

Theoretical Journals on Audiovisual Communication in Latin America

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■ *This article presents a comparison of the role developed by Latin American theoretical journals that specialise in audiovisual communication and new digital technologies. I will firstly review the most significant features of the leading publications in developed countries (mainly Anglo-Saxon countries) and then go on to look more closely at the journals in the Latin American and Spain area, i.e., those published in Spanish and Portuguese, and a number of other minority languages on the Iberian Peninsula, such as Catalan, Galician and Basque.*

Some of these journals, such as the US titles *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, *Journal of Communication* and the *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, have been influencing international environments, industry, the news profession and political decision-making for more than half a century. Europe also has examples of illustrious journals published in different countries and languages, from different ideological or theoretical approximations and with varying degrees of social and cultural impact. However, the situation has been slightly different in the Latin American arena because of various factors that I will analyse in this article.

Introduction

Scientific journals in the fields of communication, cultural industries and new audiovisual technologies are growing in number, importance and specialisations, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon countries. However, the role of these publications on the Iberian Peninsula and in Latin America is less relevant, although the areas have a long tradition of high-quality journals.

From research into mass communications (in the US) and advertising (Germany), via semiotics (France and Italy), cultural studies (the UK) and national communication policies (Latin America), many researchers at academic and business institutions across the world have published hundreds of thousands of articles in journals that specialise in these issues to greater or lesser success and with very different goals.

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1. Concentration of Anglo-Saxon Publishing

The leading role of the Anglo-Saxon world within the international scientific and technological fields in all knowledge areas is repeated in studies into audiovisual-communication phenomena. Furthermore, the US-UK hegemony, complemented by other countries such as Canada and Australia, is accompanied by a clear linguistic prepotency. In effect, any important scientific or academic journal that wants to be considered within the international circuit must be published in English, a phenomenon also perceptible in the Scandinavian countries, Japan and even the Third World¹.

Similarly, and very closely linked with the above point, these countries reign supreme in content, models, theories and the selection of authors or subject matters in all types of scientific publications. In the specific case of audiovisual communication, to the US-UK primacy in the system of mass communication (broadcasters, media and content and now also the Internet) we should therefore add an historical pre-eminence in publications devoted to analysing and reflecting on these types of phenomena.

The two main types of journals that regularly address the different facets of audiovisual communication (academic or scientific and industry or technical) are practically monopolised by the most important Anglo-Saxon countries, as well as nearly all the international organisations (of a professional, business, documental, teaching or research nature), which also use English.

In effect, the leading British, US, Canadian and Australian universities, professional associations and public institutions, as well as the international organisations headquartered in these countries or in others, have a number of important journals (in English) devoted to analysing communication phenomena and those of different broadcast industries from all sorts of scientific perspectives, i.e., historical, sociological, economic, psychological, political, linguistic, anthropological, semiotic and technological.

This situation mainly came about because of the US, where there are many professional and academic associations with a longstanding tradition and a great many members (inside and outside the country). The situation is quite different in Europe (except the UK) and Latin America, where it is usually universities (or their associated institutions and research centres) that publish most of the specialist theoretical journals. However, the number of commercial companies that publish and distribute these types of works, particularly ones published in English, is growing steadily. Publishing companies that specialise in social sciences and humanities usually publish journals that address audiovisual-communication phenomena from an academic standpoint.

In general, Anglo-Saxon journals specialising in analysing the audiovisual sphere feature one-off and empirical research results, while publications from Latin countries (particularly France) prefer studies of a more general and global nature, with theoretical and methodological contributions. The Anglo-Saxon journals are usually aimed at the hands-on exploitation of results, whether for commercial, social or political purposes, while the Latin ones, on the other hand, often contain critiques or alternative proposals and are sometimes not linked purely to current affairs. (DZIKI, 1980; DYER & GARNET, 1991; GALDÓN, 2003; JONES, 2003).

2. Journals in Latin America and Spain

The publishing of journals that specialise in communication, culture and new broadcast technologies has grown considerably across Latin America and Spain in the past 20 years, although more in some countries than others. The most notable are, without a doubt, Spain, Mexico and Brazil, because of the rise in specialist faculties and the growing number of experts devoted to teaching and research in this field. In this article, I will not only present a general overview of the Latin American area as a whole, but also emphasise the specific features of the main linguistic areas. (MOTTA, 1989; IPAL, 1990; HULLEBROECK, 1994; JONES, 1996; JONES, 1999-2003).

2.1. Portuguese: Brazil and Portugal

2.1.1. Brazil: Tradition and Importance

Brazil, a country/continent full of contrasts, in which the most modern technologies exist cheek-by-jowl with misery and under-development, has seen the rise of one of the most important media systems in the world, led by powerful groups such as Globo and Abril. Different institutions devoted to teaching, research and documentation and focusing specifically on audiovisual-communication phenomena have sprung up over the past four decades. There are currently close to 70 university teaching centres with over 20,000 students and an association that gathers 1,000 researchers in this field (INTERCOM) and which in 1986 started up the PORTCOM CENTRE, dedicated to documenting communication issues in Brazil, Portugal and the former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

There is a clear interest on the part of the Brazilian researchers who work in this area to integrate their works across Latin America and throughout the world. To that end, the above-mentioned institutions play a leading role in the heart of other, continent-wide organisations, such as FELAFACS and ALAIC, and international associations like AIERI-IAMCR and the ICA. For example, Brazilian research into audiovisual communication (particularly TV soap operas) has become a reference point for important academic sectors across the continent and beyond.

With regard to journals that specialise in this field of study, Brazil has different titles with a certain academic tradition

and other, more recent ones. At the end of the day, they reflect the development of research into communication over the past four decades and can be characterised by a number of basic elements.

Early research works in the 1960s were aimed at assessing the effects of the media, as well as journalism studies (teaching, profession and history) and rural and popular communication, generally from a functionalist and developmental perspective. Within a decade, this type of research work had grown markedly and more studies were being done into the press (sociological and content analysis) and radio and TV (effects, programming, educational use), the majority of which were influenced by the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, semiotics and structuralism. The complexity of the communication phenomena first began to be accepted in the 1980s and many simplistic and naive types of research were rejected in favour of more critical and committed works (particularly reception studies) and ones more closely related to technical and professional activities.

The Brazilian cities with the longest tradition in audiovisual-communication studies include São Paulo and its nearby environs, the site of important universities and research institutions that publish the main theoretical journals, such as the University of São Paulo, the Methodist University of São Paulo and the INTERCOM Association. In recent years they have produced publications including *Revista Brasileira de Ciências da Comunicação* (São Paulo: INTERCOM); *Anuário de Inovações e Artes* (São Paulo: USP); *Comunicação & Sociedade* (São Bernardo do Campo: UESP); *Comunicação & Política na América Latina* (Rio de Janeiro: Centro Brasileiro de Estudos Latino-Americanos), and *Revista FAMECOS* (Porto Alegre: PUCRS) (STUMPF & CAPPARELLI, 2001).

2.1.2. The Sudden Acceleration of Portugal

Theoretical studies into communication, culture and new broadcast technologies were not greatly developed in Portugal until recent years, mainly because of Salazar's dictatorship (1929-1974) and the debility of its media system, and there were few universities that taught these specialities. Without a doubt, the most significant was the New University of Lisbon. Moreover, Portuguese research was particularly influenced by other countries with a

longstanding academic tradition, mainly the US and France and, to a lesser extent, Spain and Brazil. However, although few and far between, the level of its academic books and journals was very good, easily on par with that of its neighbours. Portugal's leading researchers conducted important academic activity within the country, even though they were not well known abroad.

In recent times, important work has been done by the Centro de Estudos de la Comunicação e Linguagens, the New University of Lisbon (which publishes the excellent *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens*); the Observatório da Comunicação (the publisher of *Observatório: Revista do Obercom* and the magnificent *Anuário Comunicação*); the Associação Portuguesa para o Desenvolvimento das Comunicações, from the New University of Lisbon (the sponsor of the journal *Tendências: Broadcast, Telecomunicações, Multimédia*); the Instituto Superior de Ciências do Trabalho e da Empresa (which publishes *Trajectos: Revista de Comunicação, Cultura e Educação*), and the Centro de Estudos de Ciências da Comunicação, at the Independent University (the publisher of the industry journal *Midia XXI*).

2.2. Spanish. Latin America and Spain

2.2.1. Imbalances in Latin America

The overall number of regular publications of all types devoted to analysing audiovisual communication from the different formal, theoretical and methodological perspectives published in the different Latin American countries over recent years gives an indication of the region's great interest in studying this contemporary social phenomenon.

Because of the strong influence exercised by developmentalist currents, promoted by the US (since the 1950s), UNESCO (since the 1960s) and local universities, European foundations and religious confessions of different origins and diverse orientations (from the 1970s), almost all the Latin American countries today have centres that specialise in training communicators, researching audiovisual communication and publishing specialist journals. There is no doubt that Latin America (including Brazil) has managed to position itself at the vanguard of the developing countries with regard to the study of communication phenomena.

However, the exponential growth of university teaching centres (up from two 50 years ago to more than 200 today)

has not always gone hand in hand with an equivalent qualitative development of education and research. Many of these university faculties or schools are very poorly equipped in terms of both technical resources (libraries, newspaper archives, radio and TV equipment, computer connections) and human resources, with professors ill-equipped for teaching as a result of the mass increase of students and an evident lack of planning.

A number of excellent Latin American researchers have made among the most interesting and original contributions in recent years to this field of studies at the international level, particularly of a sociological, semiotic, economic, political and anthropological nature, with many focused on the North-South conflict. Each of these leading researchers has made a particular contribution from different perspectives and interests towards consolidating interdisciplinary studies of these phenomena, particularly through the regular publication of diverse books, reports, speeches and journals.

The great number of publications specialising in audiovisual communication in recent years in the principal Latin American countries includes organisations of very different types, content and levels of specialisation. We can thus say that diverse journals have carved out a particular name for themselves, regardless of their scope and international recognition, because of the quality of the articles and authors chosen, the treatment and profundity of the issues tackled or because of the continuity and care of the publication.

The best theoretical publications in the Latin American countries today are Mexico's *Estudios de las Culturas Contemporáneas* (Colima: Colima University), *Comunicación y Sociedad* (Guadalajara: Guadalajara University), *Revista Mexicana de Comunicación* (Mexico City: Manuel Buendía Foundation) and *Etcétera* (Mexico City: Análisis, Publicaciones y Ediciones); Colombia's *Signo y Pensamiento* (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana) and *Escribanía* (Manizales: Manizales University); Venezuela's *Comunicación* (Caracas: Gumilla Centre) and *Anuario ININCO* (Caracas: Central University of Venezuela); Peru's *Diálogos de la Comunicación* (Lima: FELAFACS) and *Contratexto* (Lima: Lima University), and Chile's *Cuadernos de Información* (Santiago: Catholic University of Chile). There are some others that are too recent to know how they will evolve and yet others that have declined in academic quality in recent months, such as Ecuador's *Chasqui* (Quito: CIESPAL).

2.2.2. The Spectacular Change in Spain

The censorship and State control exercised by the Francoist regime (1939-1975) meant that with some exceptions (particularly in the press and advertising), research in Spain during that time was characterised by a lack of scientific and academic rigour and reduced to the simple organisation of conferences, congresses and discourses of an ideological nature. However, this doctrine evolved, thanks to the socio-political adaptation of the regime from the authoritarianism of the early years into greater liberalism later on, although it was still marked by the nationalist Catholicism that characterised the whole period.

It wasn't until the 1960s that the first academic studies (by local and foreign authors) were published, thanks particularly to the publishing work of Navarre University. Moreover, despite the clear progress taking place in Europe and the US, the shortfall in heavy-hitting works and specialities at home was matched in academic institutions (teaching, documentary and research institutions) and professional and theoretical journals.

However, the past 30 years has been spectacular, although there have been significant imbalances. Because of the number of institutions, people, resources, research and publishing companies, Madrid (and to a lesser extent, Catalonia) was traditionally the main centre in Spain with regard to audiovisual-communication studies. Examples include the work carried out in recent years by some key institutions, such as the Complutense University of Madrid, FUNDESCO (now the Telefónica Foundation) and IORTV (which depends on Radio Televisión Española), as well as all types of private institutions that specialise in communication marketing (audience surveys and advertising investments), which have produced commercial information of strategic value.

These historical conditions meant that until recently there were no academic journals on audiovisual communication published in Spain on par with those being published in its neighbouring countries. There are now many publications of a commercial nature that specialise in film, radio, television, video and advertising, and different theoretical journals have appeared in recent years, although most are published in Madrid.

The most significant academic journals published in Spanish today are *Ámbitos* (Seville: Seville University); *CIC*

and *Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia* (Madrid: Complutense University of Madrid); *Comunicación y Sociedad* (Pamplona: Navarre University); *Comunicar* (Huelva: Comunicar Group); *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: La Laguna University); *Telos* (Madrid: Telefónica Foundation); *Voces y Culturas* (Barcelona: Ediciones Voces y Culturas) and *Zer: Revista de Estudios de Comunicación* (Bilbao: University of the Basque Country).

2.3. Catalan

It was not until the 1980s that various specialist academic journals appeared in Catalan. They were consolidated during the 1990s with the help of promotion from university institutions and other public and private agents. The journals could easily be framed within international models, although they generally do not have an important repercussion beyond Catalonia, mainly because of the language used and because they tend to deal with issues of interest to Catalonia and the defence and promotion of the Catalan language and culture.

The longest-established and most high-quality journal is without a doubt *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, first published in 1980 by the faculty now called the Department of Journalism and Communication Sciences at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, which has, in the 29 issues published to date, enjoyed good collaborations both from Catalans and authors from abroad, particularly the Latin countries.

The Journalists' College of Catalonia published 26 issues between 1984 and 1995, as a second phase of the journal *Annals del Periodisme Català*, which mainly involved reflections on journalistic activity within the country, both from the professional perspective and legal, historical, economic and sociological points of view, with references to the broadcast media.

The Catalan Communication Society (an affiliate of the Institute of Catalan Studies) launched the journal *Periodística* in 1989, which has published issues devoted to studies on the theory and history of journalism, but with few references to the broadcast media. The same organisation started another academic journal, titled *Treballs de Comunicació*, in 1991, which promoted the Institute's activities as well as theoretical works produced by its members.

However, not all the projects have had the same success: *Gazeta* (1994), devoted to the history of the press, and *Cinematògraf* (1992 and 1995), which specialised in film history, only published one and two issues respectively.

Other private institutions have also promoted their theoretical journals. The public Elisava School has been publishing *Temes de Disseny*, a journal devoted mainly to questions of graphic design, corporate image, semiotics, communication theory and mass culture, since 1986.

The Blanquerna School of Communication Studies at Ramon Llull University has been publishing *Trípodos: Llenguatge, Pensament, Comunicació* since 1996, which gathers articles by the university's professors and collaborations from other sources. The Catalonia Broadcasting Council has been publishing *Quaderns del CAC* since 1998, an important source of legal and sociological aspects of broadcasting in Catalonia and the rest of Europe.

Within industry, the clear highlight is the journal *Capçalera*, published by the Journalists' College of Catalonia, which has examined all types of issues relating to the professional world and the Catalan media since 1989. Finally, a new title was released in 2000, in this case private and commercial: *Mass Media 21* (now called *Comunicació 21*). This was a publishing novelty in Catalonia as it concerned the monitoring and analysis of the business and professional world of communications in the country.

2.4. Basque and Galician

There are very few theoretical publications in Basque or Galician because of the historical and social evolution of these languages. In the specific case of journals that specialise in the academic field of audiovisual communication, there are only a few titles, most recently published by public institutions devoted more to defending the languages and culture than specifically interested in the development of the media system.

In the case of the Basque language, the University of the Basque Country has been publishing *Zer: Revista de Estudios de Comunicación* since 1996. Although nearly all the articles are in Spanish, it also includes some texts in Basque, as well as other European languages, such as French and English. Another specialist publication is *Mediatika: Cuadernos de Medios de Comunicación*, published in Basque and Spanish by Eusko Ikaskuntza (the

Society for Basque Studies), which also publishes other titles relating to music and film.

With regard to Galicia, the only academic journal in this field that appears in the Galician language is *Estudios de Comunicación*, which the Council for Galician Culture has been publishing since 2001 and which particularly includes collaborations from university experts and professionals in the region and mainly deals with local issues.

3. Features of the Latin American Journals

The big Latin American cultural area is the result of the colonisations and racial intermixing begun in the 15th century by the Spanish and Portuguese, and although from the point of view of political, economic, cultural and communication integration it could be qualified as entelechy, it could also be understood in the current global era as constituting a differentiated (and at the same time fairly heterogeneous) cultural and communication space. In any case, these shared identity traits do not clearly translate into the field of theoretical journals on audiovisual communication.

3.1. The Main Contribution of the Academic Journals

Although they have been around in Latin America for nearly half a century, it is not easy to say what the most important contribution of academic journals in the region is, although some trends can be observed in the trajectory of the main titles. These include an interest in popular culture and alternative media used as tools for social development and an observable interest in questions of a political nature, i.e., the role of the media in the democratic development of Latin America. However, this has been not been so to the same extent on the Iberian Peninsula.

The 1970s and 1980s featured concern for national communication policies and the new world order of information and communication, particularly following the impact of the MacBride Report and regular discussions within the heart of UNESCO. In recent years, however, theoretical research has focused on more pragmatic aspects, such as the rise of institutional communications and the implementation of new digital technologies. In any

case, culturalist and anthropological theories influence the whole of Latin America. On the Iberian Peninsula, on the other hand, we find more studies of an empirical nature on the real structure of the media and cultural industries and their dependence on local power groups, as well as their links to big trans-national groups.

3.2. Latin American Journals Compared to their Anglo-Saxon Counterparts

At first glance, we can see quantitative and qualitative differences of both form and content between the Latin American journals and their Anglo-Saxon counterparts. Firstly, in the Anglo-Saxon world, and thus by extension all the developed countries, there are a great many titles, many with a commercial circulation (particularly the British and US ones) from the main universities across the world. This gives them a very big projection, particularly in the developed world. They have an excellent formal quality and are released with strict regularity, generally on a quarterly basis. By contrast, the Latin American journals (less in the case of Spain) are usually characterised by poverty of material, sloppy design, irregularity in release dates and a noticeable disappearance rate, most dropping quickly from view. Few manage to survive for a period of years or have a foreign projection.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, there are an ever-increasing number of new titles that specialise not just in communication in general but in particular theoretical perspectives, e.g., history, economics, technology, linguistics and psychology, or aspects such as sex, age, health, etc. They even focus on specific media, e.g., radio, television, advertising, film or new digital technologies. The rise in specialisation has come about because of the increased complexity of the phenomena and progress in research.

In contrast, in Latin America (less on the Iberian Peninsula) journals are still in a preliminary, more descriptive, repetitive and trial phase, with texts of a more general nature that do not feature original contributions (where the author only shows, with the bibliography and sources used, that it is updated) but instead are different versions of matters that have already been discussed.

In general, at least in the developed countries, academic journals (particularly those that specialise in physical and natural sciences) are the first level of dissemination

(together with specialist congresses) that an expert can use to promote the preliminary results of his or her work (both individual and group work, at universities or in research centres) before a book is released; a book being a slower process that can include more details and relevant updates. However, what happens in Latin America is that nobody who has anything important to say uses these types of journals as a platform, and they don't have any academic or social projection or real influence.

3.3. Redundant and Unoriginal Content

With few exceptions, audiovisual-communication journals are very repetitive because little is researched due to lack of resources (particularly in Latin America), lack of time and because there is little social interest in the theoretical area of communications. This disheartens many researchers, who often end up abandoning academic circles and creating private consultancies at the service of corporations, political parties or other institutions, such as NGOs, where they tend not to carry out theoretical research of an empirical basis but rather applied research on particular and situational questions.

Furthermore, universities generally do not undertake research because the conditions to do so are unavailable or because professors are poorly paid and often have to take on another job. In short, the texts that usually appear in many Latin American journals are one-off articles that don't form part of a long-term ambitious process or line of reflection and research, but are rather commissions or proposals that serve to boost an author's academic curriculum so they can rise through the bureaucratic ranks and obtain better work conditions.

With regard to the criteria they are forced to abandon, the most notable is originality in the approach to an issue, rigour in the selection of sources and bibliography, the theoretical framework and empirical data handled, clarity of organisation and the social interest of the object of the study (as it is not enclosed within a purely academic environment but contributes to common wellbeing).

3.4. Circulation Today

Anglo-Saxon journals have a high level of circulation among hundreds of universities in the wealthy countries, not just the English-speaking ones but also in those of the

world's main languages. The same does not occur with Latin American journals, which generally don't leave their own country because there is not the material ability to do so nor enough interest in their content to attract potential readers, at least within their own cultural area. For example, very few journals from Latin America reach Spain (particularly some that circulate in a form of exchange with other Spanish ones) because they are not very attractive from the formal and content points of view, are too irregular and are only concerned with local or one-off issues, without original contributions that could be of use to the research community.

There is no justification for the fact that academic journals in Spanish don't circulate across the whole Latin American cultural area (including Brazil and Portugal) because Spanish is generally used in nearly all academic fields. The situation is different in Europe, where political and linguistic fragmentation results from each State having its own language. Some even have more than one language (e.g., Spain).

This has a marked impact on the publishers and readers of academic journals, including ones concerned with audiovisual communication. Publications generally only circulate within their linguistic environment and don't usually cross borders unless they are published in English. That is why important German, French or Italian journals, for example, are not well known outside their national territories. In the case of post-Franco Spain, for example, regional languages in which journals (or at least a number of articles) are published, such as Catalan, Galician and Basque, have gradually been recovered, which paradoxically makes it more difficult for them to circulate across Spain and Latin America.

However, not only is the level of readership low, but journals often have no type of academic, political or social repercussion. In other words, articles are not commented on or quoted in other academic texts (books, reports, theses, other scientific articles) and even students in the faculties that publish them don't take them into account as reference works, nor are they used for professional recycling or updating within industry.

This does not mean journals are not published or new titles don't appear regularly, because there is a strong pressure by university institutions for their teachers to publish theoretical reflections, but as they cannot do so in the

leading specialist journals they have to create their own platforms of expression, which usually have a very short life or, in the best of cases, are irregular and weak.

3.5. The Rise of Digital Journals

The implementation of the most advanced technologies has been much slower in Latin America than in the highly developed world, something that can be clearly appreciated by the number of computer users and even more by the number of people who use the Internet. This has very important repercussions at all levels in the use of these technologies, the languages used, the expansion of websites (particularly portals) and, especially, the implementation of e-commerce, where the differences between the First and Third World are much more obvious. Moreover, this inequality translates into the hegemony of a number of languages (particularly English and to a lesser extent German and Japanese) and the marginalisation of others, such as Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and Russian, a phenomenon that is even more pronounced in the case of minority languages in all the regions of the world, except for the Scandinavian ones (with a large number of speakers).

Despite these inequalities, there is a very dynamic Internet environment made up of Latin American digital newspapers, i.e., ones that carved out a place online during the 1990s, which are enjoying significant year-on-year growth. However, the publications that are still not consolidated in the Latin American area are theoretical journals in the field of audiovisual communication on digital support. It is true that in the past two or three years many of these journals have had a double version (on and offline) and that access is still free, which means they can be disseminated beyond the specialised libraries that store them. But there has been hardly any success stories to date among digital journals without a printed version or titles that were traditionally printed and which are now digital only.

At the same time, there are few cases of new Latin American journals published on digital support only (e.g., online and CD-ROM, such as the case of the Madrid-based Cuadernos de Documentación Multimedia), or that can only be consulted online, such as Catalonia's *Formats: Revista de Comunicació Broadcast*, the Spanish journals *Caleidoscopio*, *GITTCUS* and *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social*, Brazil's *Pensamento Comunicacional*

Latino-Americano, *Eptic on Line*, *Com Ciência* and *e.Pós*, or Mexico's *Razón y Palabra* and *Sala de Prensa*, to mention some of the most important.

Only time will tell whether these publications will be consolidated or not (e.g., *Revista LATINA de Comunicación Social* had published 56 issues by August 2003, while *Formats* has not been published since 1999). Neither is it clear whether the digital format will be the most suitable format for theoretical and academic texts, which are generally long and sometimes dense. In effect, paper support is still more important (as texts downloaded from the Net have to be printed). Furthermore, the rigour in the selection of authors and texts in some digital journals has not been the same as is usually applied to printed journals. It will therefore be a question of time until readers get used to finding good-quality articles in journals that are only presented in a digital format .

4. Conclusions

The production of journals that specialise in audiovisual communication has enjoyed sustained growth in the Latin American area in recent decades, both with regard to number of titles and variety of publishers and cities of origin. However, it is the developed countries (particularly the Anglo-Saxon ones) that have managed to consolidate the most ambitious academic and professional projects.

Analyses of the traditional broadcast media continue to award most space to Anglo-Saxon journals, although it is the electronic broadcast industry (e.g., new types of television transmission and consumption: cable and digital satellite) and computer technologies (multimedia integration, CD-ROMs, information highways) that are generating an increasing interest in the international panorama of this speciality area.

The most commonly used theoretical analysis perspectives are sociology and politics and, to a lesser extent, economics, semiotics, anthropology, pedagogy, psychology and history. Electronically broadcast goods and services appear to be more interesting in terms of their technological and socio-political implications than other considerations. Moreover, analyses on content, professional practices and ideological and commercial effects on audiences continue to

be of great interest to the experts who publish in these types of specialist journals.

However, the same is not true for the Latin American countries, which continue to publish traditional studies of a fundamentally ideological and cultural nature. Furthermore, there are publications of very diverse types, content and levels of specialisation. Some journals stand out above the rest, either because of their scope and international recognition, or for the quality of the articles and authors chosen, the treatment and depth of the issues tackled or for the continuity and care taken with the publication.

On the other hand, many of the issues dealt with in the different journals are often repeated, without signifying clear progress in research. This could be attributed to a lack of previous documentation on the part of the essay writers and a large dispersion of sources and efforts. Repetition often fails to give rise to new approaches and themes, which means that the range of issues dealt with - and the way of dealing with them - shrinks and does not allow an in-depth analysis of the real communication processes with all the different types of links they contain and the consequences that can be drawn.

However, the journals published in Latin America in recent decades have favoured the dissemination of intellectual output devoted to analysing audiovisual-communication phenomena, not only by locally based researchers but ones from abroad. They have also made it possible to introduce and generalise different theoretical currents and new methodologies, as well as debates crucial to the future of the area, although they have inevitably suffered from the shortfalls of any other genre in relation to the societies from which they spring and on which they act. Most of the titles have an irregular existence, an austere presentation and an uncertain future. In short, we could say that, despite the differences between them, they have contributed, even if modestly, to a better understanding between the different countries and an increased comprehension of their social, political, economic and cultural problems.

Notes

1. This is what recently occurred with the French journal *Communications & Strategies*, published by the IDATE in Montpellier. From 1991 to 1999 it was bilingual (French and English), but since the year 2000 it has only been published in English.
2. The most significant case is SAGE Publications, headquartered in London and with offices in other English-speaking countries, e.g., the US and India. This important transnational publishing company develops a hegemonic role in its specialty areas, annually publishing different books by the most important researchers at the international level, as well as 17 scientific journals. Through agreements with numerous professors at the most important Anglo-Saxon universities, it publishes quarterly journals that have a big circulation and a great influence on all academic environments across the world. It is a good example of globalisation.
3. 1997 saw the launch of the first issue of *Formats: Revista de Comunicació Broadcast*, promoted by the Broadcast Communication Studies area at the UPF. The journal was released on digital support over the Internet and a second issue was published in 1999, offering academic articles on this specific field. The Associació Film Historia published the journal *Film Historia* between 1991 and 2000, which included academic articles on film history and theory, both of domestic and foreign films. The journal was published in Spanish and English.
4. Today, what works very well on the Internet is not just on websites and portals (e.g., the Communication Portal started up by InCom at the Autonomous University of Barcelona), but also news bulletins with regularly updated content. This is the case of the excellent *Jornal Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação* (São Bernardo do Campo: Methodist University of São Paulo), which had published 225 issues by August 2003, with a wide range of information on academic communication activities.

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