

Pandemic narratives: news and seminality on Twitter and Facebook

Narrativas de pandemia en Chile: noticias y seminalidad en Twitter y Facebook

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Abstract

The beginnings of pandemic motivated a growing interest in the Chilean users in media, especially in digital social networks, searching for useful information in order to face fear and anguish. Considering the relevance of digital social media in this country as the main source of news, it is important to know the narratives that the journalists displayed in their stories about the social environment during the first period of the COVID-19 sanitary emergency. Thus, this study aimed to analyze and compare the discursive strategies that 17 Chilean media used to report the pandemic, and its association with seminality, namely, the ability to incite discursive interactions on users. Using a quantitative methodology, a discursive analysis was applied to characterize the narratives of all posts published on March and April 2020, with a sample of 6.525 news. In addition, a frequency analysis was performed to calculate the news or topics and the non-textual digital resources used in the news discourses. The results suggest a narrative uniformity on the two platforms that ignores the disparity of audiences and uses between them. This becomes evident when reviewing the association with seminality, where the more frequent linguistic marks, topics and digital resources of the news were precisely the less seminal ones.

Keywords

Social media, pandemics, news, discourse, journalism, users, Twitter, Facebook.

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Resumen

El inicio de la pandemia volcó a los usuarios chilenos hacia los medios de comunicación y sobre todo a las redes sociales digitales, en busca de información para enfrentar al miedo y a la angustia. Considerando que los medios digitales son la principal fuente de noticias en ese país, resulta relevante conocer las narrativas que los periodistas desplegaron para relatar las novedades del entorno social durante la primera etapa de la emergencia sanitaria. Por eso, este estudio se propuso analizar y comparar las estrategias discursivas utilizadas en Facebook y Twitter por 17 medios de comunicación chilenos para narrar la pandemia, y su asociación con la seminalidad, es decir, con la capacidad de estas publicaciones para provocar las interacciones discursivas de los usuarios. Utilizando una metodología cuantitativa, se aplicó un análisis de discurso para caracterizar las narrativas de todas las publicaciones sobre la pandemia durante marzo y abril de 2020, con una muestra total de 6525 noticias. Además, se realizó un análisis de frecuencia para calcular los frentes noticiosos y los recursos no textuales empleados. Los resultados sugieren una uniformidad narrativa en las estrategias discursivas implementadas en ambas plataformas, que ignoran la disparidad de audiencias y usos entre ellas. Esto se evidencia al revisar la asociación con la seminalidad, donde las marcas lingüísticas, las áreas temáticas y los recursos no textuales implementados tienden a ser precisamente los que atrajeron menos interacciones.

Palabras clave

Medios sociales, pandemia, noticias, discurso, periodismo, usuarios, Twitter, Facebook.

Introduction

Chile: the crisis after the crisis

Psychological and social distress are some of the symptoms experienced during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic in Chile. The diagnosis says that “the severity of symptoms was related to the duration of isolation, fear of contracting the disease, financial instability and exposure to the media” (Leiva *et al.*, 2020, n.p.). Considering social precariousness and exclusion as aggravating factors, it is interesting to note that the media appear as catalysts of fear and distress in times of crisis, especially if considering that they have a powerful influence on public attitudes in alarming situations. In fact, it has been seen in previous health crises that publishing dramatic head-

lines and instilling fear contribute to stigmatizing those who become infected (Brooks *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the benefits of having reliable, consistent and non-alarmist information to increase the sense of control are confirmed (Leiva *et al.*, 2020).

Additionally, when the pandemic appeared in Chile, the country was still in the midst of the crisis that began with the so-called “October Revolt” of 2019, when protests and riots were registered, rejecting social inequalities in issues such as social welfare, education and health (Aguilera and Espinoza, 2022). In this framework, the arrival of the quarantine in March 2020 interrupted the demonstrations and protests against the neoliberal system:

If the explosion sent millions into the streets with the slogan “Chile woke up”, the demand for “dignity” and the rejection of the abuses of the political-economic system, COVID-19 suddenly returned them to their homes to prevent contagion. (Heiss, 2020, n.p.)

In this context, the media recorded in 2020 a 15 % drop in trust in news with respect to 2019, being identified as part of the dominant elite, in a scenario of ownership concentration (Newman *et al.*, 2020).

This situation changed the year after, with a slight increase (6 %) in trust in the news, due to the attempts to respond to citizen demands with more informative content in the midst of the pandemic crisis (Newman *et al.*, 2021). Despite this, there are critical views that think that it was a strategy, because the credibility of the journalistic media in Chile has been falling for at least a decade, thus it was used as an instrument of the government’s communication strategy to cover all genres and time in all media to connect with audiences (Lagos, 2020) (and electorates) in an emergency situation.

From this scenario, it can be dramatically interpreted that digital social media in 2020 for the first time overtook television as news sources, a trend that continued in 2021. Thus, the main sources of information in Chile were online media and, in second place, social networking platforms, followed by television and, far behind, the written press (Newman *et al.*, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2021). This trend contrasts with other countries such as Spain, where television was the main news medium during the pandemic, leaving digital media behind (Montaña Blasco *et al.*, 2020). The same happened in the United States, where there was a repositioning of analog media (Casero-Ripollés, 2020).

Therefore, it is important to ask how the news was told at the beginning of the pandemic through social networks, considering the notorious shift from social outbreak to confinement. The narratives, i.e., the discursive strategies used by the main media in their accounts on the platforms, played an important role in building this scenario of crisis after a crisis, where citizen followed restrictive measures for protecting their health and life, especially considering the privileged role of journalistic narratives in the construction of social reality (Rodrigo Alsina, 1989), since narratives distinguish us as a species, allowing us to make sense of the world (Scolari, 2019).

The pandemic fostered the growth of the digital environment, which increased the natural and urban environments at an accelerated rate (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein, 2021). Considering that people naturalize the environment without distinguishing what is real, forgetting the social nature of their notions about the world and taking them for granted (Berger and Luckmann, 2001), it is important to make this process visible and problematize it. In the case of the construction of digital news, the duality of digital language, mentioned by Boczkowski and Mitchelstein (2021), indicates that old and new narratives are mixed, with past and emerging social categories, but users perceive them as a set of pre-established and fixed routines.

In a more specific sense, narratives, as forms of story construction, are instrumental in prompting discursive interactivity. A basic way to provoke action is to motivate the reading of the news fragment or -better- clicking on the link. This is a “content interactivity”, where the user only selects what he/she wants to consume. However, sharing the note with one’s followers or commenting publicly can be classified as “human interactivity” (Boczkowski and Mitchelstein, 2015, p. 117), i.e., the use of digital tools for communicating with other people, which transforms an individual act into a social fact, which, to a large extent, is not only motivated by the content or the topic, but also by the form of the discourse.

Because of the latter, this study aims to analyze the narratives of the most used media in Chile in digital social networks, leaving behind the vertical model of consumption and reading of analog media to establish the participation of users through their own content, called User Generated Content (UGC) (Thao and Shurong, 2020), which involve different levels of creative effort (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Therefore, it is important not only to value the journalistic discourses of the medium, but also its ability to incite interactive responses from users, to take advantage of and create open spa-

ces to listen to the voices of audiences and their contributions, and to inspire empathy through news, especially during crises.

To this end, seminality allows to value the discursive interactions of users when dealing with news, weighting them quantitatively according to their engagement and exposure (Miranda Bustamante, 2018).

As for the most used platforms in Chile, Facebook has appeared in the last three years as the most required for news, and although it is oriented more to interpersonal communication with known people, it is not alien to public and political debate, especially fostering greater confidence at the time of giving opinions because it is supposedly private. It is mainly used to disseminate media news and redirect to the native website (Tagle Montt *et al.*, 2021). As for Twitter, although it is listed in fifth place (Newman *et al.*, 2020; Newman *et al.*, 2021; Newman *et al.*, 2022), it is a privileged public space to learn and comment on news. It is very used by journalists, because it allows reporting and monitoring information in a bidirectional way (Puertas-Hidalgo *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, this research aims to comparatively analyze the digital narratives of news on Twitter and Facebook in the context of the COVID-19 quarantine in Chile and its association with seminality.

State of the art

The studies that have addressed the news of the pandemic in Chile and the world have mostly referred to fake news, which do not come mainly from the media but from the audiences. On the other hand, they have outlined a criticism of the journalistic approach, as observed in the study by López *et al.* (2021), where an epic war and narrative were observed in the news at the beginning of the pandemic to discursively construct the health professionals, who in turn are criticized by being considered heroes.

Likewise, the work of Mellado *et al.* (2021) addresses the social networks of the media and focuses specifically on the use of sources, concluding that political sources were favored, followed by health, and then, by citizen, academic-scientific and economic sources. It is interesting to note that Twitter, unlike Facebook and Instagram, turned out to be less pluralistic with respect to the voices consulted and tended much more to interview political sources.

Outside Chile, audiences perceived that there was exaggeration and generation of fear caused by the information transmitted mainly on television and

also on social networks, as in Peru (Mejía *et al.*, 2020). In Spain, an analysis was made of the language, content and reactions on Facebook of the news of two media about COVID-19, to conclude that one obeys a polarized pluralist model, while the other is framed in a corporate democratic style, by a more impartial and independent language (Lázaro-Rodríguez, 2020).

Regarding user engagement with content, the contribution of Gruszynski Sanseverino and De Lima Santos (2021), in their study of 80 news websites from 80 Latin American countries examines how UGC was embraced during the pandemic by a small handful of media outlets, with interesting experiments incorporating audience insights into news content. However, the overall trend had minimal engagement with audience participation.

Finally, on the use of language, the study by Krawczyk *et al.* (2021) states that 16 % of news stories associated with the pandemic were negatively polarized, addressing death, fear or crisis.

Therefore, it was not possible to detect previous research focused on the specific analysis of the narrative in relation to the discursive interactivity of users.

Materials and methods

Type of study and units of analysis

This descriptive and explanatory study applies a quantitative methodology that takes as units of analysis all publications on Twitter and Facebook made by a list of 17 Chilean journalistic media during March and April 2020. The time span was set to include the days prior to the official declaration of the pandemic by the World Health Organization (OPS, 2020), on March 11, when the effects of COVID-19 began to be seen in other countries of the world, in addition to the implementation of the first restrictive measures dictated by the government of the center-right President Sebastián Piñera. These began with the declaration of a catastrophic state on March 18, followed by a nationwide curfew on March 22, followed by the first quarantines. The strategy, called the Step-by-Step Plan, consisted of setting different levels of travel restrictions, activities and capacity per city, which varied over time depending on the localized infection rates (MINSAL, 2022).

The selected media correspond to the most consulted by Chilean audiences to search for news during 2020, according to the Digital News Report

(Newman, 2020), together with the media that obtained the highest seminality rate in a study on Twitter and news in Chile with data collected in 2014 (Miranda Bustamante, 2016). The list considers Twitter and Facebook accounts of digital media, television, radio and press (Table 1).

Table 1
Chilean media included in the sample

	Number of news about COVID-19 on Twitter	Number of news about COVID-19 on Facebook
CDF (cable TV)	31	52
CNN Chile (cable TV)	482	184
Copano (digital)	2	N/A
El Dínamo * (digital)	179	54
The Clinic * (print)	222	417
24 Horas * (broadcast TV)	575	556
Bío-Bío * (radio)	139	382
Emol (digital)	6	10
LUN (print)	10	5
Meganoticias (open TV)	450	277
El Mostrador (digital)	172	108
La Tercera (print)	349	103
T13 (broadcast TV)	396	183
Cooperativa (radio)	434	91
El Ciudadano (digital)	107	201
CHVNoticias (open TV)	211	18
La Cuarta (print)	41	78
Total	3806	2719

The collection of all the news published yielded a total of 74 925 on Facebook and 107 433 on Twitter. The inclusion criteria were those containing the words coronavirus, COVID or COVID-19. In both cases, they corresponded to only 4 % of the total, which constituted a sample of 3806 on Twitter and 2719 on Facebook.

Data analysis tools

Linguistic markers analysis

A quantitative discourse analysis was applied on the 6525 news items in the sample, which was useful for transforming the characteristics of a text into quantifiable and discrete data (Sayago, 2014). It facilitates the subsequent triangulation of these textual indicators with seminality.

The matrix of linguistic markers was applied to the discursive analysis to characterize the discursive strategies, which allowed coding the narrative of each news item as a sequence of linguistic markers, understood as textual resources that indicate the presence of the narrator subject in the story and that do not correspond to specific syntactic types (Martín Zorraquino, 2008), but rather point to a wide diversity of connotations. In this research we will look for the markers of the narrator-journalist, understanding that the pretension of objectivity transforms into an ethical imperative to hide in appearance the imprint of the narrator-subject in a discourse, which in reality is an impossible task.

The matrix (Table 2) divides the linguistic markers into four types. Traditional journalistic markers include the 6 classic W's of Anglo-Saxon-style informative journalism, equivalent to what, who, how, when, where and why, which predominate in the narrative of the inverted pyramid, widely disseminated in Chile through journalism schools (Hernández Osuna, 2016). The why is added and also the technique of giving voice to the sources that participate in the discourse quoted directly, indirectly or with a paraphrase that identifies the issuer of the discourse.

There are also the brands that use rhetoric, inspired by Aristotle and re-floated by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1989, p. 39), who define it as the study of “the discursive means that serve to obtain the adhesion of the audience”, which is materialized in “the technique that uses language to persuade and convince”. Although opinion was the first genre to dominate journalism, modernity and industrialization consolidated the Anglo-Saxon idea of explicitly separating it from data and facts (Peñaranda, 2000) and thus differentiating it from the informative and interpretative genres (Santibáñez Martínez, 1985). This category includes indicators related to argumentation, which may belong to the opinion genre or could be used openly in an informative text:

- **Expositio:** provides the thematic or temporal context that allows understanding the semantic environment that develops the central idea or news.

- **Inventio:** the judgment expressed, the opinion itself, which, according to journalistic tradition and ethics, must be expressly distinguished from information.
- **Elocutio:** stylistic aspects of the discourse that give it argumentative power or emotional persuasion through two resources: expression, which adds emotionality with interjections, highly connotative words or simple exclamation marks; and witty or poetic phrases.
- **Question:** this includes the rhetorical question, which states an obvious statement in a questioning tone, without waiting for an answer.

In addition, connotative resources will be reviewed, with a wide variety of linguistic forms that affect the prescriptive meaning of words to relate them with new meanings through language, which camouflage the language, deviating its original meaning (López Panach, 1999; Gutiérrez, 2008). They include expressions of consequence, adversative and conditional forms.

Finally, digital markers are categorized, which correspond to discursive forms that point to the nature of digital language. There are metadiscursive markers, which highlight the characteristics of the medium that emits the message, for example “live”, “now”, “more information”. Secondly, the inciting ones, which assume that it is inherent to the digital media to allow and procure the discursive interactions of the audiences and, therefore, invite and promote this participation and contribution with UGC. This is the case of expressions such as “comment and share”, “follow us” or “check this listing”.

Table 2

Linguistic markers matrix for analyzing journalistic narratives

Journalistic markers			
What	Q	Who	W
When	C	How	H
Where	D	Why	Y
What for	M	Direct quotation	T
Indirect quotation	I	Source	F
Connotative markers			
Adversatives	A	Conditionality or probability	N
Consequence	S		

Rhetorical markers			
Inventio	O	Ask	P
Expositio	B	Witty phrase	R
Expression	X		
Digital markers			
Metadiscursive	V	Inciters	E

Image 1



Note. Facebook.

For example, the post shown in image 1 has the QWYVDV narrative, since the sequence identifies the what (“first death”); the who (“health official”), which in this case constitutes the distinctive value of the news; and the

why (“by COVID-19”). Then it introduces a metadiscursive resource on the coverage (“@HectorBurgosO with more details”), the where (“La Araucanía”) and a new metadiscursive marker at the end (“En vivo por #T13AM”).

Frequency analysis

A frequency analysis type content analysis was also considered to quantify the use in the narratives of digital resources specific to the platforms, such as emojis, photographs, videos, links to the native websites of the medium and hashtags.

In addition, news were quantified, grouping the publications on the pandemic around the following topics: sports, related to the suspension or holding of tournaments and matches and the opinions and contagions of figures; economy, with the consequences of the crisis on companies and financial indicators; education, referring to the interruption of classes; entertainment, linked to the holding or not of events, or the contagion and charity events of celebrities; religion, with comments from leaders of different religions and politics on ceremonies; international, about the pandemic in the world; police, with the control measures of restrictions and the investigation of those who contravened them; health, which focused on outbreaks, daily government reports on the progress of contagion and status of hospitals); society (expert opinions on the social environment or surveys); transportation (flights and shipments); politics (statements by party leaders, announcement of measures and restrictions by the government); science (new data on the disease, advances in the discovery of cures and vaccines); cities (regional or community information); and metadiscursives, which only contained self-promotion, without journalistic content.

Calculation of seminality

Seminality was measured for each unit, calculating the capacity of a digital journalistic discourse to incite discursive contributions from audiences, weighting each possible response according to its degree of exposure and creative effort, from Twitter likes or Facebook reactions, the lowest level, to comments, which are considered the most exposed and dedicated way of discursive participation in the news flow of digital social networks (Table 3):

Table 3
Seminality formula

Twitter:	Facebook
$\frac{((MG*0.1)+(RT*0.2)+(CM*0.3))}{0,6}$	$\frac{((RC*0.1)+(CP*0.2)+(CM*0.3))}{0,6}$
MG: I like it RT: Retweet CM: Comment	MG: Reaction RT: Share CM: Comment

Note. Miranda Bustamante and Fernández Medina (2020). Adapted to be applied on Facebook.

Hypothesis

Regarding the objective of this research, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H1: There are different narratives for news communicated on Facebook compared to Twitter, considering the differences between both platforms.
- H2: Traditional journalism narratives, despite their importance, are insufficient on their own to increase levels of seminality.

Results

Linguistic marker

Although Twitter increased its character limit for tweets from 140 to 280 (El País, 2017), it is still restricted, while Facebook offers a wide and continuously increasing capacity for the length of its posts. According to this, it is understandable that Twitter has had an average of 127 characters in its news and Facebook, a 55 % greater length, with an average of 197. However, it is striking that the density of linguistic tags, i.e., the average number of resources used per unit of analysis was 3.9 on Facebook, and 3.3 on Twitter, with only a 18 % difference. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that the greater space available was not necessarily used on Facebook to achieve a more forceful discourse from a narrative point of view.

As for the most frequent markers, there was a coincidence between both platforms in the five most used ones, where the what, who, where, *expositio* and metadiscursive digital resource were preferred (Table 4). Therefore, it can be affirmed that there is a preference for traditional journalism markers and the need to contextualize information through *expositio* and metadiscourse. The use of background on a topic and the reiteration of the characteristics of the coverage and the channel make a lot of sense in social network platforms where news appears in an individual timeline, in a fragmented and decontextualized way, in conjunction with publications from other contacts and other media, which address different topics and semantic contexts.

This trend is also replicated when analyzing the least frequent tags on both platforms, where the five with the lowest incidence also coincide: witty phrase, opinion, expression, adversative tag and conditional.

Table 4
Frequency of linguistic markers

Markers	Twitter	Facebook	Difference
A	0.5 %	1.2 %	0.7
B	10.2 %	8.8 %	1.4
C	4.0 %	5.0 %	1
D	10.8 %	9.2 %	1.6
E	3.5 %	1.9 %	1.6
F	0.9 %	1.6 %	0.7
H	1.2 %	1.3 %	0.1
I	2.0 %	1.9 %	0.1
M	2.5 %	3.4 %	0.9
N	0.7 %	1.1 %	0.4
O	0.3 %	0.7 %	0.4
P	0.9 %	1.2 %	0.3
Q	23.8 %	24.0 %	0.2
R	0.2 %	0.5 %	0.3
S	1.6 %	2.1 %	0.5
T	4.0 %	3.6 %	0.4
V	8.7 %	6.6 %	2.1
W	19.5 %	19. %	0
X	0.3 %	1.2 %	0.9
Y	4.4 %	5.7 %	1.3

The above allows establishing that there is a narrative uniformity among the 17 accounts, regardless of whether Facebook or Twitter is used. This is probably related to the fact that journalistic routines are deeply rooted in Chilean journalism also in terms of discursive practices, even when dealing with digital narratives and two social networks that target different uses and audiences. This is also translated into a clear predominance of the informative genre, which is confirmed by observing that the expression of judgments constituting opinion was very marginal, with 0.7 % on Facebook and 0.3 % on Twitter.

When classifying the use of markers by type, journalistic markers are the most used on Facebook and Twitter, with 76 % and 73 % respectively. In second place are digital markers with 12 % on both, followed by rhetorical markers with 8 % on Facebook and 12 % on Twitter. Finally, connotative markers have 4 % on Facebook and 3 % on Twitter. Thus, it can be observed again that there is a coincidence in the type of narratives. It is interesting, however, that Twitter has a slightly lower incidence of journalistic markers than Facebook in favor of rhetorical resources. Considering the limitation of the tweets, it is noteworthy that this platform gives space to argumentation, slightly taking away the prominence of data.

Narratives and seminality

It is important to relate narratives to seminality, i.e., to evaluate the capacity of these discursive strategies to incite audience participation.

On average, Facebook registered a seminality of 257.4, much higher than that of Twitter, which reached 11.4. This is clearly due to the massive use of Facebook for news consumption, which occupies the highest preference in Chile, while Twitter is in fifth place. In any case, Twitter has increased its seminality in recent years, compared to that recorded in 2014, when news tweets on that network in Chile only reached an average of 1.48 (Miranda Bustamante, 2016).

Table 5
Incidence of linguistic markers on seminality. Facebook

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	P
Intercept	71.46	41.8	1.7095	0.087
A	30.18	90.8	0.3323	0.740
B	-62.94	39.6	-1.5877	0.112
C	-36.13	46.4	-0.7779	0.437
D	104.99	35.7	2.9438	0.003
E	220.05	76.6	2.8732	0.004
F	45.12	79.2	0.5698	0.569
H	-28.85	83.6	-0.3450	0.730
I	147.14	73.4	2.0050	0.045
M	189.50	56.0	3.3832	<.001
N	172.92	92.7	1.8659	0.062
O	374.80	122.4	3.0612	0.002
P	71.48	92.5	0.7731	0.440
Q	1.21	33.3	0.0363	0.971
R	-158.64	133.9	-1.1845	0.236
S	95.10	68.9	1.3811	0.167
T	226.89	52.9	4.2919	<.001
V	117.86	40.7	2.8940	0.004
W	3.31	33.0	0.1003	0.920
X	274.18	91.8	2.9870	0.003
Y	80.28	47.1	1.7050	0.088

Table 6
Incidence of linguistic markers on Twitter seminality

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	8.2454	1.96	4.1996	< .001
A	-0.1138	4.76	-0.0239	0.981
B	-0.8788	1.35	-0.6492	0.516
C	-0.8618	1.76	-0.4885	0.625
D	0.0158	1.29	0.0122	0.990
E	-3.7085	1.92	-1.9271	0.054
F	5.0012	3.54	1.4109	0.158
H	0.8665	3.17	0.2734	0.785
I	6.2970	2.70	2.3317	0.020
M	-2.5132	2.34	-1.0739	0.283
N	15.4785	4.14	3.7397	< .001
O	3.8743	5.83	0.6645	0.506
P	1.0181	3.70	0.2751	0.783
Q	1.3797	1.36	1.0118	0.312
R	-4.9592	7.85	-0.6320	0.527
S	-1.8261	2.75	-0.6634	0.507
T	11.2833	2.04	5.5393	< .001
V	-3.5977	1.22	-2.9468	0.003
W	2.9091	1.21	2.3957	0.017
X	-4.9919	6.22	-0.8022	0.422
Y	-1.3170	1.79	-0.7352	0.462

Tables 5 and 6, which show the linguistic markers that turn out to be predictive variables of significant incidence for seminality in both platforms, indicate that while Facebook has eight incident markers (D, E, I, M, O, T, V and X), Twitter only registers five (I, N, T, V, W) and they have three in common (I, T and V). It is noteworthy that different narratives tend to be as-

sociated with a greater seminality in both platforms, remembering that they were quite uniform among themselves in the selection of their discursive strategies. Thus, it can be observed that Twitter is dominated by seminality related to probability (N), which is understood in the context of the pandemic, with news that are linked to possible treatments or vaccines to combat the disease. Apart from this, the traditional resources associated with sources (W, I and T) turn out to be more seminal, which could suggest the importance of the competence of those who deliver the information to the press and also the centrality of sources in the midst of a health crisis. In addition, one can suggest the idea that Twitter, due to its character's limitation and focus on public issues, should concentrate more on journalistic markers in order to trigger more discursive interactions with respect to its audiences. Despite this, the metadiscursive resource (V), which suggests the need to emphasize the identity of the medium in a context of fragmentary reading, also encourages audience participation.

On the contrary, on Facebook, in addition to the journalistic markers, which include textual (T) and indirect (I) quotations, the what (M) and where (D), the opinion (O), which was almost always an explicitly marker as such in accordance with traditional deontological norms, tended to have a significant impact on the seminality. The expression of emotions in the story (X), the metadiscursive resources (V) and the invitation to participate and interact on the part of the audience (E) were also seminal. Therefore, it could be inferred that Facebook tends to be more inciting when there is more freedom of expression on the narrator, as long as he/she does not neglect the identification of his/her sources and the classical separation between facts and judgments.

Tabla 7

Incidence of the type of linguistic markers on seminality on Facebook

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Journalistic	36.87	9.29	3.968	<.001
Rhetorical	5.53	30.53	0.181	0.856
Connotative	83.02	46.61	1.781	0.075
Digital	138.61	32.36	4.284	<.001

Tabla 8

Incidence of the type of linguistic markers on seminality on Twitter

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Journalistic	0.918	0.558	1.645	0.100
Rhetorical	-0.872	1.201	-0.726	0.468
Connotative	1.151	2.092	0.550	0.582
Digital	-3.572	1.039	-3.438	<.001

According to Tables 7 and 8, the use of digital markers has a significant impact on seminality in both platforms, confirming the idea that journalistic data are extremely important and turn out to be central, but are insufficient on their own to enhance discursive participation.

Image 3 exemplifies the XYSDO narrative, which obtained the highest seminality in the sample for Facebook. First, it has an expression (“Even the fish are seen”); then, the why (“After a week without humans due to the coronavirus quarantine”); the consequence (“the canals (...) have been cleaned and have returned to clarity”); and the where (“of Venice”). It ends with a value judgment that, in this case, is not made explicit as an opinion: “One more sign of who is the planet’s problem”. This post only has two journalistic facts, but it adds rhetorical (expression and opinion) and connotative (consequence) markers.¹

1 It is important to say that the use of different markers to journalistic ones must be rigorous to treat the data. In the case of the example referred to a post by Cooperativa (2020), Facebook adds a fact check with a news item from USA Today, where it is explained that the COVID-19 crisis in the long term did not contribute to diminish the impact of the human being in the environment.

Image 3



Note. Facebook.

Seminality and digital resources

In the digital context, linguistic markers coexist and are complemented by the digital resources of both platforms, which add non-textual elements to the narratives and can also have an impact on seminality. Thus, tweets contained an average of two digital resources and Facebook posts only 1.5, even though they have a greater capacity for writing. On both platforms, the most frequent were links, mainly to the native site of the medium, which were present in 87 % of the tweets and 83 % of the posts. On Twitter, the second place went to the photograph (47 %) and then to the hashtag (30 %), which, in this network, due to its characteristics of public space, is used to start conversations on common topics. On Facebook, in second place comes the emoji, which only 3 % were used to express emotions (pleasure, sorrow and astonishment, in decreasing order) and the remaining ones were only used for decorative or signaling purposes. In third place, the hashtag was used (21 %).

Table 8

Incidence of digital resources on seminality on Facebook

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Hashtag	-165.634	49.55	-3.3426	<.001
Link	-148.348	70.97	-2.0904	0.037
Emoji or similar	125.507	51.19	2.4518	0.014
Photography or graphics	393.886	73.22	5.3797	<.001
Video	601.049	71.75	8.3765	<.001
Another	-13.924	322.63	-0.0432	0.966

Tabla 9

Incidence of digital resources on seminality on Twitter

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Hashtag	-1.63	1.39	-1.17	0.243
Link	2.24	1.75	1.28	0.200
Emoji or similar	-4.15	3.92	-1.06	0.290
Photography or graphics	-6.24	1.44	-4.32	<.001
Video	1.64	1.37	1.20	0.229
Another	10.51	2.14	4.92	<.001

Tables 8 and 9 show that all the resources on Facebook, except the “other”, have a significant incidence with respect to seminality, confirming the idea that participation increases in responses with content that involves a greater creative effort (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Whereas, on Twitter, probably because of its brevity and immediacy, only seminality is associated with narratives containing photographs and the “other” type of resources.

Seminality and news

The news from which the pandemic was addressed agree in frequency on Facebook and Twitter. The most recurrent was health (22.6 % and 28.3 %,

respectively), followed by the international area (20.6 % and 20.3 %) and politics (14 % and 11.2 %). Likewise, the least frequent news items were those that combined the health emergency with transportation (1.9 % and 0.2 %) and religion (0.6 % and 0.3 %) and then the entirely metadiscursive contents, which only stated the COVID-19 topic to highlight the media coverage (0.6 % and 0.1 %).

As for the relationship between the news addressed and seminality, religion on Twitter obtained the highest level (17.8), followed by science (17.5), society (16.2), police (16.1) and politics (16). In the case of Facebook, religion (836.3) is in first place, followed by police (790.1), cities (591), politics (383.4) and education (340). It is noteworthy that the topic that obtained the highest seminality was among those that were less covered by the media in the context of the crisis.

Regarding Facebook, the possible reactions are varied, and a specific emotion can be chosen from seven options. Thus, the most reiterative was “I like it” (50 %), probably because it is the oldest and best known and does not require the user to make a selection movement to the right but appears by default when hovering over the menu. It is followed by “I am amused” (22 %) and “I love it” (11 %).

It is relevant to say that the “I care” was introduced by Facebook on April 17, 2020, during the pandemic. However, it was only registered in 0.001 % of the posts, probably because people did not know it. It is interesting to note that the “I am amused” appears mostly related to news about religion and politics. This coincides with “makes me angry” (5 %), which is also associated with these topics plus police. This trend coincides with the discrediting of the churches in Chile due to the cases of sexual abuse and abuse of power that have been reported since 2010 (Claro, 2021). In addition, since the social outburst, political parties and the police have experienced a social discredit (Garcés, 2020) that may explain these measurements.

Conclusions and discussion

It can be stated that the 4 % of news on both platforms that were recorded in relation to COVID-19 is below the 25 % of digital news about the pandemic that was found in 11 countries according to the study by Krawczyk *et al.*

(2021). This shows that, at least in social networks, the saturation of news in Chile on this topic was lower than elsewhere in the world.

In addition, it is important to note that Facebook, despite being the main source of news for Chileans several years ago, had 43 % less news about COVID-19 than Twitter, considering the same media at the beginning of the crisis. This is the first sign that consumption habits are being ignored in relation to the news offer.

In fact, the news on Facebook, although longer in length, only register a small positive variation in the number of linguistic markers and use fewer digital resources to complement the story.

This is also translated into the narrative nomenclature of the news. Although they are different platforms in their uses and audiences, almost the same discursive strategies are applied in both.

There is an almost exclusive predominance in both on the informative genre, and the same traditional markers of journalism are used above all, together with expositio and metadiscourse. Likewise, the same rhetorical and connotative resources were avoided, including opinion. This leads us to refute H1, inasmuch as the narratives employed in the news published on Facebook and Twitter tend to resemble each other. This reflects a scarce knowledge or interest on the part of the media regarding the differences of both platforms, which refer, as explained above, in technical terms, to the extension and, in terms of uses, to a greater habit of sharing among acquaintances, in the former, and a tendency to share public topics, in the latter.

For this reason, the differences in the results between these networks were found precisely in the relationship of the narratives with the seminality, i.e., in their effectiveness in the discursive relationship with the audiences.

In addition to the expected great advantage of Facebook in terms of seminality, in line with its popularity as a source of information, interactions on one and the other seem to vary with narratives that are partly the same and partly different. On Twitter, users' discursive interactions are more frequent with tweets containing journalistic resources associated with sources, probability and metadiscourse. On Facebook, on the other hand, the rise is linked to opinion, expression, textual and indirect quotations, where, what for, the inciting digital resource, where the participation or action of users is explicitly requested and the metadiscourse is typical of the digital environment. Thus, it is possible to observe that some journalistic resources individually are still important to incite the discourse of users on both platforms

and especially on Facebook, where a greater extension is allowed for data. In both, digital resources have a significant incidence with seminality, even though their frequency reaches only 12 %. Thus, it would be advisable, in order to increase it, a greater use of digital brands in the two social media, and greater expressive freedom, within ethical limits, for news stories on Facebook, considering that a diversity of markers is associated with seminality in this network.

In this way, H2 can be confirmed, since journalistic narratives turn out to be frequent and also seminal, but, together with certain additional journalistic markers, they tend to increase the discursive interactions of the public.

Regarding non-textual narrative resources, Facebook confirms the idea that dedication and time to prepare a good video or other material that requires “creative effort” pays off in terms of participation (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). However, once again there is a tendency to be unaware of the consumption habits of the audiences, due to the low use of resources that turned out to be seminal, such as video, which is among the least used resources, but on Facebook it tends to have a significant impact on seminality.

The same phenomenon occurs in relation to the topics, with an evident recurrence of the health topic in a context of health emergency, followed by world and political news. However, religion, which is among the least recurrent topics on Twitter and Facebook, was the most seminal of all the thematic areas.

In summary, the analysis of the narratives allows highlighting the importance of respecting and taking advantage of the characteristics of both platforms, knowing the habits and preferences of those who participate in them looking for news or encountering them.

It can be concluded that if we want to communicate effectively in a digital context, it is important to remember the participatory nature of the medium and aim to encourage discursive interactions. The bifurcation between the journalistic narrative practices described in this study and the behaviors and choices of audiences to interact with these contents indicate the pending task of recognizing these audiences and the expressive potential of each of these digital social networks. In this way, the digital construction of the news as a social narrative that is intersubjective can be evidenced, especially in the midst of a health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which required news to reduce distress.

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