Politics, public health, and disinformation: Instagram posts by European far-right parties about COVID-19 vaccines

Política, sanidad y desinformación: argumentos en Instagram de los partidos de extrema derecha europea sobre las vacunas contra la COVID-19

Sebastián Sánchez-Castillo.
Universidad de Valencia. Spain.
sebastian.sanchez@uv.es
[CV] 🆔 🔗 🅖 Rᵉ A

Carlos López-Olano.
Universidad de Valencia. Spain.
Carlos.Lopez-Olano@uv.es
[CV] 🆔 🔗 🅖 Rᵉ A

Àlvar Peris-Blanes.
Universidad de Valencia. Spain.
Alvar.Peris@uv.es
[CV] 🆔 🔗 🅖 Rᵉ A

How to cite this article / Normalized reference.

Sánchez-Castillo, S., López-Olano, C., & Peris-Blanes, À. (2023). Politics, public health, and disinformation: Instagram posts by European far-right parties about COVID-19 vaccines. *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 81, 209-229. https://www.doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-2023-1870

ABSTRACT
Introduction: This research has analyzed the visual discourse on Instagram of the European far-right parties in Italy, Germany, France, Spain, Belgium, Austria and Poland on the COVID-19 vaccines carried out during 2021. The main objective has been focused on in discovering the position of these parties regarding the vaccination process against the coronavirus and the use of biased strategies or

frames linked to misinformation. **Methodology:** (N=1050) Instagram posts have been analyzed using visual content analysis. The results show that the European far-right parties studied have not used their Instagram accounts to spread health strategies to alleviate the effects of COVID-19. **Results:** The contents disseminated have turned out to be individualistic and consistent with the ideals of each party. Except for specific exceptions, in general all the parties have shown a neutral position without being very explicit in their positions. **Discussion:** What these findings reveal is an inclination not to make decisive speeches that could make them lose voters, despite maintaining a critical position that pretends to be an alternative to the official one. **Conclusions:** Their main speeches allude to the lack of individual freedom, the voluntariness in the administration of the dose, the rejection of vaccination of children and the denial of the COVID passport.

Keywords: Disinformation; Content analysis; Far right; Instagram; Image.

RESUMEN
En esta investigación se ha analizado el discurso visual en Instagram de los partidos de extrema derecha europeos de Italia, Alemania, Francia, España, Bélgica, Austria y Polonia sobre las vacunas contra la COVID-19 realizados durante 2021. El objetivo principal se ha centrado en descubrir el posicionamiento de estos partidos frente al proceso de vacunación contra el coronavirus y el empleo de estrategias o encuadres sesgados vinculados con la desinformación. **Metodología:** Se han analizado (N=1050) publicaciones de Instagram mediante un análisis de contenido visual. Los resultados evidencian que los partidos de extrema derecha europeos analizados no han empleado sus cuentas de Instagram para difundir estrategias sanitarias con las que paliar los efectos de la COVID-19. **Resultados:** Los contenidos difundidos han resultados ser individualistas y acordes con los ideales propios de cada partido. Salvo excepciones puntuales, en general todos los partidos han mostrado una posición neutra sin ser muy explícitos en sus posiciones. **Discusión:** Lo que revelan estos hallazgos es una inclinación para no realizar discursos determinantes que puedan hacerles perder votantes, a pesar de mantener una postura crítica que pretende ser alternativa a la oficial. **Conclusiones:** Sus discursos principales aluden a la falta de libertad individual, a la voluntariedad en la administración de la dosis, al rechazo de la vacunación a niños y a la negación ante el pasaporte COVID.

Palabras clave: Desinformación; Análisis de contenido; Extrema derecha; Instagram; Imagen.

1. Introduction

We live in times of major global changes to communication. The phenomenon of disinformation has burst into the public arena, with an internet architecture that conforms perfectly to the political activity of the new generations: more informal, peer-oriented, and allergic to authority (Storsul, 2014), where political actors can produce and disseminate their own media content (Crilley & Gillespie, 2019). This situation has allowed populist parties on the far right of the political spectrum to leverage social media platforms and their user-generated content, thereby leapfrogging over the obligatory intermediation of traditional media (Krämer, 2017). In 2016, Donald Trump's presidential victory in the United States and the success of the Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom marked a new era, unleashing an epistemic crisis in contemporary democratic societies (Benkler et al., 2018) characterized by phenomena such as fake news and post-truth (McIntyre, 2018). Although its origins can be traced much further back, the term "fake news" was coined by the journalist Craig Silverman of BuzzFeed (2017) to explain certain media processes that were unfolding in the United States and other countries. Due to its use as an insult to discredit any media outlet that contradicts one's own ideology (as Donald Trump used it repeatedly during his term as US president), some authors have recommended not using the term "fake news", instead favoring the concept of "disinformation" (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Another phenomenon of recent years has been the rise of political parties identified as extreme or far right, which have seen an expansion of global proportions (Brils et al., 2020; Halikiopoulou, 2020). Researchers such as Mudde (2019) describe this as a "fourth wave" of the far right, characterized by a powerful media impact and widespread acceptance of its principles. The "far right" label is an umbrella term that includes radical and extreme right parties covering a broad spectrum of ideological positions, ranging from outright rejection of the democratic system and support for the use of violence to an acceptance of democracy but without admitting essential elements of it, such as minority rights and pluralism (Wondreys & Mudde, 2022). Mudde coined the term "populist radical right" (PRR) to refer to parties considered nativist, authoritarian and populist (Mudde, 2007).

Economic crises and issues arising from mass migration seem to lie at the historical roots of contemporary populism (Laclau, 2005). These phenomena have been especially intense in recent years, creating circumstances favorable to the growth of populist movements, which also benefit from the effects of an uneven globalization (Kübler & Kriesi, 2017). Populism is not easy to define (Mudde, 2007) as it covers a wide range of political positions and can be studied from a variety of perspectives (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2020). There is, however, a general consensus that populism is a "weak" and opportunistic ideology that adapts easily to circumstances and contexts (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018; Aalberg & de Vreese, 2017) best suited to the achievement of its objectives (for example, splitting society into the separate camps of "the people" and a "corrupt elite"). It is also widely agreed that discourse and communication play an important role in the raison *d'être of populism; i.e.*, that populism should be understood as a "communication phenomenon" (de Vreese et al., 2018; Casero-Ripollés et al., 2017) characterized by a particular way of explaining its ideas and propositions (Block & Negrine, 2017; Jagers & Walgrave, 2007). The strong emotional charge and the sensationalist, provocative, and polarizing tone (Arias, 2016) it employs to create stereotypes of "the Other" are some of these characteristics. However, the use of these strategies can vary in degree, which in turn gives rise to different forms of populism (Aalberg et al., 2017). In view of the above, the media needs to be a key consideration for any analysis of populism.

The recent rise of populism has coincided in time with the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which has also become an important factor in political terms, constituting a perfect hotbed for the growth of populist movements, particularly on the far right, and for the dissemination of falsehoods and disinformation related to sensitive public health issues such as vaccines. The opposition of populist far-right parties to both the scientific and political elite (Eberl et al., 2021) has been a constant since the beginning of the pandemic. This context has exacerbated the propensity of extremists to spread conspiracy theories based on anti-elitist, populist and simplistically dualistic worldviews, which depict the academics and scientists who struggle to fight them as members of a technocratic class with the same flaws they deem inherent in our political representatives.

2. The far right and populism on social media and Instagram

Following events such as Britain's decision to leave the EU and Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential elections in 2016, there has been a growing concern about the role of social media as a contributing factor to polarization and the destabilization of democratic systems (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Iosifidis & Wheeler, 2018). The well-known sociological phenomenon of homophily, whereby individuals with similar interests (including politics) tend to group together, (McPherson et al., 2001), is now made manifest in online interactions in the form of another key concept related to disinformation: what the internet activist Eli Pariser (2011) calls the "filter bubble."

By their nature, social media platforms facilitate the dissemination of messages around the world, leapfrogging over the filters imposed by traditional media, which are deemed to be mediatized by the

power of the elite (van Erkel & van-Aelst, 2020; Mazzoleni, 2008). This feature of social media is greatly valued by populist parties (Engesser et al., 2017). Moreover, the content posted on social media, as an alternative to messaging on traditional media outlets, is characterized by a kind of "spectacularization" and an emotionalism associated with populist discourse (Gerbaudo, 2018). These persuasive strategies are particularly effective in the case of disseminating images or videos, which may not be sufficiently studied given that fake news tends to be examined as a strictly textual issue. Our brains can process images at an incredible speed, much faster than they process text (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Some recent studies have highlighted this visual dimension of messages produced and disseminated by parties identified as populist far-right movements (Pérez-Curiel & Rivas-de-Roca, 2022). And while many examine such dissemination on the highly news-focused platform Twitter, increasing attention is being given to alternative platforms like Instagram, which, according to Al-Rawi (2020), has become a toxic battleground despite its reputation in popular culture as a harmless platform suited to communications about fashion, and where young people can share selfies and photographs of their travel and dining experiences. In fact, we would argue that apparently innocuous visual messages such as memes are often used as highly effective political attacks and that they therefore deserve more attention and scholarly study.

Although Instagram is ranked fourth among the world's most popular social media platforms, behind Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, its number of users has grown to 1.393 billion (Statista, 2021). Local data for Spain indicates that Facebook and WhatsApp continue to be the most popular social media platforms, although in 2021 Instagram moved into third place, followed by YouTube and Twitter. Moreover, Facebook's popularity dropped in relation to the previous year, while Instagram's increased from 59 to 64% (IAB Spain, 2021). This makes this more visually oriented platform an interesting case study for the analysis of political content, especially given its popularity among young people who get their news on the platform, who represent a significant demographic in electoral terms (Newman et al., 2020). In fact, Santiago Abascal, the leader of Spain's far-right party, Vox, acknowledges that they have a very strong presence on Instagram, a forum with more images than words and a predominantly young audience, in contrast to Twitter, which is more popular with journalists, politicians, and ideologues.

Messages posted by politicians on Instagram have attracted considerable scholarly attention in recent years. The Swedish general elections of 2014 were one of the first electoral events in which Instagram was used as a campaign tool, although according to a study by Filimonov et al. (2016), the parties used the platform merely to reproduce content posted elsewhere, as a kind of "billboard." Other authors, such as Lalancette & Raynaud (2017), have found that political actors regularly share content related to their private lives on this platform. In Spain, research has shown how Instagram has become a tool for "spectacularization" (López-Rabadán & Doménech-Fabregat, 2021) and that populist far-right parties like Vox use the platform more to define their image as professional politicians and approachable individuals than to disseminate typically extreme-right messages (Sampietro & Sánchez-Castillo, 2020).

Other studies have analyzed specific narratives disseminated by Vox on this platform, such as anti-feminist (Bernárdez-Rodal et al., 2020) and anti-immigration narratives (Jaramillo-Dent et al., 2021). This far-right party uses Instagram to convey a clear message: Vox is the only party that knows and understands the needs of the Spanish people, which are defined in opposition to foreign interests. A noteworthy study at the pan-European level was conducted by Bast (2021), taking an international perspective on how European populist far-right leaders present themselves on Instagram. The main conclusion of his study is in line with the research on Vox discussed above: the creation of a "professional" image and the idea of being closer to the common people stand out over other frames traditionally associated with the far right that may be perceived as more aggressive.

3. Position of the european far right on COVID-19

Far-right parties in the European Union (EU) have monopolized the discourse of opposition to the policies implemented by governments and institutions in an effort to halt the spread of COVID-19, including vaccination campaigns (Eberl et al., 2021). However, the reaction has not been the same everywhere, as there has been considerable variation depending on the country and on whether the party in question is in government or opposition (Wondreys & Mudde, 2022). What is common to all far-right parties is the absolute distrust in the scientific and political elite that has marked their responses throughout the pandemic.

For example, among European far-right parties we might expect to find more denialist discourses in line with the reactions of Trump or Bolsonaro, both of whom dismissed the severity of the virus from the outset; however, such discourses have not been widespread among these parties, which instead have sought to promote disinformation about COVID-19 with all kinds of statements that fan the flames of different conspiracy theories (Vieten, 2020). There is a large number of studies exploring the relationship between the pandemic and different political stances (McNeil-Willson, 2020). The most common of such stances, many of which are associated with an exclusionary form of nationalism (Bieber, 2020), include the theory that the virus was produced by the Chinese or is the result of immigration (especially illegal immigration) and that it is therefore an external enemy intended to disrupt the peaceful life of the national community; that it was created by "dirty" people who "do not wash," in contrast to the hygiene and "purity" of the country's citizens; or even that it was developed in a laboratory run by Jews, thereby reviving anti-Semitic tropes of the past (Ehsan, 2020).

In keeping with the ideology of these parties, with its rejection of globalization and liberalism, their first reaction was to call for the closure of national borders to protect the country from the external threat (Wondreys & Mudde, 2022). The far right saw this crisis as an opportunity for nation states to recover the sovereignty they had lost now that the fragile nature of these globalizing processes had been exposed. They thus focused much more on care and support for their fellow citizens, while criticizing governments for acting too slowly and weakly in response to the skyrocketing infections and deaths around Europe in the first months of the pandemic (McNeil-Willson, 2020). It is certainly true that in the first wave of the pandemic the responses of the different governments and of transnational institutions like the EU were fiercely criticized for their ineptitude, lack of planning, and the selfishness implicit in their efforts to ensure a supply of facemasks and vaccines for their own citizens at the expense of international cooperation and the needs of less developed countries. If there is anything about the virus that we know for certain, it is that it can only be overcome through a global approach, a fact that went ignored by most European nations. This circumstance was exploited by the forces of the far right in order to legitimize and consolidate their political agenda, albeit with some serious contradictions.

Indeed, as the pandemic grew worse and governments extended lockdowns and increased restrictions in an effort to contain the virus, including strict border closures, the position of European far-right parties varied widely (Wondreys & Mudde, 2022; Halikiopoulou, 2020). Those that were in government at the time, such as PiS (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) in Poland, exploited the situation to restrict individual freedoms and undermine the internal conditions of democracies that were already weak before the pandemic began. Parties in opposition, on the other hand, accused governments of excessive regulations on citizens' movements that were violating personal freedoms and destroying the economy. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, AfD (Alternative für Deutschland) called on the German government to impose stricter measures, and then later claimed that lockdowns were no longer effective or appropriate. This frustration with the state, which was shared by many other citizens, led European far-right parties (together with COVID denialists and anti-vaccine groups) to encourage large-scale protests and demonstrations throughout 2021 in countries such as France, Italy,

Austria, Denmark, and the Netherlands, protesting against further lockdowns, vaccine mandates, or the COVID passport requirement to gain access to entertainment venues and cultural events. There were even inflammatory arguments comparing the supposed persecution of the unvaccinated to the singling out of Jews under the Nazi regime.

Obviously, these discourses are not entirely new but have been fermenting for some time, associated with populist movements that have been gaining legitimacy in many parts of the world in recent years (Eberl et al., 2021). Nevertheless, it is also clear that it is far-right parties that are benefiting the most from these circumstances, especially as a result of the handling of the pandemic, as they seek to promote a new political order (Bieber, 2020) and to gain greater visibility and credibility in a context of social polarization, despite the efforts of social media platforms to censor any fake news or disinformation about COVID-19 posted on their platforms.

In view of the considerations outlined above, for this study the following hypothesis and research questions were proposed:

H_1 The European far-right parties analyzed in this study all adopt the same position regarding the use of vaccines against COVID-19.

RQ_1 What discourse do they use as an argument against mass vaccination? Does it include disinformation?

RQ_2 Have far-right parties in Europe used their strong presence on Instagram to engage in public emergency messaging against COVID-19?

4. Methodology

The methodology for this research draws on various studies that apply discourse analysis (van Leeuwen, 2008) to political profiles on Instagram (Lalancette & Raynauld, 2017; Lilleker et al., 2019; Sampietro & Sánchez-Castillo, 2020). Specifically, this involves analyzing the visual and textual elements present in each post, as social media users consider both textual and visual elements to judge the profiles of other users (Pelled et al., 2017).

To answer the research questions posed for this study, we analyzed visual archives, photos, and videos. In the case of videos, the first image or frame was encoded, since this is immediately visible when Instagram users scroll through their feed and projects the maximum impact (Haßler et al., 2021). It is the methodology used by Lalancette and Raynauld (2017) in their study on Instagram on the figure of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The authors qualify as "visual digital content" or "online images", both still and moving images. Also Sampietro and Sánchez-Castillo, (2020) in their analysis of the image of Santiago Abascal (Vox), analyze the figure of the politician from the so-called "visual texts" that arise from the staging of still and moving images from the same point of view.

The Instagram accounts of the far-right parties analyzed are: Germany's Alternative für Deutschland (AfD),[1] led by Jörg Meuthen and Tino Chrupalla; Poland's Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS),[2] led by Jarosław Kaczyński; Spain's Vox,[3] led by Santiago Abascal; France's Rassemblement National (RN),[4]

---

[1] https://www.instagram.com/afd.bund/
[2] https://www.instagram.com/pisorgpl/
[3] https://www.instagram.com/vox_es/
[4] https://www.instagram.com/rassemblementnational_fr/

led by Marine Le Pen; Belgium's Vlaams Belang (VB),[5] led by Tom van Grieken; Austria's Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (FPÖ),[6] led by Heinz-Christian Strache; and Italy's Lega Nord (LN),[7] led by Matteo Salvini. The study focused on the Instagram accounts of the political parties rather than the individual accounts of their leaders, as the intention was to identify the content posted by far-right organizations and analyze their discourses as organizations, without considering the personal interests of their leaders. The analysis covers a period from the authorization of the first safe and effective COVID vaccine by the European Commission on December 1, 2020 (EC.Europa.eu, 2020) to November 26, 2021, when the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert classifying the Omicron variant as a COVID-19 variant of concern (WHO, 2021). Over this 12-month period, a large volume of political information was posted on social media platforms in Europe with the aim of polarizing public opinion about vaccination against COVID-19 (Brubaker, 2021; Brils et al., 2020; Down & Joon-Han, 2021).

The analysis included 150 posts by each party, obtained randomly using the "=RAND()" function in Microsoft Excel (Microsoft Corp.) for all of the posts on the parties' Instagram profiles. The number of units of analysis is analogous to that of current research involving social media platform content analysis (Li et al., 2021; Boatman et al., 2021; Unni & Weinstein, 2021).

In addition to knowing the participation rate of each match, data was obtained on the number of followers of the party's official account, the number of likes for each post with visual content related to the research, and the number of comments. The engagement rate measures the number of interactions that social media users have with a particular post, and the number of likes, reactions, and comments the post receives (Larsson, 2016). Given that there are many ways to calculate engagement and considering the specific features of each platform, for this study the formula used is [(number of *likes*+ number of comments) / number of followers] x 100, an adaptation of the engagement rate formula developed by Chen (et al., 2021).

Six "crisis frames" related to the far right in Europe were identified in their posts on Instagram, associated with the concepts of migration, globalization, governance, liberty, resilience, and conspiracy. These frames offer an understanding of the interactive processes that take place between far-right groups, global events, and the authorities (McNeil-Willson, 2020). The content analysis explores how the far right in Europe has developed its visual discourse on COVID-19 on Instagram and identifies the deliberate emphasis on certain aspects of reality and the concealment of others, while also identifying diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational components of these frames (Snow & Bedford, 1992).

Frames provide an important means of analyzing the language and symbolism used by political groups and they have proven useful for exploring key issues underlying the rise and success of the far right. They also offer information for understanding and interpreting the activist discourse of far-right organizations, identifying important contexts that define these parties in areas such as identity, migration, traditional values, and self-portrayal (Guenthe et al., 2020). These frames provide a very sound basis for identifying the responses of the far right to the public health crisis, and also in a broader political and organizational context. The six crisis frames are:

1. Migration: the spread of COVID-19 as a result of migration across open borders.

2. Globalization: the spread of COVID-19 as a result of globalization and multiculturalism, criticizing weak border controls due to a globalist agenda and warning against European

---

[5] https://www.instagram.com/vlaamsbelang/
[6] https://www.instagram.com/fpoe_wien/
[7] https://www.instagram.com/matteosalviniofficial/

multiculturalism as a way of overlapping ideological principles related to national identity and neo-fascism (Zuquete, 2018).

3. Governance: the impact of COVID-19 as a result of government mismanagement.

4. Liberty: the political parties express concern about the use of lockdowns as a means of public control, endangering the basic pillars of democracy and using the virus as a pretext for invading our privacy. This frame is also related to the opposition against vaccine mandates.

5. Resilience: posts that promote resilience against COVID-19. Resilience is defined here as the capacity of the people to confront and respond to adversity, and their ability to take advantage of different sources of strength (individual or social) in order to adapt and meet challenges and situations of tension, stress, or trauma (McNeil-Willson, 2020). Examples of resilience include care for vulnerable groups, donations of foodstuffs and basic necessities, volunteering and the Red Cross, army assistance, blood donations, charity work in hospitals, etc.

6. Conspiracy: COVID-19 is used deliberately as a distraction to promote disinformation about the virus and general suggestions of conspiracy theories. This frame, which can be difficult to identify, includes a wide variety of approaches, including erroneous information such as the idea that the virus was manufactured in a laboratory, that information on COVID-19 is being used as a smokescreen to distract from other more important realities, that vaccination is being driven by the economic interests of pharmaceutical multinationals, etc.

The six frames outlined above can be interpreted in multiple ways, which means that any individual frame might overlap to varying degrees with others. For this reason, it was decided to assess them using a Likert scale (1-5) in order to identify the intensity of the presence of each variable. This made it possible to obtain more precise results and scaled measurements. Four variables were established to identify the attitude towards vaccination (in favor; against; neutral; protest), in this case using a percentile quantification. The "protest" variable should not be confused with "against," as it is possible that a post in which protest is the dominant feature may not clearly define its position in favor or against vaccination.

To mitigate the possibility of bias in the coding of the units of analysis, an intercoder reliability process was conducted on the six frames. Two analysts who did not participate in the initial coding evaluated a subsample of 50% of the posts by each party (n=75), making for a total of 525 units of analysis that were submitted to this process to measure the degree of consensus or agreement reached. For the reliability calculations two criteria were used: the observed agreement coefficient, and Cohen's kappa coefficient (κ).

The average agreement percentage indicator for each variable were as follows: Migration: 87%, (κ)= 0.818; Globalization: 88%, (κ)= 0.872; Governance: 70%, (κ)= 0.776; Liberty: 89%, (κ)= 0.883; Resilience: 80%, (κ)= 0.762; and Conspiracy: 73%, (κ)= 0.712. Although the variables are subject to subjective interpretation, and the data suggests that this is especially true of the "Conspiracy" and "Resilience" variables, these results indicate that the intercoder reliability was sufficient, taking into account the standards established in Social Sciences (Oliden & Zumbo, 2008), and thus the reliability of the statistical process was confirmed. The percentage indicator in stance on vaccination were as follows: In favor 83%, (κ)= 0.813; Against 81%, (κ)= 0.793; Neutral 88%, (κ)= 0.882 and Protest 87%, (κ)= 0.893. The statistical process was carried out using SPSS (v21.IBM).

5. Results

In response to the first hypothesis (H_1), the results show that the far-right parties analyzed in this study have not adopted a homogeneous discourse on Instagram in relation to COVID-19 vaccination in Europe (Table 1).

Table 1. *Mean Scores. Parties/Frames.*

	Migration	Globalization	Governance	Liberty	Resilience	Conspiracy
AfD	2.06	1.92	1.32	2.95	3.01	2.49
Pis	2.03	1.60	1.32	2.15	3.45	2.38
Vox	1.82	1.83	1.78	1.77	1.83	1.74
RN	2.05	2.16	2.58	3.26	2.07	2.17
VG	1.87	1.91	1.82	3.13	1.85	1.91
FPÖ	1.80	1.85	1.75	2.86	1.71	2.92
LN	1.89	1.89	2.81	3.25	2.83	1.98
Mean	1.93	1.88	1.91	2.76	2.39	2.22

Source: Own elaboration.

In general terms, the frame with the biggest presence is Liberty (M=2.76), referring to individual freedom and the use of government policy to impose societal control. Of the parties analyzed, the only one that forms part of the government in its country is the Polish party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (PiS) led by Jarosław Kaczyński. Its status as a governing party has compelled it to adopt a discourse focusing more on the statistics on vaccinations and less on the gravity of the case numbers, the use of the COVID passport, or the alleged violation of basic rights (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Prawo Sprawiedliwość (PIS), Poland "Vaccinations administered"*

Source: https://www.instagram.com/PISORGPL/

The three parties that do not make extensive use of the Liberty frame are Spain's Vox, Austria's FPÖ and Germany's AfD. The Spanish party led by Santiago Abascal invokes a patriotic discourse of Resilience (M=1.83), employing military terminology to call Spaniards to the defense of the nation against the enemy, which in this case is COVID-19, responding to adversity with the support of institutions like the Red Cross or the Spanish army. It also makes subtle references to problems of Globalization (M=1.83) and open borders as explanations for the public health crisis. On the other hand, the Austrian far-right party (FPÖ) focuses on a narrative of Conspiracy (M=2.92), which it uses to undermine the official discourse (Figure 2), while Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) also makes frequent use of a discourse of Resilience (M=3.01).

Figure 2. *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs, Austria. "No to experimenting with our kids"*

Source: https://www.instagram.com/fpoe_at/

In response to the first research question (RQ₁), the rest of the parties embrace a discourse questioning the repression of individual freedoms, expressing opposition to the control over individual movement entailed in the so-called "COVID Passport," as exemplified in a post by the Belgian party (Figure 3). However, there is no widespread dissemination of disinformation related to COVID-19, which would be more clearly associated with conspiracy theories or with blaming the public health crisis on migration or the processes of globalization, issues generally at the very heart of populist far-right ideology.

Figure 3. *Vlaams Belang, Belgium. "No compulsory COVID Passport"*

Source: https://www.instagram.com/vlaamsbelang/

On the other hand, the data presented in Table 2 reveals that not all parties have taken a neutral stance in relation to vaccination, a fact consistent with the diversity of populist discourses (Aalberg et al., 2017).

Table 2. *Mean Scores. Parties/Frames.*

	In favor	**Against**	**Neutral**	**Protest**
AfD	106 (70.7)	7 (4.7)	30 (20)	7 (4.7)
Pis	115 (76.7)	4 (2.7)	19 (12.7)	12 (8)
Vox	19 (12.7)	2 (1.3)	111 (74)	18 (12)
RN	4 (2.7)	22 (14.7)	98 (65.3)	26 (17.3)
VG	7 (4.7)	7 (4.7)	107 (71.3)	29 (19.3)
FPÖ	0	100 (66.7)	28 (18.7)	22 (14.7)
LN	8 (5.3)	14 (9.3)	106 (70.7)	22 (14.7)
Total	256	156	499	136

N; (%)

Source: Own elaboration.

The German party (AfD) expresses support for vaccination (N=106; 70.7%) provided that it is not made compulsory but left as a personal choice within the scope of individual freedoms, although the party does oppose vaccination for children under the age of 12 (Figure 4). The same favorable position on vaccination (N=115; 76.7%) is evident in the posts of the Polish party (PiS).

Figure 4. *Alternative für Deutchland (AfD), Germany "Söder wants to impose the vaccine on children under 12. Hands off our kids"*

Source: https://www.instagram.com/afd.bund/

The Spanish (Vox), French (RN), Belgian (VG), and Italian (LN) parties have all exhibited a neutral position on vaccines in their posts, although they do position their party strategies identified in the frame analysis (Table 1). Conversely, the discourse of the Austrian far right party is marked by a categorical rejection of vaccination (N=100; 66.7%). This variability is another reflection of the adaptability of populist parties, which seek to leverage all political and social circumstances to their advantage (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2018).

In response to the second research question (RQ2), based on the results outlined above, it can be concluded that the European far-right parties analyzed have taken a partisan approach to their messaging on Instagram, promoting their party positions rather than making use of the huge influence they exert on their followers on this platform to communicate useful public health information (Drylie-Carey et al., 2020). For example, although they are obviously aware of the importance and persuasive power of the images they post, the political parties studied did not take advantage of their influential position to show their leaders wearing face masks, practicing social distancing, or following public health measures such as washing their hands or using hand sanitizer. Instead, they have generally sought to maintain a provocative tone that challenges the government, especially when the parties concerned belong to the official opposition.

Table 3. *Engagement rate.*

	Followers	Posts	Likes[1]	Comments[2]	Engagement
AfD	115000	820	4321.53	-	3.75
Pis	31400	1610	936.68	32.40	3.08
Vox	643000	2337	37972.45	892.74	6.04
RN	28400	385	2832.92	124.36	10.41
VG	59600	577	3736.45	96.02	6.43
FPÖ	5700	829	493.87	7.31	8.79
LN	2200000	12631	188345.28	2436.10	8.67

Source: Own elaboration. Date of data: 2021/12/15.

The data presented in Table 3 reveals that success or engagement on Instagram is higher among parties that position themselves with a more belligerent visual discourse against mass vaccination, mainly of children. These results are consistent with the findings of studies conducted on the communication style of populist parties, especially far-right parties, which aim for polarization and provocation (Arias, 2016). This is the case of the parties in Italy, Austria, and especially France, whose leader, Marine Le Pen, directly blames the government and immigration, with very aggressive messaging: "No to face masks for schoolchildren"; "Public health priority for French citizens, not for immigrants"; "With Macron, an immigrant enters France every 2 minutes". However, the parties that take a more moderate stance, or even clearly support vaccination, have obtained objectively lower engagement rates on Instagram; this is the case of the German, Polish, and Belgian parties. Particularly noteworthy is the neutrality of Vox, whose quest for a central position on the Spanish political landscape has compelled it to adopt a position that is not openly for or against vaccination.

6.   Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this study is to offer a clearer understanding of the communication strategies used by far-right populist parties on a social media platform of growing importance in response to the public health emergency caused by COVID-19, which placed these parties in a very awkward position as they needed to maintain an aggressive and polarizing attitude towards governments for their handling of the pandemic, calling for greater individual and economic freedom in light of the government restrictions, while at the same time supporting the protection of the public in keeping with their exclusionary nationalist ideologies.

---

1. Mean number of likes.
2. Mean party number of comments (data not available in the profile for Germany´s AfD party)

In this context, considering the particular political, social, and public health conditions of each country analyzed while also taking into account the unique features of populism itself, it is unsurprising that the parties have taken different stances on the question of vaccination. Among their various opinions they do not deny the existence of the disease, the case numbers, or the danger the pandemic poses. Nevertheless, they generally convey a clear concern about what they deem to be a violation of personal rights and individual freedoms in the government policies adopted to deal with COVID-19. Specifically, their "denialist" perspective is focused above all on the restrictions and obligations imposed upon members of the public to get vaccinated against their will, such as a measure as simple and effective as the requirement to present a COVID passport to be able to enter a restaurant. The rules are different in each country, which in turn gives rise to different responses: The Austrian government, for example, made vaccination compulsory for all of the country's residents in November; in Italy, all public employees were required to get vaccinated; and in Spain and Belgium, the COVID passport required people to get vaccinated in order to enter a bar, etc. These circumstances also meant that the frame with the biggest presence in the posts analyzed was the one related to individual freedom and to criticism of what they deemed was government overreach. In Poland, where the far-right party governs as part of a coalition, its pro-government discourse was positioned significantly more on the side of the vaccinated, avoiding criticism which, if it had been made, would have to be directed at themselves.

It might be expected that this frame based on the freedom of individuals in opposition to obligations imposed by a "corrupt" elite, an umbrella concept that includes both journalists and scientists (Wondreys & Mudde, 2022), would have been used extensively in Spain, given that even outside far-right movements, it was adopted in the Madrid region by the conservative party (*Partido Popular*), whose candidate in the regional elections in May 2021, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, launched her campaign with the slogan (which she subsequently altered) "*Comunismo o libertad*" ("Communism or Freedom"). Díaz Ayuso also called repeatedly for the relaxation of public health restrictions to take the pressure off small businesses in the restaurant sector so that they could survive the economic crisis. Nevertheless, Vox, like FPÖ in Austria and AfD in Germany, did not make extensive use of this argument. Instead, Abascal's party favored a patriotic frame of resilience, evoking a military tone to call for the defense of the country against the COVID enemy, highlighting the support of institutions such as the Red Cross and the Spanish army.

Thus, perhaps contrary to expectations, the results of this research suggest that populist far-right parties do not generally use their Instagram accounts to post fake news or disinformation on vaccination, and most do not make use of a discourse of conspiracy or blame the government directly for the handling of the public health crisis. This confirms the findings of previous studies (McNeil-Willson, 2020). The exception to this general rule is France, where Marine Le Pen's party clearly attacks the government measures, blaming them for the spread of the disease, but this is a very unusual case.

Overall, the European far-right parties analyzed here have favored their own position on the issue, but they have not done so uniformly, nor have they directly opposed vaccination. Instead, they have shown support for arguments against vaccine mandates and COVID passports. These official accounts of far-right parties can take a more neutral official stance (either voluntarily or compelled by the less permissive standards of social media platforms like Instagram), while influencers and anonymous individuals who support their underlying ideology can promote disinformation against the use of vaccines (Salaverría et al., 2020) and thus these more militant approaches coexist with the party's much milder official position. The apparent objective of this ambiguous discourse is to take a more neutral stance so as not to enter into conflict with either side on a thorny and polarizing topic with opposing views that seem irreconcilable. This positioning is in keeping with previous studies that show that the far right is moving out of marginal electoral status and into a more central space in European politics (Brils, et al., 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2019; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2019).

Given that numerous authors identify populism above all as a "communication phenomenon" (Alonso-Muñoz & Casero-Ripollés, 2020; de Vreese et al., 2018), we believe that this study could contribute to a better understanding of the communication strategies used on social media by populist far-right parties in the context of a social emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, this may have been a circumstance that further boosted the growing electoral success of these parties in many parts of the world, at a time when the rise of antiliberal discourse is jeopardizing the health of democratic systems as we know them (Runciman, 2018).

As a limitation of this study, we recognize that focusing exclusively on the analysis of messages on Instagram posts on the accounts of these parties effectively overlooks many of the different motivations and frames operating in parallel with official narratives on social media. The particular bubble of the social media universe of far-right sympathizers seems more prone to "denialism" and to unambiguous anti-vaccine stances than what is suggested in the visual messages discussed in this article. Moreover, we believe that research in other regions of the world where populist right-wing parties have acquired considerable political influence, such as the United States or Brazil, may produce different findings from those obtained here. We therefore propose an expansion of the objects of study for future research to cover a wider geographical area and include different leaders and influencers who would help fill out the map of messages and frames disseminated on social media platforms in relation to the complex issue of disinformation and COVID-19 vaccines.

7. References

Aalberg, T., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). Comprehending Populist Political Communication. En: Aalberg, T, Esser, F., Reinemann, C., Strömback, J., & de Vreese, C. H. (Eds.). *Populist Political Communication in Europe*, 3-11. Routledge.

Aalberg, T., Esser, F., Reinemann, C., Strömback, J., & de Vreese, C. H. (2017). *Populist Political Communication in Europe*. Routledge.

Alonso-Muñoz, L., & Casero-Ripollés, A. (2020). Populism against Europe in Social Media: The Eurosceptic Discourse on Twitter in Spain, Italy, France and United Kingdom during the Campaign of the 2019 European Parliament Election. *Frontiers in Communication, 5*(54).

Al-Rawi, A. (2020). Political Memes and Fake News Discourses on Instagram. *Media and Communication*, 9, 276-290.

Arias Maldonado, M. (2016). La digitalización de la conversación pública: Redes sociales, afectividad política y democracia. *Revista de Estudios Políticos*, 173, 27-54. https://doi.org/10.18042/cepc/rep.173.01

Bast, J. (2021). Managing the Image. The Visual Communication Strategy of European Right-Wing Populist Politicians on Instagram. *Journal of Political Marketing*, 20, 1-30. https://doi.org/10.1080/15377857.2021.1892901

Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press.

Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 33, 122-39. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323118760317

Bernárdez-Rodal, A., Rey-Requeijo, P., & Gutierrez-Franco, Y. (2020). Radical right parties and anti-feminist speech on Instagram: Vox and the 2019 Spanish general election. *Party Politics, 28*(2), 1-12. https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068820968839

Bieber, F. (2020). Global Nationalism in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Nationalities Papers, 5*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.35

Block, E., & Negrine, R. (2017). The populist communication style: Toward a critical framework. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 178-197.

Boatman, D., Eason, S., Conn, M. E., & Kennedy-Rea, S. (2021). Human papillomavirus vaccine messaging on TikTok: Social media content analysis. *Health promotion practice*, 10 [pre-published online].

Brils, T., Muis, J., & Gaidytė, T. (2020). Dissecting Electoral Support for the Far Right: A Comparison between Mature and Post-Communist European Democracies. *Government and Opposition*, 57, 56-83.

Brubaker, R. (2021). Paradoxes of populism during the pandemic. *Thesis Eleven, 164*(1), 73-87. https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513620970804

Casero-Ripollés, A., Sintes-Olivella, M., & Franch, P. (2017). The Populist Political Communication Style in Action: Podemos's Issues and Functions on Twitter During the 2016 Spanish General Election. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 61, 989-1001.

Chen, Q., Chen, M., Zhang, W., Xiaoyue, M., & Evans, R. (2021). Factors Driving Citizen Engagement with Government TikTok Accounts During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Model Development and Analysis. *Journal of Medical Internet Research, 23*(2), e21463. https://doi.org/10.2196/21463

Crilley, R., & Gillespie, M. (2019). What to do about social media? Politics, populism and journalism. *Journalism, 20*(1), 173-176. https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807344

de Vreese, C. H., Esser, F., Aalberg, T., Reinemann, C., & Stanyer, J. (2018). Populism as an Expression of Political Communication, Content and Style: A New Perspective. *The International Journal of Press/Politics, 23*(4), 423-438. https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218790035

Down, I., & Joon-Han, K. (2021). Far right parties and "Europe": societal polarization and the limits of EU issue contestation. *Journal of European Integration, 43*(1), 65-81. https://doi.org/10.1080/07036337.2020.1728263

Drylie-Carey, L., Sánchez-Castillo, S., & Galán-Cubillo, E. (2020). European leaders unmasked: Covid-19 communication strategy through Twitter. *Profesional de la información, 29*(5), e290504. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.sep.04

Eberl, J. M., Huber, R., & Greussing, E. (2021). From populism to the ´Plandemic´: why populists believe in COVID-19 conspiracies. *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties*, 31, 272-284.

EC.Europa.eu (2020). *European Commission authorises first safe and effective vaccine against COVID-19*. European Commission.

Ehsan, R. (2020). *Weaponising COVID-19: Far-Right Antisemitism in the United Kingdom and United States*. The Centre on Radicalisation and Terrorism. HJS Henry Jackson Society.

Engesser, S., Ernst, N., Esser, F., & Büchel, F. (2017). Populism and social media. How politicians spread a fragmented ideology. *Information, Communication & Society, 20*(9), 1109-1126.

Filimonov, K., Russmann, Ut., & Svensson, J. (2016). Picturing the party: Instagram and party campaigning in the 2014 Swedish elections. *Social media + society, 2*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116662179

Gerbaudo, P. (2018). Social media and populism: An elective affinity? *Media, Culture & Society*, 40, 745-53.

Guenthe, L., Ruhrmann, G., Bischoff, J., Penzel, T., & Weber, A. (2020). Strategic Framing and Social Media Engagement: Analysing Memes Posted by the German Identitarian Movement on Facebook. *Social Media + Society, 6*(1), 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119898777

Halikiopoulou, D. (2020). *The political implications of COVID 19: what now for populism?* En: Billio, M., & Varotto, S. (Eds.), *A New World Post COVID-19 Lessons for Business, the Finance Industry and Policy Makers*. Edizioni Ca'Foscari.

Haßler, J., Kümpel, A. S., & Keller, J. (2021). Instagram and political campaigning in the 2017 German federal election. A quantitative content analysis of German top politicians' and parliamentary parties' posts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1954974

IAB Spain (2021). Estudio Anual de Redes Sociales 2021. https://iabspain.es/estudio/estudio-de-redes-sociales-2021/

Iosifidis, P., & Wheeler, M. (2018). Modern Political Communication and Web 2.0 in Representative Democracies. *Javnost-The Public, 25*(1-2), 110-118. https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1418962

Jagers, J., & Walgrave, S. (2007). Populism as political communication style: An empirical study of political parties' discourse in Belgium. *European Journal of Political Research*, 46, 319-45.

Jaramillo-Dent, D., Contreras-Pulido, P., & Pérez-Rodríguez, M. A. (2021). Right-wing immigration narratives in Spain: A study of persuasion on Instagram Stories. *European Journal of Communication*, 13.

Krämer, B. (2017). Populist online practices: The function of the Internet in right-wing populism. *Information, Communication and Society, 20*(9), 1293-1309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2017.1328520

Kübler, D., & Kriesi, H. (2017). How Globalisation and Mediatisation Challenge Our Democracies. *Swiss Political Science Review, 23*(3), 231-45.

Laclau, E. (2005). *On Populist Reason*. Verso.

Lalancette, M., & Raynauld, V. (2017). The power of political image: Justin Trudeau, Instagram, and celebrity politics. *American Behavioral Scientist, 63*(7), 1-37.

Larsson, A. O. (2016). Online, all the time? A quantitative assessment of the permanent campaign on Facebook. *New Media & Society, 18*(2), 274-292.

Li, Y., Guan, M., Hammond, P., & Berrey, L. (2021). Communicating Covid-19 information on TikTok: a content analysis of TikTok videos from official accounts featured in the Covid-19 information hub. *Health education research, 36*(3), 261-271. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyab010

Lilleker, D., Veneti, A., & Jackson, D. (2019). *Introduction: Visual Political Communication*. En: Veneti, A., Jackson, D., & Lilleker, D. (Eds.), *Visual Political Communication*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-18729-3_1

López-Rabadán, P., & Doménech-Fabregat, H. (2021). Nuevas funciones de Instagram en el avance de la ´política espectáculo´. Claves profesionales y estrategia visual de Vox en su despegue electoral. *El Profesional de la Información, 30*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2021.mar.20

Mazzoleni, G. (2008). Populism and the media. En: Albertazzi, D., & McDonnell, D. (Eds.), *Twenty-First Century Populism: The Spectre of Western European Democracy*, 49-64. Palgrave Macmillan.

McIntyre, L. (2018). *Post-Truth*. The MIT Press.

McNeil-Willson, R. (2020). Framing in times of crisis: Responses to COVID-19 amongst Far Right movements and organisations. *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 1-32.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J. (2001). Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27, 415-444.

Mudde, C. (2007). *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge University Press.

Mudde, C. (2019). *The Far Right Today*. John Wiley & Sons.

Mudde, C., & Kaltwasser, C.R. (2018). Studying Populism in Comparative Perspective: Reflections on the Contemporary and Future Research Agenda. *Comparative Political Studies*, 51, 1667-1693. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414018789490

Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A. S., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020*. The Reuters Institute. University of Oxford. https://bit.ly/2AV1JTS

Norris, P., & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural Backlash and the Rise of Populism: Trump, Brexit, and Authoritarian Populism*. Cambridge University Press.

Oliden, P. E., & Zumbo, B. (2008). Coeficientes de fiabilidad para escalas de respuesta categórica ordenada. *Psicothema, 20*(4), 896-901.

Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble. What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Group.

Pelled, A., Zilberstein, T., Tsirulnikov, A., Pick, E., Patkin, Y., & Tal-Or, N. (2017). Textual primacy online: Impression formation based on textual and visual cues in Facebook profiles. *American Behavioral Scientist, 61*(7), 672-687. https://www.doi.org/10.1177/0002764217717563

Pérez-Curiel, C., & Rivas-de-Roca, R. (2020). Exploring Populism in Times of Crisis: An Analysis of Disinformation in the European Context during the US Election. *Journalism & Media*, 3, 144-156.

Runciman, D. (2018). H*ow Democracy Ends*. Basic Books.

Salaverría, R., Buslón, N., López-Pan, F., León, B., López-Goñi, I., & Erviti, M. C. (2020). Desinformación en tiempos de pandemia: tipología de los bulos sobre la COVID-19. *El profesional de la información, 29*(3). https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2020.may.15

Sampietro, A., & Sánchez-Castillo, S. (2020). Building a Political Image on Instagram: A Study of the Personal Profile of Santiago Abascal (Vox) in 2018". *Communication & Society, 33*(1), 169-84. https://doi.org/10.15581/003.33.1.169-184

Silverman, C. (2017). *I Helped Popularize The Term "Fake News" And Now I Cringe Every Time I Hear It*. Buzz Feed News. https://bit.ly/2wrWpBB

Snow, D., & Benford, R. (1992). *'Master frames and cycles of protest.'* En: McClurg Mueller, C, & Morris, A. (Eds.), *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*. Yale University Press.

Statista (2021). *Most popular social networks worldwide as of October 2021, ranked by number of active users*. https://bit.ly/3OtLzCk

Storsul, T. (2014). Deliberation or Self-presentation? Young People, Politics and Social Media. *Nordicom Review, 35*(2), 17-28. https://doi.org/10.2478/nor-2014-0012

Turnbull-Dugarte, S. (2019). Explaining the end of Spanish exceptionalism and electoral support for Vox. *Research and Politics, 6*(2), 1-8. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053168019851680

Unni, Z., & Weinstein, E. (2021). Shelter in place, connect online: Trending TikTok content during the early days of the US Covid-19 pandemic. *Journal of adolescent health, 68*(5), 863-868.

van Erkel, P. F., & van-Aelst, P. (2020). Why don't we learn from social media? Studying effects of and mechanisms behind social media news use on general surveillance political knowledge. *Political Communication*, 38, 407-425. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1784328

van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and practice: New tools for critical discourse analysis*. Oxford University Press.

Vieten, U. (2020). The ´New Normal´ and "Pandemic Populism": The COVID-19 Crisis and Anti-Hygienic Mobilisation of the Far-Right. *Social Science, 9*(9). https://doi.org/10.3390/socesci9090165

Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information Disorder. Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe. https://bit.ly/3VeyIG4

WHO (2021). *Classification of Omicron (B.1.1.529): SARS-CoV-2 Variant of Concern*. World Health Organization. https://bit.ly/3XhvnI6

Wondreys, J., & Mudde, C. (2022). Victims of the Pandemic? European Far-Right Parties and COVID-19. *Nationalities Papers, 50*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2020.93

Zuquete, J. P. (2018). *The Identitarians: The Movement against Globalism and Islam in Europe*. University of Notre Dame Press.

Related articles:

Boero, M. (2022). Fiabe di oggi. Temi, valori, prospettive narratologiche all'epoca della pandemia. *Opción*, 38, 20-38. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7527508

Cerdán Martínez, V., Giménez Sarmiento, A. y Padilla Castillo, G. (2022). El auge de Vox y el populismo en Youtube antes y durante la pandemia del COVID-19. *Revista de Comunicación de la SEECI*, 55, 17-35. https://doi.org/10.15198/seeci.2022.55.e751

García-Marín, D. (2021). Las fake news y los periodistas de la generación z. Soluciones post-millennial contra la desinformación. *Vivat Academia, Revista de Comunicación*, 154, 37-63. https://doi.org/10.15178/va.2021.154.e1324

Martínez-Sánchez, J. A. (2022). Prevención de la difusión de *fake news* y bulos durante la pandemia de COVID-19 en España. De la penalización al impulso de la alfabetización informacional. *Revista de Ciencias de la Comunicación e Información*, 27, 15-32. https://doi.org/10.35742/rcci.2022.27.e236

Piqueiras Conlledo, P., De Marchis, G. y Cuesta Díaz, V. (2020). Análisis del contenido publicado en YouTube, Facebook e Internet sobre vacunas y antivacunas. *Revista de Comunicación y Salud, 10*(1), 67-90. http://doi.org/10.35669/rcys.2020.10(1).67-90

AUTHORS:

Sebastián Sánchez-Castillo
Universitat de València. Spain.

Senior Lecturer at the University of Valencia. PhD in Audiovisual Communication, degree in Audiovisual Communication and Art History. He worked at the public channel Radio Televisión Valenciana from 1989 to 2013. He has also been a researcher and visiting professor at the Chile, Argentina, Scotland, England and Portugal as well as in various Spanish universities. He is the author of more than 60 research articles in JCR and Scopus reference journals, as well as 40 book chapters in the first positions of the SPI. Evaluator of research projects of the Ministry of Science in Innovation in Spain. His research focuses on media knowledge and effects, agenda-setting, framing, and audiovisual communication and its persuasion.
sebastian.sanchez@uv.es

Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3751-6425
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=55579357000
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=PxPJGpAAAAAJ&hl=es
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sebastian-Castillo-13
Academia.edu: https://uv.academia.edu/Sebasti%C3%A1nS%C3%A1nchezCastillo

Carlos López-Olano
Universitat de València. Spain.

Degree in Literature and Audiovisual Communication, and PhD (Extraordinary Award) from the University of Valencia. Since 1998 he has been a professor of Audiovisual Communication at the UV. He has also taught in different degrees and postgraduate courses at Universities such as Jaume I de Castellón (UJI), Cardenal Herrera (CEU), Valencian International University (VIU) or the University of Virginia (USA). He has also been a researcher and visiting professor at the Univ. of Bologna, Vrije Universiteit in Brussels, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Roehampton in London and Glasgow (UK). He has worked as a journalist for 25 years in different media, such as Antena 3 Televisión, Canal 9 or À Punt. His research focuses on the new possibilities opened up by multiplatform and transmedia technologies for public RTV.
clolano@uv.es

Índice H: 5
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8121-5999
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57202418112
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.es/citations?user=an99S8oAAAAJ&hl=es
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Carlos_Lopez-Olano
Academia.edu: https://uv.academia.edu/CarlosLopezOlano

Àlvar Peris-Blanes
Universitat de València. Spain.

PHD in Media Studies from the University of Valencia, where he is an Associate Professor in the Department of Theory of Languages and Communication Sciences. His interests are focused on the analysis of media content as well as the media construction of identities. In recent years, he has focused on delving into the presence of politicians in television "infotainment" programs. He is the author of numerous scientific papers published in academic journals, monographs and collective books on communication, Cultural Studies and history. He has been a visiting professor at universities in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy. He participates in various research projects and is a member of the Mediaflows and CONTD (Contents for Digital Television) R&D groups.
alvar.peris@uv.es

Índice H: 9
Orcid ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2323-2766
Scopus ID: https://www.scopus.com/authid/detail.uri?authorId=57218829039
Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=tCP6WHYAAAAJ&hl=ca
ResearchGate: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alvar-Peris-Blanes
Academia.edu: https://uv.academia.edu/PerisAlvar