

ADVERTISING AND SUSTAINABILITY: THE CASE OF “THE LAST PHOTO” CAMPAIGN

Priscila Kalinke da Silva

Departamento de Linguística, Letras, Comunicação e Artes, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais, Frutal, Brazil
Conceptualization, formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – original draft

Carlos Henrique Sabino Caldas

Departamento de Linguística, Letras, Comunicação e Artes, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais, Frutal, Brazil
Formal analysis, supervision, writing – original draft

Luiz Antonio Feliciano

Departamento de Linguística, Letras, Comunicação e Artes, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais, Frutal, Brazil
Formal analysis, investigation, methodology, writing – review & editing

Rogério Gomes Neto

Departamento de Linguística, Letras, Comunicação e Artes, Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais, Frutal, Brazil
Conceptualization, formal analysis, writing – review & editing

ABSTRACT

The aim of the research was to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society. A theoretical-methodological analysis was carried out exploring the interactions between advertising, sustainability and symbolic production, with a focus on evaluating the trajectory of the Cannes awards, which recognise advertising as an agent of social and environmental transformation, identifying campaigns in these areas. The *corpus* was defined by the most awarded campaign in 2023 at Cannes, related to social and/or environmental issues, in this case “The Last Photo”. The analysis was conducted using a discursive approach, considering lexical elements, argumentative techniques, prominence and components external to verbal language. The results of the study showed that the campaign predominantly uses advertising discourse, especially audiovisual adverts exploring social issues. Scenography plays an important role in the construction of these scenes, lending credibility and emotion to the speeches. The campaign’s approach challenges the stereotypes surrounding suicide, using real cases to promote reflection. Transmedia storytelling and accessible language are used to reach audiences effectively.

KEYWORDS

symbolic production, sustainability, suicide

PUBLICIDADE E SUSTENTABILIDADE: O CASO DA CAMPANHA “THE LAST PHOTO”

RESUMO

O objetivo da pesquisa foi investigar a construção de cenas enunciativas da campanha de cunho socioambiental mais premiada no “Festival de Cannes” em 2023, a fim de identificar e descrever os discursos midiáticos, que concorrem para a produção de cultura e valores na sociedade. Foi realizada uma análise teórico-metodológica explorando as interações entre publicidade, sustentabilidade e produção simbólica, com o foco em avaliar a trajetória das premiações em Cannes que reconhecem a publicidade como agente de transformação social e ambiental, identificando campanhas de impacto nessas áreas. O *corpus* foi definido pela campanha mais premiada em 2023 em Cannes relacionada à questão social e/ou ambiental, no caso “The Last Photo” (A Última Fotografia). A análise foi conduzida por intermédio de abordagem discursiva considerando elementos lexicais, técnicas argumentativas, destacabilidade e componentes externos à linguagem verbal. Os resultados do estudo demonstraram que a campanha utiliza predominantemente o discurso publicitário, especialmente o anúncio audiovisual explorando a temática social. A cenografia desempenha um papel importante na construção dessas cenas, conferindo credibilidade e emoção aos discursos. A abordagem dessa campanha desafia os estereótipos em torno do suicídio, utilizando casos reais para promover a reflexão. A estratégia transmídia e a linguagem acessível são usadas para alcançar o público de maneira eficaz.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

produção simbólica, sustentabilidade, suicídio

1. INTRODUCTION

The ESG (environmental, social, and governance) agenda provides brands with a scale of priorities in relation to issues linked to the environment, social responsibility and governance, including communication policies within brands. The more complete concept of “sustainable development” first appeared in the report *Nosso Futuro Comum* (Our Common Future; Brundtland, 1987/1991), organised by the Brundtland Commission, which presents two key concepts in its definition: the essential needs of the poorest people, which must be a priority on the agenda of all countries; and the level that technology has reached that imposes environmental limitations, preventing present and future needs from being met (Dias, 2019).

Resolution 41/128 of the United Nations Organisation (Declaração sobre o Direito ao Desenvolvimento, 1986) provides an interesting concept of “development” in the sense of sustainability, namely:

it is a comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process aimed at constantly increasing the well-being of the entire population and all individuals on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and the fair distribution of the resulting benefits. (p. 1)

In contrast, Boff (2012) believes that today “in the standard model of development that claims to be sustainable, the discourse of sustainability is empty and rhetorical” (p.

47). The author adds that “things are only done as long as profits are not affected, competition is not weakened, and technological innovations are not jeopardised” (p. 48).

Neither because of the quantity of its inventions, nor because of its social and political derivation, can advertising today be reduced to the commercial field, says Eguizábal (2010). According to the author, in any democratic and socially developed country, both civic education and political campaigns account for an important part of the total amount of advertising material. From Eguizábal’s (2010) perspective, the advertising industry’s job is to load products with meaning. This means that goods/merchandise are emptied of material content in order to be filled with symbolic content. To this end companies are not only appropriating social and environmental content to create significance for their products and services, but also to symbolically carry the brand’s meaning.

In addition to these arguments, campaigns with a socio-environmental responsibility theme have greater public interest and are gaining notoriety at advertising festivals. The 2023 *Global Consumer Trends* (Mintel, 2023) survey shows that consumers are currently looking for well-being, engagement in community projects fostered by brands and company initiatives that provide healthy connections with technology, leisure and well-being. There is also more interest in getting involved with local, authentic and sustainable consumption. In this sense, they want greater links with socially responsible companies and brands. It should be noted that non-profit companies also need to publicise, especially in order to attract potential donors to maintain their activities, as well as to promote more sustainable consumer behaviour or attitudes that contribute to a more harmonious social life.

At the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, for example, of the 10 most awarded campaigns, six were of this nature:

- “The Last Photo”, by Adam&eveDDB London for ITV and Campaign Against Living Miserably (2022): with the aim of showing the importance of mental health care, the campaign features home videos of people in happy situations who later commit suicide, showing that there is no pattern to suicidal behaviour. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize (“Film”), four golds (two in “Outdoor”, one in “Brand Experience & Activation”, and one in “Health & Wellness”), three silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “PR”) and three bronzes (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “Media”).
- “Where to Settle” (Marketing & Media, 2023), by McCann Poland for Mastercard: in order to help 10,000,000 Ukrainian refugees in Poland, a platform was created to present the cost of living and economic opportunities in different cities, showing the best options according to their profiles. Polish people from different regions invited the refugees to their cities in the media. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize (“Sustainable Development Goals”), a titanium lion, two golds (“Direct” and “PR”), two silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Direct”) and three bronzes (“Creative Data”, “Direct” and “PR”).
- “The Greatest”, by Apple (2022): aimed at the International Day of People with Disabilities on 3 December 2022. The aim was to present hardware and software solutions that help and support accessibility for people with visual, hearing, motor and cognitive disabilities. In the images, people with disabilities go through everyday situations with aplomb and positivity. Awards received at the festival: grand prize (“Entertainment for Music”), three golds (all in “Film Craft”), four silvers (two in “Entertainment for Music”, one in “Entertainment” and one in “Film”) and one bronze (“Film”).
- “ADLaM - An Alphabet to Preserve Culture”, by McCann New York for Microsoft (2023): digitising the alphabet of the Pulaar language of the Fulani people of West Africa, considered to be the

largest nomadic group in the world. Less than 30 years old, the alphabet is already spoken by more than 40,000,000 people and has been given fonts that identify the local culture, created by famous designers who have also produced typographic works of art that are available to download for free. Awards received at the festival: two grand prizes (“Creative Business Transformation” and “Design”), two golds (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Film Craft”), one silver (“Sustainable Development Goals”) and two bronzes (“Brand Experience & Activation” and “Film Craft”).

- “Anne de Gaulle” (LLLLITL, 2023), by Havas Paris for the Fondation Anne de Gaulle: the name of “Charles de Gaulle” airport was changed to “Anne de Gaulle” in order to draw attention to the issue of mental disability. The daughter of Charles de Gaulle, Anne was born with Down’s syndrome and is the name of an institution that has been working for 75 years to promote more inclusive public transport. Awards received at the festival: one grand prize, three golds (“Direct”, “Health & Wellness” and “Outdoor”), one silver (“Media”) and one bronze (“Brand Experience & Activation”).
- “The Postponed Day” (Design and Art Direction, n.d.), by Grey Argentina for the Argentinian League Against Cancer: on International Breast Cancer Day (19 October), 30 non-governmental organisations fighting cancer joined forces to inform the press that they had decided to postpone the date by one day: “we’ll put it off until tomorrow”. The aim was to raise awareness and alert women who postpone their annual mammograms. Awards received at the festival: four golds (two for “Direct” and two for “PR”) and three silvers (“Brand Experience & Activation”, “Health & Wellness” and “PR”).

Given this context, the aim of this research is to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society. Specifically, the aim is to: (a) provide a theoretical-methodological overview of the relationship between advertising, the discourse of sustainability and symbolic production; (b) examine the trajectory of Cannes awards for advertising as a possible agent of social and environmental transformation, making campaigns in these areas visible and promoting — even if indirectly — a greater interest on the part of agencies in promoting these discourses; and (c) examine the most awarded campaign in Cannes in 2023 related to social and environmental sustainability through discourse analysis based on lexical elements, argumentative techniques, prominence and components external to verbal language.

2. MEDIATION, MEDIATISATION AND ADVERTISING OF SUSTAINABILITY DISCOURSES

By presenting the concept of “mediation”, Martín-Barbero (1987/2001) offers us multiple possibilities for research into the communication process, especially in the second iteration of the map of mediations, dialectically reflecting the relationships between production logics, industrial formats, consumption and cultural matrices, that need to be based on the triad of communication, culture and politics, especially as they constitute a battlefield in terms of the symbolic dimension of their effects on and for society. The map of mediations contributes theoretically to research that seeks to understand the dynamics of communications as a system of feedback between the various variables that take part in the process. Overall, this map shows how “communication is mediating all forms of cultural and political life in society” (Lopes, 2018a, p. 18).

In more recent research, Martín-Barbero (1987/2001) presents a new communicative ecosystem, which includes the concepts of “temporality”, “flows”, “spatiality” and

“mobility” as a result of the processes of technological mutation that reveal new forms of production, consumption, dissemination and social relations. In terms of methodology, this research will be based on Martín-Barbero’s (1987/2001) second map of mediations (Figure 1), as we will detail below.

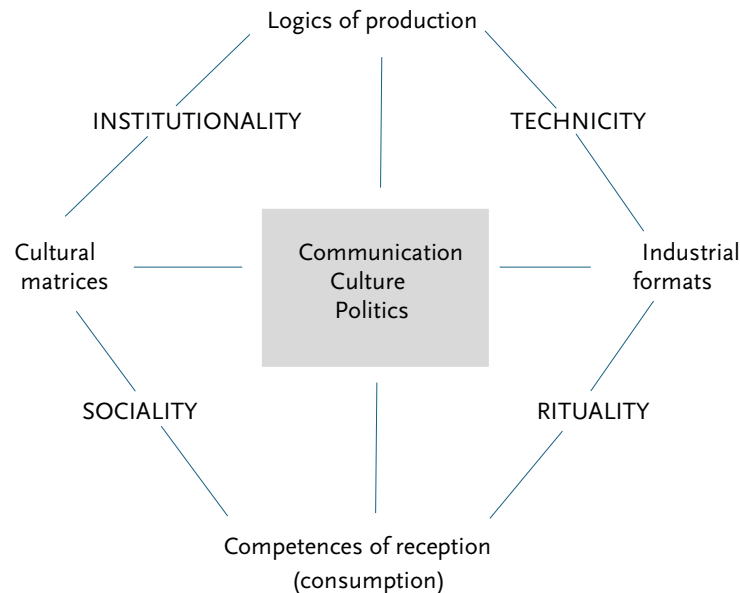


Figure 1. *Second methodological map of mediations, 1998*

Source. Adapted from “A Teoria Barberiana da Comunicação”, by M. I. V. de Lopes, 2018b, *Matrizes*, 12(1), p. 54. (<https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v12i1p39-63>). Copyright 2018 by Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes.

Between production logics and industrial formats lies technicality, in which focus can be placed on the technical aspects, language and discursive adaptations present in the media. Rituality, which lies between industrial formats and the skills of reception, allow us to analyse the different social uses of the media by the audience, as well as the reading path taken by the consumer, based on their life history, cultural repertoire, among other specificities. Sociality is the mediation between cultural formats and reception skills, which deals above all with the collective ways and uses of communication and the relationship between the product analysed and the notions of meaning and belonging on the part of the audience. Institutional mediation between cultural matrices and the logic of production are reminiscent of the battlefield of powers and interests between those involved in the process. The diachronic axis, which mediates between cultural matrices and industrial formats, deals with temporal and historical relationships in terms of the symbolic dimension and the language of the cultural sources that the industrial format will draw on. The synchronic axis makes it possible to reflect on the feedback process between production and reception.

This map is important for studies of mediatisation, the general way in which the media interferes in culture and society, based on cultural tensions through the interactional circulation of its meanings. This is because Martín-Barbero (1987/2001), by creating the

second map, including technicality and giving more weight to the media — compared to the previous model — allows us a more holistic understanding of the processes of mediatisation. According to Braga (2006), “when it comes to symbolic values and the production and reception of meanings, what matters most is the circulation after reception. (...) The interactional circulation system is this social movement of meanings and stimuli initially produced by the media” (p. 28).

Barros (2001) adds that:

it is in society that the meanings of media discourses circulate, in a “system of social interaction on the media”. And in this process of interaction between society and the media, aesthetic experiences are converted into new political experiences in a continuous process of representation and appropriation that lead to the production of new discourses, constructed by the constant exchange of expressions and impressions. It is a system of “polyphony and polysemy”, of tensions and confluences. (p. 29)

These reflections show how important it is to understand the mediations and reflections of the media on society and culture, in other words, to understand how the circulation of the topics covered by the media collaborate to re-signify cultural concepts and practices, which are in motion and put pressure on the productive system, in a game of social forces¹. In the culture of connection (Jenkins et al., 2013/2014), this circulation spreads to even greater proportions. With this in mind, advertising campaigns also promote important discussions among individuals, as well as being subjected to pressure regarding their position on various societal issues. Over time, we’ve seen less and less of an appeal to sell products and a greater concern with building narratives that make sense within people’s lives, seeking identification between brand and consumer.

It’s important to think that in the symbolic universe of brands there is always an idea of the incompleteness of the human being — who needs to consume in order to feel complete — which is the promise of advertising discourse narratives (Casaqui, 2011). According to Casaqui (2011), the new forms of advertising do not appeal to the sale of the product, but “strategies [that] involve spatiality, design, the re-signification of products, the elaboration of narratives that promote transcendence, the mythification of goods and the convergences between them and human desires, dreams and objectives” (p. 140), in other words, they are much more part of the discourse of the completeness of life. These strategies end up being used by brands and corporations to gain visibility through their mediatisation processes.

In this sense, we observed that various marketing actions by brands that use the sustainability discourse aim to stimulate the circulation of meanings produced by their campaigns to society, creating a buzz, not necessarily related to the product offered by the company. Just to illustrate, we can summarise the promotion of sustainability

¹ Regarding this play of forces, Curran (1998) says that there are pressures from the top down, which point to the influence of the media on the audience, but also pressures from the bottom up, which reveal the audience’s resistance to certain media impositions. In this way, consent comes from negotiation between the two forces.

discourses based on mediations: (a) technicality: new technological tools allow brands to promote greater interaction with consumers through new languages, for example through gamification, the promotion of collaborative strategies and dialogue between interlocutors who are interested in the topic of “sustainability”; (b) institutionality: corporations understand the relevance (socially and economically) of dealing with topics such as sustainability and, to this end, they disseminate symbols related to the topic and their narratives. In addition to their role as producers of goods and services, institutions become disseminators of symbols through narratives related to consumption; (c) rituality: the social uses that recipients make of these sustainability campaigns can be due to their affinity with the subject of the campaign and the degree of involvement can depend on the cultural competence of the subjects with the particular theme involved; (d) sociality: the consumption of these sustainability discourses can give the idea (however fleeting) of the completeness of belonging to a community that is concerned with social and environmental issues, in other words, a feeling of belonging to this community; (e) diachronic axis: it is possible to think historically about the uses of these discourses by brands in their mediatisation processes; (f) synchronic axis: it is possible to observe how the pressures of reception on the subject of “sustainability” can strain production in a feedback loop.

In advertising, at the same time as consumers have become more environmentally aware (Dias, 2019), campaigns with themes linked to socio-environmental issues began to gain more notoriety in 2015, when the world’s largest advertising festival, “Cannes Lions”, launched the “Glass: The Lion for Change” category, which rewards ideas aimed at promoting change in relation to inequality and prejudice; and in 2017, when the festival launched the “Sustainable Development Goals” category — which rewards initiatives and creative solutions aimed at achieving the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda for sustainable development (GoAd Media, 2023). In addition to the concerns that corporations may have about positioning themselves as brands that care about sustainable development, agencies also aim to win awards that acknowledge these issues.

With the increase in advertising campaigns on the subject, there is also an increase in greenwashing, “misleading green advertisements of various kinds, some with vague statements (...) and others exaggerating certain environmentally friendly aspects, focusing on one or two positive ones, and ignoring many of the company’s other negative cases” (Dias, 2019, p. 179). In this respect, one of the annexes to the regulations of the Advertising Self-Regulation Council (Conar) applied in Brazil is dedicated to providing guidance on the sustainability appeals used by brands. The document states that it is part of advertising’s role not only to respect and distinguish, but also to contribute to the “formation of ethical, responsible and supportive human and social values. CONAR supports all advertising that, in exercising its institutional or business role, can also guide, develop and stimulate society towards a sustainable future” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52). In order to regulate the practice, the Council subdivides it into

“Advertising for Socio-Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability”²; “Advertising for Socio-Environmental Responsibility and Sustainability”³; and “Cause-Related Marketing Advertising”⁴. For Conar, information and allegations on the subject need to be true, verifiable and correspond to concrete practices adopted by the company. In this sense, in Brazil, for example, advertising actions involving sustainability can be investigated by Conar in cases of complaints, in order to identify supporting data and sources that endorse the information communicated.

However, some care must be taken about the circulation of the content covered by the campaigns in society, since most of them are mistrusted. A survey by Kantar (2022), entitled *Who Cares? Who Does?* which interviewed 3,430 people in Brazil in 2022, found that 56.6% of respondents were unable to mention any brand that had a connection with the theme of “sustainability” and almost half of consumers identified the actions of brands as greenwashing, that is, environmental practices aimed above all at profit. In the same study, 44% of people said they try to buy environmentally friendly packaging, even if they have doubts about the recycling process. This means that there is a demand from society, but many consumers still see the actions of brands as misleading: there is a perception of detachment between discourse and sustainable practice.

In another survey carried out in 2022 in Brazil by Opinion Box (2022), 67% of consumers say they research brands’ ESG practices, even before finalising their purchase from the company. On the other hand, advertising agencies have been looking to expand their advertising activities with a focus on sustainability and avoid links to greenwashing by hiring specialised professionals for more structured projects (Vieira, 2022).

Regarding the coherence between the rhetoric and practice of brands, Gaulia (2019) argues:

it is therefore advisable to analyse whether a brand’s identity attributes are compatible with certain flags, always remembering that coherence should be a guide to the balance between discourse and practice. Coherence is a fundamental attribute for all situations in corporate communication: in the area of relations with the government, in dialogue with different audiences, in institutional messages, in marketing, in conversations on social networks, in communication with employees and other movements that communicate. There must be no gap or hypocritical pretence between what is done and what is preached as organisational values. (p. 187)

² “All advertising that communicates the responsible and sustainable practices of companies, their brands, products and services” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

³ “All advertising that guides and encourages society, based on examples of responsible and sustainable practices by institutions, companies, their brands, products and services” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

⁴ “That which communicates the legitimate association of institutions, companies and/or brands, products and services with socio-environmental causes, of public or private initiative, and carried out with the purpose of producing relevant, perceptible and verifiable results, both for the Advertiser and also for the socio-environmental cause supported” (Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária, 2021, p. 52).

This coherence is fundamental when we consider that in mediatization processes, exchanges between potential consumers can have negative repercussions on digital social networks when they identify problems in the brand's identity attributes and what is being communicated, for example, the "DieselGate" case in 2015, when Volkswagen allegedly fudged pollutant emission results by installing software in diesel engines that masked the results (*'Dieselgate': Veja Como Escândalo da Volkswagen Começou e as Consequências*, 2015).

It should be noted that because of the criterion adopted of analysing the most awarded campaign at the "Cannes Film Festival", the investigation is based on a campaign by a charity, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM), in partnership with the United Kingdom television network, ITV. This methodology can be applied to any other campaign. Furthermore, this research is not intended to analyse coherence in the discourse and practice of corporations, which may be carried out in other studies, since there is a concern on the part of the public to understand whether there is a harmonious relationship between the advertising discourse and the corporate culture of the organisation. Considering the methodological techniques applied, technicality (the language used through the advertising media selected by the brands) and institutionality (the dissemination of symbols through narratives related to consumption that the promoting brands chose to undertake in their campaigns) will be analysed using the categories listed in the methodology.

Advertising is not restricted to commercial brands. Third sector organisations, which are dependent on donations in order to work with society, also need to publicise their socio-environmental actions in order to sensitise potential donors, as they already have better credibility compared to profit-driven corporations, although there are situations in which they also need to manage image crises. Furthermore, the goal of advertising communication in the third sector, "in addition to stimulating consumption behaviour as is usual with traditional persuasion, should aim to stimulate reflection on the consequences of the consumption of cultural goods and ideas by individuals" (Lima, 2012, p. 17).

As a result, there is a growing number of managers of non-governmental organisations who need to plan marketing and advertising activities in order to gain visibility in relation to other institutions with similar activities for their financial sustainability, including hiring advertising agencies and entering competitions (Lima, 2012).

3. METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES FOR ANALYSING SCENOGRAPHY IN AUDIOVISUAL NARRATIVE

Roughly speaking, we can understand "audiovisual narrative" as the way in which a story is told through the physical and symbolic construction of visual and sound elements, combining narrative principles such as characters, theme and plot. Audiovisual narrative has important elements to be studied and understood when it comes to a product of this nature, namely the imagery and sound, the editing process, the construction of the script and the acting of the characters, if applicable. García Jiménez (2004) explores the concept of "audiovisual narrative" as narratology, that is, the methodical and systematic ordering of knowledge that makes it possible to identify and explain the

system, the process, as well as the instruments of narrativity of the visual, acoustic image, fundamentally considering narrativity in both its form and function. Thus, the articulation of sound and visual elements that carry meaning makes discursive construction possible, henceforth “textual construction”, of which the stories are the meanings.

The aspects of technicality and institutionality will be observed through the enunciative scenes in the narrative of the audiovisual campaign analysed. Maingueneau (1998/2008) explores three scenes involved in a statement: the encompassing scene, the generic scene and the scenography. The encompassing scene refers to the type of discourse (religious, political, advertising, for example). The generic scene deals with the specificities and role of each discourse genre, such as an election campaign leaflet. In this case a candidate addressing voters (Maingueneau, 1998/2013). Finally, the scenography, takes the whole of the encompassing scene and the generic scene into the background. The reader is enveloped by another scene. By scenography, Maingueneau (1998/2008) considers that:

the situation of the statement is not, in fact, a simple empirical framework, it is constructed as a scenography through the means of communication. Here – *writing* [emphases added] is a circular process: discourse implies an enunciator and co-enunciator, a place and a moment of enunciation that validates the very instance that allows it to exist. From this point of view, the scenography is both the source and the outlet of the work. (p. 51)

The scenography legitimises its existence as a statement. The discourse aims to convince the audience on the basis of the communicated scene that it puts into effect and through which it becomes legitimate. This means that behind the positioning of a speech, there are representations of the communicator’s personality. This is the rhetorical ethos that emanates from the discourse. The proof of the ethos, says Maingueneau (1998/2008), “consists of making a good impression of yourself, capable of convincing the audience, gaining their trust. The recipient must therefore attribute certain properties to the organisation that is put forward as the source of the event” (p. 56).

In order to understand the scenography of the campaign analysed, four categories were used, based on Maingueneau (1998/2008), Miguel (2014) and Silva (2017), namely:

- “Lexical elements”: the words or groups of words that make up the lexicon of a language, although very broad, can be studied to situate the positioning of a discourse. In this case, it is important to establish the relationship with the context and not just deal with the pure word, and also to check the frequency of certain terms throughout the discourse;
- “Sequencing/argumentative techniques”: the sequence of discourse, the resources used to construct sentences and the hierarchy of arguments are important in trying to understand the degree of relevance of certain facts and how reasoning is constructed through a sequence of propositions;
- “Prominence”: some sentences stand out in the discourse, making the creator’s position clearer;
- “Components external to verbal language”: we will take some components external to the transcribed text for analysis - predominant colours/tones, vocalities, images and audio/sound composition.

Although it is not the main objective of this research, these categories can also be used to understand the audiovisual narrative based on the elements elaborated by Souza (2009), taking García Jiménez (2004) and García García (2008) as a reference, namely: (a) morphology-narrative — in which the content and expression of the audiovisual story were analysed, above all from the analysis of “lexical elements” and “components external to verbal language”; (b) narrative analytics — whose minimum units of the narrative process were investigated with the grammatical categories in “lexical elements”; (c) taxonomy-narrative — that is, the organisation of the modes of analysis was carried out on the basis of the aforementioned categories in order to understand the scenography; (d) poetics-narrative — the free and creative nature of the audiovisual narrative could be observed especially with the analysis of the “components external to verbal language” and the “argumentative techniques”; (e) pragmatic-narrative — the relationship between sender and receiver, as well as the effects of the narrative on society, were understood from the demonstration of the practical results of the campaign, although it is not possible to go into these aspects in depth; (f) rhetoric-narrative — the structure of the narrative, which can lead to persuasion, was further explored in “argumentative techniques”, “prominence” and “lexical elements”; and (g) hypermedia in the narrative — the processes of convergence and hypertextuality were investigated in the analysis, above all, of the transmedia narrative in “components external to verbal language”.

The *corpus* selected for analysis was the most awarded campaign at the “Cannes Film Festival” in 2023 (Lemos, 2023), whose theme focuses on the discussion of suicide prevention.

4. ANALYSIS OF “THE LAST PHOTO” CAMPAIGN

Following social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the rising cost of living, the suicide rate has risen significantly in the United Kingdom, with a total of 125 people taking their own lives every week. This data drew attention to the problem and, together with CALM, ITV⁵ and ADAM&EVEDDB launched “The Last Photo” campaign, aimed at preventing suicides. The following are frames from the film of 01 min 30 s, shown on television and in the cinema (Campaign Against Living Miserably, 2022; Figure 2).

⁵ The United Kingdom television network, with the BBC as its main competitor.



Figure 2. Frames from the film *Suicidal Doesn't Always Look Suicidal*

Note. Prepared by the authors based on the advertising film *Suicidal Doesn't Always Look Suicidal*

The material features the last (home-made) videos of people who have committed suicide, in which they appear in happy situations with their children, family and friends. After showing nine of these cases, a screen (Box 10 in Figure 2) shows the following text: “these are the latest videos of people who have taken their own lives”. Three more cases are then presented and, finally, the three final screens (Box 14, Box 15 and Box 16) with the following texts: “suicide doesn’t always look like suicide”; “find out how you can help save a life”, “campaign against unhappy living/#UnitedAgaistSuicide”.

4.1. LEXICAL ELEMENTS

In this section we will look at the texts produced by the broadcasters on the four screens, namely: (a) the first screen (Box 10) contextualises the viewers and therefore has a more descriptive tone. With an anaphoric function, the word “these” is meant to refer to the videos presented earlier on the screen. It then goes on to explain the content of the “people who took their own lives” videos; (b) the second screen (Box 14) goes into more depth about the discussion that the campaign sets out to advertise. The use of the adverb (“not”) complements a sense of doubt, or a possible contradiction, between the content of the videos and the outcome of those involved. This feature triggers the unexpected and surprise, inciting reflection and commotion in the recipients; (c) the third screen (Box 15) gives the call to action. With the use of the imperative verb (“find”), the interlocutors are invited to “help save a life”; (d) on the final screen (Box 16), the logo of the enunciator and the campaign hashtag are shown. “CALM” stands for “Campaign Against Living Miserably”, a charity that has existed in the United Kingdom since 2006.

The use of “united” in the hashtag can either refer to the expression “all united” against suicide, or to the “United Kingdom”, where the campaign takes place.

Superimposed on the ambient sound of the videos, the soundtrack is composed of the song “Bring Me Sunshine” recorded as a solo version which brought another element to create commotion.

4.2. ARGUMENTATIVE TECHNIQUES

Three types of argument were used in a logical sequence to achieve the campaign’s objectives: (a) the first argument raised awareness through the images, followed by a description of the outcome of the characters in the videos; (b) the second is more reflective on the issue, with the text “suicidal doesn’t always look suicidal”; (c) the third invites the recipient to take action, either on digital social networks, using the hashtag, or to find out more about the project and/or make a possible donation to the organisation.

The use of examples also helps to support the argument. In fact, in the case of the campaign, this feature is the one that draws the most attention, as they are homemade videos and can bring more reliability to the discourse. Generally, the use of homemade videos in advertising aims to create greater identification and disguise the creation of the content by the brand, giving it a more realistic feel. Because it has a social tone, this construction helps to create greater emotion among the public, what Carrascoza (2004) calls the “Dionysian model”, with the use of emotive elements.

The argument defies stereotypes because, by common sense standards, a suicidal person is always expected to present themselves publicly with an expression of sadness and melancholy, prior to the event, which does not correspond to the examples mentioned in the campaign. This shows a non-causal relationship between what people show and what they really feel. The music on the soundtrack itself shows this contradiction, because it hints at the possible pain behind a smile; at the same time, it’s a song traditionally considered “cheerful”. The song begins: “bring me sunshine in your smile, bring me laughter all the while. In this world where we live, there should be more happiness”.

In addition to the video, the campaign is building a transmedia narrative (Jenkins, 2006/2009). The story unfolds across multiple platforms and the stories add up to reinforce the campaign’s argument. On the official website (<https://www.thecalmzone.net/thelastphoto>) you can see construction of this narrative.

4.3. PROMINENCE (OVERASSURTION)

According to Maingueneau (1998/2008), there are charged statements which make passages easily memorisable, either by exploiting elements such as rhymes, metaphors, antithesis or prosody. The same author says that “there are formulas that function as autonomous statements and formulas cited to mark a specific position that is implicitly opposed to others” (p. 75). Maingueneau (1998/2008) also introduces the concept of

“overassertion”, the idea of which, roughly speaking, is to emphasise elements that can be returned to at a later date.

In this sense, the statement “suicidal people don’t always look suicidal” stands out in the text, especially because it is an argument that challenges stereotypes, as we have already discussed, and because it is the very message of the CALM institution’s campaign with ITV, therefore going viral on digital social networks and disseminated through other direct actions. The use of the hashtag can also be considered a prominent element, since the sender wants the audience to continue visiting other portals and promote the organisation through media propagation and the circulation of discourse in society. Finally, CALM’s signoff, with the logo highlighted, is unlikely to go unnoticed by the audience, reinforcing the brand with the public.

4.4. ELEMENTS EXTERNAL TO VERBAL LANGUAGE

As it is a collage of home videos, the aesthetic is not homogeneous, making it uncharacteristic of an elaborate production. However, it brings together different characters and, consequently, stories. These factors are relevant because they convey more credibility about the argument and carry a greater symbolic charge, which contributes to a more emotive discourse, especially due to the everyday situations that cause greater identification with the recipients. This aesthetic heterogeneity can be seen in the colour palette, framing, video format and sound. However, the homogeneity is in the expression of the characters, since smiles and moments of relaxation predominate in the images (parents playing with their children, magic tricks, family moments, with friends, on the beach, among others), just as the campaign message intended. The linearity of this feeling is broken with the screens analysed above, with the campaign’s descriptive and explanatory inscriptions on a black screen with white text. Superimposed on the ambient sound of the videos, the a capella soundtrack⁶ helped to make the film more moving.

This piece was broadcast on the This Morning programme by ITV (the United Kingdom’s largest commercial television station), which supported CALM’s initiative. On CALM’s official YouTube page, this audiovisual product was added on 22 June 2022 and has achieved almost 7,000,000 views and more than 28,000 comments in just over a year (data taken from Campaign Against Living Miserably, 2022, on 14 September 2023). In addition to this film, which was shown on television and in the cinema, other actions were carried out to further expand the campaign’s narrative and the reach to the target audience.

On CALM’s website, in “The Stories” section, 50 photos (with name and age) of people who have committed suicide and their respective stories told by family and friends were posted for people to read.

In June 2022, an open-air exhibition was held on London’s South Bank, with 50 photos of apparently happy people, but without revealing any clues as to what the images were about, arousing the interest of people visiting the venue. The revelation that these were

⁶ Radford Music licensed the song “Bring Me Sunshine” and re-recorded it in a cover version with singer Beth McCarthy.

the last images of people who had committed suicide happened on ITV's This Morning programme two days later.

The campaign was also activated by digital out-of-home advertising, out-of-home advertising and print media, providing greater reach and increasing the frequency of visualisations. For the campaign, this was important because it made the cases even more visible and the narrative more robust.

CALM's partner in this cause, ITV aired the launch of the campaign on its This Morning programme, also revealing the intention behind the exhibition on the South Bank.

According to information from the DDB agency (ADAM&EVEDDB, 2023), more than 500,000 people visited the exhibition in person, which was seen live on television by more than 7,500,000 people. The campaign caused a 33% increase in online conversations about suicide. Within 48 hours of the campaign's launch, the video was the most commented on Reddit worldwide, which generated more reflection on the cause. Compared to the previous year, CALM received 400% more donations from the public and in the six months following the campaign, 161 suicides were prevented. Linking ITV to this campaign has helped both to achieve these social results and to link its image as a broadcaster of symbols that encourage reflection on suicide, which reverberates throughout society.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The aim of the research was to investigate the construction of scenes for the socio-environmental campaign that won the most awards at the "Cannes Film Festival" in 2023, in order to identify and describe the media discourses that contribute to the production of culture and values in society.

Based on the analysis carried out, we identified the following points: the encompassing scene of the campaign is an advertising discourse; the generic scene is an advertisement with a social theme, whose format selected for analysis was an audiovisual product; the scenography, which conferred credibility to the enunciator's discourse. Scenography is a space to capture adherence by establishing an enunciative scene that gives it legitimacy. In this case, the scene was built on a collective imaginary of the suicidal profile, which was put to the test with a discourse that left little room for questioning. This is because by dealing with the subject with real cases, the campaign leads the audience to rethink the stereotypes that media culture and society generally paint of the subject.

The campaign didn't limit itself to treating scenography in a way that was limited to the standard generic scene. As well as lending credibility to the speech, the home videos provided an emotional charge that was enhanced by the soundtrack. The encompassing scene can be detailed in the sections "lexical items", "argumentative techniques", "prominence" and "elements external to verbal language".

This route also allowed us to analyse the issues of technicality and institutionality, as we already mentioned in the theoretical section of the article. In terms of technicality, we observed accessible language, the collage of home videos and an a cappella soundtrack, which gave the audience greater emotion. There wasn't a great deal of technical production in this piece, mainly because the intention was for the audience to be centred on the message the video wanted to convey. In addition to the film, the transmedia narrative allowed for the use of multiple forms of expression that coincide with the campaign's message, reinforcing the campaign's ethos. In any case, the appropriate communication was pertinent to the objectives.

In terms of institutionality, we can see that because it is a traditional charity, it already has values that match the discourses promoted by the campaign. By only using the charity's logo at the end of the film, CALM was able to significantly increase the number of donations from the video, the aim of which was to prevent suicide, which is on the rise in the United Kingdom. By deconstructing the stereotype of the suicidal person, the institution manages to create new symbols for its audience, who now have more relevant information on the subject, especially since the figure of the sad and dejected person has erupted in the collective imagination. On the other hand, the partner brand in the campaign, ITV, sought to position itself socially in relation to the cause by constructing a narrative that caught the attention of viewers and promoted a boom in both viewership and the circulation of media discourse on the cause.

With these considerations, we can see the importance of having institutions that really do have a sustainable policy in terms of business management and communication. In addition to complying with the ESG agenda, brands can spread new symbols across multiple media platforms, allowing for a productive discussion with society, in line with the process of mediatisation. For ITV, the entertainment and sports television network, developing a campaign in conjunction with CALM has helped in terms of audience, image and reflections on a subject considered taboo in many cultures. Although this is not the aim of the article, it could be extended in another opportunity, complementing the possible dilemmas between partnerships in advertising campaigns by philanthropic companies with private or government corporations, which can cover up possible local problems, consequently affecting credibility, as Lima (2012) reflects.

Translation: Linguaemundi

REFERENCES

- ADAM&EVEDDB. (2023). *Exposing the heartbreaking reality of suicide*. https://www.ddb.com/creative/o1_calmbrand/
- Apple. (2022, November 30). *The greatest | Apple* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sXgIEHWRJ8>

- Barros, L. M. (2011). *Discursos midiáticos e apropriações culturais*. Universidade Metodista de São Paulo.
- Boff, L. (2012). *Sustentabilidade: O que é, o que não é*. Vozes.
- Braga, J. L. (2006). *A sociedade enfrenta sua mídia: Dispositivos sociais de crítica midiática*. Editora Paulus.
- Brundtland, H. (1991). *Nosso futuro comum*. Editora da Fundação Getúlio Vargas. (Original work published 1987)
- Campaign Against Living Miserably. (2022, June 22). *Suicidal doesn't always look suicidal* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Jihi6JGzjI&rco=1>
- Carrascoza, J. A. (2004). O apolíneo e o dionisíaco no texto publicitário. *Cadernos da Escola de Comunicação*, (2), 24–39.
- Casaqui, V. (2011). Por uma teoria da publicização: Transformações no processo publicitário. *Significação*, (36), 131–151.
- Conselho de Autorregulamentação Publicitária. (2021/2022). *Código brasileiro de autorregulamentação publicitária*. http://www.conar.org.br/pdf/codigo-conar-2021_6pv.pdf
- Curran, J. (1998). Repensar la comunicación de masas. In J. Curran, D. Morley, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Estudios culturales y comunicación* (pp. 63–83). Paidós.
- Declaração sobre o Direito ao Desenvolvimento, December 4, 1986, <https://acnudh.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Declara%C3%A7%C3%A3o-sobre-o-Direito-ao-Desenvolvimento.pdf>
- Design and Art Direction. (n.d.). *The postponed day*. <https://www.dandad.org/awards/professional/2023/237265/the-postponed-day/>
- Dias, R. (2019). *Gestão ambiental: Responsabilidade social e sustentabilidade*. Atlas.
- 'Dieselgate': Veja como escândalo da Volkswagen começou e as consequências. (2015, September 23). G1. <https://g1.globo.com/carros/noticia/2015/09/escandalo-da-volkswagen-veja-o-passo-passo-do-caso.html>
- Eguizábal, R. (2010). *Teoría de la publicidad*. Catedra.
- García Jiménez, J. (2004). *Narrativa audiovisual*. Cátedra.
- García García, F. (2006). *Narrativa audiovisual: Televisiva, filmica, radiofônica, hipermedia y publicitaria*. Ediciones del Labirinto.
- Gaulia, L. A. (2019). Relações públicas, comunicação empresarial, marca e reputação. In L. G. Berlim & P. A. Ashley (Eds.), *Ética, responsabilidade social e sustentabilidade nos negócios: (Des)construindo limites e possibilidades* (pp. 181–190). Saraiva.
- GoAd Media. (2023). *Guia Cannes Lions 2023*. https://blog.publicidade.uol.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/GUIA-GOAD_CANNES-LIONS-2023.pdf
- Jenkins, H. (2009). *Cultura da convergência* (S. Alexandria, Trans.). Aleph. (Original work published 2006)
- Jenkins, H., Green, J., & Ford, S. (2014). *Cultura da conexão: Criando valor e significado por meio da mídia propagável* (P. Arnaud, Trans.). Aleph. (Original work published 2013)
- Kantar. (2022). *Who cares? Who does?* <https://www.kantar.com/brazil/campaigns/wp/2022/wcwg-latam-2022>

- Lemos, A. Z. (2023, July 4). *Veja as 10 campanhas mais premiadas do mundo no festival de 2023*. meio&mensagem. <https://www.meioemensagem.com.br/cannes/veja-as-10-campanhas-mais-premiadas-do-mundo-no-festival-de-2023>
- Lima, G. B. (2012). *A publicidade do terceiro setor nas redes sociais digitais: O contrato da comunicação bidirecional* [Master's thesis, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco]. ATTENA.
- LLLLITL. (2023, June 23). *Fondation Anne de Gaulle - 'Paris Anne de Gaulle' (case study)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GQOAlwGoF8>
- Lopes, M. I. V. de. (2018a). Jesús Martín-Barbero e os mapas essenciais para compreender a comunicação. *Intexto*, (43), 14–23. <https://doi.org/10.19132/1807-8583201843.14-23>
- Lopes, M. I. V. de. (2018b). A teoria barberiana da comunicação. *MATRIZES*, 12(1), 39–63. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v12i1p39-63>
- Maingueneau, D. (2008). *Cenas da enunciação* (S. Possenti & M. de Souza-e-Silva, Trans.). Parábola Editorial. (Original work published 1998)
- Maingueneau, D. (2013). *Análise de textos de comunicação* (M. de Souza-e-Silva & D. Rocha, Trans.). Cortez. (Original work published 1998)
- Marketing & Media. (2023, June 23). *WHERE TO SETTLE | Mastercard | McCann Poland* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLkC6waV4xo>
- Martín-Barbero, J. (2001). *Dos meios às mediações: Comunicação, cultura e hegemonia* (R. Polido & S. Alcides, Trans.). Editora UFRJ. (Original work published 1987)
- Microsoft. (2023, April 19). *Can an alphabet preserve a culture?* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1GRTS2sFqhY>
- Miguel, K. G. (2014). *Pensar a cibercultura ambientalista: Comunicação, mobilização e as estratégias discursivas do Greenpeace Brasil* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade Metodista de São Paulo]. TEDE.
- Mintel. (2023, October 31). *Mintel announces global consumer trends for 2023*. <https://www.mintel.com/press-centre/mintel-announces-global-consumer-trends-for-2023/>
- Opinion Box. (2023). *Relatório ESG e sustentabilidade 2022: Dados, análises e perspectivas sobre práticas sustentáveis na sociedade e nas empresas brasileiras*. https://d335luupugsy2.cloudfront.net/cms%2Ffiles%2F7540%2F1659390488Opinion_box_relatorio_sustentabilidade_ESG_2022_16-9_final_4.pdf
- Silva, P. K. (2017). *Mídia e produção simbólica: A construção do torcedor-anfitrião no cenário da Copa do Mundo de 2014 no Brasil* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade Metodista de São Paulo]. TEDE.
- Souza, K. I. de. (2009). *Vídeo digital na educação: Aplicação da narrativa audiovisual na educação* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade Estadual de Campinas].
- Vieira, A. (2022, October 3). *Comunicação verde*. Meio e Mensagem.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Priscila Kalinke da Silva has a doctorate in Social Communication from Methodist University, a master's degree in Education from the State University of Maringá, a postgraduate degree in Communication and Education from Faculdade Cidade Verde,

a degree in Economic Sciences from the State University of Maringá, a degree in Social Communication - Journalism from the Higher Education Centre of Paraná and Advertising from the Ingá University Centre. She is a permanent lecturer in the Publicity and Advertising programme at the State University of Minas Gerais. She is vice-coordinator of the research group E-Publicc (Publicisation, Communication and Culture). Her research focuses on advertising and network analysis for social media; communication and education; and the social and environmental responsibility of brands.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1621-405X>

Email: priscila.kalinke@uemg.br

Address: Av. Escócia, 1001 – Bloco B – Sala dos Professores 3 – Gabinete 04 – Cidade das Águas, Frutal, Minas Gerais, Brasil. CEP 38202-436

Carlos Henrique Sabino Caldas has a degree in Social Communication - Advertising from Universidade Paulista (2003), a specialisation in Art Education from São Paulo State University (UNESP; 2009), a master's degree in Communication from UNESP (2013) and a PhD in Communication from UNESP (2018). He has experience in the field of media communication, with an emphasis on communication, innovation and technology, working mainly on the following subjects: advertising creation, multimedia production, interactive audiovisuals, mediated consumption, advertising and new technologies, audiovisual semiotics, intellectual property in communication and information technologies, communication and technology, new technologies and innovations in audiovisual production and human-computer interaction studies.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8606-5136>

Email: carlossabinocaldas@gmail.com

Address: Av. Escócia, 1001 – Bloco A – Sala 14 – Gabinete 02 – Cidade das Águas, Frutal, Minas Gerais, Brasil. CEP 38202-436

Luiz Antonio Feliciano has a PhD in Education and a masters in Multimedia from the State University of Campinas. He graduated in Social Communication - Publicity and Advertising from the University of Taubaté. He is a full professor at the State University of Minas Gerais, Frutal unit. He is a member and leader of the research group E-Publicc (Publicisation, Communication and Culture). He researches photography, youth and the city. He is deputy editor of the magazine *Educação em Foco* and a member of the Frutal Academy of Humanities. He is a photographer, documentary maker and poet.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9316-6883>

Email: liufeliciano@gmail.com

Address: Av. Escócia, 1001 – Bloco A – Sala 14 – Gabinete 01 – Cidade das Águas, Frutal, Minas Gerais, Brasil. CEP 38202-436

Rogério Gomes Neto has a degree in Advertising from Mackenzie University (1999), a specialisation in Communication Theory and Techniques from Faculdade Cásper Líbero (2001) and a master's degree in Social Communication from the Methodist University

of São Paulo (2009). He has professional experience in advertising communications (customer service, planning and media) and in devising and organising trade fairs and events. He is currently a lecturer in the Advertising and Publicity programme at the State University of Minas Gerais, Frutal campus.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9316-6883>

Email: liufeliciano@gmail.com

Address: Av. Escócia, 1001 – Bloco A – Sala 14 – Gabinete 01 – Cidade das Águas, Frutal, Minas Gerais, Brasil. CEP 38202-436

Submitted: 28/09/2023 | Accepted: 28/03/2024



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.