



ATHENS INSTITUTE

Abstract Book

**24th Annual International Conference on
Communication and Mass Media
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece**

**Edited by
John Pavlik & Olga Gkounta**

2026

Abstracts
24th Annual International
Conference on Communication
and Mass Media
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece

Edited by
John Pavlik & Olga Gkounta

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

(In Alphabetical Order by Author's Family Name)

Preface		7
Editors' Note		9
Organizing & Scientific Committee		10
Conference Program		11
1.	Media Ethics in the Context of Covering Religious Issues According to the Guidelines and Ethical Coverage Manuals of Western and Georgian Media Organizations <i>Mariam Adamashvili</i>	15
2.	Two Shades of Grassroots Illiberalism: Investigating the Discursive Construction of a Global Phenomenon <i>Maria Bakardjieva</i>	17
3.	From Monsters to Mascots: Anthropomorphized Germs in Hygiene Advertising <i>Hande Bilsel & Murat Copcu</i>	19
4.	A Qualitative Study on Hypertensive Patients' Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Food and Supplement Advertising in Taiwan <i>Yen-Jung Chang & Ching-Yi Peng</i>	21
5.	Executorial Greenwashing by Natural Sounds? The Impact of Product Color and Background Sound on the Sustainability Rating of Online Presented Fashion <i>Luise Ende</i>	23
6.	Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis <i>Festus Eribo</i>	24
7.	Fin ... Once Upon a Time (1001 Tragicomic Footnotes): A Tiny Spherical Book - Test Run <i>Frank Gessner</i>	25
8.	Narrating War in the Digital Age: Social Media and the Gaza Conflict <i>Naila Hamdy</i>	26
9.	Third-Person Effects of Meta-verse Bullying: Perceived Influence, Social Distance, and Support for Regulation <i>Seong Choul Hong</i>	27
10.	Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis <i>John Howard</i>	28
11.	The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective <i>Amani Ismail & Gayane Torosyan</i>	29
12.	Does Local Radio Have a Future? <i>Aleksandar Kocic</i>	31
13.	Format, Genre, Legitimacy: The Traitors Between Public Service and Market Logics <i>Katerina Korinkova Sobotkova</i>	33

14.	Media Polarization, Manipulative Practices and Democratic Vulnerability in Small States (The Case of Georgia) <i>Diana Liparteliani</i>	35
15.	A Netnographic Analysis of TikTok Interactions in Indigenous Languages: The Case of Tshivenda and ChiShona <i>Memory Mabika</i>	37
16.	Unifying Theories of Journalism Through the Principles of Quantum Physics <i>Brian Massey</i>	38
17.	Undoing the Enemy: Toward a Rhetoric of Peace <i>Aysel Morin</i>	39
18.	Improving Functional and Interactive Health Literacy at the Community Level: The Nexus of Indigenous Language Radio Programming <i>Kevin Onyenankeya</i>	40
19.	Beyond (Dis)Trust: Audience's Emotional Strategies and Epistemic Practices in the Digital Media Environment <i>Mojca Pajnik</i>	42
20.	Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis <i>Laura Providera</i>	43
21.	Education as a Mean of Encounter and Understanding for Different Generations <i>Elsa G. Sanchez Huerta Villalba</i>	44
22.	How to Win the Attention War? Politically Motivated Discreditation of Media in Latvia <i>Anastasija Tetarenko-Supe</i>	45
23.	The Paradox of Progress: How Linguistic Evolution Deepens Communicative Inequalities <i>Laura Trujillo</i>	47
24.	The Relative Influence of Brand Trust Dimensions <i>Faith Valente & Carl Bozman</i>	48
References		50

Preface

This book includes the abstracts of all the papers presented at the 24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media (11-16 May 2026), organized by the Athens Institute.

A full conference program can be found before the relevant abstracts. In accordance with Athens Institute's Publication Policy, the papers presented during this conference will be considered for inclusion in one of Athens Institute's many publications only after a blind peer review process.

The purpose of this abstract book is to provide members of Athens Institute and other academics around the world with a resource through which they can discover colleagues and additional research relevant to their own work. This purpose is in congruence with the overall mission of the association. Athens Institute was established in 1995 as an independent academic organization with the mission to become a forum where academics and researchers from all over the world can meet to exchange ideas on their research and consider the future developments of their fields of study.

To facilitate the communication, a new references section includes all the abstract books published as part of this conference (Table 1). I invite the readers to access these abstract books –these are available for free– and compare how the themes of the conference have evolved over the years. According to Athens Institute's mission, the presenters in these conferences are coming from many different countries, presenting various topics.

Table 1. *Publication of Books of Abstracts of Proceedings, 2010-2026*

Year	Papers	Countries	References
2026	24	14	Pavlik and Gkounta (2026)
2025	41	22	Pavlik and Gkounta (2025)
2024	58	23	Pavlik and Gkounta (2024)
2023	36	16	Pavlik and Gkounta (2023)
2022	33	19	Pavlik and Gkounta (2022)
2021	12	9	Papanikos (2021)
2020	16	9	Papanikos (2020)
2019	37	21	Papanikos (2019)
2018	56	19	Papanikos (2018)
2017	65	27	Papanikos (2017)
2016	50	22	Papanikos (2016)
2015	65	26	Papanikos (2015)
2014	66	31	Papanikos (2014)
2013	49	27	Papanikos (2013)
2012	60	26	Papanikos (2012)
2011	85	25	Papanikos (2011)
2010	64	29	Papanikos (2010)

It is our hope that through Athens Institute's conferences and publications, Athens will become a place where academics and researchers from all over the world can regularly meet to discuss the developments of their disciplines and present their work. Since 1995, Athens Institute has organized more than 400 international conferences and has published over 200 books. Academically, the institute is organized into 7 divisions and 37 units. Each unit organizes at least one annual conference and undertakes various small and large research projects.

For each of these events, the involvement of multiple parties is crucial. I would like to thank all the participants, the members of the organizing and academic committees, and most importantly the administration staff of Athens Institute for putting this conference and its subsequent publications together.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President

Editors' Note

These abstracts provide a vital means to the dissemination of scholarly inquiry in the field of Communication and Mass Media. The breadth and depth of research approaches and topics represented in this book underscores the diversity of the conference.

Athens Institute's mission is to bring together academics from all corners of the world in order to engage with each other, brainstorm, exchange ideas, be inspired by one another, and once they are back in their institutions and countries to implement what they have acquired. The 24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media accomplished this goal by bringing together academics and scholars from 14 different countries (Canada, Czech Republic, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Mexico, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan, Türkiye, UK, USA), which brought in the conference the perspectives of many different country approaches and realities in the field. To be noted is that this year's conference included a cross-cutting intellectual theme "Sports, Media and Wars" and an interesting microsymposium on "Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crises" organized by Dr. Festus Eribo that raised lots of thinking and discussion.

Publishing this book can help that spirit of engaged scholarship continue into the future. With our joint efforts, the next editions of this conference will be even better. We hope that this abstract book as a whole will be both of interest and of value to the reading audience.

John Pavlik & Olga Gkounta
Editors

24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media, 11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece

Organizing & Scientific Committee

Athens Institute's conferences are organized by the Academic Council. This conference has been organized with the valuable contribution of the following academic members of the Athens Institute.

1. Dr. Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute.
2. Dr. John Pavlik, Head, Mass Media and Communication Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, Rutgers University, USA.
3. Dr. Adam Pitluk, Deputy Head, Mass Media and Communication Unit, Athens Institute & Assistant Professor, Coastal Carolina University, USA.
4. Dr. Festus Eribo, Professor, East Carolina University, USA.
5. Dr. Geneviève Bonin, Research Fellow, Mass Media and Communication Unit, Athens Institute.

FINAL CONFERENCE PROGRAM

**24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media,
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece**

PROGRAM

08:30-09:15

Registration

09:15-10:00 Opening Speech and Welcoming Remarks

Speaker: Gregory T. Papanikos, President, Athens Institute & Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

10:00-11:30 Session 1

Moderator: Dr. John Pavlik, Head, Mass Media and Communication Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, Rutgers University, USA.

1. **Laura Trujillo**, Professor & Researcher, Universidad Panamericana, Mexico.
Title: The Paradox of Progress: How Linguistic Evolution Deepens Communicative Inequalities.
2. **Frank Gessner**, Professor, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany.
Title: Fin ...Once Upon a Time (1001 Tragicomic Footnotes): A Tiny Spherical Book – Test Run.
3. **Mojca Pajnik**, Researcher, The Peace Institute Ljubljana, Slovenia.
Title: Beyond (Dis)Trust: Audience’s Emotional Strategies and Epistemic Practices in the Digital Media Environment.

11:30-13:00 Session 2

Moderator: Festus Eribo, Professor, East Carolina University, USA.

1. **Seong Choul Hong**, Professor, Kyonggi University, South Korea.
Title: Third-Person Effects of Meta-verse Bullying: Perceived Influence, Social Distance, and Support for Regulation.
2. **Elsa G. Sánchez Huerta Villalba**, Professor, Universidad Panamericana, México.
Title: Education as a Means of Encounter and Understanding for Different Generations.
3. **Katerina Korinkova Sobotkova**, PhD Candidate, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic.
Title: Format, Genre, Legitimacy: The Traitors Between Public Service and Market Logics.

13:00-14:00 Session 3 – A Symposium on “Sports, Media and Wars I”

Moderator: John V. Pavlik, Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA.

1. **Maria Petrova Bakardjieva**, Professor, University of Calgary, Canada.
Title: Politics by Other Means: Identity, Affect and Spectacle in Sport and War.
2. **Naila Hamdy**, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, The American University in Cairo, Egypt.
Title: From Stadiums to Battlefields: Sports, Media, and the Making of War Narratives in the Middle East.
3. **Theodore Trafalis**, Professor, The University of Oklahoma, USA.
Title: Sports Gambling and Geopolitical Intelligence.
4. **Laura Trujillo**, Professor & Researcher, Universidad Panamericana, Mexico.
Title: Sport, Power, and Narrative: A Media Ecology Approach to the Case of Iran.
5. **Gregory T. Papanikos**, Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.
Title: Goals and Geopolitics: How Media Frames Iran, the U.S., and the 2026 World Cup.

Interventions:

1. **Spiro Doukas**, Deputy Head, Sports Unit, Athens Institute & Professor, American Public University, USA.

2. Elsa G. Sánchez Huerta Villalba , Professor, Universidad Panamericana, México.
14:00-15:00 Lunch
15:00-17:00 Session 4 – Microsymposium on “Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crises” Moderator: Maria Petrova Bakardjieva , Professor, University of Calgary, Canada.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Festus Eribo, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis.</i> 2. Aysel Morin, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Undoing the Enemy: Toward a Rhetoric of Peace.</i> 3. Dr. John Howard, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Application of Scholarship to Global Crises.</i> 4. Naila Hamdy, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, The American University in Cairo, Egypt. <i>Title: Narrating War in the Digital Age: Social Media and the Gaza Conflict.</i> 5. Laura Privera, Professor and Director, School of Communication, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis.</i>
18:00-20:00 Session 5 – Visit Aristotle’s Lyceum
It requires pre-booking
20:30-22:30 <u>An Ancient Athenian Symposium: Continuous Dialogues, Timeless Flavors</u> (featuring authentic ancient Athenian dishes, local wine, and sweet delicacies from ancient Athens)
Tuesday 12 May 2026
09:00-10:30 Session 6 Moderator: Yen-Jung Chang , Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faith Valente, Professor, North Idaho College, USA. Carl Bozman, Professor, Gonzaga University, USA. <i>Title: The Relative Influence of Brand Trust Dimensions.</i> 2. Brian Massey, Professor, East Carolina University, USA. <i>Title: Unifying Theories of Journalism Through the Principles of Quantum Physics.</i> 3. Amani Ismail, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Creative Arts & Mass Communications Program Lead, University of Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation, Egypt. Gayane Torosyan, Professor, State University of New York at Oneonta, USA. <i>Title: The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective.</i> 4. Memory Mabika, Lecturer, University of Venda, South Africa. <i>Title: A Netnographic Analysis of TikTok Interactions in Indigenous Languages: The Case of Tshivenda and ChiShona.</i>
10:30-12:00 Session 7 Moderator: Brian Massey , Professor, East Carolina University, USA.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Yen-Jung Chang, Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan. Ching-Yi Peng, Assistant Professor, National Taipei University of Nursing and Health Sciences, Taiwan. <i>Title: A Qualitative Study on Hypertensive Patients’ Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Food and Supplement Advertising in Taiwan.</i>

2. **Hande Bilsel**, Associate Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye.
Murat Copcu, Assistant Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye.
Title: From Monsters to Mascots: Anthropomorphized Germs in Hygiene Advertising.
3. **Kevin Onyenakeya**, Senior Lecturer, University of Fort Hare, South Africa.
Title: Improving Functional and Interactive Health Literacy at the Community Level: The Nexus of Indigenous Language Radio Programming.
4. **Luise Ende**, Researcher, University of Kassel, Germany.
Title: Executional Greenwashing by Natural Sounds? The Impact of Product Color and Background Sound on the Sustainability Rating of Online Presented Fashion.

12:00-13:30 Session 8

Moderator: Elsa G. Sánchez Huerta Villalba, Professor, Universidad Panamericana, México.

1. **Maria Bakardjieva**, Professor, University of Calgary, Canada.
Title: Two Shades of Grassroots Illiberalism: Investigating the Discursive Construction of a Global Phenomenon.
2. **Mariam Adamashvili**, Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia.
Title: Media Ethics in the Context of Covering Religious Issues According to the Guidelines and Ethical Coverage Manuals of Western and Georgian Media Organizations.
3. **Diana Liparteliani**, Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia.
Title: Media Polarization, Manipulative Practices and Democratic Vulnerability in Small States (The Case of Georgia).
4. **Anastasija Tetarenko-Supe**, PhD Candidate & Researcher, University of Latvia, Latvia.
Title: How to Win the Attention War? Politically Motivated Discreditation of Media in Latvia.
5. **Aleksandar Kocic**, Lecturer, Edinburgh Napier University, UK.
Title: Does Local Radio Have a Future?

13:30-14:30 Session 9 - A Symposium on "Sports, Media and Wars II"

Moderator: Gregory T. Papanikos, Professor (Adjunct), University of Tennessee, Knoxville, USA.

1. **Brian Massey**, Professor, East Carolina University, USA.
Title: Trivializing War: Performance Politics and U.S.-Iran Football Spat.
2. **John V. Pavlik**, Professor, Department of Journalism and Media Studies, School of Communication & Information, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, USA.
Title: From Prediction Markets to Artificial Intelligence: How Emerging Technology Is Reshaping the Landscape of Sports, Media and War.
3. **Amani Ismail**, Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Creative Arts & Mass Communications Program Lead, University of Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation, Egypt.
Title: Media Narratives on Warring Nations and Access to Global Sports.

14:30-15:30 Lunch

17:00-20:00 Session 10

Old and New-An Educational Urban Walk

The urban walk tour includes the broader area of Athens. Among other sites, it includes: Zappion, Syntagma Square, Temple of Olympian Zeus, Ancient Roman Agora and on Acropolis Hill: the Propylaea, the Temple of Athena Nike, the Erechtheion, and the Parthenon.

20:30-22:30

Athenian Early Evening Symposium (Sequence of Events: Ongoing Academic Discussions, Dinner, Wine and Water, Music, Dance)

Wednesday 13 May 2026
An Educational Visit to Selected Islands
or Nafplio & Mycenae Visit

Thursday 14 May 2026
Visiting the Oracle of Delphi

Friday 15 May 2026
Visiting the Ancient Corinth and Cape Sounion

Saturday 16 May 2026
11:00-13:00 - The Academic Discussion continues in the downtown open agora (close to the
Aristotelian Lyceum)

Mariam Adamashvili

Assistant Professor, Georgian National University SEU, Georgia

Media Ethics in the Context of Covering Religious Issues According to the Guidelines and Ethical Coverage Manuals of Western and Georgian Media Organizations.

The article is devoted to the ethical and professional standards of covering religious issues in Western media and to an analytical interpretation of this experience in the context of the Georgian media landscape. The study is based on a comparative analysis of the editorial codes and ethical guidelines of leading Western media organizations (BBC, The Guardian, Associated Press, NPR, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and others). It also examines media ethics and professional journalistic standards in light of the normative documents of media organizations operating in Georgia. The paper draws on the theoretical perspective of media as a social institution and discusses its role in shaping public discourse, pluralism, and democratic culture.

The aim of the research is to identify the key principles that define responsible practices in covering religion and to assess their potential applicability within the Georgian media environment. The study seeks to conceptualize media freedom and editorial independence in the context of professional responsibility and ethical self-regulation, particularly in a transitional democracy. The research employs a qualitative methodology and includes a content and discourse analysis of the Code of Conduct of the Georgian Public Broadcaster, the Organizational Guidelines of Channel One, the journalistic standards of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, and the Charter of Journalistic Ethics.

In the article, religion is examined as a phenomenon of social, cultural, and political significance, whose media representation requires particular sensitivity, contextualization, and editorial independence. The analysis shows that Western media ethical frameworks converge around principles such as the separation of fact and opinion, pluralism of voices, avoidance of hate speech, careful representation of sacred symbols, and journalistic responsibility toward the public interest.

The research findings indicate that these ethical documents are broadly consistent with international journalistic standards and establish a normative framework for media ethics based on accuracy, impartiality, balance, and the prioritization of the public interest. At the same time, the study concludes that the effectiveness of ethical norms depends not only on formal regulations but also on the quality of their implementation in practice, journalists' professional self-awareness, and

the institutional culture of media organizations. From this perspective, media ethics is presented as a substantive precondition for media freedom and one of the determining factors in the sustainability of a democratic media environment. Particular attention is paid to regulations governing the coverage of ethnic and religious minorities, the prohibition of hate speech, and principles of protecting human dignity.

Based on the research findings, the article formulates specific recommendations for Georgian media aimed at improving the quality of coverage of religious issues, reducing sensationalism, and strengthening ethical self-regulation. The study provides a theoretical and practical foundation for further empirical research, which will focus on an in-depth analysis of the discursive and institutional characteristics of media coverage of religion in Georgia.

Maria Bakardjieva
Professor, University of Calgary, Canada

Two Shades of Grassroots Illiberalism: Investigating the Discursive Construction of a Global Phenomenon

Whether in the form of sweeping MAGA electoral wins in the United States, an enduring support for the Reform Party in the UK, the rise of the radical right Alternative fur Deutschland in Germany or the shocking success of a protofascist presidential candidate in Rumania, a specter is haunting what were until recently considered established or aspiring liberal democracies – the specter of illiberalism. This paper will argue that illiberalism is a more accurate term for what has been previously labeled a “populist zeitgeist” (Mudde, 2004). For more than 20 years academic discourse has singled out populism as a growing cultural and political movement. However, as organizations and leaders considered populists have moved forcefully into the formal arena of politics, more has been revealed about the actual substance of their ideological and political programs. For that and a range of other reasons, the time has come to clarify and refine the terms through which we try to capture these developments occurring in widely diverse polities and cultures around the globe. Illiberalism presents itself as a good candidate-concept for bringing more precision to our understanding. It has already been formally defined as an ideology and policy that leaders such as Hungary’s Victor Orban stand on as they pursue and exercise power. The analysis presented here aims to look beyond the pronouncements and moves that transpire in the political field and the discourses of intellectuals, pundits, think-tanks and academics. It shifts the focus to the social conditions and cultural dispositions that make ordinary people, referred to as the civic grassroots, respond, embrace and mobilize around illiberal appeals. The main question posed, therefore, is why illiberal ideology and political programs meet with popular support.

The paper examines closely the discourses of social movements with illiberal orientation in Bulgaria and Canada. Based on interviews with representatives of organizations exemplifying such movements and on discourse analysis of their online publications and interactions, the paper demonstrates the paradoxical relationship between illiberal ideology and the economic, political and cultural consequences wrought by neoliberalism. Special attention is dedicated to the way social media platforms are employed for the spread of illiberalism. Across the distinct examples of illiberal grassroots mobilization unfolding in these two different national and cultural contexts, common assumptions and

common tropes offer insights into the sources from which illiberal ideology draws its grassroots support. Grassroots illiberalism, we propose, is a logical response to and a plausible upshot of the erosion of social welfare and democratic governance that neoliberalism has caused. It is a response congruent with the rationality that shapes neoliberal subjects. With acute sensitivity to national and local experiences, it construes the calamities caused by neoliberalism as a failure of liberal-democratic values and institutions. Therefore, instead of (or along with) challenging the market absolutism inherent in neoliberal ideology and policy, it attacks the core principles of liberalism, rejects the institutions of the liberal social order as a whole, and undermines democracy along the way.

Hande Bilsel

Associate Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye

&

Murat Copcu

Assistant Professor, Bahçeşehir University, Türkiye

From Monsters to Mascots: Anthropomorphized Germs in Hygiene Advertising

This paper examines how anthropomorphized germs in hygiene advertising construct cultural meanings of risk, cleanliness, and responsible consumption. Focusing on a corpus of contemporary television and digital commercials for soaps, disinfectants, and household cleaners, it explores how “germ characters” mediate between invisible microbiological threats and the everyday practices of audiences. While germs are, scientifically, imperceptible agents, advertising repeatedly visualizes them as tiny monsters, mischievous blobs, or even playful companions who invade bodies and homes. These figures invite viewers to imagine, fear, and control contamination in highly stylized ways, and in doing so, they naturalize particular understandings of health, hygiene, and the “good” consumer.

Theoretically, the paper draws on semiotics and Roland Barthes’s notion of myth to analyze how germs are turned into legible, emotionally charged signs. It also engages with work on anthropomorphism and character branding to show how advertisers borrow techniques from animation and children’s media to make risk feel tangible and narratable. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative visual and textual analysis of selected campaigns from different brands and markets, paying attention to character design, color, gesture, facial expression, voice-over, and the staging of contagion and cure. The analysis traces how the same basic germ figures are adapted across platforms (television spots, YouTube pre-rolls, social-media shorts), adjusting tempo, humor, and visual density to different screens and attention economies.

The paper argues that anthropomorphized germs operate as powerful communication devices that simplify microbiological complexity while reinforcing classed and gendered divisions of domestic labor and hygiene responsibility. Germ villains often target mothers, wives, and female caregivers, positioning them as guardians of the clean home and healthy family, while implying that proper consumption of branded products is the main route to safety. At the same time, by making germs cute or humorous, some campaigns normalize constant low-level anxiety and routinised cleaning as everyday entertainment.

By reading these campaigns as cultural texts rather than neutral health information, the study contributes to debates in advertising and marketing communication, media and cultural studies, and risk and health communication. It shows how commercial storytelling about germs both echoes and reshapes public health discourses, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, the paper suggests how critical semiotic insights can inform more reflexive creative strategies for hygiene and cleanliness advertising, opening space for representations of care and responsibility that do not rely solely on fear, disgust, or gendered guilt.

Yen-Jung Chang

Professor, National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan

&

Ching-Yi Peng

Assistant Professor, National Taipei University of Nursing and Health
Sciences, Taiwan

A Qualitative Study on Hypertensive Patients' Perceptions of Marketing Strategies in Food and Supplement Advertising in Taiwan

Background: Food and supplement advertisements claiming to lower blood pressure or improve cardiovascular health are prevalent in Taiwan. This study aims to explore hypertensive patients' perceptions of marketing strategies used in food and supplement advertising in Taiwan.

Methods: This qualitative study, conducted in 2025, recruited a total of 23 hypertensive participants. Individual interviews were conducted after obtaining informed consent. The semi-structured interviews employed open-ended questions to explore participants' perceptions of food and supplement advertisements targeting blood pressure management. Based on a previous pilot study, six categories of marketing features were incorporated into the experimental advertisements: professional endorsement, award certification, claims of treatment results, patient testimonials, celebrity endorsements, and natural ingredients. Participants were also asked about their experiences with purchasing or using hypertension-related foods and supplements.

Results: The 23 participants had a mean age of 54.2 years, and 17 were female. After viewing six types of advertisements, participants rated advertisements featuring professional endorsements the highest, indicating a tendency to trust recommendations from medical authorities. Advertisements employing award-based marketing strategies and those emphasizing natural ingredients received the next highest ratings. In contrast, advertisements featuring user testimonials received lower ratings, and participants indicated that they were less likely to trust this type of marketing content. Beyond that, most participants reported that they would not replace their antihypertensive medication with related supplements and expressed strong distrust or aversion toward these products. During the interviews, participants often avoided engaging in detailed discussions about the content of these advertisements, expressing concerns that the ads might be deceptive. They stated that they neither watched the advertisements nor purchased

the products themselves. However, some participants reported having tried these supplements when purchased by family members. Their decision to continue using them depended on whether they perceived any potential health benefits.

Conclusion: This study revealed that hypertensive patients in Taiwan generally exhibited a cautious and skeptical attitude toward food and supplement advertisements related to blood pressure management. Professional endorsements, award recognition, and claims of natural ingredients were perceived as more credible persuasive strategies. Future research should further investigate whether marketing strategies for health supplements influence patients' medication adherence.

Luise Ende

Researcher, University of Kassel, Germany

Executorial Greenwashing by Natural Sounds? The Impact of Product Color and Background Sound on the Sustainability Rating of Online Presented Fashion

In two experiments was investigated the influence of sensory cues – specifically product color and sound – on consumer perceptions of sustainability regarding long sleeves. Utilizing a 2 x 2 mixed design, the research examines the effects of typical natural versus non-natural colors and nature versus non-nature sounds. The initial online experiment involved 158 participants, while a subsequent replication study included 180 participants. Findings consistently indicate that long sleeves in natural colors are perceived as significantly more sustainable than those in non-natural colors. However, the impact of sound on sustainability judgments yielded mixed results; while the first study found no significant difference between the sound of a passing train and a waterfall with chirping birds on classification judgment, the analysis of the replication study yielded a significant difference in the comparison to a highway sound. The effects were found independent from a control for participants' motivation and mood, and even with a relatively young and educated sample. This research highlights ethical issues surrounding the use of sensory cues in marketing, particularly regarding greenwashing practices that may mislead consumers about a product's environmental impact. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the significant role of color and sound in shaping sustainability perceptions, underscoring the need for awareness of greenwashing strategies in the fashion industry as well as necessary ethical and political regulations.

Festus Eribo

Professor, East Carolina University, USA

Communicating War and Peace: Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis

With the invention of more deadly weapons and the ubiquity of violence, scholars should be more involved in preventing, deterring, de-escalating, and mitigating wars, drums of war, and messages of war through constructive, impactful, and progressive communication and the media. The global picture of human toll and misery perpetrated by warriors of all stripes is alarming. It is imperative that scholars harness new ideas, propagate crystallized intelligence, and use new technologies in a frontal intellectual battle with the primitive legacy of bellicosity inherited over time. The historicity and universality of aggression, conflict, and war are well-documented. It is embarrassing in the 21st century that homo sapiens are refusing to evolve beyond the basal inclination to fight one another. It is time to deconstruct the ancestral and archaic toga of armament, rearmament, and killings of fellow humans. The disruption of peace and the destructiveness in wars are indescribably barbaric, monstrous, and mischievous. The theater is a challenge to civilization. This Micro-symposium is significant because it offers an additional opportunity to leverage various branches of communication, including human communication, organizational communication, media ethics, and mass communication in the discourse on war and peace.

Frank Gessner

Professor, Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Germany

**Fin ... Once Upon a Time (1001 Tragicomic Footnotes):
A Tiny Spherical Book – Test Run**

Inspired by Sergej Eisenstein's fragments on the "spherical book", which is one of the most important experimental examples of the 20th century's hypertextual worlds of thinking, ordering, and writing, and by the composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann's concept of the "spherical form of time", the aim is to make "curated" knowledge accessible online, using the current polymedial possibilities.

As early as the mid-1980s, Friedrich Kittler used the term "record system" to describe "the network of techniques and institutions [...] that allow a given culture to address, store and process relevant data." The storage of writing, images, and sound, possible for the first time, ushers in the end of the Gutenberg galaxy. The successor stage is the "total media network on a digital basis", and the computer becomes the all-integrating leading medium. All media of the modern era implode in the computer. Universal media convergence occurs. But film history continues not only on the Internet, as Alexander Kluge writes in "Geschichten vom Kino": "I think cinema is immortal and older than film art. It is based on the fact that we communicate something that moves us inwardly to each other in public. In that way, film and music are relatives. Both do not go under. Even if the cinema projectors stop rattling, there will still be something that works like cinema."

In the "spherical book in progress", hybrid space fruitfully coexists and is comparable to an experimental textbook. As an expanded "cosmic" network project, data is published both digitally and analogously in a multidimensional way as artistic-research knowledge transfer. In the 14th Transdisciplinary Colloquium of the Film University Babelsberg KONRAD WOLF, Peter Weibel characterizes this as "A noetic turn: from a language-based to a tool-based culture."

Based on the symposium of the artistic-research masterclass GLOBE PLAYHOUSE SPACELAB, the English-language desktop publishing project will be developed as a spherical interdisciplinary "net within a net", with linked scientific and artistic-text-based contributions by international authors.

The spherical publication EXPANDED ANIMATION WOR(L)DS sees itself as a "kickoff" for the interdisciplinary creative, artistic, and scientific actors network TESTELAB & GUESTS.

Naila Hamdy

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Narrating War in the Digital Age: Social Media and the Gaza Conflict

Media has emerged as a powerful voice in narrating the war in Gaza. Whether the conflict subsides or continues, its pervasive presence online has been remarkable – though not surprising in a region where platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have become increasingly vital spaces for relatively free expression.

In this context, information streams from governments, militaries, politicians, accredited journalists, activists, and relief agencies have merged with the minute-by-minute updates and firsthand accounts shared by ordinary people. Digital storytelling, livestreams, hashtags, and viral posts have become defining features of contemporary conflicts. Winning the “information war,” both locally and globally, has become a strategic objective not only for official actors but also for citizen journalists and activists who have emerged as powerful voices in shaping narratives.

This discussion explores the transformative role of digital media in mobilizing public sentiment and influencing global public opinion during times of conflict.

Seong Choul Hong

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Third-Person Effects of Meta-verse Bullying: Perceived Influence, Social Distance, and Support for Regulation

This study examines the third-person effect in the context of meta-verse bullying, defined as users' concerns about unethical and harmful behaviors occurring in meta-verse environments. Drawing on third-person perception theory, the study investigates whether individuals perceive meta-verse bullying as having a greater impact on others than on themselves, how such perceptions vary according to social distance, and whether these perceptions translate into support for regulatory and educational interventions. An online survey was conducted with 465 meta-verse users aged 14 to 29 in South Korea. Meta-verse bullying was operationalized across three dimensions: flaming, sexual harassment, and moral disengagement. Third-person perception was measured by comparing perceived effects on oneself versus various social groups (elementary school students, adolescents, adults aged 30–40, and adults aged 50–60).

The results confirm the presence of a social-distance-dependent third-person effect. Respondents perceived children and adolescents as significantly more vulnerable to meta-verse bullying than themselves, whereas no third-person effect – or a reversed pattern – was observed for older adults.

Regression analyses further indicate that stronger third-person perceptions are positively associated with support for preventive education and punitive legal regulations addressing unethical behaviors in the meta-verse. In addition, perceived anonymity, para-social relationships, and concerns about meta-verse bullying significantly contributed to third-person perceptions and regulatory attitudes. These findings extend third-person effect research into immersive virtual environments and suggest that users' biased perceptions of vulnerability – particularly toward younger populations – may play a critical role in shaping public support for governance, education, and ethical policy frameworks in the meta-verse.

24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media,
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece: Abstract Book

John Howard

Professor, East Carolina University, USA

**Communicating War and Peace:
Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis**

NOT AVAILABLE

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Associate Dean, School of Humanities and Creative Arts, University of
Hertfordshire hosted by Global Academic Foundation, Egypt

&

Gayane Torosyan

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The Internet, Academic Integrity, and College Student Practices: A Contemporary Perspective

This paper investigates one of new media's recent academic controversies, namely students' increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in academic settings. Through anonymously surveying undergraduate college students about their positions on academic integrity/misconduct and their own college practices, the study seeks to navigate the technology/society complex by illuminating how we can situate the contemporary education landscape within expectations of student work authenticity and how ethics possibly fit into theories of internet centrism and technological determinism.

To answer the study's research question, we designed a survey that we administered to students enrolled in a media law and policy undergraduate course at a medium-sized East Coast university. The course is offered to second-year Media Studies students and a mixed group of other majors at various levels of undergraduate studies. This course explores how the law and common practice impact media industries and journalism interests. Topics include the First Amendment, libel, invasion of privacy, free press, fair trial, regulation of obscene and sensitive content, regulation of advertising, ethics, and intellectual property. The survey was administered anonymously on Blackboard, and students received course credit for completing it. The responses of students under the age of 18 were excluded from the study through a pre-screening process.

Survey questions totaled 10; they inquired (in this order) about: sources used in research assignments; whether they have previously used paraphrasing computer software in courses and which (if any); whether they believe universities should allow students to use AI-based computer software to improve their assignments and to justify their position; whether they believe universities should use text-matching software to detect originality and to justify their position; the school level when they first learned about plagiarism and other types of academic misconduct; and whether they believe universities are right to apply a penalty for academic misconduct and to justify their position. The survey

included both closed-ended questions (required) and open-ended questions (optional).

Findings point to thought-provoking notions on how intellectual property, fairness in assessment, and the fruits of technology are perceived and interact within a wider dynamic. The paper also highlights the ongoing nature of a multidimensional debate.

The study raises various issues to contemplate. Prime among these is: where should educators draw the line in determining the acceptability of use of AI-based tools in college education, and on a more profound level, what is the role of intellectuals in balancing the influence of technological determinism and ethical practices? Other issues that present themselves include the expectation for originality of student output and the extent to which educational institutions seek to uphold and reinforce the values of student creativity, pride in one's work, and the vitality of bearing the fruits of one's genuine labor.

Aleksandar Kocic

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Does Local Radio Have a Future?

Local news is considered vital to the functioning of local communities and the engagement of citizens in local democracies (Fenton 2011; McLeod, Scheufele and Moy 1999; Nielsen 2015). Local radio's role is to bring to the fore issues relevant to the local communities it serves. However, local radio in the UK is at a turning point, with the BBC reducing its local radio output and commercial radio, largely owned by a small number of media groups, moving away from localism while maintaining only a minimal local news output. The remaining independent commercial stations often maintain strong links with the local communities they serve but struggle to provide any substantive local news coverage.

Using the theoretical frameworks of the public sphere (Habermas 1989; 1997) and localism (Napoli 2001; Cowling 2005), the present study aims to contribute to a limited body of knowledge on the role of local radio as seen by those who make it and those who listen to it. It employs extensive one-to-one interviews with 30 local BBC and commercial radio journalists and station managers, as well as four listener focus groups with 16 participants in total, in order to answer the following research questions:

- How do local radio journalists in the UK reflect on their experience of practice in meeting the informational needs of their listeners?
- How do local radio journalists and listeners perceive the role of radio in providing news?
- What are the views of both groups regarding the future of local radio in the UK?

The study finds that both local radio journalists and listeners are aware that radio in the UK is at a turning point, with numerous challenges lying ahead. Journalists understand that resources are shrinking while the competition for consumers' attention is growing. They say that traditional roles of local radio as provider of local news and forum for debate are under threat as new, digital platforms offer an alternative. In the context of major changes in the ways radio is produced and consumed, the present study shows that commercial radio seems best placed to take the advantage of the new technologies available,

while the BBC and independent stations see their strengths in providing for under-served communities. All journalists interviewed still express optimism regarding the short-to-medium future of local radio.

Listeners, however, point out they are trying to make sense of the fast-changing and “overwhelming” media ecosystem. They say they value local radio and listen to it; they express a desire to stay informed, but reluctantly admit that in the current global context, local news does not matter to them very much. Their sense of civic duty is implied but does not seem to be the major determinant of listening habits.

The present study contributes to a limited body of research on contemporary local radio. It does so at the time of significant changes the medium is going through and against a great deal of uncertainty regarding its future.

Katerina Korinkova Sobotkova

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**Format, Genre, Legitimacy:
*The Traitors Between Public Service and Market Logics***

Reality television is routinely dismissed as a vehicle of commercial logics and a neoliberal cultural imaginary – structured around competition, individualism, and spectacle (Redden, 2018). Yet in Europe’s platform era, where public service media (PSM) face intensified political and regulatory scrutiny amid market fragmentation, the key question returns in a sharper form: **can public service be made visible – and defensible – through mainstream entertainment?**

This paper explores that question through a comparative case study of *The Traitors*, a global format with dozens of national iterations that operates as a live laboratory of local translation. Focusing on the BBC version and a Czech commercial adaptation (*Zrádci*), it shows that a single licensed template can be re-authored into **distinct genre regimes** – and, with them, distinct normative orientations – depending on institutional context.

Drawing on normative traditions of public service broadcasting (e.g., Scannell, 1990) and EBU value frameworks (universality, independence, quality/excellence, diversity, responsibility, innovation), the paper treats “public value” not as a declared mission but as something **embedded in production choices**. Public service values become legible in how the game calibrates fairness, how it negotiates conflict versus dignity, whose identities are made representable, and which forms of social heterogeneity are legitimised within the show’s narrative economy.

The comparison foregrounds **universality** as a particularly instructive marker. The BBC iteration sustains a broader representational repertoire, including a contestant with a physical disability. By contrast, the Czech commercial version – produced within a socially heterogeneous society – presents a narrower spectrum of diversity and includes only one national-minority contestant. Rather than reading these differences as isolated casting decisions, the paper interprets them as indicators of institutional framing: divergent notions of responsibility, different tolerances for representational and reputational risk, and different calibrations of attractiveness versus normative commitments.

Beyond representation, the paper identifies a striking **genre shift** across contexts. The Czech commercial adaptation frames the premise primarily as an escapist “fantasy game,” whereas the BBC version

reorients the same template toward social drama, where contestants' social realities are more explicitly articulated and the monetary prize acquires existential weight. This variability is not cosmetic styling; it is an institutional translation of the format into distinct cultural and value regimes.

Overall, the paper contributes to debates on public service entertainment by demonstrating how PSM values can be enacted – materially, not rhetorically – within global reality formats. It proposes *The Traitors* as a model case for examining how PSM may negotiate legitimacy in the platform era through mainstream popular genres.

Diana Liparteliani

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Media Polarization, Manipulative Practices and Democratic Vulnerability in Small States (The Case of Georgia)

Media polarization in contemporary information environments is increasingly shaped not only by internal political divisions within countries, but also by communicative and manipulative practices embedded in digital media systems that have become part of everyday life. The transformation of mass communication has introduced new challenges: algorithm-driven platforms, emotionally charged narratives, and fragmented information flows have fundamentally altered how audiences access news and interpret social reality. As a result, new patterns of media consumption and perception have emerged.

These dynamics are particularly visible in small and vulnerable media markets, where audience fragmentation and the influence of so-called “information bubbles” have significantly undermined public trust in the media. In such contexts, polarization is intensified not merely through political competition, but through structural features of contemporary communication environments.

The present study examines the relationship between media polarization and manipulative communication practices, using Georgia as a case study. Rather than approaching polarization solely as a consequence of partisan rivalry, the research conceptualizes it as a communicative process shaped by media agenda-setting, platform logics, and audience behavior. The analysis focuses on mechanisms such as agenda-setting, framing, emotionalization, selective exposure, and narrative fragmentation, whose combined effects contribute to the formation of polarized media environments. Digital platforms play a central role in this process, as they tend to privilege emotionally engaging content, accelerate the circulation of simplified narratives, and limit access to diverse perspectives.

Special attention is given to the erosion of public trust in journalism and to the transformation of journalists’ professional roles within polarized media systems. In small media markets, journalists increasingly operate under conditions of economic vulnerability, audience dependency, and algorithmic visibility. Such pressures may blur the boundary between information and interpretation, encouraging media actors to adopt communication strategies oriented toward engagement rather than contextual accuracy. As a result, journalists may struggle to maintain their traditional role as neutral informers and

instead become active participants in polarized communication ecosystems. This development further complicates issues of credibility, professionalism, and ethical responsibility.

Methodologically, the study is based on qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis of selected media outputs and digital communication practices. This approach allows for the identification of recurring patterns of manipulation, emotional framing, and narrative construction across different media platforms. Media polarization is examined as a structural factor of democratic vulnerability in small states, where limited media pluralism, concentrated information flows, and weak self-regulatory mechanisms amplify the effects of manipulative communication strategies.

By placing the Georgian case within a broader comparative framework, the study contributes to ongoing international debates on media polarization, manipulative communication, audience fragmentation, and democratic resilience. The findings are relevant for scholars working in mass communication, digital media, journalism studies, and media ethics, and aim to support interdisciplinary and cross-national academic dialogue on contemporary communication challenges.

Memory Mabika

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A Netnographic Analysis of TikTok Interactions in Indigenous Languages: The Case of Tshivenda and ChiShona

Preserving and revitalising indigenous languages is a pressing global concern, given the perceived threat posed by dominant languages like English, French, Spanish, and Mandarin. The United Nations reports a disconcerting rate of at least two indigenous languages dying every month, leading to the loss of valuable indigenous knowledge embedded in each language. As a result, language scholars are turning to advanced communication technologies as potential tools for indigenous language revitalisation. This comparative research focuses on how TikTok, a prominent digital platform for social interaction, is used by Chishona and Tshivenda speakers. The paper evaluates how the two language speakers are utilising their indigenous language of TikTok to establish the role of Facebook in the preservation and revitalisation of indigenous languages. It explores how TikTok may contribute to the ongoing efforts to safeguard and revive languages in the face of digital colonialism. This study adopts a netnographic approach, focusing on analysing user-generated content in TikTok public interactions where Tshivenda and ChiShona are used. Netnography enables the exploration of digital cultural expressions and community discourse without requiring face-to-face interaction. Instead, the study uses content analyses for data collection, observing ethical considerations such as confidentiality, privacy, and the researcher's potential influence on data interpretation. The study will outline the conclusions and their corresponding implications.

Brian Massey
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Unifying Theories of Journalism Through the Principles of Quantum Physics

This paper argues that theories of journalism are more than the separate analytical paths they appear to be. Deep down, they all are emanations of the same primal human need to communicate and to understand the fullness of why. Each in its essence is part of a harmonious whole. To make that case, this paper draws from Oleksandr Kholod's novel concept of "quantum journalism." It situates the production and consumption of news as a macro social activity organized by the principles of the micro realm of subatomic particles. Likewise, theories about journalism also would be rooted in the quantum and as such, in a state of fundamental unity. The proposition was tested by calibrating the elements of two (seemingly) unlike perspectives – news ecology and journalism field theory – to the principles of quantum physics and assessing their fit.

Aysel Morin

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Undoing the Enemy: Toward a Rhetoric of Peace

This paper approaches war not primarily as a military event, but as a rhetorical achievement made possible through the communicative production of enemies. It argues that both the external enemy and the “enemy within” arise from the same rhetorical logic: a grammar of moral purification that transforms political difference into existential threat and ethical necessity. Before violence is enacted, it is rehearsed rhetorically, as dissent is learned to be coded as betrayal and existential danger. Enemy-making thus functions as the symbolic bridge between political conflict and the moral conditions under which war becomes thinkable and legitimate.

Drawing on rhetorical theory and critical media scholarship, the paper argues that political and media discourse normalize this grammar of enmity by privileging certainty over complexity and loyalty over critique. It then advances a normative and applied intervention by asking what a rhetoric of peace would require in a communicative environment structured by enemy-making. The paper proposes that peace rhetoric must interrupt the logic of purification itself by cultivating rhetorical humility, resisting moral absolutism, affirming constitutive pluralism, and repositioning media as ethical moderators rather than amplifiers of fear. Peace, it concludes, is not merely the absence of war but a communicative and ethical achievement of rhetoric.

Kevin Onyenankeya

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Improving Functional and Interactive Health Literacy at the Community Level: The Nexus of Indigenous Language Radio Programming

In South Africa, health literacy is inadequate. Health literacy improvement initiatives contend with a plethora of impediments, including differences in education, languages spoken, “a racially defined political and socioeconomic structure” (Onyenankeya and Salawu, 2019, p. 33), and a binary health system that often confines disadvantaged individuals and communities to ineffectual public health facilities. These structural, socioeconomic and cultural factors result in a significant variation in health literacy among the populace, where only a few privileged individuals can access, understand, and use information and services, leaving the majority to struggle with health illiteracy.

Inadequate health literacy is particularly problematic in rural communities, where residents often face greater difficulty accessing health information. The difficulties in accessing health information hinder the capacity of these marginalized communities to make informed health-related decisions and take appropriate actions (Obaremi and Olatokun, 2022; Ouchene et al., 2024; Wallace et al., 2021). Therefore, health literacy initiatives face the arduous challenge of bridging the educational and language divide and providing equitable access to health information simultaneously.

This paper explored how indigenous language radio programming, such as Umhlobo Wenene’s (UWFM’s) *Khanyisa Kukhanye Mhlobo* show, could be leveraged to promote and improve functional and interactive among rural communities.

A qualitative methodology, grounded in the theory of self-efficacy was employed, and data were collected through a combination of in-depth interviews and audio content analysis.

The results suggest that *Khanyisa Kukhanye Mhlobo* can serve as a valuable media outlet for disseminating accurate and reliable health-related information to the public, particularly to marginalized communities. Using the first language or mother tongue and combining socially relevant health messages and stories that resonate with the listeners’ way of life and experiences makes the Show relatable and inspires trust, making the information more effective and actionable.

Consistent with previous findings, the study suggests that when health literacy is offered in a participatory manner and language spoken by the audience, it can increase the uptake of health information, modify behavior and empower individuals to participate actively in community health initiatives.

The findings underscore the importance of public health agencies and NGOs utilizing indigenous language media platforms to deliver health literacy interventions. The results of this study provide insight into health literacy and behavior change among a specific African population and indigenous language radio, a medium rarely explored in mainstream academic endeavours.

Mojca Pajnik

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Beyond (Dis)Trust: Audience's Emotional Strategies and Epistemic Practices in the Digital Media Environment

This article critically examines perceptions of audience (dis)trust toward media by exploring how citizens navigate contemporary media environments marked by (dis)information and competing truth claims. Rather than taking distrust at face value or framing it as a simple lack of trust, the article builds on focus group data conducted with citizens in Slovenia as part of the Horizon-funded *MeDeMap* project to unfold how audiences emotionally and epistemically engage with media and journalism. It foregrounds audience voices from a bottom-up perspective to analyze how scepticism serves not merely as a symptom of alienation, but as a productive strategy of media maneuvering and sense-making.

The analysis engages with the *affective turn* in media and audience studies to foreground the role of emotions as constitutive to citizens' engagements with media. It conceptualizes *audiences' emotionology*, i.e., the socially shared norms and expectations about how people ought to feel and act toward media as a key framework for understanding the affective underpinnings of (dis)trust. Emotionology shapes not only the emotional repertoires audiences engage with – ranging from scepticism, frustration, and fatigue to cautious curiosity – but also their understanding of what counts as appropriate civic feeling. In this sense, (dis)trust is not solely a cognitive evaluation of media credibility, but an affective disposition embedded in broader cultural understandings of responsible citizenship and emotional conduct.

The article argues that emotional strategies, such as selective exposure, irony, or withdrawal function as coping mechanisms that assist audiences manage uncertainty, navigate misinformation, and sustain agency in complex digital media environments. The emotional practices intertwine with *epistemic repertoires*, or the ways people evaluate, verify, and construct what counts as “truth” or reliable knowledge. Together, they constitute audiences' everyday epistemic labor, where affect and reason co-produce judgments about credibility. By integrating the conceptual lens of emotionology into the study of media (dis)trust, the article advances a more nuanced understanding of how emotions and epistemic practices are mutually constitutive in shaping the moral and affective economies of digital news engagement.

24th Annual International Conference on Communication and Mass Media,
11-16 May 2026, Athens, Greece: Abstract Book

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**Communicating War and Peace:
Application of Scholarship to Global Crisis**

NOT AVAILABLE

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Education as a Mean of Encounter and Understanding for Different Generations

In recent years, intergenerational tensions have intensified within educational settings shaped largely by the transformative impact of digital media.

Empirical research highlights a marked decline in adolescent mental health since the moment when smartphones and social media became ubiquitous.

These trends link to increasing digital immersion, observing that teens now spend significantly less time engaging in face-to-face interactions—a shift that correlates with the decline in psychological well-being.

Philosopher Byung-Chul Han offers a critical philosophical framework to understand this phenomenon.

This paper argues that education must serve as an intentional space for intergenerational encounter and mutual understanding.

By integrating pedagogical philosophies rooted in care, dialogue, and critical thinking, the classroom can counteract digital fragmentation and foster meaningful relationships across generational boundaries.

Anastasija Tetarenko-Supe

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How to Win the Attention War? Politically Motivated Discreditation of Media in Latvia

This study examines politically motivated discreditation of professional media as a strategic intervention in the securitization process, conceptualized as part of a broader struggle over attention and communicative authority. Focusing on Latvia, former USSR state and relatively new democracy, the research analyzes how political actors deploy attacks against journalists on the microblogging platform X (formerly Twitter) in order to reshape securitization channels and to gain advantage in what can be described as an attention war surrounding security-related issues.

The study is grounded in securitization theory (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998), which conceptualizes security as a performative process whereby political actors seek to convince a relevant audience that a particular issue constitutes an existential threat requiring extraordinary measures. While securitization scholarship has extensively theorized speech acts, actors, the role of communication channels through which securitizing moves circulate remains comparatively under-theorized. Channels are often treated as neutral or technical conduits, rather than as politically contested arenas. This study addresses that gap by placing communication channels - and struggles over their legitimacy - at the center of securitization analysis.

Building on the author's original analytical model of the securitization process, the study conceptualizes communication channels as a distinct component alongside actor, message, audience, and context. From this perspective, professional journalism is understood as a historically central securitization channel that translates elite discourse into publicly accessible, credible, and accountable narratives. Attacks on journalists are therefore not peripheral to securitization but constitute attempts to weaken, bypass, or ideologically reconfigure these channels.

Empirically, the study focuses on Latvian political elites - members of the Saeima (Parliament) and government ministers—and their communication on X in late 2025 and early 2026, a period marked by intensified security discourse. Although no more than approximately 5% of Latvia's population actively uses X, the platform plays a disproportionate role in securitization dynamics. It functions as an elite arena where securitizing moves are articulated, contested, and

strategically amplified into mainstream media. This configuration creates conditions in which attention becomes a scarce resource and control over visibility is integral to successful securitization.

Within this environment, media discreditation emerges as a deliberate securitization tactic. By portraying journalists as biased, hostile, or politically motivated, political actors seek to undermine trust in professional media and to destabilize their role as legitimate intermediaries between securitizing actors and audiences. Such attacks are frequently embedded within securitizing narratives and function to redirect attention, pre-empt critical scrutiny, and consolidate greater control over the circulation and interpretation of security claims.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative narrative analysis. The findings demonstrate that media delegitimization is systematic and closely intertwined with securitization moves. The study contributes to securitization theory by foregrounding attention and channel contestation as central dynamics of contemporary security politics, with significant implications for democratic accountability, media credibility, and the public's capacity to recognize and evaluate security threats.

Laura Trujillo

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The Paradox of Progress: How Linguistic Evolution Deepens Communicative Inequalities

In an era marked by unprecedented technological and communicative progress, language continues to evolve at a pace never seen before. New media, digital platforms, and algorithmic environments have expanded the possibilities of expression and participation across cultures and social groups. Yet, this linguistic evolution does not necessarily translate into a parallel evolution in equality. On the contrary, while the tools and channels of communication multiply, the distance between social groups often widens.

This paper examines the paradox that, as our linguistic and communicative capacities become more sophisticated, the discourses that dominate public spaces tend to reinforce polarization, exclusion, and radical positions. Rather than fostering openness and understanding, communicative abundance seems to amplify social fragmentation. Through a media ecology perspective, this research explores how linguistic evolution – accelerated by digital technologies and shaped by algorithmic mediation – both reflects and reproduces existing inequalities.

The study argues that communication, instead of functioning as a bridge, increasingly becomes a mechanism of distinction, where language itself operates as a marker of identity and power. Understanding this paradox is essential for rethinking the ethical and educational foundations of communication in the 21st century – a time when speaking more does not necessarily mean understanding better.

Faith Valente

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&

Carl Bozman

Professor, Gonzaga University, USA

The Relative Influence of Brand Trust Dimensions

Brand trust is the belief that a branded product, person, or organization will consistently deliver on its expressed or implied promises. Consistent perceptions of performance reduce uncertainty and mitigate associated perceived risks – two factors which have long been a focus of communication research. This study explores how four hypothesized dimensions of brand trust (authenticity, ability, affinity, and advocacy) impact a well-known measure of brand trust.

The fundamental question of whether one component of brand trust may matter more than another has not been previously addressed. We analyze published cross sectional data from a panel of over 13,188 adults for 405 firms to answer this question.

All brand trust observations are converted from a rank-number to a percentile: $1 - \text{firm rank} / \text{max rank in the sample}$. This is a percentile where a value close to 1 means it is the most trusted firm, and a value close to zero is a lesser trusted firm. We did this both for the overall brand trust variable, as well as for each of the four components of brand trust.

We use simple quantile regressions to test hypotheses. Regressions select the median for the dependent variable as the quantile of interest. Overall brand trust percentile is the dependent variable. Each of the percentile rankings for the components represents independent variables.

Quantile regression allows for t-tests on the individual parameter estimates. However, there is no R-square for quantile regression. It is a linear programming problem which attempts to minimize weighted linear deviations from the quantile of interest. Instead of an R-square, deviations are measured as mean absolute percentages, or MAPE, (rather than mean square percentage errors). Overall goodness of fit is measured by a “pseudo R-square”.

If we have an unrestricted model, and a restricted version of that model, $\text{pseudo R-square} = 1 - (\text{Unrestricted MAPE} / \text{Restricted MAPE})$. The higher the pseudo R square, the more that the restriction harms the model’s ability to predict the dependent variable. In other words, higher pseudo R-squares mean that the restriction is invalid. Put yet another

way, higher pseudo R-square values indicate the relative impact on any variable that is omitted from the unrestricted model is larger.

All of the coefficient estimates are significant, so all four variables matter. The first pseudo-R-square compares all brand trust component variables included in the model versus including none of them. Jointly, the pseudo-R-square is very large.

Subsequent pseudo R-squares compare the change in pseudo-R-square by excluding one brand trust dimension ranking at a time. Comparing these second sets of pseudo-R-squares across regressions (where, again, in each regression one component variable is omitted at a time) allows us to gauge which component matters most. Affinity rankings matter the most in overall brand trust, followed by advocacy, and ability. Authenticity is least important by a substantial margin.

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