

## Media Literacy as a New Field of Scientific Knowledge

*La alfabetización mediática como  
nuevo ámbito de conocimiento  
científico*

*A literacia mediática como um novo domínio  
do conhecimento científico*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2025.9048>

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In recent times, media literacy has gained an emerging presence in the academic and scientific fields. Undoubtedly, the importance of communication, media, social networks, and all forms of interaction and communication devices has increasingly played a central role in the last two decades in this society, which for many is already the “society of screens”, where fake news, digital spectacle, global knowledge, gamification, and collective hypnosis coexist. Both the finest aspects of humanity and the most trivial have a place, and at the same time, in the media gallery best symbolized by the mobile phone, the “cell phone”.

The media represent us as individuals, as a society, and as an era. Therefore, the interactions that citizens, as audiences, establish daily –often in a general and sometimes even compulsive manner– must be addressed in academia as both a phenomenon of study and a space for social transfer and intervention.

These interactions with the media are neither neutral nor aseptic; they shape and condition the lives of many citizens in an increasingly

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global and interdependent world. Research on these emerging knowledge spaces proves essential for providing answers to situations humanity has never had to face before in history.

In this thematic section, we propose six researches and reflections that address various perspectives and approaches from Europe and America. The articles in this section cover multiple theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives on the promising field of media and information literacy in different Latin American and European countries.

The article “Media and Information Literacy as Public Policy in Ecuador”, written by Ecuadorian researchers Diana Rivera-Rogel, Ana María Beltrán-Flandoli, Lucy Andrade-Vargas, Margoth Iriarte-Solano and Andrea Velásquez-Benavides, presents the results of research carried out by the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (Ecuador), in collaboration with UNESCO, Mintel Fundamedios, and the Ministry of Education of Ecuador. The IGO (Importance and Governance) methodology of Mojica (2005) was implemented to evaluate and segment actions aimed at formulating a public policy on digital transformation that integrates media and information literacy as a cross-cutting axis in Ecuador.

The findings reveal that the socialization of legal frameworks, training to access and use ICT, and critical training for media consumption are identified as highly relevant objectives for training people to analyze and understand the information they receive, make informed decisions, and participate socially in the media and digital culture. Furthermore, it is imperative that government entities clarify official information for the media, so they can produce and verify content credibly and reduce the digital divide.

The theoretical essay “Towards an epistemological model of media competence: paideia, maieutics, and classical thought”, by Mario Montaner Bastías, Marcelo Careaga Butter and Andrés Seguel Arriagada from the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (Chile), presents an epistemological model to study media literacy, based on classical schools of thought. The objective is to challenge the positivist paradigm that has dominated media and communication studies. The essay argues that the combination of media literacy studies

and Socratic maieutics is essential for understanding critical thinking as a fundamental process for humans and a means of access to knowledge.

Media literacy aims to encourage responsible media consumption; however, its initial conceptualization has not always contributed to the comprehensive development of individuals. The goals of media literacy align more closely with the principles of *paideia* and *maieutics* than with the predominant values in postmodern society. Therefore, the authors argue that, to achieve an effective application, specialized educators are necessary to promote questioning and critical thinking in the educational context. From this reflection, an epistemological model of media literacy is presented, grounded in the ecological systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which places media literacy at the heart of the learning process. This process is mediated by educators, who act as critical agents and stimulators through questioning and guidance, so that the process of assimilating real knowledge is truly meaningful for those who cultivate it within the context of today's digital society.

The article "Transdisciplinary and multimodal approach to the integration of media education into the content of higher education in Slovakia" by Viera Kačínová and Sabína Gálíková, from the University of St. Cyril and Methodius in Slovakia, addresses transdisciplinarity and multimodality in integrating media education in higher education teaching in this Eastern European country. Media education, which is mandatory in primary and secondary education, is flexibly incorporated into the curriculum.

The study presents a systematic analysis of the curricula of Slovakia's main universities to verify the inclusion of media education content. The analysis begins with an evaluation of national curricular policies and teaching practices in courses designed to train communicators and educators. The purpose of the research lies in identifying explicit content concerning media education and detecting multimodality in its integration into higher education. From a methodological perspective, a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the curricula of university programs related to the topic was implemented during the academic periods of 2023/24 and 2022/23. The findings reveal that media education is integrated into 38 academic programs across four fields of study, present in the 14 faculties and nine Slovak universities examined.

The article “Promoting Tourism Literacy from an Educommunication Perspective”, by Sandra-Cristina Côrtes-Moreira, Amor Pérez-Rodríguez, and Miguel M. Lopes from the University of Huelva (Spain), addresses the understanding of the relationship between tourism, communication, and educommunicative practices, systematizing the concept of *competence in tourism literacy*. A qualitative research approach was conducted through structured interviews to examine the roles and perceptions of tourism mediators in three destination management organizations in the Algarve region, Portugal.

The findings highlight that tourism mediators possess competencies related to technology, reception, empathy, and creation. As a result, the study delves into a deeper understanding of tourism and its implications, with the aim of promoting practices that favor ethical and sustainable tourism development.

The article titled “Threads on X and Content Curation for Scientific Dissemination in Higher Education in Ecuador”, by Marcelino Romero Gutiérrez, Patricia de-Casas-Moreno y Edgar Efraín Obaco Soto from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador and the University of Extremadura (Spain), explores the interrelation between media literacy and scientific literacy. While media literacy allows for the identification and selection of reliable sources, which aids in content curation, scientific literacy helps integrate and contextualize information rigorously, strengthening the credibility of publications on social networks.

The research’s main objective was to highlight the role of media and scientific literacy in the understanding and critical evaluation of information shared on the social network X. A systematic study was conducted on the use of threads in research and scientific dissemination by professionals and students from the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador. The sample consisted of 302 subjects, divided into two groups of 194 students and 108 professionals. A quantitative methodology, based on an empirical-inductive approach, was implemented, using questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The findings indicate that the use of X as an information source for research activities is moderate, although more prevalent than content curation.

The results reveal that, as academic level increases, a greater understanding of content management as a specialized process is mani-

fested, transcending the mere act of sharing content on social platforms. Furthermore, there is evidence of progress in media and scientific literacy, suggesting that survey participants possess a greater ability to effectively manage information on X and disseminate quality scientific content.

The article titled “Media Literacy in Sexual Education of Adolescents in Public Schools in Spain”, by Ane Amondarain and Eva Herrero Curriel from Carlos III University of Madrid (Spain), presents the results of a study conducted with students and teachers from various regions of the country to understand the most consulted sources of information on sexual education, the needs perceived by teachers regarding students’ sexual education, and the sources of sexual health content on the TikTok platform.

The methodology integrated qualitative and quantitative strategies through methodological triangulation, covering the in-depth investigation of information sources used by 270 adolescents, a detailed analysis of 551 sexual health posts on TikTok, and 20 interviews with teachers about the sexual education needs related to students’ media and information literacy.

The study’s findings indicate that the Internet emerges as the primary source of sexual education information for adolescents, who show deficiencies in this area and face challenges in distinguishing between reliable information and misinformation. Additionally, it was found that the sexual health posts on TikTok analyzed lacked credible sources.

Finally, the research highlights the challenges presented by digital culture and the urgent need to ensure sexual education that includes media and information literacy training so that adolescents can build affective sexual relationships and enjoy their sexuality in a healthy way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thematic section was edited within the framework of the Alfa-med Network (Euro-American Interuniversity Network for Media Competencies for Citizenship), with the support of the R&D Project “Research, Design, and Implementation of a Curriculum Proposal

for Teacher Training in Media Literacy in the Euro-American Area” by the Ministry of Science, Innovation, and Universities of Spain under the 2023 Knowledge Generation Projects Call (code PID2023-146288 NB-I00).

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