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Number 43 / September 2025-February 2026 ISSN impreso: 1390-3837 / ISSN electrónico: 1390-8634

DOSSIER

The manipulation of public policy evidence with Generative Artificial Intelligence: the risks of deepfakes 15
Christian Cruz-Meléndez

Artificial intelligence: impacts and challenges in public procurement. A systematic review 37
José Antonio Sánchez-Chero, Manuel Jesús Sánchez-Chero and Mario Villegas-Yarlequé

Web coverage of corruption in Chile: automated analysis with artificial intelligence and linguistics 63
Camila Rojas-Sánchez, Luis Cárcamo-Ulloa and Matthieu Vernier

Regulating digital hate: between freedom of expression and the protection of vulnerable groups in Chile 93
María Lorena Rossel-Castagneto

Citizen participation and open government in the digital age: an AI perspective 121
Griselda Alicia Macías-Ibarra and Adriana Guadarrama

MISCELLANEOUS

Newscasts: an opportunity to connect with television channel audiences 149
Ana González-Neira, Natalia Quintas-Froufe and Carlota Fiaño-Salinas

Fashion and femininity: from local press to the digital age.
A critical vision of its evolution, discourses, and tensions 175
Olga Soriano-Ortega

The representation of women in comic sketches
of the CCTV China Spring Festival Gala (2014-2024) 197
Manqing Qiu

Women and garments in conflict: Exclusivity
and exclusion in fashion design in Ecuador 241
María Dolores Vaca-Eguez and Jenny Pontón-Cevallos

Territory, senses, and emotions: transdisciplinary case
of the university campus 269
Rodolfo Jiménez-León and Edith J. Cisneros-Chacón

REVISTA DE CIENCIAS SOCIALES Y HUMANAS XXI
NIVERSITAS

Número 43 / septiembre 2025-febrero 2026 Print ISSN: 1390-3837 / electronic ISSN: 1390-8634

DOSSIER

La manipulación de la evidencia de políticas públicas con la Inteligencia Artificial Generativa: los riesgos de los *deepfakes* 15
Christian Cruz-Meléndez

Inteligencia artificial: impactos y desafíos en las contrataciones públicas. Revisión sistemática 37
José Antonio Sánchez-Chero, Manuel Jesús Sánchez-Chero y Mario Villegas-Yarlequé

Cobertura web de la corrupción en Chile: análisis automatizado con inteligencia artificial y lingüística 63
Camila Rojas-Sánchez, Luis Cárcamo-Ulloa y Matthieu Vernier

Regular el odio digital: entre la libertad de expresión y la protección de colectivos vulnerables en Chile 93
María Lorena Rossel-Castagneto

La participación ciudadana y el gobierno abierto en la era digital: una mirada desde la IA 121
Griselda Alicia Macías-Ibarra y Adriana Guadarrama Chaparro

MISCELÁNEA

Los telediarios: una oportunidad para conectar con la audiencia de los canales de televisión 149
Ana González-Neira Natalia Quintas-Froufe y Carlota Fiaño-Salinas

Moda y feminidad: de la prensa local a la era digital.
Una visión crítica de su evolución, discursos y tensiones 175
Olga Soriano-Ortega

La representación de mujeres en sketches cómicos
de las Galas del Festival de Primavera de CCTV
China (2014-2024) 197
Manqing Qiu

Mujeres y prendas en conflicto: exclusividad
y exclusión del diseño de modas en Ecuador 241
María Dolores Vaca-Eguez y Jenny Pontón-Cevallos

Territorio, sentidos y emociones: caso transdisciplinario
del campus universitario 269
Rodolfo Jiménez-León y Edith J. Cisneros-Chacón

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The manipulation of public policy evidence with Generative Artificial Intelligence: the risks of deepfakes

La manipulación de la evidencia de políticas públicas con la Inteligencia Artificial Generativa: los riesgos de los deepfakes

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Abstract

The article analyzes the risks of using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) and deepfakes in the formulation of public policies. The justification lies in the growing presence of digital media that allows citizens to generate evidence of public issues, and the risk of manipulating this evidence through technologies like GAI, which could distort governmental decision-making. The objective is to highlight how Deepfakes can alter the public perception of social issues, distorting the political agenda and the government's response. The research is qualitative, with an exploratory and descriptive approach, utilizing documentary review on public policies, GAI, and deepfakes. The lack of specific legislation on GAI in countries like Mexico increases these risks, and it is suggested that both governments and civil society work on regulation by promoting greater transparency in digital information to ensure that public policies are based on real evidence. The conclusions highlight that deepfakes create significant distortion in the evidence of public issues, which can lead to erroneous decisions. The creation of regulatory frameworks and the use of content verification technologies are recommended to mitigate these risks. The relationship between public policies and GAI is noted as a novel field of study for generating new knowledge.

Keywords

Public policies, agenda setting, evidence, internet, social media, Artificial Intelligence, fake news, misinformation.

Resumen
El artículo analiza los riesgos del uso de la Inteligencia Artificial Generativa (IAG) y los *deepfakes* en la formulación de políticas públicas. La justificación radica en la creciente presencia de medios digitales que permiten a los ciudadanos generar evidencia de problemas públicos, y el riesgo de manipulación de esta evidencia mediante tecnologías como la IAG, lo que podría distorsionar la toma de decisiones gubernamentales. El objetivo es señalar cómo los *deepfakes* pueden alterar la percepción pública de problemas sociales, distorsionando la agenda política y la respuesta gubernamental. La investigación es de tipo cualitativo, con enfoque exploratorio y descriptivo, utilizando revisión documental sobre políticas públicas, IAG y *deepfakes*. Se subraya que, en países como México, la falta de legislación específica sobre la IAG amplifica estos riesgos, y se sugiere que tanto gobiernos como sociedad civil trabajen en la regulación y en la promoción de una mayor transparencia en la información digital, para asegurar que las políticas públicas se basen en evidencia real. Las conclusiones destacan que los *deepfakes* generan una distorsión significativa en la evidencia de los problemas públicos, lo que puede llevar a decisiones erróneas. Se recomienda la creación de marcos regulatorios y el uso de tecnologías de verificación de contenido para mitigar estos riesgos. Se señala la relación entre políticas públicas e IAG como un campo de estudio novedoso para la generación de nuevo conocimiento.

Palabras clave
Políticas públicas, agenda, evidencia, internet, redes sociales, Inteligencia Artificial, noticias falsas, desinformación.

Introduction

Citizens in the digital age can generate and disseminate evidence of public problems using technologies such as smartphones, social media, and artificial intelligence (AI), facilitating greater citizen participation in matters of collective interest, such as public policy. These involve both the government and non-governmental actors and citizens, from agenda setting to the evaluation of the results. On the Internet and social media, it is common to find evidence shared by citizens about public problems such as potholes, flooding, broken streetlights, insecurity, or natural disasters. This access has allowed more citizen participation in detecting situations not addressed by the authorities, generating useful evidence for public policy. However, there are also risks related to the manipulation of such evidence, which can distort how problems are addressed.

Access to technology has also enabled the creation of manipulated content through Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), which can generate false visual, auditory, or textual content with a high degree of realism, known as deepfakes. These materials, such as videos of false situations or audio recordings of manipulated political speeches present a challenge for public policy formulation, as they can distort the reality of public problems.

The manipulation of public policy evidence through deepfakes poses risks to the government decision-making process, distorting the political agenda, affecting the government's response, and reducing public confidence. Although citizen participation is essential, there are group interests that can divert policies toward interests, reinforcing the risk of misinformation. This article aims to point out that there are risks of manipulation of public policy evidence presented by digital media through deepfakes made with GAI. When false or incorrect information and evidence about a problem is received, the result of public policy will not be the solution to the situation. The premise is that thanks to digital media such as smartphones, their applications (apps), and social networks (Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok), any citizen can generate evidence, whether as a photo, video, or audio, and disseminate it with the aim of having it included in the government's agenda. However, there is a risk that these materials could be manipulated using generative artificial intelligence (GAI), which allows for the creation and distribution of manipulated, decontextualized, or false content, thus distorting information and negatively affecting the public policy-making process. Mexico is taken as a reference, as it currently lacks laws, strategies, and policies to regulate GAI and deepfakes.

Materials and method

This study was developed using a qualitative approach with the aim of understanding and analyzing emerging phenomena, such as the manipulation of evidence in public policy through deepfakes generated by GAI, which is a novel topic, as the relationship between this technology and public policy has been little addressed. Consequently, the scope of this work is mainly exploratory and descriptive, allowing for a deeper understanding of how technologies such as deepfakes can influence government decision-making and policy formulation. This approach is appropriate given the exploratory natu-

re of the phenomenon, which is poorly documented in the current literature (Quecedo and Castaño, 2002), especially in relation to the manipulation of digital evidence and its implications in the public policy.

Research design

To study the phenomena addressed in this article, a documentary investigation was carried out that involved reviewing "scientific articles, book chapters, books, scientific topics on social media, newspapers, interviews with individuals, and any other source of information in which a scientific methodology was written and implemented to analyze, evaluate, and create new information" (González-López, 2024, p. 7). The literature analysis was selective, as only the most important and relevant texts on the topics under study were selected (Hernández *et al.*, 2014). According to these authors, selective review occurs when one is familiar with a research topic, as in this case, which was related to public policy. The bibliography was searched for topics related to its conceptualization, public problems, agenda setting, and public policy evidence. Given the novelty of the topic of GAI, a more exhaustive search had to be conducted, which was done mainly online, involving "browsing and searching scientific databases, institutional repositories, and academic networks. Its purpose is to generate primary or original data, i.e., new knowledge based on the analysis of secondary data present in documents (scientific articles, books, papers, theses, etc.) published on the web" (Arias-Odon, 2023, p. 15). In this regard, related theses were searched in the UNAM catalog and in Google Scholar, "a free bibliographic search engine specialized in retrieving scientific documents in a large number of disciplines and sources, such as peer-reviewed scientific articles, theses or dissertations, patents, books, abstracts, technical reports, etc. It also identifies the citations these have received, helping to understand the impact of publications, thus becoming a competitor to other search engines and citation indexes" (Franco, 2023, p. 37). Terms such as deepfakes, fake news, misinformation, infodemic, and social media were entered into the search engine. To narrow down the topics, the operators "And" and "Or" were used, for example "deepfake" and "public policy," in order to obtain more accurate results. Additionally, Internet and social networks were searched for cases of deepfakes related to a public issue, and news sites and profiles from networks such as Facebook, X, YouTube, and TikTok were used.

Theoretical framework

This section explores the connections between concepts that although initially seemingly unrelated, are interrelated in the current context: public policy, policy agenda, public policy evidence, and AI-generated deepfakes. Manipulating this evidence with AI could distort government decisions and affect expected outcomes.

Public policy

The definition of public policy has been widely debated by academics. Since the beginning of this form of government based on decision-making, implementation, and evaluation of government action, academics interested in the subject have developed a wide range of topics for understanding so-called policies. In the specialized literature, there are broad or very specific definitions, so as not to call them limited or deficient. In this regard, Velásquez (2009) points out that the definition of public policies is such a complex process that some authors do not explicitly provide a definition in their research; others simply cite a conceptualization proposed by another author; and in other cases, they limit themselves to listing the elements that make up public policy, concluding with their own proposal. The present work can be framed in this case, as its purpose is not to participate in the debate on the definition of public policies, but it does consider it important to understand what a public policy is, which may be debated or contrasted in the future. However, rather than being considered a problem or a flaw, this is, within the framework of the academic debate typical of the social sciences, an opportunity to enrich the discussion, in the hope that readers and those interested in the topics addressed will discover and integrate elements that strengthen the field of knowledge. Returning to the point of the essential elements for understanding public policy, the following are proposed:

- The existence of a public problem: these types of problems are those that negatively affect or impact a community, and according to Aguilar (2017), they are interesting such as those related to the safety of people and their property, and fall within the scope of the constitutional responsibilities of the state, requiring only that the government's obligations be adequately fulfilled. Furthermore, these problems have

been called complex or twisted (Head, 2008), and the following characteristics are recognized, according to Rittel and Webber (2017): They do not have a definitive solution; solutions are temporary and may change over time or as the problem evolves. Likewise, possible solutions can generate new problems, which cannot all be foreseen, thus creating uncertainty in the decision-making process.

- The (in)action of the authorities: the state plays a crucial role in managing these problems. Uvalle (2022) emphasizes that state bodies are responsible for recognizing these problems and responding to them actively. However, inaction is also considered a form of public policy, not because of omission or incompetence, but when those responsible do not allocate resources or propose actions, often for ideological reasons or lack of resources (McConnel and ‘t Hart, 2019).
- Participation of other sectors: although public policy consists of actions taken by the authorities, this does not mean an arbitrary exercise of power. In other words, “public policies are not the product of the ideals or desires of those in power, nor of dictatorial or autocratic political regimes” (Uvalle, 2022, p. 25), as one element that has characterized government through public policy is the participation of non-governmental actors who are involved, affected, or interested in the public problem, the intervention, and the solution. This involves seeking dialogue, understanding, and agreements that give legitimacy to the action taken by the government, which, according to Franco (2020), includes listening to the opinions of those affected and giving them a participatory role in the policy process, which gives legitimacy to public action and strengthens the democratic environment (Arellano and Blanco, 2013).
- Decisions, tools, and information: there are several public problems, but governments, due to limitations in resources, capacity, or ideology, select some to form their government agenda, prioritizing those that they can address and that will shape the government agenda, which lists “the set of problems, demands, issues, and matters that those in power have selected and ordered as objects of their action and on which they have decided that they must and have to act” (Aguilar, 2017, p. 29). Governments must choose the appropriate instruments to channel their action, with the aim of modifying what is causing unrest in society (Villarreal, 2019). Regarding information, Bardach

> (1998) points out that the analysis of public policy design must be based on information that becomes evidence for understanding and quantifying a public problem (which may have different rhetorics and interpretations), and thus resolving it or at least controlling it. The decision-making process, the use of resources, the actions implemented, and the improvement of the planning process depend on this information (Paz, 2024).

After grouping the key elements of public policies and aligning them with the themes and objectives, these can be understood as interventions (decision, action, evaluation, continuity, and termination) by the competent authorities, aimed at identifying and solving public problems, in coordination with relevant actors, using knowledge, tools, and appropriate evidence to achieve better results. This work does not focus on the debate on the conceptual construction of public policies, but rather analyzes the relationship between emerging technologies, such as ICT and artificial intelligence, and their impact on public policy formulation. Digital platforms have transformed citizen participation, allowing citizens to exert a more direct and massive influence. Social networks, online forums, and electronic surveys broaden the diversity of actors involved, leaving behind elitist political processes limited to experts and politicians.

Evidence in public policy

Evidence is crucial in the public policy process, as it provides information about the problem, its magnitude, those affected, resources, and decision alternatives. Public problems are complex, and each actor involved will defend their vision, generating a debate full of beliefs, interests, and values (Pirazán and Ríos, 2014). This complicates analysis and decision-making, as politics does not always follow a rational and technical process, but is influenced by political conflicts, value judgments, and ideologies (Jaime *et al.,* 2013).

Evidence is a "clear certainty that cannot be doubted" (Real Academia Española, 2025). It is any type of information, data, or fact that supports a statement, theory, or argument and is used to prove or refute an idea or hypothesis. In this sense, evidence serves to strengthen an argument, providing objectivity and reducing or eliminating uncertainties and ambiguities. In the context of public policy, evidence plays a crucial role, as it provides the ne-

cessary support for informed design and decision-making. Thus, the so-called Evidence-Based Public Policy approach emerged, specifically when in...

> 1999, the British government proposed introducing an "enlightened" vision for developing public policy. Then Prime Minister Tony Blair suggested that good policy-making depended on high-quality information, which is obtained from various sources such as expert knowledge, existing national and international research, statistical data, consultation with stakeholders, previous policy evaluation exercises, recent research, and even secondary sources. (Flores-Crespo, 2013, p. 267)

According to Head (2008), three types of evidence have been identified in public policy:

- Political knowledge: generated by political actors, parties, interest groups, and the media. It is subjective, influenced by ideologies and interests.
- Scientific knowledge: based on analytical methods and empirical evidence. It is essential that the data be reliable and the methods systematic to ensure objective conclusions.
- Practical knowledge: comes from everyday experience in the implementation of policies and programs, without being derived from theories or systematic analysis.

An additional category called citizen evidence can be integrated, which is not always constructed scientifically, it may have political influences and subjectivities and may possess practical wisdom as parties affected by public policy, and may represent "the knowledge of citizens, both individually and collectively, from their everyday experiences. This evidence is linked to understanding a place, a culture, or a community and its problems, and is acquired through the direct experience of the people who are part of it" (Ademokun *et al.,* 2016, p. 28). This evidence is loaded with subjectivity; it needs to be balanced with the scientific knowledge and experience of the implementer.

Ultimately, it is citizens who directly experience public problems such as insecurity, poor infrastructure, traffic, garbage, inadequate transportation, and flooding. In a democratic environment, their voice is fundamental in the creation of public policies. Those involved present their versions and seek benefits, which generates public discussion between citizens and policy makers,

allowing for results and conclusions based on diverse points of view about the reality (Majone, 1997).

It is essential to consider the stage of the public policy at which evidence is incorporated, and what type of evidence. On this point, Pollard and Court (2005) highlight the role of evidence at each stage of public policy

- Agenda setting: it is essential to identify the problem, the argument, and the evidence.
- Formulation: analysis of options, decisions, and actions.
- Implementation: putting the policy into action.
- Evaluation: monitoring the results obtained, determining whether the policy is on the right track or it needs changes.

This work focuses on the evidence for the agenda-setting stage and how it contributes to determining which problems will be addressed, given that not all of them can be addressed by the authorities due to financial, technical, human, or ideological constraints. The way in which the agenda is set directly influences public policy; thus, citizen evidence is key in this process. According to the OCDE (2024), citizens are considered "experts by experience" and "stakeholders" in policy-making, which ensures equity and inclusive access. Citizen evidence provides crucial empirical information for decision-making. This evidence is obtained through surveys, participatory forums, public consultations, and social media, which allow citizens to report problems such as potholes, crime, abuse of authority, and deficiencies in public services, facilitating organization and mobilization to address these issues. In this regard, Cruz-Rubio (2015) identifies some tools for citizens to participate in the public policy formulation stage:

- Citizen forums where the problem can be presented, argued, and evidence presented.
- Citizen committees for decision-making.
- Focus groups, in which information and evidence about a problem are presented.
- Surveys and polls to obtain information and data, which become evidence.
- Digital media. In this case, the list of tools is more extensive, thanks to the rise of ICT and mass accessibility. These channels, such as civic apps and social networks, allow citizens to inform authorities about

public problems and participate in debates. Civic apps facilitate the reporting of relevant events, while social media encourages communication, participation, and access to information (Cruz-Rubio, 2015).

Generative Artificial Intelligence and deepfakes

The incorporation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into key areas of society, such as commerce, health, education, administration, and public policy, has recently gained relevance. AI is defined as a disruptive technology that:

> Uses data and algorithms to perform typically human tasks; is capable of learning autonomously and making decisions based on the use of data and algorithms; is capable of generating capabilities and learning considered autonomous and/or intelligent, as well as performing tasks commonly understood as human, focused on the achievement of certain objectives, including different areas of application, among others, perception, reasoning, or action. (CLAD, 2023, p. 7)

AI applications such as predictive analytics, big data analysis, the possibility of implementing conversational agents (chatbots), decision-making, and encouraging citizen participation have been noted. Like all technology, AI is at risks to "have potential threats that can also negatively affect individuals in different areas of development, i.e., it generates effects both internal and external to the system" (Vera, 2024, p. 91).

The Ibero-American Charter on Artificial Intelligence in Public Administration (CLAD, 2023) identifies risks in the protection of personal data, privacy, transparency of algorithms, human bias, and manipulation of systems.

In particular, Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI), which creates content such as text, images, and videos, is gaining attention. Unlike traditional AI, which focuses on data analysis, GAI produces products such as photographs, videos, and conversations (OCDE, 2023). This type of AI does not focus on prediction, classification, or analysis of data volumes (AMETIC, 2024), but rather its final product can be a photograph, a video, an animation, a song, a conversation, or a statement. According to Storey et al. (2025), "GIA has generated great interest and speculation about the role of artificial intelligence in everyday use, driven in part by the growing popularity of tools such as ChatGPT and Dall-E, MidJourney, Google Bard, and CoPilot AI" (p. 3). A recent phenomenon related to generative artificial intelligence (GAI) is that

of *deepfakes:* false or manipulated content created with the aim of spreading misinformation or misleading information. These can generate realistic but false images and videos that are used to defame, influence electoral processes, or damage the reputation of individuals and institutions (Ríos, 2023).

This phenomenon began in 2017, when a Reddit user shared manipulated videos of celebrities with explicit sexual content (Caballero, 2024). Deepfake is understood as:

> The use of deep learning techniques to create misleading media content. This term encompasses both the creation process and the resulting manipulated media. This technology allows the content of media to be altered without direct interaction with the original material. (Ramos-Zaga, 2024, p. 365)

The term "deepfake" comes from the English words "deep" and "fake." It refers to the manipulation of visual, audio, or multimedia content using deep neural networks, a type of artificial intelligence algorithm to create fake material that appears genuine.

Generative Artificial Intelligence and Public Policy Evidence

As mentioned, this paper establishes a relationship between two separate topics that have been found to have a connecting element: GAI and deepfakes used to manipulate evidence of public policy. The manipulation of social reality is by no means a recent phenomenon. Even in what could be called the offline era, i.e., before the emergence of digital media, there were practices in place to control the media in order to broadcast "misleading news and unreliable or manipulated information, such as statements or declarations taken out of context that explain the motivation of those who issue them" (Chávez, 2022, p. 44). Before ICTs, traditional media such as television, radio, and print media controlled the dissemination of information on social and political issues. In that pre-digital era, media manipulation through images, videos, and texts already existed to influence public perception (Cabral, 2019). Mayoral *et al.* (2019) point out that disinformation and lies for specific purposes have been present throughout history and that rumors have always been part of civilizations.

Subsequently, the fourth industrial revolution or digital age began, marked by the intensive use of ICT in virtually all aspects of society. As Schwab (2017) mentions, we are living in the era of digital technologies, the Internet, social networks, smartphones, and artificial intelligence (including AGI). With these technologies, the monopoly on information held by traditional media such as television, radio, and print media began to collapse, and "journalists no longer have a monopoly on mediating between an event and its reporting. Journalists and their companies are no longer the only ones with the tools to construct and disseminate news" (Espiritusanto, 2011, p. 8). With technologies accessible to all, it is now easy to generate and disseminate content with various intentions, including to cause social harm. In the digital age, the manipulation of information is facilitated, allowing citizens to become prosumers, creating and sharing content to discuss and analyze public issues (Lastra, 2016).

Digital media has facilitated citizen participation in reporting public issues, allowing information to be shared immediately and globally. However, the democratization of information also carries the risk of manipulation, a phenomenon that, although amplified by technology, is not new. For example, it is possible to upload videos, photographs, or any other material that is false, manipulated, or taken out of context to "construct plausible narratives of false events" (Bañuelos, 2020, p. 54).

Initially, *deepfakes* focused on celebrities, politicians, and economic leaders (Westerlund, 2019), However, their use has escalated to even criminal acts such as extortion, dissemination of personal data, invasion of privacy, fraud, copyright infringement, and distortion of democratic processes (Ramos-Zaga, 2024), to which can be added the manipulation of evidence for designing public policies. In this regard, Arguelles (2023) points out that GAI can be misused, leading to a misguided analysis of the problem and subsequent policy phases. Public problems can also be underestimated or overestimated, generating a distorted government agenda and, as a result, the persistence or aggravation of the real problem. On the Internet and social media, it is common to find multimedia materials that supposedly highlight a public problem, such as videos of people falling into potholes filled with water during a live television broadcast; or interviews with alleged victims of a natural disaster; or videos of people swimming or boating after heavy rain. In this way, *deepfakes* can distort reality, information, and evidence in public policy, which is addressed in the following section.

The relationship between AI and GAI in public policy evidence

Continuing with the argument of the potential of digital media to share information, data, and evidence on public issues, the evolution of the web towards stages 2.0 and 3.0 has made digital media more interactive, allowing citizens to produce and share multimedia content (photos, audio, video) as evidence of public issues, which facilitates the incorporation of these topics into the public policy agenda. According to Bekkers and Edwards (2018), these digital media play a prominent role in disseminating images, sounds, and other visual experiences to help frame issues and, as Rodríguez (2021) mentions, document what is being experienced and leave evidence.

For Pearson and Dare (2016), audiovisual content used as evidence for public policy design promotes a broader understanding of the social world and becomes an important element in policy formulation. By focusing on images and visual materials rather than written words and numbers, they facilitate the participation of members of society who are often marginalized from traditional policy analysis processes and can provide a more complete picture of the issues or context. Digital media have been effective "in positioning social issues on the media agenda and later influencing the political sphere. Their importance is noteworthy because of their capacity for outreaching and accessing the information which facilitates social organization" (Mendoza, 2021, p. 53).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been integrated into the public policy process, improving policy design from the identification of the problem to the implementation of the evaluation, measuring effectiveness, costs, and results (González *et al.*, 2020). In particular, it plays a key role in the agenda setting and identification of the problem, improving the accuracy, efficiency, and speed of data analysis. Digital media, such as social networks and platforms, have become crucial sources of information that AI can process to generate relevant evidence (Valle-Cruz *et al.*, 2020).

Although the potential of AI to transform public administration and policy is recognized, governments with limited technological infrastructure may be left out of its benefits. The digital divide is a key barrier, as it creates inequalities in access to essential tools such as the Internet, mobile devices, and social media. This makes it difficult for certain governments and communities to take advantage of these technologies to make informed decisions. For

example, many administrations lack websites, mobile applications, or a presence on social media. In addition, the lack of access to devices and connectivity limits citizens' ability to collect and share evidence on public issues, making it difficult to distinguish between truthful and manipulated information.

Information manipulation in Mexico: from historical cases and the information monopoly to the risks of deepfakes

In Mexico, ICTs have democratized access to public information, a significant advance compared to the pre-digital era of the 20th century. At that time, media such as radio, television, and the press were essential in shaping public opinion, but they were also manipulated to align information with political and economic interests. In most of the 20th century, Mexico lived under an authoritarian political system that controlled the media, using technologies such as television and radio to disseminate official discourse and manipulate information. This control favored political and economic interests and omitted the context necessary for a broader understanding of reality. The media portrayed an image of growth and progress, while minimizing or ignoring social inequalities, human rights violations, and political repression, due to the complicity between the government and the media (Gutiérrez, 1985). In this era of hegemonic party rule, the media...

> Far from being interlocutors or counterweights to power as they are in democratic societies, in Mexico the media were true accomplices of the government. In Mexico, the close collaboration of the media with the authoritarian regime occurred because the media owners were, to a greater or lesser extent, part of the power system. (Bravo, 2008, p. 63)

In Mexico, it is difficult to obtain information on cases of manipulation of information on everyday public issues in the non-digital era. However, there are representative cases of information manipulation, such as the events of October 2, 1968, when television networks did not cover the events in Tlatelolco objectively and presented the demonstrators as a threat to the stability of the country. The narrative broadcast on television favored the government and concealed the magnitude of the repression (Fijałkowska, 2013). The 1988 elections and election campaigns (Sandoval, 2002), and even the case of the "chupacabra," a rumor spread by the mass media in the 1990s

about the existence of a creature that attacked animals (livestock) and even humans, fueled by testimonies from alleged witnesses and which was on the agenda for several months (Zires and Ledesma, 2007).

In the 21st century, the advent of digital media, Web 2.0, smartphones, and social networks broke the monopolies of traditional media. An example of this was the #internetnecesario movement in 2011, which prevented Internet services from being taxed (Zamora, 2011). Similarly, in situations such as natural disasters, a problem that afflects Mexico, ICTs have been a great ally for civic mobilization, as in the 2017 earthquakes when "mobile devices and their cameras and data connections, citizens were able to generate their own videos, something that in 1985 seemed exclusive to television stations, with tools such as Periscope and Facebook Live, live *streaming* was possible via Twitter and Facebook" (Cruz-Meléndez, 2022, p. 120). Digital media are also useful for highlighting everyday public problems, such as poor road conditions, broken street lighting, traffic problems, poor health and education services, corruption among public servants, and public insecurity.

However, the impact that GAI and *deepfakes* may have on public policy evidence is a topic that has been little addressed in Mexico, where there is no regulation or strategy regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence, although there have been some attempts worth mentioning. From civil society, there is the National Artificial Intelligence Alliance (ANIA), "a coalition of experts in Artificial Intelligence from all sectors and disciplines who seek to democratize access of AI in Mexico and promote inclusion, adoption, transformation, social welfare, and economic development, and which recognizes and strengthens the artificial intelligence ecosystem in Mexico with a comprehensive, pluralistic, and multidisciplinary perspective" (ANIA, 2025). This organization presented a document called "Proposal for a National Artificial Intelligence Agenda for Mexico 2024-2030" in which recommendations are made on AI public policies on issues such as security, data protection, innovation, education, and human rights. Although it does not directly mention deepfakes, it does mention the importance of "developing systems to detect fake or misleading news, disinformation, distortion of reality, and other synthetic content that can be used to manipulate public opinion" (Lagunes *et al.,* 2023, p. 24). In terms of AI legislation, there is no law regulating its use; only initiatives have been presented, most of which focus on deepfakes (Meza, 2024), which means that the issue addressed here has been interesting to the legislature. For example, the "Initiative with a draft decree issuing the Federal Law Regulating Artifi-

cial Intelligence" presented in the Senate of the Republic mentions penalties for those who use deepfakes to manipulate situations, people, or places. For its part, the judiciary has also taken action on AI deepfakes, but only in cases where they are used for sexually explicit content (SCJN, 2025), so it has not yet discussed the issue of manipulation of public policy evidence.

Conclusions

Widespread access to ICT and GAI presents both opportunities and risks for public policy. From a positive perspective, it allows citizens to actively participate in issues that were previously reserved for bureaucrats and politicians, giving them the ability to generate evidence through available digital media. However, there are also associated risks, as technologies such as GAI, which gives rise to deepfakes, can be used to manipulate situations and distort the perception of social problems, affecting the formulation of public policy. In countries such as Mexico, where regulation of AI is scarce and there is no strategy to control deepfakes, the risks are increased. On the one hand, digital media have broken the monopoly of information, allowing citizens to generate direct evidence on public issues; but, on the other hand, there have been cases in which deepfakes have not only affected individuals, but also altered the perception of social situations. This environment of misinformation poses a significant challenge, as it can distort the evidence used in government decision-making. Therefore, it is crucial that governments, civil society, and citizens implement easily accessible measures for verifying and authenticating digital content to ensure that public policies are based on real evidence and are carried out in a scientific, transparent, and professional way.

Given that Mexico does not yet have specific legislation on AI and seeks to preserve citizen participation in public policy-making, it is essential to create a legal and institutional framework that regulates the use of AI-generated materials and controls deepfakes. This includes not only protection against harm to individuals, such as privacy violations, defamation, or identity theft, but also the preservation of the integrity of the evidence used in public policy. This framework already has foundations in organizations such as the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA), created in 2021 by Microsoft, Adobe, Google, Sony, Meta, and others, which are dedicated to verifying the authenticity of digital content. In addition, technologies such

as *blockchain* offer solutions for identifying, verifying, and removing deepfakes and other manipulated content.

It is essential that the legislative branch prioritize this issue and pass an Artificial Intelligence law that addresses ethical, moral, and protection aspects of rights violated by GAI. In this context, the academic sector has an opportunity to research new approaches to public policy and its relationship with GAI and deepfakes. This is a novel and interdisciplinary field of study that involves areas as diverse as technology, ethics, politics, communication, administration, public policy, and law, making it a complex topic to address. Although this work focused on the relationship between evidence, GAI, and deepfakes, there are also ample opportunities for research in other phases of the public policy cycle, such as the creation of legal frameworks and ethical dilemmas in the regulation of AI-generated content.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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Christian Cruz-Meléndez	Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Research, Resources, Data Curation, Original Draft Writing, Writing Review and Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Management, and Fund Acquisition.

Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence
The author DECLARES that the article ***Manipulation of Public Policy Evidence with Generative Artificial Intelligence: The Risks of* Deepfakes** was not created with the support of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Artificial intelligence: impacts and challenges in public procurement. A systematic review

Inteligencia artificial: impactos y desafíos en las contrataciones públicas. Revisión sistemática

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Abstract
Artificial Intelligence (AI) has generated diverse impacts and challenges in public procurement processes, with its application being fundamental for economic development and social inclusion. This is justified by the persistence of corruption, regulatory barriers, and the lack of state sustainability. The objective is to analyze factors that affect efficiency, transparency, inclusion, sustainability, technological innovation, regulations, and internal economic development. The methodology applied a systematic review based on articles indexed in Scopus, using thematic, geographic, and language filters, reaching 50 relevant studies from countries such as Brazil, the United States, Canada, Peru, Mexico, and others. The results revealed that AI identified the centralization of powers that limits the transparency and efficiency of public spending. Corruption was a structural problem in Latin America, while in the US, it demonstrated transparency and cost sustainability, achieving successful initiatives. AI, as part of technological innovation, improved efficiency, although it faced implementation challenges, managing to reach the conclusion, on the grounds for development, reducing regulatory obstacles that limited its effectiveness in public management.

Keywords
Political corruption, professional competence, interested agent, public company, government organization, internal politics, public sector, political system.

Resumen
La inteligencia artificial (IA) ha generado diversos impactos y desafíos en los procesos de las contrataciones públicas, siendo fundamentales su aplicación para el desarrollo económico e inclusión social. Se justifica por la persistencia de la corrupción, barreras regulatorias y falta de sostenibilidad del estado. El objetivo consistió en analizar factores que afectan la eficiencia, transparencia, inclusión, sostenibilidad, innovación tecnológica, normativas y el desarrollo económico interno. La metodología aplicó una revisión sistemática basada en artículos indexados en Scopus, utilizando filtros temáticos, geográficos y de idioma. alcanzando 50 estudios relevantes de países como Brasil, Estados Unidos, Canadá, Perú, México y otros. Los resultados revelaron que la IA identifico la centralización de competencias limita la transparencia y la eficiencia del gasto público. La corrupción fue un problema estructural en América Latina, mientras que, en EE.UU., demostró transparencia y sostenibilidad de costos logrando iniciativas exitosas. La IA, como parte de la innovación tecnológica mejoró la eficiencia, aunque enfrentó desafíos de implementación logrando obtener la conclusión en fundamentos para el desarrollo, reduciendo obstáculos regulatorios que limitaron su efectividad en la gestión pública.

Palabras clave
Corrupción política, competencia profesional, agente interesado, empresa pública, organización gubernamental, política interna, sector público, sistema político.

Previous studies

According to Klabi *et al*. (2018), public procurement (PP) is a fundamental strategic tool for managing public resources, accounting for 30% of

public spending. It promotes economic development, innovation, and the fulfillment of social and environmental objectives, ensuring goods and services, and fostering transparency, efficiency, and sustainability. In the United States, it has been established as a critical space for integrating strategic policies and improving government management, as indicated by Boykin *et al.* (2024) and Atkinson (2020).

However, PP systems faced significant challenges, including corruption and collusion, which will affect public confidence and the efficient allocation of resources. Operation Lava Jato in Brazil revealed networks of structural corruption that undermined transparency and created systemic imbalances in public procurement, which, according to Jones *et al.* (2021) and Nicolás-Carlock and Luna-Pla (2023), led to institutional reforms to combat corruption and promote competition by applying artificial intelligence (AI) tools to mitigate multiple institutional errors.

Another significant problem was the lack of social inclusion and equity in PP. Small producers and local actors faced barriers such as high transaction costs, strict regulations, and lack of government support. In Bolivia, small farmers thought their participation in public food procurement was limited due to coordination problems and lack of trust, according to Mercado *et al.* (2016). In Brazil, although public procurement programs favored the integration of family farmers, obstacles related to technical and sanitary requirements persisted, as noted by de Souza *et al.* (2023).

Sustainability emerged as a key dimension in PP. Green public procurement (GPP) was positioned as an effective tool for promoting environmental objectives, although its implementation was incidental and not deliberate. In Florida, United States, according to Dimand (2024) intergovernmental collaboration facilitated sustainable procurement.

AI, as a technological innovation, allowed electronic public procurement (EPP) to offer an opportunity to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase transparency in processes. According to Bosio *et al.* (2023), EPP systems generated significant savings, especially in low- and middle-income countries, although their implementation required high initial investments and faced barriers related to adoption and technical training. Tools such as building information modeling (BIM) had positive impacts on infrastructure project management in Canada, according to Jobidon *et al.* (2018).

Governance and legal frameworks play a crucial role in the effectiveness of PP, facing limitations due to the lack of clear regulations, poor implementation of

regulations, and restrictions in award criteria. These deficiencies will affect the quality of contracted services and highlight the importance of balancing transparency, efficiency, and equity. A systematic review identified patterns and successful experiences to propose recommendations for better public governance.

The study proposal addressed the main challenges and impacts of contracting on public governance in the Americas, focusing on factors such as efficiency, performance, corruption, transparency, social inclusion, sustainability, technological innovation, and legal regulations, seeking to analyze how it affects a country's internal development.

PP was recognized as a key tool of government policy for managing public resources and achieving strategic social, economic, and environmental goals. According to Steinfeld *et al.* (2015), its evolution turned it into a specific professional occupation within the public sector linked to governance. In Canada, the integration of systems such as BIM posed new legal and contractual challenges (Jobidon *et al.,* 2021), while Patrucco *et al.* (2024) point out that contemporary dynamics expanded its framework toward more complex goals such as sustainability and innovation.

Likewise, PP began to be seen as an instrument for mitigating social and economic inequalities. In Latin America, countries such as Bolivia and Brazil are implementing public procurement programs for family farmers, facing challenges of transaction costs and insufficient infrastructure (Mercado *et al.,* 2016; de Souza *et al*., 2023). In addition, emerging technologies based on AI and CPE systems, highlighted by Bosio *et al.* (2023) and Haim (2015), demonstrated their ability to modernize public management, despite initial barriers in infrastructure and technical capabilities.

Finally, PPs faced significant challenges in terms of corruption and lack of transparency. Operation Lava Jato in Brazil revealed collusion networks that weakened the effectiveness of the system (Jones *et al.,* 2021), while in Mexico, the analysis of shell companies highlighted organized patterns of fraud, underscoring the need for oversight and legal reforms (Nicolás-Carlock and Luna-Pla, 2023).

The theoretical framework

Speculative perspectives and concepts from public administration, social sciences, and economic development studies. The main approaches and theories underlying this study are described below:

According to Jung (2024), artificial intelligence applied to public procurement should be involved in all dimensions—social, legal, economic, technical, organizational, and individual—to achieve public procurement that strictly complies with requirements, since it is efficient in awarding contracts, and is transparent in terms of free participation.

Administrative efficiency is part of the classic principles of public administration, which seek to maximize the use of public resources to obtain the best possible results. According to Klabi *et al.* (2018), the minimum price criterion remains a pivotal element in procurement processes. However, they highlight that other factors, such as the quality of the goods or service and the reputation of suppliers, are essential for improving results and minimizing costs in the long term. Efficiency is also linked to competition in bidding processes, as noted by Tkacova *et al.* (2017), who found that greater participation by bidders tends to generate greater savings in public procurement.

Governance and transparency in PP are fundamental for ensuring public trust and accountability. The regulatory framework for PP is based on principles of collaborative governance, where government, private, and social actors work together to ensure fair and efficient processes (Boykin *et al.,* 2024). According to Jones *et al*. (2021), corruption and collusion pose a critical threat, especially in contexts of high discretion. Therefore, transparency must be promoted through monitoring systems, audits, and regulatory frameworks, such as those implemented in several European Union countries.

Sustainability has become a central concept in public procurement policies. Sustainability theory states that governments can use PP as a tool to promote environmental and social objectives, beyond immediate economic benefits. Dimand (2024) points out that green PP, although often not the main objective, can be a positive outcome of collaboration between government agencies. Similarly, Nijaki and Worrel (2012) emphasize how environmentally responsible procurement policies can contribute to sustainable economic development in local communities.

Social inclusion and development highlights the role of PP as a means of reducing inequalities and promoting economic development. In Latin American countries, programs such as the PNAE in Brazil or public food procurement in Bolivia have sought to incorporate small producers and vulnerable groups into procurement processes (Mercado *et al.,* 2016; de Souza *et al.,* 2023). However, according to Misra and Basu (2024), for these strategies to

be effective, structural barriers such as high transaction costs and lack of infrastructure must be overcome.

Technological innovation, through the use of AI, has enabled the integration of emerging technologies, such as CPE systems, which underpin theories for administrative modernization. Bosio *et al.* (2023) highlighted that the digitization of procurement processes increases efficiency and transparency, allowing for better monitoring and evaluation of acquisitions. However, the use of these technologies requires advanced technical capabilities, significant initial investments, and adequate management of organizational change (Haim, 2015; Boykin *et al.,* 2024).

Materials and method

Definition of the scope of the review

The search and selection process for indexed articles was carried out in the **SCOPUS** database using the following search code: **TITLE-ABS-KEY**(Public procurement) **AND** (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI")) **AND** (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) **AND** (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Public Procurement")) **AND** (LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "United States") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Brazil") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Colombia") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Peru") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Canada") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Ecuador") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Mexico") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Chile") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Nicaragua") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Costa Rica") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Bolivia") **OR** LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY, "Argentina")) **AND** (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")).

Main thematic search

TITLE-ABS-KEY (Public procurement). The search focuses on works that include the term "Public procurement" in the title, abstract, or keywords. This filter ensures that the results are relevant to the main topic.

Limit to a specific area of knowledge

LIMIT-TO (SUBAREA, "SOCI"). Filters results to articles belonging to the subject area of Social Sciences. This excludes publications from other areas such as engineering, medicine, etc., and focuses the search on studies with social and governmental impact.

Restriction to document type

LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar"). Limits results to research articles ("ar") published in academic journals. It does not include other types of documents such as books, conferences, chapters, reviews, or editorials.

Exact keyword match

LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Public Procurement"). Filters results to those articles that specifically contain "Public Procurement" as an assigned keyword. This ensures that the articles deal directly with public procurement and not with tangential topics.

Filtered by country

(LIMIT-TO (AFFILCOUNTRY)). The search restricts the country with its article, being selected: Bolivia (1), Brazil (15), Canada (5), Colombia (1), Costa Rica (1), Ecuador (1), United States (20), Guatemala (1), Mexico (2), and Peru (3).

Document language LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"). Restricts results to documents written in English. This facilitates access to international literature and ensures a greater scope of work. The set of filters applied guarantees the selection of 50 articles indexed for systematic review.

Eligibility criteria

Table 1
Inclusion and exclusion criteria

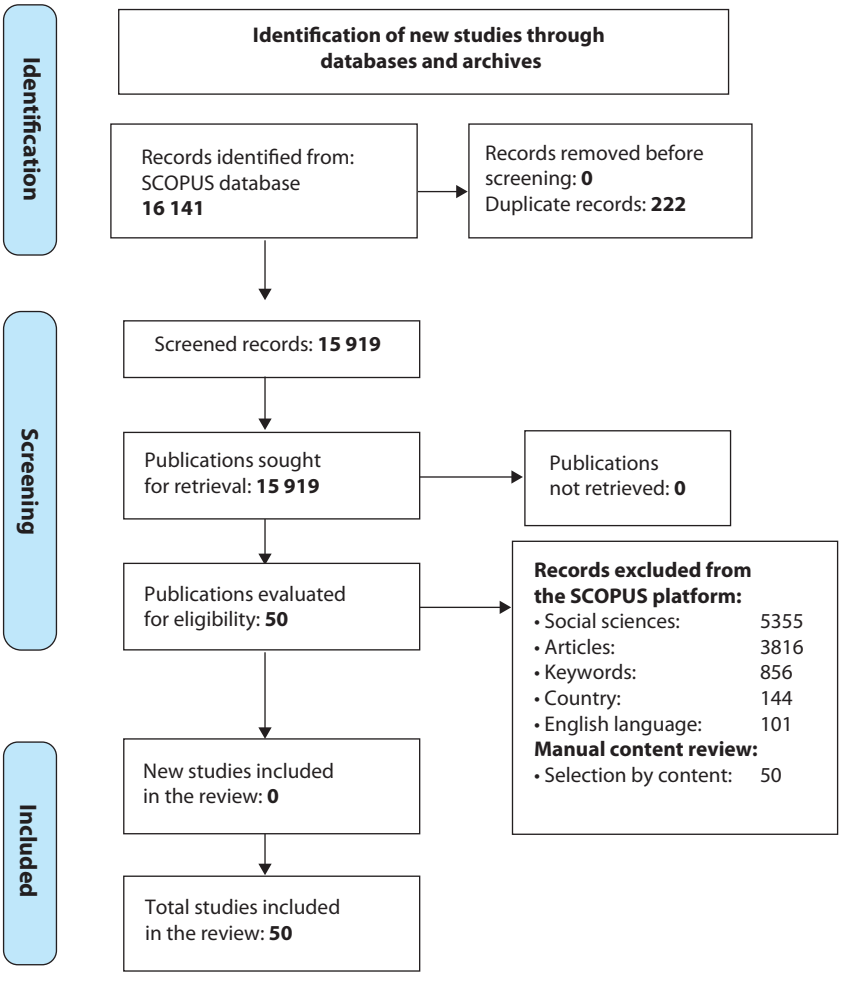
Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Subject	Studies related to *public procurement*.	Research not related to public procurement or secondary topics.
Area of knowledge	Social sciences as the main area of research.	Articles from non-social areas (e.g., engineering, medicine, etc.).
Type of document	Scientific articles.	Books, chapters, conference proceedings, reports, and theses.
Keyword	Content with the exact keyword "Public Procurement."	Studies without an exact match for the keyword.
Country of affiliation	United States, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Canada, Ecuador, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Bolivia.	Articles with affiliation outside the countries mentioned.
Language	English.	Languages other than English.
Availability	Scopus database.	Incomplete articles, duplicates, or articles outside the scope of Scopus.

Data analysis and report preparation

The following processes were developed for data analysis:

- **Data extraction**: the SCOPUS database exported a text file with the abstracts of the selected articles and another file with the extension "ris" that imports bibliographic citations to be retrieved with the Zotero application.
- **Content translation**: The finished document was translated using Google Translate from the original English into Spanish.
- **Information analysis:** the total number of articles per country was counted, then classified according to the objective factors.

Figure 1
PRISMA flow diagram (Page et al., 2021)



Note: The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram was applied. The search process was carried out using the SCOPUS indexed article database, yielding a total of 16,141 articles. A total of 222 duplicate records were filtered out, 5,355 records belong to the subject area of social sciences, 3,816 records are exclusive publications of articles indexed with open data, 856 records correspond to the keyword "public procurement," 144 records belong to the American continent, and finally, 50 articles were reviewed.

Report preparation

Based on the review of the articles, the problem and objective of the study were identified, establishing a technical introduction supported by a solid theoretical framework that served as the structural basis for the research. Subsequently, the methodological processes used for selecting the articles in the SCOPUS database were detailed, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the relevance of the studies analyzed. The results were organized and analyzed according to the factors defined in the objective, allowing for a clear and systematic interpretation of the findings. The discussion compared and contrasted the perspectives of various authors, highlighting the similarities and differences in relation to the proposed factors. Finally, conclusions were formulated as a significant contribution, synthesizing findings and implications for public procurement processes.

Limitations of the review

Limitations were identified related to a possible bias in the selection of articles, given that only open-access abstracts were considered. This restriction may have excluded relevant information contained in the full text of research, which represents a limitation in the analysis.

Results

Table 2
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PP on its efficiency and performance

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Pinto *et al*. (2024)	Centralization of purchasing improves time management but negatively affects competition.
	de Almeida and Sano (2018)	Identification of problems, lack of speed in purchasing, and failures in databases such as Comprasnet.
	Pereira *et al.* (2022)	Integrated procurement management in the public sector improves process control, with electronic negotiation standing out as a more agile and effective method.

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Canada	Klabi *et al.* (2018)	The use of reputation criteria, in addition to prices, optimizes government procurement costs.
United States	Atkinson (2020)	"Full and open competition" and its practical implementation, affecting procurement efficiency.
	Steinfeld (2022)	Identification of key skills to improve procurement management (trust and credibility).
	Steinfeld *et al.* (2015)	Identification and validation of occupational functions in hiring; professionalization certificates.

Table 3
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PP on corruption and transparency

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Jones *et al.* (2021)	Incremental reforms are insufficient to eliminate endemic corruption in procurement processes.
United States	Adobor and Yawson (2023)	Use of artificial intelligence to improve transparency and combat corruption in PP.
	Alibašić and Atkinson (2022)	Negative perception of government procurement due to sensationalist media coverage affecting public trust.
	Moya-Espinoza *et al.* (2024)	Corruption is a factor limiting the effectiveness of public management in health crises; erosion of institutional trust.
Guatemala	Romero (2024)	Technically advanced bureaucracies can facilitate corruption in contexts with political control.
Mexico	Nicolás-Carlock and Luna-Pla (2023)	Shell companies generate organized fraud networks that significantly affect PP.
Peru	Aponte *et al.* (2023)	Factors such as regulatory disparities and the inability of agents lead to contract fragmentation and acts of corruption.
	Calderón *et al.* (2020)	Problems of justification and transparency in advertising PPs, with high levels of non-compliance regulations.

According to the results in Table 2, the impacts and challenges of PP on efficiency and performance, Brazil considered that centralization improves times but reduces competition; sectoral integration problems and database use affect the speed of procurement. Canada determined the introduction of addi-

tional criteria optimizing costs at price, through the reputation and experience of the supplier. The US considered that difficulties in the practical implementation of competition require validation of the occupational skills of the professionals responsible for procurement. The analysis determines that there is a diverse approach, but with persistent challenges in the implementation of more agile and efficient systems. Electronic technologies and complementary criteria represent promising areas, but are not fully exploited. However, the results in Table 3, Impacts and Challenges of PP on Corruption and Transparency show that Brazil and Mexico considered corruption to be systematic through fraudulent networks and shell companies. Meanwhile, the US implements technological innovations based on artificial intelligence to combat corruption, although with challenges related to public perception. In Peru and Guatemala, acts of corruption occur in selection processes, contract splitting, and bureaucracies that facilitate irregularities. The analysis determined that efforts to combat corruption face technical and political challenges. Although technological tools have been implemented, institutional barriers still limit their efficiency.

Table 4
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PP on social inclusion

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Bolivia	Mercado *et al.* (2016)	Hybrid governance structures allow for the inclusion of farmers with direct and community support.
Brazil	de Souza *et al.* (2023)	The PNAE Program promotes the participation of family farming, although it faces regulatory barriers.
	Borsatto *et al.* (2021)	Productive inclusion of family farming impacts on the creation of sustainable local food systems.
	Reis and Cabral (2015)	Public procurement programs seek to include SMEs, although they face challenges related to performance and contract termination.
Colombia	Hernández *et al.* (2023)	Small businesses face difficulties in participating in public procurement due to structural barriers.
United States	Atkinson *et al.* (2021)	Discrepancy that addresses exclusion issues increases inequalities rather than reducing them.
	Izumi *et al.* (2010)	Farm-to-school programs strengthen rural economies and promote social benefits by connecting farmers with school consumers.
	Patrucco *et al.* (2024)	Promotion of social inclusion and environmental sustainability through a strategic focus on PP.

According to the results in Table 4, the impacts and challenges of PPs on social inclusion were presented in Bolivia and Brazil as initiatives for smallholder participation through regulated purchases, according to their operational capacity. However, in Colombia and the US, they created structural barriers that prevent the participation of small businesses due to differences in the limited effects that ensure compliance with the process. The analysis defines that there is progress in inclusion programs, but regulatory and structural problems persist due to the lack of implementation of specific policies for small economic actors, which is a major challenge for achieving effective social inclusion.

Table 5
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PPs on sustainability

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Da Costa and De Motta (2019)	Main barriers to sustainable PP include high initial costs and lack of infrastructure.
	De Oliveira *et al.* (2020)	Environmental regulation and PP as tools to promote sustainable consumption practices in Brazil.
Canada	Jobidon *et al.* (2019)	Promoting sustainability and energy efficiency in public construction projects.
USA	Dimand (2024)	Collaboration in public procurement significantly improves environmental sustainability.
	Nijaki and Worrel (2012)	Green procurement drives environmental sustainability and local economic development.

According to the results in Table 5, in relation to the impacts and challenges of PPs on sustainability, Brazil and Canada applied relational methods such as CMGC/IPD (collaborative management), which promote sustainability and efficiency. In the United States, procurement collaborations have generated unintended sustainable outcomes, and green procurement has boosted local economic development. The analysis of environmental sustainability in PPs is advancing through approaches such as green procurement and collaborative management. However, lack of infrastructure and high initial costs remain significant barriers.

Table 6
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PPs on technological innovation

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Medeiros-Costa (2024)	Risk strategies in PP lead to contractual modifications; technical supervision must be strengthened.
Canada	Jobidon *et al.* (2021)	BIM in infrastructure projects improves execution time but faces legal contractual challenges.
Costa Rica	Murillo *et al.* (2023)	Network analysis technologies based on open data enable the fight against corruption in PPs.
USA	Bosio *et al*. (2023)	Electronic procurement saved $637.9 million by reducing prices and increasing transparency.
	Hua (2022)	IT procurement failures due to low procurement maturity and lack of strategic planning.
	Haim (2015)	Evolution of the CPE system as a key innovation, improving efficiency and transparency.
	Sadiq and Kessa (2020)	Challenges in the procurement of supplies that meet the need for innovative and resilient processes.

According to the results in Table 6, the impacts and challenges of PP in technological innovation are led by Brazil, where public tenders face contractual modifications due to insufficient risk strategies and technical supervision. Subsequently, Canada allowed the integration of BIM, improving infrastructure management, although it faces legal barriers that are manageable. The US implemented CPE processes which have significant savings potential, but failures in technology procurement highlight the need for greater strategic planning. The analysis determined that technologies such as BIM and CPE systems are essential to innovation in procurement. However, legal challenges and low maturity in technology procurement limit their impact, making it necessary to establish measures that guarantee processes to reduce their negative impact.

Table 7
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PP in legal regulations

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Reis *et al.* (2024)	Legislative changes to streamline hiring processes, although affected by organizational inertia among experienced civil servants.
	Signor *et al.* (2022)	Law 14.133/2021: seeks to reduce excessive prices in procurement but may lead to contract breaches due to unsustainable prices.
Canada	Talebi and Rezania (2020)	Innovation projects in public procurement require multilevel governance and efficient collaborative networks.
USA	Diggs and Roman (2012)	Limitations in public-private partnerships due to legal, political, and structural constraints in procurement governance.
	Roman (2017)	Importance of public officials' participation in policy-making and decision-making in public governance.
Peru	Díaz (2024)	Advantages of arbitration in public contracts over litigation; institutional influence on arbitration awards and potential conflicts of interest.

According to the results in Table 7, the impacts and challenges of PP in legal regulations for Brazil are the basis for legislative changes that seek to streamline processes, although there are still problems of organizational inertia. Canada has implemented innovative projects that require multilevel governance and collaborative networks. In Peru, contract arbitration is considered an alternative to litigation, although it faces potential conflicts of interest. The analysis indicates that public procurement legislation is evolving to adapt to increasingly complex contexts.

Table 8
Analysis of the impacts and challenges of PP on the economy and domestic development

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Brazil	Caliari *et al.* (2024)	PPs in high-tech sectors generate significant productive and technological spillovers.
	Brandão *et al.* (2024)	Brazilian public policies historically focused on exports have exacerbated social problems by neglecting domestic markets.
	Ribeiro *et al.* (2018)	PPs account for 13.8% of GDP, with significant potential to promote economic development.

Country	Article/Study	Factors
Canada	Jobidon *et al.* (2018)	Implementation of integrated execution methods to optimize costs and achieve functional and environmental objectives in public infrastructure.
Ecuador	Brugués *et al.* (2024)	Political connections in contract awarding cause welfare losses of 2-6% of the procurement budget.
United States	Hawkins *et al.* (2018)	Small businesses reduce transaction costs and increase efficiency in PP processes.
	Trammell *et al.* (2020)	Identification of gaps in public procurement research to maximize its impact on internal development and strategic economic policies.
	Vecchi *et al.* (2020)	Strategies to diversify production and strengthen supply chains in response to economic and health crises.
Mexico	Silverio-Murillo et al. (2024) *et al.* (2024)	Increased risk of corruption in procurement during the COVID-19 pandemic, especially in non-health institutions.

Institutional resistance and conflicts in the implementation of regulations are constant challenges. The results in Table 8 show that PP plays a key role in domestic economic development, accounting for a significant percentage of GDP in several countries. In Brazil, it generated significant productive and technological benefits, although export-focused policies neglected the domestic market, exacerbating social problems. In Canada, integrated methods optimized costs and promoted environmental sustainability, while in the United States, small businesses improved efficiency and identified strategies to diversify production in the face of a crisis. However, political connections in Ecuador and Mexico increased corruption during emergencies, causing significant economic losses. Overall, although PPs showed high potential for promoting development, challenges related to corruption and a lack of focus on domestic needs persisted.

Conclusions and discussion

The following conclusions stood out:

- PPs improved efficiency in Brazil through centralization and integrated management, although these strategies affected competition. In Ca-

nada, the inclusion of additional criteria optimized costs, while in the United States, professionalization strengthened contracting processes.

- Corruption remained a structural problem with insufficient reforms in Brazil and high risks of fraud in Mexico, Ecuador, and Peru. In the United States, artificial intelligence offered solutions for transparency, although negative perceptions limited its effectiveness.
- Social inclusion advanced with programs for small farmers and SMEs in Bolivia and Brazil, although regulatory barriers in Colombia and the United States limited its scope. Successful initiatives in the United States strengthened rural economies and benefited vulnerable communities.
- In terms of sustainability, initial costs and lack of infrastructure affected implementation in Brazil, while Canada and the United States made progress through green procurement and collaborative methods, integrating sustainable practices into processes.
- Technological innovation, such as electronic systems and the BIM model, improved efficiency in Canada and the United States. However, legal challenges and a lack of strategic planning limited its impact in Brazil and Costa Rica.
- Legislative changes streamlined procurement in Brazil and Canada, but organizational inertia and conflicts of interest affected its success in the United States and Peru. Even so, arbitration and collaborative networks improved dispute resolution.
- Finally, PPs boosted economic development in Brazil and the United States by diversifying production and strengthening supply chains. However, corruption and political connections limited their impact in Ecuador and Mexico.

Among the most salient findings are:

Evidence of different perspectives on efficiency and performance in PPs. In Brazil, Pinto *et al.* (2024) highlighted that centralization improved execution times, although it affected competition, while de Almeida and Sano (2018) identified problems in sectoral integration and the use of databases such as Comprasnet, affecting the speed of purchases. Pereira *et al.* (2022) emphasized that integrated management through electronic negotiation allowed for more agile and effective control of the process. On the other hand, in Canada, Klabi *et al.* (2018) highlighted that including reputation criteria, in addition to price, optimized acquisition costs. In the United States, Atkinson (2020)

analyzed the discrepancy between the normative concept of full competition and its practical implementation, which impacted procurement efficiency, while Steinfeld (2022) validated key skills and occupational functions to professionalize public procurement roles. This diversity of approaches underscored both advances in innovation and persistent challenges in implementing more agile and efficient systems.

Corruption and transparency in PP addressed various perspectives. Jones *et al.* (2021) noted that incremental reforms in Brazil were not sufficient to eliminate endemic corruption, highlighting the need for more structural transformations. In the United States, Adobor and Yawson (2023) analyzed the use of artificial intelligence as a tool to combat corruption, highlighting its potential to increase transparency, while Alibašić and Atkinson (2022) highlighted how sensationalist media coverage generated a negative perception that affected public confidence. In Peru, Aponte *et al.* (2023) identified contract splitting as a common practice, facilitated by regulatory disparities and the lack of capacity of agents, while in Guatemala, Romero (2024) argued that technically advanced bureaucracies could be used to facilitate illicit acts in contexts of political control. Finally, in Mexico, Nicolás-Carlock and Luna-Pla (2023) analyzed organized fraud networks through shell companies, which significantly impacted PP.

In terms of social inclusion, the authors argued how PPs managed, in some cases, to integrate vulnerable actors, although significant barriers persisted. Mercado *et al.* (2016), in Bolivia, highlighted hybrid governance structures, which allowed for the inclusion of small farmers through direct support, while de Souza *et al.* (2023) noted that the PNAE Program in Brazil encouraged the participation of family farming, although it faced regulatory barriers. Similarly, Reis and Cabral (2015) noted that public procurement programs sought to include SMEs, although their performance was limited by challenges in the execution and termination of contracts. In Colombia, Hernández *et al.* (2023) argued that small businesses encountered significant structural barriers to accessing PP, while in the United States, Atkinson *et al.* (2021) questioned the effectiveness of disparity studies in addressing historical problems of exclusion. On the other hand, Izumi *et al.* (2010) highlighted that programs such as "farm to school" strengthened rural economies and generated social benefits by connecting farmers with consumers.

Sustainability in PP highlighted both opportunities and obstacles. In Brazil, Da Costa and De Motta (2019) identified high initial costs and lack of in-

frastructure as key barriers to implementing sustainable public procurement, while De Oliveira *et al.* (2020) noted that environmental regulation provided important tools for promoting sustainable consumption practices. In Canada, Jobidon *et al.* (2021) highlighted those collaborative methods, such as CMGC/IPD, promoted sustainability and energy efficiency in public infrastructure projects. In the United States, Dimand (2024) noted that collaboration in public procurement generated positive results in environmental sustainability as an unintended benefit, while Nijaki and Worrel (2012) stated that green procurement not only improved the environmental setting but also boosted local economic development. These perspectives reflected how sustainability advanced unevenly depending on the economic and political context.

Technological innovation in PP showed diverse approaches. Medeiros-Costa (2024) in Brazil noted that risk strategies in public tenders often led to contractual modifications due to insufficient technical supervision, highlighting the need for greater rigor in the processes. In Canada, Jobidon *et al. (2021)* analyzed how the implementation of the BIM model significantly improved the management of infrastructure projects, although it faced legal and contractual challenges that limited its widespread application. In Costa Rica, Murillo *et al.* (2023) argued that open data-based technologies offered high potential for combating corruption, although their effectiveness depended on institutional adoption. In the United States, Bosio *et al.* (2023) showed that electronic public procurement systems could generate significant savings by reducing prices and increasing transparency, while Haim (2025) highlighted how the evolution of these systems represented a key innovation for improving efficiency. However, Hua (2022) underscored the failures in TI procurement due to the low maturity of strategic planning, highlighting a recurring structural problem.

In the area of legal regulations, the authors analyzed how legislation influenced public procurement processes. In Brazil, Reis *et al.* (2024) studied legislative changes aimed at streamlining procurement, noting that their effectiveness was limited by resistance from experienced officials and organizational inertia. Signor *et al.* (2022) examined Law 14.133/2021, which sought to reduce excessive prices in procurement, but warned that this could lead to contract breaches due to unsustainable prices. In Canada, Talebi and Rezania (2020) argued that innovative public procurement projects required effective multilevel governance and robust collaborative networks. In the United States, Diggs and Roman (2012) discussed the legal and structural limita-

tions of public-private partnerships, noting that these restrictions negatively impacted governance efficiency. Finally, in Peru, Díaz (2024) highlighted the advantages of arbitration over litigation in public contracts, although he pointed out possible conflicts of interest arising from institutional influence.

The economy for internal development in PP showed both potential and challenges. In Brazil, Caliari *et al.* (2024) highlighted that procurement in high-tech sectors generates significant productive and technological spillovers, while Brandão *et al.* (2024) criticized that historical export-focused policies exacerbated social problems by neglecting domestic markets. Ribeiro *et al.* (2018) emphasized that public procurement accounted for 13.8% of GDP, highlighting its strategic importance for economic development. In Canada, Jobidon *et al. (2019)* analyzed integrated delivery methods that optimized costs and achieved functional and environmental objectives in public infrastructure. In Ecuador, Brugués *et al.* (2024) discussed how political connections in contract allocation caused significant losses in economic welfare. In the United States, Hawkins *et al.* (2018) argued that small businesses helped reduce transaction costs and improved efficiency in purchasing processes, while Vecchi *et al.* (2020) analyzed productive diversification strategies to strengthen supply chains in crisis. Finally, in Mexico, Silverio-Murillo *et al.* (2024) pointed out that corruption in procurement—during the pandemic—mainly affected non-health-related institutions, increasing economic risks.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
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Web coverage of corruption in Chile: automated analysis with artificial intelligence and linguistics

Cobertura web de la corrupción en Chile: análisis automatizado con inteligencia artificial y lingüística

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Abstract
This study seeks to present and validate analytical techniques for evaluating figures involved in political corruption cases using an automated news classifier that combines artificial intelligence, linguistics, and social and political sciences. To this end, a topic analysis using LDA (Latent Dirichlet allocation) is analyzed using automatic language processing strategies. A large corpus of information extracted from Sophia Search, an automated news classifier, contains 33,699 news items about seven corruption cases considered scandalous from 64 Chilean online news outlets. From this corpus, the analysis of 32 figures involved in seven events considered politically scandalous is obtained. These items were triangulated with 1120 concepts that helped to deepen the evaluation of the figures. Thus, the results reveal differences and similarities across one axis between media considered hegemonic and non-hegemonic, and across another axis between media considered traditional or emerging, highlighting distinct strategies in each media type. Finally, a conclusion is drawn from the results and future projections are made regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in social and political sciences.

Keywords
Data mining, artificial intelligence, linguistics, social and political sciences, political corruption, news media, web.

Resumen
Este estudio busca presentar y validar técnicas de análisis de evaluación de personajes involucrados en casos de corrupción política mediante un clasificador de noticias automatizado que combina inteligencia artificial, lingüística y ciencias sociales y políticas. Para ello, se realiza, con base en estrategias de tratamiento automático del lenguaje, un análisis de tópicos con LDA (Latent Dirichlet allocation) de un corpus amplio de informaciones extraído de Sophia Search, un clasificador de noticias automatizado, y donde se encuentran 33 699 noticias sobre 07 casos de corrupción considerados escandalosos, provenientes de 64 medios informativos chilenos presentes en la web. Desde este corpus, resulta el análisis de 32 personajes involucrados entre siete hechos considerados como escandalosos políticamente, y que fueron triangulados con 1120 conceptos que ayudaron a ahondar en la evaluación de las y los personajes. Así, los resultados dejan en evidencia diferencias y similitudes en un cruce de un eje entre medios considerados hegemónicos y no hegemónicos, y de otro eje entre medios considerados tradicionales o emergentes, resaltando estrategias propias en cada uno de los tipos de medios. Finalmente se concluye sobre los resultados y se dan futuras proyecciones sobre el uso de herramientas con inteligencia artificial en ciencias sociales y políticas.

Palabras clave
Minería de datos, inteligencia artificial, lingüística, ciencias sociales y políticas, corrupción política, medios informativos, web.

Introduction and state-of-the-art

Since the return to democracy, Chile has been recognized as one of the countries with the highest levels of transparency, competing with Uruguay

for first place in Latin America (Transparency International, 2024). However, this score has fallen significantly since 2014, after several high-impact corruption cases involving prominent political figures and institutions in the country came to light, revealing structural deficiencies in the prevention and punishment of corruption (Wilenman and Feddersen, 2023; Heiss, 2023; Matus, 2020; Nash, 2017; CIPER, 2015a, 2015b).

Although it cannot be denied that Chile has made progress in the last two decades in terms of regulations and institutions related to transparency and public probity, such advances have been partial and generally driven by corruption scandals (Nash, 2017; Zalaquett, 2011), which has led to low confidence in public and private institutions (Irarrazabal and Cruz, 2023).

This decline in trust over 20 years is not random, as corruption scandals and the privileges enjoyed by certain figures in Chilean politics are widely reported in the media.

In Thompson's terms (2001), cases of corruption are presented as political scandals and promote the mobilization of moral outrage and public denunciation (Pereyra, 2012). In this sense, corruption cannot be understood without taking into account social networks and multimedia platforms, since, as various studies point out, the use of modern sources of information (the web) influences interest in politics and specifically in issues of corruption (Pastrana, 2019; Nash, 2017). Although greater consumption of digital platforms generates a higher degree of exposure to diverse content, this ultimately strengthens convictions due to the ability of the algorithms used by these platforms to offer personalized and/or *ad hoc* information (Aruguete *et al.,* 2024; Vidal and Olivares, 2020; Waisbord, 2020).

In this way, social networks and technological applications are as important as television. Thus, WhatsApp, social networks, and broadcast television are the most frequently used media for information by Chileans, according to the CADEM survey (2025). It would therefore appear that consumption of traditional media has positive effects on political opinion and participation, while the use of social media, insofar as it is multidirectional, encourages other more critical dimensions of political participation (Navia and Ulriksen, 2017). Political discussions on the web are thus replacing the use of traditional media in democratic processes in Latin America (Rodríguez-Virgili and Fernández, 2017).

Indeed, as Serrano and Salvat (2015) point out, digitization, which began as just another means of communication, has expanded and filtered through

all dimensions of our society, leading to the process of digital migration from the Information Society to the current Network Society, where digitization has changed the structure of information, accounting for the emergence of digital media in the press, and where the Internet is recognized as a particular medium characterized by integrating and merging all previously known media. In fact, there is a new configuration of the media system in Chile, where digital versions of traditional media coexist with new media originated for networks (Vernier *et al.,* 2017), and where social networks and technological applications are achieving the same informational importance as formal media, modifying the Chilean information system (López-Rabadán and Mellado, 2018; Ayala, 2016).

Journalism is undergoing substantial changes as a result of technological evolution and the social interaction of this evolution and is experiencing a crisis of credibility and trust (Sixto *et al.,* 2021). For this reason, some argue that educating news consumers from a critical perspective is the most challenging way to guarantee the quality of democratic information ecosystems (Cárcamo *et al.*, 2021; Cárcamo *et al.*, 2023), in the face of this phenomenon where citizens seem vulnerable to poor-quality news or unclear framing (Vernier *et al.*, Scheihing, 2018).

In fact, in the case of Chile, Mellado and Scherman (2020) conducted a study to map the diversity of sources and their quality on news platforms and media in Chile. According to their results, online media do not seem to contribute to greater diversity in the representation of social figures and appear to have a predilection for reporting on celebrities and figures who appear in traditional media, especially on television. This is the same conclusion reached by Couso (2011), who pointed out that, at least in Chile, and probably in other Latin American democracies as well, the new digital media have not radically transformed the public agenda set by traditional media.

In this sense, this type of news coverage reflects a bias typical of sensationalist media coverage: the personalization of the news, which expresses the media's tendency to focus its attention on the actors rather than their actions, increasing public attention through the deployment of explicit dramatic and controversial affective elements (Zunino and Focás, 2021; Palau and Davesa, 2013). Hence, corruption can be understood as an interpretive phenomenon (Sola-Morales and Rivera, 2017).

Hence, this research aims to present and validate techniques for analyzing and evaluating individuals involved in cases of political corruption using an

automated news classifier that combines artificial intelligence, linguistics, and social sciences. To this end, this study analyzes, based on automatic language processing strategies, a topic analysis with LDA (Latent Dirichlet allocation) of a large corpus of information extracted from Sophia Search, an automated news classifier, which contains 33,699 news items on seven cases of corruption considered scandalous from media outlets throughout Chile.

Consequently, all the news items are processed to represent them as a list of nouns, key concepts, and entities, and patterns are added to search for their frequencies.

In addition, because frequencies of characters and concepts are obtained, a sentiment analysis is performed within natural language processing (NLP), applying it to moral evaluations of news stories about corruption cases. In this way, a sentiment analysis, also known as polarity analysis, was performed, obtaining various scores with a value between -1 and 1, which indicates at a glance whether the model is positive or negative. Values close to -1 indicate that it is very negative, values close to zero indicate that it is neutral, and values close to 1 indicate that it is very positive.

A triangulation of the data is then generated, both from the analysis of frequency and polarity or sentiments of the individuals linked to the corruption cases, and from the analysis of the conceptual frequency of the news items related to them.

In this regard, it should be noted that research focused on the construction of supervised machine learning models for classifying texts in this language is still scarce, but it is increasing (Sánchez *et al*., 2020), and most studies that classify texts in Spanish originate from the TASS project (Workshop on Sentiment Analysis in the Spanish Society for Natural Language Processing - SEPLN), which aims to promote research and development of new algorithms and techniques, and which is applied to the analysis of opinions in Spanish (García Cumbreras *et al.,* 2016).

In fact, there is research that applies sentiment analysis to investigate moral evaluations and possible biases that could be affecting news texts on the web, a challenging task due to the difficulties of processing some underlying linguistic phenomena such as negation, irony, sarcasm, and the ambiguity of natural language (Xu *et al.*, 2024, Sutriawan *et al.,* 2024), and more broadly, the subjectivity of opinions (García-Vega *et al.,* 2020), which require context for analysis. In fact, linguistics pays attention to technological innovation insofar as it has an impact on the Spanish language and its uses (Lovón and Parini, 2024).

These new approaches, which combine computational methods and big data, are beginning to be addressed in communication research in the social and political sciences (Arcila-Calderón *et al.,* 2016) and open new perspectives for their application in other sectors such as political communication.

This research culminates in the general conclusions of the study, highlighting the experience of using a tool that combines artificial intelligence with the academic disciplines of linguistics and social and political sciences, and indicating projections for future studies that will continue to allow for a deeper analysis of media pluralism in Chile.

Materials and methods

Due to the large volume of information published online, the burden falls on automated approaches to identify these frames within the text. Morstatter *et al.* (2018) test a machine learning model that recognizes patterns and identifies biases in journalistic frames. Similarly, Saez-Trumper *et al.* (2013) examine biases in online news sources and the communities surrounding them. To do so, they present unsupervised methods that consider three types of bias: selection or "control" bias, coverage bias, and statement bias, characterizing each of them through a series of metrics and identifying that these biases increase on platforms linked to social networks. There is also research that points to possible discriminatory biases in the algorithms that enable these analyses (O'Neil, 2017; Martínez *et al.*, 2020).

This type of methodological approach has the difficulty of detecting linguistic phenomena such as irony, sarcasm, and the ambiguity inherent in natural language (Xu *et al.,* 2024, Sutriawan *et al.,* 2024). Therefore, the enormous volumes of text require tools capable of automatically processing these messages without losing reliability. To this end, supervised machine learning processes can be used, which allow context to be taken into account and patterns to be revealed, but researchers must always be given the opportunity to refine the analysis (Baviera, 2017), as automatic analysis methods cannot dispense with rigorous manual coding if they are to be used reliably in research.

The methodological design of this research is presented below, with an emphasis on searching for news using Sophia software (Vernier and Ruiz, 2023) and analysis using open-source programming language due to the high volume of data (Oliva, 2017), and triangulation with data coded by the research team (Otero, 2020).

General Research Design

This study is mixed in nature, with both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as it seeks to access and track large flows of news from different media outlets with a web presence on cases of political corruption. To this end, an analysis model based on web data mining will be followed, specifically under a set of media outlets indexed by the Sophia software. It also seeks to assess interpretive processes on the issue of political corruption in different media outlets in Chile, both nationally and locally.

In order to explore the news treatment of different topics in all their communication stages, a combination of qualitative and quantitative techniques is needed (Amadeo, 2008). Thus, content analysis is offered as an appropriate and valid technique for collecting and processing large amounts of data and subsequently identifying the topics present in the news (Sádaba *et al.*, 2012; Koziner, 2015).

Sample design and sampling strategy

The sample design was based on a comprehensive logic that depended on the advances that were being made in understanding the problem studied during the course of the research itself. Thus, the search was conducted using the Sophia platform, a tool for collecting large volumes of press news data, which allows social phenomena to be explored using *machine learning* and computational linguistics algorithms, thereby developing computational methodologies for human language analysis applied to the social and political sciences, using artificial intelligence and algorithms.

Sophia is software for the automatic collection and indexing of web documents that develops computational methods and indicators based on the collection of large volumes of press news data in various countries around the world, using *machine learning* and computational linguistics algorithms and developing computational methodologies for the analysis of human language applied to the social sciences.

The set of media outlets monitored is a heterogeneous group in terms of political orientation, geographically distributed throughout the country and with diverse media origins. The period of analysis is related to the creation of milestones in corruption scandals, therefore, all texts related to corruption cases considered scandalous between 2014 and 2022 are analyzed.

It is important to understand how the Sophia platform works. Sophia Search is a search engine that indexes millions of news articles published by the media (Vernier y Ruiz, 2023). Based on a list of keywords, a date range, and a list of media outlets, it returns the most relevant news articles, indicating their publication date, the media that published them, the title and content of the news article, and its URL.

Analysis plan

News items published on various corruption cases considered scandalous were stored. To do this, the following search was performed in the Sophia search engine, based on seven cases of media importance, filtering by dates between December 31, 2013, and January 1, 2023.

Caso Corpesca: ("Corpesca" OR "Jaime Orpis" OR "Marta Isasi" OR "Ximena Chong" OR "Angelini" OR "Ley General de Pesca" OR "Ley de Pesca") AND ("inhabilitación" OR "asesorías" OR "soborno" OR "cohecho" OR "corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones")
Caso Cascadas: "cascadas" OR "sqm" OR "Soquimich" OR "Sociedad Química y Minera de Chile" OR "Calichera" OR "Oro blanco" OR "Superintendencia de Valores y Seguros" OR "Ponce Lerou") AND ("corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones" OR "corte suprema")
Caso Penta: ("Penta" OR "Pentagate" OR "FUT" OR "Fondo de Utilidades Tributables" OR "Carlos Alberto Délano" OR "Carlos Délano" OR "Délano" OR "Carlos Eugenio Lavín" OR "Carlos Lavín" OR "Hugo Bravo" OR "Jovino Novoa") AND ("corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones" OR "soborno" OR "cohecho")
Caso Caval: ("Caval" OR "Sebastián Dávalos" OR "Dávalos" OR "Machalí" OR "Natalia Compagnon" OR "Compagnon" OR "Nueragate" OR "Sociocultural de la Presidencia") AND ("hijo" OR "Michelle Bachelet" OR "crédito" OR "Banco de Chile" OR "Banco Chile" OR "madre" OR "predios" OR "plano regulador" OR "suelo" OR "uso urbano" OR "tráfico de influencias" OR "corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "acusadas" OR "acusada" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones")
Caso Milicogate: ("Milicogate" OR "Ley reservada del cobre" OR "ejército" OR "Corte Marcial" OR "militar" OR "Comando de Apoyo a la Fuerza" OR "defensa" OR "Milico" OR "Milicos" OR "Juan Miguel Fuente-Alba" OR "Juan Miguel Fuente Alba" OR "Juan Miguel Alba" OR "Héctor Ureta" OR "Clovis Montero" OR "Francisco Huincahue") AND ("Codelco" OR "Cobre" OR "datos borrados" OR "uniformado" OR "uniformados" OR "corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones" OR "soborno" OR "cohecho")
Caso Pacogate: ("Pacogate" OR "Paco" OR "Carabineros" OR "fuerza policial" OR "Eduardo Gordon" OR "Flavio Echeverría" OR "Felipe Ávila") AND ("documentos faltantes" OR "documentos destruidos" OR "corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones" OR "soborno" OR "cohecho")
Caso Rodrigo Rojas Vade: ("Rodrigo Rojas Vade" OR "Rojas Vade" OR "pelado Vade) AND ("cáncer" OR "convención" OR "constituyente" OR "mentira" OR "enfermo" OR "donaciones" OR "tratamiento" OR "exconvencional" OR "pelo" OR "pelado" OR "cejas" OR "estallido social" OR "leucemia" OR "desnudos" OR "protestas" OR "salud" OR "vicepresidencia" OR "sífilis" OR "corrupción" OR "caso" OR "infringir" OR "multa" OR "investigación" OR "multas" OR "acusados" OR "acusado" OR "infracciones" OR "infracción" OR "sanción" OR "sanciones")

These seven outputs from Sophia Research were then combined into a CSV document to be processed and analyzed using Python language, to which some variables were added in order to make a general characterization of the media that report on corruption cases in Chile.

Next, in order to identify and compare the treatment of media coverage of Chilean corruption scandals between 2014 and 2022, all the news items were processed to represent them as a list of nouns (NOUN); key concepts (PATTERN); entities such as (PER) and (ORG); and patterns were added to search for their frequencies.

In addition, because the frequencies of characters and concepts were analyzed, moral evaluations of news stories about corruption cases can be analyzed. In this way, a sentiment analysis, also known as polarity analysis, was performed, obtaining various scores with a value between -1 and 1, which indicates at a glance whether the model is positive or negative. Values close to -1 indicate that it is very negative, values close to zero indicate that it is neutral, and values close to 1 indicate that it is very positive.

Sentiment analysis is a use case of natural language processing (NLP) and is included in the text classification category, which involves classifying a text into various sentiments, such as positive, negative, or neutral. Therefore, the ultimate goal of sentiment analysis is to decipher the underlying sentiment of a text. This is also known as Opinion Mining.

This resulted in an analysis of 32 individuals involved in the seven events considered politically scandalous, which were triangulated with 1,120 concepts that helped to delve deeper into the evaluation of the individuals.

Analysis and results

The analysis presented below was developed to study a set of national news stories about corruption events considered scandalous in Chile between 2014 and 2022, such as: the Cascadas case, also known as the SQM case; the Penta case; the Caval case; Milicogate; Pacogate; the Corpesca case; and the Rodrigo Rojas Vade case.

In total, the analysis was applied to a set of 33,699 news articles, distributed across 64 media outlets throughout Chile, available on the web (Table 1).

Table 1
News coverage of Chilean corruption cases by media outlet on the web between 2014 and 2022

	Media outlet	Posts	Media outlet		Posts
1	emol	4464	33	diariodevaldivia	15
2	hours24	3413	34	lavozdepaillaco	11
3	113	3289	35	newslosrios	10
4	elciudadano	2940	36	key9	10
5	elllanquihue	2822	37	enlanoticia	9
6	CNN Chile	2586	38	enlalinea	8
7	latercera	2562	39	elproa	8
8	elaustral	2154	40	aconcaguadigital	7
9	ahoranoticiasmega	1617	41	work	6
10	the star of Chiloe	1242	42	diariofutrono	5
11	biobiochile	1145	43	radionuevoamanecer	4
12	chvnoticias	992	44	radioestrelladelmar	4
13	ciper	913	45	masnoticia	4
14	eldinamo	630	46	local seminar	3
15	elmostrador	601	47	seconds33	3
16	elvacanudo	544	48	prensadelestuario	3
17	elrepuertero	507	49	elinsular	3
18	lanacion	271	50	elcalbucano	3
19	radiosago	247	51	diariolagoranco	3
20	laquinta	125	52	soypuertomontt	2
21	laserenaonline	96	53	rioenlinea	2
22	the navigable	90	54	radio reception	2
23	laregiontoday	60	55	fresiaahora	2
24	radiopudeto	49	56	diariosanjose	2

	Media outlet	Posts	Media outlet		Posts
25	diariolaguino	35	57	diariolaunion	2
26	elheraldoau stral	30	58	soyosorno	1
27	suractual	29	59	soychiloe	1
28	elquellonino	25	60	elinformador	1
29	ovallehoy	24	61	diarioriobueno	1
30	elhuemul	21	62	Diariopaillaco	1
31	elperiodista	19	63	diariomafil	1
32	elobservador	19	64	diariolanco	1

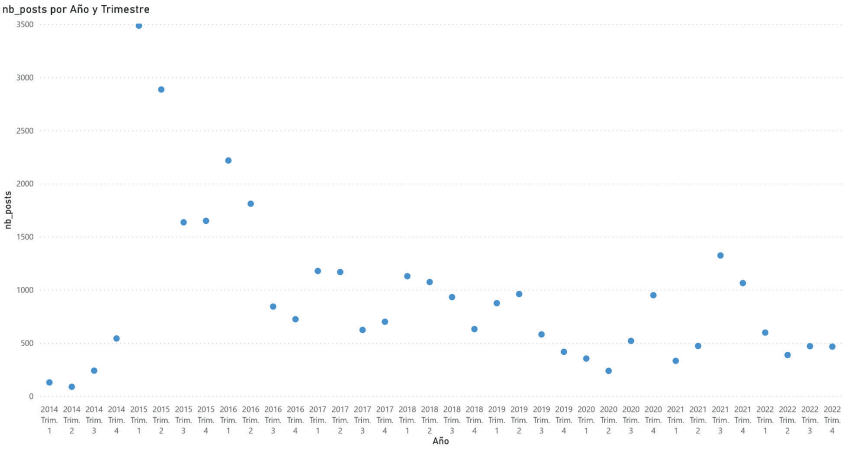
Likewise, in order to determine which variables are interesting to analyze, an overview of media coverage of corruption in Chile is presented, since it allows us to see the geographical distribution of the media outlets that published at least one news item on a corruption scandal (illustration 1). In this regard, it is important to note that these 33,699 news items, distributed across 64 media outlets, are geographically located in 39 municipalities throughout Chile, and as with most news coverage in Chile, they are concentrated in the Metropolitan Region. On this occasion, slightly more than 70% of news broadcasts were in that region, and in fact, almost 25% of all news broadcasts in the period between 2014 and 2022 were in the municipality of Santiago.

There is also an overview of corruption news broadcasts between 2014 and 2022 over time (Illustration 2). There, the highest *peak* of news posts about corruption coincides with the beginning of Michelle Bachelet's second term in office in the first quarter of 2015, when the issue of illegal financing came to light, and then the second *peak* coincides with the Rodrigo Rojas Vade case in September 2021, when, after an interview with La Tercera, former convention member Rodrigo Rojas admitted that he did not have cancer, despite having obtained donations for his supposed treatment.

It is noteworthy that between these *peaks*, the number of posts about corruption in Chile remained relatively stable, which does not mean that there were no other cases of corruption.

Illustration 1
Geographical distribution of media outlets covering corruption between 2014 and 2022

Illustration 2
Distribution of the number of news items on corruption cases in Chile between 2014 and 2022



Likewise, in order to compare types of media on the web, it is possible to search for characteristics of each media outlet, such as year of origin and legal status, etc.

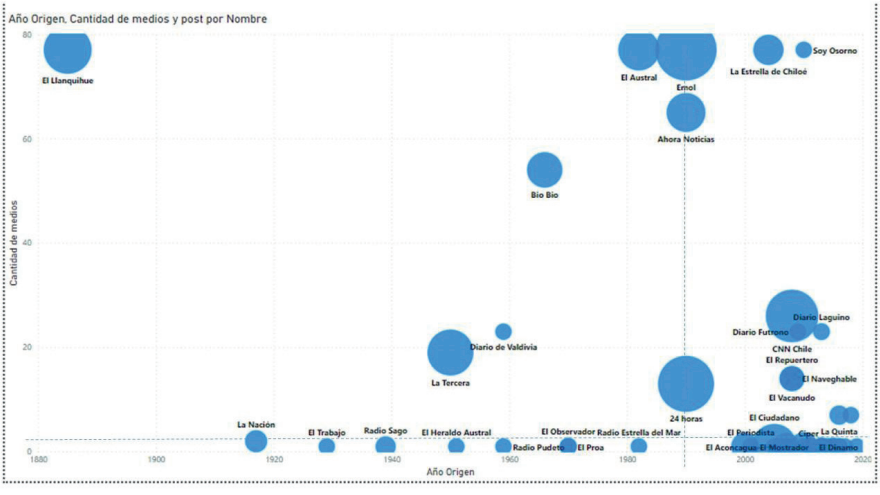
In relation to the year of origin of the media outlet, as established by Couso (2011), in Chile, there is a high degree of digitization, and since its installation in the country, "new media" have begun to emerge, where it is found (1) traditional media, including their digital versions, which were created before 1990 and the professional arrival of the internet in the country; and (2) emerging media, including their digital versions, which were created before 1990 and the professional arrival of the internet in the country.

Regarding the legal status of each media outlet, owners who have more than one media outlet can be categorized as (1) hegemonic, and those who have only one media outlet as (2) non-hegemonic.

In this way, it is possible to categorize the media that cover corruption news into traditional hegemonic media (HT), traditional non-hegemonic media (HNT), emerging hegemonic media (HE), and emerging non-hegemonic media (NHE), as shown in Figure 3.

Illustration 3

Distribution of corruption news coverage from 2014 to 2022 in online media, by year of creation and number of media outlets owned by the owner.



Thus, as seen in Table 2, it is evident that under this first characterization by media outlets covering corruption news, the media outlets that post the most news about events considered political scandals, in descending order, are the emerging hegemonic media outlets (HE), which account for 39.1% of the media analyzed and cover 46.5% of the news in their posts; then there are the Traditional Hegemonic (HT) media, which account for only 9.4% of the media analyzed and cover 36.3% of the news in their posts; then there are the non-hegemonic emerging (NHE) media, which account for 40.6% of the media analyzed and cover 16.1% of the news in their posts; and finally, there are the Traditional Non-Hegemonic (TNH), which account for 10.9% of the media analyzed and cover only 1.1% of the news in their posts.

Table 2
Percentages of media outlets and their coverage, according to categorization

	Post	Media	% of Total Posts	% Media of Total
HE	15,654	25	46.5	39.1
HT	12,243	6	36.3%	9.4%
NHE	5,439	26	16.1	40.6%
TNH	363	7	1.1	10.9%
	33,699	64	100	100

As seen in Figure 3 and Table 2, emerging media outlets, i.e., originating from 1990 onwards, account for 79.7%, almost 80%, of the media outlets analyzed. And if looking at it in terms of hegemony, i.e., if the legal entity of these media outlets has one or more media outlets under their control, 82.8% of the posts covering news related to corruption cases come from hegemonic media outlets. In other words, despite the high emergence of media outlets made possible by digitization, the volume of coverage continues to be in the hands of hegemonic media outlets, whether emerging or traditional.

Now, if the goal is to analyze who, what, and how corruption cases are discussed, in addition to comparing the different treatments of corruption scandals, then it is convenient to analyze each corruption case individually. To do so, the coverage by case is considered, which, as seen in Tables 3.1 and 3.2, varies depending on the news story.

Table 3.1
Percentage of corruption case coverage by type of media

	%Post Corpesca	%Post Cascadas	%Post Pentagate	%Post Caval	%Post Milicogate	%Post Pacogate	%Post Rojas Vade	Total%of Post
HT	30.31	40.90	34.25	39.54	36.75	33.56	44.68%	36.30
HE	42.90	41.76	47.39	49.67	40.47	45.52	41.88	46.50
TNH	2.15	0.78	0.49	0.55	0.27	2.11	1.77	1.10
NHE	24.65	16.56	17.87	10.25	22.51	18.82	11.66	16.10
	100.00%	100.00%	100.00	100.00%	100.00	100.00%	100.00	100.00%

Table 3.2
Percentage of corruption cases covered by type of media

	Post % of Totalb TM Corpesca	Post % of Total TM Cascadas	Post % of Total TM Pentagate	Post % of Total TM Caval	Post % of Total TM Milicogate	Post % of Total TM Pacogate	Post % of Total TM Rojas Vade	Total
HT	14.35	27.96	19.56	19.21	4.24	10.94%	3.74	100.00
HE	16.50	23.19	21.99	19.61	3.79	12.06	2.85	100.00%
NHT	34.30	17.94	9.50	8.97	1.06	23.22%	5.01	100.00%
NHE	24.37	23.64	21.32	10.40	5.42	12.81	2.04	100.00%
	22.38	23.18	18.09	14.55	3.63	14.76	3.41	100.00

Below is a summary of the results that expand on the analysis of 32 individuals involved in the seven events considered politically scandalous, which were triangulated with the 1,120 concepts that helped to deepen the evaluation of the individuals.

It is important to clarify that, as this is an investigation related to cases of corruption, polarity or sentiment assessments tend to lean toward negative scores (García-Vega *et al.,* 2020; Martínez *et al*., Sustaeta, 2020), because these individuals, including prosecutors and whistleblowers, are associated with concepts linked to the crimes mentioned in the news, which, due to their moral aspect, will result in negative averages.

Thus, using a color scale of coverage percentages and the average polarity scored by the characters, it can be noted that the character with the highest media coverage, despite being involved in one of the cases with the least amount of news, is Rodrigo Rojas Vade. This may be because, unlike the other cases, only one person is accused of committing the crime, which means that interest in covering the event is directed solely at that person, triggering a loss of credibility for the first constitutional process.

Something similar occurs in the Milicogate case, in which former commander Fuente-Alba is being prosecuted and investigated by visiting minister Romy Rutherford, both with high percentages of coverage and average negative polarity. Although the other defendants charged by the visiting minister do not receive high coverage, they do have high negative scores on the sentiment scale. It is noteworthy that, although they are evaluated negatively

in most types of media, as defendants, they are not evaluated more negatively than Rutherford.

The same is true of prosecutor Ximena Chong in the Corpesca case, who always has a more negative average polarity than Jaime Orpis, one of the people involved in the case and convicted for it.

In this regard, in the case of Cascadas, the low coverage of Julio Ponce Lerou, the main benefactor of the sale of SQM's cascade companies, is striking, with coverage not reaching 7% in several types of media except for emerging non-hegemonic media, which mention him in almost 19% of the news items related to the case.

In contrast, coverage of Natalia Compagnon in the Caval case is high, close to 30% and 40% depending on the type of media, and with it, so is her high negative polarity in almost all types of media.

Regarding the Penta case, the high coverage of the Independent Democratic Union (UDI) is striking. It is the only organization evaluated in this investigation as a character, obtaining the highest negative polarity in almost all types of media, except to the emerging hegemonic media, where Sebastián Piñera reaches that position.

In relation to the Pacogate case, the negative score on the polarity scale of former police officer Bruno Villalobos stands out, even above Eduardo Gordon, who was convicted of embezzlement of public funds and is now under house arrest and required to sign in monthly.

In all cases, the news is personalized, focusing attention on the actors rather than their actions, with explicit emotional elements (Zunino and Focás, 2021; Palau and Davesa, 2013). Tables 4 and 5 summarize all these evaluations statistically.

Table 4

Percentage of coverage and evaluation of individuals in seven corruption cases, by type of media

Corruption case	Person linked to the case	Involvement	Percentage of mentions				Moral assessment			
			HT	HE	TNH	NHE	HT	HE	TNH	NHE
Corpesca	Ximena Chorra	Direct (tax)	34.04	24.51	9.23	18.82	-0.0812	-0.0550	0.0077	-0.0589
	Jaime Orpis	Direct (convicted)	2576	23.16	3.08	19.09	-0.0501	-0.0431	0.0077	0.0422
	Sebastián Piñera	Indirect	5.28	6.85	2.31	18.22	-0.0169	-0.0154	0.0077	0.0683
Waterfalls	Patricio Contesse	Direct (convicted)	19.23	12.95	4.41	13.47	-0.0291	-0.0296	-0.00147	-0.0366
	Pablo Lonaueira	Direct (accused)	15.99	11.61	5.88	16.37	-0.0285	-0.0260	-0.0294	0.0421
	UDI	Indirect	7.69	6.49	4.41	16.92	-0.0266	-0.0173	-0.0147	-0.0539
	Michelle Bachelet	Indirect	6.68	6.02	7.35	16.64	-0.0154	-0.0156	0.0000	0.0539
	Julio Ponce Lerou	Direct (convicted)	6.85	6.24	1.47	18.44	-0.0212	-0.0205	0.0000	0.0698
Pentagate	UDI	Indirect	17.50	14.03	19.44	25.04	-0.0551	-0.0378	0.0000	0.0904
	Carlos Gaiardo	Direct (fiscal)	14.34	12.50	8.33	11.72	-0.0388	-0.0303	-0.0556	0.0375
	Jovino Novoa	Direct (convicted)	13.78	14.61	2.78	15.77	-0.0368	-0.0352	0.0000	-0.0574
	Carlos Delano	Direct (convicted)	12.66	14.73	13.89	21.36	-0.0244	-0.0358	-0.0556	0.0804
	Carlos Lavin	Direct (convicted)	8.75	13.66	5.56	12.94%	-0.0160	-0.0361	0.0000	-0.0436
	Ivan Moreira	Direct (unrestrained)	9.67	11.49	30.56	11.79	-0.0248	-0.0312	-0.0278	0.0421
	Sebastian Pinera	Indirect	9.55	8.55	19.44	29.48	-0.0324	-0.0193	-0.0278	-0.1072
Caval	Natalia Compao non	Direct (convicted)	41.05	40.19	29.41	34.85	-0.1090	-0.1052	0.1176	0.1068
	Michelle Bachelet	Indirect	36.13	30.31	23.53	30.93	-0.0993	-0.0748	-0.0882	-0.1020
	Sebastián Davalos	Direct (accused)	27.26	34.62	23.53	34.54	-0.0765	-0.0965	0.0000	0.0942
	Mauricio Valero	Direct (convicted)	16.56	15.09	8.82	11.77	-0.0382	-0.0405	0.0294	0.0283
	Sergio Moya	Direct (fiscal)	13.10	8.42	5.88	7.69	-0.0325	-0.0207	0.0294	-0.0251
Milicogate	Romv Rutherford	Direct (fiscal)	52.58	31.16	75.00	51.81	-0.1642	-0.0988	0.0000	0.1717
	Juan Miguel Fuente-Alba	Direct (convicted)	62.18	61.81	25.00	57.83	-0.1956	-0.1508	0.0000	-0.1687
	Humberto Oviedo	Direct (accused)	29.89	19.10	25.00	21.39	-0.0941	-0.0653	0.0000	0.0633
	Ricardo Martinez	Direct (accused)	11.81	5.03	25.00	15.96	-0.0277	-0.0184	0.0000	-0.0542
Pacogate	Eduardo Gordon	Direct (convicted)	7.00	4.48	4.55	6.62	-0.0207	-0.0111	0.0000	-0.0217
	Bruno Villalobos	Direct (accused)	18.86	17.85	6.82	12.23	-0.0521	-0.0585	-0.0114	0.0395
	Michelle Bachelet	Indirect	5.57	5.85	10.23	8.41	-0.0157	-0.0211	0.0341	-0.0293
	Sebastián Piñera	Indirect	8.00	2.53	14.77	13.25%	-0.0271	-0.0068	0.0114	0.0535
Rojas Vade	Rodrigo Roías Vade	Direct (convicted)	74.74	74.39	78.95	76.80	-0.2484	-0.1826	-0.1053	-0.2160
	Elisa Loncon	Direct (complainant)	24.43	17.15	21.05	15.20	-0.0605	-0.0178	0.0000	0.0160
	Jaime Bassa	Direct (complainant)	22.13	16.70	5.26	16.80	-0.0689	-0.0245	0.0000	0.0080
	Tomás Ramírez	Direct (lawyer)	5.43	6.90	5.26	8.00	-0.0146	-0.0111	0.0000	-0.0320

Table 5
Concepts related to seven cases of corruption by type of media

Corruption case	Most frequent nouns in the case (in descending order)				Most frequent noun phrases in the case (in descending order)			
	HT	HE	NHT	NHE	HT	HE	NHT	NHE
Corpesca	case; prosecutor, senators crimes; law: years: investigation: company; bribery; millions;	case; prosecutor; law; senator years; investigation; country; fishing; millions; resources;	fishing; resources; resource; law; fishermen; case; year; people; years;	millions; companies; years; company; law; case; project; year; country; investigation;	national prosecutor; tax crimes; regional prosecutor: preventive detention; oral trial; millions of pesos; artisanal fishermen: irregular financing; house arrest; precautionary measure;	artisanal fishermen; tax crimes; artisanal fishing; preventive detention; national prosecutor; millions of pesos; fishing law: bill; regional prosecutor; fishing resources:	artisanal fishermen; artisanal fishing: recreational fishing: hydrobiological resources; illegal fishing; legal origin; fishing law: fishery resources; criminal prosecution; minimum size:	bill: artisanal fishermen: millions of pesos; artisanal fishing; general manager; millions of dollars; economic groups; illegal financing; fishery resources; tax crimes:
Cascadas	case; prosecutor; millions; investigation: senator years; people; crimes; company; minister;	case; prosecutor; investigation; company; millions; senators crimes; years; minister;	years; case; information; sector; hours; people; municipality; millions; country;	millions; company; companies: case; years: year; investigation; satiety: president: country;	national prosecutor; tax crimes; oral trial; regional prosecutor; general manager; irregular financing; presidential candidate; millions of pesos; definitive dismissal: political campaigns;	tax crimes; national prosecutor: general manager: political campaigns; irregular financing; millions of pesos; regional prosecutor; presidential candidate; oral trial; formalization hearing;	last year; regional prosecutor; tax crimes; millions of pesos; national level; weekend; oral trial; social media; national prosecutor: irregular financing;	general manager; tax crimes; illegal financing; millions of dollars; millions of pesos; false receipts; political campaigns; national prosecutor; last year; irregular financing;
Pentagate	case; prosecutor; senator crimes; investigation; millions; deputy; years; minister; president;	investigation; prosecutor: senator; crimes; years; millions; minister; president; financing;	case; years; days; investigation; year; people; prosecutor; millions; parliamentarian: crimes;	millions; case; companies; company; years; investigation; project; society; year; president;	national prosecutor; tax crimes; irregular financing; regional prosecutor; political campaigns; house arrest; secretary general; precautionary measures; general manager; constitutional indictment;	tax crimes; political campaigns; national prosecutor; millions of pesos; preventive detention; irregular financing; house arrest; precautionary measures; regional prosecutor; national confinement;	last year; tax crimes; appeal; preventive detention; millions of pesos; irregular financing; political campaigns; facilitation of ballots: constitutional indictment: national prosecutor:	millions of dollars; general manager; tax crimes: millions of pesos; illegal financing; political campaigns; false ballots: tax havens; confidential contributions; draft

Caval	case; prosecutor; minister; millions; son; company; investigation; people; deputy; country;	case; prosecutor; investigation; millions; company; son; information; country; minister;	case; years; millions; people; country; year; week; hours; days; information;	millions; case; years; company: country; prosecutor; government; year; investigation; project;	regional prosecutor; national prosecutor; influence peddling; tax crimes; oral trial; millions of pesos; sociocultural director; last week; secretary general; investigative commission;	regional prosecutor; millions of pesos: influence peddling; investigative commission; tax crimes; national prosecutor; precautionary measures; national arrest warrant; oral trial; privileged information;	millions of pesos; millions of people; weekend; preventive detention; days in prison; tax crimes: seizure of assets: legal action; district week; economic growth;	millions of pesos; influence peddling: regional prosecutor; national prosecutor; public opinion; millions of dollars; political class; bill; tax crimes: media:
Milicogate	chief; general; millions; expenses: minister; case; commander; institution; investigation;	chief: millions: commander; general; case; minister; investigation; years; expenses; institution;	general; case; chief; money; travel; pesos; information; trip; minister;	millions; chief; general; minister; investigation; case; years; commander; institution; expenses;	confidential expenses; public funds; embezzlement of funds: millions of pesos; military institution; preventive detention; use of expenses; military justice; crime of embezzlement; investigative commission;	confidential expenses; millions of pesos; public funds; embezzlement of funds; preventive detention; military institution; investigative commission; illicit enrichment; military justice; repeated offense:	excess baggage; false invoices; tourism companies; service commission; emails; total amount; chief financial officer; ticket prices; invoice value; million pesos;	confidential expenses; millions of pesos; public funds; embezzlement of funds: millions of dollars; military institution; preventive detention; repeat offense; total amount; public funds;
Pacogate	institution; case; prosecutor; fraud; general; millions; investigation; director; people;	institution; fraud; millions; investigation; years; prosecutor; general; people; director	years; people; case; year; millions; fraud; institution; hours; days;	millions; years; investigation; year; people; company: general; country; institution;	confidential expenses; millions of pesos; regional prosecutor; uniformed police; public funds; embezzlement of funds; preventive detention; national prosecutor: house arrest; national detention:	millions of pesos; confidential expenses; preventive detention; public funds; embezzlement of funds: regional prosecutor; criminal association; house arrest; uniformed police; national prosecutor;	millions of pesos; pretrial detention; last year; weekend; corruption cases: last week; uniformed police; oral trial; social unrest; social media;	millions of pesos; confidential expenses; public funds; preventive detention: social unrest; millions of dollars; embezzlement of funds; last year; organized crime; social media;
Rojas Vade	convention; cancer; table; process; resignation; convention delegates; illness; organ; situation;	convention; cancer; process; case; table; convention delegates: resignation; situation; people; illness;	cancer; convention; situation; resignation; statement; illness; crime; case; body; facts;	convention; cancer; resignation; constituents; process; September; case; work; body; convention delegates:	board of directors; constituent process; constituent body; constitutional reform; social media; constituent convention; bill; weekend; social unrest; millions of pesos;	board of directors; constituent process; social media: constitutional reform; constituent convention; indigenous peoples; social unrest; public trust: point of view; declaration of interests;	constitutional convention; board of directors; constitutional process; constitutional body; declaration of interests; millions of pesos: declaration of assets; regulatory vacuum: formal resignation; immune thrombocytopenia:	constitutional process; social media; constituent body; board of directors; constitutional reform; social unrest; indigenous peoples; declaration of assets; constituent convention; billions of pesos;

The triangulation of the data obtained, both from the frequency analysis of mentions and from that of polarity or sentiments of the figures linked to cases considered politically scandalous in Chile, and the conceptual frequency analysis of news related to them, allows to identify predominant topics and strategies in the journalistic coverage of Chilean corruption scandals that occurred between 2014 and 2022 by Chilean news media present on the web, as well as to compare the different treatments of these corruption scandals.

Furthermore, this type of tool, by providing the most relevant news, made it possible to carry out a content analysis of the news (see Table 6). Thus, this study shows that the hegemonic media, whether traditional or emerging, treat the news in a similar way, with differences only in the emphasis on who and what they talk about. It should be noted that this type of media accounts for almost 83% of all news broadcasts related to the corruption cases studied in this research. Therefore, as pointed out by Mellado and Scherman (2020) and Couso (2011), online media do not seem to contribute to greater diversity in the representation of different social sectors, and even seem to have a predilection for reporting on celebrities and personalities who appear in traditional media.

Table 6
Example of news stories about different figures involved in corruption cases

Personality	Type of media	No. of news items on the case	No. of news items on the figure	Person count	Character score	Examples
Eduardo Gordon (Pacogate)	HT	1400	98	7.00%	-0.0207	"Prosecutor Eugenio Campos, who is leading the investigation in the fraud within the Carabineros, faces an intense day on Wednesday, as a series of witness statements began at 10:00 a.m. at the OS-7 offices of the Carabineros. According to the information provided, at least six people have been summoned, including former Deputy Comptroller Dorothy Pérez, former Comptroller Ramiro Mendoza, and former Carabineros Director General Eduardo Gordon." La Tercera, Nov. 20, 2018.

Humberto Oviedo (Milicogate)	HE	597	114	19.10%	-0.0653	"The decision was made after retired General Humberto Oviedo, who is also under investigation for misusing Army funds amounting to nearly $4.5 billion, who was released on August 1." CHV, Aug. 21, 2019.
Jaime Orpis	NHT	130	4	3.08%	0.0077	"Orpis is terrified of freedom: a final appeal to the Court would delay his entry into prison. 'It is going to be my home.' That is how former UDI senator Jaime Orpis described the prison where he will serve the sentence he received in the Corpesca case. Radio Saqo, Nov. 16, 2021.
UDI	NHE	1448	245	16.92	-0.0539	"This is a problem that affects practically the entire spectrum of political parties and, at this particular moment, has come to the fore on the side of the UDI." El Ciudadano, October 9, 2014.

Regarding the analysis of individuals, the tactic of some media outlets, particularly non-hegemonic traditional media, to omit mention of crimes is striking. They employ the strategy of using concrete nouns that do not carry a negative moral connotation, thus neutralizing the moral weight of the act considered scandalous, and even use positive adjectives such as "freedom," so that several of the characters highlighted in these media outlets have a neutral or even positive evaluation on the polarity or sentiment scale, thus perpetuating the *status quo* of the information ecosystem, without an obvious difference in perspective from the hegemonic media, which is not even desired due to possible connections between political and public authorities and the various media outlets analyzed here.

Likewise, emerging non-hegemonic media outlets differ from hegemonic media outlets in that they place greater emphasis on covering national authorities from across the political spectrum, but with greater perseverance in the sector close to the UDI, relating them to negative words and linking them to the Pinochet dictatorship, so their evaluations tend to be more negative. Also noteworthy in this type of media is the high coverage of figures who are not directly involved in the corruption cases, such as Sebastián Piñera and Michelle Bachelet, both leaders of Chile since the corruption cases began to come to light.

It is important to note that during the analysis process, the research team had to provide context in the case of some ambiguities that arose, since, as

suggested by Xu *et al*. (2014) and Sutriawan *et al.* (2024), it is important to make the necessary adjustments to the software's output in the event of lexical ambiguities. This occurred in cases where two people had exactly the same name and the software was unable to differentiate between them (as is the case with company managers where fathers and sons have the same name and both are managers). It also occurred when individuals were not always named in the same way in the news, so the software assumes that if a surname is separated from the first name, it will treat the surname as a separate character (e.g., Piñera and Sebastián Piñera), or if there is an accent in the character's name and some media outlets refer to them without an accent, then the program also assumes that they are two different characters (e.g., Loncon and Loncón).

Conclusions

This study identifies predominant treatments and strategies in the journalistic coverage of Chilean corruption scandals that occurred between 2014 and 2022 by Chilean news media present on the web, in addition to comparing the different treatments of these corruption scandals.

It is also important to note that there are some limitations to using a tool that combines artificial intelligence, linguistics, and social sciences. Three limitations were observed in this study in general terms.

The first occurred in cases where two individuals had the same name, as is the case with company managers where fathers and sons have the same name and both are managers.

The second occurred when the individuals are named differently, either by their first name, last name, or nickname, or if there is an accent or apostrophe in the individual's name, and some media outlets name them with or without an accent, assuming that they are different individuals.

Both of these limitations result from the difficulty of analyzing linguistic phenomena in natural language using automatic language processing techniques, such as ambiguity (Xu, *et al.,* 2024; Sutriawan *et al.,* 2024). In both cases, lexical ambiguities occur where two people have the same name or one person is named differently, which requires in-depth observation by the research team to provide context and generate an in-depth analysis.

The third limitation of the study, which is a little more specific, highlights the fact that those who administer justice, such as Rurherford and Chong, are charged with negative polarity, which suggests that further adjustments are needed to automatic language processing, as to some extent, it is proof of the limitations that these tools may have. However, despite these limitations, the program provided a rewarding guide for metadata analysis.

Given the limitations presented in this study, future studies are planned that are related to the computerized analysis of large volumes of data on the web, in order to identify other possible biases in multimedia texts.

The sentiment analysis used in this study allowed to find different biases, but it failed to delve deeper into others, such as gender bias, for example, by noting that female prosecutors were rated worse than convicted, who were mostly men. It also failed to delve deeper into discriminatory biases toward Elisa Loncon, who was linked to indigenous peoples, connections that could presumably have meaning, whether negative or positive, but that would affect her evaluation on the polarity scale.

Investigating the moral evaluations and possible biases that could be affecting the texts of news articles on the web is a challenging task, due to the difficulties of processing some underlying linguistic phenomena, as seen in this study with the fact of being able to individualize names in a single way, or difficulties inherent in this type of analysis that consist of calculating or measuring irony, sarcasm, and the subjectivity of opinions (García-Vega *et al.,* 2020), as well as calculating and measuring possible discriminatory biases in the algorithms that enable these analyses (O'Neil, 2017; Martínez *et al.*, 2020), in order to generate new algorithms that enable more equitable and non-discriminatory studies.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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Matthieu Vernier	Data curation, Methodology, Software, Validation.

Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors DECLARE that the article ***Web Coverage of Corruption in Chile: Automated Analysis with Artificial Intelligence and Linguistics*** was not supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Regulating digital hate: between freedom of expression and the protection of vulnerable groups in Chile

Regular el odio digital: entre la libertad de expresión y la protección de colectivos vulnerables en Chile

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Abstract

The expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) in political communication has transformed the ways in which political actors interact with citizens, enabling the automated generation of personalized messages and the massive dissemination of information through digital networks. This dynamic has contributed to the spread of fake news and polarizing content, weakening public debate and fostering the reproduction of hate speech, particularly against historically vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, and sexual minorities. Cases such as Cambridge Analytica reveal how the intensive use of personal data can manipulate political preferences, while inter-American jurisprudence —as in Azul Rojas Marín v. Peru— has begun to relate hate speech with structural prejudice-based violence. In this context, it is increasingly urgent to reconsider the role of law in addressing expressions that, under the guise of free speech, perpetuate exclusion and discrimination. This article analyzes the issue from a comparative legal perspective, examining regulatory frameworks such as those of Germany and Spain, and assessing the regulatory gaps within the Chilean legal system. It concludes that an effective response requires clear and proportionate regulation aimed at protecting fundamental rights without resorting to censorship. The study proposes normative criteria for legitimate state intervention that combines reasonable sanctions with preventive and educational measures, thereby strengthening democratic deliberation.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence, hate speech, freedom of expression, political communication, fundamental rights, deliberative democracy, criminal law, digital authoritarianism.

Resumen
La expansión de la inteligencia artificial (IA) en la comunicación política ha transformado las formas en que los actores políticos interactúan con la ciudadanía, facilitando la generación automatizada de mensajes personalizados y la difusión masiva de información en redes digitales. Esta dinámica ha contribuido a la propagación de noticias falsas y contenidos polarizantes, debilitando el debate público y favoreciendo la reproducción de discursos de odio, especialmente contra colectivos históricamente vulnerables como personas migrantes, mujeres y disidencias sexuales. Casos como *Cambridge Analytica* evidencian cómo el uso intensivo de datos personales puede manipular preferencias políticas, mientras que la jurisprudencia interamericana —como en Azul Rojas Marín vs. Perú— ha comenzado a vincular los discursos de odio con la violencia estructural por prejuicio. En este escenario, se hace cada vez más urgente repensar el rol del derecho frente a expresiones que, bajo la apariencia de libertad de expresión, reproducen exclusiones y discriminación. El artículo analiza esta problemática desde una perspectiva jurídico-comparada, examinando experiencias normativas como las de Alemania y España, y evaluando los vacíos regulatorios del sistema chileno. Se concluye que una respuesta eficaz requiere una regulación clara y proporcionada, orientada a proteger los derechos fundamentales sin recurrir a mecanismos de censura. La investigación propone criterios normativos para una intervención estatal legítima que combine sanciones razonables con medidas preventivas y educativas, fortaleciendo así la deliberación democrática.

Palabras clave
Inteligencia artificial, discursos de odio, libertad de expresión, comunicación política, derechos fundamentales, democracia deliberativa, derecho penal, autoritarismo digital.

Introduction

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in political communication has reshaped the ways in which political actors interact with citizens, enabling the automated generation of personalized messages, the circulation of hyper-segmented content, and the amplification of polarizing narratives. Far from being neutral, this technological transformation has also facilitated the proliferation of hate speech in digital environments, especially against historically vulnerable groups such as migrants, women, and sexual dissidents.

The rise of AI-mediated discriminatory expressions raises fundamental legal tensions between freedom of expression and the state's duty to protect equality, human dignity, and democratic deliberation. In this context, the

question that guides this work is: how should the law respond to hate speech amplified by artificial intelligence in political contexts, without compromising freedom of expression?

The main hypothesis argues that the absence of adequate regulation creates a regulatory gap that allows messages harmful to democratic coexistence to circulate with impunity. It is therefore important to rethink the regulatory margins of state intervention, overcoming both the risk of inaction and the punitive overreaction.

This article addresses the problem from a legal-dogmatic and comparative perspective, examining the legal treatment of hate speech in Chile, Germany, and Spain, as well as the standards of the inter-American human rights system. Based on this, a set of normative criteria is proposed to address this phenomenon in a legitimate and proportionate way, in accordance with the principles of democratic constitutionalism.

Materials and method

This study uses a legal-dogmatic methodology, rooted in the tradition of constitutional and criminal law, aimed at identifying, interpreting, and systematizing norms, principles, and categories relevant to the legal treatment of hate speech in digital environments. As Pereznieto Castro (2020) says, this dogmatic approach allows evaluating the internal coherence of the legal system through the structuring principles of criminal law, such as legality, harmfulness, and culpability, which is especially useful for analyzing the legitimate limits of *ius puniendi* in the face of harmful communications. The approach is based on the recognition of hate speech as a controversial legal category, whose definition, limits, and control mechanisms require rigorous normative foundations based on positive law and fundamental rights.

However, as Castillo Morales (2019) warns, the object of criminal law cannot be analyzed in isolation or in a purely formal way. As it is an instrument of social control, its study requires the integration of social, cultural, and political dimensions that go beyond classical dogma. Hence, the author proposes a comparative and interdisciplinary methodology that strengthens the scientific nature of criminal dogma and avoids its technical-formal gap, allowing for a critical evaluation of the legitimacy of punitive power and its suitability for democratic ends. For this reason, a comparative approach is

used, focusing on the legal systems of Germany and Spain. The choice of these systems is justified both by their belonging to the continental legal tradition (based on codification and guarantees) and by their regulatory and jurisprudential experience in the area of freedom of expression and the punishment of hate speech. Germany offers a robust model with criteria of proportionality and exceptional application of criminal law; Spain, on the other hand, has a broader and more controversial criminal offense, subject to doctrinal debate about its limits. This comparison allows us to identify alternative regulatory models that illustrate the risks and virtues of different legal strategies.

The regulatory comparison allows us to respond directly to the second and third specific objectives of the study, related to the evaluation of international standards and the formulation of legal criteria for legitimate and proportionate state intervention.

The comparison criteria focus on three analytical dimensions:

- The criminal classification of hate speech and its substantive limits (typical elements, protected legal rights, degrees of harm).
- The proportionality and effectiveness of state control mechanisms (criminal, administrative, and educational).
- The potential impact on the exercise of fundamental rights, particularly freedom of expression and the principle of equality.

Similarly, the study covers both current legislation and relevant legislative proposals between 2010 and 2025, as well as recent national and international case law. In the case of Chile, Article 31 of Law No. 19,733, legislative bulletins on hate speech and denialism, and their articulation (or lack thereof) with the principle of minimal intervention in criminal law are analyzed.

The work integrates an interdisciplinary operational framework that articulates legal tools with contributions from political theory (deliberative democracy), digital communication (algorithmic virilization, post-truth), and legal sociology (structures of discrimination). These perspectives allow us to problematize the contemporary digital context and its effects on the structuring function of legal language in a democracy.

The primary sources analyzed include constitutional norms, criminal laws, bills, and national, inter-American, and European jurisprudence. A doctrinal and jurisprudential content analysis was used, employing coding matrices that allowed categorizing the levels of regulatory intervention, intensity of

discourse, condition of the affected group, and nature of the state response. The doctrinal and jurisprudential selection is based on criteria of thematic relevance, topicality, and reference in academic and legislative debates. Secondary sources, such as institutional reports, academic articles, and recent empirical studies are used for illustrative and contextual purposes, without aspiring to statistical representativeness, but with analytical value to enrich the legal analysis.

This approach allows us to respond to the objectives of the study: to identify regulatory gaps, evaluate relevant regulatory standards, and propose applicable legal criteria for legitimate state intervention against hate speech in digital environments, particularly in the Chilean context.

Results

This study has identified relevant findings that are organized into three levels: (1) conceptual-doctrinal results; (2) results derived from comparative legal analysis; and (3) propositional results oriented toward normative criteria for legitimate state intervention.

Doctrinal findings: normative challenges of digital hate

- Regulatory gaps in the face of the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI): AI acts as a catalyst for hate speech in digital environments, generating a form of symbolic violence that violates fundamental rights such as informational self-determination, equality, political participation, and human dignity. The absence of specific regulation regarding content generated or amplified by AI leaves a critical legal gap in current legal systems.
- Structural impact of digital hate: it has been observed that hate speech is no longer limited to direct incitement to violence, but operates as a normalized mechanism of exclusion and stigmatization, especially against migrants, women, and sexual dissidents. This discourse affects the effective exercise of democratic judgment, favoring forms of "digital authoritarianism by design".

Comparative findings: contrast between Germany, Spain, and Chile

The main elements are systematized using a comparative matrix focused on three variables:

Dimension analyzed	Germany	Spain	Chile
Criminal classification	§130 StGB (incitement to hatred), defined with restrictive criteria linked to human dignity	Art. 510 CP, broad and imprecise wording, includes speech against "ideology"	Art. 31 Law 19.733: weak administrative offense; no specific criminal offense
State control and role of platforms	NetzDG: requires platforms to remove content within short timeframes; combination of criminal and administrative penalties	Passive role of platforms; no specific law on algorithmic moderation	No regulation of platforms or rules on AI or the viralization of digital hate
Impact on fundamental rights	Guarantee-based model; proportionality and protection of dignity over hate are prioritized	Doctrinal criticism for ambiguity and legal uncertainty; risk of over-criminalization	High risk of impunity; low effectiveness of the legal framework to protect vulnerable groups

This comparative analysis shows that the German model offers a reasonable balance between punishment and guarantees, while the Spanish model presents risks of punitive ambiguity. Chile, on the other hand, exhibits a worrying regulatory gap.

Propositional results: regulatory criteria for state intervention

Based on the analysis carried out, the following regulatory criteria are proposed, aimed at legitimate and proportional regulation of hate speech in digital environments:

1. Differentiation by severity of speech (proposed typology):
    - High severity: direct incitement to violence, justification of crimes against humanity: criminal response.
    - Intermediate severity: misinformation with stigmatizing intention, indirect incitement: administrative response.

- Low severity: non-systematic offensive expressions: educational/preventive response.

2. Limitation of the use of criminal law to the principle of *ultima ratio*:
   - Only applicable when there is objective evidence of real and imminent risk to the fundamental rights of vulnerable groups.
3. Need for reforms to the Chilean framework:
   - Reformulation of Article 31 of Law No. 19,733.
   - Incorporation of an autonomous and limited criminal offense (based on *odium dictum*).
   - Regulation of the role of digital platforms, with obligations for transparent algorithmic moderation.
4. Inclusion of the principle of informational self-determination as a structural guarantee.
   - Especially in relation to the use of personal data for automated political segmentation without consent.
5. Comprehensive state intervention:
   - Combination of proportional sanctions, educational measures, and public policies for digital literacy, without prior censorship or democratic regression.

Conclusions and discussion

Political campaigns and deliberative deterioration in digital contexts

Contemporary political communication is characterized by a radical transformation of the traditional dynamics of interaction between political actors, the media, and citizens, based on the incorporation of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and big data analysis (Mota, 2023). Indeed, artificial intelligence (AI) has profoundly transformed political communication in election campaigns, especially by intervening in the production, personalization, and dissemination of political discourse. This transformation, as Amaya and Cueva (2025) assert, responds to the use of algorithms that allow for audience segmentation and the generation of highly personalized messages, which redefines the interaction between political actors and citizens (pp. 3-4).

AI enables massive data processing and predictive capabilities that directly influence strategic campaign decision-making (Torres *et al.,* 2024, p. 84). Among other things, this translates into the traceability of campaigns, the detection of fake news, and the emotional manipulation of the electorate (Abrego and Flores, 2021, p. 6).

Ábrego and Flores cite what happened in Mexico as a paradigmatic case of the use of technologies—especially artificial intelligence (AI) and *big* data—for political purposes, highlighting their potential to manipulate information and control voters through what they call *algorithmic governmentality*. This form of power is based on the massive collection of personal data, often without consent, to profile, segment, and condition social and political behaviors for the benefit of governments and corporations (Ábrego and Flores, 2021, pp. 213-216).

Valdez *et al*. (2023) point out that the most relevant mechanisms for manipulating political campaigns and conditioning the electoral behavior of citizens are the use of "bots" and fake profiles, which can replicate messages, position trends on social networks, and attack opposing candidates, creating the illusion of social consensus or rejection (Valdez *et al.*, 2023, p. 33). Likewise, AI allows for the mass analysis of data from social media and other platforms to develop psychographic profiles of voters, as evidenced in the *Cambridge Analytica* case*,* where electoral preferences were manipulated based on the analysis of data obtained without consent (p. 31).

Added to this is the use of generative AI (GenAI) to create falsified visual content—such as war images or deepfakes—that distort the public's perception of reality (Rubio *et al.,* 2024, p. 7; De Rê, 2024, p. 12; Valdez *et al.,* p. 34; Alkiviadou, 2023).

This phenomenon raises serious ethical and legal implications. First, it affects the principle of informational self-determination, recognized by various international human rights standards. Second, it undermines the principle of electoral transparency and the right to receive accurate information, which are essential elements in a deliberative democracy. Finally, the lack of control over these technologies creates a regulatory gap that can enable forms of covert digital authoritarianism, as will be discussed below.

The principle of informational self-determination

The principle of informational self-determination guarantees individuals control over their personal data, allowing them to decide freely and in an

informed way what information can be processed, by whom, and for what purposes. It arises as a legal response to the risks of massive and automated data processing in digital environments mediated by artificial intelligence (AI), where individuals are reduced to objects of algorithmic analysis (Bonilla, 2022, pp. 288-289).

This principle, recognized by the German Federal Constitutional Court in its 1983 census ruling (Volkszählungsurteil), has been incorporated into international instruments such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Council of Europe's Convention 108+, which impose obligations on states to ensure transparency, informed consent, and control over the use of personal data (Álvarez Buján, 2023; Bonilla, 2022).

In the context of political campaigns, the use of AI and micro-segmentation systems allows large volumes of data to be collected and processed without informed consent, seriously affecting this right. As Amaya and Cueva (2025) warn, citizens become targets of persuasive strategies designed on the basis of their profiles, which undermines privacy, freedom of information, and voting autonomy (pp. 5-6).

Furthermore, the same mechanisms that enable political manipulation facilitate the spread of hate speech directed against historically vulnerable groups. This reality requires understanding informational self-determination as part of a network of guarantees designed to protect not only individual privacy, but also dignity, equality, and democratic deliberation. In the face of these threats, it is necessary to move toward regulatory frameworks that recognize the structural value of this principle and allow for the sanctioning of expressions that, due to their intensity and effects, are incompatible with a democracy that respects human rights.

Electoral transparency and the right to accurate information

Electoral transparency is a structural condition of democratic constitutionalism, ensuring that the electoral process is conducted under clear rules, with equal access to information and effective oversight of the actors involved. In digital environments, this requirement takes on a new dimension in the face of the opacity of algorithms, the massive personalization of content, and the circulation of false information. As Serra (2023) points out, transparency in contexts of algorithmic governance must be understood as an active princi-

ple, which imposes on public and private actors the obligation to disclose the criteria, sources, and effects of their automated decisions.

This principle is linked to the right to accurate information, understood as access to relevant, pluralistic, and unmanipulated information, a condition for exercising informed and deliberative citizenship. The proliferation of political disinformation—enhanced by the use of AI—violates this right, distorts the electoral debate, and erodes public trust. In this context, transparency must be extended to digital platforms, whose algorithms act as invisible filters that define what users see, amplifying polarizing or discriminatory content.

Both the UN Human Rights Committee and the IACHR Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression have emphasized that states must adopt measures to ensure the transparency of digital processes that affect freedom of expression, without resorting to forms of censorship. This includes the duty to regulate digital political advertising, algorithmic moderation mechanisms, and the use of personal data in electoral campaigns.

Thus, electoral transparency in the digital age is not limited to traditional accountability, but it requires regulatory mechanisms that make visible what currently operates in an opaque and automated way, affecting democratic quality and the equal exercise of political rights.

Reflections on covert digital authoritarianism and post-truth

Digital authoritarianism refers to the systematic use of technologies to monitor, manipulate, or repress the population, not only by authoritarian regimes, but also in democracies and technology companies when they operate systems without accountability, creating "authoritarianism by design" (G'sell, 2025, pp. 3-5).

In this environment, disinformation becomes a tool of symbolic control. Lafont (2025) warns that the proliferation of manipulative content weakens the minimum conditions for democratic deliberation and installs echo chambers and algorithmic segmentation that undermine discursive pluralism. When citizens cannot distinguish whether the messages they receive come from fellow citizens or malicious actors, public trust and the legitimacy of the democratic system are eroded (Lafont, 2025, pp. 20-22). From the perspective of constitutional state theory, this prevents the rational recognition of norms, a requirement for the democratic validity of collective decisions. Therefore, strengthening reliable deliberate spaces—such as mini-publics or citizen as-

semblies—is not only an ethical need but also a condition for the survival of democracy (Lafont, 2025, pp. 26-28).

Added to this structural threat is the phenomenon of post-truth, which, according to Astudillo (2023), seeks to install distorted convictions as if they were true, affecting not only freedom of expression but also the possibility of exercising it in a critical and informed manner (pp. 403, 415). This instrumentalization of informational pluralism weakens democratic debate and, in contexts of stigmatization, legitimizes intolerant discourse and discriminatory practices, especially against migrants and sexual dissidents (pp. 417-418). Even rights such as public health can be compromised, as demonstrated by the spread of anti-vaccine discourse without scientific basis (p. 418).

In this scenario of information manipulation and deliberative deterioration, hate speech becomes particularly dangerous. Digital platforms have facilitated its circulation and legitimization under the rhetoric of freedom of expression, even though they reinforce structures of exclusion and symbolic violence. As the links between post-truth and digital authoritarianism show, the problem is no longer just the falsity of the content or the opacity of its origin, but its ability to reproduce dynamics of structural discrimination. It is therefore urgent to address its regulation not as censorship, but as a proportionate and necessary response to safeguard the dignity and fundamental rights of vulnerable groups.

Freedom of expression and hate speech in comparative terms: an approach to the inter-American and European human rights systems

In contemporary digital environments, hate speech has become a structural threat to human dignity, equality, and democratic pluralism, affecting historically vulnerable groups such as women, migrants, and sexual dissidents particularly intensely.

Although there is no single legal definition, international organizations and doctrinal studies describe it as any expression that incites or justifies violence, discrimination, or stigmatization on the basis of identity characteristics. On social media, this discourse takes explicit and subtle forms, it is amplified by algorithms, and distorts public opinion, undermining democratic deliberation and reinforcing structural prejudices. Its proliferation has had

varying effects, from victims leaving digital platforms to the normalization of patriarchal narratives in school settings. All of this highlights the urgent need for regulatory and social responses that combine proportional regulation, responsible moderation, and citizen education in digital environments (Alkiviadou, 2023; Prabhu and Seethalakshmi, 2025; Sibrián *et al.,* 2024; Marolla *et al.,* 2024; Sánchez *et al.,* 2023).

The regulation of hate speech presents a fundamental dilemma: on the one hand, the state's responsibility to protect human dignity, peaceful coexistence, and democracy, based on constitutional principles of equality and non-discrimination; on the other, the need to safeguard freedom of expression, which prohibits prior censorship and limits the regulation of the content of expression (Abramovich, 2022, pp. 88, 89).

The Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHRS) has developed a doctrine on freedom of expression that is characterized by its broad scope and an approach considered "hyperprotective" and would include the freedom to "seek, receive, and communicate ideas of all kinds" (Jacoby, 2020, p. 149).

In Advisory Opinion 5/85, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (hereinafter IACHR), in interpreting Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter ACHR), recognized that freedom of expression has a dual dimension. The individual dimension refers to the right of each person to express their opinions and disseminate their thoughts by any means, and the social dimension is linked to its instrumental function for the exchange of ideas and information, and for mass communication between people.

It is crucial that both dimensions be guaranteed simultaneously. The Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression (RELE-OEA, 2004) has emphasized that "one cannot undermine one of them by invoking the preservation of the other as justification," which differentiates this model from the principle of balancing that predominates in the European system.

Jacoby (2020) adds that a fundamental pillar of freedom of expression in the inter-American human rights system is the prohibition of prior censorship, contained in Article 13.2 of the American Convention on Human Rights. The exercise of this right cannot be subject to prior censorship, except in specifically defined situations and under very strict conditions. Instead, the system favors a regime of subsequent responsibilities. These responsibilities must be expressly established by law, be necessary to ensure respect for the rights or reputation of third parties, or to protect national security, public order, or public health and morals (Jacoby, 2020, pp. 150-154).

Additionally, Article 13.5 of the ACHR explicitly refers to hate speech, prohibiting "any propaganda in favor of war and any advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to violence or any other similar illegal action against any person or group of people, for any reason, including those of race, color, religion, language, or national origin".

Abramovich (2022) points out that from the interpretation of these norms by the Rapporteur and the Inter-American Court, a classification of hate speech emerges to determine the levels of state interference, distinguishing between unprotected speech, protected speech, and specially protected speech.

The European model, and specifically the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), on the other hand, assumes that there is a *continuum* between the expression of speech and the infringement of fundamental rights, which justifies the limitation of speech as a direct form of protection of those rights. This model seeks a balance, weighing freedom of expression and other fundamental rights, as well as public values such as peace and social coexistence (Rodríguez Zepeda, 2018, p. 47).

Abramovich argues that the ECHR recognizes the need to punish and prevent all forms of expression that spread, incite, promote, or justify hatred based on intolerance. To determine the levels of state interference and the type of responsibility, the ECHR and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on combating hate speech establish a series of factors for assessing the seriousness of hate speech, such as the content of the speech, the political and spatial context, the speaker's intention, the speaker's role or status in society, the way in which the expression is disseminated or amplified, the capacity of the expression to cause harmful consequences, and the nature and size of the audience (Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16, para. 32).

Unlike the European model, the Inter-American Human Rights System (IAHR) has not developed such an explicit and in-depth doctrine on hate speech, but has instead favored mechanisms of subsequent accountability (Jacoby, 2020, p. 150). However, a key ruling in which the Inter-American Court specifically referred to the nature of hate speech in relation to violence was in the case of Azul Rojas Marín *et al*. vs. Peru. In this ruling, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights deepened its understanding of prejudice-based violence, especially against LGBTI people, linking it directly to hate speech, since, in the Court's opinion, "this violence, fueled by hate speech, can lead to hate crimes" (CIDH, 2020, para. 93).

In this case, the Inter-American Court determined that strong prejudices against the LGBTI population existed and persist in Peruvian society, often leading to violence, including by state agents, and that violence against LGBTI people has a symbolic purpose: to communicate a message of exclusion or subordination to a specific group (CIDH, 2020, paras. 50-93). The Court concludes that regarding these situations, the State has a positive obligation to adopt measures to reverse or change existing discriminatory situations in its societies and to exercise special protection against the actions of third parties who, with its tolerance or acquiescence, violate the rights of vulnerable groups (CIDH, 2020, para. 89).

For its part, the RELE actively promotes non-punitive mechanisms and comprehensive public policies, focusing instead on alternatives to criminal law, such as the development of public policies and the creation of government commissions or committees to monitor them, promoting awareness and training, and ensuring that any legal restrictions are clear, precise, and proportionate, avoiding vagueness that could lead to abuse (Jacoby, 2020, p. 161).

Despite the disparity in criteria between the Inter-American Human Rights System, which favors a subsequent protection approach and emphatically rejects prior censorship, and the European model, which allows for the advance limitation of speech as a mechanism for direct protection against intolerance, both systems recognize the harmful potential of hate speech when it reinforces structures of discrimination and exclusion. As the Inter-American Court of Human Rights has stated in the case of Azul Rojas Marín vs. Peru, this type of expression not only reflects persistent social prejudices, but can also directly influence the commission of hate crimes, especially against historically vulnerable groups (CIDH, 2020, para. 93). Therefore, beyond doctrinal differences regarding the weighing of interests or subsequent liability, it is essential to move toward substantive regulation of hate speech, particularly the one that affects vulnerable groups. This regulation must balance the protection of freedom of expression with the need to guarantee conditions of equality and dignity, preventing discriminatory narratives from continuing to operate as normalized mechanisms of symbolic violence, social exclusion, and legitimization of intolerance. In this context, both the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights have agreed that states have a positive obligation to prevent and punish such expressions when their content, context, or impact can translate into real or symbolic attacks that threaten democratic coexistence and fundamental human rights.

The challenge of punishing hate: effectiveness and limits of criminal law in Germany and Spain

Valdés (2021, pp. 35-47) points out that, although the use of criminal law to limit freedom of expression is generally viewed with suspicion, there is a widespread rejection toward hate speech and an acceptance of its criminal punishment in many contemporary legal systems. In legal systems such as those of Germany, France, Italy, and Austria, human dignity plays a leading role, allowing criminal sanctions against expressions that constitute a direct attack on it or on the constitutional order. These systems are described as "militant" because they exclude certain expressions due to their content and the potential danger they pose, beyond any real danger. They share a sensitivity to protecting fundamental legal rights, such as public order (understood as public peace) and human dignity, even with criminal law as *ultima ratio* (Valdés, 2021, p. 47).

However, Valdés emphasizes that any restriction on freedom of expression poses a risk to democratic order and individual rights. For conduct to be prohibited and criminally punished, it must seriously affect legal rights, making criminally punishable expressions or statements as very specific exceptions; the general rule is that freedom of expression cannot be restricted criminally.

Germany has one of the most robust legislations in Europe in this area. In Germany, hate speech is classified in the Criminal Code (Strafgesetzbuch, StGB), particularly in §§ 130 and 185-187.

§130 StGB, entitled Volksverhetzung (incitement to popular hatred), criminally punishes anyone who incites hatred against parts of the population or calls for violence or arbitrary measures against them, as well as anyone who violates human dignity through insults, contempt, or slander against groups on the basis of ethnic origin, religion, nationality, or similar characteristics. This provision also considers Holocaust denial to be a specific form of incitement to hatred (González Ruiz, 2023, pp. 87-88).

Additionally, the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG) requires digital platforms to promptly remove hate speech, under administrative penalty, which shows a comprehensive approach that covers both the criminal and administrative and digital spheres (González Ruiz, 2023, pp. 89-90).

For its part, the Spanish Criminal Code defines hate speech in Article 510, which punishes both those who directly or indirectly promote or incite hatred or violence against a group or individuals on grounds such as race, religion,

gender, disability, etc., as well as those who produce or disseminate material that promotes hatred or violence against these groups or individuals, or those who deny or glorify genocide and crimes against humanity.

Although this regulation aims to protect historically discriminated groups, it has been criticized for the ambiguous and broad terms used by the legislator to punish hate speech or denialism. Indeed, Tapia (2021) argues that the new wording of Article 510.1.a) is excessively broad and imprecise, creating legal uncertainty and allowing for an excessive expansion of criminal law. This is evident, for example, in the equating of radical or controversial speech—such as that expressed by artists, activists, or social media users—with actual incitement to violence or discrimination (Tapia, 2021, pp. 284-290).

Additionally, according to the author, the term "ideology" as a suspicious circumstance of discrimination has served to criminalize dissident or politically incorrect expressions. This has led to speeches directed against bullfighters, police officers, members of the Crown, or even people with neo-Nazi ideologies being considered hate crimes, which distorts the original meaning of anti-discrimination crimes and trivializes their protective function against historically marginalized groups (Tapia, 2021, pp. 297-304). For this reason, Tapia agrees with the proposal of the Criminal Policy Study Group to reform the criminal classification, limiting punishment to cases where there is direct and public incitement to commit specific crimes (against life, integrity, freedom, etc.) for discriminatory reasons, and only when there is an imminent risk of their commission. According to the author, this delimitation would allow the criminal offense to regain its legitimacy and respect the principles of minimal intervention and proportionality (Tapia, 2021, p. 314).

Likewise, Alastuey questions the current orientation of Article 510. First, the author argues that the breadth of the criminal offense, with expressions such as "fostering a climate of hatred," affects the principle of criminal legality by introducing vague evaluative clauses (Alastuey, 2024, p. 497). The consequence is the judicialization of historical or ideological discourse, even when there is no direct, concrete incitement or clear risk to public peace.

Secondly, the author warns of the risk of political instrumentalization of criminal law, insofar as the use of offenses such as denialism may respond more to symbolic and reactive purposes in the face of social or media pressure than to a real need for criminal protection (Alastuey, 2024, pp. 507-508).

Consequently, Alastuey does not deny the seriousness of denialist discourse, but advocates a restrictive interpretation of the criminal offense in

accordance with the principle of minimum intervention, compatible with the standards of the European Court of Human Rights.

Similarly, Fuentes Osorio (2022) argues that the excessively broad wording of Article 510 creates legal ambiguity and allows for unequal and, at times, arbitrary application. This breadth makes it difficult to clearly distinguish between expressions that effectively incite hatred or violence and those that, while offensive, are protected by freedom of expression. This ambiguity, far from strengthening the protection of vulnerable groups, can weaken it, as it allows courts to resolve cases without adequately incorporating the structural context of discrimination in which such expressions occur (Fuentes Osorio, 2022, pp. 2-3).

The author also criticizes the judicialization of hate speech for its excessively individualistic and decontextualized approach, which fails to recognize the structural conditions of vulnerability of the affected groups. In many cases, judges privilege a formalistic view of freedom of expression, downplaying the social harm caused by the stigmatizing discourse. Added to this is a selective judicial practice, which most often deals with the most high-profile cases, leaving many everyday expressions and systematic hate unaddressed by institutions. Consequently, the criminal strategy does not guarantee effective protection of fundamental rights and must be accompanied by public policies aimed at combating structural discrimination and promoting a culture of human rights (Fuentes Osorio, 2022, pp. 6-9).

In light of the comparative analysis, it is clear that the criminal punishment of hate speech is a legitimate and, in many cases, necessary tool for protecting the fundamental rights of historically discriminated groups. However, this punitive response must be proportionate and exceptional, respecting the principle of minimum criminal intervention and without sacrificing basic guarantees such as freedom of expression. The German experience, with its systematic and limited approach, contrasts with the Spanish case, where the breadth and imprecision of the criminal offense has given rise to well-founded criticism regarding legal uncertainty and the potential instrumentalization of criminal law. In this context, any attempt to suppress hate speech must carefully balance the goals of protection against discrimination with the risks of undue restriction of public debate, ensuring that criminal responses do not become mechanisms of censorship or ideological repression. Only in this way is it possible to maintain a criminal policy that is effective, legitimate, and in line with democratic and human rights standards.

In this regard, Kaufman's (2015) proposal is interesting, as proposing a gradual and proportional model that seeks to reconcile the protection of freedom of expression with the need to punish those expressions that seriously violate fundamental rights and democracy.

The author points out that the notion of "*hate speech*" is reconceptualized as *odium dictum.* This Latin term, and its variants *(odium dicta, odia dictum, odia dicta)*, seeks to denote a dogmatic, unjustified, and destructive opinion directed at historically discriminated groups or individuals because of their membership in these groups (Kaufman, 2015, p. 47). Unlike a mere expression of hatred, an *odium dictum* implies a malicious and premeditated intention to humiliate, denigrate, or incite others to marginalize or exclude the victims (Kaufman, 2015, p. 139). Kaufman emphasizes that this precise conceptualization is crucial to differentiate it from other "expressions of hatred" which, while unpleasant, may be protected by freedom of expression (Kaufman, 2015, p. 43).

Kaufman proposes a three-part classification of *odium dicta* according to their severity, with the aim of establishing differentiated legal and social responses. The most serious cases, such as direct incitement to genocide, terrorism, or the glorification of crimes against humanity, justify strictly defined criminal penalties, under the principle of *ultima ratio*. Those of intermediate severity, which, although they do not directly incite violence, may persuade third parties to discriminate or exclude, and should be addressed through administrative channels, via agencies specializing in anti-discrimination matters. Finally, those of lesser severity, associated with insensitive or socially offensive expressions, do not warrant legal sanctions, but rather long-term response strategies, such as human rights education and awareness campaigns. This proposal seeks to protect the dignity of historically vulnerable groups without unduly compromising freedom of expression, and requires, for criminal punishment, the concurrence of multiple criteria that demonstrate a willingness to humiliate or exclude with real and significant impact (Kaufman, 2015, pp. 179 ff.).

Hate speech in Chile. Limits and gaps in the protection of vulnerable groups

In Chile, the debate on the criminalization of hate speech has become increasingly relevant in the context of strengthening legal mechanisms to protect

historically vulnerable groups from discrimination and symbolic violence. Indeed, although Article 31[1] of the Law on Freedom of Opinion and Information and the Exercise of Journalism (Law No. 19,733) punishes those who, through any means of social communication, make publications or broadcasts intended to promote hatred or hostility towards individuals or groups on the basis of their race, sex, religion, or nationality, with fines that may increase in the event of recidivism, this rule has been rarely applied since those affected by hate speech often opt for more effective legal remedies, such as appeals for protection or criminal actions for libel and slander. [2][3]

Due to the ineffectiveness of Chilean regulations that punish such conduct and the need to protect vulnerable groups, various legislative initiatives have been developed to amend this article or incorporate criminal regulations with the aim of broadening its coverage and making it more effective in terms of sanctions.

One of these reform initiatives was the bill contained in Bulletin No. 7130-07, which sought not only to redefine Article 31, but also to introduce into the Criminal Code a new autonomous criminal offense of incitement to hatred, as well as specific aggravating circumstances for crimes committed with discriminatory reasons. This legislative initiative gave rise to a broad legal and political debate, in which organizations such as the National Human Rights Institute (INDH) expressed their support for the need to establish penalties for hate speech, but warned of the risks of an excessively broad or

1 Article 31, Law No. 19,733 "Anyone who, through any means of social communication, makes publications or broadcasts intended to promote hatred or hostility towards individuals or groups on the basis of their race, sex, religion, or nationality, shall be punished with a fine of twenty-five to one hundred monthly tax units. In the event of a repeat offense, the fine may be increased to two hundred monthly tax units."

2 In addition, various regulations punish discriminatory conduct, although they do not expressly classify incitement to hatred as a crime. Among these, the following are noteworthy: Law No. 20,609, which establishes measures against discrimination and adds an aggravating factor to Article 12 of the Criminal Code for discriminatory motives; Law No. 19,253, which punishes intentional discrimination against indigenous people; Law No. 20,422, which provides for penalties for discriminatory acts against people with disabilities; Decree Law No. 1,094, which prevents foreigners who promote violent or discriminatory doctrines from entering the country; and Law No. 18,603, which punishes parties and organizations that promote hatred or discrimination.

3 A review of the jurisprudential basis of the Judiciary (Pjud) reveals that of a total of 54 Supreme Court rulings that mention Law No. 19,733, 39 correspond to appeals for protection—most of which were rejected—and the rest to cases of libel and slander, which carry more severe criminal penalties, including imprisonment. However, there is no record of any case in which the offense provided for in Article 31 of that law, relating to incitement to hatred, has been invoked or applied.

ambiguous classification, which could affect the legitimate exercise of freedom of expression.

Currently, the Chilean Congress is considering the bill contained in Bulletin No. 11.949-17, presented in 2019, which aims to criminalize both incitement to violence and discrimination, as well as the denial of human rights violations that occurred in Chile between 1973 and 1990. This initiative proposes amendments to Law No. 20,609, the Criminal Code, and Law No. 20,393, establishing penalties for those who, through public media, incite physical violence, promote contempt or dishonor toward people on discriminatory grounds (race, sexual orientation, religion, among others), or deny, approve, or justify crimes against humanity. It also contemplates the criminal liability of legal entities when they use these expressions for their own benefit. Despite its innovative content and alignment with international standards, the bill remains in its first constitutional stage since its introduction (Bulletin No. 11,949-17, 2019).

While the initiative is commendable in its objective of protecting legal rights such as dignity, honor, and social peace, the bill has conceptual deficiencies and problems with the severity of penalties that distance it from the doctrinal and international standards that should guide the regulation of this matter.

In effect, the bill proposes to punish incitement to physical violence (Article 161-C) and the promotion of dishonor or contempt (Article 161-D) against a vast list of categories, including "ideology, political or sports opinion or affiliation, union membership or participation in trade organizations or lack thereof, and the work performed." Kaufman explicitly warns against such broad lists for the application of criminal sanctions. He argues that legal protection against *odium dicta* should be limited to "historically discriminated groups" that have suffered "long-term structural exclusion" (Kaufman, 2015, p. 157). The inclusion of "political or sporting opinion or affiliation" or "union membership" as grounds for criminal punishment for hate speech is precisely what Kaufman criticizes, as it can be used to persecute "alternative political ideas, ideological dissidents, or, worse still, to intimidate those who denounce corruption" (Kaufman, 2015, p. 47). In his view, politicians, for example, should "show a greater degree of tolerance" to criticism, even if it is harsh. By criminalizing speech based on these categories, the bill's proposal could exceed the objective of protecting "the weak and persecuted, the historical victims of all time" (Kaufman, 2015, p. 156).

Furthermore, the bill seems to lack clear and proportional gradation in its penalties. While direct incitement to physical violence (Article 161-C) aligns with Kaufman's category of "greater severity" that justifies severe criminal penalties, Article 161-D punishes the dissemination of ideas to "promote dishonor or contempt" with imprisonment. Kaufman classifies speech that is "likely to humiliate and exclude" or "likely to persuade third parties to discriminate, humiliate, and exclude" as "medium severity," suggesting that it be handled by the public administration or "specialized administrative bodies" to avoid "saturation of the courts" (Kaufman, 2015, pp. 145 et seq.).

To correct these deficiencies, the proposal should review and narrow the categories protected by criminal sanctions, limiting them strictly to historically discriminated groups. It is crucial to implement a graduated response model, where custodial sentences are the *last resort* for the most serious cases (such as direct incitement to violence or denialism), and cases of "medium severity"—under Article 161-D—are handled through administrative sanctions. For their part, less serious cases—insensitive *dictum* in the face of vulnerability—should be addressed through educational actions and awareness campaigns (Kaufman, 2015, p. 145). In this way, the bill would benefit from clarification of the thresholds of intent and malice for criminalization. Kaufman requires that, for criminal prosecution, the speaker have a "deliberate intention to humiliate or exclude" or that "the promotion of hatred be the likely consequence of their expression." On the other hand, the inclusion of denial of serious human rights violations (Articles 161-E and 161-F) is consistent with Kaufman's framework, which considers it to be of the "utmost gravity" and justifying "severe criminal penalties," in line with European case law that protects "historical truth" and the dignity of victims. This aspect of the bill reflects the importance of preventing impunity in speech that undermines dignity and social integration (Kaufman, 2015, pp. 99 et seq.).

In summary, although the Chilean bill advances in the protection against harmful speech, its articulation, especially in criminal classifications, could benefit from greater specificity and a more stratified application of sanctions, reserving criminal law for the most serious speech that directly attacks the dignity of historically vulnerable groups, and using administrative and educational tools for other forms of expression. This would not only be more consistent with legal doctrine, but also with the principles of minimal intervention and proportionality in criminal law.

Conclusions

The urgency of clear and proportional regulation of hate speech in Chile is not merely theoretical. In recent years, various political campaigns have shown how, in the absence of effective regulatory limits, expressions that stigmatize historically vulnerable groups, trivialize sexual violence, relativize fundamental rights, and vindicate denialist or authoritarian discourse. These examples demonstrate that, without a legal framework that establishes precise limits, the political arena can become a stage for unpunished symbolic violence, incompatible with dignity, equality, and democratic deliberation. Although there are bills aimed at punishing hate speech and denialism, these suffer from conceptual deficiencies and lack adequate sanctions, which makes it necessary to move toward regulation that is more consistent with international human rights standards.

Although freedom of expression is an essential guarantee in contemporary democracies, its protection cannot translate into impunity for speech that reinforces structural discrimination, legitimizes exclusion, or incites violence. The challenge is to design mechanisms for state intervention that, without resorting to prior censorship or an unreasonable expansion of criminal law, make it possible to punish expressions that seriously harm the dignity of groups protected by the principle of equality.

Based on the analysis carried out, the following normative guidelines are proposed:

- The need to distinguish between types of hate speech, so that only those that pose a real and imminent risk—such as direct incitement to violence, advocacy of genocide, or denialism—are subject to criminal sanctions, in accordance with the principle of *ultima ratio*. The incorporation of administrative sanctions and remedial measures in cases of medium or low severity hate speech, especially when it affects the rights of historically discriminated groups.
- Strengthening public policies on human rights education, digital literacy, and democratic culture as preventive, non-punitive tools.

In short, criminal regulation of hate speech is necessary but insufficient on its own. A comprehensive response is required that combines proportionate sanctions with educational and preventive measures, avoiding both state inaction and punitive overreaction. All interventions must be guided by the principles

of legality, necessity, and proportionality, ensuring the effective protection of vulnerable groups without undermining the essential freedoms of democratic debate. Although this study adopts a dogmatic-normative approach, its findings pave the way for future empirical and comparative research on the real impact of hate speech and the effectiveness of its regulation in digital environments.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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María Lorena Rossel Castagneto	Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal Analysis, Research, Resources, Data Curation, Original Draft Writing, Writing-Revision and Editing, Visualization, Supervision, Project Management, Fund Acquisition.

Declaration of Use of Artificial Intelligence
The author DECLARES that the article ***Regulating digital hate: between freedom of expression and the protection of vulnerable groups in Chile*** was not created with the support of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Citizen participation and open government in the digital age: an AI perspective

La participación ciudadana y el gobierno abierto en la era digital: una mirada desde la IA

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Abstract
The incorporation of technological tools into people's lives has generated changes, both in their daily activities (such as working, studying, obtaining information, entertaining, shopping, etc.) and in their forms of social interaction with other actors, such as with the State (its character as governed people). Thus, such tools (the internet, big data, artificial intelligence, etc.) determine—in part—the form of interaction between those governed and those who govern and are used as strategies to streamline processes and service administration, while maintaining democratic and open government principles.
Currently, within these tools, Artificial Intelligence represents a paradigm similar to that of the internet (at the time of its emergence and rise) due to the implications it can have on the way it is governed. However, how does AI impact participation and governance? Thus, this paper aims to analyze and explain the transformation of citizen participation and open government through the use of new information and communication technologies (such as AI). It employs a qualitative documentary approach based on a review of specialized literature and statistical data. It establishes that the use of AI in government and citizen participation represents potential opportunities, but also challenges and risks, as its changes will continue to be constant.

Keywords
Citizen participation, open government, artificial intelligence, digital age, daily life, digital citizenship, democracy, technology.

Resumen
La incorporación de herramientas tecnológicas en la vida de las personas ha generado cambios, tanto en sus actividades cotidianas (como las de trabajar, estudiar, informarse, entretenerse, comprar, etc.) como, en sus formas de interacción social con otros actores; como lo es con el Estado (su carácter de personas gobernadas). Es así, que tales herramientas (internet, big data, inteligencia artificial, etc.) determinan —en parte— la forma de interacción entre gobernados y gobernantes, y se utilizan como estrategias para eficientizar sus procesos y administración de servicios, sin perder los principios democráticos y de gobierno abierto.
Actualmente, dentro de estas herramientas, la Inteligencia Artificial representa un paradigma similar al del internet (en el momento de su aparición y auge) por las implicaciones que puede tener en la forma de gobernar, pero ¿Cómo la IA ha transformado la participación ciudadana y al gobierno? El presente trabajo tiene por objeto analizar y explicar la transformación de la participación ciudadana y el gobierno abierto a partir del uso de las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, como la Inteligencia Artificial (IA). Para ello, se emplea un enfoque cualitativo-documental, basado en la revisión de bibliografía especializada y datos estadísticos. Se concluye que el uso de la IA en el ámbito gubernamental y en los procesos de participación ciudadana representa oportunidades potenciales, pero también implica desafíos y riesgos, ya que los cambios en estos campos continuarán de forma constante.

Palabras clave
Participación ciudadana, gobierno abierto, inteligencia artificial, era digital, vida cotidiana, ciudadanía digital, democracia, tecnología.

Introduction

Interest in Artificial Intelligence (AI), motivated by its wide range of possibilities, enables business, government entities, and citizens to draw parallels with the momentous revolution brought about by the internet and its penetration into everyday life, transforming the way human beings relate to each other. The objective of this paper is to analyze and explain how technology has transformed citizen participation and government in this digital age from the perspective of artificial intelligence (AI), paving the way for creating public spaces based on digital communities and opening up virtual spaces for citizen participation.

To achieve this objective, a critical review of the concept of Artificial Intelligence (definition, origins, evolution) is carried out to identify how it is present in the personal and private lives of citizens, based on some examples that are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather explanatory. This is followed by an analysis of the relationship between AI and big data based on its potential use in public administration as a prelude to the analysis of the application of AI in the context of open government and digital government.

Subsequently, open government is reviewed from an AI perspective, identifying potential uses and providing some examples, which allows us to establish the premise that there is a transformation in social and political relations (based on the internet and digital tools) and, therefore, in public administration. Thus, "open government" and "digital" or "electronic" government are intertwined and allow for further analysis of the technological, political, and social changes currently taking place. This is followed by a discussion of citizen participation and how it has changed with the use of digital tools and instruments. Some mechanisms and instruments related to the potential use of AI are reviewed, highlighting potential benefits but without ruling out risks.

Finally, an exhaustive analysis is made of the impact of AI on both government and citizen participation, noting its potential and opportunities for improvement, but also the risks and challenges it faces, making it necessary to establish a research basis to determine how to address them.

Methodology

This work uses a qualitative-documentary approach, aimed at analyzing and explaining the transformation of citizen participation and open govern-

ment in the digital age, with emphasis on the proposal and current potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in these areas. Thus, the qualitative approach[1] initially allowed for the analysis of the main conceptual attributes, dimensions, and elements of observation of citizen participation, open government, and artificial intelligence in the digital context.

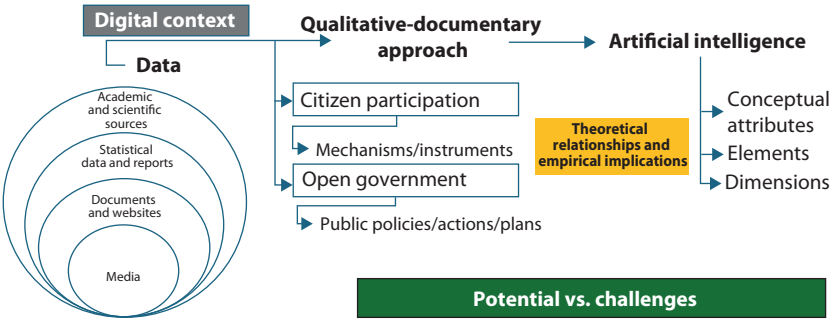
Rigorous consultation, collection, and exhaustive documentary and statistical review[2] made it possible to cover the proposed phenomenon, based on: a) *academic and scientific sources* (digital platforms of specialized and academic journals in order to obtain conceptual definitions, theoretical frameworks, and the state-of-the-art for the empirical observation of the concepts of Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, open government, and citizen participation); b) *Statistical data and reports* (used to interpret data in order to contextualize the discussion and support the analysis of trends and patterns related to the adoption and impact of digital technologies in the pursuit of citizen participation through open government in Mexico); c) *Official documents and websites* (such as official government websites, regulatory documents, and action plans in order to analyze the strategies implemented to promote citizen participation and identify possible challenges in the use of technology in government processes); and d) *Media* (relevant news items were examined to document AI and digital government).

Based on the documentation, the information collected and its processing, a thematic analysis of the conceptual sections was established, referring to the qualitative approach, which allowed for the identification and correlation of categories, dimensions, and trends between AI, open government, and citizen participation, as shown below (diagram 1):

1 This allows for "the social and spatial construction of reality in which the individual is immersed, and it does not exist if his/her mind and thinking do not 'apprehend' a situation, problem, or phenomenon of personal or community interest" (Bunge, 2002).

2 "... consists of reviewing bibliographic material on the object of study to perform an analysis of the selected content" (Corona, 2016), and although it has certain limitations inherent to its design and development, as it depends exclusively on secondary sources and existing data, it is a viable means of obtaining effective information on the implementation of Artificial Intelligence in citizen participation and open government programs in Mexico.

Diagram 1
AI in everyday life



The information obtained, systematized, and analyzed was organized and presented using descriptive statistics (tables, graphs) and data generated from that information to illustrate trends in the use of technologies, the adoption of open government principles, and the transformation of citizen participation and open government in the digital age. Finally, the findings were interpreted, connecting them with the theoretical/conceptual framework to answer the research question about the transformation of citizen participation and open government in Mexico in the digital age and its interaction with Artificial Intelligence; the potentialities and challenges.

Artificial Intelligence

The incorporation of artificial intelligence (hereinafter AI) into modern societies has led to significant changes in the way citizens relate to each other and to the state. These changes can be analyzed from a social-political-administrative dimension (social sciences) and from a scientific and technological development perspective (from Artificial Intelligence (AI)). According to Olivé, "the promotion of sociocultural networks of innovation" must be satisfied in order to form knowledge societies in Mexico. With this, there will be "a profound transformation of educational and cultural policies to promote the capacities for social appropriation of science and technology" (2014, p. 7). This arduous process requires individual and collective commitment; hence, it is necessary to study it from the perspective of the social sciences.

Thus, Petrone (2023) defines AI as "the combination of algorithms designed for the purpose of creating systems that replicate the same capabilities as humans" (p. 407) and classifies it into: a) systems that think like humans; b) systems that act like humans; c) systems that think rationally; and d) systems that act rationally. Currently, there is no artificial intelligence that contains these four characteristics.

The concept of AI has also been studied by López de Mántaras and Mesenguer (2017), who highlight: a) "the ultimate goal of AI (is) to enable a machine to have general intelligence similar to that of humans" (p. 7); b) intelligence is not a unique characteristic or attribute of human beings; other forms of intelligence have been described in animals, as they have been seen to be capable of planning, anticipating the consequences of their actions, and even using tools; c) it is more appropriate to speak of intelligences in the plural than of intelligence in the singular; d) AI corresponds to a different type of intelligence where human beings are the main reference point. In this regard, these authors provide two definitions (two visions) of AI: one weak and one strong.

On the other hand, AI is understood as "the science and engineering that allows computers to be designed and programmed to perform tasks that require intelligence" (e.g., Amazon's Alexa), or also as "the science and engineering that will allow human intelligence to be replicated by machines" (López de Mántaras and Mesenguer, 2017, p. 8), consisting of General AI (GAI) and Super Artificial Intelligence (SAI). In the latter, both (GAI and SAI) constitute a theoretical model where AI would have intelligence similar to or even superior to that of humans (BBC, 2023).

This topic has been little studied by the social sciences compared to other sciences. Cortés (2019) points out that "the social sciences have done little to anticipate the imminent arrival of artificial intelligence as a social actor, as an entity that makes decisions" (p. 3) and states that "no matter how AI is categorized or classified— as an object or a conscious being—today it controls global economic operations, weather forecasts, and countless everyday tasks" (Cortés, 2019, p. 3).

In political science and public administration, the issue has been studied from the perspective of open government and digital government. The former is a public management paradigm that seeks to change the relationships between government, citizens, and the private sector in order to develop quality democracies through the modernization of public administration. In open

government, technological development is not an end in itself, but it is a very important tool. In contrast, from the perspective of digital government (e-Government, e-gov*),* the digital modernization of public administration, the use of AI, and its presence in citizen services through chatbots are essential requirements. These are benchmarks that allow us to understand the uses and applications of AI in people's lives.

Origins and evolution of AI in everyday life

There are some scientific advances that may not seem directly related to the development of AI, but without them it would not have been possible to develop "methods and algorithms that allow computers to behave intelligently" (Nebrija, n.d., p. 6). An important reference point is Alan Turing,[3] a British mathematician considered to be the father of computer science and the first to design a computer program to play chess. His work forms the basis of what is now called developmental robotics. He believed that a machine should resemble the mind of a child and teach it autonomous learning so that it could later resemble the mind of an adult (López de Mántaras and Meseguer, 2017), which is why his work falls within the vision of Strong Artificial Intelligence.

A year after the death of Alan Turing (1912-1954), work related to artificial intelligence began to appear in various academic and scientific activities: in 1955, the topics revolved mainly around autonomous learning, pattern recognition, and *satisficing solutions.* In 1956, a six-week meeting was held with the aim of generating major advances in understanding and language for artificial intelligence; in the 1990s, *Cyberpunk* culture and other subgenres of science fiction exploited the idea of futuristic and dystopian universes as a consequence of the irresponsible development of artificial intelligence and, although in recent years its application in the real world still felt vague or distant, it is a fact that artificial intelligence now accompanies the daily activities of individuals, companies, citizens, communities, and governments (López de Mántaras and Meseguer, 2017).

3 Best known for Enigma, a machine used during World War II to decipher encrypted messages from German enemies; other important contributions include the Turing machine and the Turing Test.

The importance of understanding how AI has transformed dynamics lies in having an up-to-date overview, not only of the benefits, but also of the implications and risks associated with its incorporation into our personal, social, and political lives.

Some of its first clear applications were so discreet that many people are unaware of how long they have been living with AI (see Table 1). We find it in virtual assistants, social networks, *streaming* platforms*,* online shopping, machine translation, facial recognition, navigation and maps, health and wellness (e.g., smart watches that take biometric data to make predictions), video surveillance, among many others.

Table 1
AI in everyday life

Where do I use it?	What is AI used for?	Some examples
Virtual assistants	They use AI for voice recognition, translating commands, and responding.	Alexa (Amazon), Siri (Apple), Google Assistant (Google).
Social media	AI is especially useful for analyzing content consumption algorithms and displaying recommendations based on user preferences.	Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Pinterest, X.
Streaming platforms	It makes recommendations for movies, series, or music based on previous consumption information.	Netflix, Spotify, Disney+, HBO.
Online shopping	Platforms or apps analyze interactions on their pages to recommend products similar to those the user has previously viewed and purchased.	Amazon, Mercado Libre, Shein, Temu.
Facial recognition	Smartphones use AI to recognize facial patterns and unlock the device, and also banking apps.	Smartphone, BBVA, Mercado Pago.
Navigation and Maps	Some apps collect user information to make traffic predictions and generate alternative routes.	Waze, Google Maps.

As can be seen in Table 1, most platforms use AI based on behavior pattern detection to recommend content, products, or services related to users' consumption patterns. It is particularly useful for companies to have this data

and convert it into information because it allows them to make decisions and create new products and services based on demand.

On the other hand, governments and public administrations may find it interesting and useful for detecting social problems and designing effective public policies that reduce costs and maximize benefits, while considering AI as "a technology that allows computers to simulate human intelligence and abilities (...) Among its everyday applications (...) are digital assistants, GPS navigation, autonomous vehicles, and generative artificial intelligence tools, etc." (Bravo, 2024), influencing people's lives, their dynamics, and their relationships with the government.

As a result, the exponential use of the internet[4] (social networks, government platforms, online shopping) has generated interactions between users and platforms that translate into billions of pieces of data generated every day, which must be cleaned and analyzed in order to make decisions (*big data*). AI constantly requires data input to continue learning and stay up to date.

In short, the development of AI has a significant impact on the dynamics that result from various interaction processes. Although there are ethical concerns about the massive handling of data, algorithmic bias, or the lack of transparency of AI systems, the truth is that its impact on society suggests areas for improvement and ways to efficiently utilize human potential in the various activities carried out on a daily basis.

AI and Big Data

To determine this relationship, it is first necessary to understand the concept of *big data*. Gil (2016) defines it as "the set of technologies that allow massive amounts (of data) from disparate sources to be processed with the aim of giving them a utility that provides value" (p. 15); i.e., massive data with pronounced characteristics, which are: a) large amount of data or its volume; b) variety of sources from which it comes; c) high speed with which it is generated; d) the social or public value it can generate; and e) its veracity (Castillo, 2021). This is possible due to its continuous use on different

4 During the health emergency caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on March 2, 2020, and the mortality of this virus, confinement measures were imposed, transferring all types of face-to-face activities to digital platforms, while interactions via the internet intensified and diversified, changing relationships in all aspects.

platforms such as websites, applications, social networks, smartphones, etc., and the increase in the amount of information stored daily (Martínez, 2009).

Through the internet, each interaction generates large amounts of data and information[5] (services, purchases, sales, social networks and reactions, entertainment, requests for information from the government, etc.) that are organized, processed, and applied using algorithmic formulations. Thus, *big data* "is not a technology in itself, but rather a working approach to obtaining value and benefits as a result of processing large volumes of data" generated daily (Gil, 2016, p. 17), which has an impact on people's social and political lives. For example, in the political-electoral sphere, it is particularly useful (e.g., in the election campaigns of Obama in 2012, Modi in 2014, Trudeau in 2015, and Macron in 2017) for analyzing voter behavior in a prospective study (De la Garza Montemayor and Gómez Díaz de León, 2024).

Therefore, the imminent relationship between AI and Big Data lies in the interoperability of data and the tools used by people (in their various activities[6]), and this is where big data seeks to establish patterns and causal relationships. "What is not expressly prohibited is permitted (...) as there is no regulation on the matter; it is understood that data sources, processing, and purposes (...) in the digital age are, in principle, permitted and without limitation" (Newman and Angel, 2019). In this sense, the relationship between big data and artificial intelligence is (to a certain extent) one of codependence. On the one hand, AI needs to receive data constantly in order to learn and improve the processes that allow it to analyze data and convert it into information. On the other hand, big data uses AI to establish causal relationships more quickly and accurately.

In this regard, Martínez (2009) states that AI works with two main elements: a) *computing power* (computer systems, machines, and storage memories) and b) big data (large volumes of data produced by different sources that can be structured or processed with different tools). It is worth mentioning the existence of this ethical conflict[7] in view of the variation in social dynamics resulting from the incorporation of technologies. Therefore, the following section reviews how these have influenced government dynamics.

5 This data is owned by the platforms (whether private sector or government).
6 The use of these technologies and the privacy of personal data are debatable.
7 For more information, see Gil (2016).

Although its use can bring benefits in decision-making, an inadequate interpretation can lead to wrong conclusions. When analyzing a large amount of data, it can show what is known as random error or confusion error (Gil, 2016), so human intervention is still important in selecting the variables to be analyzed. *Big data* processing uses data mining,[8] algorithms, and artificial intelligence.

AI and Open Government

The use of AI has changed paradigms, dynamics, and ways of interacting in people's daily lives, thus influencing ways of governing. Its possible implementation in government to carry out its functions is controversial. The debate focuses, on the one hand, on the opportunities to improve the lives of citizens, politics, and the economy and, on the other hand, on its inappropriate use. Therefore, the use of AI in government has advantages and disadvantages.

Meanwhile, a government that facilitates the relationship between the governed and the governing in a transparent, coordinated, efficient, accessible, ethical, etc. manner (open government) through technological and information tools to provide its services more effectively and efficiently, and with "accessible websites, with practical menus systematically organized by sectors that facilitate communication between the governed and their government through these platforms" (Guadarrama, 2025, p. 119). In other words, e-government—also called "digital government"—is one that makes strategic use of ICT to improve its public management. In addition, "open government" is understood as one that "seeks a paradigm shift and a restructuring of the relationships between civil society, government, and the private sector (...) e-government is simply and purely the introduction of technology into government processes" (Macías and Baca, 2022, p. 56).

The use of AI has generated diverse opinions regarding its incorporation, with several countries opting for its implementation. Some examples are: the United States (government policy to leverage AI and mitigate its risks based on EO), China (investing in the development of AI tools and laws for its citizens to use generative tools such as ChatGPT), the United

8 "The process of secondary analysis of large databases with the aim of finding unexpected relationships that are interesting or add value to the database owner" (Hand, 1998 in Aluja, 2001, p. 480).

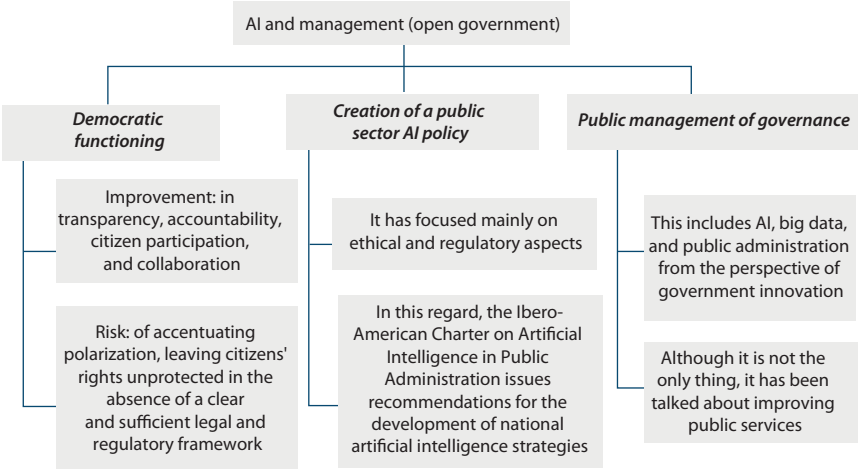
Kingdom (investing in research and development seeking to expand AI to various industries and regions), the European Union (creation of a Coordinated Plan on AI and proposal for regulatory infrastructure), India (use of AI for social welfare), and Brazil (multimillion-dollar campaign investing in AI technologies of its own origin to reduce external dependencies) (Downie and O'Brien, 2024).

Therefore, the use of AI has not been limited to the private lives of citizens or businesses but has found a place in government and state policy. De La Garza (2024) highlights three fundamental impacts of AI and big data on government operations, which can be seen below (Table 1):

In order to conduct an in-depth analysis of what these changes mean for public administration, it is necessary to refer to the open government paradigm, because it is through this paradigm that they take on meaning and direction. Every society needs a kind of compass to set the course it wants to follow. Although open government emerged strongly in 2011,[9] its principles currently guide dozens of national governments and hundreds of subnational governments. This provides a framework for action toward which governments must—or can—move. It is not a matter of using digital tools, AI, or big data just because they are novel; it is a matter of having a purpose that can aid decision-making processes, i.e., analyzing large amounts of data efficiently in order to provide sufficient information for informed decision-making. In this regard, Benoit (2024) states that "with the growing availability of large data sets and more sophisticated AI tools, public policies now have an even greater capacity to be data-driven, predictive, and responsive" (p. 2).

9 The term was first mentioned in 1957 in an article that did not elaborate on its meaning. It was not until 2009 that Barack Obama, in his presentation of his entourage, established its scope. Two years later, the United States, Brazil, Mexico, Indonesia, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, and the United Kingdom founded the Open Government Partnership, an international initiative that aims to improve the quality of public management and democracy through the implementation of public policies that promote transparency, participation, collaboration, accountability, and innovation (Mariñez Navarro and Valenzuela Mendoza, 2013).

Diagram 2
AI and public management



In other words, there has been substantial progress in government dynamics since the incorporation of technologies, which can be reflected in various actions taken by the government to facilitate interaction and service delivery to citizens. Its potential is already being explored in some countries, such as Estonia,[10] where the scope of AI in issues of democracy, participation, and collaboration is already being reviewed.

In the case of Mexico, AI has been used mainly by the government to provide better citizen services and streamline procedures and services. As can be seen in Table 2, AI is being used in the public policy process by enabling the analysis of large amounts of data in much less time, and is even used for public safety, for example, by tracking license plates reported as stolen or analyzing suspicious activities. It can even be a great ally in detecting fraud and thus preventing acts of corruption. Its application is immense, and new uses are still being discovered.

10 This country is considered to have the most digitized government in the world, with approximately 99% of services available online. In addition, it is investing in technology and AI for the public sector (América Digital, 2024).

Table 2
AI in Government

What is it used for?	How is it used?	Some examples
Data analysis for public policy	Some governments have begun to use artificial intelligence-based tools to collect, organize, and analyze data essential for public policy-making (from design to evaluation).	During the COVID-19 pandemic, it was particularly useful for predicting the spread of infection, identifying hotspots, and allocating budgets or medical equipment.
Chatbots: citizen services	Some government websites have decided to use chatbots to answer frequently asked questions and thus streamline procedures.	***Chatbot Susana Distancia***, which was replaced by Dr. Armando Vaccuno, was used in Mexico during the 2020 pandemic.
Anti-corruption	There is also potential for use in detecting irregularities in taxation or public procurement.	The ***Federal Court of Accounts*** (TCU-Brazil) (TCU, 2024)
Open Government	Although its use is quite widespread across all converging topics, one example is the processing of open data to identify social problems or generate visually appealing products that are easy for citizens to understand.	***MyGoc*** is an initiative of the Indian government used to analyze citizen interactions and identify priority issues through AI algorithms (Malik et al., 2020).
Smart planning	Geospatial and demographic data can be processed using AI for better urban planning.	***Identification of aquifers*** by the Center for Scientific Research and Higher Education in Ensenada (CIDE, 2025c).
Public safety	In this case, AI is used to analyze and prevent violence against women based on data from the Mujer Segura (Safe Woman) platform.	***Mujer Segura,*** National Technological Institute of Mexico (CIDE, 2025d)
Cybersecurity	Monitors devices and connectivity on networks to measure and control access and behavior in order to make decisions based on the criticality level of the incident.	***Anígena*** of the Government of the State of Sinaloa (CIDE, 2025a)
Citizen participation	The activation of citizen participation mechanisms through digital platforms can generate a large amount of data that must be classified and analyzed. AI is useful for data analysis.	***Esperanza,*** Guanajuato (CIDE, 2025b)

Thus, in a country with a so-called "Digital Policy" (national and state) as a technological tool that streamlines administrative functions, transparency, and citizen participation (Guadarrama, 2025), the National Digital Strate-

gy of the National Development Plan (2018-2024) was established with the aim of improving the use of ICTs to make government services and functions provided to citizens more transparent, guarantee internet coverage (reducing inequality and marginalization in more remote areas). The line of action was to provide "digital government, connectivity, digital inclusion, free software, open standards, digitization of procedures, interoperable systems and infrastructure, and information security" (DOF, 2021). The following section will explore the change that AI has brought about in citizen participation and its potential, as well as its risks and benefits.

Citizen participation in the digital age

According to Cortés (2019), the evolution of citizen participation is visible, for example, if analyzing the number of independent countries at the beginning of the 20th century and those that were part of the United Nations at the beginning of the 21st century, which correspond to 50 and almost 200 respectively. According to Colomer (2006), we must first briefly summarize the political change of the last century. In the last century, two global wars took place, accompanied by scientific and technological advances (Cortés, 2019).

Based on the advances observed, Cortés (2019) states that it is not unreasonable to think that AI will soon be able to make decisions in the field of political science, because it could better understand social and political problems and because—in theory—it could understand and observe everything at the same time, which would represent a new paradigm, i.e., it requires an interdisciplinary approach and a more in-depth analysis to assess its effects on contemporary democratic systems and the functioning of government.

Open government seems to guide democracies in the search for better public management processes, political-electoral processes, and decision-making processes in a context surrounded by technology. Technological tools are used to reach more citizens and create spaces that foster this relationship between government and society. Therefore, in this context, the principle of participation (a mechanism of direct democracy in which society has direct influence on the state) (Rodríguez, 2015) must be worked on to achieve an active citizenry that is interested in the problems of its environment and willing to contribute its knowledge and alternative solutions, implement them,

and co-create a functional and strong[11] y democracy in which citizens are effectively relevant actors in the political system.

For Rodríguez (2015), citizen participation only materializes if there is respect for individual guarantees, institutional channels, adequate legal frameworks, access to timely information, and citizen trust in democratic institutions. Citizens must feel that they are relevant actors whose participation is decisive in guiding decisions that concern and affect society. To illustrate this, below is a series of examples (Table 3) of these mechanisms (and their potential exercise through digital platforms).

Table 3
AI and citizen participation

Mechanisms and instruments for citizen participation	Level of involvement	Artificial intelligence (potential for use)
Citizen assemblies	5	
Participatory budgeting	7-8	
Surveys and consultations	4	Responses can be processed to identify patterns and trends, and questionnaires can be customized according to the target groups.
Public forums	5	It can be used to automatically summarize key points and even be used for inclusion purposes by translating or generating subtitles.
Citizen jury	5	It can be used to generate relevant summaries of large databases in a format that is accessible and appealing to citizens to facilitate informed deliberation. It can also be used for certain topics to generate and visualize predictive (environmental) models.
Deliberative panels	7-8	Virtual assistants can be incorporated to quickly access relevant data or information.
Citizen focus groups	3-4	
Popular initiative	7-8	Can provide data, statistics, and relevant information for decision-making.
Referendum	7-8	AI can be used to provide information to citizens so that they have a better understanding of the issues before commenting or voting.
Plebiscite	6-7	

11 In this regard, it is "necessary for democracy to survive as a way of life and for citizens to feel entitled to participate in the affairs not only of their community but also at the international level, through the expansion of citizen participation as a prelude to global citizenship becoming the democratic platform of the future" (Ordóñez and Martínez, 2024, p. 245).

The above shows that citizen participation was previously limited by various political, social, economic, and geographical factors[12] and that, with the advent of technology, specifically the internet, some barriers have been overcome. However, although the global internet access rate in February 2025 was 67.9% (Statista, 2025), not everyone has universal access to the internet and new technologies. Nevertheless, this progress facilitates interpersonal, institutional, and political communication.

Digital platforms, and especially social networks, have changed social dynamics by migrating many everyday activities from private life to the internet (communication, education, shopping). In this sense, Rabotnikof (2000) was able to clearly illustrate and distinguish between the public and the private. Social media blurs this line to such an extent that a new boundary must now be sought between what falls within the remit of the state and what does not. In this regard, Revel (2022) states that social media "act as private service providers with specific objectives: sharing content (Facebook), creating public conversations (Twitter), building community with the public (Instagram), and so on" (p. 8).

The use of social media by citizens is a result of access to the internet and devices with internet connectivity, as these are tools that facilitate communication between users (who may be citizens or government officials). According to DataReportal (2024), there are around 90 million active social media users in Mexico, an increase of 6.5 million people compared to the previous year. The main device they use to access their networks is the cell phone, and people connect for an average of 7 hours and 37 minutes, of which 3 hours and 14 minutes The most popular social networks "continue to be Facebook (93% of social network users said they access it at least once a month), WhatsApp (92%), Instagram (80%), Facebook Messenger (79%), TikTok (76%), and Twitter, now X, (53%)" (DataReportal, 2024).

This exposes the social dimension of internet and social media users and is potentially a tool that can serve as a means of interaction between the governed and the governing, thereby contributing to democracy. However, its use must be carried out with shared responsibility, and there must be awareness of the possibilities given the amount of information available on the

12 Lack of political will to open spaces for participation, inaccessibility to timely public information, scarce public resources, limited media, and other factors such as the educational or socioeconomic level of citizens.

internet. In this regard, Ravel (2022) "makes us reflect on the need to build mechanisms to strengthen democratic values through civic education strategies in relation to social media, since the characteristics that the author describes as universal are a reflection of the lack of a media culture and citizen responsibility" (pp. 10-11).

Thus, citizen participation in the digital age has been permeated by individual and collective decisions in the use of digital tools, creating digital communities.[13] These often influence the political system, since "information and communication technologies have been involved in social life and its political, economic, social, educational, cultural, and religious manifestations" (Fajardo and Serrano, 2022, p. 17).

With the advent of the internet and social media in people's lives, digital communities began to be created in order to exert pressure on political and social issues,[14] such as the #YoSoy132 movement or the #metoo feminist movement (social demands, injustices, problems). In both cases, citizens appropriated virtual spaces (neither traditional nor occupying physical spaces) and redefined the concept of citizenship. In recent years, they have been used extensively by hacktivists (e.g., Anonymous), search groups for missing people (e.g., Madres y familias buscadoras in Mexico), social movements (e.g., the feminist movement that used #VivasNosQueremos), or in general by groups dedicated to raising awareness (e.g., Article 19).

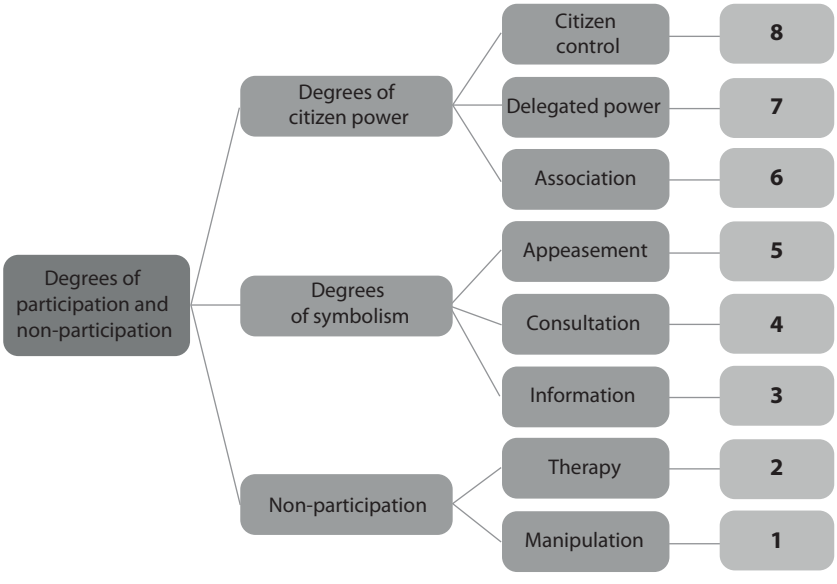
This can be contrasted with Arnstein's Ladder[15] (Figure 3), which states that in most cases where the government has strived to move from traditional public administration to open and digital government, participation is limited to symbolic levels of citizen participation and, at best, informed and consulted.

13 A community is made up of individuals who share cultural characteristics, interests, objectives, needs, and problems; communities create a sense of identity and are often heterogeneous, or aspects of "action, practice, place, interest, or circumstance" (Richard, 2010).

14 By getting information from official websites, they comment, give their opinions, express themselves, and discuss, all from home using an electronic device with internet access.

15 Arnstein (1969) developed a simple framework to explain the level of citizen involvement in significant state processes.

Diagram 3
Arnstein Ladder



Source: Arnstein (1969).

The explanation for the above diagram is that in the first three levels there is no real participation; levels 1 and 2 are dangerous because, in his words, they were created with the intention of making citizens think that they are effectively participating, but they do not influence or make decisions. The following levels correspond to information and consultation, in which citizens have access to information and can express opinions, but their influence on decisions is neither guaranteed nor binding. At the appeasement level, there is a greater presence of citizens and broad sectors that were previously relegated, but decision-makers retain the final say. On the other hand, at the partnership level, power is redistributed among social actors in such a way that they can negotiate (Arnstein, 1969).

Finally, levels 7 and 8, corresponding to delegated power and citizen control, are the highest levels of participation, where decisions made by citizens are binding (Arnstein, 1969). These are the desired levels in an open government scheme and are the most difficult to achieve. If analyzed carefully, the ladder re-

presents the process of participation: citizens have the right to be informed, consulted, and, ultimately, to take part. In this regard, Serrano (2015) states that "it does not matter whether it is a direct, representative, deliberative, or participatory democracy; any of these requires the participation of the people" (pp. 94-95).

We can also cite the spectrum of public participation (iap2, 2025), which corresponds to informing, consulting, involving, collaborating, and ultimately giving decision-making power. The former model analyzes participation based on the relationship between citizens and power, while the latter does so by excluding non-participation as a viable form of participation.

Impact of AI on PA and GA: results

Although, in general, information on citizen participation (non-electoral) is outdated, there is some data that, taken together, sheds some light on Mexico's current situation regarding the transformation of citizen participation with the introduction of new technologies. According to the National Survey on Government Quality and Impact (INEGI, 2023), the percentage of the population aged 18 and over with at least one interaction with the government via the internet is 47.9%. The main interactions are: procedures, payments, consultations, and requests for information (INEGI, 2020). In terms of the adoption of e-government, the internet has facilitated communication between government officials and citizens. Procedures such as service payments (22.9%) and filling out or submitting forms (25.5%) are the most frequent, and the observed benefits are time savings and efficiency in services (Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, 2025).

The implementation of digital tools in government dynamics will continue to change the traditional form of citizen participation and governance. Traditional spaces will find a place on the internet, as long as citizens, politicians, public servants, companies, and citizens can recognize the potential of technologies without neglecting their dangers. Therefore, it should be noted that, despite these advances and potentialities (or opportunities detected), there are still significant challenges for the country in terms of the continuation and consolidation of e-government, as there is currently no unified digital identity, full internet coverage, connectivity in various spaces, infrastructure, or a legal framework, which highlights the fragmentation of information in any attempt to migrate to digital and virtual platforms. Therefore, at present, the use of technologies for the benefit of citizens and the improvement of public policy design using analytical tools such as AI (Plan Nacional de

Desarrollo, 2025) can be implemented gradually without overlooking the challenges and risks identified (Table 4).

Table 4
Potential, challenges, and risks of technology in Mexico

	AI			
	Actor	**Opportunities/Potential**	**Challenges**	**Risks**
DEMOCRACY	Government	• Automated transparency of public data • Detection of corruption and fraud • Accountability • Predictive government • Data-driven decision-making	• Infrastructure • Internet access • Inclusion • Ethical-cultural conditions	• Algorithm • Vulnerability • Technological dependence
	Open/ electronic government	• Digitization of all public agencies	• Limited public resources • Resistance of public servants to updating their technological skills	• Cyberattacks • Dependence on technology
		• Use of big data for decision-making	• Information must be transformed and comply with open data requirements	• Cyberattacks, information theft, improper data handling
		• Diversification of AI use	• There is still no infrastructure capable of supporting change	• Environmental risk due to the overuse of AI • Algorithm bias (AI learns from the data it is fed)
		• Digital literacy	• Limited economic and human resources	• If the population is not educated in the responsible use of technology (digital citizenship), they may become victims or perpetrators
	Citizenship	• Procedures and services • Social networks (communication with government officials) • Streaming • Virtual assistants and chatbots • Voting/balloting/referendums	• Infrastructure • Internet access • Inclusion • Ethical-cultural conditions.	• Data management Misinformation • Fake news • Algorithmic biases • Privacy • Digital exclusion

With this, the National Development Plan (2025-2030) outlines the Mexican State's physical, technological, and human capacities at its three levels of government to optimize and simplify its procedures and services, with digitization that not only implies an improvement but also significant savings in resources and time; "digital sovereignty," which seeks to unify technological capabilities through coordination and interoperability.

In addition, there are currently actions such as those carried out by the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE), which seek to build a national registry of Artificial Intelligence algorithms in order to identify the AI tools currently used by the Mexican government. In its review of the CIDE Algorithms platform, it shows that of the 107 projects currently part of this repository, 12 belong to citizen service chatbots, 10 are used to streamline administrative tasks, 36 are also mostly chatbots but are tasked with informing citizens, and another 29 projects fall into the program operation category (mainly used in the health sector). The rest are intended to reduce administrative burdens and influence issues of peace, justice, and strong institutions, among others. Few programs are not based on chatbots, which means there is still much to be done to diversify the use of artificial intelligence.

With this in mind, AI opens up new possibilities for public administration, ranging from the automation of activities such as providing information on procedures and services, organizing data, and operating programs, among others. This allows for a focus on other activities that have been neglected for years, for example: the creation of new spaces for citizen participation and its promotion.

Final considerations

The incorporation of technologies into people's lives not only impacts their daily lives but is also immersed in the way of governing. Therefore, reviewing citizen participation and open government in the digital age based on available documentary information allows us to understand and explain its transformation process and, with it, to understand its benefits in the functions of the state and public administration.

From a political and social perspective, analyzing the behavior of AI in the public sphere as a governing or governed entity is essential to understanding how these tools are being adapted by people, and thus to understanding

the convergence of Big Data and AI in the governmental sphere not only as a matter of technological modernization, but also as a profound reconfiguration that redefines the dynamics of power and its relationship with society and democratic mechanisms.

The imminent relationship between citizens and open government is permeated by digital tools (social networks, internet access, and the use of AI), which shape and transform (positively and negatively) the way they interact. Hence, it can be said that citizen participation is enhanced by digital communities and (virtual) interaction between people, promoting the exchange of information and opinions (which is good for democracy). However, they can also present challenges related to misinformation, polarization, and the digital divide, which require constant attention and care.

Open government in the age of AI can be used to build more efficient, transparent, participatory, and fair governments in the digital age, helping to strengthen the connection between citizens and a truly open and digital government.

In both cases, understanding its benefits in order to understand the transformation allows us to establish a basis for building possible future scenarios. Identifying risks will be decisive in determining its use for both the governed and the rulers. Therefore, empirical data must subsequently be contrasted with scales such as Arnestein's in order to avoid falling into simulated citizen participation or artificial government and thus make the best ethical use of these tools.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors DECLARE that the preparation of the article ***Citizen Participation and Open Government in the Digital Age: A View from AI*** did not rely on the support of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

ARTICLES

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Newscasts: an opportunity to connect with television channel audiences

Los telediarios: una oportunidad para conectar con la audiencia de los canales de televisión

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Abstract
The growing competition from Over-the-Top (OTT) platforms has transformed the programming offerings of traditional television networks. For these channels, newscasts are a differentiating feature from the content offered by competitors outside the classic structures of television broadcasters, in which live broadcasts are scarce. This research analyzes the behavior of the Spanish television audience regarding newscasts over the past six years (2019-2024) to determine whether their evolution has been affected by these changes, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic or the dislocation of news. In this way, it is possible to assess whether these segments constitute a significant framework within the programming schedules of linear channels. To achieve this, audience data from the four Spanish generalist networks that have broadcasted newscasts during these six years were analyzed, based on information obtained from audience measurement systems. The results indicate that these programs have increased their viewership, with a special predominance of Antena 3's news broadcasts. Furthermore, newscasts tend to contribute to the audience of the channels and confirm the importance of audiovisual journalism in their schedules. It is concluded that newscasts are a differentiating value compared to OTT platforms, both in terms of content and consumption format.

Keywords
Audience, newscasts, television, programming, audiovisual consumption, time-shifted audience, pandemic, OTT.

Resumen
La creciente competencia de las plataformas *Over the top* (OTT) ha transformado la oferta de programas de las cadenas generalistas de televisión. Los telediarios constituyen para estos canales un rasgo diferenciador de los contenidos ofertados por concurrentes ajenos a las estructuras clásicas de emisores televisivos, en los que las transmisiones en directo son exiguas. En esta investigación se analiza el comportamiento de la audiencia televisiva española respecto a los noticiarios durante los últimos seis años (2019-2024) para determinar si su evolución se ha visto afectada por los cambios mencionados, el impacto de la pandemia y la plataformización de los medios. De este modo se puede valorar si estos espacios constituyen un pilar importante dentro las parrillas de programación de los canales lineales. Para ello se analizan los datos de audiencia de las cuatro cadenas españolas de corte generalista que emitieron telediarios en estos seis años basándose en la información procedente de la audimetría. Los resultados indican que estos espacios han incrementado su peso entre los más vistos de las cadenas con especial predominio de los telediarios de Antena 3. Además, los noticiarios suelen aportar audiencia a los canales y corroboran la importancia del periodismo audiovisual en sus parrillas. Se concluye que los telediarios constituyen un valor diferenciador frente a las plataformas OTT tanto en contenido como en forma de consumo.

Palabras clave
Audiencia, informativos, televisión, programación, consumo audiovisual, audiencia en diferido, pandemia, OTT.

Introduction

The emergence of new players on the television has forced traditional television channels to relocate and redefine themselves. In the last five years, the percentage of subscribers to *Over the Top* (OTT) services has almost doubled from 37% to 65%, but linear television retains its dominance with 84% of the audience compared to 16% for streaming (Vara *et al.* 2024). In Spain, the arrival of Netflix in 2015 and the subsequent arrival of other OTTs changed the audience's audiovisual consumption patterns and led to a further adaptation of programming schedules (Cascajosa-Virino, 2018; Fernández Herruzo, 2024; Izquierdo-Castillo and Latorre-Lázaro, 2022). The digitization of television production and consumption, platformization, and the increase in digital video viewing imposed an even more pressing search for audiences than already existed (Cañedo and Segovia, 2022; de la Casa *et al.,* 2023; Ekström and Westlund, 2019). The audiovisual offering diversified and competition increased significantly (Budzinski *et al.,* 2021), leading to a review of the business model in light of the development of the digital (Arjona Martín, 2021; Quintas-Froufe and González-Neira, 2016).

This transformation took place in two main directions. On the one hand, various studies have addressed the changes in the programming schedules of traditional channels (Fernández Herruzo, 2024; Forteza Martínez, 2021; Saavedra Llamas *et al*., 2021), in which some genres have been relegated due to strong competition from OTTs.

On the other hand, with varying degrees of success, television channels have been incorporating innovations with the aim of extending their reach. They have expanded their viewing windows through social media (Gallardo-Camacho and Maganto-Pérez, 2022), YouTube (Carrillo Bernal *et al.,* 2022; González-Neira *et al.,* 2022), time-shifted broadcasting, and even new proprietary platforms such as Flooxer (Atresmedia), Playz (RTVE), Mtmad (Mediaset), and their own OTTs such as RTVE play (García Torre, 2022) in order to reach younger audiences (Eguzkitza-Mestraitua *et al.,* 2023).

In a context of liquid television, where consumption is diluted in terms of when, how, and where due to the dynamics imposed by technological innovations and new viewing models derived from OTTs, news programs can break with these practices and maintain loyalty to the temporal factor.

In this complex environment, with linear television audience figures in gradual decline in recent years in Spain (Barlovento, 2024), it is worth

investigating whether the audience supports the basic principles of educating, informing, and entertaining of generalist television or whether, on the contrary, their information preferences have limited this triad due to novel news consumption practices (Gómez de Travesedo Rojas *et al.,* 2020; Herrero-Diz *et al.,* 2020; Vázquez-Herrero *et al.,* 2022) or their own interest in the news. In this regard, data from *the Digital News Report Spain 2024* reflect a progressive increase in news indifference. With the increase in supply through new channels such as social media, which are increasingly used by younger generations (Catalina-García *et al.,* 2021; Cortés Quesada, 2022; Ceballos-del-Cid *et al.,* 2025; Goirizelaia *et al.,* 2025), it is worth asking whether the role that news programs actually play has been negatively affected in terms of audience.

In this regard, various studies support the prominence of the small screen in the news habits of Spaniards, with a rate very close to that of the internet. The survey by the Sociological Research Center (CIS) on social media audiences (2023) ranks television as the preferred medium for news. Likewise, the *General Framework of the Media in Spain* (AIMC, 2024a) indicates that it is the medium with the highest usage (81.1%), coincidentally the same percentage as in 1980. However, the momentum of the internet in this area should not be overlooked. The *General Media Study* for the last four months of 2024 shows that television, with 81.6%, ranks second in terms of media penetration, behind the internet with 88.9% (2024b).[1] Internet use varies, but according to the *General Framework of the Media in Spain* (AIMC, 2024a), 60.1% of those surveyed use the internet to keep up with current events.

The 2024 edition of the *Digital News Report Spain* points to a downward trend in trust in the news and a declining interest in politics and information. This study provides more detailed information by breaking down the digital origin of the information. It notes that in the last two years there has been a slight decline in the percentage of internet users who get their news from social media. It also indicates that television remains the preferred medium for news (56%), followed by social media (48%). Furthermore, compared to previous editions of this study, there was a slight increase in 2023 in the percentage of Spaniards who cited this medium as their main source of news (38%). However, when segmented by age, another trend emerges: those under 35 prefer social media as their source of information (39%).

1 It should be noted that this overtaking already dates back to 2021.

In this context of fierce audiovisual competition, news broadcasts are a distinguishing feature for generalist channels, setting them apart from the content offered by competitors outside the classic structures of television broadcasters, where live broadcasts are scarce. This informative function does not appear and is replaced by entertainment and, sometimes, by educational content. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the behavior of the Spanish audience regarding these news programs over the last six years (2019-2024). This will reveal whether digitization and audiovisual consumption beyond television channels, as well as the pandemic, may have affected the viewing of these programs over the last six years and whether they constitute a crucial part of their programming, in terms of audience, compared to the new broadcasters.

Television news

Television news programming is best represented by news programs or telediarios. This format originated in radio and has been present in television schedules since the 1950s, following its debut in France in 1949 with the *Journal télévisé.* It offers the main news of the day in several 30-45 minute editions, with a very stable internal structure (Marín, 2017). It should be noted that this research does not cover the changes that have taken place in recent years, with an increase in weather information and a greater emphasis on infotainment, as well as the move to virtual reality and other technological advances (Berrocal-Gonzalo, 2005; Sotelo González *et al.,* 2025; Karbaum-Padilla, 2022; Molares-Cardoso, 2020; Pestano, 2008).

In Spain, it was first broadcast on September 15, 1957, on TVE by José de las Casas and Ángel Marrero and presented by Jesús Álvarez García (Antona Jimeno, 2017; Mateos-Pérez, 2009; Montero Díaz *et al*., 2018; Palacio, 2020; Román Portas *et al.,* 2019). Since then, it has undergone various changes, many of them resulting from the Spanish political context and technological advances (Montero Díaz *et al.*, 2014).

From its inception, it became an important event for television audiences. Its enormous impact can be seen in the influence these broadcasts have on viewers' lives, as they often coincide with family gatherings in Spanish homes. Even today, with home dynamics far removed from those of thirty

years ago, an analysis of peak television viewing times in Spain shows that the midday period coincides with the time when news programs are broadcast on most television channels.

Table 1
Percentage of television audience in different time slots (year 2023)

	2:00-2:30	2:30-3	3:00-3:30	3:30-4	4:00-4:30	8:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.	9:00-9:30	9:30 p.m.-10 p.m.	10:00 p.m.-10:30 p.m.
Mon-Sun	7:40	22.6	29.3	26.2	22.6	27.3	40.6	42.7	46.7
Mon-Fri	19.5	22.8	29.2	27.2	22.1	27.9	41.2	43.6	47.6
Saturday	19.9	23	30.2	27.1	23.5	25.4	38.1	39.5	44
Sunday	18	21	28.5	26	23.7	26.2	39.7	41.6	45.2

Source: General Media Framework in Spain (2024).

In this regard, it is necessary to contextualize the times at which the main news programs of the generalist channels are broadcast in Spain: in the afternoon between 2:30 p.m. and 4 p.m., while in the evening between 8:30 p.m. and 10 p.m., depending on the channel (Table 2). In both cases, these are times of high television viewing during the day, and this continues to be the case during the broadcast of these news programs.

Therefore, despite changes in family and work rhythms, this daily appointment with the news remains. In other words, regardless of the digitization of information and the change in news processes, with the internet offering a constant flow of information, television still has the power to mark the internal rhythms of viewers' personal lives (Scaglioni, 2020). However, in recent years, there has also been an erosion in these figures, as the afternoon television audience was almost 30% in 2023, compared to 37.1% in 2015 (AIMC, 2024a).

Table 2
News broadcast times in Spain: afternoon and evening

Network	News program	Start time	End time	Duration
Telecinco	Telecinco News	3:00 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	30 min
Telecinco	Telecinco News	9:00 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	30 min
Antena 3	Antena 3 News 1	3:00 p.m.	3:30 p.m.	30 min
Antena 3	Antena 3 News 2	9:00 p.m.	9:30 p.m.	30 min
La 1	Telediario 1 + regional	3:00 p.m.	4:15 p.m.	1h 15min
Channel 1	Telediario 2	9:00 p.m.	9:55 p.m.	55 min
La Sexta	La Sexta News 1st Edition	2:30 p.m.	3:05 p.m.	35 min
La Sexta	La Sexta News 2nd Edition	8:00 p.m.	9:00	1h

Methodology and objectives

The main objective of this non-experimental, longitudinal research design (Hernández *et al.,* 2010) is to study the viewing of television news programs on Spanish generalist television, both live and recorded, using audience data from audience measurement as a reference. Therefore, the aim is to verify whether this format is supported by audience preferences in the context described above.

The research questions to achieve the objectives described are:

- What place do news programs occupy among the most-watched broadcasts each year and each month?
- Which channel has the highest audience ratings for these programs? Have there been changes in audience preferences in relation to news programs?
- Has there been a decline in this format on generalist channels?
- Do news programs attract or detract from the audience of the channels on which they are broadcast?
- How did the pandemic influence viewership of these programs? Is there a difference in viewership of these news programs when comparing the pre- and post-pandemic periods?

To answer these questions, a quantitative study was conducted using average audience figures and audience share as indicators for analyzing the news programs broadcast by the generalist channels La 1, Antena 3, Telecinco, and La Sexta in their afternoon and evening editions, from Monday to Sunday, as well as those of the channels. It also analyzes the number of news programs that appear among the thirty most-watched monthly broadcasts, the channel on which the most-watched news program of each month is broadcast, and the most-watched recorded news programs in the months analyzed.

These channels were selected because they were the only ones with national coverage that broadcast daily news programs during the period analyzed (2019-2024). It should be noted that this research is limited to linear and time-shifted audiences, so it does not address other types of digital consumption through other viewing windows, as this would require further research that exceeds the objectives of this study.

To establish the period of time under study, it was taken into account, as advised by Montero (2014), that the time frame should be significant in some way. Therefore, the period selected covers the last six years, from 2019 to 2024, as the latter is the year closest to the research. The selection of this time frame allows us to understand the period before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Aware of the importance of contextualization in audience studies, this selection provides a sufficiently broad space to evaluate the possible variations that the pandemic and the technological context produced in terms of audience in this format. Special emphasis will be placed on the analysis of the months of March, April, May, and June of each of these years, as they coincide with the lockdown period in 2020[2] *(*Focas, 2020; Masip *et al.,* 2020; Montaña Blasco, 2020). Furthermore, these are months in which audience behavior is not usually altered due to extended vacation periods.

The main sources used for data collection were Kantar Media (the official television audience measurement company in Spain), the *General Media Framework in Spain* and the *General Media Study* by the Association for Media Research (AIMC), the consulting firm Barlovento Comunicación, and the Center for Sociological Research (CIS). These sources use different,

2 Mobility restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic were in place in Spain from March 14, 2020, when a state of emergency was declared, until June 21 of that same year, when it was announced that the restrictions would be lifted.

mainly quantitative methodologies to collect the main indicators used in television audience studies in Spain.

Results

To achieve the objectives set and answer the research questions, the results of the analysis are presented below in different sections.

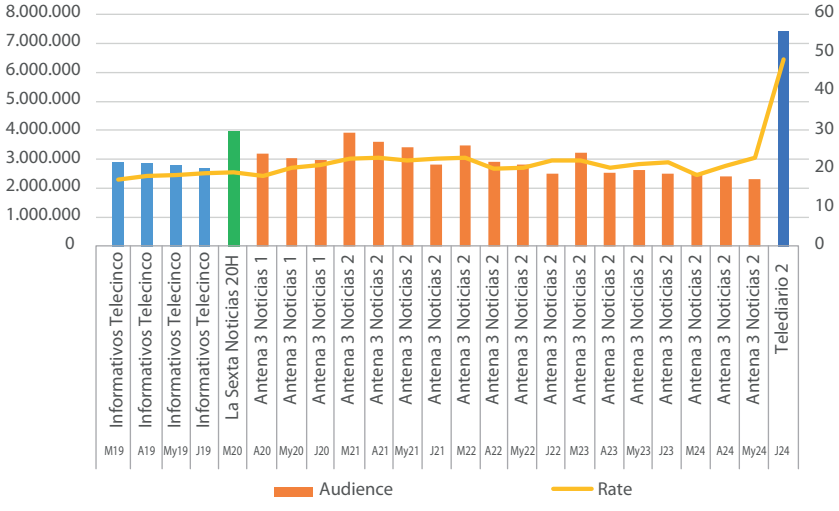
The most watched news program each month

The data collected indicate a trend among the most-watched news programs in each of the twenty-four months analyzed. While in 2019, the most watched news program each month was Telecinco, followed closely by Antena 3, the pandemic changed this dominance, as in March 2020 the most watched news program was La Sexta Noticias (8 p.m.) with 3,982,000 viewers and a 19.1% audience share. This program was broadcast on a key day in terms of news (March 14, 2020), which coincided with the announcement of the state of alarm due to the health crisis. It reached the highest number of viewers in the sample analyzed in this research (3,982,000). Since then, Antena 3's news programs (second edition) have dominated the monthly ratings for most watched news programs, with a share of between 20% and 22%, except in June 2024. The only time La 1 took the top spot was in June 2024, with a 49.5% share and more than seven million viewers. These high figures are because the news program was broadcast during the half-time break of a Spanish national team match in the European Championship, thus benefiting from the audience of the sporting event. Likewise, it must be considered the knock-on effect that the return of the game show *Pasapalabra* to Antena 3 had on the news programs (Fernández Herruzo, 2024). The synergy between the two programs had an impact on the success of the audience share, which has been maintained until 2024.

In this regard, the data collected also shows the changes imposed by the pandemic on the information needs of Spaniards, since, during April, May, and June 2020, the most watched news program was Antena 3 Noticias 1. In other words, it is striking that the peak in news consumption occurred at midday, rather than in the evening as usual, precisely because of the change

in work and family dynamics imposed by the lockdown, as well as the urgency of the news.

Figure 1
Most watched news program each month

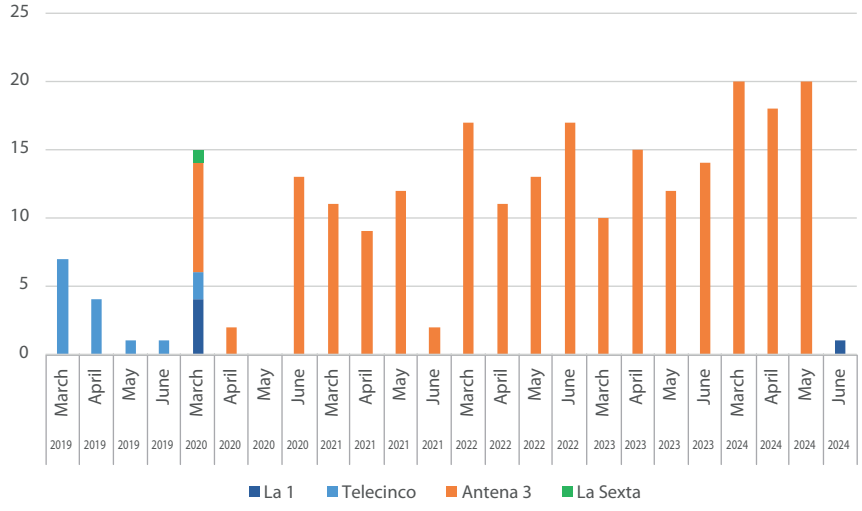


Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

Figure 1 also shows how the pandemic increased news consumption during 2020 and 2021. However, these figures began to decline from 2022 onwards. Nevertheless, despite the number of viewers has been decreasing, the audience share has hardly been affected in the months following the pandemic, due to the overall decline in the total number of viewers.

Finally, it is noteworthy that there has been a progressive decline in the March-June period in all the years analyzed and June has the lowest audience ratings of each year (except in 2024). This is probably a consequence of changes in habits influenced by the arrival of summer.

Figure 2
Number of news programs among the 30 most watched broadcasts each month



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

Figure 2 reflects three important trends. First, the shift in the leadership of news programs between Telecinco and Antena 3. Second, it shows that the arrival of the pandemic significantly altered the weight of news programs among the most watched programs of the month. Since 2020, with rare exceptions probably due to the broadcast of sporting events, the relevance of news programs among the most watched broadcasts on these channels has been increasing, even reaching 20 of the 30 places in two months of 2024. Finally, March 2020 stands out as an anomaly in terms of news, both because of the high number of news programs among the most-watched programs and because of the variety of channels with highly watched news programs due to the health emergency.

News programs among the most watched programs each year

When analyzing the presence of news programs among the fifty most-watched programs each year, two notable facts can be observed. On the one hand, there is a slight increase in the number of these programs in the annual list, from four in 2019 to six in 2021. On the other hand, the leadership of Antena 3's news programs is also evident.

If we consider the overall audience figures, it can be seen that all the most-watched news programs in 2019 reached four million viewers, with two of them even exceeding six million. This is undoubtedly a very high figure, although it is conditioned by the fact that these news programs are broadcast during the half-time breaks of various soccer matches, so they usually inherit the audience of these sporting events.

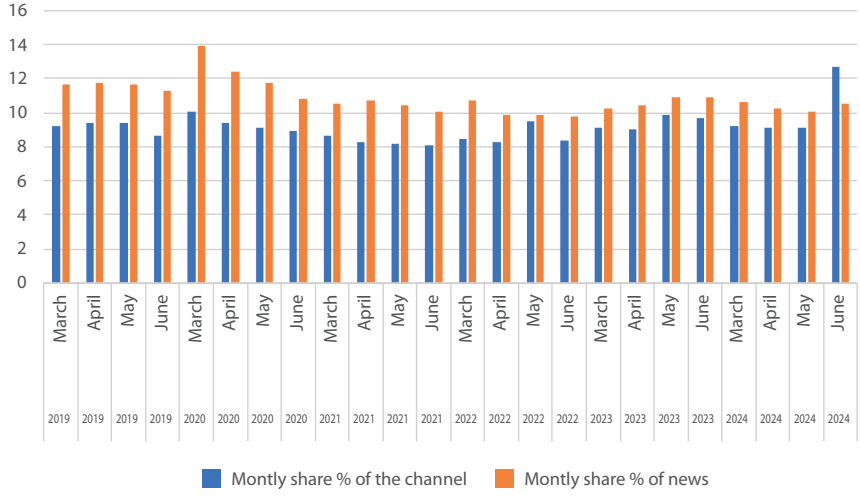
The analysis also reveals that while the audience share of the most-watched news programs during the period under review remained more or less stable at between 21% and 23%, the number of viewers declined progressively. The data would be consistent with the progressive decline in the total number of television viewers.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the power of information during the pandemic, which corroborates the results of previous research (González-Neira *et al.,* 2023). Three of the most-watched broadcasts of 2020 were the news programs on La Sexta, La 1, and Telecinco on March 14, the date on which lockdown began.

The shift in news programs in relation to channel audience

In audience research, contextualization is a key element in accurately assessing data. For this reason, a comparison has been made between the average share of the news programs on each of the channels and that of the channel for that month, with the aim of determining the extent to which these programs add to or detract from the channel's viewership.

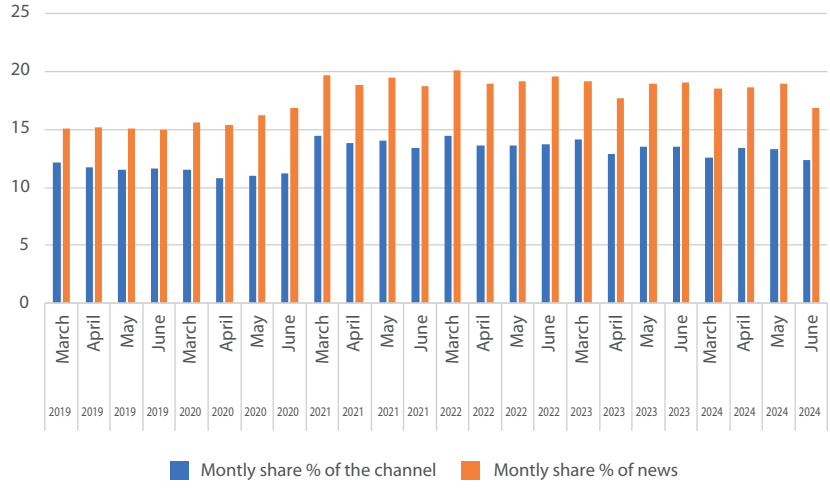
Figure 3
Monthly comparison between La 1's audience share and its news programs



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

In the case of La 1, as a result of the pandemic, there has been a gradual decline in the audience share of its news programs during the months analyzed, with a slight upturn in 2023 and the exception of the Eurocup broadcast in June 2024. However, they are always above the channel's average (except for June 2024). This positive difference in favor of news programs has also been narrowing in recent months and almost never exceeds two points. Finally, it is worth noting the viewership of this public channel's news programs during the first month of lockdown (March 2020), with a peak of almost 14%.

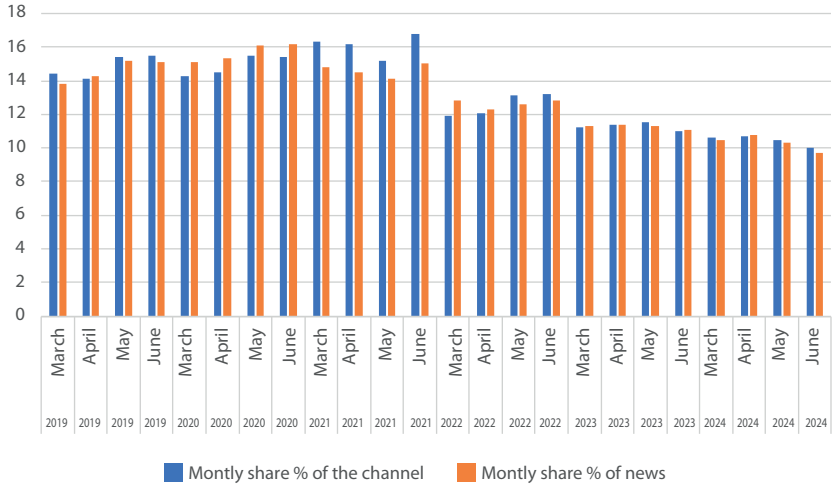
Figure 4
Monthly comparison between Antena 3's audience share and its news programs



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

Antena 3's news programs also exceed the channel's average audience share. In this case, Figure 4 clearly shows the consolidation of these programs with a progressive increase from 2021 onwards. This is the channel where the difference between the news share and the channel's share has been increasing significantly, precisely due to the increase in *the share* of its news programs, with a difference of more than five points.

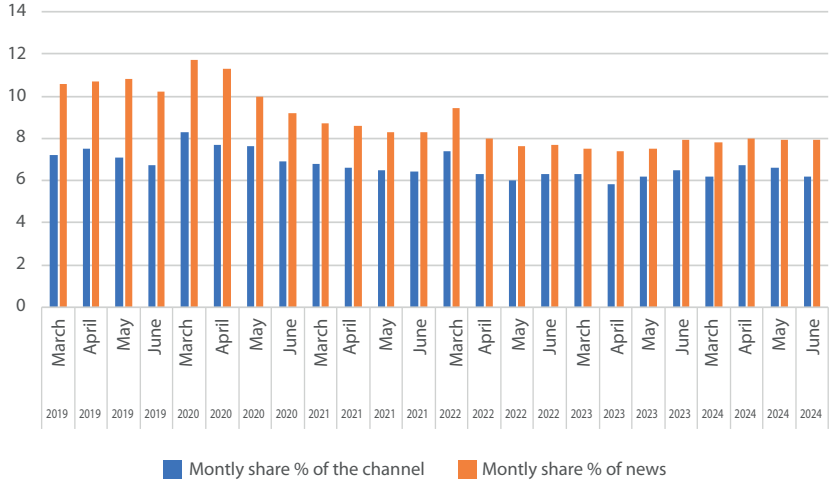
Figure 5
Monthly comparison between Telecinco's screen share and its news programs



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

In the case of Telecinco, unlike the previous channels, there is parity between the audience shares of the news programs and those of the channel. Even in 2021 and 2022, the channel's *share* is higher than that of its news programs. This shows the gradual decline in the share of its news programs since 2021, as well as the reduction in its overall share since 2022. Telecinco's global crisis, which had a very negative impact on its audience, is clearly evident in Figure 5.

Figure 6
Monthly comparison between La Sexta's audience share and its news programs



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

Finally, the data analyzed indicates that La Sexta's news programs also contribute to the channel's average audience. However, their weight has been declining over the years, while in 2019 the difference was close to four points, in 2023 it was less than two points. As with the public channel, its audience during the first two months of lockdown (March and April 2020) stands out, highlighting its importance as a news source.

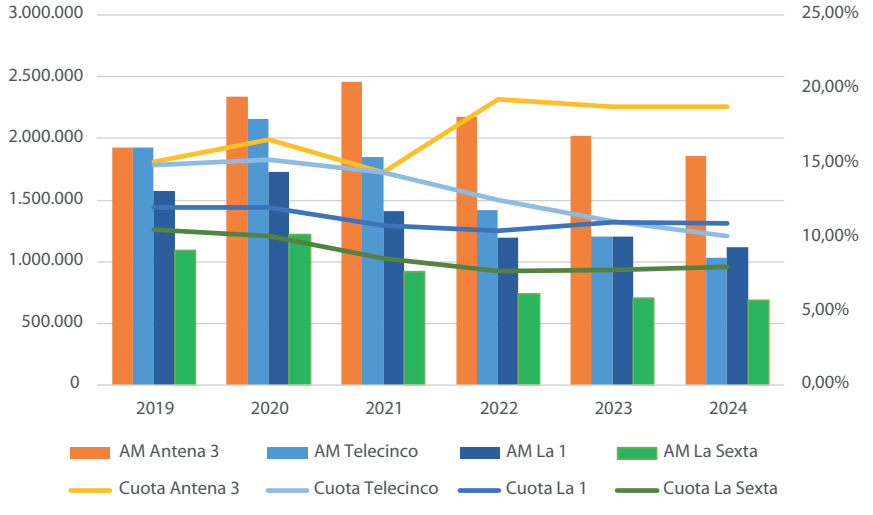
Analysis of the average annual news audience

In relation to the evolution of news viewership in annual terms during the period analyzed, the consolidation of Antena 3's news programs is clearly evident, compared to Telecinco and La 1. An examination of the weighted audience for afternoon and evening news programs shows that while in 2019 the data was very similar, with Antena 3's news programs enjoying a very

limited lead, in 2024 there is a clear divergence in the trends for these three channels. The consolidation of Antena 3's news programs is fueled by the crisis that both Telecinco and La 1 have suffered in recent years. In fact, in 2022, Antena 3's news programs were the most watched broadcast in 280 days and achieved the highest audience ratings on 349 days of the year. These figures improved even further in 2023, when they were the most watched every day of the year except for two days when La 1 led with its news programs.[3] However, in 2024, La 1 experimented a slight improvement, becoming the leader on 55 occasions, but still far behind Antena 3's 275.

Figure 7 clearly shows the progressive decline in terms of audience for the public broadcaster's news services, which coincides with the problems and changes at Mediaset in the last two years.

Figure 7
Average annual audience for news programs on Antena 3, Telecinco, La 1, and La Sexta



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

3 Both dates coincide with TVE's broadcast of major sporting events: August 20 with the Spain-England soccer match and May 7 with the Alcaraz-Struff tennis match.

It also confirms the impact that lockdown and the pandemic had on news consumption. As seen, the Spanish audience's preference for television news increased in 2020 due to the special context of the pandemic. As a result, all channels increased their average audience and audience share. However, this effect did not last over time, and in subsequent years, there was a gradual decline in average audience figures due to the decline in the number of people watching television.

Time-shifted viewing

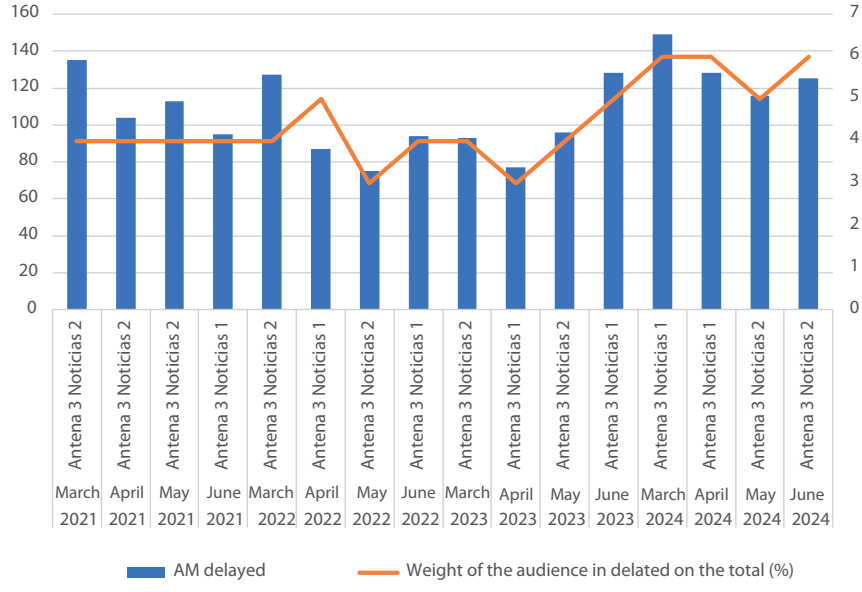
In order to obtain a broader picture of the consumption of these programs, time-shifted viewing was also analyzed, based on data obtained on the news programs with the highest ratings for this type of viewing during the months of March to June 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024.[4] After analyzing the results, the dominance of Antena 3 news, mainly the second edition, is evident.

It is worth mentioning the importance of live broadcasting in this genre, which makes it difficult for delayed broadcasts to be successful. In fact, this format tends to contribute the lowest percentage of delayed viewing to the total audience for a given program (González-Neira and Fernández Martínez, 2019).

Since 2021, the weight of this type of time-shifted viewing on the total audience for news programs has ranged from 3% to 6%, with an average audience of between 75,000 (May 2022) and 149,000 (March 2024). These figures contrast to other content from the same period, where time-shifted consumption is much higher, such as series (*La cocinera de Castamar* with more than 30%) or game shows (such as *Tu cara me suena* with more than 10% or *Mask Singer* with around 13%). This type of consumption demonstrates that news programs break the barrier of timeless consumption characteristic of liquid television and anchor it to the present, a time shared between broadcaster and receiver, one of the main differences with other players such as OTTs.

4 The years 2019 and 2020 are excluded as they are not included in the methodology of the Barlovento Comunicación reports.

Figure 8
Most watched news programs on delayed broadcasts (March-June 2021-2024)



Source: Barlovento Comunicación.

Conclusions and discussion

This research indicates that news programs on Spanish generalist channels dominate the audience's daily attention and are among the most watched programs in the months analyzed over six years. In 2024, 20 of the 30 most consumed programs per month are news programs, demonstrating their importance. The data show that despite changes in family and work rhythms, this daily commitment to the news, mainly in its evening edition, is still maintained.

In this regard, it is significant to note that, like other programming, these news programs have gradually lost audience share, yet their screen share remains unchanged. Both facts are a consequence of the current television ecosystem, in which linear audience measurement should be complemen-

ted by digital measurement to obtain a more accurate picture of reality, especially when it comes to young audiences. The decline in the total number of people who consume linear television, directed towards new audiovisual practices and new uses of the small screen, and the readjustment of television schedules may be one of the reasons that explain this phenomenon, as well as the new news routines mentioned above. However, the percentage of the audience that follows these news programs remains stable, so it can be concluded that interest in these programs has not eroded.

Except in the case of Telecinco, on the other channels analyzed, news programs exceed the average audience share of the channels. This difference is most striking on the channel with the leading news program, Antena 3. Therefore, the strength of these programs and the interest they generate is evident. They tend to attract audiences to the channels and confirm the importance of audiovisual journalism in their programming schedules. In this regard, the data collected shows the leadership of Antena 3's news programs over its competitors during much of the period analyzed, influenced by the crisis of the public channel and Telecinco, as well as the change of channel of *Pasapalabra*, as pointed out by Fernández Herruzo (2024).

The results analyzed indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic was a boost for television news programs. It has been verified that the health emergency led to extraordinary levels of television news consumption in 2020. It revalued the role of news programs on their respective networks, although in the following months they lost viewers. Therefore, the pandemic postponed the progressive decline that had been occurring in the years prior to COVID-19 by two years. It caused a pause but did not reverse the existing trend.

The data collected from audience measurement information shows that television continues to be an important source of information for viewers, as noted in some of the studies mentioned at the beginning of this paper (CIS, Digital News Report, etc.). There is, therefore, a parallel between the information reported in the surveys and viewers' behavior in front of the small screen.

News programs are therefore a distinguishing feature of broadcasters that do not have a journalistic tradition. Live broadcasts and the connection with news events are a distinguishing feature of generalist channels that is supported by a significant portion of the audience. The informative function continues to be valued and supported by the audience of these four channels, despite the rise of new forms of news routines. This is undoubtedly a decisive factor due to the social and democratic consequences of access to journalistic

information. In a context of the rise of pseudo-media, this strength must be exploited to reclaim the value of the journalistic profession.

Thus, in today's highly competitive environment, television news programs represent an opportunity for generalist channels because, despite being a very old format, they continue to attract audiences and differentiate them from their competitors. For these channels, reinforcing broadcasts connected to the present, such as live journalism in the form of television news, is an excellent opportunity to retain an audience that often flees to new broadcasters and their timeless content. In short, strengthening this journalistic commitment means betting on a format that is followed by the public.

Finally, it is worth noting how this format differs from the global characteristics of liquid television, mainly in terms of live viewing. In a context of consumption that breaks down the barriers of time and space, news programs represent a continuation of traditional viewing anchored in the present. Data derived from time-shifted viewing attests to the fact that their success comes from simultaneous broadcasts. Therefore, news programs, one of the oldest formats on the schedule with more than six decades of history, have maintained their initial nature (with some modifications in content, production, and technology) and their capacity to influence as an informative brand that continues to determine the internal schedules of many Spanish households (as demonstrated during the pandemic).

It should be noted that this research opens future development. One of these would be to compare these conclusions with data on digital consumption of television news programs. Further research could include a study that offers a more complete picture in which the digital aspect is present. This would provide a more comprehensive view of audience behavior toward television news programs. A final line of research would open comparative studies in two areas. On the one hand, comparing with other countries so that the following of this news format in other countries could be determined. On the other hand, by extending the time frame to include other years and other factors such as the recent and pressing disaffection with news or the presence of news influencers who could affect the viewing of these programs and their perception of journalism.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors DECLARE that the preparation of ***the*** article ***"Television news programs: an opportunity to connect with television channel audiences"*** did not involve the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Fashion and femininity: from local press to the digital age. A critical vision of its evolution, discourses, and tensions

Moda y feminidad: de la prensa local a la era digital. Una visión crítica de su evolución, discursos y tensiones

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Abstract

Fashion is a reflection of political, social, and cultural changes. Its study requires adapting analytical tools to each historical period. In this work, the objectives are divided into two phases: first, to reconstruct the discourse of fashion through a qualitative analysis of the local press during the Spanish Transition, identifying gender stereotypes and aesthetic pressures characteristic of that era; and second, to explore how the democratization of fashion, social media, and the rise of sustainability shape the current construction of femininity, through semi-structured interviews with actual experts in communication and fashion.

The results reveal the persistence of gender stereotypes, the popularization of fashion through influencers and social media, and the growing importance of sustainability and conscious consumption. Fashion emerges as a platform for identity, but it also faces significant challenges in the digital age in balancing ethical and sustainable practices. Although there have been advances in inclusion, aesthetic pressure remains strong, often fueled by the rapid spread of content on social media. In conclusion, although the discourse of fashion has evolved since the Transition period, it is crucial that it continues to adapt to cultural and technological changes.

Keywords

Gender stereotypes, femininity, fashion, conscious consumption, sustainability, social media.

Resumen
La moda es un reflejo de los cambios políticos, sociales y culturales. Su estudio exige adaptar las herramientas analíticas a cada época. En este trabajo, nuestros objetivos se dividen en dos fases: primero, reconstruir el discurso de la moda a partir de un análisis cualitativo de la prensa local de la Transición, identificando los estereotipos de género y las presiones estéticas propias de ese periodo y segundo, explorar cómo la democratización de la moda, las redes sociales y la emergencia de la sostenibilidad configuran hoy la construcción de la feminidad, mediante entrevistas semiestructuradas a expertas actuales en comunicación y moda. Los resultados reflejan la persistencia de estereotipos de género, la popularización de la moda gracias a influencers y redes sociales y la creciente relevancia de la sostenibilidad y el consumo consciente. La moda se erige como una plataforma de identidad, pero también se enfrenta a retos significativos en la era digital para equilibrar prácticas éticas y sostenibles. Aunque hay avances en inclusión, la presión estética sigue siendo fuerte, a menudo fomentada por la rápida difusión de contenido en redes sociales. En conclusión, aunque el discurso de la moda ha evolucionado desde la Transición, es crucial que siga adaptándose a los cambios culturales y tecnológicos.

Palabras clave
Estereotipos de género, feminidad, moda, consumo consciente, redes sociales, sostenibilidad.

Introduction

This research analyzes the evolution of communication on the construction of femininities, studying the discourse reflected in the local press during the Spanish Transition (1975-1982), a period with profound political and social transformation that ushered in the democratization of the media, the redefinition of identity, and the renegotiation of gender roles, in order to contrast it with contemporary dynamics. Until now, little attention has been paid to the intersection between fashion and political and social change, which can provide valuable information about social phenomena and can help better understand the construction of the welfare state and social identity in Spain.

Fashion, as a means of communication, uses its own language and requires distribution channels, the press being one of the most prominent. Fashion acts as a mirror of public opinion and reflects the "spirit of the times" (Velasco, 2018). According to Cabrera and Vera (2021), the media has been

crucial in shaping public opinion, the political agenda, and subjectivities. Luque and Pérez (2018) argue that the media shapes globalized attitudes by exposing everyday social situations related to politics, economics, and culture. Surprisingly, fashion has been underestimated by academic studies, possibly because it has not been considered a "serious subject." Celso Almuiña, professor of Contemporary History, highlights the need to study fashion due to its multidisciplinary nature, which requires a cross-sectional analysis and a complementary methodology. Fashion is a marker of social group identity (Velasco, 2016), and sociologist Martínez (1995) points out that although clothing serves a practical function, this represents only 50%, with the rest being communication. Current historiographical trends advocate adopting a gender perspective in historical studies to enrich the understanding of bilateral dynamics from a contemporary perspective. Cabrera and Vera (2021) recognize the importance of the socio-demographic process in examining how changes in participation in the political sphere and in communication and cultural professions have increased the role of women.

According to Barros (1993), historians can modify or replace paradigms in the social sciences, including the study of fashion, which is intrinsically linked to the social, ideological, and cultural context. Exploring the flow of information between the media and fashion trends at specific moments is crucial to understanding the processes of social change (Rodríguez, 2009). Given the complexity of fashion as a cultural and social phenomenon, it is considered necessary to explore it in depth in the context of recent history (Mansilla, 2017). Focusing on fashion as a means of communication during Transition and the current era, this research seeks to shed light on its influence on the construction of identities. A holistic perspective on fashion is used, recognizing it as a phenomenon that impacts various aspects of society (Martínez, 1995). Using the press and the opinions of experts in communication and fashion as tools, it is examined how the image of society is projected, focusing on fashion management and its consumers (Velasco, 2018).

The hypotheses explore whether fashion transcends its practical function, acting as a social phenomenon that reflects trends and preferences, contributes to the construction of gender stereotypes, and plays a role in shaping power relations and the expression of personal identity.

Materials and method

The main objective of this study is to conduct a critical analysis of the social discourse on fashion present in *La Voz de Almería* during the Spanish Transition (1975-1982) and contrast it with the contemporary view of experts in communication and fashion. The following specific objectives are proposed: to identify the gender stereotypes and aesthetic pressures prevalent in this newspaper; to describe the role of the mass media as markers of time, as Luhmann points out: "The media tell us what is considered the future and what is the past" (Carmona, 2024, p. 131). To analyze the democratization of the media and the emergence of new specialized publications, as well as to examine the relationship between political liberalization, fashion consumption, and the redefinition of female identities. This will allow us to compare how digital platforms and influencers are reconfiguring fashion discourse today with historical journalistic narratives, through the opinions of experts, to see how they position sustainable fashion as the heir or break with the aesthetic idea of the Transition and thus be able to propose future lines of research on fashion, ethics, and the environment.

The methodology used is based on two complementary approaches. First, the newspaper archive of *La Voz de Almería* was compiled for each of the ten years of the period under study, using the keyword "fashion." A ten-year sample was chosen because, from the perspective of many historians, the Transition should be understood as a prolonged process, which requires a sufficient time frame. Each year yielded around 200 headlines, of these those articles that simultaneously met the following criteria were examined: addressing fashion as a social or cultural phenomenon and including explicit references to identity, gender stereotypes, or the construction of femininity. No minimum length was established for the selected texts; however, the following were excluded: short notes or reviews with little analytical substance, mentions of fashion in contexts unrelated to the subject of study, duplicates of events, and texts focused exclusively on technical aspects (fabrics, prices) with no link to gender or power. The number of articles retained ranged from twenty to sixty per year, depending on the intensity of the media debate at the time. Finally, the selected texts were subjected to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to explore fashion as an expression of power. To this end, they were classified according to their main theme: identity, stereotypes, mentalities, and gender (Pardo, 2007).

The choice of *La Voz de Almería* was not accidental. Between 1975 and 1981, this newspaper was part of the State Social Media, which meant that local communication was heavily controlled, with messages directed from Madrid and influenced by the Women's Section, focused on communication strategies for the home. Therefore, by analyzing this newspaper, all the messages that were conveyed to the population can be gathered, because, as is known, the rest of the media "drew" from the newspapers. This configuration provides valuable information about the messages that were intended to be conveyed to the public, which could be extrapolated to other provinces, as they were "orchestrated" by the government. From 1977 onwards, journalists showed a growing commitment to freedom of expression, although they were still limited in their scope of action (Román, 2024). Finally, in 1982, with the approval of the Law on the Privatization of the State Press Chain by the first socialist government, the newspaper became a private media outlet.

In this sense, the evolution of *La Voz de Almería* during the Transition reflects profound changes both in its structure and editorial orientation and in the discourse, paving the way for modernization and freedom of expression.

Figure 1
Page from the newspaper La Voz de Almería
dedicated to fashion during the Transition

Source: Own elaboration based on data from *La Voz de Almería*.

On the other hand, to interpret the continuities and ruptures detected between the two periods, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five

specialists in communication and fashion. The questions focused on: How they perceive the evolution of fashion discourse from the Transition to today, what media and technological factors have influenced this transformation, and the role of sustainability and conscious consumption in current narratives. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed manually using inductive thematic analysis, generating four main codes (continuity, rupture, innovation, media feedback). This process was carried out in four phases: preliminary reading to detect recurring ideas, establishing codes related to the construction of femininities and changes in fashion discourse, review of themes, and finally, definition and naming of categories to explain the transformation of discourse.

In this way, the historical articles ensure that the objective of evaluating fashion discourse is met, while the expert voices provide the interpretation necessary to understand the factors behind these changes.

The interviewees have a close relationship with fashion and communication, providing a valuable perspective to the research: María Prieto, a graduate in Advertising and Public Relations with a Master's degree in Sociocultural Analysis of Knowledge and Communication, has worked in the Communications Office of the Faculty of Information Sciences and in the Department of Journalism and New Media at the Complutense University of Madrid. Isabel Perales, journalist and with Master's degree in Social Communication. Concha Pérez, a journalist and professor at the University of Seville, attached to the Department of Journalism, and professor at the Master's degree in Fashion at the Seville Chamber of Commerce, making her an expert in teaching and analyzing fashion from an academic and professional perspective. Ana Velasco, writer, journalist, and historian, is a professor at the Complutense University of Madrid. Thanks to her journalistic career and her training in history, she approaches fashion as a cultural and social phenomenon. Isabel Muñoz, journalist and doctoral candidate in Information Sciences at the Complutense University of Madrid.

The interviewees were selected intentionally based on their professional careers and academic contributions to the world of fashion and communication. This approach has provided a broader view of the experts' opinions and facilitated comparison with the discourse present in *La Voz de Almería* during the Transition. This has led to a deeper understanding of the continuities and changes in the way fashion is communicated and experienced throughout both decades.

Figure 2
Set of questions for contemporary fashion experts

Perceptions of femininity, beauty standards, and sustainable fashion in the local and regional press: a comparative perspective
1. How do you think the local press and fashion supplements currently reflect femininity and women's independence? Do you notice any differences in their approach compared to national media? 2. In your opinion, how do local and regional media address beauty standards and social pressure, compare to national media? What role do they play in promoting conscious and sustainable fashion consumption? 3. Do you consider fashion to be a tool for expression and empowerment for women today? How do local and regional fashion supplements contribute to this perception? 4. Do you think that today's media, including local and regional media, have managed to overcome the traditional view of gender in fashion, or do you see the persistence of certain stereotypes? How is this reflected in fashion coverage and advertising campaigns? 5. How do the media, especially local media and fashion supplements, manage the construction of femininity today? What differences are there in the representation of sustainable fashion and conscious consumption compared to fashion in the 1980s?

Fashion since the transition to digital

During the Franco regime, fashion in Spain was strictly regulated, reflecting a conservative and hierarchical society. Dress codes limited diversity and creativity. However, around 1975, with Franco's death, social and cultural changes began to emerge, which materialized with the transition to democracy, allowing for greater diversity and individual expression in fashion (García, 2013). From 1973 to 1982, fashion reflected the social, cultural, and political transformation of the time. The first democratic elections in 1977 established a new discourse, and fashion became a means of expressing identity and participating in the construction of a democratic and modern Spain.

From the 1980s onwards, globalization had a decisive influence on the Spanish fashion market, promoting the arrival of international brands and generating a homogenization of trends (Orospe, 2024). This process led to changes in supply and demand in the textile industry, with the introduction of flexible and just-in-time production, driven by new technologies (Martínez, 2024). During this period, television and specialized fashion magazines became the main tools for dissemination, establishing stereotypes of beauty and, consequently, lifestyles and notions of femininity.

Since 2010, the digital age has further transformed fashion. E-commerce, social media, and digital platforms have altered consumer habits and the way trends are communicated. Influencers and bloggers have come to the fore, displacing traditional media and allowing for the rapid dissemination of new developments. Instagram and TikTok have established themselves as key media for the industry, contributing to brand image creation and the loyalty of young audiences (Pérez and Velasco, 2020). Likewise, García (2023) states that "physical stores are in decline" (p. 42), but adds that they will have to evolve to offer exclusive shopping experiences that combine product purchases with new experiences.

Table 1
Evolution and relationship of fashion discourse, from print media to the digital age

Aspects	Print Media	Digital Age
Dissemination of trends	Mainly through magazines, newspapers, and television.	Immediate thanks to social media, blogs, and online platforms.
Role of opinion leaders	Designers and specialized magazines wielded great authority.	Influencers, bloggers, and independent experts are gaining prominence.
Availability of fashion	Limited by geographical barriers and less variety of styles.	Global, with brands and trends accessible at the click of a button.
Speed of change	Moderate, marked by runway seasons and launches.	Accelerated, driven by the immediacy of the Internet and "fast fashion" culture.
Relationship with the public	Readers received information passively.	Consumers interact, comment, and share trends, favoring co-creation.
Impact on sustainability	The pace of production and consumption was slower.	Challenges related to fast fashion have emerged, but so have slow fashion initiatives and environmental awareness.
Creation of identity	Fashion was presented as an aspiration, filtered by traditional media.	Strong consumer participation, with consumers building their style by sharing content and influencing others.

Source: Own elaboration based on data from *La Voz de Almería* and interview results.

The advent of the Internet has optimized transactions and business management, while social media has accelerated the fashion cycle, creating challenges in terms of sustainability. In response, eco-friendly fashion and "slow fashion" are gaining more followers, promoting responsible production and

consumption practices (Crespo, 2022). This approach advocates for change in both manufacturing and consumer behavior, emphasizing the importance of eco-friendly and responsible habits (Martínez, 2021). In addition, there has been a boom in the second-hand market, especially among millennials and Generation Z, as well as a growing acceptance of eco-friendly products, confirming the need for more conscious fashion (García, 2023).

Finally, artificial intelligence (AI) has become a key tool for the industry: it enables the personalization of the customer experience, the prediction of trends, and the optimization of the supply chain. Thanks to AI, fashion companies can add value through neuromarketing techniques and strengthen customer interaction, thereby increasing loyalty. In this context, social media acts as a channel that directly connects trends and consumers, driving the "democratization of fashion" (López *et al.,* 2024).

Fashion and female representation: Discourse analysis in the local press

In 1973, fashion was highlighted as a means of expressing femininity in its various facets. From this perspective, the transformative power of aesthetics was emphasized, as evidenced in the statement: "today's woman, physically and mentally situated within a society with its own mentality and opinion" (La Voz de Almería). At the same time, personal attractiveness was promoted through the accessibility of beauty products: "Finally, makeup products within everyone's reach. A new, freer, more joyful, and more refined form of makeup" (La Voz de Almería, March 11, 1973). However, it was noted that fashion sometimes also conveyed messages of frivolity or infantilization, revealing a critical awareness of the stereotypes and pressures associated with femininity: "it is the plain truth, a trend that is sought after and sought after to satisfy the desire for perpetual youth to which women generally aspire" (Pik, 1973, p. 12).

By 1974, progress toward independence and equality for women was already visible. The training offered by the Women's Section was highlighted: "Today, women are very independent, and much of that independence is due to the training that the Women's Section has been providing to Spanish girls for years," although at the same time, the challenges and contradictions inherent in this process were recognized. Thus, it was stated: "Legal and labor equality has been rapidly incorporated into our laws in recent years and has

represented a fundamental advance in the promotion of women" (Pik, 1974, p. 12), while warning that "we must overcome the obstacles and taboos that prevent the principles of equality between men and women from permeating our daily lives to the point where they seem as natural as breathing" (La Voz de Almería, May 31, 1974). These quotes reflected the complexity of society, in which change was presented as a constant struggle for equality.

The following year, women were portrayed as innovative figures in the field of fashion. The discourse emphasized female protagonism by declaring: "The world of fashion belongs to them, women who can afford expensive dressmakers, i.e., those who celebrate International Women's Year every year, know how to dress." In addition, the existence of a marked distinction between male and female roles was highlighted, and criticism was levelled at consumer society and youth movements such as the hippies and beatniks, as well as communism. These reflections showed how fashion was deeply influenced by the social and political trends of the time (Martínez, 1975).

Although not explicitly addressed in 1976, it was clear that fashion continued to play a crucial role in the construction of femininity. Aspects related to feminine elegance and the representation of "sex and other taboo subjects" were mentioned, given that "there has been a proliferation of nudity, both in shows and in illustrated magazines." In this context, the following reflection was made: "How often are sex and nudity used exclusively to liven up a languid plot and attract an audience incapable of enjoying anything other than crude stimulation" (Planelles, 1976, p. 15). In addition, it was observed that references to prominent women were often associated with the positions held by their husbands, indicating a persistence of traditional gender roles (La Voz de Almería, April 2, 1976).

In 1977, fashion and the construction of femininity were closely linked to the evolution of society and the role of women. With the greater freedom that journalists began to experience "from 1977 onwards, we began to commit ourselves to democracy, which was a general commitment of the press, and we stopped following the guidelines... but before that it was impossible... People knew that the things that appeared in the newspaper came from others and did not originate with us" (Román, 2024), the discourse became more practical, adapting to the needs of modern women. It was expressed as "a practical fashion at the service of an active woman who is fully integrated into a society in which, at last, she seems to have been granted a better position" (La Voz de Almería, September 18, 1977). Thus, personal care be-

came a pillar of female identity, reinforcing the idea that "today's woman... has clearly assimilated, among many other things, that personal care is so important that it deserves to be considered a requirement for functioning and being pleasant within the society in which she belongs" (Vázquez, 1977).

In 1978, the debate was broadened to include topics such as the role of women in the fashion industry and feminist movements. The need was raised that "fashion in clothing is not always as appropriate as it should be, if those who establish it do not take into account the function to be performed by the body, both from an aesthetic and hygienic point of view," suggesting a concern for functionality and physical well-being, in addition to purely aesthetic criteria. On the other hand, the ability to choose was evident in the adoption of trousers: "they ceased to be an exclusively male garment and women adopted them, aware of all the advantages that fashion could bring them, and thus acquired new prominence and set out on a path that had until then been limited or almost unexplored" (De Pablos, 1978), demonstrating the challenge to gender norms.

The discourse in 1979 highlighted the pressure on women to meet certain standards of beauty, manifested in: "as a decisive threat to women this spring, the slogan of the day is: you have to lose weight." An idealized vision of femininity was also presented, with statements such as "spring is the only season that belongs to the fair sex, who likes to be pampered, and the poor bard who is never tired of strumming its lyre," which was evident in a change with the adaptation of models: "designers have been able to adapt their models to more universal standards," although, at the same time, pressure continued to be exerted that "current fashion does not allow for wide, round hips," which restricted body diversity (Kalikatres, 1979).

In 1980, fashion discourse was defined as a tool for female expression and empowerment, emphasizing that "any type of soft, romantic, well-finished garment in original but elegant colors" not only beautified women but also strengthened their self-esteem. The evolution of makeup was presented as an essential part of the process of constructing femininity: "if modern life is pure hustle and bustle, this month it increases even more; more work, shopping, commitments... this should not be reflected on the face. Going to a meeting looking exhausted is discouraging for everyone. Good time management is essential." In addition, it reflected the central role of women in the home, where their responsibility for creating a welcoming environment was considered an extension of their feminine identity. This expectation, howe-

ver, generated feelings of inadequacy and limited women's opportunities in other areas (Moreno, 1980).

In 1981, fashion was still considered a means of shaping femininity, emphasizing the importance of dressing elegantly, but it also imposed pressure: "This is the time when we must arm ourselves with enough willpower to conduct those projects so often postponed since last summer, whether it be losing a few pounds or rejuvenating our complexion." (La Voz de Almería, 1981, July 12). In this context, there was discussion about the evolution of the perception of women in society, including the recognition of the value of family love and the strengthening of emotional ties, as well as support for maternal responsibilities: "transforming a movement with the idea of promoting family feelings and reaching the general public of our nation" or "do not deny her that right" in relation to breastfeeding (Marianata, 1981).

Finally, in 1982, fashion became a space for reflection on the construction of femininity and gender stereotypes. Social pressure on physical appearance was questioned: "because most women decide to attack when it is too late, sometimes too late, and cellulite is unforgiving." In addition, social norms that imposed certain standards of elegance and body image were highlighted: "our era also has its social rituals, certain relentless norms by which people judge (and allow themselves to talk about) our physical and economic well-being and our social status." This discourse also extended to the family, where during festive seasons, women were expected to maintain an immaculate image: "During the Christmas holidays, full of family gatherings, women must look well-groomed and overflowing with joy, even though cooking takes up a lot of time during those days" (del Campo, 1982).

Redefining fashion: femininity, beauty, empowerment, and sustainability today

The local press and fashion supplements continue to perpetuate certain gender stereotypes that delineate the image of women in traditional terms. For example, when it is stated that "a successful woman is one who rises socially or maintains the high status she has inherited," and it is further proclaimed that "she is professionally successful, that is what is important and, apparently, unheard of, and on top of that, she is the mother of several children, has a fabulous house, and looks younger than she is, without losing fe-

mininity" (Prieto, 2024). These expressions reflected a conception of women who are valued based on their social position and their ability to combine professional achievements with traditional roles.

In contrast, other voices in the journalistic field offer a more transformative vision. Perales (2024) recognized that "the change we are experiencing through the press and the media in general, locally, nationally, and internationally, is in itself a point in favor of the feminist struggle and empowerment," noting that "the power to show ourselves as we are, the reality is imperfect, because there are many types of bodies, and for that we need fashion that adapts to them." This approach highlights the importance of inclusive fashion that reflects the real diversity of women, as opposed to the homogeneous ideal traditionally promoted.

Several experts agree that, in terms of content, there are no major differences between the local and national press, although there are contrasts with the international press. According to Velasco (2024): "I don't think there are major differences because we live in a post-industrial or cultural capitalism dynamic... not one in which there are cultural industries of which the media are part." On the other hand, Pérez (2024) points out that "the local press and fashion supplements deal with more specific issues and target more specific audiences, as their work can actually be even more important because they can talk about specific issues that concern their own readers, and women can see themselves well represented." This perspective suggests that the local press has greater potential to address the real concerns of its audience in an intimate way.

Likewise, the interviewees expressed a certain optimism regarding the global effort of the press to reflect issues of gender equality, femininity, and the defense of women's independence and freedom, with statements such as: "I believe that, in general, the international, national, and local press have made a significant effort to reflect the entire issue of gender equality, femininity, the defense of femininity, and the defense of women's independence and freedom in their spaces." However, Muñoz (2024) believes that the local press remains more traditional, using language and addressing issues "more typical of another era."

Regarding the discourse on social pressure and beauty standards, according to the interviewees, local and regional media share similar content. For Perales (2024), local media often draw on image banks, which are not always "representative in terms of beauty standards." Prieto (2024) expanded on this: "diversity and inclusivity respond to market demands and to our

continued consumption in order to maintain constant economic growth, so I do not think they promote particularly responsible consumption." Similarly, Muñoz (2024) emphasizes that local media were "less risky when dealing with certain issues, because they do not have as wide an audience as national media and cannot afford to stray beyond certain limits."

In relation to sustainability and conscious consumption in fashion, Pérez (2024) believes that local media have an important role to play in informing and even "convincing" readers to change certain unsustainable consumption habits. Velasco (2024) added that "local media can do a lot, especially because sustainability is a topic of debate and one of the things most demanded of fashion. Fashion is the third most polluting industry in the world." He also suggests taking advantage of the business opportunity for "journalistic, regional, and local brands that may have a reach and interest that is perhaps underestimated today."

Finally, fashion was highlighted as a tool for expression and empowerment for women, a way of constructing both individual and collective identity. For Perales (2024): "the simple fact of wanting to look beautiful, elegant, sophisticated, is already loving yourself, showing that you care and that you want to look good, above all, to yourself. The way you dress is a way of representing your deepest self." Pérez (2024) emphasizes that "it is perhaps one of the areas that has given women the most opportunities to face the social pressures to which they are exposed. Being fashionable has also meant challenging themselves and facing those kinds of pressures that sometimes, and especially in the past, have been very difficult." However, Velasco (2024) warns that, although fashion empowers, it is also part of the capitalist industry: "it is a way of making money" (Muñoz, 2024) concludes that, despite efforts to offer a renewed discourse, "the content of the media is similar, but the way it is approached seems new, even though it is not."

In summary, all interviewees agreed that media discourse has not yet completely overcome traditional gender views in fashion, although changes in content can be observed, such as greater diversity in local supplements and the reflection of a more dynamic role for women in society, evidenced by the growing incorporation of images shared between both genders (Pérez, 2024; Perales, 2024; Muñoz, 2024; Velasco, 2024). In addition, compared to past decades, there is a perceived promotion of sustainable fashion and conscious consumption, although the market continues to influence the formation of new models of femininity and beauty, as does the inertia of Francoist heritage in some discourses, reflecting social problems such as racism and gender inequality.

Results

This extensive analysis shows, on the one hand, how the discourse on fashion and female representation has evolved over the years in *La Voz de Almería*. Each year it reveals transformations in the way femininity is constructed, from the exaltation of youth and aesthetics in the early days, through advances in independence and the strengthening of traditional roles, to the integration of debates on equality, inclusion, and sustainability. Furthermore, it shows how the media, especially the local press, have been instruments for spreading messages that have influenced women's identity and role, reflecting contradictions and tensions in the process of social modernization.

Table 2
Construction of femininities through the social discourse of fashion in La Voz de Almería

Year	Discourse Focus	Observations	Year	Discourse Focus	Observations
1973	Fashion as a means of expressing femininity and accessing beauty products. The influence of stereotypes about eternal youth begins to be apparent.	Fashion presents as a vehicle for self-expression, but introduces stereotypes related to youth and aesthetics.	1978	Debate on the functionality of fashion and the importance of physical well-being. Clothing that challenges traditional gender norms begins to be adopted.	There is a growing concern for well-being and functionality, and women are increasingly able to challenge traditional boundaries.
1974	Progress toward female independence and equality, albeit with challenges and contradictions. Educational and legal advances are highlighted, but so is the difficult road to equality.	Progress is noted, but contradictions and persistent cultural barriers to gender equality emerge.	1979	The discourse focuses on the aesthetic pressure imposed by fashion and the adaptation of design models for greater inclusion, although restrictive standards are imposed.	The pressure to conform to specific physical ideals is evident, while at the same time possibilities for more inclusive fashion are opening up.
1975	Women are represented as innovative figures in fashion, but with a marked distinction between gender roles. Criticism of consumerism and youth movements is integrated.	Female innovation is contrasted with the persistence of traditional roles and a materialistic view of identity.	1980	Fashion presents as a tool for female empowerment, strengthening self-esteem and personal care. The evolution of makeup and the role at home is emphasized.	The ability of fashion to empower and strengthen women is highlighted, although an impeccable image is imposed, which can generate pressure.

1976	Construction of femininity through fashion with debates about nudity and the use of sex to enliven arguments, and the association of women with traditional roles.	Although it is suggested that fashion contributes to the construction of femininity, discourses that reinforce male dominance and stereotypes persist.	1981	Fashion was used to forge femininity and promote changes in social perception, integrating debates on equality and traditional roles, as well as family love.	The discourse of fashion is integrated with the family sphere and social commitment, maintaining traditional aesthetic pressures.
1977	Fashion adapts to a new social reality, driven by greater freedom of expression in the press and personal care as a pillar of female identity.	The press began to reflect a more active and multifaceted image of women, but there were still certain condescending approaches to their role.	1982	Fashion becomes a space for reflection on the construction of femininity and gender stereotypes, with special attention to social standards and family roles.	There is evidence of the persistence of social pressure and the imposition of traditional roles, especially in the domestic sphere, which still influence the image of women.

Source: Prepared by the author based on data from *La Voz de Almería*.

Table 3
Social discourse on fashion in the digital age

Aspect	Perspecrives and opinions
Femininity and independence	Gender stereotypes are perpetuated in the press. There is an effort to reflect equality and empowerment. The local press is more traditional.
Beauty standards and Social Pressure	The discourse on beauty does not vary much locally. Diversity is promoted due to market demands. The media can influence sustainable consumption.
Fashion as Expression and Empowerment	Fashion is a tool for expression and empowerment, although it remains part of a capitalist industry. Social pressure remains.
Traditional Views of Gender and Stereotypes	Gender stereotypes have not been overcome, but there are changes in content and advertising campaigns. Inclusion is used as a capitalist strategy.
Construction of Femininity and Sustainable Fashion	Sustainable fashion and conscious consumption are gaining ground, but more effort is needed. Controlled media influence the perception of fashion.

Source: Prepared by the author based on interview results.

On the other hand, if looking at Table 3, it can be seen the evolution of fashion in terms of femininity, beauty, empowerment, and sustainability, showing that although the press perpetuates certain gender stereotypes, it also plays a crucial role in promoting empowerment and sustainability. Fashion continues to be a tool of expression for women, although it is influenced by capitalism. Beauty standards are changing more because of social media than because of the press, and although sustainability is gaining ground, it still faces challenges such as greenwashing.

Conclusions

This journey shows that although fashion discourse on the construction of femininity has undergone formal changes from the 1970s to the present day, the substantive transformations are partial and, in many cases, contradictory. Traditional stereotypes persist, such as the valorization of thinness, the exaltation of youth, and domestic roles, revealing the continuity of the power structures described by Bourdieu in the theory of symbolic reproduction (Fernández, 2005).

During the Transition, *La Voz de Almería* initially contributed to reinforcing conventional gender roles; however, from 1976 onwards, signs of a more active femininity emerged, presented as a vehicle for individual empowerment. Nevertheless, this emancipation coexisted with rigid normative and aesthetic demands, illustrating the tension of cultural capitalism in the democratic phase: the "free woman" quickly joined the consumer market, turning self-sufficiency into just another product.

Today, visibility and diversity have advanced, but the same regulatory mechanisms persist under new formulas. The "constant transition" mentioned by Ana Velasco is manifested in the intensification of beauty ideals through social media and influencers, who simultaneously impose youth, professional success, motherhood, and physical attractiveness. At the same time, discourses on sustainability and conscious consumption are emerging which, although necessary, are threatened by greenwashing strategies and the lack of structural changes in the industry.

Thus, fashion continues to play a dual role: as a tool for identification and potential empowerment, and as a device for social control and exploitation, both of bodies and resources, in an accelerated cycle of production and con-

sumption. To move towards a truly plural and free femininity, it is essential that the media and the industry take on an active responsibility, promoting ethical practices, transparency, and a discourse that goes beyond simple diversification of styles, promoting profound social transformation.

Recommendations and limitations of the research

This study was conceived with the intention of revealing how *La Voz de Almería* articulated its messages on fashion, gender, and identity between 1975 and 1982, and how these narratives resonate or are transformed in contemporary discourse. However, from its methodological foundations to its geographical scope, the work has a number of limitations that should be recognized when interpreting its results.

Firstly, the research was based solely on one provincial newspaper: *La Voz de Almería*. Its status as a state-owned newspaper during the Transition ensures that it reflected the official discourse, but at the same time it excludes other newspapers, whether privately owned or with a different orientation, which would have offered valuable nuances. To compile the corpus, ten years of headlines containing the keyword "fashion" were searched, and articles that explicitly referred to gender, femininity, or identity were selected. This intentional sample, of between twenty and sixty texts per year, allowed for an in-depth examination, but sacrificed exhaustiveness, i.e., articles that did not use that specific terminology or that addressed the phenomenon of fashion were left out. Thus, the decision to prioritize interpretive quality over quantity introduces a limit on the statistical representativeness of the results.

The CDA provided the theoretical framework necessary to articulate relationships between language, power, and the construction of femininity. However, each phase of coding was based on interpretive decisions, inevitably subject to the researcher's perspective. This subjective component, inherent in any qualitative approach, suggests caution when generalizing conclusions.

A second line of research consisted of interviewing five current experts in fashion and communication, selected through purposive sampling based on their academic and professional backgrounds. Their reflections provide valuable information about the continuities and ruptures between the past and the present, but the homogeneity of the profiles, all academics or journalists, leaves out other voices, both in terms of gender and roles, such as designers,

consumers, activists, or digital content creators, whose testimony would enrich the understanding of current discourses.

Finally, the comparison between historical texts and contemporary opinions provides flashes of insight, but also reveals contextual dissonances: language, cultural references, and interpretive frameworks have changed substantially, making it difficult at times to directly contrast the two records.

Given these limitations, several avenues for the future are proposed: exploring other newspapers and formats (magazines, radio, television, advertising), incorporating quantitative analysis or statistical techniques that offer broader patterns, and including an intersectional perspective of class, age, and territory to capture the plurality of women's experiences. It would also be useful to investigate how female readers during the Transition received and internalized these messages, through retrospective interviews, and to extend the study to national and international contexts to assess cultural similarities and differences.

Despite its limitations, this work provides valuable tools for critical media education, enabling students and professionals in communication, fashion, and gender studies to identify persistent stereotypes and propose more ethical narratives. It also offers a solid foundation for designing public policies on equality and media sustainability, aimed at promoting truly inclusive discourses. Finally, its findings can inspire future multidisciplinary teams—historians, sociologists, communicators, fashion experts, and feminist studies scholars—to combine methodologies and perspectives, and even to resort to big data analysis, to trace more accurately the evolution of social discourse on fashion and femininity.

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Declaration of Authorship - CRediT Taxonomy	
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The representation of women in comic sketches of the CCTV China Spring Festival Gala (2014-2024)

La representación de mujeres en sketches cómicos de las Galas del Festival de Primavera de CCTV China (2014-2024)[1]

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1 All dialogues in the sketches cited have been translated from Chinese into Spanish by the author.

Abstract
This research undertakes a feminist-informed analysis of the comedic sketches featured in the Chinese CCTV Spring Festival Gala. Its principal objectives are to elucidate the representation of women within these sketches, as well as to unpack the mechanisms through which gender-based discrimination is reproduced and/or perpetuated. To this end, the study examines a sample of 61 short comedic pieces aired between 2014 and 2024. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the research combines quantitative and qualitative analyses. Specifically, it examines female participation in directorial and scriptwriting roles, while also investigating the construction of unequal discourses and imagery through the narratives and cinematic techniques employed. In this context, women persist as objects of ridicule and social coercion. The findings reveal that female directors and screenwriters constitute a minority, representing only 7.7 % and 5.7 % respectively during the last decade. Notwithstanding the ostensible diversity of female characterizations, the representation of women remains subordinate to an androcentric perspective. In light of these insights, the study underscores the urgent imperative for gender studies training within the film industry, with the aim of fostering a media landscape that exerts a more equitable societal influence.

Keywords
Women, media, feminist perspective, comedy sketches, CCTV Spring Festival Gala, China.

Resumen
Esta investigación se centra en el análisis de los sketches cómicos de las Galas del Festival de Primavera de la CCTV china desde una óptica feminista. Su objetivo es dilucidar la representación femenina en dichos sketches, así como desentrañar los mecanismos mediante los cuales se reproduce y/o perpetúa la discriminación de género. Para ello, se ha examinado una muestra de 61 breves comedias emitidas entre 2014 y 2024. El estudio utiliza una metodología mixta que combina el análisis cuantitativo y cualitativo. Se analiza la participación femenina en los roles de dirección y guion, se investiga la construcción de discursos e imágenes desiguales a través de la producción narrativa y cinematográfica. Los resultados evidencian que, las mujeres directoras y guionistas constituyen una minoría, representando únicamente el 7,7 % y 5,7 % respectivamente durante la última década. Pese a la aparente diversidad de roles femeninos, la construcción de la mujer sigue subordinada a una perspectiva androcéntrica, en este contexto, la mujer persiste como objeto de escarnio y coerción social. En conclusión, se subraya la necesidad imperiosa de una formación en estudios de género en la industria cinematográfica, con miras a construir una sociedad influida equitativamente por los medios de comunicación.

Palabras clave
Mujeres, medios de comunicación, perspectiva feminista, sketches cómicos, Galas del Festival de Primavera de CCTV, China.

Introduction

There has been growing academic interest in the analysis of female representations in the media. Although there is extensive literature on the presen-

ce and status of women in the media, recent research has prioritized the study of contemporary digital platforms, such as social media (Ghaffari, 2023) and emerging media such as TikTok (Scherr and Wang, 2021). The predominant themes in this research include systematic violence against women (Chirino, 2020), the invisibility of women in the media (Delgado, 2020), the reproduction of sexist sociocultural patterns (Lazo *et al.,* 2022), and the violation of fundamental rights (Tornay, 2021). Although digital platforms and journalistic and cinematographic products have provided fertile ground for analyzing female representation, it is noteworthy that the geographical scope of this research has been limited mainly to the Western and Latin American contexts, as evidenced by studies conducted on Chile (Mardones, 2020) and Ecuador (Serrano *et al.*, 2022).

Studies on the media representation of China, especially those focused on gender analysis and the temporal evolution of news coverage of Chinese women, have been notably limited, with particularly scarce research on their representation in humorous content. In this sense, it is imperative to examine the existing literature on comedy sketches in the Chinese context, the exploration of which lays the foundations for understanding the evolution of humorous creations. Likewise, the analysis of comedy productions must be complemented by exhaustive research on the presence of women in the Chinese media. This analytical framework provides the theoretical basis necessary to develop a comprehensive study of media messages from a gender equality perspective.

Objectives and hypotheses

This research examines, from a feminist perspective, the comedy sketches presented at the Spring Festival Galas of China Central Television (CCTV) during the period 2014-2024. This study employs a mixed methodology: on the one hand, it performs a quantitative analysis of female participation in directing and scriptwriting roles; on the other hand, it develops a qualitative analysis of the construction of unequal discourse and images through narrative and film production. The main objective is to examine the representation of women in these sketches, elucidating the mechanisms by which discrimination in terms of gender equality is reproduced and/or perpetuated.

In order to analyze the representation of women in the comedy sketches of CCTV's Spring Festival Galas, this research is based on a methodological framework that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis from a feminist perspective, a paradigm that provides ideal theoretical tools for examining the presence of women in the media. Cuklanz (2016) argues that the interpretation of media content must consider the interrelationship between gender and power, as well as the relevance of other textual elements, such as race, sexuality, and social class. Along the same lines of research, Cuklanz (2019) subsequently develops a preferential framework for media data collection that encompasses diverse contexts, forms, and discourses.

Considering the methodological affinity of the study with previous research, the focus is on identifying and analyzing the modalities of female representation in the conversations and activities presented, with the aim of examining the discursive and cinematographic nuances surrounding the figure of women, an aspect that has been addressed in previous research (Qiu, 2023a, 2023b). Based on these lines of research, the following hypotheses are proposed:

1) Gender differences in creative teams is very noticeable in terms of the number of participants of different genders. Compared to their male counterparts, the number of female directors and screenwriters is significantly lower. Furthermore, these women are often relegated to less important positions, without being given the same degree of voice and participation, despite being collaborators.

2) Women in their various family roles (girlfriends, wives, mothers, daughters, daughters-in-law, and mothers-in-law) are subject to systematic stigmatization. They are attributed with stereotypical and false characteristics, as well as limited economic aspirations. Male roles are characterized by an androcentric perspective or deliberate invisibility, exercising constant supervision over women to maintain a family classification based on sexism.

3) Social pressure related to marriage and motherhood falls disproportionately on the role of young women. Parents, as the main agents of this pressure, maintain the traditional belief that marriage and procreation are the only path to personal fulfillment and happiness for their daughters. andoung women, influenced by these sociocultural expectations, internalize the idea that motherhood and their role in the in-laws' family are an obligation inherent to their status as wives.

4) The role of professional women, including managers and skilled employees, faces systematic questioning of their professional abilities, despite

their academic training. Media coverage and professional discourse tend to divert attention from their work achievements, attributing them to supposed "female advantages" rather than recognizing their professional merits. While professional women face this constant delegitimization, male roles in the workplace perpetuate, often unconsciously, prejudiced narratives about women, contributing to the deterioration of women's working conditions in the professional world.

5) Social interactions between women and men in the sphere of interpersonal relationships (friendships, neighborhood ties, and camaraderie) are often permeated by underlying sexist discourse. Androcentric attitudes and veiled irony are manifested in criticism of aspects such as women's physical appearance, age, and professional skills, which are legitimized under a benevolent paternalism expressed through justifications such as "for your own good."

State-of-the-art

Study on comedy sketches in CCTV's Spring Festival Galas

Since 1983, China Central Television (CCTV) has broadcast the Spring Festival Gala annually on the eve of the Lunar New Year, a television event in which comedy sketches have become a fundamental component. The academic analysis of these sketches is particularly relevant from multiple perspectives. On the one hand, this content highlights the underlying tensions in the intellectual hierarchy that has historically marginalized the rural population, while uniquely addressing significant historical events such as the Great Leap Forward, thus articulating a narrative of apparent social empowerment (Wang, 2023). On the other hand, these audiovisual materials facilitate critical reflection on the evolution of their meanings and interpretations in different temporal contexts (Lam and Leung, 2022).

Comedy sketches, based on the interaction between linguistic and bodily expression, play an essential dual sociocultural role: "the preservation and maintenance of traditional values, as well as the consolidation and clarification of the hegemonic values that bring the community together" (Lu *et al.,* 2024, p. 370). This perspective is empirically supported by research on the psychosocial impact on audiences, which suggests that the international projection of Chinese humor acts as a catalyst for social cohesion and stabili-

ty (Zhang *et al.,* 2022). In this theoretical context, Wang's (2022) discourse analysis of the 1983 inaugural gala reveals the construction of a nationalist narrative that aspired to position China as a world power in a highly modernized global environment, with particular emphasis on the relational dynamics between citizens and the state.

Regarding the linguistic mechanisms that generate comic effect, several studies analyze the discursive strategies and narrative structures employed. Zhou (2024) posits a systematic process in the construction of humor that culminates in audience hilarity: initially, discursive presuppositions are established through the interventions of the actresses and actors, to later subvert them, thus generating a rupture in the psychological expectations of viewers that results in the humorous effect. On the other hand, Huang (2024), through the analysis of dialogic interactions between the protagonists, provides a deeper understanding of humorous production in the Chinese television industry within the framework of entertainment. The research identifies three categories of simulated discourtesy in discourse: self-directed, directed toward the direct interlocutor, and directed toward third parties. These patterns of simulated discourtesy function as particularly effective humorous devices in the representation of interpersonal relationships characterized by intimacy and cordiality.

However, the reception and interpretation of the Gala Show as a media tradition in the Chinese family context has undergone a significant evolution, a phenomenon that Xie (2022) attributes to the sociocultural transformations that have emerged since the advent of the television era. This metamorphosis in social perception has manifested itself in a particularly problematic way in the treatment of gender, where insufficient training in gender perspective has led to a progressive normalization of derogatory expressions toward women, even when these present under the pretext of simulated discourtesy for humorous purposes.

The relationship between stereotypes and media information

The study of female representation in the media has already been addressed by Arfuch (1996), who raises two fundamental questions: "What is meant by the word 'woman'?" and "How are the media defined today in a 'satellite civilization'?" (p. 112). The author argues that media production and reproduction not only reflect social discourse and consumption, but also have the capacity to transform the stereotypes, norms, and models that predominate in society. In this line of research, Ward and Grower (2020) delve deeper

into the analysis of media stereotypes, demonstrating that the consumption of media content significantly influences the perpetuation of prejudices and discrimination related to gender roles. This phenomenon manifests itself in multiple dimensions: physical appearance, sexualization, playful behaviors, courtship behaviors, professional aspirations, and academic performance.

In the context of contemporary digital media studies, various research studies highlight the significant influence of visual platforms on the perception of the female body. Recent studies by Huang *et al.* (2021), Vandenbosch *et al.* (2022), and Engeln *et al*. (2020) examine body representation in the digital environment, highlighting that predominantly visual platforms such as *Instagram* have a more detrimental impact on body self-perception compared to text-based platforms. Their findings reveal a correlation between the use of these platforms and a decline in three fundamental aspects: body satisfaction, positive affect, and constructive social comparison. Overall, they identify that exposure to body positivity-focused content has beneficial effects on self-image. In response to the negative consequences of sexist media bias, Tiggemann *et al.* (2020) propose that representing female body diversity on social media is an effective strategy for promoting body satisfaction and appreciation.

Given China's growing presence in the international community, the situation of Chinese women has reemerged as a topic of significant academic interest. Nie (2020) points out that although Chinese women have achieved unprecedented levels of social and educational participation since the founding of the People's Republic of China, they continue to face manifestations of sexism in both the domestic and public spheres. Cao *et al.* (2023) identify Chinese women as a vulnerable group that is often neglected in the context of intimate partner violence. From a historical-cultural perspective, Tarasco and Gómez (2020) analyze the conceptualization and treatment of women in Confucianism, arguing that kinship relationships are decisive in the construction of the female gender.

In the field of media, Zhang and Zhou (2023) and Chen and Gao (2023) examine the representation of Chinese women in the genre of live comedy. Their research reveals that the female themes presented constitute a negotiated form of feminist expression. Female comedians employ various discursive strategies such as humor, satire, absurd fantasy, subversive affirmation, self-deprecation, and ambiguity to coexist within hegemonic rhetoric. However, these humorous expressions remain conditioned by gender stereotypes and patriarchal perspectives.

Methodology

This research proposes to analyze, from a feminist perspective, the representation of women in comedy sketches broadcast during CCTV's Spring Festival Galas between 2014 and 2024. The methodology is based on the systematic collection and analysis of dialogues and visual elements from 61 short programs available on YouTube, with data collection carried out during 2024. The study adopts a mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods from a gender perspective, to examine the reproduction of stereotypes and their influence on the construction of the female imaginary. Following the theoretical framework proposed by Osorio and Castro (2021), this dual methodology allows identifying population behavior patterns and a deeper understanding of specific social phenomena.

The quantitative analysis focuses on examining gender distribution in management positions during the artistic creation process, meticulously documenting the proportions to highlight the existing disparities in responsibility roles. The investigation of gender roles in the main creative team seeks to establish a solid empirical basis that allows formulating more precise and well-founded research questions. On the other hand, qualitative analysis is based on the reconstruction of social reality (Balcázar *et al.,* 2013) regarding female representation. The study examines the cinematographic level based on "intertextuality and narrativity as useful strategies for producing reflexivity in research processes" (Martínez *et al.,* 2014, p. 11). The research delves into narrative structures, discursive modalities, and compositional elements to elucidate the construction of the female image in the sketches, considering aspects such as sexist language in discourse and the discriminatory representation of female experiences and voices (Erol and Cuklanz, 2020), including their emotional states and traditional behavioral patterns (Delgado, 2020).

Power relations are equally relevant in the analysis of the representation of women in news reports, in addition to investigating oppression based on gender relations (Franco and Tajahuerce, 2022). Power imbalances exist within the family and society, and "the consequences of this assignment of roles throughout the life cycle greatly hinder any proposal for equality" (Lamas, 1996, p. 1). Within this framework, the aim is to study how comedies construct the discourse of women and men based on the family, professional, and interpersonal environment, considering their diverse identities as mothers, daughters, wives, lovers, daughters-in-law, mothers-in-law, bosses,

clients, employees, colleagues, neighbors, friends, etc., in order to enable the detection of unequal power relations.

In the analysis of the generic framework, which covers both executive distribution and narrative production, it is essential to establish specific research parameters. Regarding the directing distribution, the following questions are raised: What is the quantitative and qualitative representation of women in directing and screenwriting roles? What significant disparities exist in the frequency of appearance between male and female directors, as well as between screenwriters of both genders? How has gender distribution in positions of responsibility evolved over time? Regarding narrative production, the following aspects are analyzed: How is the stigmatization of female roles in the domestic sphere manifested? How are female family identities instrumentalized within the patriarchal structural hierarchy? What mechanisms are used to impose traditional conceptions of marriage and motherhood as opposed to female autonomy? Who are the main agents in perpetuating marital pressure? What representations of professional women predominate in media discourse? How are the job skills of female workers valued and recognized? To what extent does the androcentric narrative persist in the representation of female interpersonal relationships?

Results and discussion

Creative teams without women

Table 1
Frequency of appearance of female and male directors (2014-2024)

	Number of appearances	Percentage
Female directors	7 (one repeated)	7.7%
Male directors	84	92.3%
Total	91	

According to Table 1, over a period of ten years, female directors appear seven times, representing 7.7% of the total. In contrast, male directors main-

tain absolute control of the comedy market in CCTV's Spring Festival Gala. Of the 61 sketches studied, men appear 84 times, equivalent to 92.3%. This large disparity in the frequency of appearance between female and male directors lays the foundation for a less feminist approach in the works created. The marginalization and invisibility of female directors results in a scarce presence of female voices in national programs, preventing their artistic innovations, which differ from those of men, from being known. When women are forced to remain silent in the production process, it is inevitable that men in power will begin to portray the world according to their own experience, imbuing the works with their own pride and prejudices.

Table 2
Frequency of appearance of female and male directors each year (2014-2024)

Year	Female directors (times)	Male directors (times)	Percentage of female directors
2014	0	6	0
2015	1	10	9%
2016	0	8	0
2017	0	8	0
2018	2	8	20%
2019	0	10	0
2020	1	8	11%
2021	0	9	0
2022	1	8	11%
2023	0	6	0
2024	2	3	40%
Total	7	84	

According to Table 2, female directors appeared in 2015, 2018, 2020, 2022, and 2024. The years 2024 and 2018 saw the highest female presence, with 40% and 20% respectively. In 2020 and 2022, the participation of female directors was low, not exceeding 11%. In 2015, the female presence fell to

9%, and in the remaining years, it was zero. Analyzing the figures for the ten years, it is clear that female directors have less than half the opportunities to appear before the public compared to their male counterparts. The female directors who appeared seven times deserve to be mentioned by name, as they are the only female representatives on the management team. In total, there are six women: Xv Yi (2015), Fang Fang (2018), Lou Naiming (2018, 2020), Liu Qingling (2022), Jiang Shimeng (2024), and Liu Tianchi (2024). Among them, director Lou is the only one who directed comedy programs twice.

The year 2024 marked a milestone in reducing the gender gap, as two of the four sketches aired were directed by women. Jiang took first place, followed by a male director, while Liu was the only female director on her program. In 2018, for the first time, a woman directed the comedy sketch in the lead position, a role shared by Lou and Fang. In addition, Lou is the only woman to have directed comedies as the lead director on two occasions.

The achievements of women in the management team are insufficient. The five female directors have witnessed repeated discrimination in the history of the Spring Festival Galas. They have fought against sexist prejudices to be recognized in the performing arts. Meanwhile, men are the beneficiaries of existing gender privileges. Two directors, Fang Xiang and Shang Daqing stand out, having directed five times; four other directors have participated four times; six men have directed three times and seven have done so twice.

About the sketches from the period with the highest proportion of female directors, the thematic analysis of 2018 is unique in that it perpetuates the traditional family narrative. This perspective is embodied through two significant ways of thinking: on the one hand, maternal concern about the marital status of the daughter in *Sharing Joy and Pleasure/Tong Xi Tong Le* (Lou and Liu); on the other, feelings of longing, jealousy, and marital submission in *Returning Home/Hui Jia* (Zhao and Fang). Female emotional fragility presents in a paradoxically "privileged" way, as it is the female creators who capture their everyday experiences without giving a voice to the defenders of gender equality. The comedy *Kai Bu Liao Kou/I Can't Say It (*2024), directed by Liu, is another paradigmatic example of the reproduction of androcentric ideas from a female management and administration perspective. The narrative focuses exclusively on the dynamic father-child, completely disregarding the mother figure. It is contradictory that a film directed by a woman preserves and continues the imperceptibility of the female subject.

Table 3
Frequency of appearance of female screenwriters and male screenwriters (2014-2024)

	Number of appearances	Percentage
Female screenwriters	9 (1 repeated)	5.7%
Male screenwriters	148	94.3%
Total	157	

According to Table 3, there is a marked gender disparity among screenwriters: women appear only nine times during the decade analyzed, accounting for 5.7% of the total, while men appear 148 times, equivalent to 94.3%. This pronounced asymmetry in representation substantially determines the narrative orientation of the humorous content, which is predominantly constructed from a male perspective. The employment situation of female screenwriters (5.7%) is even more precarious than that of female directors (7.7%) previously analyzed in terms of professional recognition.

Table 4
Frequency of appearance of female and male screenwriters in each year (2014-2024)

Year	Female screenwriters (times)	Male screenwriters (times)	Percentage of female screenwriters
2014	1	8	11%
2015	2	11	15
2016	1	18	5
2017	0	14	0
2018	1	18	5%
2019	1	15	6.7%
2020	1	15	6.7%
2021	2	14	12.5%
2022	0	14	0
2023	0	14	0
2024	1	7	12.5%

As seen in Table 4, there was a total absence of female screenwriters in comedy productions in 2017, 2022, and 2023. In contrast, 2015 saw the highest percentage of female participation, reaching 15%, although this represented only two women. The years 2021 and 2024 ranked second with 12.5% female participation in script design and writing, significantly surpassing previous years such as 2019 and 2020, when only one female screenwriter was counted in a total team of 16 professionals. The years 2016 and 2018 showed identical rates of female participation, standing at 5%, lower than the figures recorded in 2019 and 2020.

Among the few professionals who have managed to break through in this restrictive environment are Li Yi (2014), Ye Dan and Meng Huan (2015), Liu Lan (2018), Zou Jingjing (2020), Li Yuyue (2021), Liu Jing (2021), and Zhang Nana (2024). It is worth mentioning that Li Yi participated in two productions, occupying a leading position in the 2014 work, as did Zhang Nana in 2024. The other professionals, however, were relegated to secondary positions, generally ranking at the bottom of the creative team. As for the distribution of male directors, there is a significant concentration in the frequency of appearance of certain names. The analysis reveals that two directors individually registered six appearances, six names appeared five times each, three directors appeared four times, another four were mentioned three times, and nine men were registered twice.

In the field of male screenwriters, Wang Hongkun and Wang Zhenhua stand out, having served as directors on six occasions, while their participation as lead screenwriters exceeded four appearances. A similar pattern can be seen in the cases of Su Huan and Su Biao, who contributed five times as members of the screenwriting team and four times in directing roles. The notable density of male decision-makers, characterized by a lack of gender perspective, increases disparities in the comic creation process, perpetuating misperceptions about women's professional abilities. As a direct consequence of this phenomenon, female screenwriters experience systematic marginalization in the field of writing.

Although the representation of female screenwriters exceeded 10% in 2015, 2021, and 2024, this figure remains significantly lower than that of their male counterparts. The limited decision-making power of female screenwriters reinforces the subordinate position of female characters in comedies. In *Yu Sankuai, Community Police Officer/She Qu Min Jing Yu San Kuai (*Shang and Xiao, 2015), the low female participation in the writing team—barely

15%—fails to overcome the stereotypical characterization of the female customers' physical appearance. This situation increases in the 2021-2024 period, in works entitled *The Terrace/Yang Tai (*Peng and Shang, 2021), *Pressured to Marry at Every Holiday/Mei Feng Jia Jie Bei Cui Hun (*Zhang and Zhao, 2021), and *How Can It Be the Same?/Na Neng Yi Yang Ma?* (Jiang and He, 2024), where, despite maintaining 12.51% female representation, the narratives continue to revolve around the fulfillment of domestic roles.

Both the management and screenwriting teams are dominated by men. From 2014 to 2024, women are highly marginalized and invisible in making their artistic innovations known. The absolute control of men in film direction and script production reproduces a system of exclusion that limits narrative diversity and reproduces gender stereotypes in the audiovisual industry. This male hegemony not only restricts women's creative opportunities but also conditions the construction of the social imaginary through cinematic language.

The distortion and stigmatization of women in family structures

The theme of family relationships appears repeatedly in the sketches analyzed. As girlfriends, wives, and mothers, women are presented in a very traditional way: as the main caregivers as those concerned with the poor maintenance of the home. They devote themselves to domestic affairs, while their distortions and objectification continue. The 2019 sketch entitled *Occupy the seat / Zhan Wei Zi* (Shen and Ma, 1m05s) highlights, first, the lack of education of a mother at her daughter's school. For her daughter to have a more appropriate place in the classroom, the mother begins to physically fight with others who also want it, as if she were crazy (Figure 1).

This sketch gives the mother a barbaric image to satisfy the male scriptwriters' and directors' illusion about women in the family, in whose sexist minds wives, mothers, and daughters must do anything for the good of the family. Women's total contribution to the home is what macho men want. If less polite behaviors help solve problems in the private sphere, submissive women are taught to exercise them, to be the bad guys, because their behaviors are judged in the name of "the good of the family." Born and raised under self-sacrificing education, women become puppets in the home. However, total sacrifice reduces them to the role of domestic "housekeepers," deprived of a voice in decisions.

Figure 1
Occupy the Seat

Source: Shen and Ma (2019, 1m05s).

Besides suffering unjustified defamation and harmful images, these women are characterized by stereotypes such as hysteria, jealousy, prodigality, and greed. However, many of the unrealistic female characters are embellished when their domestic roles are highlighted. Under the "protection" of "for the good" of the family, the hatred of macho men towards femininity is hidden. Instead, the level of sacrifice of women to the family becomes the evaluation standard to decide who is good or bad.

The sketch also considers ideas in favor of equality to be "interesting" elements capable of provoking laughter from the audience. It is unfortunate that egalitarian facts are manifested through ironic laughter, which is actually mockery directed at the subordinate status of women in the tradition of Eastern culture. When the audience learns that it is the husband who is in charge of household chores, in addition to the introduction of sarcastic laughter, the camera focuses on the men sitting in the front row, who cannot contain their laughter at the "comic effect" of the situation. Activities such as washing clothes, cooking at home, or helping children with their homework should not be viewed as exotic or unusual tasks for men. These are everyday responsibilities that should not be associated exclusively with a particular gender. In no case are women the only ones who do domestic work. Mocking men who help out in the home reflects a dual contempt, undermining both a more

equitable masculinity and women's intelligence. Rejecting male participation in the family sphere in advance contributes to the deprivation of women.

Regarding masculinity and femininity, a different dialogue can be found in the 2021 sketch entitled *The Train of Happiness Towards Spring/Kai Wang Chun Tian De Xing Fu*. The reversal of traditional roles between wife and husband brings an egalitarian audiovisual fragment, in which the husband is not ashamed to explain why he works as a nanny:

> Jia Bing: Your wife works as a security guard.
> Yang Xiaodi: We went together to an interview to be security guards, but they thought my personality was more suited to being a nanny. I am a very meticulous person in my work. (Lou, 2021)

Comedies broadcast on New Year's Eve in China do not usually include gender-related content. Regarding female roles in the family environment, they impose false identities on women, such as treacherous, unfaithful, and harsh. In the 2019 play directed by Director Shang, when the protagonist explains why she is single, he stigmatizes the girl by accusing her of betrayal. However, she is nothing more than an employee of his company, with whom he has had no private relationship. In this man's imagination, the girl is the villain for not marrying him in the end because "she ran off with someone else."

> Shao Feng: That's enough, let it go. Call your pretty Star to come pick you up.
> Guo Donglin: Star has run off with someone else.
> Shao Feng: Wow! The CFO has run off with someone else. (Shang, 2019)

The 2019 case is not the only one that tarnishes women's honor through dialogue. In his two works, released in 2021 and 2022 respectively, the young director Lou repeatedly imposed on the audience the idea that women were the ones who abandoned marriage or romantic relationships, that they were the irresponsible ones. Phrases such as "Don't forget that it was you who asked me to separate back then (2021)" and "Wasn't it that girl who left you back then (2022)?" specifically blame women for the breakdown of relationships, leaving men as the supposed victims. In this context, men shirk their responsibilities for problems between two people, turning women into the real victims. Discourses laden with gender segregation are conveyed to the public, leaving misleading images of women. When the idea of women as perpetrators is falsely repeated, gynophobia is encouraged.

Among the relationships investigated, contempt for female talent is evident. The lack of a voice for people educated with gender ideas worsens the images of women in the sketches broadcast. Stereotypical concepts are applied to women's ways of being. In the comedies titled *Going Home/Hui Jia* (Zhao and Fang, 2018) and *Are You Going to Return It or Not?/Hai Bu Huan (*Yan and Peng, 2022), wives are portrayed as submissive and hardworking in accordance with the desires of a sexist world. Meanwhile, to highlight how "outstanding" they are, in comedy scripts, wives become the ones who are not interested in money. The male-dominated family vision imposes multiple restrictions on women: they must excel at housework and family care while remaining excluded from economic control, as any female aspiration to wealth is interpreted as "greed" within the androcentric family system.

In the 2014 comedy directed by Chen and Mu, both men, men's hatred of "greedy women" is easily detected. Although the girlfriend is a virtual character who does not appear on screen, through the conversation between the two brothers, it is understood that she was unhappy because she asked for money, wanted to leave the younger brother, lacked traditional femininity, and was not particularly attractive. The misogynistic sentiment reflected in the dialogue is evident, preventing women from being appreciated impartially and establishing unequal romantic relationships. It is necessary to reflect on the exploitation of women by a sexist society, especially at home. Women's economic vulnerability is their confinement, in which they suffer both contempt and surveillance from men.

> First: Don't worry, we'll find someone else for you.
> Second: Yes, let's find someone who doesn't ask you for money.
> First: She should like doing housework.
> Second: With a good body.
> First: And with lots of hair. (Chen and Mu, 2014)

Although preference is given to women who do not want to earn money, it is noteworthy that they are looking for women who can manage it. The essence of women as "butlers" is what sexist works desire and expect. On the one hand, wives are given a "high" position in the home, where they are allowed to "rule," while on the other hand, husbands continue to be the ones in charge of financial resources. They believe that spending money on their partner and supporting the family is something prestigious and privileged. Conversely, it is an insult to their masculinity because they lose their family

role as protector, which is one of power. To please the expectations of a sexist society, the expression of love between the couple is evidenced by the husband giving money to his wife so that she can thank him, instead of supporting each other in their work outside the home. It is important to remember at this point that women are treated like machines without personal qualities. They are seen as objects with which it is permissible to have sexual relations. Their intelligence, emotions, and values as human beings are ignored.

Women's economic independence is a threat to men because they will lose their power of control when women achieve financial autonomy. The sketches studied never ask wives what they really want, to be "housekeepers" or to be the source of family finances. They give women the emotions about money that men imagine, without forgetting to ask for their gratitude. When women are educated in this way and become accustomed to the "protection" of men, even in the economy, money becomes a measure of love for both people. In the 2023 sketch, we see a husband's explanation of the intimacy of his marital relationship, in which he highlights the power of money and denies the woman's efforts to preserve the family union:

> Why do you think she is so committed to me? Because I have given myself completely, right? I have given myself completely. I tell you, I not only provide her with material things, but I also give her emotional value, brother. (Fang, 2023)

Living under the "happiness" constructed by men, women are entering into a vulnerable life. What husbands offer are temporary benefits that confine wives to the home. Every time the media mentions the importance of men in maintaining the family, female talent is dismissed. The worst thing is that public women are unaware of their submissiveness thanks to the transmission of content that defends the sexist social structure and segregated gender ideas.

In the sketches entitled *It became a trend on social media! / Shang Re Sou Le* (Fang, 2023) and *How can it be the same? / Na Neng Yi Yang Ma?* (Jiang and He, 2024), there are mothers and wives who have a strong need for control, while retaining the "right" to "manage" the family. Women may be "placed" in "decisive positions" in the to manage the daily tasks, but in reality they are economically dependent. According to the studies, they are aggressive because they easily get angry with others who oppose them. In addition, they argue with others at any moment. The suffocating images of women created by those responsible for the works are filled with stereotypes

and distortions. Because directors and screenwriters do not wear purple glasses during the work process, women in real life have to endure once again the infamies invented by the audiovisual industry.

The conflictual relationships between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law also reveal the limited and discriminatory vision of the sketches when they address issues of women in the family. The 2020 comedy titled *Guisquillosas /Po Po Ma Ma* establishes the starting point of the narrative from the outset: the little things in everyday life. Directed by two men, Sun and Liu, the plot focuses on the imaginary conflicts that unfold between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law of the household, for example: the silent competition for more attention from the young husband, or their long disputes to gain control of the situation. The invisible father-in-law and the hidden husband make up the classic figures of men in the home.

The design of the incessant conflicts between the women at home reflects the macho ambition for the female sex: that she be self-sacrificing and submissive. The male directors, without a gender perspective, even place the young husband in an unattainable position within the family, where the others are required to compete if they want to get his attention. This discriminatory idea highlights the supposed importance of male biological inheritance, which is in fact a complete lie. The struggle between the two women is futile, as it is nothing more than a tool to reinforce paternalism in the family. If women focus on who wins the man's favor, they give up opportunities to regain their autonomy. Similarly, the entire sketch conveys a negative image of the mother-in-law. The mother-in-law's complaints and criticisms of her daughter-in-law's lack of care for the family expose men's views on a "perfect" family, which encompasses a vertical hierarchy among women, but one that is subservient to the male sex. It is noteworthy that the dissatisfaction shown by the mother-in-law is complicit in the paternalistic hierarchy, because she is angry about the absence of women in the tasks, completely excluding men from domestic chores.

Mockery of female appearance constitutes another "funny scene" that perpetuates sexist ideas in the comedy sketches studied. In the 2021 sketch, the husband compares the face of his wife, a flight attendant by profession, to that of *Voldemort*, the character in the *Harry Potter* films. In addition to the verbal insults uttered behind her back, under Lou's direction, the husband uses body language to show his disgust at the girl's appearance. The director tries to generate comic moments by contrasting the man's descrip-

tion with the woman's actual appearance. The audience's mood was heated by this unfunny "humor," as evidenced by the canned applause and laughter heard in the background. This is a vulgar audiovisual fragment that bases its "funny situations" on the offense of women. It is possible that the controversial points help to attract the audience's attention, but it is sexist attitudes that allow the female sex to be dishonored based on their physical appearance.

The interest in the comedies analyzed from a female perspective is no less significant. In terms of dialogue between couples, men are more sensitive when talking about the beauty or ugliness of their wives. These male characters live in a psychological contradiction: on the one hand, they seek beautiful women who belong exclusively to them; on the other, they believe that "an ugly wife is the treasure of the home" (Zhang, 2017), arguing that less attractive women offer greater security in marriage. The male roles portrayed in these comedies are selfish, wanting to enjoy all the benefits that traditional femininity offers, while at the same time appreciating the beautiful appearance of women.

The ideas conveyed in Li's sketch (2015) are absurd in their treatment of the dangers the couple faces. When the husband offers to protect his wife, his excuse is that he is concerned about the beauty of his wife being seen by the thief. It is absurd to hear the man's explanations when he says, "Precisely because you are a woman, and such a beautiful one at that, if he comes in, the consequences could be unimaginable." In this case, pretty faces under stereotypical contemplation are reduced especially to the parameter that decides who he saves and who he does not.

The objectification of women permeates doubly: it emerges in the male characters and is replicated in the women. Among the comedies analyzed, there are women who feel useless when they learn that they cannot give birth. They blame themselves for not being able to "make contributions" to the family, unaware of their work capacity both inside and outside the home. This feeling that they should not have come from their obedient life and work environment. An education full of discrimination shapes women and men with inequality. Thanks to the conservative mindsets portrayed in television shows, women in real life cannot escape the disdain of people with segregated attitudes, who view female self-sacrifice as something natural and logical. Thus, in the 2017 comedy, there are the submissive ideas expressed by the female role:

> You told me that the doctor said I may never be able to have children in my life. In your family, the male line has been one son per generation. If you lose your offspring here, how will you explain that to your parents when you go home? Instead of telling you this and then you would leave me, it's better for me to take the initiative and leave you first. (Li and Zhao, 2017)

Coercion in marriage and motherhood

The assimilation of women in the weaker sex is a weapon of control over women in a male-dominated society. The infantilization of adult women in the family environment continues to satisfy men's imagination of power and privilege. Taking advantage of the benefits of being male, the father's over-protectiveness leads him to complain about his daughter's "young age" for dating when she is 25 years old. The stifling dialogue between father and daughter was accompanied by applause and smiles from the audience, which reinforces the childish image of mature women inside and outside the home, since restricting the freedom of a 25-year-old woman is not funny at all, but rather the beginning of a horror movie:

> Father: What? Do you have a boyfriend?
> Daughter: What's wrong?
> Father: I don't agree.
> Daughter: Why?
> Dad: How old are you? You're only twenty-five and you're already dating someone (Hou, 2015)!

The same sketch uses the title *The Little Padded Jacket /Xiao Mian Ao* to ration patriarchal supervision over women. Applying terms such as "little jacket" to adult daughters in public increases the false impression of women's dependent status in the family, even though the "little jacket" has been considered in that headline as a metaphor to describe the close relationship between daughter and father. Tajahuerce (2021, p. 22) further adds that words written under male authority cause "feelings of guilt and perpetual unease" when decisions are made against the father's ideas.

Being single, postponing marriage, or not wanting to marry is the original sin of women according to the videos investigated. Rage, anxiety, and mistrust are the emotions that follow and lead to them, which come not only from male family members such as fathers, grandfathers, and husbands, but

also from mothers, wives, etc. In this case, women become the protectors of the macho hierarchy because they have been raised in a sexist environment.

In the 2021 sketch entitled *Being pressured to marry at every holiday/ Mei Feng Jia Jie Bei Cui Hun*, the mother blames her daughter for not having a "normal" life like other people, saying that "being single is like being a dog." Furthermore, the dialogues between the mother and daughter/father and 28-year-old daughter highlight the concerns and anxieties of older people, accompanied by ironic metaphors.

> Xixi's mother: What are you laughing at? Look at yourself, so carefree. How can you be happy at your age without being married?
> Xixi: Does getting married make you happy? What's so good about marriage? A classmate of mine is already at her third marriage.
> Xixi's mother: If marriage wasn't good, people wouldn't get married three times.
> (…)
> Xixi's father: Do you know why oranges are so sweet?
> Xixi: Hmm.
> Xixi's father: Because when you cut them open, they're full of segments. If oranges have segments, when will our Xixi find a partner?
> Xixi: Dad, if you keep this up, I'm not going to eat anymore.
> Xixi's mother: You don't want an orange? Here, peel this garlic.
> Xixi's father: Look, daughter, even garlic has teeth. Look at your mother, my partner. And your partner? (Zhang *et al*., 2021)

Although the parents' interpretation is intended to be a comedic punchline, the essence of their words is not funny at all. On the contrary, they show great disrespect for women who are truly single, who live happily and independently from the protection of the men in their family. However, the suffocating conversations between family members, together with the reactions in favor of the audience, build a culture of comedy that delivers the *coup de grâce* by being against gender equality. In this culture, it seems that the value and happiness of female roles are evaluated by whether they are married or have children, but this is not the case. Women today are strong enough to choose the life they want, regardless of whether they have men by their side or not.

The mothers who appear in the sketches studied tend to be given roles of low self-awareness, as they very often place their daughters' happiness in a marriage to a well-educated man with a good job. Meanwhile, they ignore and do not accept their daughters' excellent professional development skills. The submissive desire of mothers is born and grows within a more subordi-

nate educational, work, and family environment, where they spend their lives listening to the illusions invented by men, without having the opportunity to review their value as human beings.

When the story moves to Africa, the African mothers who appear on the Chinese stage have no other ideas than to marry their daughters to "a rich and handsome man" because "now that she is a flight attendant on the Mombasa-Nairobi railway, her status has changed" and she is "more beautiful than ever." According to the mother, marrying such a man is a symbol of "success in life" (Lou and Liu, 2018, 3m16s). The most ironic thing is that the humble mother is played by the director of the comedy herself, who dresses up as a Kenyan woman, representing a stereotype of African women (Figure 2).

Figure 2
The Kenyan mother

Source: Lou and Liu (2018, 3m16s).

Although at the end of the story, the mother supports her daughter's work plan and future studies, sexist ideas about marriage hinder the young woman's personal development. In the traditional mindset of female obedience, a good education and a good job are a young woman's capital when entering the marriage. In this regard, female intelligence and talent are valued in the private sphere rather than the public sphere, which again rejects the professional value of women. As a result, the lack of recognition of women's work capacity and their scarce presence in positions requiring high training lead to greater female economic dependence in everyday life. With the desire for their daughters to maintain a certain standard of living, mothers send them back to school, but with the aim of finding a good match for marriage, thus perpetuating the vicious circle that imprisons young women. Therefore, training mothers in gender-focused education is a viable mechanism for women to escape this harsh, intergenerational cage of oppression. Once mothers have internalized principles of equality, both daughters and sons will be better equipped to break the cycle of female subordination.

Under no circumstances should women be considered mere tools for the perpetuation of the family or blame themselves for not being able to have children. Motherhood is not mandatory for all women because each woman has the capacity to make her own decisions. In the 2017 sketch entitled *True Love Endures/Zhen Qing Yong Zhu,* the wife shows feelings of guilt after suffering a miscarriage, and the solution she comes up with is to ask for a divorce, as she imagines that she is responsible for not being able to bring the family's "successor," obviously "the male successor." Therefore, in her traditional mindset, the separation of the two people is a "reward" for her to recover the loss of her husband's family, especially his parents. The wife's low self-esteem pushes her to be the protector of the male-dominated hierarchy, where men are seen as the rulers of the world. When she loses her ability to be a mother, she believes she is worthless in her marriage, but this should not be the case.

The wife's absurd ideas about motherhood are described in the same sketch as a "commendable sacrifice" and "true love." In reality, they are nothing more than "reproductive exploitation of women" (Nuño, 2020, p. 182). The two male directors, who lack gender education, exercise male power in their work, conveying unequal relationships between couples and family members through the discriminatory script.

Men's expectations of motherhood are not insignificant, especially among older men. The 2022 sketch entitled *The father and son/Fu Yu Zi* discusses the issue between father and son, as the title itself suggests. The entire comedy highlights the older father's stress about not having grandchildren. Although women have the absolute right to decide whether or not to have children, they are excluded from conversations about their bodies. The elderly father of the family gets angry in front of his only son, saying that having a baby is "so simple." The male neighbors, for their part, pass on the reproductive pressure to young people by linking a good quality of life in retirement with caring for grandchildren. Although it is the older men who want to be grandparents, the caregiving tasks always fall to women. When it comes to raising children, the will of older men is assumed to be a reconstruction of family privilege, as they seek once again the obedience of the vulnerable group.

> Neighbor: Hurry them up so they have a baby soon. As soon as you become a grandfather, your emotions will instantly transfer. Let the parents take care of their stuff, we'll focus on raising this little one. I'll show you how: "Granddaughter, who is better, daddy, mommy, or grandpa?"
> Granddaughter: Grandpa is the best.
> Neighbor: Look, when she grows up, who is she going to listen to? Grandpa, of course. andou'll see. (Fang, 2022)

The invisibility and lack of presence of women in motherhood is a clear reflection of discrimination against women. The sketch uncritically reproduces stereotypes "regarding the gender of bodies," as confirmed by Franco and Tajahuerce (2022, p. 85). Due to their lack of a voice and marginalized roles in the domestic sphere, women are forced to live under sexist domination until they lose control of their uterus under family pressure, social persuasion, and guilt-inducing education.

Social imaginaries about personal characteristics and professional skills

The female roles presented at work are diverse, although most carry negative images, especially in the case of women in management positions. The misogyny transferred from television to the public manifests men's antipathy towards female management. Under the discriminatory description of male

screenwriters and directors, the roles of female executives are used to provoke laughter in comedies, through virtues and extravagant activities that do not correspond to their job positions. For example, in the 2015 comedy (Peng and Yan), the head of the logistics department gets her job by flattering her superiors. The title of the play Flattering Someone's Tastes clearly reflects this dynamic. In 2020, the comedy titled *Doing Something by Pure Formula/Zou Guo Chang (*Shen) is another example that seeks to expose the supposed "incompetence" of female directors. The bureaucratic and formalistic attitude portrayed by the actress reinforces the incompetent image of women in management positions. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that the actress who appeared in the 2015 and 2020 versions is the same. The almost identical figures and gestures reinforce the "harmful" impression of women in leadership roles, contributing to the strengthening of the glass ceiling in the real professional sphere.

The "weakness" of women in management positions in the company is constant. The contemptuous looks directed at them were born out of the egalitarian social system, where men are the controlling sex both inside and outside home. In the 2020 sketch entitled *Love for Dumplings in the Snow and Wind/Feng Xue Jiao Zi Qing (*Lou), the character of the captain of the rescue and emergency construction team does not appear on stage, but is only revealed through the words of others. During the 14-and-a-half-minute performance, the fact that the team was led by a woman is revealed in the last four minutes. It is unfortunate that in the first 10 minutes, no viewer would have imagined that the central theme revolved around a woman. The surprise of one of the customers tarnishes the captain's reputation, insinuating that she must be a "close friend" of the male directors. This assumption reflects a sexist mentality, assuming that men are incapable of managing difficult tasks in the middle of a snowstorm, let alone a pregnant woman. The clear portrayal of the supposed supremacy and preeminence of the male sex in positions of power is manifested through the doubts expressed. Fortunately, the captain's husband demonstrates a more egalitarian attitude than the customer, strongly rebuking this unfounded suspicion:

> Sha Yi: Do you understand now? If I'm not mistaken, your wife and the captain are best friends, right?
> Jia Bing: Come on, what are you talking about? I suggest you take out that brain of yours and spray it with some vinegar to disinfect it. I thought you

> were complimenting me, don't you get it yet? My wife and the captain are the same person. (Lou, 2020)

In another sketch from the same year entitled *Happiness is Very Simple/ Kuai Le Qi Shi Hen Jian Dan* (Fang), there is a similar situation. The conversations are structured in such a way that the woman's managerial identity is relegated to the background, to the point of confusing her with the male assistant's wife. Even more worrying is that the dialogues between the male employee and the female manager are full of paternalistic advice. It is suggested that having a partner is a form of rest, and that staying single without children means living without worries. The man's recommendations to professional women are ridiculous, as they are based exclusively on a male perspective. If men perceive life in this way, as a form of relaxation, it is because it is women who bear the pressure and fatigue of both work and home life. It is women who take care of seemingly insignificant but complicated situations, freeing men from these responsibilities. This representation reinforces gender stereotypes, while minimizing the achievements and difficulties women face in their leadership roles and personal lives.

In the 2023 sketch titled *The Hole/Keng* (Yan and Peng), and the 2021 sketch *The general cleaning/Da Sao Chu* (Fang), there are two other female directors who are initially not recognized by the male workers. In addition to being belittled, they suffer indignity because of their personal characteristics and physical appearance, from being labeled "rude" to being criticized for not having a perfect body shape. The contempt and hostility of the male employees towards women is conveyed directly from the scene to the audience. The irony is the change in attitude of the detractors when they discover the true identity of the women. The humble reverence they show them is respect for power, not for the female gender. The 2018 film entitled *Making Comments/Ti Yi Jian* differs from the ones mentioned above, as the director's identity is revealed from the outset. The employee's reaction is therefore different. He compliments the director's makeup to make a good impression on her, even though she is not wearing any. He also compares the director to the other employees, emphasizing her beauty.

The working conditions for women are not easy. Based on what the men say and do in the comedies studied, it is clear that men are selfish when it comes to their interests. In no case are they willing to give up their benefits and rights. They become flatterers and less aggressive towards female directors

due to their fear of the administrative authority they possess, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Without managerial identity, professional women are seen as the most subordinate in the workplace. Inequality in television programs that is neglected and omitted diminishes opportunities to achieve gender equality in real life, as the population without a gender perspective occasionally imitates the stereotypical words and expressions presented as models. The lack of anti-macho debates in comedy sketches further deteriorates the gender order, which already lacks balance.

The construction of disdain among professional women is another phenomenon in the sketches analyzed. *The stories in* Director Zhang's *Ban Gong Shi De Gu Shi* (2015) show the insults of a young employee towards the manager: "Why are you so aggressive? At your age, you could already be president, but you are only a director." The young woman's audacity does not imply that she is competent in her job; on the contrary, she is the daughter of the company's president and is also the only woman employed in an office of five people. She is not afraid of disrespect because she knows that no one will fire her for speaking like that. The role of the proud "connected" girl reflects a social fantasy laden with prejudices towards women, where those from wealthy families are always portrayed as stupid. One wonders: why is there not a single man playing these capricious roles in comedies of the last 20 years?

The role of the manager in the same sketch presents without privileges. The jokes about her single status are the supposed "comic effect" that the play aims to achieve. The laughter spread across the screen is, in reality, an outrage to brave professional women who choose to live independently. Likewise, there are misleading concepts about women's happiness, reducing them to giving birth and caring for the family without their own economic aspirations. At the manager's birthday party, due to a misunderstanding, she happily accepts the message on the cake prepared by her subordinates: "may you soon have a son." Surprisingly, she endorses this retrograde idea, stating that "it is my mother's greatest wish for me." It is regrettable that notions that "belittle women and exalt men" reappear in national television productions, which undoubtedly encourages self-contempt among women in the real professional sphere.

Verbal abuse against the female director also appeared in 2017. In the comedy titled *El tal A Feng/A Feng Qi Ren* (Zhao), the company's driver A Feng denigrates his boss, considering that her "train has passed" because

she is 38 years old and single. Instead of appreciating his boss's excellence at work, he constantly gossips with his neighbors, belittling her: "She's been on eighty-one blind dates, all of which have failed, which is why we call her the 'golden single,' the 'big leftover.'" In this case, men's aversion to women is evident, especially towards those who are outstanding and single. It seems that they are the ones most to blame for everything. In reality, it is professionally successful women who do not follow the path laid out for them by paternalism. Stereotypical comments that invade the privacy of professionally successful women are a clear example of workplace harassment, as they denigrate them and prevent them from being socially accepted.

As lower-level employees, they are the most discriminated against compared to their superiors. They are marginalized and described as "mentally weak" at work, with the purpose of provoking laughter from the audience. The 2020 sketch titled *The Airport Sisters/Ji Chang Jie Mei Hua (*Lou) is about two young women who work as ground staff at an airport. They are serious workers who prefer to be alone and devote themselves fully to their work rather than give themselves over to family life. However, the conversations that take place between them and their supervisor are extravagant and irrational. Taking advantage of the innocent image of young women, the "funny" dialogues based on the confusion of customers' first and last names once again degrade women's abilities in the workplace. The worst part of the comedy is the insults that the young women tell at each other regarding their intelligence, reinforcing the stereotype ingrained in the educated population without a gender perspective:

> Song Zuer: But sister, what if I'm not very smart?
> Jin Jing: What are you talking about? To not be smart, you'd have to have a brain in the first place. (Lou, 2020)

Director Zhao's comedy, released that same year, presents similar ideas that underestimate the female image through two female characters. To escape a blind date, the young woman who works in the tea shop asks her colleague for help, inventing flaws that her colleague does not have, in order to get rid of her admirers. Although the terms used to humiliate her are presented with a supposed humorous intent, it is very likely that the audience will perceive the falseness of these expressions about women, since one learns from what one hears:

> Xie Na: Why should I go on your blind date?
> Ju Jingyi: But you're different!
> Xie Na: How am I different?
> Ju Jingyi: You have an intimidating appearance, a direct personality, an explosive character, and you're also quick-witted. I'm sure you can do it. (Zhao, 2020)

The marked "difference" in the above conversation presents as the comic point of the sketch, although it fails to convey a true sense of humor to the audience. A woman's shortcomings are constructed under male gaze, but are expressed by another woman. This reveals the intrigue of the sexist world: envy struggles between women favor the strengthening of the male hierarchy, since the enemies are female, not male. When women become obsessed with doing what men say, without having the strength to question the hidden meaning behind their words, they lose their right to express themselves. In the macho conception, a less traditional physical appearance and personality are excuses to drive men away. In this context, it is not difficult to imagine what the male world really wants from women: beauty and an obedient idiosyncrasy.

"Protecting the beauty" of women from challenging and dangerous jobs is another phallocentric excuse, as this conservative thinking prevents well-educated women from achieving new professional advances, under the pretext of "for your safety." The 2022 sketch titled *Rest Area Stories/Xiu Xi Qu De Gu Shi (*Li *et al.),* directed by two male directors and one female director, once again it reaffirms male prejudice against women. Although Guo's husband tries to create a humorous atmosphere by praising his partner's beauty, linking a woman's physical appearance to her ability to work is totally unfair, as it reinforces the public perception that female success is linked to beauty. The directing team's lack of egalitarian awareness exacerbates the discriminatory tone of the comedy through the conversations between the couple of doctors, when they both have to decide who will go to the first aid area at the border.

> Guo Zi: Why do you think you should go?
> Yun Yun: I'm a woman, I'm more sensitive than you. When I get there, I'll be able to do the job better.
> Guo Zi: Precisely because you are a woman, you will not be able to do the job when you get there.
> Yun Yun: Why?
> Guo Zi: Because you're pretty. Everyone will be looking at you, who's going to pay attention to the sick person (Li *et al*., 2022)?

The doctor tries to persuade her husband, believing that sensitivity is an inherent characteristic of the female sex that favors rescue tasks. However, she underestimates herself by not basing her arguments on her outstanding professional achievements, which should be the main reasons for convincing her partner. Considering sensitivity as a natural female attribute is a male construct to maintain their authority. The term "sensitive" has been engraved in the minds of subjugated women like Dr. andun Yun, undermining women's pride and confidence in the workplace.

The representation of people engaged in cleaning is evident. In the 2018 (Sun) and 2019 (Sun and Liu) sketches, the same actress plays the role of a cleaner. She is a young, short, and sturdy woman who is portrayed as honest and loyal. The character appears to have little education and is shown to be clumsy when offering home services. The knowledge of the main television creators about cleaning work is limited. The stereotype of female cleaners excludes educated, tall, and thin women who cannot find work commensurate with their education due to social preference for men. Poor, quiet, older, or weak-willed women are also not represented. The sad reality of cleaners is hidden in these comedies, ignoring the low wages that barely cover food and housing. The issue of basic tasks in society is embellished. Comic sketches that induce the audience to admire the cleaner's optimism overlook the difficulties faced by working women from the lowest social strata.

The stereotypical construction of interpersonal relationships

The relationships of friendship, neighborliness, between the delivery man and the customer, and between former schoolmates shown in the sketches represent the many sexist facets of this Eastern society. The persistent inequality between men and women remains linked to gender distinctions, perpetuating established social roles. The delivery man's rejection of the customer's single life (Zhou, 2016) exerts sexist pressure on female public figures, as do the porters' sexual fantasies about the nanny in the neighboring building (Feng, 2014) and a man's sarcastic and mocking comments to his neighbor during a discussion about the loss of a dog (You and Hou, 2016). Elderly female artists who fake accidents (Yan and Peng, 2014) contribute to a less trustworthy image of women outside home. The oppressive atmosphere conveyed by these "comic segments," in describing the socio-ecological environment, once again reaffirms male authority over women.

The 2015 sketch (Pan *et al.,* 5m29s) is a typical example that highlights the "unfriendly" friendship between young people. Although the protagonist is a cheerful and self-confident girl, her supposed friends humiliate her in various ways. The criticism ranges from her imperfect body shape, her inability to sing or dance, her bad personality traits, to her unemployment and single status, covering almost all the prejudices that can be directed at a woman. The misogyny that creeps into the conversations is evident. In order to increase the body anxiety of the girl, named Jia, a comparison is made between her and a fashion model (Figure 3).

Figure 3
Comparison of body shape between the model and Jia

Source: Pan *et al*. (2015, 5m29s)

The dialogue accompanying the comparison image is even more offensive. Jia is described as a "car airbag" because her body type is not as slim or tall as the model's. She is also given a nickname: tomboy (Nv Han Zi), while the model is called "Goddess." The insulting terms and offensive attitudes went unnoticed by both the performance's management team and the actors and actresses. These "comical" representations hurt the feelings of ordinary girls, once again trampling on respect for women who do not fit traditional standards of beauty. Like the unequal terms and attitudes, the applause and laughter that accompany the show, both on stage and among the audience, cause further harm to people who have a body similar to Jia's, as these reactions reflect public attitudes that favor discriminatory ideas.

Due to the indignity of her friends, Jia sometimes doubts herself, thinking: "I'm turning thirty this year, I don't have a job or a partner, and just thinking about it makes me feel very discouraged." Jia's insecurity stems entirely from the inculcation of a hierarchical and paternalistic society, in which women who live according to the male paradigm are valued positively. The friendship surrounding Jia, which constantly reminds her of her imperfection, is a toxic relationship. The time limit of the sketch and the script with fixed concepts hide the true nature of such a company, which is to protect male dominance.

In order to fulfill the male directors' fantasy about women's physical appearance, female roles are created that mock their own bodies in social activities. In the 2015 sketch (Shang and Xiao) titled *Yu Sankuai, Community Police Officer/ She Qv Min Jing Yu San Kuai,* a female figure appears who laughs at her body weight to accentuate the comical atmosphere, visiting her police chief husband who is still working on New Year's Eve.

> Officer Shao: Sister-in-law, how come you came?
> Yu Sankuai's wife: Can't I come? I knew that even on New Year's Eve, our old Yu couldn't stop worrying about the community and his work. If he's not going home, what can I do? So I brought my 200+ jin (100 kg) here. (Shang and Xiao, 2015)

Judging a weight of over 100 kilograms in front of everyone at the police station is a forced "laugh" in the dialogue that does not contribute any real humor. The camera crew also collaborated with the directors by moving the shot towards the audience after the woman tried to entertain the show by revealing her weight. Images of men who cannot contain their laughter fill the screen again. Degrading women to introduce supposedly funny fragments into this sketch represents a type of low-quality entertainment, which is based on disrespect for the female sex, pushing the population without education in equality to repeat and accept the dominance of men over women.

In the sketch entitled *Joy upon Joy! /Xi Shang Jia Xi* from 2022 (Sun and Guo), there are other dialogues that represent the "horror" women feel towards their bodies. In fact, it is an imaginary fear imposed by men on women, where a "pumpkin" silhouette is supposedly what can attract the attention of the male. However, the docile opinions that have been internalized by women are, in essence, exhortations from a patriarchal society. When they engage in activities outside home, they act according to the rules established by sexist education, forgetting what they really want. Therefore, the protago-

nist appears submissive when she wants to start a romantic relationship with her dance partner. She presumes the importance of a "perfect" body shape to achieve love, complaining that eating little to maintain her figure is difficult, without taking health into account:

> I'm flirting with your Uncle Zhang, you know? Do you have any idea how I eat when I'm with your Uncle Zhang? I eat rice grain by grain, eh! Your Uncle Zhang compliments me by saying I look like a little bird. (Sun and Guo, 2022)

Conclusion

Following previous research on the representation of women in the media, this study analyzes the media representation of Chinese women in comedy sketches broadcast during CCTV's Spring Festival Galas between 2014 and 2024. The research aims to provide an analysis of female participation, both in creative roles (directors and screenwriters) and in acting roles, with the aim of examining the mechanisms that perpetuate stereotypes and discrimination in these short comedy pieces. Through discourse analysis and cinematic representations, a significant marginalization of women in the creative process is evident. Although there is an apparent diversity of female roles in both the domestic and public spheres, the construction of these characters continues to be subordinate to an androcentric perspective.

Regarding the participation of female directors and screenwriters, the results of the research show their marginalization and virtual invisibility in the creative process. Under male dominance in artistic direction, the contribution of most female collaborators is in the traditional domestic sphere, which, far from promoting gender equality, hinders it. The hierarchical structure of the educational and creative environment limits the access of the few participants with their own voice to egalitarian content, inadvertently transforming them into perpetrators of androcentrism. This dynamic positions them as unwitting agents of a structural hierarchy that reinforces sexist patterns based on gender segregation.

Regarding the representation of women in the family, there has been a systematic distortion and stigmatization of their personal qualities. The discursive framework is constructed on androcentric bases that not only ignore but deliberately render invisible the outstanding capacities of women, promoting an image of self-sacrifice that reinforces the order established by

the system of gender segregation. The construction of female archetypes is developed in accordance with the interests of the patriarchal system, which seeks to maximize the exploitation of women. On the one hand, their unpaid domestic work is exploited while they are paradoxically accused of coveting male wealth; on the other hand, their entry into the labor market is promoted under the pretext of family welfare, masking this demand with a discourse of apparent material detachment. These contradictory ideological conceptions of women are persistently evident throughout the period analyzed.

As for marital and reproductive pressure, the persistence of these issues has been evident over the last decade, a phenomenon that coincides with the steady decline in China's fertility rate (Yang *et al.,* 2022), considering the role of CCTV's Festival Galas as a vehicle for transmitting national policies. Social anxiety about this issue is mainly channeled through older characters, particularly maternal figures. The marriage-motherhood equation is presented as a *sine qua* non condition for female personal fulfillment, thus perpetuating the imperatives of an androcentric society and reinforcing discriminatory stereotypes towards women. Social scrutiny of the private lives of professional women who aspire to personal autonomy is configured as a control mechanism that intensifies female anxiety in relation to their independent life decisions, resulting in a systematic devaluation of their professional aspirations.

About female professional identity, mistrust of women's abilities persists until 2024, as evidenced by the fact that female screenwriters represent only 12.5% and have not achieved a predominant position during the ten-year study period. Professional women and female executives are characterized by stereotypical attributes such as naivety, servility, aggressiveness, or supposedly exceptional interpersonal skills, thus underestimating their objective competencies and intelligence. This representation derives from male hegemony in creative processes, which simultaneously constructs conventional professional representations for male characters. In terms of the female relational dimension, media narratives and constructions perpetuate harmful stereotypes and prejudices, reinforcing patriarchal social structures. Humor is instrumentalized as a mechanism for normalizing discrimination, where interpersonal relationships and social bonds operate as devices of control and oppression that reproduce androcentric values.

The research highlights that female media representations, transcending their apparent playful function, operate as active instruments in the perpetuation of social hierarchies where women persist as objects of ridicule and

social coercion, particularly when they transgress traditional aesthetic canons and gender roles prescribed by the prevailing androcentric system. From an analytical perspective, it is imperative to restructure the film industry based on gender equality. The strategic integration of professionals trained under non-androcentric paradigms is the fundamental pillar for achieving a truly egalitarian media ecosystem. Similarly, the systematic incorporation of equitable principles in higher education in communication sciences emerges as a cardinal element in this structural transformation.

It should be noted that this research has certain methodological limitations that suggest new lines of investigation. First, the analysis has focused exclusively on comedy sketches broadcast by CCTV, without establishing a comparative study with similar productions from other television networks or countries that also address the representation of Chinese women, which could provide significant findings on the media construction of female identity. Second, this work has not considered the educational and professional background of the creative and artistic teams, including both the management team and the cast of performers. The inclusion of these elements would allow expanding the corpus of analysis in future research. Third, a comprehensive analysis of the narrative structures and cinematic composition of these comedy sketches would contribute substantially to the field of feminist studies in the Chinese context.

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Women and garments in conflict: Exclusivity and exclusion in fashion design in Ecuador

Mujeres y prendas en conflicto: exclusividad y exclusión del diseño de modas en Ecuador

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Abstract
This research analyzes the strategies employed by fashion designers in Ecuador to position themselves in the national market, despite the arrival of large fast fashion chains in the country over the past few decades. It also examines the forms of "feminine duty" promoted through their proposals. A qualitative methodology was used, based on semi-structured interviews that gathered testimonies from fashion designers and workers creating garments for their own brands, as well as from women experts in the garment industry. Participant observation was also conducted in design workshops, photographic productions, and catwalks where national clothing collections were showcased. The findings are expressed in two dimensions. On one hand, the Ecuadorian fashion industry employs the following positioning strategies: (i) constant professionalization, attention to quality, and customization of the garments produced; (ii) collaboration through design societies; and (iii) the exhibition and promotion of their creations. On the other hand, the designs aim to define the lifestyle and image that fashion consumers should conform to establishing an imaginary shaped by gender and class stereotypes that often fail to reflect the bodily diversity of most Ecuadorian women.

Keywords
Fashion, production, stereotypes, gender, social class, Ecuador.

Resumen
Esta investigación analiza las estrategias que emplean diseñadores y diseñadoras de moda en el Ecuador para posicionarse en el mercado nacional, pese a la llegada de grandes cadenas de moda rápida que han ingresado al país en las últimas décadas, indagando además sobre las formas de "deber ser femenino" que promueven a través de sus propuestas. Para ello se utilizó una metodología cualitativa basada en entrevistas semiestructuradas en las cuales se recabaron los testimonios de diseñadoras de moda y obreras que laboran para sus propias marcas, así como de mujeres expertas en la comercialización de prendas que se dedican a esta industria. De igual forma, se realizó observación participante en talleres de diseño, así como en producciones fotográficas y pasarelas en las cuales se presentaron colecciones nacionales. Los resultados obtenidos se expresan en dos dimensiones: por un lado, se evidencia que la industria de la moda ecuatoriana utiliza como estrategias de posicionamiento (i) la constante profesionalización, calidad y personalización de las prendas que produce; (ii) la participación en sociedades de diseño; (iii) así como la exhibición y difusión de sus creaciones. Por otro lado, se constata que los diseños creados apuntan a definir el estilo de vida y el tipo de imagen al que deberían ajustarse las consumidoras de moda, mediante el establecimiento de un imaginario basado en estereotipos de género y clase, los cuales no siempre corresponden a la diversidad corporal de la mayoría de las mujeres ecuatorianas.

Palabras clave
Moda, producción, estereotipos, género, clase social, Ecuador.

Introduction

Fashion is a constantly changing social phenomenon that consists of establishing social relationships based on cohesion and distinction through social

style (Entwistle, 2002). In other words, people use certain types of clothing as a way of positioning themselves in the world, showing their identity and a type of discourse through the signs they wear. For this reason, an ideal of "how one should be" has also been imposed on men and women when it comes to these purchases.

The history of fashion dates back to the mid-19th century, when the concept of the "couturier" originated with its pioneer Fredrick Worth, known as the father of "haute couture" (Viste la calle, 2011). Worth marked a turning point in the history of fashion, since in the past the French aristocracy went to a seamstress or tailor to have their clothes made. However, with the arrival of the English couturier, the "designer label" was introduced in clothing, which added value to a product by transforming it into something exclusively made by an artist. As the English designer's work was known among the upper classes, he began to produce collections that were shown once a year in his office, also known as *Maison.*

Frederick Worth's work was followed by Paul Poiret, known as the creator of the pencil skirt, as well as Gabrielle Chanel, the pioneer of the three-quarter-length black dress and tailored suits for women (Erner, 2004). Fashion has a long history of renowned figures who have introduced new ways of dressing through their designs, including Christian Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Franco Moschino, and Vivienne Westwood, who are representatives of *haute couture,* understood as the creation of exclusive garments that are never repeated (Vaca Eguez, 2019a, p. 27).

With globalization, the names of many of these designers have become the most luxurious fashion brands circulating worldwide, turning into an important industry by promoting the consumption of certain material goods as a way to satisfy people's needs. In addition to the aforementioned luxury brands that cater to a very specific market with high purchasing power, there are also business groups dedicated to ready-to-wear fashion or *Prêt-à-porter*, "an expression of French origin that translates as 'ready to wear' and refers to mass-produced fashion garments with patterns that are repeated depending on the demand" (Vidal Miranda, 2018, p. 5), which have more affordable prices due to cheap labor based on subcontracting and a decrease in the quality of raw materials. Among these are companies such as Inditex, Mango, Hennes & Mauritz, also known as H&M, among others.

However, the level of consumption and circulation of symbols through fashion in recent years has grown so rapidly that the world is now in a mo-

ment of real-time fast fashion production, as is the case with SHEIN: "a Chinese cross-border company that is a pioneer in reducing the total clothing production time to three weeks" (Bunster *et al. and* 2021, p. 84). This phenomenon means that by 2023, the industry will be valued at $1.74 trillion, making it one of the fastest-growing business models globally (Statista, 2024).

The growth of fashion trends has spread throughout the world, and Latin America is no exception. Faced with such a globalized landscape, each country has tried to come up with its own design proposals as a way of generating identity. In the case of Ecuador, fashion has been a constant form of distinction between social classes. According to Cifuentes (cited in Pontón, 2019), this has been the case since the late 19th century, when elite women were influenced by Parisian fashion and completely changed the way they dressed. Thus, "fashion in Ecuador took on the face of modern expression and became a force that destroyed traditional codes of life and behavior" (Pontón, 2019, p. 67).

However, as such, the fashion industry with its own Ecuadorian stamp began to emerge in the 1980s in the city of Guayaquil with the appearance of designers who were responsible for making dresses tailored to their clients, although they did not have a business with expansion prospects as such. It was not until the mid-1990s that fashion design began to emerge through new designers who started to showcase their creations. However, to date, this activity faces several obstacles that have prevented it from projecting itself and competing as an industry with large transnational business conglomerates. In this regard, it is necessary to understand what strategies are used by fashion designers in Ecuador to position in the market despite the large fast fashion chains that exist in the country, and what forms of "feminine ideals" do these designers promote through their creations?

Theoretical framework

For Entwistle (2002), people are clothed bodies willing to coexist in society and, therefore, their consumption and aesthetics respond to a social function. Thus, fashion deserves to be critically reflected upon, not as a frivolous industry, but as a complex network that responds to mandates governed by social class and gender. Seid (2018) understands social classes as multidimensional spaces in which social powers converge, such as: economic po-

sition, acquired knowledge, and group membership ties. In Bourdieu's terms (2000), distinction coexists in these three dimensions, defined as:

> Determining how cultivated disposition and cultural competence, learned through the nature of the goods consumed and the way of consuming them, vary according to the categories of the agents and according to the fields to which they apply, from the most legitimate fields, such as painting or music, to the freest, such as clothing, furniture, or cooking (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 11).

As for Simmel *et al*. (1988), these powers, according to their accumulation, place human beings on social stratification, where body image represents the visible symbol of the place to which one belongs, and fashion is a crucial tool that serves to distinguish, but at the same time to generate social cohesion.

In the world of fashion, there are two forms of consumption. Günter Wiswede (cited in Martínez Barreiro, 2006) points out that one of them is the *trickle-down effect,* a mechanism that spreads fashion and lifestyles drop by drop according to social status, with the upper classes being the first to consume what is considered exclusive. For Gilles Lipovetsky (2002), this vertical way of generating trends is no longer as enduring, and he mentions a second form of consumption based on globalization and the constant circulation of information, where fashion trends do not take as long to reach all sectors of society, which he calls the "democratization of fashion," in which consumerism is even greater because both women and men are constantly confronted with novelty and the ephemeral nature of fast fashion.

According to Laura Zambrini (2024): "clothing and textile trades carry symbolic gender burdens to the detriment of women, which have had (and continue to have) a strong impact in Latin America since the importation of dominant aesthetic models" (Zambrini, 2024 p. 107). It is because the world is conceived and organized in a binary fashion through sex-gender divisions, in which gender operates as an inescapable condition that provides certain qualities to men and women, which in the case of women are referred to as femininity (De Beauvoir, 1999). This is also affirmed by Judith Butler when she points out that gender "is conditioned by mandatory norms that define it in one sense or another (generally within a binary framework) and therefore the reproduction of gender is always a negotiation of power" (Butler, 2009, p. 322).

In fashion, this gender imposition occurs directly on bodies, which play a fundamental role as active agents that make certain decisions and choose

to mold and project themselves in a certain way, with the aim of fitting into the norm (Csordas, 1995). This process occurs in the pre-production, production, distribution, and consumption phases, where women are agents who must fulfill a certain role in the chain, becoming working bodies, bodies for display and consumption, and bodies that consume content.

Studies on fashion

Fashion is a phenomenon that has been studied from various disciplines. On the one hand, history (Gallard, 2021) has described how clothing has been a symbol in each stage of humanity; on the other hand, semiotics has come to understand it as a system of signs and a discourse (Barthes and Roche, 2003). However, it is from sociology that fashion has been thought of as a social phenomenon, i.e. and "a particular system of dressing that is found under certain social circumstances" (Enwistle, 2002, p. 56), in which social class, gender, and age operate, both in their relations of production and consumption, and therefore make it a "hybrid subject" of study (Leopold, 1992).

From feminist theories, authors such as Judy Attfield (1989), Cheryl Buckley (1989), and Pat Kirkham (2000) highlighted the invisible place of women within the design industry, with the male point of view predominating in creations. In this context, studies on sexuality (Foucault, 2002) and gender as a social construct (Stolke, 2004) provided tools for thinking about how women's bodies have been seen as objects of consumption and desire, which must adopt norms such as clothing and beauty products in order to be validated by men.

In Latin America, the relationship between women's bodies and fashion has been studied by authors such as Mariluz Esteban (2013) and Patricia Soley Beltrán (2010), who analyzed the experiences of models within the industry, identifying them as subjects who are aware of the commodification of their bodies in this activity. However, they decide to coexist in these spaces because it is their way of sustaining their material living conditions.

Silvia Ventosa Muñoz (2023) conducts a study on gender inequalities and new identities within the social history of fashion, identifying that, currently, a growing number of designers and companies are raising the issue of gender as the essence of the brand or as a marketing strategy, creating *agender* or unisex collections. This shows that we are facing undefined bodies that

wear equally undefined clothing, and this phenomenon is becoming increasingly prevalent, to the point of becoming a *leitmotif* of contemporary fashion.

Along the same lines, Laura Zambrini (2019) from Latin America has also focused her research on analyzing the history of clothing design from a gender perspective, highlighting the regulation of sexuality that this aesthetic practice of wearing clothes has imposed on the lives of women and men in the region.

For his part, Jorge Jr. Leite (2019) studies the power relationship between gender, body, and clothing and whether there is the possibility of social change within the industry, finding that in the development of trends it is possible to move toward a fluid identity that downplays gender binarism. However, this author also identifies that fashion will always be disciplinary and normative, since its objective is to generate need in consumers.

In Ecuador, María Ángela Cifuentes (1999) is one of the first authors to study this phenomenon, analyzing how Ecuadorian women revealed criteria of modern femininity through fashion in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, showing that it became a force that destroyed the traditional codes of life and behavior of that time, because "in a visual culture, fashion is a direct resource for personal representation; it facilitates the configuration of emblems of beauty, liberality, and modernity" (Cifuentes, 1999, p. 17).

On the other hand, Jenny Pontón (2019), who conducts a critical study on the representation of the female body in the country's advertising industry, reveals that advertising is precisely an essential part of the dissemination and massification of fashion, since advertisements create the need to dress according to the trends imposed by brands, disciplining the physicality of women in particular due to their gender.

Finally, Juan Carlos Guamán (2024) proposes a more current view of the construction of masculinity and femininity from the fashion design carried out by several Ecuadorian brands, concluding that currently the dynamics between clothing and gender disruptions must be addressed from a diverse perspective, including in the management and administration of fashion brands, since it is not possible to homogenize clothing under a rigid identity. To all these debates on fashion and gender, this study will contribute by demonstrating, from a feminist perspective, that gender performativity is embedded in all the production processes of this industry, despite the new proposals that are emerging in clothing. This triggers a total disconnect between what the market offers and what the diversity of women in Ecuador are and require.

Methodology

This theoretical approach to fashion is combined in this article with a qualitative methodology that collects information through two methods: semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The former were conducted with renowned designers in the country, including the figure with the longest career, who contributed her historical perspective on the Ecuadorian context to this research. Members of a fashion company that experienced considerable growth between 2016 and 2019 were also interviewed. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this company had to significantly reduce its production. In addition, testimonies were collected from several women seamstresses who have worked for these brands.

Likewise, with the aim of gathering information from all the agents involved in the issue under study, interviews were also conducted with three professionals in the field: a director of fashion events, a professor of fashion design at a renowned institute in the country, and a businesswoman dedicated to the marketing of imported clothing. Participant observation was also carried out in various fashion spaces and settings, including clothing workshops, fashion shows, sewing courses, and photo shoots for collections.

This research focuses its fieldwork on the period between 2017 and 2018, as during these years a group of fashion designers emerged who generated new proposals, as well as spaces for dissemination and development for the industry in the country. However, in order to contrast the data obtained with the current vision of the sector, the testimony of a businesswoman active in the industry was also incorporated. The study was limited to the city of Quito, as it is the country's capital and a benchmark for cosmopolitan influence in clothing, with the idea that in the future, this research could extend to other cities in the country, incorporating a comparative approach to gender and fashion at the national level.

The selection of informants was carried out using the snowball technique, which, according to Baltar and Gorjup (2012), consists of inserting oneself into a given context and establishing contacts, so that one informant leads to another, thus generating a progressive growth in the collection of data for the research. In order to protect the identity of both the interviewees and the brands that collaborated in this study, their names have been replaced by pseudonyms throughout the article.

Fashion design and exclusivity in Ecuador's proposals

As mentioned, Ecuadorian fashion design emerged in the early 1980s, but it began to take center stage ten years later. Malena, one of the pioneers of the local industry, pointed out that:

> We started out as a group of friends who wanted to show our work. In Quito, people began to talk about designer fashion in the 1990s, and we began our participation by dressing candidates in beauty pageants such as Miss Ecuador. (Interview with Malena, September 5, 2017)

However, fashion design was not part of empirical training or technical trade. As Guillaume Erner (2000) states, being a designer means training as a "creator of differences" (Enner, 2000, p. 34), i.e. and professionals who project a lifestyle through their collections. Therefore, being a designer in the country means having a complete educational background. In the city of Quito, academic offerings began in 1991 at the Fashion Design Institute (DISMOD), the Equinoctial Technological University, later at the La Metro Design Institute, and then at the University of San Francisco de Quito (Vaca Eguez, 2019a). Although the degree program was exclusive in its early days, interest in training in this field grew over the years, as stated by Carmen, director of the fashion design program at La Metro: "Before, very few students chose this program. There were classes of ten people, but then everything changed, and we started offering two classes of 20 people each" (interview with Carmen, November 9, 2017).

However, these programs are offered at private educational institutions and are attended by people who have the purchasing power to acquire the materials and support their professional training for a period of no less than three years. In the case of the participants in this study, some of them have also studied abroad at renowned institutes, especially in New York. This is how professionalization has become one of the strategies that allows designers to create their own collections, which are imbued with their own concept as a form of brand identity.

Another of the market positioning strategies of Ecuadorian fashion is to work with quality materials and practically personalized production, taking care of every detail. According to the information collected for this study, it was evident that having their own workshop and infrastructure is very complex for those engaged in this activity in the country, since it requires capi-

tal to have a physical workspace, purchase machinery, and hire staff. Therefore, of the three designers and the fashion company studied, only two of them have their own workshop for creating and manufacturing. In the case of Sara, for example, she inherited her grandmother's workshop, which is located on the ground floor of a family building. It is an apartment converted into a workshop that is divided into two parts. The front part consists of a display area and offices where the designer meets with her clients, and the back part is where the manufacturing area is located, with cutting tables, sewing machines, and a mannequin on which the fabrics are fitted (field notes, January 22, 2018).

The Mística brand, meanwhile, had a workshop with a large space divided into areas for design, cutting, sublimation, manufacturing, labeling, and packaging of garments. Therefore, around 15 women and two men worked there, one in charge of the company's administration and the other responsible for cutting and sublimating garments (field notes, January 29, 2018). However, with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which triggered a global economic crisis, the brand weakened, reducing its production to a minimum, as well as its distribution.

In the case of designers Mariana and Juliana, setting up their own workshop has been more complicated due to their lack of access to bank credit, which has been denied to them because of their limited experience, their youth, and the fact that their productive activity is not considered profitable. "They consider us young people who do not have the solvency to pay the debt, and they also think that fashion is like a hobby for us" (field notes, Thursday, February 8, 2018).

According to Carmen Diana Deere (2021), this happens because there is still a strong gender bias when it comes to supporting women's financial autonomy through granting loans, as they have historically not been considered economic subjects. Despite the changes that have taken place over time, their professionalization and productive capacity are still in doubt. For this reason, Mariana and Juliana have resorted to subcontracting, which consists of taking their design ideas to artisan workshops located in homes or small sewing shops dedicated to clothing alterations. In this regard, Juliana points out:

> I made things at home and also went to the seamstress. I paid her per piece and told her what I wanted to do, and she helped me because I didn't know much about pattern making. I've known her for about two or three years, and she's excellent. She made me her priority and sometimes worked until late

making my things. Her name is Gladys, and she works on orders for some brands. She also makes formal dresses and alterations, and her workshop is in her home, where she works with her daughter. (Interview with Juliana, February 5, 2018)

Figure 1
Clothing workshops

Photo: María de María Dolores Vaca (2018).

Consequently, in the clothing production stage, as well as in the design professionalization stage, the industry faces a sharp sexual division of labor, which consists of assigning the type of job according to people's gender and operates across all social classes (Narotzky, 2003). In this case, dressmaking has traditionally been conceived as a woman's job because it is associated with self-care, establishing a feminization of this activity, which in many cases has been imposed on women's lives. As several of the interviewees stated, the skill of sewing was a requirement in their homes as a natural characteristic of being a woman:

> I didn't like sewing, but my mom wanted me to be a seamstress and made me learn. I went to the academy, but I didn't finish because I didn't have enough money. (interview with Consuelo, January 22, 2018)

> I'm studying fashion design. Well, now I really like it, because before it wasn't my strength, I didn't like it, and my mom forced me because she had a *Sin-*

> *ger* sewing machine and told me that this profession would give me money. (interview with Luciana, January 23, 2018)

It can be observed the family pressure on young women to learn sewing, an activity that, beyond being considered feminine, can become a source of income for both those who limit themselves to being workers and those who manage to become professionals. In Sara's case, the influence of her grandmother—who founded a dressmaking institute—was essential, as her family had always been in the clothing business; therefore, she was expected to become the next generation to continue the legacy. However, this is not the case for men interested in becoming fashion designers, since, as explained above, this activity has historically been associated with women due to the naturalization of the binary division of labor, according to which men must apparently perform tasks that require physical strength and public visibility in order to achieve status and social recognition (Pateman, 1996). In this regard, Carmen states that:

> men are in the minority in the classrooms, with only five male graduates out of the total number of students in this degree program. And they often have to face stigmatization and prejudice that belittles their masculinity for pursuing a degree program that is pigeonholed as feminine. (interview with Carmen, November 9, 2017)

In this sense, those who dedicate themselves to fashion design face rigid gender stereotypes in their work. In the case of men, as pointed out by Zurián *et al.* (2023), they often face constant questioning about their sexual orientation and masculinity, while in the case of women, there is a double disadvantage: on the one hand, the feminization of the profession as a reproductive issue. On the other hand, there are glass ceilings or invisible barriers (limited access to credit, devaluation of the profession, among others) that prevent them from positioning themselves competitively in the world of work (Galeana de Valadés, 2013). These gender biases reduce the competitiveness of fashion design and, therefore, its ability to establish itself as a fundamental part of the country's productive world.

Proposals for distinction in Ecuadorian fashion design

According to Vigarello (2005), historically, beauty was the first form of recognition and validation for women. In this sense, Pontón (2019) expla-

ins that the beginnings of fashion in Ecuador responded to a modern need for social distinction and to represent what was considered beautiful through clothing. For this reason, *haute couture* prevailed as a form of production in the country, as there was greater demand from women belonging to the upper class in the cities of Quito and Guayaquil. These women attended various social events—including beauty pageants—and did not want to look like everyone else, i.e. and they sought to distinguish themselves from others (Bourdieu, 2000). As Simmel (1999) argues, fashion seeks both integration within the circle of social equals and distancing from those considered inferior, so, according to the author, fashion unites and differentiates at the same time.

Figure 2
Reference to haute couture design in Ecuador in the early 2000s

Photo: El Universo (2024).

According to Burneo (2023), this trend of distinction through fashion constituted a code of civility that was always orchestrated from a male perspective. Historically, women of the Ecuadorian bourgeoisie based their dress

styles on images from Ecuadorian magazines (La Revista Ecuatoriana, Revista de Quito, and El Sastre Quiteño), whose editorial lines were directed by men who established the guidelines and styles that women were expected to follow (Burneo, 2023, p. 21). For this reason, fashion implicitly reflects a male gaze on female physicality (Berger, 2000).

Over the decades and with the advance of globalization, Ecuadorian society has maintained that it needs to comply with standards of beauty and distinction through the adoption of various mechanisms, fashion being one of the main ones. Malena says that:

> (...) for many years, the fashion that arrived in Ecuador corresponded to the importation of international brands, especially from the United States and Europe, and then, starting in the 1980s, fashion from Brazil and Colombia also began to arrive in the country. So, these trends were usually replicated by copying models from foreign magazines or what were known as "figurines" (patterns); there was no national industry. (interview with Malena, September 17, 2017)

Although in the 1990s, with the professionalization of fashion design, there was greater local production, especially in *haute couture*, this trend was affected in the second decade of the 2000s with the arrival of multinational textile manufacturing and distribution companies, including Punto Fa, with its Mango brand, and Industria de Diseño Textil (Inditex), with its Zara, Stradivarius, Bershka, and Pull&Bear brands, among others. This led to a transformation in local design proposals, and the already established *haute couture* was joined by *prêt-à-porter* or "ready-to-wear," a mechanism for the mass production of casual clothing. In this way, Ecuadorian fashion design adapted to the *street style* trend and began to offer more urban collections for women and men, characterized by a mix of formal and informal styles, combining elegant garments with sports shoes. This style became socially accepted in various social interaction spaces (Vaca Eguez, 2019b).

In this context, fashion design proposals in Ecuador attempt to curb the mass and uniform consumption of imported ready-to-wear fashion, in which apparently "everyone is able to consume everything" (Lipovetsky, 2002), in order to return to differentiation based on the quality of garments with aesthetic appeal, capturing a specific audience interested in marking the social stratum to which they belong through their image and way of dressing. For this reason, in the testimonies collected, one of the designers stated:

Figure 3
Street style reference from Ecuadorian fashion design

Photo: Catalog by designer Juliana (2018).

> You have to do something different, something that not everyone will have when you go to a meeting, otherwise customers will go somewhere else to buy. Sometimes this is what being a designer is all about, being so exclusive (...) and it's such meticulous work that's why it's difficult, that's why I think the price of my clothes is fair. (interview with Sara, January 23, 2018)

For its part, the company Mística, whose hallmark is to make fashion a showcase for art, prints the works of renowned Ecuadorian artists on its designs, targeting consumers with high cultural capital, which promotes the idea of wearing clothes with purpose. For Nadia, one of the artists collaborating with the brand:

> Bringing art into clothing means taking it out of museums and making it visible, thus giving fashion more status and meaning, provided, of course, that the customer is knowledgeable and passionate about this world. (interview with Nadia, January 31, 2018)

As Bourdieu (2000) rightly points out, these behaviors, both in the creation and consumption of fashion, respond to the need to demonstrate a cultivated disposition, i.e. and through what one acquires and consumes daily to accessorize oneself, eat, and even read, one shows how much knowledge one has acquired. Therefore, knowing about fashion means being a "cultured body" that knows exactly what it wants to demonstrate when wearing a garment.

Design societies

Although the previous section explained that fashion design in Ecuador is characterized by attempts to organize consumption for a specific sector of the country—since its creators do not want to be seen as stores that produce clothing without a concept behind it—these brands cannot act alone given the wide range of products available on the market. Therefore, it is essential that they operate under a principle of social cohesion (Simmel *et al. and* 1988), understood in the industry as the ability to work in groups through partnerships. Thus, in the early 2000s, the Society of Ecuadorian Fashion Designers and Creators (Sadicme) was founded with the aim of bringing together and promoting national design (El Universo, 2006).

Over the years, these societies have transformed into multi-brand *ateliers*,[1] where the collections of between 15 and 20 national designers are exhibited, with the vision of providing customers with complete consumer experience. In these spaces, not only clothes can be found, but also accessories, skin care products, jewelry, and shoes. Currently, there are several multi-brand fashion societies, including *The Designers Society* Piso Rosá and Vintage, which are located in shopping malls and residential areas in the country's major cities.

However, it is once again clear that not all brands that exist in Ecuadorian society are accepted into these associations, precisely to maintain the criterion of exclusivity. In this regard, Malena comments: "The association remains as a closed circuit in which only those with experience and recognition are accepted" (interview with Malena, September 5, 2017). This shows that unity and collaboration in fashion can only be forged between upper-middle-class and upper-class peers. For this reason, several fashion ventures have had to demonstrate that they have a concept, promote a clear brand image, use durable materials, and have a high production capacity to supply stores. This shows

1 These are studios where artists or painters work and exhibit their work.

that there is still a desire to mark distinction (Bourdieu, 2000) and differentiation in equality (Simmel, 1999) in the world of Ecuadorian fashion design.

The feminine ideal for which designs are created

Ecuador is facing a scenario that promotes novelty and creativity in the way people dress, due to the advance of globalization, which has allowed the entry of large fashion chains that set the standards for what is worn and consumed in clothing. In the case of the designers who participated in this study, their inspiration when creating is based on:

> Thinking about the context in which women are living, how they can look feminine, and how to make them comfortable. Because women are living in a special moment in history, a moment in which they work, are professionals, manage their money, are entrepreneurs, but also mothers. (field notes, Thursday, April 19, 2018)

According to this vision, this special moment that women are experiencing is not only about accessing to rights and the historical achievements they have made, but also about how this should be projected through how they look, or what Iris Marion Young has identified as hiding women's interests behind a "beautiful" body (Young, 2005). Here, the feminine "should be" reappears (Muñiz, 2014), and fashion plays a crucial role because it is responsible for sending a message with subtle but effective indications of how an independent and autonomous woman should be represented according to the market. This is paradoxical because these categories, which originated in gender studies as tools to promote radical change in the structures of subordination with which women live (León, 1997), have now been completely emptied of content by capitalism, transforming them into a new aesthetic standard to follow.

This shows that Ecuadorian fashion, in a sense, is being permeated by the achievements of the feminist struggle. However, this remains a simple market strategy, covering up practices of domination in terms of body, gender, and class. The authors Pineda *et al. (*2024) call this commercial trend of certain brands that take advantage of the feminist cause for corporate gain "*purple washing*," i.e. and the commodification of feminism for the purpose of selling.

Women interested in following fashion trends produced in Ecuador are those who belong to the upper classes and can allocate considerable income specifically to their personal grooming. The designers described their target audience as follows:

> Juliana: When designing, I thought of a woman who is not too dressed up or pompous, a young and casual woman, I would say between 20 and 30 years old. My ideal customer is someone who appreciates slightly more timeless design and quality, and that's why it costs more because it's worth it. (Personal communication, Monday, February 5, 2018).

> Mariana: I have all kinds of customers, for example, the person who buys a $500 dress at a mall and also the college student who is looking for a top from an independent brand at a fair, so I try to make clothes for both types of women. (Personal communication, Monday, January 22, 2018).

> Margarita: Usually, more daring people who dress differently buy our clothes. The woman who wears my brand has a strong personality and is not afraid to try new things. (Personal communication with Mística manager, Monday, January 29, 2018).

The designers' testimonies refer to the fact that this industry is aimed at "productive bodies," i.e. and economically active women who keep up with fashion trends because of their concern for satisfying what Bourdieu (2000) calls luxury tastes. It is interesting to note that this analysis concludes that there is a time limit for women to be interested in designer fashion today, which also reveals a generational bias in the image of the target audience for this industry. Therefore, when addressing the issue of the body in the research, the interviewees seemed somewhat uncomfortable when giving their opinions. Amid laughter and silence, some testimonies said:

> I know it's not right to criticize the body, but if you ask me, I do prefer a skinny girl because everything looks good on them. That's why I make quite a few small sizes for both sale and the fashion show. And if someone larger comes in, we make something custom for them. (personal communication with Sara, Thursday, February 1, 2018)

For their part, the rest of the designers did not make a direct reference to what their client's body should look like, but their comments subtly pointed to the primacy of slimness, which is why in some conversations they stated:

> As a company, we make clothes that fit all body types. We mainly sew for young people, but of course also for older women, who are physically larger. (Personal communication with Soledad, Monday, February 19, 2018).

> I wouldn't define a perfect body for the world, but sometimes there is a perfect body for the design, and there are things that look perfect on women. I've seen it happen in *fittings*.[2]

Naturalized concepts of the "ideal body" in terms of age and slimness continue to be replicated by design professionals to their clients, who, through catalogs, photographs on social media, and the videos they consume, are aware of how they should look if they want to be part of the fashion system and, in this sense, make their own choices to fit into this representation. For this reason, women continue to be pursued by what Pontón (2019) calls aesthetic biocapitalism, as "a commercial biopolitics that manages and disciplines the bodies and lives of women in late modernity" (Pontón, 2019, p. 7), in this case the market internalizing itself in bodies through tastes in clothing.

Figure 4
Mística photographic production

Photo: Mística brand catalog.

2 Tests carried out on a model's body prior to an event or fashion photo shoot.

The photographic productions created by the brands studied constitute a marketing strategy to generate precisely these tastes in clothing, through images of models who set the trends of the moment, not only in terms of fashion but also in terms of the physical appearance of the bodies that wear them, even though these do not reflect the diversity of most women in the country.

Thus, reality is completely different from what is defined as the feminine ideal, since, although the customer base of these local brands is made up of young professional women, they are also diverse in terms of body type and purchasing power; in other words, they are bodies with their own life stories. This limited view of customer diversity has led to a disconnect between what is being sold and who can actually afford the fashion produced in the country. In this regard, Ana, a Colombian fashion entrepreneur, stated that in Ecuadorian design:

> They must segment the market and study the needs of their customers, which are determined by variables such as climate, age, and tastes, among others. Above all, people from the highlands and the coast have different physical characteristics; women from the coast have much wider hips and are larger in size. Therefore, they should have stores where they can offer a product that meets the needs of the market. (personal communication, July 16, 2024)

Although there is still a tendency to label women's bodies according to age and size, it is clearly necessary to break down certain structures and analyze customers' needs according to their body types, contexts, and incomes. This will make Ecuadorian fashion a profitable business and meet the real needs of the population. However, photographs and catalogs are not the only resources used to project the ideal feminine image in the fashion world, as fashion shows are also a means of exhibition and validation in which it is possible to show directly how clothes fit the female body.

Thus, in organizing fashion shows, designers seek to create an image of exclusivity for their designs, which is achieved through two key moments of classification in which gender biases in terms of age and body type are most strongly expressed (Pineda, 2020). On the one hand, in the days leading up to the show, strict logistical preparations are made through the rigorous selection of models, designs, makeup, hairstyles, venue, music, lighting, invitations, among other things. This is followed by continuous rehearsals to ensure that the event matches the experience that the designers want to convey to the public.

On the other hand, at the moment of the catwalk, details are finalized before the staging, which is known as *backstage*. This is the most intense moment of work, where the outfits are prepared according to the order of appearance, the models are prepared and produced, defects in the garments are corrected, and the costume changes for each collection are made. It is at these moments that gender performativity (Butler, 2009) is more evident, as models with very specific characteristics are chosen to promote the rigid stereotype of women that they project in their creations. In the words of Patricia Soley Beltrán (2012), models become emblematic bodies of desirability carefully constructed through social conventions. In this regard, the study participants noted:

> Mariana: Personally, I like the girls who model my collections to have neutral features, such as straight hair, small noses and mouths, and above all, to be thin, because that way I make people focus on my clothes and not on any exotic features the model may have. (personal communication, Thursday, February 15, 2018)

> Sara: I always ask for flat girls everywhere, because it makes the clothes look better. And in my experience, most designers ask for that. It also depends on what I want to show in the collection. Let's say I had a super sweet collection in pastel colors, A person with super hard or pronounced features cannot wear it. (personal communication, Thursday, February 1, 2018)

The fashion show is a communication spectacle that reinforces the ideal of femininity for which fashion is produced in the country, legitimizing not only the design proposals, but mainly the type of woman who should wear them. To fit into the garments on display, buyers face the challenge of adapting to the age and body standards for which they are designed. In this sense, although designers claim to work with models with neutral characteristics, they are far from being display mannequins and, in reality, are the bearers of the ideal of the empowered woman promoted by the Ecuadorian fashion market. Therefore, by pigeonholing itself into a rigid type of femininity that does not represent the diversity of potential consumers, the fashion industry is unable to expand or consolidate itself in the country, as it is exclusive in terms of age and female body type.

Figure 5
Moments before the runway show

Photo: María Dolores Vaca (2018).

Conclusions

It was found that Ecuadorian designers use constant professionalization, attention to detail in the production of their garments, and streetwear proposals based on quality and creativity as positioning strategies against large fashion conglomerates, as well as promoting their products at exclusive events.

Despite this, the brands studied have not been able to reach their full potential because there is still strong class and gender oppression on those who engage in this activity, since the feminization of this work creates economic barriers that prevent the growth of production and international projection of Ecuadorian creations.

Both designers' associations and fashion shows are highly restrictive and vertical spaces in which only the work of those who have managed to enter these circles is disseminated. This has revealed that in the Ecuadorian fashion industry, exclusivity is synonymous with exclusion, and therefore, bu-

sinesses cannot grow when they depend on the functioning of secret societies, whose strategy is based on inserting already recognized designers who make proposals aimed at a segment of young professional women with economic solvency and certain physical characteristics, whom they project as "empowered," but as a mere marketing strategy.

This trend, known as *purple washing,* is being used in Ecuador in some markets, such as fashion, and attempts to include feminist achievements in the area of consumption. However, this is not done in a way that encourages public reflection on issues such as women's autonomy and development, but rather it seeks to sell more by trying to improve the discriminatory image that has characterized the fashion industry.

In this sense, hegemonic criteria continue to be used in the creation of collections, feeding an unattainable image of womanhood, which is constructed according to criteria that are completely dissociated from the Ecuadorian reality and the diverse context of women. Women's autonomy is a process marked by a history of resistance and is far from being a stereotype to which consumers must adapt by disciplining their bodies and dressing in certain ways. Considering that customers are people with full decision-making capacity, the fashion industry no longer faces passive recipients of content. The lack of a deep understanding of the contexts of Ecuadorian women has led to a total disconnection between what the market offers and what users are and require. Therefore, if local fashion brands want to stand out and be visible, they cannot continue to use the same strategies that are constantly being questioned by promoting a single type of femininity, since there are no labels or recipes for being a woman.

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Interview with Margarita, brand manager, January 29, 2018.

Interview with Malena, fashion designer, September 17, 2017.
Interview with Mariana, fashion designer, January 22 and February 15, 2018.
Interview with Nadia, visual artist, January 31, 2018.
Interview with Sara, fashion designer, January 23, January 30, and February 1, 2018.
Interview with Soledad, fashion designer, February 19, 2018.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors DECLARE that the preparation of the article ***Women and Clothing in Conflict: Exclusivity and Exclusion in Fashion Design in Ecuador*** did not use Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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Territory, senses, and emotions: transdisciplinary case of the university campus

Territorio, sentidos y emociones: caso transdisciplinario del campus universitario

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Abstract

This research examines how emotional and sensory experiences related to natural and urban spaces within the university campus help cultivate a transdisciplinary perspective aimed at fostering responsive and inclusive communities. Using qualitative methods, this study employs a phenomenological and ethnographic sensory approach through a multiple-case study design. Interpretation is based on methodological bricolage using diverse theoretical perspectives and data collection tools. The process is organized into five phases, and through axial coding, 40 dimensions were identified from a model of knowledge dialogue constructed by the senses. Through grounded theory, a conceptual and systematic cartography of the posthuman phenomenon is presented, articulated in: explanatory theories on sensitivity, gender, urban planning, and inclusive politics (based on a posphenomenological approach); constructed from a body, a territory, and situated educational practices. The study concludes with theoretical and methodological contributions and educational implications, allowing us to address the relevance of the "philosophical quantum" for teacher training. The role of the teacher-researcher in the creation of knowledge is highlighted, as well as the impact of recognizing the territory and contexts where educational experiences are developed through transformative teaching.

Keywords

Teaching skills, data analysis, educational environment, cultural conditions, social science policy, human behavior, emotions.

Resumen

Esta investigación examina cómo las experiencias emocionales y sensoriales en relación con los espacios naturales y urbanos dentro del campus universitario ayudan a cultivar una perspectiva transdisciplinaria destinada a fomentar comunidades sensibles e inclusivas. Utilizando métodos cualitativos, este estudio emplea un enfoque fenomenológico y etnográfico sensorial a través de un diseño de estudio de casos múltiples. La interpretación se basa en el bricolaje metodológico utilizando diversas perspectivas teóricas y herramientas para la recolección de datos. El proceso está organizado en cinco fases, y a través de la codificación axial se identificaron 40 dimensiones que forman un modelo de diálogo de conocimiento construido por los sentidos. A través de la teoría fundamentada se presenta una cartografía conceptual y sistemática del fenómeno poshumano, articuladas en: teorías explicativas sobre sensibilidad, género, urbanismo y política inclusiva (a partir de un enfoque posfenomenológico); construida a partir de un cuerpo, un territorio y prácticas educativas situadas. Se concluye con los aportes teóricos, metodológicos e implicaciones educativas, permitiendo abordar la relevancia del "quantum filosófico" para la formación docente. Se resalta el papel del profesor-investigador en la creación del saber, así como el impacto que tiene el reconocer el territorio y los contextos donde se desarrollan las experiencias educativas desde la enseñanza transformadora.

Palabras clave

Habilidad pedagógica, análisis de datos, ambiente educacional, condiciones culturales, política de las ciencias sociales, comportamiento, afectividad.

Introduction

The sensory or affective orientation in the social sciences and humanities facilitates the understanding of knowledge emanating from emotional communities through theoretical-methodological models and analytical vocabularies based on poststructuralist thinking. This perspective has revolutionized fields such as anthropology, sociology, history, and cultural studies by questioning conventional knowledge frameworks and introducing new ways of interpreting reality, language, power, and subjectivity (Howes, 2013, 2014; López-Sánchez, 2023; Turner, 2009).

Under this approach, the figure of *the bricoleur*, proposed by Denzin and Lincoln (2012) and reinterpreted by the Chicago School (Jiménez and Cisneros, 2025), takes importance. This category of scholar uses a variety of methods and theories to examine complex phenomena, incorporating varied approaches depending on the resources available. Metaphorically, they are also known as *quilt makers,* alluding to individuals who integrate fragments of knowledge into a complete piece (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012, p. 12).

Sensory perception, conceptualized as a physically and cerebrally mediated sociocultural process, is also established in interpersonal interactions, where affective and control dynamics develop. The exploration of the sensory faculties of sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell in everyday life challenges the rationalist paradigm of scientific knowledge, integrating emotions as essential components in the construction of meanings, social practices, and subjectivities (Castro, 2014; Castro-Gómez, 2010; Deleuze, 2015; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 2001; Eribon, 1995; Jambet, 1999; Morey, 2014).

This study examines how sensory and emotional experiences, in interaction with the natural and urban space of the university campus, contribute to a transdisciplinary perspective with the aim of building inclusive and responsive communities. The research focuses on three fundamental questions:

1. How do emotional and sensory communities influence the development of a transdisciplinary perspective in the university setting?
2. What are the interrelationships between the natural and urban environment, emotions, and the senses in the academic context?
3. How does the administration of audiences in the university environment promote social participation and the formation of sensitive and inclusive communities?

From a phenomenological and ethnographic-sensory perspective (Stake, 2000), dimensions of university life are recognized from the perspective of faculty, with consequences for the optimization of institutional policies, spaces of coexistence, and inclusive practices. In addition, the role of university outreach in the formation of social connections through effective and sensory practices is investigated.

According to Ahmed (2015), collective emotions play a crucial role in the formation of emotional communities, as they facilitate the mobilization of individuals toward shared goals. Simultaneously, the term sensory community refers to a collective perception that manifests itself when the senses amalgamate around a social phenomenon, enabling transformative actions based on experience.

For Turner (2009), emotions manifest themselves at various levels: biological, behavioral, cultural, and structural, so their definition is conditioned by the theoretical approach adopted. From a neurological, cultural, or cognitive perspective, emotions manifest themselves through bodily activations, social norms, or conscious feelings.

Since the 1970s, authors such as Collins (1975), Heise (1979), Hochschild (1975, 1979), Kemper (1978a, 1978b), and Scheff (1979) have promoted theories about emotions, contributing progressively to the expansion of this field. During the 1980s, Williams (1977) and Hall (1980) emphasized culture as an experienced practice, while Surrallés (1998) explored the emotional dimension of indigenous cultures from the perspective of kinship systems.

In the 1990s, affect theory gained prominence thanks to writers such as Massumi (1995) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), who stated that affects are preconscious forces that establish connections between bodies and spaces. At the dawn of the 21st century, perspectives such as sensory anthropology (Howes, 2003; Pink, 2009) emerged, focusing on embodied experience and the use of technologies to document and represent such experiences. Pink (2015) proposes a forward-looking ethnography that examines how individuals experience, conceive, and shape future worlds.

Currently, sensory cultural research (Bourdin, 2016; Bolaños, 2015; Fernández, 2011) is dedicated to investigating the bodily, emotional, and artistic experiences of indigenous peoples, community actors, study or research groups, as well as educational institutions at different levels. In Mexico, Báez (2023) examines regional identity through the use of sounds in Central America, while Martínez (2023) analyzes streets as "non-places," spaces of tran-

sit and identity in contemporary cities. For socio-educational environments, Jiménez-León *et al.* (2024) compiles the discursive phenomenon from academic actors in training, and Mateos-Cortés (2025) specifies transdisciplinary creative positions in intergroup and intercultural processes from Latin American geographical coordinates.

Materials and method

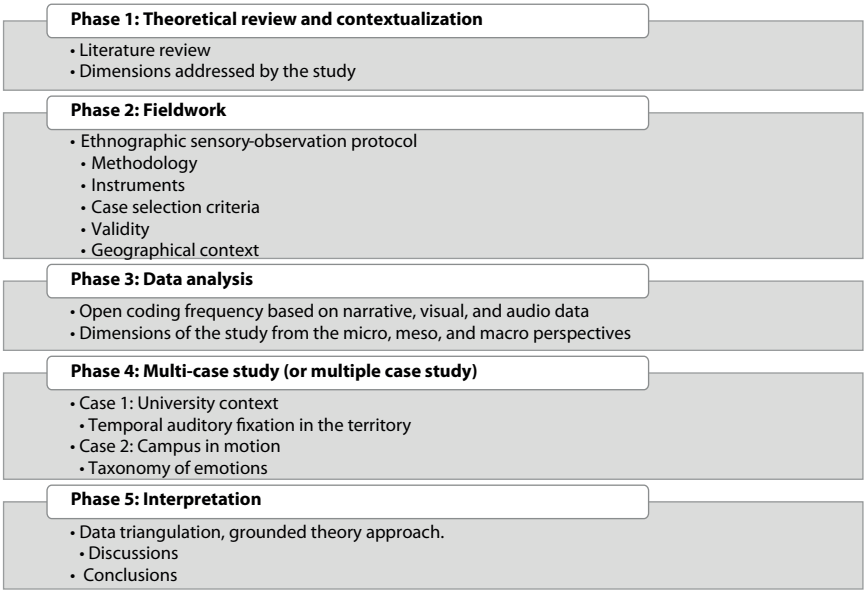
This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), driven by the desire to understand how sensory and emotional experiences in university environments shape new forms of academic interaction, territorial identity, and transdisciplinary knowledge construction. This methodological journey was divided into five interconnected phases (see Figure 1) that allowed for the integration of theory, field experience, analysis, and interpretation from a perspective sensitive to the environment and educational actors, which are described below.

The first phase was a theoretical and contextual review that laid the conceptual foundations for the study. Through a critical reading of the specialized literature, key contributions on the cultural construction of the senses (Geurts, 2002), the role of emotions in everyday life (Stewart, 2007), and the multiple ways of observing and recording social reality (Guber, 2011) were explored. Elements related to the historicity of sensory perceptions (Corbin, 2005), the use of audiovisual media as epistemic tools (Pink, 2015), and perspectives from sensory anthropology in contemporary contexts (Howes, 2024) were also included. This phase not only provided a solid theoretical framework but also helped define the key dimensions to be observed in the fieldwork.

In the second phase, the study moved to the field. A sensory-ethnographic observation protocol was created that allowed recording subjective experiences on the university campus from a visual, auditory, and emotional perspective. The methodology used a mix of techniques, such as participant observation, audio collection, participatory photography, field shorthand, and the use of digital applications. The geographical context of the study at the Faculty of Education of the Autonomous University of Yucatán provided a unique environment because it was in a natural ecosystem and its architectural design was oriented towards integrating learning with the environment. The triangulation of techniques, the intentional selection of significant cases, and the

ethical adherence to the principles of informed consent helped to ensure the validity and reliability of the work.

Figure 1
Qualitative research approach, through a phenomenological and sensory ethnographic study in multiple case studies



The third phase was the analysis of the collected data. A corpus including narratives, images, and sound recordings was used to carry out an open, axial, and inductive coding process (Schreier, 2012; Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2023). This process resulted in more than twenty thousand initial codes, of which 243 were refined with 40 central dimensions being chosen for the study. The analysis was divided into three levels: micro (individual experiences), meso (institutional dynamics), and macro (sociocultural frameworks). This allowed for an understanding of university life from a sensitive, situated, and relational point of view.

Multiple case study became the main methodological strategy in the fourth phase (Stake, 2000). The first case analyzed how the natural environment of the campus affected the sound experience of its residents. Using "temporal

sound fixation," significant moments in the university soundscape were captured, such as birdsong, weather phenomena, and nocturnal serenity, which evoked feelings of belonging and symbolic links to the territory. The second case dealt with an academic event focused on the development of scientific and artistic skills, where the emotions expressed by the participants were recorded and classified. From this exercise, an emotional taxonomy was constructed that included positive, negative, relational, and sensory feelings. This showed how emotional experiences affect knowledge acquisition and the formation of sensitive communities.

Finally, in the fifth phase, the findings were interpreted through data triangulation and the use of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This stage allowed for the integration of voices, sounds, images, and meanings into a complex narrative about the university as a sensitive territory. The conversations focused on the importance of the senses and emotions as mediators of knowledge, the importance of creating emotionally positive environments, and the strategic role of university extension as a space for articulation between academic knowledge and social experience.

This methodological journey not only led to the creation of situated and transdisciplinary knowledge but also showed how powerful sensitivity and affection can be in modern educational processes. The senses and emotions were not just additional data, they were fundamental parts of a more humane university, connected to its environment and to the voices that inhabit it.

Literature review

This paper presents an analysis of literature in the growing field of sensory studies, covering the period 2000-2025. To identify contemporary authors, prestigious publishers were selected, and comprehensive readings were carried out in order to scan and highlight the most relevant dimensions. Based on this, a document was prepared that identifies the characters, constructs, and overall structure of each work, which facilitated its reading and understanding (see Table 1).

Table 1
Dimensions addressed by the study

Author	Document	Dimensions	Descriptions
Geurts (2002)	*Culture and the senses: Bodily ways of knowing in an African community*	Senses as cultural constructs	Geurts demonstrates that the senses are not merely a physiological experience but are culturally mediated and the product of specific knowledge systems. Sensory perception depends on the cultural values, practices, and contexts in which it develops.
		Expansion of the sensory framework	Geurts introduces the concept of "seselelame," a term that refers to an integral bodily sense and a holistic awareness of the body in the world. This includes: The ability to feel with the whole body, beyond specific sensory organs. The recognition of emotions, intuitions, and other sensory aspects as valid forms of knowledge.
		Bodily ways of knowing	For the Anlo-Ewe community, the body acts as a vehicle for knowledge and learning, where the senses are essential tools for interacting with and understanding the environment. Sensory perception involves the physical as well as the emotional and spiritual, forming an integrated system of bodily knowledge.
Stewart (2007)	*Ordinary affects*	Affects	These are forces or intensities that are not always expressed consciously or verbally but are felt and experienced in the body and in the environment.
		Ordinary as a field of possibilities	Describes everyday life as a space in constant motion, full of open and non-linear possibilities. The ordinary is not static; it is composed of dynamics, encounters, and connections that emerge spontaneously. These moments can trigger processes of change or remain as small affective vibrations that permeate routines.
		Social tensions	Small gestures or everyday emotions can reveal broader social tensions, such as discomfort at work, consumerism, or structural inequalities. Shift the gaze to the small and subtle to recognize the emotional intensities that shape the everyday world.
Guber, (2011)	*Ethnographic*	Observation	"Observation is a qualitative research technique that allows the researcher to directly capture social facts, behaviors, and events in their natural context, providing a deeper understanding of the meanings that social actors attach to their actions" (Guber, 2011, p. 143).
		Participant observation	"Participant observation involves the researcher participating in people's daily lives, taking on different roles, and sharing situations that allow them to understand from within" (Guber, 2011, p. 79).

Author	Document	Dimensions	Descriptions
		Unstructured observation	"Unstructured observation is flexible, open to the unexpected, and does not depend on a fixed protocol of pre-established categories" (Guber, 2011, p. 78).
		Direct observation	"This is direct, immediate observation carried out by the researcher, who is present in the situation" (Guber, 2011, p. 77).
Robert E. Stake (2000)	*The art of case study research*	Sensory-ethnographic observation	Sensory-ethnographic observation has a deep connection with the researcher's emotional and bodily experience, becoming a complex instrument of perception that transcends mechanical or structured recording. As the following comment states: "Good observers see with their ears and listen with their eyes" (Stake, 2000, cited in Guber, 2011, p. 82).
Corbin (2005)	*Charting the cultural history of the senses*	Historicity of the senses	The senses are neither universal nor timeless but are historically conditioned. Each society and historical period organizes, hierarchizes, and values the senses in a particular way.
		Sensory experience	Each sense can be educated or disciplined to align with the demands of a specific social context.
		Senses and spatiality	The senses interact with spaces and landscapes, particularly in contexts such as the city, the countryside, or nature. The senses allow us to build a sensory relationship with our environment, shaping experiences that are both individual and collective.
		Sensory hierarchy	Throughout history, the senses have been ranked according to the dominant needs and values of each era. Sight has been predominant in Western modernity, while other senses, such as smell and touch, have been marginalized or considered inferior.
		Collective identity	Corbin explores how sensory experiences contribute to the construction of individual and collective identities. The senses participate in rituals, memories, and social practices that define a community. For example, the sound of church bells, the aromas of festivities, or the textures of everyday objects are part of the sensory imagery shared by a culture.
		Affection and sensory memory	It recognizes that the senses are deeply connected to affections and memory. Sensory experiences evoke emotions and memories that can be personal or communal. This dimension highlights how the senses contribute to shaping the past, both in individual terms (sensory memory) and in the reconstruction of cultural history.
Pink, (2015)	*Doing sensory ethnography*	Use of audiovisual media	The role of audiovisual media (photography, video, sound recordings) as complementary tools for documenting and representing sensory experiences. These resources allow recording non-textual dimensions of the field, such as sounds, movements, and atmospheres.

Author	Document	Dimensions	Descriptions
		Creation of sensory knowledge	The knowledge generated from sensory ethnography is transdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and visual arts. This knowledge not only describes people's sensory worlds, but also explores how these worlds shape identities, memories, and everyday practices.
Howes (2024)	*Sensory investigations: an introduction to sensory anthropology*	Sensory anthropology	The study of how different cultures perceive and value sensory experiences. This approach emphasizes that the senses are culturally shaped and that each society has a particular "sensory hierarchy" that influences how the world is experienced and interpreted.
		Cultural sensorium	Refers to the organized set of senses in a specific culture. Howes argues that each society configures its own sensorium, determining which senses are most valued and how they should be used in social contexts.
		Sensory relativism	Sensory experiences are not universal but vary significantly between cultures. Howes argues that what one culture may perceive as a pleasant smell, another may consider unpleasant, exemplifying how sensory perceptions are culturally conditioned.
		History of the senses	Howes explores how sensory perceptions have evolved over time and how historical changes have reconfigured sensory hierarchies in different societies. For example, he analyzes how the Industrial Revolution altered auditory and olfactory experiences in cities.
		Politics of the senses	Howes examines how sensory experiences can be subject to social regulation and control, and how power and authority can influence which senses are privileged or repressed in a given society.

Note: Prepared in accordance with open-access documents on the authors' platforms: Corbin (2005); Geurts (2002); Howes (2024); Pink (2015); Stewart (2007), cited in the growing field of sensory studies (Howes, 2014). The *scanning* technique is used, which performs a quick scan to identify keywords and their meanings. For the observation technique, the different techniques are described based on Guber (2011) and Stake (2000). In addition, underlining is used to highlight the main ideas of the text with lines and annotations.

Fieldwork

The study was carried out within the framework of the intensive summer course: *Agile and Active Management for Educational Projects with Qualitative Methods* of the Graduate Program in Teaching Specialization of the Faculty of Education, at the Autonomous University of Yucatán. Participants

were selected through direct sampling, forming a group of new-generation teachers in training, in collaboration with the authors actively involved in the development of the project.

In a participatory context, the study argues that it is essential to link relevant academic levels and teaching experience. In this regard, Durston and Miranda (2002) mention that "participatory research aims to produce knowledge by critically articulating contributions to science and popular knowledge" (p. 5). This vision facilitates not only the enhancement of local capacities, but also the alteration of social realities regarding educational needs.

Instruments

The use of ethnographic-sensory observation protocols, as well as the design of audiovisual data collection activities, helped define a specific area of research that was dynamic and situated. This area was oriented toward the analysis of educational experiences from an interdisciplinary and multisensory angle.

The ethnographic method is well known for using multiple instruments to collect information and understand social phenomena across various disciplines (Hermann *et al. and* 2011). A structural-functionalist approach was used because it emphasizes rich contextual descriptions of the cultures and educational systems being studied (Malinowski, 1973), relying primarily on participant observation. This methodological decision stems from the strengths of the framework in identifying clear patterns and salient themes based on the raw data collected in the university environment (Angrosino, 2012, p. 19).

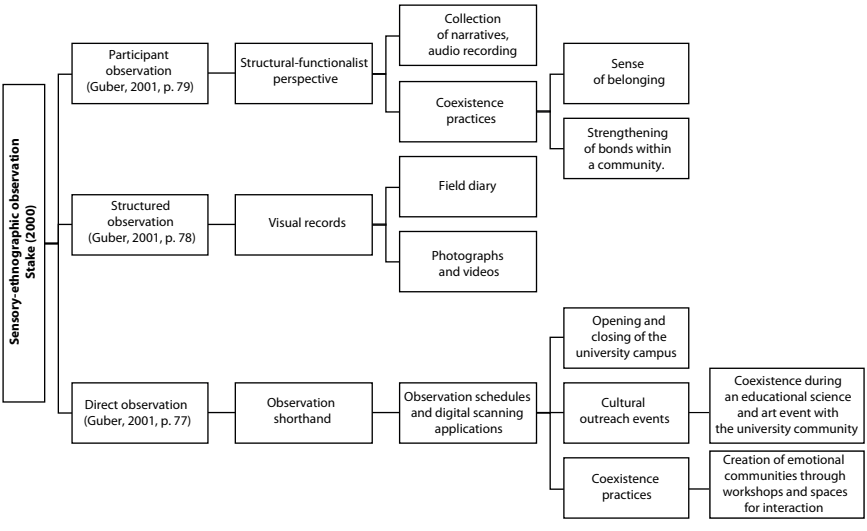
The structural-functionalist approach, in Malinowski's work (1973), is characterized by being holistic because it analyzes cultural interactions that are essential for social consistency and balance. Along these lines, the basic framework of the sensory-ethnographic observation protocol proposed by Stake (2000) was formulated, which combines parts such as: participant, unstructured, and direct observation, as shown in Figure 2.

For this study, Guber's (2011) observation typologies, described in Table 1, allowed for conceptualization of their applicability through the dynamic relationships of coexistence practices and life on the university campus as part of an underlying holistic cultural system.

Participant observation facilitated the researcher's immersion in academic and everyday events, while unstructured observation broadened access to less

predictable emerging phenomena. Direct observation focused on capturing spontaneous interactions and behavior patterns during critical moments such as campus opening and closing times and during cultural outreach events.

Figure 2
Sensory-ethnographic observation protocol



Note. Based on the notion of sensory-ethnographic observation, the data are addressed according to: (a) Opening and closing of the university campus; (b) Cultural outreach event; (c) Collection of narratives through audio recordings; (d) Visual recordings; (e) Observation stenography.

Techniques included concise transcription, visual records (photography and videography), and sound recordings through the collection of audio narratives, among others. These materials were complemented by field journals, schedules aligned with designated observation times, and scanning applications, which allowed for multisensory documentation of educational experiences.

Analyzing the audit records allowed for the application of data sonification techniques (Carnero-Sierra, 2022; Ruiz-del Olmo and Vertedor, 2016). This approach, informed by grounded theory reasoning (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Bénard-Calva, 2016), facilitated the triangulation of the observation of emotional practices with reflection on meaning within shared university spaces.

These findings revealed indicators of social cohesion, such as feelings of belonging and the strengthening of community ties in interdisciplinary workshops and gatherings. In addition, it was documented that shared emotions, together with the perception of interaction, fostered the formation of "emotional communities," defined as spaces of collective construction that enhance inclusivity and university identity.

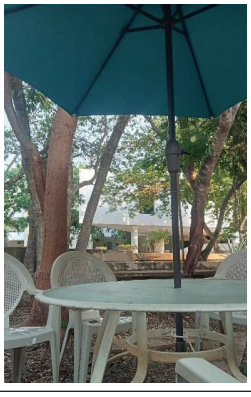
This methodological approach provides information on how sensory perception, together with emotion intertwined with the structure of daily campus experience, shapes the campus not only as a physical site but also as a symbolic territory dense with converging educational, affective, and cultural practices.

From an eclectic holistic perspective on integrated culture as an interdependent system, there is an application of multiple case designs characterized in Stake (2000), which allows studying the interrelationships of the university campus between dimensions of sensory perception rooted in emotion and education. This approach demonstrated how these dimensions facilitate social cohesion and community inclusion by perceiving the university as an interconnected cultural system where each component helps maintain balance within the learning ecosystem.

Visual data is addressed according to how participants generate images through photographs that represent their experiences, called windows, allowing for the exploration of personal and cultural meanings attributed to the images (Mannay, 2015). With the collection of this data, a critical and reflective analysis of the photographs produced by the participants is generated. For Banks (2010), at the moment of image creation, when the social researcher takes out their camera and begins to film or take photographs, they must know enough about the community in accordance with their research, emphasizing the observational analysis of images in the context of production, interpretation, and use of photographs from a legal-ethical framework (p. 119).

The visual data collection technique consisted of asking participants for images that described three moments in the territory based on a memorable memory, a meaningful learning experience, and a conflict (see Table 2).

Table 2
Visual data recording

Window	Reflective analysis
	Important memory: Third-floor terrace. ... "The third-floor terrace is a quiet place where you can think, rest, and even reflect, as it is quite peaceful and cool. It reminds me of important moments when, between class breaks, I would go up to watch the sunsets. This allowed me to rest and take a breath before continuing with the heavy workload of some days."
	Meaningful learning: Tables in the garden on the ground floor ... "Under the umbrella of one of those tables, we concluded our work on educational psychology, a blog recorded by each of the members at different points during the course, and we gathered here to make the final recording. For me, it is significant because in that video we gathered everything that each of us had learned, and it was interesting to listen to and find out what each of us learned from that wonderful course."

Note. Narrative description by the participant.

Historical-geographical context

The history of the Faculty of Education at the Autonomous University of Yucatán shows a process of institutional strengthening focused on academic reinforcement and the decentralization of education. Since it began in 1977 as an assembly resulting from an agreement with the UNAM, innovative programs such as the Specialization in Teaching and the Master's Degree in Hig-

her Education (Maestría en Educación Superior) were promoted. In 1984, it was established as a faculty, which represented a turning point with the introduction of the bachelor's degree in education. Over the course of forty years, it has stood out for expanding its reach, such as with the Multidisciplinary Unit in Tizimín, and for continuously renewing its plans and programs, including varied modalities and quality criteria. The perspective of teacher training with a reflective, ethical, and inclusive approach has guided its evolution. Currently, decision-makers have converged on schools of thought such as the Chicago School and the Ibero-American vision; the Faculty maintains a robust educational proposal and a commitment to educational change in the region.

The Faculty of Education is located on the Social Sciences, Economics, Administration, and Humanities Campus of the Autonomous University of Yucatán. Its design reflects a perspective of integration between the natural environment and academic work, honoring the endemic vegetation and more than 300 mature trees of the original jungle environment. The spaces were designed not only for transit and educational activity, but also to promote reflection, gathering, and team learning.

The center of the campus, a 1,300 m² green plaza, acts as a symbolic and operational hub connecting the different academic and administrative sectors, reinforcing the institution's identity and sense of community. This architectural layout meets the demands of a modern university that aspires to educate professionals who interact with their territory and cultural environment (Departamento de Proyectos de la Facultad de Arquitectura, 2018).

Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) in the research allowed us to understand the social phenomenon from the university campus by identifying patterns and behavior of the groups for the development of the categorization system (coding) from a deductive approach. It should be noted that Schreier (2012) mentions that QCA (*Qualitative Content* Analysis) is a method for systematically describing the broad meaning of qualitative material. It is performed by manually classifying the material as instances of the categories of a coding framework.

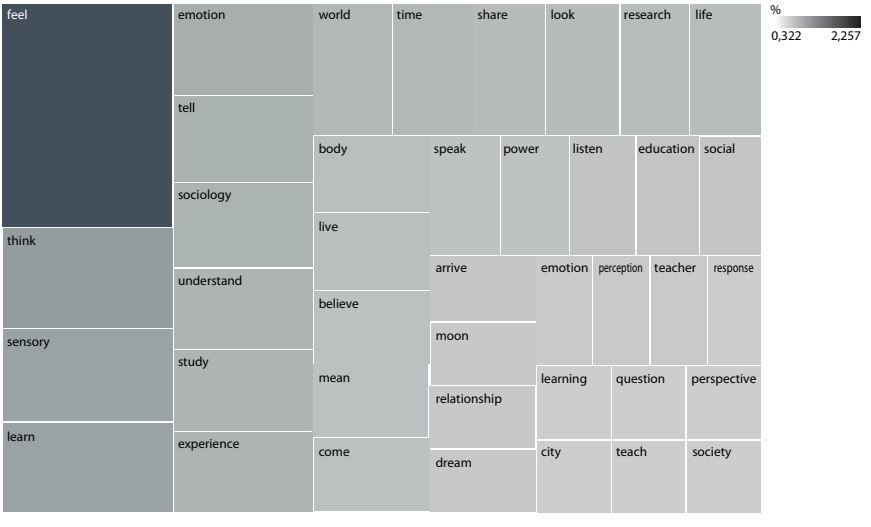
According to Gibbs (2022), "codes provide a focus for thinking about the text and its interpretation." (p. 66). This key function records the development of ideas for the analysis of qualitative data. Using digital processes, the transcripts of the audio narratives were analyzed, and the images recor-

ded through the participatory method were identified to generate categories and subcategories based on relevant qualities. These codes, called patterns, follow a round process to refine the coding system, allowing the data to be visualized and the results to be explored using MAXQDA2024 software. This process allows the research questions and hypotheses to be answered, as well as the relationships between the ideas in the analysis to be visualized (Kuckartz and Rädiker, 2023).

With the identification of the categorization system (coding) from the deductive approach, 20,691 open codes were identified, based on the narrative, visual, and audio data from the data collection. With inductive coding, 243 codes were selected, of which only 40 codes are addressed for the study (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

Frequency of open coding based on narrative, visual, and audio data



Note: The color shows the sum of the frequency, calculated using the online software tableau.com.

Table 3 organizes the levels of analysis of ethnographic-sensory study into three interrelated scales: micro, meso, and macro. This framework allows for a systematic understanding of sensory and emotional experiences on the university campus, placing them within broader and more abstract theoretical, social, and spatial frameworks.

At the micro level, there is concrete evidence from fieldwork, such as gestures, perceptions, memories involving the senses, and emotions. This level demonstrates some aspects of the emotional dynamics in everyday life among educators.

The meso level presents a theoretical context with key researchers, guiding research questions, qualitative methodologies that support the analysis, and its framing components. Consideration is also visible as a cross-cutting approach along with ethnographic observation and event sampling techniques.

Finally, the macro level integrates these experiences into broader sociocultural structures such as: city, contemporary society, gender theory, politics, urban studies, and sensitivity. In this case, it situates phenomena at the regional or global level while interpreting the relationships between territory, body, and knowledge. Therefore, the table facilitates the interpretation of the sensory phenomenon in a university setting from a transdisciplinary and multi-scalar situated perspective.

Table 3
Dimensions of the study from the micro, meso, and macro perspectives

Micro	Meso	Macro
Learning	Post-phenomenological	City
	Sensory sociability	Street
	Contemporary society	University
	Sociology	
Counting	Gestures	
	Tactile invasion	
	Sensory memory	
	Perception	
	Perception of the senses	
	Sensitive proximity	
Believing	Expressions	
Question	Space	World
Emotion	Affectivity	Central America
Understand	Narrative ability	
	Natural sensory certainty	
	Five senses	
	Power issues	

Experience	Alain Corbin	Time
	Brian Massumi	
	David Howes	
	Georg Simmel	
	Gilles Deleuze	
	Howard Becker	
	Jonathan H. Turner	
	Kathleen Stewart	
	Kathryn Linn Geurts	
	Kolen Hymen	
	Sarah Pink	
Talk	Sensory Turn	
	Shared vocabulary	
Thinking	How is the sensory ethnography method carried out?	Qualitative research
	What is the relationship between the sensory turn and the contemporary digital condition from an auditory and visual perspective?	Sensory-ethnographic observation
	What are the methodologies for studying the senses in ethnographic contexts?	Event sampling
	Is the sensory turn related to phenomenological studies?	Multiple cases
Perception	Taxonomy of emotions	
Feeling	Sociological spirit	Theory of sensitivity
		Theory of gender
		Theory of urbanism
		Political theory
Signify	Sensory workshops	
Dream	Sensory experiences	Jungle songs Weather phenomenon Nocturnal serenity

Note. Macro, environment within which the problem or area of research exists; Meso, contextualization of the problem in the subarea where it is theoretically inserted; Micro, explains how the problem manifests itself, indicating objective evidence through narratives, videos, and photographs. It is the microenvironment where the data emerges.

Results

Case 1: University context

The natural landscape and the ancient identity of the Mayan population refer to a connection with the territory, history, culture, and pre-Hispanic traditions, which remain valid over time. It is considered an ancient identity because of its roots that go back thousands of years in the Mesoamerican territory. In modern times, Mérida, Yucatán continues to be a capital of active megaprojects within the context of the Maya Zone, with possibilities for water supply, a direct relationship with natural resources, and construction stones that emerge from the Yucatán Peninsula, as described by Franco-Cáceres (2021). Our research context is located on the Mérida-Motul highway, kilometer 1, in Gran San Pedro Cholul; the university campus is located in the Mayan Jungle, embracing a large courtyard that contains multiple atmospheres: 1) a three-level orthogonal body for educational classrooms; 2) a two-level triangle for administrators and research cubicles; 3) two curved volumes for administration and services (Faculty of Education of the Autonomous University of Yucatán, 2018). To actively focus the university campus on the territory, three sensory experiences are addressed, focusing on auditory and visual temporal fixation, called: (1) Songs of the jungle; (2) Meteorological phenomenon; and (3) Nocturnal serenity.

To actively focus the university campus on the territory, three moments are addressed, focusing on auditory fixation in time, called: Jungle songs; Meteorological phenomenon; and Nocturnal serenity (Table 4).

Table 4
Selection of auditory temporal fixation

Dimension	Total duration	Schedule	Time		Description of the fixation temporal auditory
			E	S	
Opening: Time 01	24:00:00	08:30:00	00:01:26	00:02:02	Jungle sounds: Birds Whispers of students: Classrooms
Moment 02		05:30:00	00:01:33	00:01:42	Storm: Weather phenomenon
Closing: Moment 03		09:00:00	00:00:00	00:00:00	Serenity: When the sun sets and night begins.

Note: Own elaboration; the abbreviations "E" refers to the entry and "S" to the exit of the sound according to the time marking.

In line with the above, Heidegger (1947), in his work *Letter on Humanism*, highlights that "language is the home of being," emphasizing that language is not only a construction but also the soul of humanity. Through it, heaven and earth are intertwined, which is a relevant allegory for identifying the narratives of the territory. In this sense, the relationship between the educational center and its natural environment is explored as a complex and dynamic ecosystem (Murillo-García, 2022). In this space, living beings interact in a social and natural environment, generating bidirectional processes of knowledge from their daily lives. Here, the environment acts as a regulator of the emotional, cognitive, social, and physical.

In the context of the university campus in the Mayan area, the natural environment is clear in the audio recordings captured at 08:30:00 [Moment 01]. For example, in the audio chain between 00:01:26 and 00:02:02, entitled *Songs of the jungle and birds, murmurs of students in classrooms,* geographical aspects such as the landscape, climate, fauna, and flora can be perceived. This ecosystem, characterized by a sub-humid environment due to precipitation, generates ambient humidity that retains heat, causing low temperatures and facilitating the life of larger fauna in cool environments. The vocalization effect of birds is noticeable, a phenomenon in which birdsong invokes rain, marks territory, and maintains contact with other members of the species.

To learn more about the sounds of the peninsular ecosystem, we recommend consulting Garrido-Ávila (2020), who identifies key terms in the *Mayan Glossary*: *K´ÍINIL* (sounds of the weather), *CHÚUN LU´UM* (subsoil sounds), U *WICH LU´UM* (soil sounds), and *JA´* (water sounds). These references are essential for understanding the ecological environment of the context studied.

In addition, the use of technology played a key role in the data collection process. Technological tools such as *Merlin Bird ID*, developed by the *Cornell Lab of Ornithology*, made it possible to capture and analyze the environmental sounds of the university context.

This application, supported by repositories such as the *Macaulay Library* and *eBird*, converts sounds into spectrograms, three-dimensional representations that associate sound signals with bird species. In this way, technology facilitated the evocation of sensory perception, promoting the creation of new knowledge by stimulating auditory curiosity. This is particularly relevant in the habitat of migratory birds that coexist in the rainforest introduced on the university campus.

In conclusion, this integration offers a transdisciplinary approach that strengthens environmental and social awareness in the university community. Through observation of the environment and analysis of its sounds and images, the aim was to develop an emotional and sensory connection with the landscape, creating an atmosphere that promotes the formation of citizens in an environment of sustainability.

Case 2: Campus in motion

The campus in motion manifests as a narrative structure established in the recognition of emotions during the event "Skills in science and arts in agile management for educational projects with qualitative methods", held on the university campus. This event fostered a social dialogue with the university community (composed of parents, administrative staff, teachers, among others) aimed at developing scientific dissemination processes to enhance teaching specialization skills within a graduate program.

During the event, fifteen topics were presented by the participants, following a sequential cascade format. This structure facilitated audience comprehension, resulting in a link between behavior and cognitive experiences. These records made it possible to identify the emotions of the participants as they expressed their experiences with the environment through narratives.

Taxonomy of emotions

- Positive emotions: these emotions are related to rewarding experiences in the teaching-learning process and interaction with students and colleagues, based on:
  - ✓ Satisfaction: participants express their contentment and satisfaction with the experience. For example, one individual states: "I am very happy to participate in this experience."
  - ✓ Motivation: An intense sense of enthusiasm is evident, particularly regarding learning and improving skills. One subject notes that they have improved their teaching skills and feel "better prepared" and "eager to continue learning."

- ✓ Appreciation: the workshop's approach and the instructor's passion are appreciated, providing a nourishing and creative experience for participants.
- ✓ Curiosity and desire to acquire knowledge: Some participants express a desire to acquire new knowledge and be at the forefront of their discipline, demonstrating a positive attitude toward personal and professional development. Another mentioned the sense that it enhanced: "A very visual, colorful experience that we don't usually have here, and in the end, it resulted in a well-structured, elaborate academic product."

- Negative emotions: These emotions arise from obstacles, administrative pressures, tense relationships, or situations of failure.
  - ✓ Frustration: occurs when there are barriers that prevent the expected performance. In the case of one participant, gestures and tone of voice were compared when mentioning their positive experience (which was negative).
  - ✓ Anxiety: derived from the pressure to meet educational quality standards and external evaluations, participants felt pressure a few days before their presentation and accreditation of the event.
  - ✓ Anger: caused by conflicts in academic or administrative dynamics, based on unilateral decision-making in educational and administrative policies.
- Relational emotions: linked to human interactions in the university context, nature, and community building.
  - ✓ Affection: development of emotional bonds with students or colleagues, fostering a collaborative environment. Participants felt connected to a group working on a joint project. One participant mentioned: "I was really happy because since the specialization began, this is the first time I feel that we are working on something focused on my area, which is part of the arts, so I am very happy, I feel comfortable with the work completed, and I would like to continue participating in this type of activity."
  - ✓ Commitment: emotional responsibility for students' well-being and academic success. Constant support for participants when they face academic difficulties.

- ✓ Trust: a feeling of security and mutual support in relationships, according to one participant's comment: "Good teachers, but those who put love, perseverance, and motivation in their work are the ones who have good teaching practices."
- ✓ Disappointment: negative perception due to unmet expectations in the project presented.

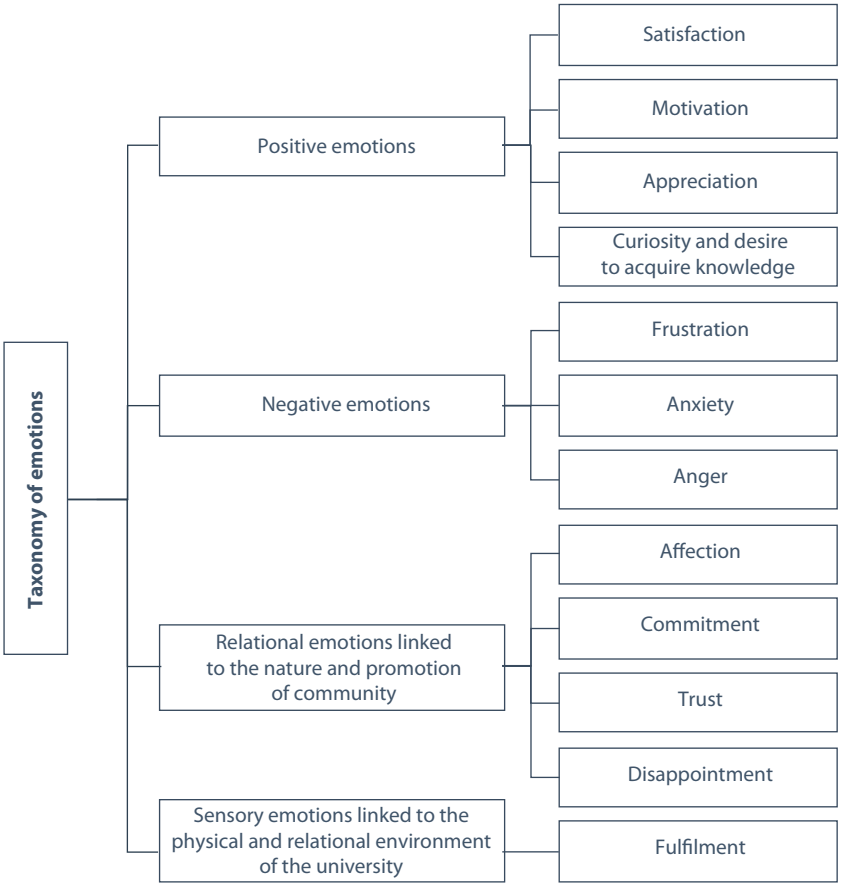
- Sensory emotions, which arise through sensory experiences linked to the physical and relational environment of the university.
  - ✓ Fulfilment: emotional balance achieved in an environment that positively stimulates the senses. This data was obtained from the event's guest book, which contained positive messages from the university community.

The implications of our study's results allow us to identify the sensory shift and phenomenological studies integrated through case studies: (1) University campus context, (2) Campus in motion. These are described below:

For case 1, it allows for a deep understanding of the natural environment based on sensory experience. While the sensory turn emphasizes the importance of the senses, phenomenology provides a method for describing and analyzing these experiences, highlighting how individuals experience and attribute meaning to the territory. In this context, the auditory and visual perception of the university campus not only documents sounds and landscapes, but also allows to explore how these sensory experiences strengthen the emotional and cultural connection with the environment, promoting environmental awareness and territorial identity, as confirmed by the comment: "...Watching the sunsets allowed me to rest and take a break to continue with the load of some days." [Participant].

Moving forward in our reasoning, emotions and senses emerge as vehicles of knowledge that connect the university community with its natural territory. Through case 2, transdisciplinarity as a product of emotions and senses in motion allows us to identify the integration of emotions and senses in a social dialogue during activities presented at the "Skills in Science and Arts" event, promoting a transdisciplinary perspective in the following terms.

Figure 4
Taxonomy of emotions



Note: The figure presents a taxonomy of emotions identified through ethnographic-sensory studies, representing them based on visual data, audio recordings, and narratives from participants. Emotions are divided into four categories: positive, negative, relational, and sensory. This classification helps to understand the impact of the physical context, along with community interactions in academia, since it shapes and defines the emotional experience of educational actors in university settings.

The promotion of collaboration is identified, because relational emotions (affection, commitment, trust) allow individuals to overcome disciplinary

barriers and work as a team, generating shared knowledge and an integrated vision. In turn, the reinterpretation of the environment, based on interaction with the territory and sensory stimulation, connects nature, culture, and knowledge, facilitating critical reflection and the development of proposals aimed at sustainability and social innovation. The movement through the dialogue of knowledge, fostered in an emotionally positive and sensorially stimulating environment, favors the convergence of different areas of knowledge (sciences, arts, and humanities), allowing for a holistic approach to addressing complex problems.

The theoretical basis identified in the study is based on sensitivity theory, gender theory, urbanism theory, and political theory. These allow us to make the following assertions:

Architecture, urban planning, and the design of public spaces (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1991) play a key role in how people perceive and relate to their environment. These spaces create experiences of power, control, and segregation, and public universities can use different areas of management to favorably influence environments from a sensory perspective. Through gender roles (Butler, 1990) and sensory perception: the way people experience the world sensorially is influenced by gender norms. At our event, women were more sensitive to certain stimuli—such as the scent of flowers or the texture and decoration of the venue—than men, while hegemonic masculinities tend to reject certain forms of sensitivity (Merleau-Ponty, 1945).

Merleau-Ponty's theory of sensitivity (1945) addresses the importance of emotions and sensory perception in the constitution of the subject and society. This theory is closely connected to phenomenology, psychology, and aesthetics (Scheler, 1954; Shusterman, 1992). With the design of sensory experiences as knowledge, sensitivity emerges as the primary form of access to the world. Sensory perception is not only a physical response to stimuli, but also a form of subjective and emotional knowledge.

It should be noted that educational processes must be marked by empathy and affection, since emotional sensitivity is closely linked to empathy and the way emotions are transmitted sensorially between people. For example, affective experiences are strengthened when teachers manage to identify their students' motivation, shaping the relationship with others through bilateral perception.

To conclude this section, we consider that sensory theory is not only an approach focused on the senses, but a complex way of examining the social world and its structures. Each of these perspectives offers a unique lens for understanding how sensory experiences affect identity, power (Bourdieu, 1979; Gramsci, 1971; Foucault, 1975), culture, and resistance.

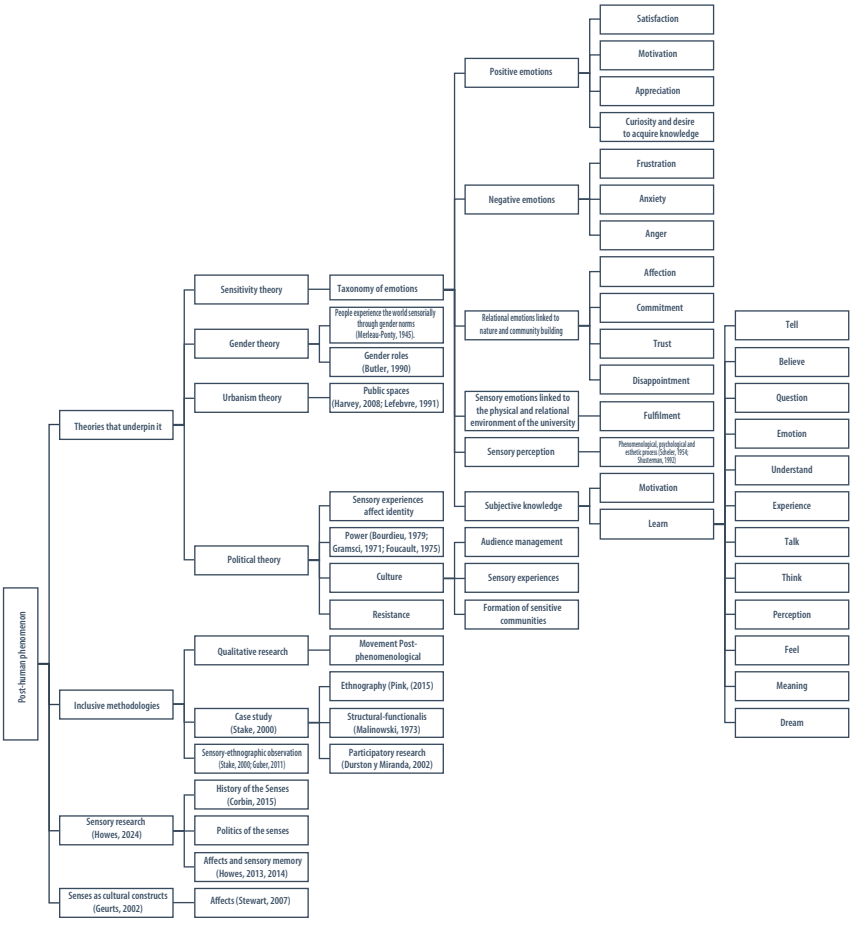
Public administration geared toward social participation in university outreach areas can foster the formation of sensitive and inclusive communities through various strategies and approaches that emanate from the sensory approach in sociology. This methodology facilitates understanding of how sensory experiences and emotions affect the way individuals interact with each other and their environment. This is how we identify that proximity sensitivity posits that when individuals share a space, their bodies perceive each other through the senses, generating a reciprocal impact, both in the sensory and emotional spheres.

This has the potential to promote a sense of community and connection between individuals, an essential aspect for the formation of inclusive communities. Furthermore, it is important to note that interaction, managed at the university, can foster interactions that transcend cognitive and emotional dimensions, thus facilitating sensory and emotional interactions. The establishment of spaces where individuals can exchange their experiences and emotions fosters a culture of empathy and understanding, which are fundamental aspects for the development of sensitive communities.

It should be noted that the generation of collective narratives through social participation facilitates active listening of diverse individuals. This not only enhances the community but also contributes to the identification of inequalities and action aimed at overcoming them.

Understanding inclusive methodologies, from the post-phenomenological movement and the use of technology, can favor ethnographic research. The implementation of methodologies that consider the heterogeneity of participants' sensory and emotional experiences can be fundamental to the advancement of the line of research. In addition, it is necessary to relate to literary, aesthetic, and poetic narratives from the creation of sensitive environments.

Figure 5
Conceptual and systematic cartography of the posthuman phenomenon



Note. The image represents a conceptual and systematic cartography of the posthuman phenomenon, considering four interconnected dimensions: explanatory theories of sensitivity, gender, urbanism, and inclusive politics (post-phenomenological theory) that include methods such as qualitative research and sensory ethnography; sensory research that integrates body, affect, and territory; the construction of meanings through embodiment and corporeality in educational practices. This structure makes it possible to understand posthumanism in educational contexts based on affective, political, and community configurations that give visibility to modes of existence, learning, and relationships from a multisensory and relational perspective.

Conclusions and discussion

It is concluded that the contributions of Bourdieu, Foucault, Gramsci, and Merleau-Ponty to the field of education allow us to understand that the construction of knowledge, power, the body, culture, and hegemony in school and social spaces should not be assumed to be neutral or natural realities. On the contrary, it is necessary to denaturalize them and analyze them critically from their political, social, and symbolic dimensions.

The analysis of the participants' photographs showed how certain spaces shape power through practices of surveillance, normalization, and disciplining of the body. These findings allow us to understand education as a device of power-knowledge, where knowledge is linked to relations of domination that produce subjectivities that are obedient and functional to the social order.

Thus, it is essential to recognize that education cannot be reduced to the purely cognitive, but rather manifests itself as an embodied, corporeal experience situated in an intersubjective world. This understanding makes it possible to move toward sensitive pedagogical approaches, where the body and the senses play an essential role in the learning process.

From Gramsci's perspective, school is a space of ideological fight between projects of hegemony. In contrast to the traditional model that reproduces the dominant order, he proposes an education for emancipation articulated with social movements and popular sectors. This critique of traditional education is relevant in the context of posthumanist thought, considering the relationships between education, nature, and territory.

The affective studies addressed in this research offer an interdisciplinary field on the role of emotions, affects, and intensities in social, political, and educational life. From this perspective, emphasis is placed on how relational, bodily, and sociocultural practices are experienced in an embodied way and situated in specific contexts, allowing for a more sensitive and complex reading of educational processes.

Authors such as Brian Massumi, David Howes, Kathleen Stewart, Sara Ahmend, and Sarah Pink have made fundamental contributions to the field of education by highlighting the importance of embodied learning, the design of sensitive pedagogical experiences, and attention to the affective intensities that shape subjectivities. From their approaches, it is recognized that every day, the body, and sensory are key dimensions for understanding how meanings are generated in educational contexts.

In dialogue with the Chicago School and its emphasis on situated methodologies, it is essential to affirm that all truth is local, constructed relationally, and conditioned by the specific contexts of knowledge production and validation. Within this framework, the phenomenon of post-truth is transformed according to the pedagogical tactics that teachers adopt from their environment, highlighting the role of geographical territory and the natural environment in shaping educational processes.

In this process, emotions emerge through a taxonomy as an epistemic mediator, forming part of power structures that regulate actions, relationships, discourses, and events. Thus, emotions shape behaviors, define school climates, and configure contexts with epistemic authority where the emotional occupies a central place.

The course "Agile and Active Management for Educational Projects with Qualitative Methods" allowed us to identify the effects of the natural and urban environments, which condition the way emotions and senses are experienced, interpreted, and shared within the educational context. These spaces are not only physical settings but also affective contexts that shape the perception, concentration, well-being, and creativity of those who participate. The presence of green spaces, air quality, noise, architecture, and spatial layout directly influence the sensory and emotional experiences of faculty and students. Likewise, the interaction between nature and the city is reflected in everyday practices of knowledge, such as walking around campus, observing the environment, stopping to listen, or feeling the weather. These experiences have an impact on the formation of subjectivities and the construction of knowledge, as they mobilize memories, desires, tensions, and affections that connect the academic with the vital, the individual with the collective.

From a posthuman perspective, we must ask ourselves: what does this *quantum* require in contemporary teacher training? This question prompts an in-depth analysis of the current meanings of educational leadership and teacher development, recognizing epistemic, cultural, and narrative diversity with fundamental axes. Based on the Chicago School, an intercultural, decolonial, and transdisciplinary discussion is promoted, which questions the hierarchies of traditional knowledge and favors the emergence of new teaching skills.

In this framework, the philosophical quantum manifests itself as situated knowledge, guided by a reflective and ethical approach to analysis. This implies recognizing the direct involvement of the teacher-researcher in the

process of creating new knowledge, emphasizing the importance of teachers understanding their territory and the places where learning experiences take place. In addition, their participation in academic life is perceived through the cultural context, and the joint creation of knowledge with communities is promoted, overcoming the logic of intervention in them.

This involves the use of qualitative methods that enable people to express their experiences in a more comprehensive manner, which could lead to an increased sense of belonging and active participation in the community. For public administration at the university, understood as the ability to articulate meaningful links with various social actors, it is essential to promote social participation and the formation of sensitive and inclusive communities.

This management should not be reduced to strategies for outreach or audience training, but should be oriented toward the creation of dialogical, affective, and ethical spaces where the voices, knowledge, and experiences of students, teachers, local communities, and external actors are recognized and valued. Communities are formed through forums, collaborative projects, artistic activities, interventions in the territory, and social responsibility actions, not only sharing academic objectives but also emotional and political commitments to equity, social justice, and the common good. This approach builds bridges between the university and its surroundings, as well as between universities through the pedagogy of encounter and mutual recognition.

In conclusion, this research contributes to the field of education by highlighting the relevance of a situated, affective, and transdisciplinary pedagogy. Its findings can serve as a basis for future research on teacher well-being and sensory and ethnographic methodologies in higher education, especially in the social sciences, humanities, and economic-administrative disciplines.

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Declaration on the Use of Artificial Intelligence
The authors DECLARE that the preparation of the article ***Territory, senses, and emotions: a transdisciplinary case study of the university campus*** did not use Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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The challenges and opportunities of policy in the face of the disruptive impact of Artificial Intelligence

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The development of Artificial Intelligence has impacted the functioning of our societies and also poses a significant challenge for politics. With a focus on politics, this volume presents scientific proposals and analyses on issues related to this new field of research.

One dilemma is to what extent generative AI reaches politics to construct new narratives, or only to access those already in circulation. Another is the scope of AI in processes of pernicious political polarization, and consequently, in the worst-case scenario, even in processes of autocratization. A third question concerns the potential usefulness of AI in the management of political organizations, as well as in calling for social and electoral mobilization from within them. Can political parties, unions, NGOs, and lobbies gain competitive advantages through AI? Another potential question concerns the impact of the use of AI on sustained communication between political institutions at any level and citizens. Finally, we cannot forget the implications of the use of generative AI from the public sphere in the field of political ethics and the debate it sparks.

These and many other questions related to the changes, effects, and consequences of AI in the political sphere will be the subject of analysis in this monograph.