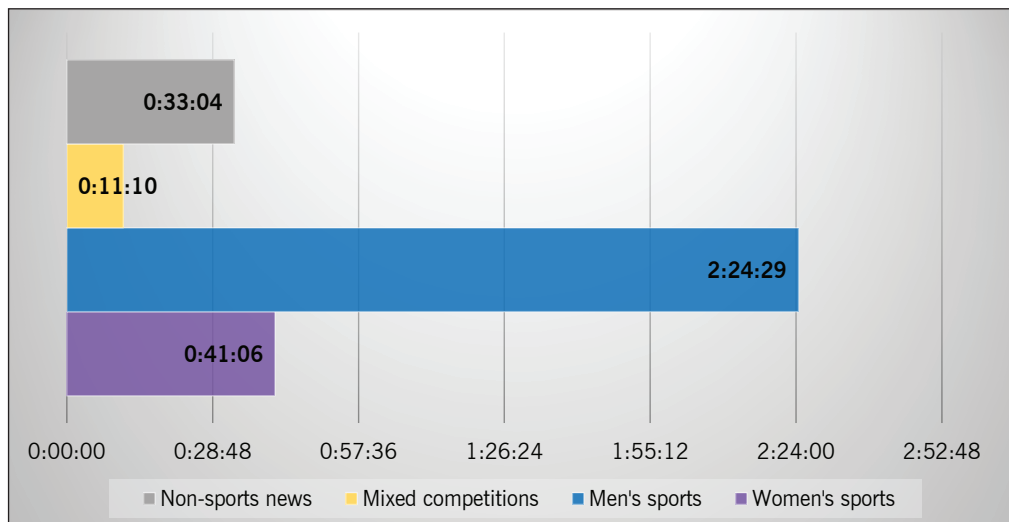
If we analyse the global data by sports discipline, football far surpasses the rest of the sports in the news coverage on *TN vespre*. Out of the total news items (N=288) analysed, 56.60% are dedicated to 'the king of sports' (163), many more than the 37 items that deal with the second most prominent discipline,

Figure 1. Total number of news items by gender



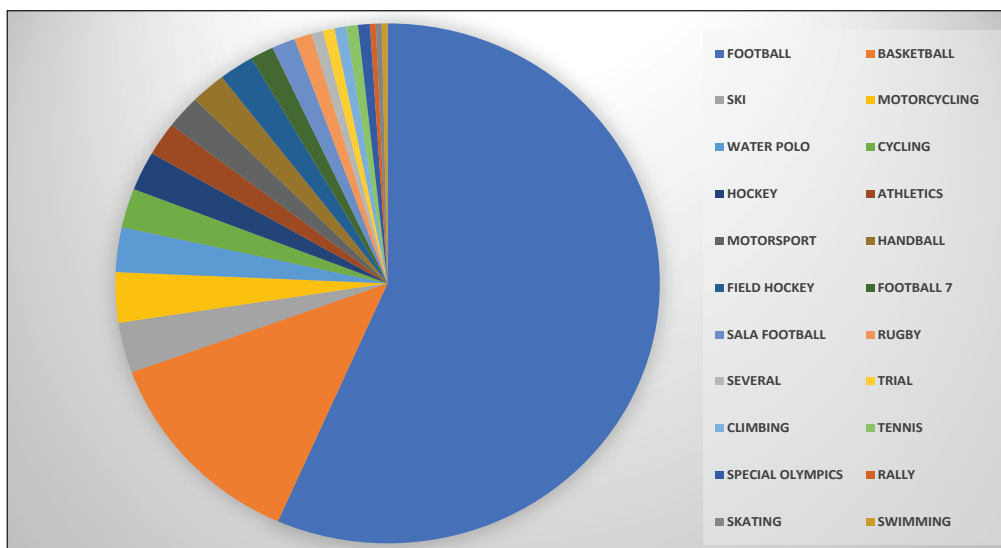
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2. Total news time dedicated to sport



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Total news items by type of sporting discipline



Source: Own elaboration.

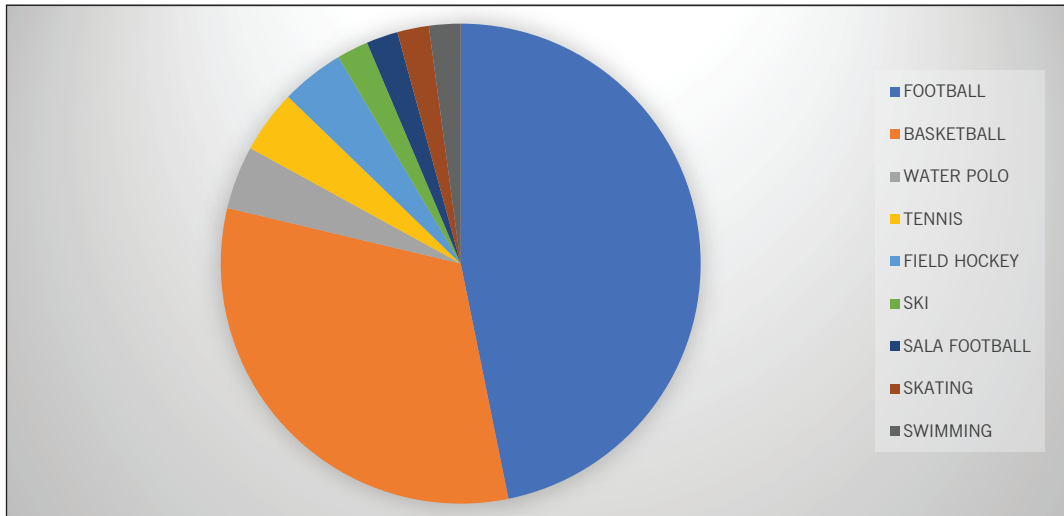
basketball (12.85%) and at a great distance from those that would be in the following positions [see Figure 3]. Here, the range drops to 9 units for skiing and motorcycling (3.13%), 8 for water polo (2.78%) and 7 for hockey and cycling (2.43%), followed by athletics, handball, motoring and field hockey with 6 (2.08%). The rest of the sports that appear in the news no longer exceed 2% with 4 (futsal and 7-a-side football) or 3 news items (rugby) each, while trials, climbing, tennis or swimming, the skating and the rally have a practically anecdotal presence. This is also the case of the *Special Olympics*⁴ with 2 news items (0.69%).

If we look only at the news items dedicated to women's sports (N=47), although football continues to focus the attention of sports news (46.81%), its predominance is not so overwhelming. To begin with, the distance to the second sporting discipline with

the most news coverage is smaller: while 22 news items are devoted to football, 15 are devoted to basketball (31.91%). And it also highlights the lesser diversification of the other sporting disciplines in more modest coverage ranges. Only water polo, tennis and field hockey appear here with 2 news items each (4.26%) and skiing, futsal, skating and swimming with just one (2.13%) [see Figure 4].

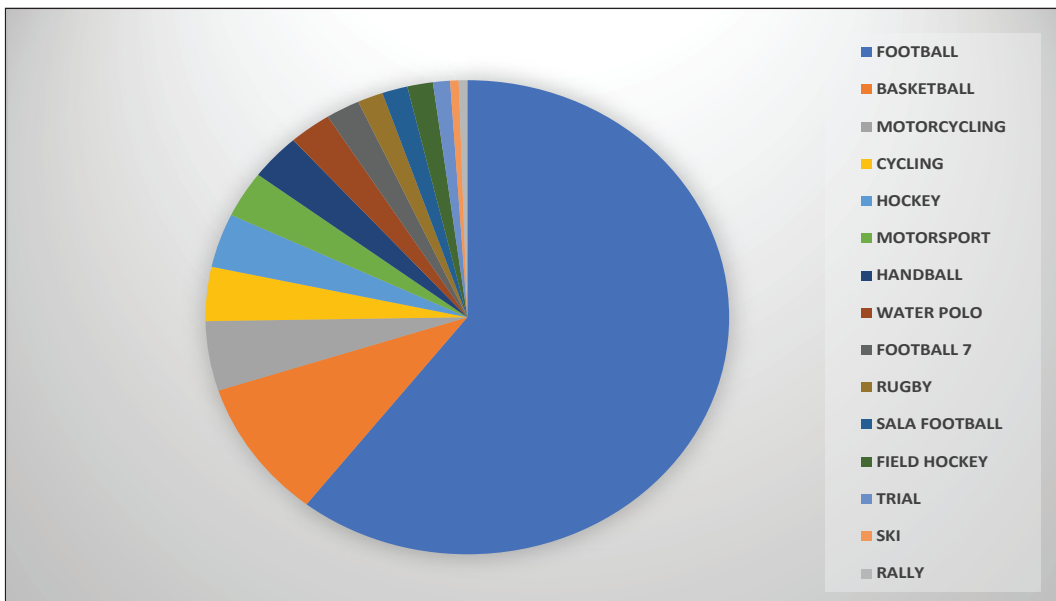
On the other hand, for the news items dedicated to men's sports, the tendency to privilege football is accentuated. Of the 190 news in total, 115, i.e. 60.53%, are about football. And the distances between basketball, as the second discipline with the most presence in the news, with 18 news items (9.47%), or the sports that occupy the following positions, is reduced. Thus, motorcycling (4.74%), cycling and hockey (3.68%) appear in this range of 7 to 9 news items. They are followed by water

Figure 4. Total women’s sports news items by sports discipline



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 5. Total men’s sports news items by sport discipline



Source: Own elaboration.

polo, with 5 news items (2.63%) and seven-a-side football with 4 (2.11%). And below this 2%, but maintaining a greater diversity than that of women’s sports, we find rugby, indoor football/futsal and field hockey with 3 (1.58%), trial riding with 2 (1.05%) and eventually some skiing and rally car news items (0.53%) [see Figure 5].

With respect to the other two categories, it should be noted that the news items of a non-sporting nature (N=34) are mostly related to football (76.47%). Again, basketball comes in second, but with only 4 news items (11.76%) while the remaining 4 are spread across several sports covered together, plus the eventual appearance of water polo and athletics (2.94%). [see Figure 6].

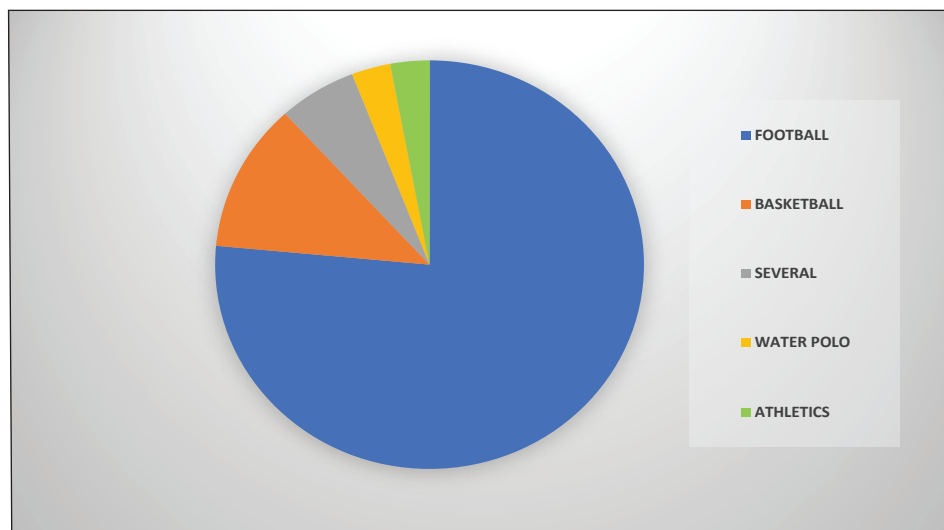
As for the mixed competitions, the coverage is significantly

less, with a total of 17 news items. Skiing leads this category with 7 news items (41.18%), followed by athletics with 5 (29.41%) and already with smaller records, climbing and *Special Olympics* with 2 each and the eventual presence of field hockey [see Figure 7].

5.3 Relevance of women’s sports news items

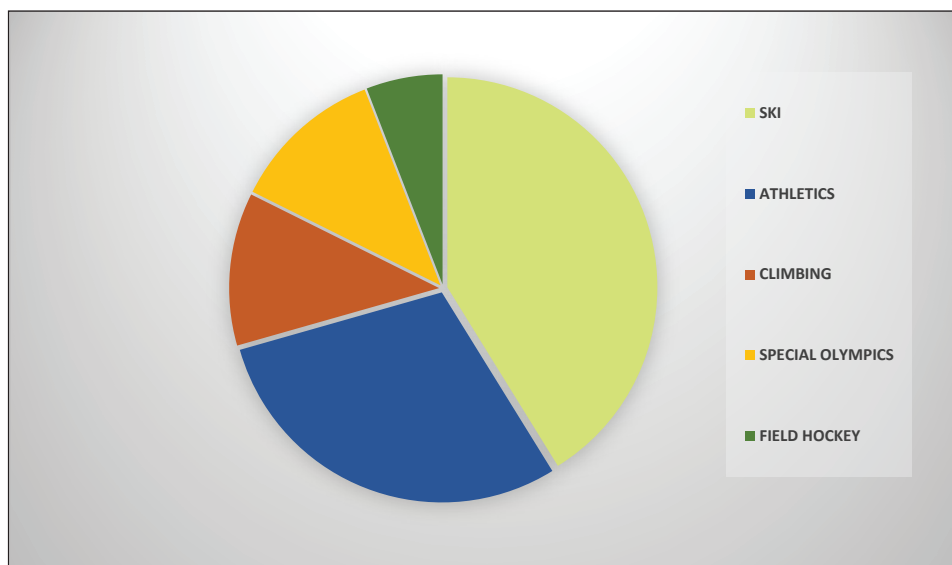
By analysing the openings of the sports section in the TN news programme broadcast on the evenings of the month of March 2023, we can see how men’s sports take centre stage in this opening on 18 of the 31 days (58.06%), non-sports news only does so on 7 occasions (22.58%), and women’s sport opens the block on 6 occasions (19.35%).

Figure 6. Total non-sports news items by sports discipline



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 7. Total news items on mixed competitions by sport discipline



Source: Own elaboration.

This data can be analysed more clearly when we look at the sports disciplines that focus the opening news items segregated by gender [see Figure 8]. More than half have devoted themselves to men's football (51.61%), not counting that non-sports news (19.35%) is also related to this discipline. Football is also the most prominent discipline for women, but with 5 opening news items (16.13%) compared to 16 for men. What is indisputable is that football is the preferred opening in the sports section on the TN news programme (on 27 of the 31 days, 87.09%). To a much lesser extent, men's motorcycling (6.45%) or women's water polo (3.23%) and non-sporting news related to basketball appear in the sports opening on the TN news programme.

The table 1 shows the order of appearance of the news items

from day to day according to the four pre-established categories. Of the total number of women's sports items news identified (N=47), the majority are broadcast in the second block of the sports section (63.83%) and only the remaining 17 (36.17%) appear in the first block. We can also observe how out of the 31 days analysed, women's sport appears on 25 days, and if on 6 occasions it did so as the opening news item (19.35%), on 7 it did so as the closing news item (22.58%).

As it can be seen in Table 1 that of the days analysed (N=31), women's sport appears at least once on 25 occasions (80.65%), and does not appear on 6 days (19.35%). The days with the most presence of women's sports are 25 and 31 March with four news items each. On 25 March, the two featured

be noted that on the days before and after 8 March, there is no news about women's sports. On 7 March, there are three reports on football and three on basketball, and on 9 March, football takes a total of 8 news items and water polo closes the sports section of the news programme.

5.4 Inclusive and non-sexist language

Although in the discourse that was analysed during the news broadcast, neither references to the physical beauty of the sportspeople nor transfers of merit from the sportspeople to another person were detected, but some sexist expressions were observed that should be highlighted.

On the one hand, the news programmes of 6 and 7 March 2023 use expressions like *the first female referee* and *female referee*. The recommendations of the Consejo Nacional de Deportes [National Sports Council] (CGD) state that it is advisable to "avoid the use of the word *women* before the professional title [...] because it is redundant and, moreover, it is not used in the case of men" (López Díez, 2011, p. 50).

Along these lines, the use of what could be called a qualifying adjunct has been identified as indisputably sexist. In 38.30% of the cases, in the sports news items focused on women, it has been detected that the adjective "women's" is added to the term sport: *the Barça women's team*, *the women's league*, and *now in women's basketball*, etc. In no case has it been detected that any competition or sport represented by men has been identified as "men's": *the Girona men's team*, *the men's first league*, etc.. In the case of mixed competitions, the qualifying adjunct is correctly used to differentiate both competitions, using terms in the same news item as *men's competition – women's competition*, *female squad – male squad*, *women's final – men's final*. It would be something advisable to use the same system in all cases, both in women's and men's sports, or to avoid it at all times, since again, it is extremely redundant when in the images you can already clearly identify male or female sportspeople, and in the journalistic account, they are identified as *the sportsmen*, *the female players*, *the male runner*, etc.

On the other hand, on 16 March, a news item was broadcast about the skier Mikaela Shiffrin. The reporter sent to the ski slopes of Grandvalira describes the sportswoman as 'photogenic, approachable and very professional', a remarkably sexist expression, which is completed in the subsequent androcentric comparison 'Shiffrin could come to be in skiing what Leo Messi is in football'.

5.5 Journalistic voice and statements

The sports section of the weekly TN edition is presented by journalist María Fernández Vidal (23 of the 31 days analysed), while the TN weekend edition falls to Artur Peguera Anura (8 remaining days, 25.81%).

But of the total news items analysed (N=288), 44.44% are announced by a journalistic voice other than the one presenting

the sports section. In these cases, 128 news items to be specific, the voice that narrates the news event (on camera or voiceover) is mostly male (90.63%). If we separate the women's sports news items, only 25% are presented by a woman, while in men's sports the percentage of the female journalistic voice (9.68%) is even lower in comparison to the male voice (90.32%).

Regarding the leading voices included in statements or in the coverage of press conferences (in a total of 17 of the 47 reports on women's sports), coaches (64.71%) predominate over sportswomen (47.06%). In women's sport, relatives of the sportspeople, or other people such as club presidents or specialists (medical, legal, etc.) have not been interviewed or given statements. In contrast to the 49 men's sports news where statements were included or press conferences were covered, sportspeople were given a voice on 25 occasions (51.02%), almost as much as coaches (24 times, 48.98%) and other people were added, especially club presidents, in 7 reports, but in no case, relatives or specialists.

Together with the voice, we close this section with a short note on the relevance of the images used in the news coverage of sport, or the percentage of news items illustrated with images that do not correspond to the facts is similar in women's and men's sports (12-13%). In most cases, the exclusion of images is justified by the lack of rights to exploit the images of matches or competitions. Or in short news items or an events agenda, in the use of photographs or graphics.

5.6 Analysis of non-sporting references

In women's sports news items, only once is reference made to the sportsperson's private life. On the news programme of 11 March 2023, it is reported that the Barça CBS player, Itziar Llobet, is beginning her maternity leave. Even so, we highlight another news item (29 March 2023) where the couple and the sexual orientation of female sportspeople are referred to through the images, precisely to cover what the female news presenter describes as imaginative solutions in front of reinforcing the training of the staff with the partners of the sportspeople. In the images of the couples, men and women and the sportspeople they accompany are identified.

5.7 Analysis of competitions involving men and women and mixed sports

Of the 17 news items identified as mixed sports, more than half show female and male sportspeople together. Of the rest, on 3 occasions only women appear, on 4 there are only men, but the exclusive references to one or another gender are equal (17.65%) and contrast with the predominance of both genders in 41.18% of mixed sports news items. Given the small number of mixed sports news, if we analyse the role as the centre of the newsworthy event, the variation between women (11.76%) and men (17.65%) is not significant, and it is hardly indicative that in when giving a voice to sportspeople in 3 of the four occasions they are women.

6. Discussion of results, limitations and new lines of research and conclusions

6.1 Discussion of the results in relation to each of the objectives

This research has been structured based on five objectives which, together, analyse the degree of visibility that Catalan public television gives to women's sport in its most popular news programme.

Regarding Objective 1, although the presence of women's sport is higher than that recorded in previous studies, the percentage is still low (16.3%) and very unequal compared to men's sport, to which almost 66% of the news items on TV3's evening news is devoted. Also, the time spent on men's sports is almost four times that spent on women's sports. Mixed competitions are relegated to 5.9%, being a time that minimises the possibility of seeing men and women competing together. And while it is true that non-sporting news items have a greater presence (11.8%), this time is used to talk about information that also marks gender differences (such as those noted around the Negreira case, or when the singer Rosalía is shown covering the Barça anthem).

We can also affirm that the TN programme does not usually give much news relevance to women's sport, since it only opens the sports section on 19.35% of the occasions and relegates 63.83% of the news items focusing on women in the second part of its sports block. In the same way that the viewer perceives the first news item as the most important one, by leaving women's sports in the second block, the interpretation can be induced as something less significant (secondary or even complementary).

In addressing Objective 2, it has become clear that football has not only taken over men's sport and the majority of non-sporting news, but has also conquered the women's sports space. This *footballisation* (Ramon-Vegas, 2017; Rojas-Torrijos, 2012; Steen, 2012) has therefore been extended to women's sports where, although basketball accounts for 31.91%, football is almost 15 points higher at 46.81%. In men's news, six out of ten news items are dedicated to football, to the detriment of the rest of the sports that do not reach 10% of the news items in any case (not even popular disciplines such as motor sports).

This over-representation of football generates, however, a more acute invisibility of minority female sports, reducing their diversity and coverage. Thus, the sportswomen who "make an effort, train and obtain exemplary results", and although these results are significant, they are ignored and "if the media ignores them, these positive values are not references for the rest of the women, especially in childhood and youth" (López Díez, 2011, p.14).

Mixed sport is relegated to four disciplines, skiing, athletics, climbing and field hockey, in addition to a deference to the *Special Olympics*, reporting in general about the event and not showing any competition or discipline specifically. Here the most plausible explanation is that TV3 covers events or

competitions that take place in Catalan territory and/or those where sportspeople or teams from Catalonia compete. Even so, the reduced coverage of these types of sports means that it is very unrepresentative of the total of existing mixed competitions, which exponentially serves makes these practices less visible.

Regarding professional practice, from the association of journalists for equality, when they advocate for feminist journalism or with a gender perspective, researchers Elena Bandrés and Carmen Serrano (2021) note that "the media have historically contributed to concealing women's work" (p. 130). In this regard, when addressing Objective 3, despite bearing in mind that the presenter of the weekday sports section is a woman, we observe that when this figure is not the one who narrates the news piece, the journalistic voice that presents the item is a man in more than 90% of cases. We consider this data as a warning sign to implement measures that do not silence a more diverse voice for women also as journalists and reporters.

Regarding Objective 4, focused on the agenda of 8 March 2023, International Women's Day, and the days before and after, we emphasise that the news outlet only produced one news item dedicated to women's sports. The news piece, broadcast on the same day (8 March), at the end of the sports section, is an interview with the Spanish futsal coach, the Catalan Clàudia Pons, defined by the presenter as 'a true role model in coaching this sport, and this is how she was recognised last year, with the award for the best coach in the world'. The news revolves around the lack of female coaches in general and the fact that she is the only one who trains a futsal national team, going back to its beginnings. It is positive news to make women visible in highly masculinised environments, but unique on a date as significant as 8 March, International Women's Day. Therefore, we see a missed opportunity to report on more female sportspeople and teams, which would make known other possible role models for the new generations or, on the contrary, make more emphasis on the challenges still pending in the field of sports for women, with statistical data, which make the case of this coach so significant.

Ultimately, Objective 5 leads us to review the monitoring of the recommendations of the style book of the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation and its decalogue on gender, and we note that they have not been strictly respected. The only exception would be the rigour with which the objectification of women and the fragmentation of their bodies is avoided. On the other hand, the criterion of parity has not been applied in all contents, nor has positive discrimination. There has also been no increase in content that questions gender roles, nor those that address matters related to gender inequality. On the other hand, although there is care taken in the preparation of the discourse, sexist language has not been completely eliminated, and the repeated use of qualifying adjuncts has been detected, accompanying the sports played by women and not those played by men. Ultimately, given the scant coverage of minority sports, it is evident that the desire to show the diversity of sports played in Catalonia does not mark the daily practice of those responsible

for the sports section of the TN news programme.

6.1 Limitations and new lines of research

With the general view of the data collected in this research, although indicative given the analysed sample, it seems interesting to open new lines of research such as an analysis of journalistic routines and professional practices, starting from interviews with those responsible for the sections of sport of the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation to evaluate decision-making and the work and supervision processes for compliance with the Catalan public body's own regulations and recommendations. We consider that there is a margin of reflection on which to propose new actions or evaluate alternatives (such as the revision of a system of quotas or positive discrimination), which can give women's sport an adequate progression in terms of visibility, treatment and consequently, social perception in Catalonia.

On the other hand, and in more detail, the number of news items detected for some of the categories, such as mixed competitions, is excessively low, precisely because of the limitation of the analysed corpus, only one month of the news programme, and they need, therefore, new studies with larger samples to assess patterns and infer editorial criteria that can only be formulated here as hypotheses, such as coverage of these competitions.

7. Conclusions

The lack of representation of women's sport in the media in general and TV3 in particular, deprives children and young people of female role models. Despite the female presence leading the sports section, the reality of women in the TN vespre evening news programme continues to be explained from an androcentric point of view, meaning that men prevail over women both in terms of news items and viewing time. There is a protection of the dominant male value, and sexist biases are detected during the narration of the chronicles or during the introductions of the news items.

The TN vespre evening news programme ensures that the coverage of women's football mimics that of the men's sport, that is to say, it uses the same formula and sidelines the rest of the sports, turning disciplines such as basketball or tennis, which years ago were the female sports with the most representation, into minority sports in terms of media coverage. The sports section of the news programme follows this same dynamic in establishing a hierarchy in the news items, always giving priority to football, women's and men's, to the detriment of the other disciplines. This professional practice places the other sports played by women in an axis of double discrimination, the result of the sum of women's sports and minority or underrepresented sports. And it has clear consequences in the creation of role models for current, and especially future sportswomen, because if football is mostly presented as the

only relevant female discipline, the girls and teenagers who want to dedicate themselves to skating, the different styles of hockey, or sports as popular as basketball or tennis, will suffer double discrimination: one for playing a sport in female categories, and the other for having chosen a sport which is minimised in the media sphere and the public agenda.

From the Catalan Audiovisual Media Corporation, it is necessary to implement measures that help the professionals to take on board a set of recommendations appropriate to current regulations and public service objectives. The #ThoEstàsPerdent campaign⁵ started in 2020 and promoted by the CAC, the Generalitat and the CCMA to promote women's sport in the media, cannot be purely anecdotal for the Corporation, but should apply the commitments to which they adhered, such as promoting the presence of female sportspeople to achieve full equality or the breaking of gender stereotypes. It is therefore about continuing to work on journalistic routines to reduce the current tendency to make women's sport invisible, promote real parity between women and men in the sports section of TV3's evening news and contribute to reducing the ongoing gender inequality in this area of the public sphere.

Notes

1. For literal quotations from original texts in English or Spanish, the translation corresponds to the author.
2. 'Barcelona women's team once again breaks the world attendance record: 91,648 spectators'. Source: <https://www.rtve.es/deportes/20220422/barcelona-femenino-repite-record-asistencia-91648-espectadores/2337460.shtml>
3. The research derives from a previous investigation by the first-named author, which deals with the presence of women's sport in the primetime news on TVE (La1), during the 2021-2022 season, collected in the Final Bachelor's Degree project (TFG) tutored by the second-named author and presented before the academic tribunal in June 2023 (full consultation in the UPF Repository).
4. The Special Olympics appear segregated as a supra-category, since, in the news item that appeared, no particular sport was mentioned, but rather the newsworthy item was the opening ceremony of the event itself.
5. The CAC, the Generalitat and the CCMA promote the #ThoEstàsPerdent campaign to promote women's sport in the media <https://www.cac.cat/actualitat/cac-la-generalitat-i-la-ccma-impulsen-la-campanya-thoestasperdent-fomentar-lesport>

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*Academia (des)acelerada.**Encierros, entusiasmos y epidemias*

Dafne Calvo, Germán Llorca-Abad, Lorena Cano-Orón

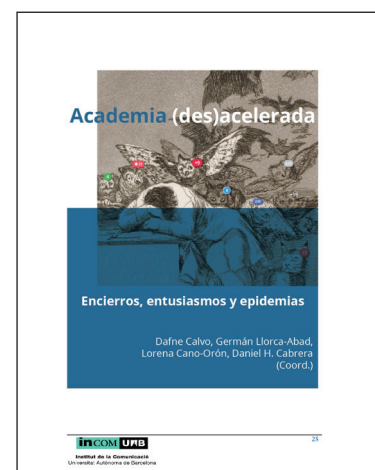
& Daniel H. Cabrera (coords.).

Bellaterra: UAB, Institut de la Comunicació, 2022. 263 p.

ISBN: 978-84-124136-2-5

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García-Ull, F. J. (2023). [Book review of *Academia (des)acelerada. Encierros, entusiasmos y epidemias*, by Calvo, D., Llorca-Abad G., Cano-Orón, L. & Cabrera, D.H.]. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 85-86. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420671>

The book *Academia (des)acelerada. Encierros, entusiasmos y epidemias* (2022), coordinated by the members of the Mediaflows Research Group [www.mediaflows.es] Dafne Calvo, Germán Llorca-Abad, Lorena Cano-Orón (Universitat de València) and Daniel H. Cabrera (Universidad de Zaragoza), raises, through a careful selection of authors, the need for structural changes in the current academic system. As the general feeling of the work reveals, the university co-exists with dynamics and routines that lead the institution and its stakeholders to an unsustainable situation. So much so that their very survival depends on the extent to which they meet these challenges.

The text raises the need to rethink education in the digital age and points out that the pandemic has exposed the limitations of a model of education fascinated by technology. The means prevails over the content to such an extent that the disruptive, creative and revolutionary point of view consists of transgressing this maelstrom of digital tools, stopping for a moment and reflecting on the processes and objectives of education. Educational innovation takes precedence over critical thinking to the point that, during the pandemic, “the only pedagogical discussion we had was to choose between *Teams*, *Google Meet* or *Zoom*” (p. 21).

The pandemic turned classrooms into screens and led the university to the unquestionable logic of *not stopping* and *guaranteeing* education. “Like when you learn to ride a bike, the advice was to keep going, look ahead, focus on the road and not the sides, continue in order to ensure the academic year was not lost. [...] The university, the centre of excellence of humanity, appears to function without any interest in the human beings that make it up, those who build and maintain it” (p. 5).

However, the work points out that addressing the urgency with digital tools is not transforming education. In fact, the inertia of

transmitting knowledge to *certify* the studies was emphasised. The university, like the rest of society, does not see slowing down, let alone stopping, as an option. That is why the university runs the risk of concealing the facts: education has been patched up with “tools” of a different kind in order to “keep progressing”, but there has been no serious reflection on the processes and objectives of learning and education under the transformative effect of digital technologies. In this sense, the text highlights the importance of reflecting on the relationship between digital technologies and education. It points out that education cannot be reduced to the transmission of information, but must be understood as a process of knowledge construction. Digital technologies can be useful tools to support this process, but they cannot replace it. It also addresses the issue of unequal access to education in the digital age. The pandemic has highlighted inequalities in access to digital technologies and online education. In this regard, the book highlights the importance of ensuring equal access to education in the digital age, especially for groups that have been historically marginalised. Equality too, in a “feminised but androcentric” academia (p.47).

Slowing down “does not mean abandoning the idea of progress”(p. 39), but is rather a reflexive and ethical appropriation of what has been ceded to market logic. The work proposes a pause converted into a time of estrangement, imagination and play, which allows us to turn mechanical and accumulative inertia into a diversion in order to produce meaning, to aspire to something more than a set of numerical achievements stripped of social and humanistic value. Furthermore, it stresses the importance of knowledge experts not normalising the bureaucratisation (p. 85) and precariousness (p. 231) scenario, aimed at competing and accumulating numbers, but rather generating value and knowledge.

The necessary deceleration of academia, which serves as the

central theme of the book, also involves a review of the system for evaluating research output.

The pressure to publish and the measurement of academic performance based on quantitative indicators has generated a culture of accelerated knowledge production and a lack of research quality, raising important questions about the integrity and purpose of academic work. This dynamic has become a worrying phenomenon affecting various disciplines and has deeply permeated contemporary academia.

It is important to recognise that the pressure for constant publication has led to a saturation of the academic market, where the amount of research far exceeds the capacity for assimilation and critical evaluation by the scientific community. This overproduction has generated a sense of unbridled competition among academics and has led to the emergence of academic journals of dubious quality, which focus more on the quantity of publications than on the rigour and impact of the research.

Furthermore, measuring academic performance based on quantitative indicators, such as the journal impact factor or the number of citations, has contributed to the lack of quality in research. While these indicators may be useful for a general assessment of the impact of the research, they are not necessarily an accurate reflection of its quality or scientific relevance. Instead of promoting excellence and originality, there has been an obsession with meeting these indicators, which has led to questionable practices, such as publishing studies with biased results or manipulating citations to increase the apparent impact of the research.

This culture of accelerated production and lack of quality in research also has negative consequences for academics themselves. The constant quest for publications and meeting performance indicators generates a disproportionate workload, which can lead to a lack of time and resources to carry out quality research. Moreover, this pressure may discourage the exploration of risky or innovative ideas, as safe and predictable research that meets established criteria is favoured. The book explains, for example, that the experimental research that led to the discovery of the Higgs boson (2012) “could not have been carried out in the current competitive environment” (p. 88).

As the authors argue, to counteract this culture of accelerated production and lack of quality, it is necessary to promote a change in the way academic research is evaluated and assessed. Rather than focusing exclusively on quantitative indicators, holistic evaluation mechanisms should be developed that consider the originality, methodological rigour and real impact of the research.

In addition, open and collaborative research practices using *open-source software* (p. 146) should be encouraged, where research staff share data, methods and results in a transparent manner. This would allow for greater verification and replication of studies, which in turn would strengthen the reliability and quality of academic research.

Academia (des)acelerada. Encierros, entusiasmos y epidemias is a harsh critique of the practices, structures and processes of the current academic system, written by university professors and researchers, with the aim of saving academia. The work denounces a general lack of reflection on the role of the university in society and takes a close look at the situation as a whole. A model is therefore being reformulated and will have to adapt to new realities in order to ensure its own survival.

The Tyranny of Algorithms: Freedom, Democracy, and the Challenge of AI

Miguel Benasayag

Rome: Europa Compass, 2021. 128 p.

ISBN: 9781609456627

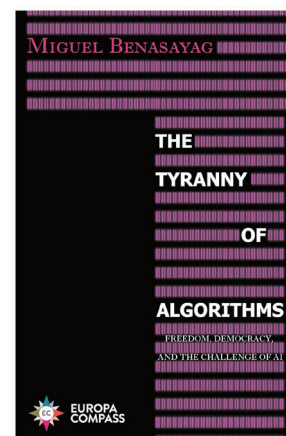
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How to cite:

Gozalo Salellas, I. (2023). The anthropological condition of algorithmic man [Book review of *The Tyranny of Algorithms: Freedom, Democracy, and the Challenge of AI*, by Benasayag, M.]. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 87-88. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420674>

The anthropological condition of algorithmic man

The Tyranny of Algorithms (Europa Compass, 2021) is a short volume, no more than 120 pages, originally published in French, with the only translation into English being by Steven Rendall for Europa Compass. It is a rich but chaotic dialogue between the Franco-Argentine philosopher and psychoanalyst Miguel Benasayag (who is listed as the author) and the French anthropologist Régis Meyran. It is the basis for another work by Benasayag, published in Spanish, called *¿Funcionamos o existimos?* (Prometeo Libros, 2021). Both titles are philosophical-anthropological approaches to the era of the algorithm, focusing on the production of artificial intelligence and the impact it has on contemporary human subjectivity.

Throughout its three sections (1. *The failure of Western rationality*; 2. *Post-democracy*; 3. *The theory of action*), the work claims that singularity is the element that differentiates humans from machines, relying on a whole host of bibliographical references for this (from Heidegger to Badiou, Descartes to Lacan, Newton to Einstein, Spinoza and Leibniz to Marx, Turing to Deleuze and Guattari...), rich dialogues between periods and authors, and a wide range of examples. The result is a unique, wide-angle reflection that moves away from the current presentist fever while addressing cases ranging from the Holocaust to Nagasaki; from the Valladolid controversy (1550-1551) to the Stock Markets or Silicon Valley.

The first chapter, where the author's central ideas are discussed, points to the central debate between the human model and the technical model (p. 16): to exist (the human) or to function (the machine), the dilemma framed by the title of the other book that has been referenced (*¿Funcionamos o existimos?*). Thus, for Benasayag, man and his body are a type of analogical thought, which fails and cannot be controlled because it is real (“the

real with bodies”). The first section continues with Benasayag affirming that the prominence of technological rationality in our lives is, for practical purposes, the end of the modern project that reached its climax in the 18th and 19th centuries with Kant and Hegel—which the author defines as “the age of the spirit”, p. 25). For Benasayag, what characterised the modern project was a relational rationality, in eternal dispute, quite the opposite of the current technocratic project, based on technical-digital hyperrationalism—a rationalism that leaves no room for error, as it is nothing but a sum of quantitative correlations (p. 26).

Even so, the author shows the circular nature of history and, in his eagerness to make a genealogy of the project of modernity, in the book, he concludes that it is precisely modernity that, in different periods and with different methods, has created the measure of the world: from Galileo's mathematical method to the rise of automata in the 18th century as perfected models of man, passing through the equation between the human organism and the clock in the Cartesian era. The final conclusion regarding the errors of ancient methods of calculation of the world (“not everything is possible”, p. 22) is the strongest argument that Benasayag offers to criticise the faith in contemporary technical rationalism, which leads to the traps of the cybernetic promise—the fact that technology will free humans from work and the difficulties that life presents.

The second section of the book, *Post-democracy*, should have more of a tone of contemporary political analysis, however, despite specific moments where it tries to address the concept of *post-democracy*, it continues to delve deeper into the implications of technology in our lives and in the ways of articulating society. It offers just a few truly illuminating passages on post-democracy: in an interpretation that goes away from the hegemonic one, the author considers that democracy is

characterised by its conflictual character (“conflictuality”) with what is different (or “the Other”) (p. 65). Therefore, the denial of alterity and conflict is what characterises the post-democratic model that, according to Benasayag, has successfully managed neoliberalism and its capacity to deterritorialise and destroy links. From this management model, the post-democratic subject would have emerged, fundamentally individualised and relativistic - a condition that the author summarises in the concept of “hypernominalism” (p. 68). In this world, understood as “aristocracy without aristocrats”, the future is subject to mass prediction, which minimises the random and uncontrollable character of destiny to the extreme. In a way, our post-democratic era denies *futurability*, as Franco Berardi theorises, and turns it into an extension of the programmed and monitored present.

All in all, in my opinion, the most interesting reflection that the book offers about our era is the inability of humans (and their rationality) to control the consequences of their actions. In summing up a rich presentation of cases of modernity, the author concludes that the catastrophes to which we expose ourselves with digital technology are nothing but the last chapter in a series of disasters produced by the technical avant-garde in the West, with Auschwitz and Hiroshima/Nagasaki being the two key examples, and figures such as Hitler, Stalin or Pol Pot the most recognisable figures.

Faced with this scenario, the author proposes a re-politicisation of the social field and a rethinking of political action, neutralising the current delegation of politics to machines (p. 74-75), but assuming the key handicap of the most immediate future: the inability to invade physical space as in the past. In the example of the Winter Palace as a great symbol of the conquest of public space, Benasayag contrasts the offices of Google or IBM as the iconic spaces of contemporary power. In this sense, it may be useful to think about Elon Musk's entry to Twitter and the media attention given to his symbolic arrival at the company's *headquarters* in San Francisco, as an example of who has the ability to conquer today.

The reflections of the final chapter, The theory of action, focus on strategies of human action in the future, largely based on Foucaultian theories about power and forms of governmentality. Under the hegemony of algorithmic governmentality (p. 79), according to Benasayag, individuals are depersonalised and communities are annulled. The avatar would therefore be the figure that stars in our time in history. The path proposed by the author is to open our minds to other forms of existence and other forms of action that are not only conscious but also alive. In a world dominated by complex non-linear systems, Benasayag calls for singular solutions, avoiding Tabula Rasa fantasies that come from both the far left and the right, and returning to a more extended time scale that avoids the great sins of the digital world: constant feedback, immediacy and promises of the infallibility of mechanisation.

In conclusion, *The Tyranny of Algorithms* is an uneven critique, but it is full of brilliant and non-catastrophic diagnoses of the

algorithmic era, which will likely have more resonance and unanimity in the not-too-distant future. Although it contributes some central theses, it suffers from the risks of a poorly delimited and apparently improvised conversation, resulting in the structure outlined in the index remaining an unfulfilled promise. In any case, the book fulfils its initial function: to be a launcher of ideas for more systematic reflections in the future.

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XX AdN. La historia del festival universitario de cortometrajes más veterano de España

Marta Saavedra, Nicolás Grijalba & Rocío Gago (coords.).

Valencia: Tirant Humanidades, 2023. 294 p.

ISBN: 978-84-19632-93-7

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How to cite:

Sancho Belinchón, C. (2023). [Book review of *XX AdN. La historia del festival universitario de cortometrajes más veterano de España*, by Saavedra, M., Grijalba, N. & Gago, R.]. *Quaderns del CAC*, 49, 89-90. doi: <https://doi.org/10.34810/qcac49id420676>

Twenty editions of the oldest university short film festival in Spain, AdN, have been held since it began in 1997. This short film festival has emerged as another university activity, launched by the Faculty of Communication and Arts of the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, framed under the ABP methodology—problem-based learning—that encourages students to learn while developing real projects. In this way, the involvement and motivation of the students is encouraged while they put their creativity into action with the aim of participating in a short film competition focused on advertising and cinema.

The book *XX AdN. La historia del festival universitario de cortometrajes más veterano de España* (2023) was coordinated by Marta Saavedra Llamas, Nicolás Grijalba de la Calle and Rocío Gago Gelado. The three coordinators have extensive academic and research experience in studies related to the communication industries, such as film and advertising.

Saavedra is an accredited doctor with a six-year active research term, as well as Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Arts at the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. Her research focuses mainly on changes in the media ecosystem in the production and distribution of audiovisual content.

Grijalba holds a PhD in Audiovisual Communication and is Director of the Communication Department in the Faculty of Communication and Arts at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. His main lines of research deal with film theory and aesthetics, as well as the skills associated with the audiovisual sector.

Gago is an accredited doctor with a six-year active research term, who also directs the Degree in Audiovisual Communication at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija. Her lines of research focus on fiction formats in the audiovisual industry.

The book's coordinators have made a brilliant selection of authors, consisting of professionals from the fields of communication, film, television fiction, entertainment and

advertising, all of whom have extensive experience in the book's subject. The narrative thread of the book recounts the history of the AdN International Short Film Festival in seventeen chapters that provide the reader with a 360° vision of the origin and essence of the festival. Chapters one to five reveal the details of the origins of the university festival; chapters six to nine explain the key aspects of its international expansion, and finally, from chapter ten to seventeen, the need for a university activity such as this is underlined and the key role played by the students in the development of the festival during its twenty editions is highlighted.

The first part of the book, up to chapter five, provides context on the situation of university audiovisual communication studies in Spain, along with a peripheral view of the state of short film festivals at university level on an international scale. Marta Perlado Lamo, Dean of the Faculty of Communication and Arts Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, together with Nicolás Grijalba de la Calle, one of the coordinators of this volume, highlight the main motivation of the AdN Festival: to encourage collaborative work among students. The event, with a (pre)professional character, challenges the students to make decisions and propose specific actions based on the achievement of a real common objective, the celebration of the short film festival.

The second part of the book, from chapter six to nine, tells the story of how the international expansion of the AdN short film festival came about. Marta Saavedra Llamas, another of the book's coordinators, together with Saloomah Yousefian, Director of University Development for Europe and the Middle East at Universidad Antonio de Nebrija, explain how in 2019, the festival celebrated its XVIII edition, coming of age and establishing itself at national level. It is at this point that the directors of the teaching innovation project decide that the time has come to "cross the pond" and give the festival a well-

deserved international passport. As the authors recount in chapter six of the book, the international launch began in Peru, followed by the Dominican Republic and, thirdly, Mexico.

The third part of the book, from chapter ten to chapter seventeen, which concludes the content, recalls the main aim of the AdN festival, the learning and real professional practice of the students. Another of the book's coordinators, Rocío Gago Gelado, together with Irene Caballero González and Christian Álvarez Peralta, directors of the XX edition of the AdN International Festival, talk about the need for a university activity such as this, which has become the longest-running university short film festival in the country. In the last edition of the festival, the twentieth, the two students who wrote chapter ten, together with Gago, were the ones to take the reins of managing the festival. The three authors of the tenth chapter show that the two Roman letters that number the edition of the festival represent both the teamwork carried out by teachers and students, and the similarity of the teamwork that is essential to bring a short film to fruition.

In the seventeen chapters of the book, a friendly, descriptive and approachable tone is employed, whereby the authors involve the readers in the essence of the festival and its history. It is easy to read, but it still contains relevant information told in a narrative that is both simple and educational.

Prior to the publication of the book, there was the contribution of Mar Ramos (2014), in which she analyses the "Project-Based Instruction" method applied to the creation of this university activity. Ramos stresses that the AdN festival requires research and offers opportunities for students to have a platform to exhibit their work. In turn, "it is a complete pre-professional project" (2014, p. 790) in an environment of commitment and motivation on the part of the students.

The volume concludes with an epilogue by Félix Piñuela, Director of *Versión española* and winner of the 2015 AdN Prize of Honour. In closing, the author assures us that the short films serve to remind us that cinema is play, truth and trickery, a style of magic that always needs new tricks in order to continue to exist. In the epilogue, he expresses his gratitude for having been part of the international short film festival and congratulates the festival's organisers for these twenty years, which, he assures us, have flown by.

In short, the book *XX AdN. La historia del festival universitario de cortometrajes más veterano de España* is a perfect journey through the steps that have led a university activity to become an international short film festival of outstanding quality. In broad terms, this book clearly sets out a model of university teaching that encourages student learning with a quality method whereby students put their skills into practice for a real purpose. The text is motivating and reflects a spirit of self-improvement and hard work that is desirable for all university students.

The volume successfully compiles the participation of professionals, teachers and students in its pages to offer an academic proposal that reflects on the need to use practical team methodologies in the university world to challenge students to get the best version of their work and projects.

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