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Editorial correspondence to be addressed to

The International Journal of Magazine Studies
J-MagLab—Journalism & Magazine Lab — CICANT
Lusófona University
Campo Grande, 376
1749-024 Lisbon
Portugal

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EDITORIAL

MAGAZINE-IFICATION: A PROBLEM OR A SOLUTION TO JOURNALISM?

CARLA RODRIGUES CARDOSO

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

ANA FIGUEIRAS

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

ILO ALEXANDRE

CICANT/ LUSÓFONA UNIVERSITY (PORTUGAL)

Carla Rodrigues Cardoso holds a PhD in Communication Sciences by NOVA University Lisbon. At Lusófona University, she is Associate Professor and integrated researcher at CICANT, where she founded J-MagLab – Journalism & Magazine Lab. Carla Rodrigues Cardoso has researched and published in Journalism and Magazine Studies for over two decades.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0790-6924>

Ana Figueiras is an Assistant Professor at Universidade Lusófona and a researcher at CICANT, where she serves as the assistant scientific coordinator of J-MagLab – Journalism & Magazine Lab. She earned her PhD in Digital Media by NOVA University Lisbon (UT Austin Program | Portugal) in 2016, and since then her primary research area has been information visualisation, focusing on visual storytelling.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7233-9968>

Ilo Alexandre is an Assistant Professor at Lusófona University. He holds a Ph.D. in Digital Media by NOVA University Lisbon (UT Austin Program|Portugal). He is a researcher at CICANT, where he serves as the head of communication of J-MagLab – Journalism & Magazine Lab. Alexandre was editor-in-chief at G1 Ceará and has worked as web editor and social media editor for political campaigns and advertising.
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1256-6613>

Corresponding author

Carla Rodrigues Cardoso
carla.cardoso@ulusofona.pt
CICANT, Lusófona University

One of the most compelling insights that emerges from a magazine studies perspective is that several recent theoretical developments in journalism studies - such as the emotional turn (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2020), constructive journalism (Bro, 2019; Gyldensted, 2015; Haagerup, 2017; Hermans & Gyldensted, 2019), and solutions journalism (Lough & McIntyre, 2023; McIntyre, 2019; McIntyre & Lough, 2021) -, reflect what might be described as the magazine-ification¹ of journalism. Although treated naturally by some magazine studies scholars (Holmes, 2005; Ribeiro & Costa, 2024), the concept of magazine-ification - the process by which diverse social phenomena come to adopt characteristics traditionally associated with the magazine *medium* - has received little scholarly attention. Outside academia, the term is often used pejoratively (Strauss, 2013), while journalists continue to regard it as complex (Lynch & Pompeo, 2013).

Yet, this phenomenon itself is increasingly evident. In response to growing news avoidance and what Brites (2026) terms epistemic disconnection, newspapers have increasingly embraced emotion, solutions-oriented reporting, constructive narratives, and more engaging forms of storytelling - territories that magazine journalism knows well. Consider a headline such as "Ten Ways to Reduce Anxiety." It could easily have appeared in a health magazine today or twenty years ago. From the outset, the headline signals its purpose: through direct, reader-oriented language ("ten ways"), it promises practical solutions to a real-life problem ("reduce anxiety"). Unapologetically, magazine journalism has always been committed to addressing readers' needs. By contrast, mainstream journalism has traditionally relied on the strategic ritual of objectivity (Tuchman, 1972), a defensive set of routine procedures that promotes distance and reinforces the separation between journalists and their audiences.

Despite inspiring many of the innovations now being embraced by journalism studies, magazines remain underrecognized.

Journalism studies themselves illustrate this paradox. When scholars seek to reconstruct the recent past, they typically turn to journalism, where newspapers remain the primary object of analysis. Magazine journalism, by contrast, is often overlooked, despite possessing characteristics that justify its description as "the best documentary source of recent history" (Cardoso et al., 2022, p. 6). The photographs, language, design, and advertising found in magazines bring to life vanished customs, reveal social habits and behaviors, and capture the *zeitgeist* of the societies they portray with a richness and breadth that often surpass those of newspapers.

In their mapping of magazine research, Anders Jalakas and Ingela Wadbring (2012) identified three key findings: 1) magazines are predominantly used as windows for studying other phenomena rather than as objects of inquiry in their own right; 2) content analysis is by far the most commonly employed research method; 3) only about one quarter of the articles they examined fall within the field of media and communication studies. Based on these findings, Jalakas and Wadbring concluded that magazine studies contain significant research gaps, highlighting structural, historical, and global studies as particularly promising areas for future scholarships. They argued that in this "virgin territory (...) lies a golden opportunity of finding and defining a scientific field where there still are possibilities for ground breaking pioneer work" (Jalakas & Wadbring, 2012, p. 94). In this context, when we turn our attention to magazine journalism, these research gaps persist due to the lack of a shared understanding of what magazine journalism actually is.

So, what is (or is not) magazine journalism? There is no consensus on the answer. One reason is the fact that magazines can fulfill a wide range of human needs: cognitive, affective, personal, social, and tension-release (Johnson & Priatel, 2013). Newsmagazines fall into the first category and remain the only type of magazine that journalism scholars

¹ Also referred as magazineification and magazinification.

consistently regard as a legitimate object of inquiry. Consequently, magazines that produce journalism while also addressing other human needs - such as inspiration, identity, leisure, or emotional engagement - are, in most cases, overlooked by journalism research.

This diversity is also reflected in how magazines themselves are defined. In *Magazine Journalism*, Holmes and Nice (2012) make no reference to newsmagazines. Instead, they propose a general theory of magazines, where the first principle states that "magazines always target a precisely defined group of readers" (Holmes & Nice, 2012, p. 7). The emphasis on "always" effectively places newsmagazines outside the realm of magazines as conceptualized by the authors, since newsmagazines are intended to appeal to a broad, undifferentiated audience rather than to a clearly defined readership.

An example of this continuous struggle to legitimize magazine journalism is that even newsmagazines had to pave their way to recognition as journalistic publications. In the United States, for example, although the pioneering *Time* magazine had been in circulation for 37 years by 1960, some press associations, including the Florida Press Association, still refused to recognize newsmagazines as members. As a result, in Florida and several other states, these publications were barred from carrying political advertising, a privilege reserved exclusively for newspapers (Martin, 1960).

More than 60 years later, a similar debate resurfaced in Portugal. In 2021, the national authority responsible for accrediting journalists² denied a press credential to a trainee reporter at the Portuguese lifestyle magazine *Time Out* and subsequently refused to renew the credentials of one of its senior journalists (Moura & Torres, 2021). The decision was based on the nature of the magazine's content, much of which focused on stores, restaurants, and consumer brands. At the time,

Time Out had been operating in Portugal for 14 years, and its journalistic status had never previously been questioned. The dispute ultimately had to be settled in court.

Cases such as *Time Out* reveal that the question is not merely institutional but conceptual. According to Smith and Higgins (2020), it is language - the defining characteristic of what makes us human - that ultimately distinguishes different forms of journalism. If magazine content differs from that of newspapers, so too does its journalistic language. As a *medium* organized around specific audiences and interests, the magazine is uniquely positioned to engage in direct, intimate dialogue with its readers, speaking to communities in ways that address their needs, aspirations, and everyday concerns. These characteristics, once again, set magazine journalism apart from newsmagazines. As a result, the two academic fields find themselves on a collision course: journalism studies tend to recognize journalism only in newsmagazines, whereas magazine studies locate magazine journalism primarily beyond the general-interest newsmagazine. At the heart of this divide lies a more fundamental question: what each field understands journalism to be.

Smith and Higgins (2020) argue that feature writing is the dominant mode of expression in magazine journalism, encompassing a wide range of genres, including service pieces; inspirational; personal services; relationships; interviews; nostalgia. This editorial tradition provides a useful lens for reading David Frankel's *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (2026), starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway. Although widely perceived as a film about the fashion industry, it is equally a film about magazine journalism. Set at the fictional fashion magazine *Runway*, the story revolves around a publication struggling to remain relevant in a rapidly changing media landscape. Most importantly for the present discussion, one of its central characters, Andrea Sachs (Anne Hathaway), is a journalist.

2 Comissão da Carteira Profissional de Jornalista (CCPJ): <https://www.ccpj.pt/>

In the first film, Andrea accepts a position at *Runway* but dreams of becoming a “real journalist” in a newspaper, a goal she ultimately achieves. Ironically, in the sequel, Andrea is an award-winning newspaper journalist who returns to *Runway* as a features editor after being laid off together with her entire newsroom. Magazine journalism thus becomes the central focus of the film, which portrays an industry grappling with layoffs, artificial intelligence, declining revenues, advertiser pressure, and the growing influence of technology billionaires.

Coincidentally, while *The Devil Wears Prada 2* brought magazine journalism back into the cultural spotlight, *Encyclopædia Britannica* published its first dedicated entry on magazine journalism on May 21, 2026, defining the field as having an emphasis on “longer-form storytelling, interpretation, and specialized audiences” (Ncube, 2026). Nevertheless, the magazine industry is in transformation, a scenario encapsulated by *Runway*’s creative director Nigel Kipling (Stanley Tucci), who remarks that the magazine “stopped being a magazine many years ago. I mean, we still have a book, but practically nobody buys it. We are digital, we are downloadable, we are streamable, we are in the ether” (Frankel, 2026). In this transition from print to digital, what ultimately sets magazines apart is the quality of their content: high-quality magazine journalism. In doing so, the film presents long-form feature journalism as a potential path not only for the future of magazines but also for the renewal of journalism itself, provided it embraces a more magazine-ified approach.

In an article discussing the future of *The New York Times Magazine*³, from 2013, the newspaper *Politico* wrote that “the ongoing magazine-ification of the [news]paper, and its attendant bells and whistles on the web and mobile devices, means the line between the two may continue to blur.” (Lynch & Pompeo, 2013). More than a decade later, this analysis seems increasingly relevant, so it is time to bridge

the long-standing divide between journalism and magazine studies. In 2026, the Magazine Media Lab (MagLab), based at CICANT, Lusófona University, celebrates its fourth anniversary while publishing the third issue of the International Journal of Magazine Studies (IJMS). It was within MagLab and the IJMS that the concept of interconnected journalism (Cardoso & Figueiras, 2024) emerged and has continued to evolve. This model of journalism draws heavily on the traditions of magazine journalism, particularly its ability to build communities and foster meaningful connections with readers.

Interconnected journalism is grounded in the concept of interconnection. It focuses on issues that matter to more than one community, revealing how different communities experience the same reality. In this way, it operates as a positive Trojan horse: by engaging audiences with topics already relevant to them, it simultaneously exposes them to the perspectives of communities they might otherwise overlook. The goals are greater empathy, reduced prejudice and hate speech, and a deeper understanding of shared social challenges.

Nearly three years of research on interconnected journalism have significantly expanded MagLab’s research agenda, leading to the evolution of MagLab into the Journalism & Magazine Lab (J-MagLab). This is not a merger of two fields, nor does it diminish the autonomy of either journalism studies or magazine studies. Rather, it recognizes the value of building bridges where meaningful intellectual dialogue can advance both traditions, particularly in the long-overdue discussion of magazine journalism. Having established itself as an international reference point in magazine studies, MagLab now begins a new chapter as J-MagLab, with the ambition of making equally significant and socially relevant contributions to journalism studies.

In this issue (Vol. 3, Nº. 1), we are delighted to feature a guest essay by Rebecca Johnke from the University of Sydney,

3 Magazine included with the Sunday edition of *The New York Times* newspaper.

Australia, a leading researcher in the field of magazine studies. Johnke is co-author, alongside Megan Le Masurier, of the seminal article "Magazine studies: Pedagogy and practice in a nascent field" (2014), in which the authors argue that magazine studies have been unfairly neglected and propose ways to consolidate it as a legitimate academic field.

Entitled "Discovering magazines: the scholarly meanderings of an accidental magazine scholar", Rebecca Johnke's essay takes readers on a journey through the richness of magazine studies, illustrating how the field attracts scholars from a wide range of disciplines who share a commitment to deepening our understanding of a *medium* of remarkable richness and complexity. In doing so, it reveals magazine studies as an inherently eclectic and polyphonic field of inquiry. Rebecca Johnke's forthcoming edited volume, *The Gendered Image of the Magazine Journalist on Television and Screen: Fashion and the Failing Feminist* (Routledge, 2026), provides yet another testament to the vitality and intellectual richness of magazine studies.

The peer-reviewed section opens with Ullamaija Kivikuru's examination of audience participation through an analysis of four issues of three popular Finnish magazines in "Inclusion and distance: Embedded messages in Finnish magazinescape". The article investigates the extent to which these publications promote genuine reader participation or whether they merely offer superficial invitations to react and comment. The findings reveal that invitations to participate tend to be subtle, and Ullamaija Kivikuru also identifies recurring inclusive narratives.

In "Health magazines in Portugal: publishing trends from 1993 to 2025", Hernâni Zão Oliveira and Helena Lima provide a comprehensive overview of Portuguese health magazines over three decades, analyzing circulation patterns and thematic trends within the sector. The authors identify three distinct phases in their evolution: expansion and editorial specialization; contraction and the disappearance of titles; and

structural fragility marked by the digital transition and highlight that the decline in specialist publications also represents a significant reduction in the supply of expert-mediated, evidence-based health information.

Anna Ragasová investigates the construction and presentation of emotionalism in newsmagazines, based on the coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's death, in "How do we feel about facts: Emotionalism in Newsmagazine Coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's Death". Through content analysis and semiotics applied to 111 articles from the magazines *Time* (USA), *The Economist* (UK), and *.týždeň* (Slovakia), the article examines textual, visual, and structural elements that contribute to the reader's emotional engagement. A comparison of publications from different countries, editorial traditions, and cultural contexts reveals how journalistic standards and national perspectives shape representations of mourning, legacy, and royal symbolism, shedding light on the media's influence on public perception at times of collective upheaval.

The issue concludes with "A Multimodal Analysis of COVID-19 Metaphors on Magazine and Journal Covers", where Damla Yildirim analyses the metaphorical framings of the COVID-19 pandemic on 70 magazine and journal covers published between 2020 and 2024. Using a multimodal approach, the study investigates how metaphors emerge from the interaction between visual and verbal modes and identifies war as the most recurrent source domain. Damla Yildirim highlights the central role that cover design plays in linking images and text, shaping the construction and interpretation of metaphorical meaning.

Taken together, the contributions to this issue embody the breadth, diversity, and vitality of contemporary magazine studies. They examine audiences, health communication, emotional journalism, and visual metaphors, demonstrating that magazines continue to offer a unique lens for understanding society.

Keywords: *Magazine Studies; Journalism Studies; Magazine Journalism; Interconnected Journalism; The Devil Wears Prada 2*

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DISCOVERING MAGAZINES: THE SCHOLARLY MEANDERINGS OF AN ACCIDENTAL MAGAZINE SCHOLAR

REBECCA JOHINKE

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

Rebecca Johinke is an Associate Professor in the Discipline of English and Writing at the University of Sydney, Australia. Her work examines gender and popular culture. She has published many articles and chapters on Australian film, and about magazines, magazine editors, and the image of the journalist in popular culture. She has published two books: *Queens of Print* (2019) and *The Gendered Image of the Magazine Journalist on Television and Screen: Fashion and the Failing Feminist* (2026).
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7991-8372>

Corresponding author

Rebecca Johinke
rebecca.johinke@sydney.edu.au
Associate Professor, Discipline of English and Writing
University of Sydney, Australia

I turned 63 this week and my route to academia, let alone Magazine Studies, has been a long and circuitous one. Given my brief with this essay, I'm not sure it is wise to admit this, but I've never been a recreational reader of print magazines. There, I've said it. It has always been books and newspapers, for me. Perhaps for a few brief months when I was an early teenager reading Australia's *Dolly* magazine, I was attracted to the shiny allure of a glossy magazine, but I never became one of those cradle-to-grave magazine readers who (in Australia) were expected to move from *Dolly* to *Cleo* and from *Cleo* to the *Women's Weekly* and a parenting, gardening or home decorating magazine or two. Women were then meant to fill their twilight years with titles like *That's Life* where, at my age, it would have been assumed that I was long retired (if I'd worked outside of the home at all) and that I'd be interested in puzzles (true) or stories about husbands, grandchildren and puppies (not so much). It's a sign of the times that I listen to American political podcasts when walking to work and then, rather than sitting down with a pen and hard-copy magazine at night, I turn to my tablet or phone to complete Wordle, Connections, Strands, the Mini and then Spelling Bee (drivers beware, I often start working on them at traffic lights as I walk home in the evening).

As Joke Hermes explains in *Reading Women's Magazines* thirty years ago, part of the appeal of magazines is that, as everyday media, they can be picked up and put down and are typically not read back-to-back in a sitting or indeed in a linear fashion at all (1995). In the moments when we might have reached for a magazine in the past, of course, it's old news now that we reach for our mobile devices. Whether it is breaking news about tariff wars, wars in the Middle East, or the latest celebrity break up, we want to know about it *right now* and often while we are on the move. That is part of the problem for Australian print magazines but part of the success stories for titles like *The New York Times* (NYT) who have managed the shift from print to digital and from a national to an international audience so successfully. Although the NYT

is technically what we would have called a newspaper, a lot of its appeal is 'magazine style' content: puzzles, cooking, celebrities, product reviews, real estate, entertainment and culture. Readers now expect and indeed demand that material in digital form and it comes from a 'newspaper' that also includes videos, podcasts, and shared subscriptions. Rather than passing on a print magazine from person to person, we swap recipes, stories, and compete with each other to solve Connections on our devices. As researchers working in magazine studies, we understand how readership patterns have shifted and how the very definition of a 'magazine' is a dynamic one no matter how we might try to tie it down.

If I'm not a recreational magazine reader, why, then, have I just finished writing my second book about magazines? The answer is (of course) that magazines are fascinating objects of study. They capture the zeitgeist and that makes them invaluable texts to learn more about social history—gender, power, fashion and popular culture. Unlike many other distinguished magazine studies scholars like Marjorie Ferguson, David Abrahamson, Tim Holmes, Megan Le Masurier or Sharon Maxwell Magnus, I didn't start my professional life as a journalist. My undergraduate studies were varied but I eventually specialised in literary studies. My PhD was meant to be about Australian literature but ended up being about Australian film (search my name and *Mad Max* or *The Cars that Ate Paris*) and then over twenty years ago now I was fortunate to secure a position in the Department of English at the University of Sydney, Australia (now the Discipline of English and Writing). I then, happily, stumbled into Magazine Studies quite by chance.

I've taught many subjects here at Sydney University, but over twenty years ago a retiring Chair of Australian Literature, Professor Elizabeth Webby, designed a postgraduate unit of study about Australian Print Culture (chiefly colonial titles and little magazines) and, as these things happen, she soon retired, and I took on the unit and made it my own. My

interests remained in gender and popular culture, and I continued to write about gender and Australian film and so the unit soon morphed into a study of twentieth century and early twenty-first century magazine titles. We always started with the question 'what is a magazine?' (usefully guided by Le Masurier, 2014, on that topic) and my slides each semester tracked the Wikipedia entry for 'magazine' and showed how that definition was shifting every year. We looked at early second-wave feminist attacks on magazines (for example, Friedan, 1963 and Wolf, 1990) and then talked through second, third, and post-feminist approaches to femininity, magazines and consumption (Hanigsberg, 1997 and many others).

We looked at a range of Australian magazines from *Dolly* and *Girlfriend* to *Frankie* and *House & Garden* and enjoyed looking at everything from lads' magazines to surfing, fitness, decorating, quilting, fashion and wedding titles. When Apple smart phones were launched in 2007 and then iPads in 2010, we speculated whether screens could ever replace the tactile appeal of a glossy and how we might navigate digital content. We read papers by Dennis (2004), Abrahamson (2009) and others about the future of magazines and made our own predictions. Each semester, students gave papers about iconic Australian magazine editors, and we tracked sales and readership figures online and debated which titles would thrive and survive and which ones looked likely to wither and die. Would we, as the interviewees in Brita Ytre-Are's study (2011) declared, still want to hold magazines in our hands? In the early 2000s, two titles usually competed for the top spot: *The Australian Women's Weekly* (launched in 1933 and a monthly since December 1982) and *Better Homes & Gardens*. A quick check on Roy Morgan Research in early June 2026 confirms that that is still the case all these years later, with *Better Homes & Gardens* now comfortably in the lead.¹ What the Roy Morgan figures also illustrate is that free 'custom' or

'customer' magazines (that are essentially brand promotions) have vastly higher readerships than commercial magazines available for purchase.

I began to publish academic papers about magazines and co-edited a special issue of Australian journal *TEXT* in 2014 along with another Australian magazine scholar, Rose Williamson. My colleague Megan Le Masurier and I wrote about teaching Magazine Studies in that *TEXT* special issue (2014).² In another co-written piece, this time with Frances Di Lauro (2017), I discussed innovative Magazine Studies assessment tasks like asking students to write Wikipedia entries about Australian magazine editors. I was discovering just how broad and rich Magazine Studies could be as a field of research. During this period when I was establishing my unit of study and starting to publish in Magazine Studies, Tim Holmes founded the Mapping the Magazine (MtM) conferences; originally at Cardiff University, UK, and then in cities like Chicago, Sydney (where we hosted one year), and then in Lisbon. More recently, Carla Rodrigues Cardoso and Ana Figueiras head up a dynamic magazine research hub (which includes this journal), and they now also host the Future of Magazines (FoM) conferences at the Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon, Portugal. Lisbon is now the gathering place for international scholars who share a love of magazines.

When I was teaching my postgraduate students, one of the topics we loved discussing was iconic Australian editors—women—and learning about their professional histories and professional rivalries, but almost no academic literature existed about Australian editors. In the 1980s and 1990s, Australians were avid magazine readers and the market was a lucrative and intensely competitive one. Without question, the best-known Australian magazine editor (to this day) is Ita Buttrose, but Dulcie Boling and Nene King were publishing

1 Researchers can look readership figures up here: <https://www.roymorgan.com/readerships/australian-magazine-readership>.

2 Le Masurier retired some years ago now.

powerhouses (and intense rivals) when they helmed two weekly glossies: *New Idea* and *Woman's Day*, and they were feared and highly respected publishing figures who made their bosses very wealthy men. Television series dramatizing their professional lives have been made about all three women. The first was *Paper Giants: The Birth of Cleo* (about Buttrose's time launching Australia's version of *Cosmopolitan* called *Cleo*) and then a second series called *Paper Giants: Magazine Wars* about King and Boling and their enormous success selling weekly magazines peddling gossip about the British royals and local and international celebrities. King's flamboyant persona, and the tragic death of her husband in a diving accident, also made for gripping television and, of course, generated many magazine stories.³

My students and I also liked discussing the next generation of female editors who were mentored by or grew up with Buttrose, Boling and King as role models. Mia Freedman is one of those women who went on to edit *Cosmopolitan* in Australia from 1996-2002 and then form her own digital media company Mama Mia, with a suite of podcasts and a number of books. Freedman is still a household name (at least for women of my generation), and a television series about her called *Strife* (2023-2025) tells part of her story. I was conscious, however, that the stories of so many extremely talented and successful editors who were household names (or should have been) in the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s would soon fade from Australian publishing history when I saw the writing was on the wall about the impact of what was then called the 'digital disruption'. I wanted to preserve these women's stories but also to learn about how they were adapting to the new digital environment

and new ways of creating and disseminating content.⁴ This seemed like an important moment in magazine publishing history to capture. Many editors were kind enough to share their stories with me for a book of interviews that I subsequently published called *Queens of Print: Interviews with Australia's Iconic Women's Magazine Editors* (2019)

I divided that book into three sections. The first looked at powerhouse female editors who started their careers in the 1970s and 1980s, like Ita Buttrose, Julia Zaetta, Karin Upton Baker, Sandra Hook, Shona Martyn, Pat Ingram, and Nene King. The second looked at luminaries from the 1990s and early 2000s like: Kathy Bail, Marina Go, Jackie Frank, Carolyn 'Bunty' Avieson⁵, Kirstie Clements, Paula Joye, Sarah Wilson, Helen McCabe, and Kellie Hush. The third section focused on the new generation of editors who were grappling with the decline of print and the rise of digital and featured interviews with Louisa Hatfield, Kerrie McCallum, Amy Sinclair, Justine Cullen, Edwina McCann, Fiona Connolly, Keshnee Kemp, Emily Taylor, Sarrah Le Marquand, Jo Walker, Jess Blanch and Lisa Messenger. Looking back just a few years later, I'm grateful that 28 amazing editors took time to speak with me and record their stories. Several other successful editors (including Alison Veness, Mia Freedman and Deborah Thomas) allowed me to interview them but ultimately decided not to be included in the book. Kathy Bail and Elissa Blake, who were two of the first women to edit Australian *Rolling Stone*, kindly shared their insights into women about being a woman covering the music industry, and that piece appeared in *Persona Studies* (2019). I spoke with several other magazine and beauty editor success stories like Zoë Foster Blake⁶, Melissa

3 Indeed, Peter FitzSimons published her story in a biography simply entitled *Nene* (2013).

4 I also wrote about this in a journal article published in *Journalism Studies* (2017) where I tracked one editor's rhetorical moves to prompt readers of a custom print magazine to read digital content.

5 Avieson is now also an academic at Sydney University in the Discipline of Media and Communication.

6 Foster-Blake worked as a magazine journalist specialising in beauty and has now written over a dozen books (fiction, non-fiction, advice) and started her own hugely successful skincare company called 'Go To'.

Kang⁷, Tamara Davis⁸, Sally Wright⁹ and Jacqui Mooney¹⁰ but have not yet written about them in a substantial way. For international scholars reading this who want to know about the recent history of Australian magazines and women working in leadership positions in publishing, I hope these interviews and the contextual material in that book and various other journal articles I have written are a useful resource.

In talking with these women, I discovered that many of these Australian female editors have published memoirs about their time in magazine publishing, or they have written novels based on their experiences. For example, Ita Buttrose (*A Passionate Life* and several others), Mia Freedman (*Mama Mia*, *Mia Culpa*, *The New Black*, *Work*, *Strife*, *Balance*), Justine Cullen (*Semi-Gloss*), Sarah Wilson (*First, We Make the Beast Beautiful*), Kirstie Clements (*The Vogue Factor*, *Tongue in Chic*), Marina Go (*Breakthrough*), and Lisa Messenger has published over a dozen books which combine business advice, motivation, and memoir.¹¹ If one considers how many international editors like Tina Brown (*The Vanity Fair Diaries*), Katie Betts (*My Paris Dream*), Jean Godfrey-June (*Free Gift With Purchase*), Cat Marnell (*How to Murder Your Life*), have written about their time editing magazines or working as beauty editors, there is ample material for a special issue or an edited collection or monograph examining a range of memoirs from around the world. That hasn't happened yet, but perhaps it will one day?

The reason that I'm writing this essay, however, is that another idea that germinated when talking with the editors featured in *Queens of Print* is that their stories would make very

watchable content for television and film. As I readied that first book for publication in 2019, I started compiling what ended up being a long list of films and television shows that were centred on magazine workplaces: think *Ugly Betty*, *Suddenly Susan*, *Just Shoot Me*, *The Bold Type* and the list goes on. Much to my delight, I then discovered that there is a whole field devoted to depictions of the journalist in popular culture – primarily film, but some work was emerging about television too. Fast forward, and this has been my scholarly obsession for the last seven years, and the editors of this journal have been kind enough to ask me to write about the evolution of the book here.

The top scholars working in the area of the image of the journalist in popular culture, like Joe Saltzman, Matthew Ehrlich, Howard Good, Loren Ghiglione, Richard Ness, and Brian McNair, have all written monographs about film (primarily American films about journalism). They are all associated with the journal the *Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture (IJPC)*, and they are the drivers of most of the scholarly activity in this area. In more recent years, Chad Painter and Patrick Ferrucci have published extensively (together and with other researchers) about the representation of journalists in popular culture, and they have branched into the important area of television. Several of their articles examine how women are portrayed negatively on screen as unscrupulous or incompetent journalists (2012, 2015). In recent months, Ferrucci has published in the *IJPC* journal what he calls "A Theoretical Model for Understanding Journalism in Film" which illustrates how compromised women's careers in journalism are in portrayals that

7 Kang is now a Professor of Adolescent Health at the University of Sydney but for many years she wrote the enormously successful and well-respected 'Dolly Doctor' columns in *Dolly* magazine.

8 Davis was an editor of *Girlfriend* and *Total Girl Magazine* and then has worked for *Mamamia* and a number of other titles.

9 Wright co-founded Medium Rare Content which has been one of the most successful agencies in Australia providing custom content and she was an early entrepreneur working across digital publishing platforms.

10 Mooney edits *Women's Health Australia*.

11 Others like Avieson took their writing in a completely different direction and she published a number of chilling crime novels: *Apartment 255* (2002) *The Affair* (2003), and *The Wrong Door* (2004). Another of Avieson's interests is the media in Bhutan (and Wikipedia).

represent them or their career prospects in negative ways on screen (2025). I discovered that scholars like McNair, Saltzman, Good, Ferrucci and Painter were starting to recognise that there was a problem with the way that female journalists are portrayed in popular culture, but no one had yet identified this as an issue that lies at the heart of how magazines are portrayed in popular culture and how magazine journalism is characterised in definitions of journalism itself.

This early research into the field of the image of the journalist in popular culture confirmed my belief that there was a significant gap in the scholarship about magazines and magazine workplaces as they are depicted on screen. The driving research questions I started with were related to gender. Why so many images of male journalists? Why so many films about investigative journalists and hard news but fewer about lifestyle journalism? Newspapers and broadcast television shows were the subject of so many important films about the journalist in popular culture, but where were the magazines? Why so much scholarship about film but very little about television? Where do magazines sit in the in-group/out-group boundaries that are erected by journalists about 'real' journalism? Is fashion and lifestyle journalism actually journalism, and who decides? Why do magazines matter? Where do feminism and femininity sit in these discussions? Who holds the power in these fictionalised magazine workplaces? These questions are all addressed in my upcoming book *The Gendered Image of the Magazine Journalist on Television and Screen: Fashion and the Failing Feminist* (Routledge, forthcoming, 2026).

To make that happen, I reached out to scholars working across several interrelated areas that intersected with the image of the journalist in popular culture in, for example, magazine studies (of course!), gender studies, or fashion, and to those who already had a track record writing about important television shows set in magazine workplaces like the beloved *Ugly Betty* or the extremely topical *The Bold Type*.

And everyone has an opinion about or a favourite line from the first *The Devil Wears Prada* film (2006) and so scholarship did exist about that film but not specifically in relation to magazines (rather than fashion exclusively). I was fortunate that 18 brilliant scholars from around the globe responded to my invitation to contribute: Richard R Ness, Quinlan Miller, Niall Richardson, Rose Williamson, Wyatt Moss-Wellington, Lili Pâquet, Justine Brisset, Joke Hermes, Myles Ethan Lascity, Mayka Castellano, Melina Meimaridis, Beth Montemurro, Grace Kelly, Maxine De Wulf Helskens, Chad Painter, Lisa Anderson, Jennifer Esposito, and Jade Miller. Films under analysis include: *Slander* (1957), *The Best of Everything* (1958), *13 Going on 30* (2004), *How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days* (2003), and *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006). And, television case studies include shows like: *Living Single* (1993-1998), *Suddenly Susan* (1996-2000), *Ugly Betty* (2006-2010), *Paper Giants: The Birth of Cleo* (2011), *Dietland* (2018), *Inventing Anna* (2022), *The Bold Type* (2017-2021), reality show *Running in Heels* (2009), and documentary *Mademoiselle C* (2013). The book comprises 14 case studies plus a lengthy introduction.

What the book explains is that, from very early in the twentieth century, filmmakers were drawn to journalists (chiefly as heroes) and journalism as a noble profession defending free speech and acting as the Fourth Estate. Investigative journalism, where heroes solved crimes, uncovered corruption, and exposed conspiracies, proved both dramatic and irresistible for audiences. Mostly, those journalists are newspapermen. What chapters by Ness and Miller uncover, however, is that there were many examples of films that portrayed tabloids as 'dirt' and those who worked for them as contemptible villains (media owners and publishers, especially). If present at all in these narratives, the trajectory for women was generally not positive, with workers subjected to sexual harassment and assault. If we fast forward to films and television shows set in the 1990s and early 2000s before the Global Financial Crisis and the onslaught of digital, as Lascity argues (2024), we see an optimistic collection of films and television sitcoms

that situate magazine workplaces as desirable working environments for aspirational women – particularly women who are interested in lifestyle and fashion magazines. The chapters written by Richardson, Williamson, Moss-Wellington, and Pâquet, Lascity, Castellano and Meimaridis, Montemurro and Kelly, De Wulf Helskens, Painter, Anderson and I, and Esposito all address different aspects of this positive portrayal of magazines. How the various characters engage with feminism (whether they label themselves feminists or not) is of particular interest. In these shows, we see how well magazine offices work as the backdrop for sitcoms, in particular. The regular cycle of weekly or monthly deadlines, interesting guest stars, fashion, and romance provide reliable plot lines. While also painting journalism as a desirable (if challenging and stubbornly sexist) profession for women, one slight outlier to this section was the fascinating *Inventing Anna*, based on the real story of Anna Delvey/Sorokin, and Painter takes us through the show's positive portrayal of magazine journalism (the character Vivian Kent chasing a story) and two negative depictions of magazine journalism and magazine culture.

We also discovered that the editor retains a goddess-like status in shows like *Paper Giants* and *The Bold Type* and this is examined in chapters by Richardson, Williamson, Moss-Wellington, and Pâquet, De Wulf Helskens, and Anderson and I. De Wulf Helskens, Montemurro and Kelly, and Brisset and Hermes also observed that in several cases real editors were active in constructing their iconic status through involvement with productions like *Running in Heels*, *Mademoiselle C*, and *The Bold Type*. To this day, Marjorie Ferguson's work on the editor as a 'high priestess' to 'the cult of femininity' (1983) proved to be an important touch point for the almost rockstar status of some editors and the influence they have over consumers. In chapters by Anderson and I, and one by Esposito, we see how race and ethnicity are situated

in magazine culture and we learn how influential *Living Single* has been as a forerunner not only to other sitcoms set in magazine offices but also to groups of young professionals living in share accommodation in New York and navigating their professional and personal lives (does that 'friendly' scenario sound familiar?). The effervescent Betty Suarez from *Ugly Betty* is the subject of two chapters that address Betty's status as a Latina and the racism she encounters in her magazine workplace (Esposito's chapter) and a second by Jade Miller that looks at the global streaming success of the Betty brand and its record-breaking success. Closing out with the confronting *Dietland*, I explain how this series portrays what it calls 'magazine culture' with 'rape culture'. It's a dark but incredibly provocative look at magazines, fatness, sexual violence, and feminist vigilantes, and it stars a truly memorable evil editor named Kitty Montgomery (played by Julianna Margulies). Kitty's diva behaviour resembles some aspects of Miranda Priestly from *The Devil Wears Prada*, but Kitty is a far more ruthless and less likeable character. What we see, overall, is that if we expand the category of the image of the journalist in popular culture to include magazine journalists and women, we get snapshots of how women are negotiating their careers and their trajectories and the place of the magazine in that journey.

Given the richness of every film or television show discussed in the book, I now feel that I could write another book about every one of them included in the collection. However, there are other fascinating television series that have either been ignored completely by scholars or have received little attention in relation to what they tell us about magazines and magazine journalists. Next, I need to turn my attention to shows like *Absolutely Fabulous* (1992-2012), *Central Park West* (1995-1996), *The Naked Truth* (1995-1998), *Just Shoot Me* (1997-2003), *Dirt* (2007-2008),¹² *Minx* (2022-2023), and the

12 I am currently writing a journal article about another television series that I recently discovered: Courteney Cox's *Dirt* (2007-2008). I believe it is a fascinating example of how female editors are portrayed on screen with much attention devoted to their marital status and whether they have children.

aforementioned *Strife* (2023-2025). In 2022, I wrote about magazines and *Sex and the City* (1998-2004), but I have not yet had time to study *And Just Like That...* (2023-2025) and so that is yet another opportunity. There are many more reality shows set in magazine offices (some with crossovers into modelling reality shows) like *Stylista* (2008, 13 episodes), *Miss Seventeen* (2005, 10 episodes, set in *Seventeen* magazine) and *The Hills* (2006-2010, and set at *Teen Vogue*) and so gaps and opportunities abound. And, of course, we are all still digesting the new *The Devil Wears Prada 2* film (released last month in May 2026). The sequel confronts head on the 'death' of the magazine and is rightly described as an 'elegy for magazines' (Cruz, 2026). I believe it is an important film about magazines and a whole industry in crisis. Who could forget the character Emily's taunt: 'Remember when magazines were a thing?' Readers of this journal remember, and given that in just over a month the film has already earned \$650 million (USD), it would appear that audiences remember (and love) magazines too.

For those who are new to Magazine Studies or who have stumbled upon this piece by accident—and my whole career proves this happens—I hope this essay demonstrates the richness of Magazine Studies as an area of disciplinary specialization. I hope it illustrates that it is possible to approach magazine studies from multiple directions given that my work has ranged from interviews, content analysis of magazines, close reading of individual films and whole television series, and pieces about assessment and pedagogy. For scholars, like me, with diverse and inter-disciplinary interests, Magazine Studies provides unending research opportunities. I have a lot to thank the late Elizabeth Webby for given that she accidentally started me on this scholarly adventure.

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INCLUSION AND DISTANCE: EMBEDDED MESSAGES IN FINNISH MAGAZINESCAPE

ULLAMAIJA KIVIKURU
UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI, FINLAND

Ullamaija Kivikuru is Emerita Professor of journalism at University of Helsinki, Finland. With a Communication PhD from University of Helsinki, she has published a dozen books about media in Finnish, Swedish and English. Ullamaija Kivikuru worked as professional journalist for more than a dozen years. In academia, she has taught at the University of Helsinki and several years at Tanzania School of Journalism. Her main research interests have been media and democracy, development communication, gender studies and magazine journalism.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9125-4513>

Corresponding author

Ullamaija Kivikuru

ullamaija.kivikuru@helsinki.fi

Emerita Professor in Journalism

University of Helsinki, Finland

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Abstract

Over the past decades, traditional magazines have suffered economic and readership losses in many countries and have failed to gain momentum with their website activities. For old media, particularly magazines, establishing fresh connections with readers is essential. Today, magazines—print and digital—encourage readers to participate in comments, discussions and games. However, research found that calls to action directed at readers tend to remain at the level of invitations to react and comment rather than to exercise true decision-making power, as in participatory journalism.

This limited empirical study focuses on four issues of three popular Finnish magazines. It analyses their print versions to determine whether true participation has a chance in the magazinescape. The results indicate that the form of participation suggested to readers is limited. Calls for inclusion are mostly subtle, disguised as part of the 'editorial line'. While explicit exclusion is rare, strong stereotyping can serve as a form of exclusion. The study, experimenting with a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, identified four frequently used inclusive narratives in these magazines: narratives of accidents, narratives of overcoming challenges, narratives of happiness and season-bound narratives.

Magazines are among the oldest forms of mass media. Despite predictions of their demise with the emergence of new media, they have survived. However, in recent times, magazines have experienced losses in many countries that once had flourishing magazine industries. For instance, in Finland, the magazine industry weathered the deep economic crisis of the early 1990s reasonably well, but it failed to do so during the 2008–09 economic downturn, suffering more than other media sectors.¹ Following this, readers and advertisers alike seemed to have abandoned magazines. Despite this, owners and journalists made significant efforts to maintain contact with readers. In these efforts, the concepts of inclusion and exclusion were introduced into the magazinescape. An inclusion policy in the magazine business aims to reinforce connection with readers and make them feel ‘at home’ and comfortable; radical moves are generally avoided.

Cambridge Dictionary defines inclusion as the practice or policy of integrating people and groups into activities, organizations and political processes. On the other hand, exclusion is the act of preventing someone from entering a place or taking part in an activity. In some cases, exclusion can be compensated with the word ‘distancing’.

Effective media practices and access to inclusive digitalization are considered necessary for promoting public connection and enabling active, informed citizenship (Couldry *et al.*, 2010). In media use, these concepts highlight significant problems, which Benson (2020, 91) further elaborated. According to Benson (2020), journalism has oscillated between forces of inclusion and exclusion. Precisely, while the civic purpose of journalism is inclusive, its practical application is often exclusive by withholding information from those who need it and discouraging people from participating in public debate.

Over the past 10–15 years, participatory journalism (e.g. Ahva *et al.*, 2024) has become a popular focus for media research. Transparency, framing and participation in journalistic decision-making have been extensively studied. However, some studies (e.g. Aitamurto, 2013; Frölich *et al.*, 2012; Koliska & Roberts, 2015) suggest that these activities remain more of a goal than a reality. Integrating participation into journalistic work is challenging due to entrenched routines; for magazines in particular, these routines are deeply ingrained in the essence of the medium, constantly balancing freshness and familiarity.

A recent interesting discussion (e.g. Ytre-Arne & Das, 2021) has deepened the concept of participation in agentic capabilities of media audiences and users. Ytre-Arne and Das (2021) characterize them in terms of socio-cultural, civic-political and creative-connective dimensions. Thus, agencies emerge within socio-cultural contexts in everyday life engagement, fostering activities as political citizens and participatory media users, cultural and community inclusion, and identity formation. Creative capabilities highlight expression and production, in which audiences become producers, as seen in phenomena such as blogging, citizen journalism, or elaborate fan practices.

This article aims to determine how the concepts of inclusion and exclusion manifest in the content and structure of magazine journalism. While the theoretical goals remain modest, the main target is to assist in the development of methodological tools. Most importantly, it aims to determine how popular magazines can cultivate a sense of belonging, familiarity and excitement in their readers.

Inclusion traits

Approximately 75% of magazine consumption in Finland is based on subscriptions,² fostering a stable relationship

1 Statistics Finland: ‘Mass media market grew by 3 per cent in 2022.’ <https://stat.fi/en/publication/cl8if9gxp48wz0bvxlbm2txjh>

2 Statistics Finland: Mass media statistics 2022, *Kansallinen Mediatutkimus 2023* (Media Audit Finland 2023) <https://stat.fi/en/statistics/jvie:https://mediaauditfinland.fi/uploads/2023/09>

between magazines and their readers. Although there has been a decrease in overall periodical use, the subscription rate has remained constant since 2000. In addition, there is a strong demand for continuity in the magazine industry, with the subscription model leading to interesting effects. The model provides consistency, a sense of community and financial stability; simultaneously, it tends to make editorial decision-makers hesitant to take risks or make significant changes. Radical moves, however, are generally avoided.

In 2021, the Finnish Association of Magazine Press (*Aikakausmedia*) organized a survey asking magazine readers about their reading habits and their most popular forms of reading. Almost two-thirds of the participants favored the print format, saying that they want ‘an own moment’ for reading, which perhaps refers to the feeling of intimacy that a physical magazine can foster. Furthermore, many viewed that digital content did not add anything special to their reading experience, and some respondents experienced screen reading as a reminder of work and exhaustion.³ A large readership survey found that digital use is increasing among readers less than 25 years of age. However, young people do not tend to favor magazines. Nevertheless, the move to screen or tablet reading is far slower than the move to newspapers.⁴

Finland is a large country with a rich tradition of literacy, even among those with less formal education⁵ For decades, their magazines have not only encouraged readers to work hard but also to participate in crossword puzzles and games and to offer thoughtful commentary on substantive topics. Today, popular Finnish magazines regularly ask readers for their opinions on articles and themes. In fact, question-and-answer columns have been a consistent feature, with ‘ask us about health’ columns being particularly

common, although their popularity has gradually waned due to the rise of online alternatives.

Most Finnish magazines offer a variety of games, puzzles and information on television programs. Women’s magazines have also promoted reader participation in ‘change your style’ journalism, typically focusing on lifestyle issues such as fashion and make-up. This practice has also broadened to encompass readers with interests in literature, theatre and music.

Globally, magazines have been slow to transition to the web, and the journey towards online/offline combinations has been challenging in Finland as well (Sonkamuotka, 2013, *Aikakausmedia* 2024). Today, popular magazines have websites and various online platforms, such as Facebook and digital radio, where readers can engage in discussions about lifestyle, practical issues and social and political matters. However, it is noteworthy that readers are rarely given the opportunity to participate in journalistic decision-making (Ahva, 2013).

A common topic of discussion among researchers has recently become a popular technique in text production. Precisely, here, citations from interviewees are presented in a monologue format, excluding any questions and concealing the presence of the reporter—also known as ‘monologisation’. This practice gives the impression that the interviewee has spontaneously raised certain issues, when, in reality, they may have been prompted by the interviewer (Haapanen, 2016). Despite this, monologisation can create a sense of intimacy and openness, which many may see as inclusive.

In many international magazines, the cover serves as a natural invitation for participation, opening a metatext to the

3 Aikakausmedia (FIAM), survey 2021

4 Aikakausmedia (FIAM) survey 2024

5 Since the early 18th century, the Lutheran Church has not allowed young people to get married without proof of literacy organised by a local priest.

content (Iqani, 2010). However, in the Finnish subscription-based system, the cover promises the content but does not play a marketing role in prompting a purchase. Cantrell Rosas-Moreno *et al.* (2013) argue that a cover picture is more effective at attracting readers than a long article inside the journal. Other researchers, such as Maslow (2015), who discussed *Cosmopolitan* covers, suggest that women's magazines have increasingly focused in recent times on glorifying flawless beauty on their glossy covers, creating a sense of detachment from 'ordinary' people—an exclusion effect?

In the 20th century, Finnish magazines obtained information from both domestic and international sources and provided advice—often delivered in a commanding manner—on topics such as health, agriculture and religion (Kivikuru, 2024). Today, different types of magazines address issues of inclusion in various ways. While popular magazines in Finland continue to have relatively high circulation, they tend to overlook inclusion mechanisms, focusing instead on promoting the products or services they feature in a one-way communication style that invites no discussion. On the other end of the spectrum are membership journals, which serve as a clear signal of inclusion. These journals engage in discussions with readers, creating a natural connection through shared interests.

Inclusion and exclusion in action

Popular Finnish magazines send a mix of implicit and explicit messages of inclusion and exclusion to their readers; a practice often integrated into journalistic practices. My aim is to analyze how and in what format these messages are conveyed. Inclusion is defined as admittance, formation, incorporation or involvement, while exclusion refers to leaving someone out or creating distance. I intentionally kept these definitions simple because I aim to examine the forms and functions of these concepts in this pilot analysis. My objective is to identify the nuances of both concepts in magazine

texts and develop methods for a larger study of inclusion and exclusion mechanisms in popular Finnish magazines.

Inclusion, especially in the context of the Finnish subscription-dominated magazine industry, has turned into a complex concept. While some elements seem to focus on retaining a magazine's permanent (subscription) readers, others aim to attract potential new readers. A unique characteristic of Finnish magazines, though not exclusive to Finland, is an imbalanced reader age distribution. Most readers are considerably older than both the content focus and the journalists writing the stories, and printed magazines are not popular among Finnish youth.

Reading used to be seen as a sign of 'good citizenship'; however, now, it has lost much of its significance to the concept of 'multiliteracy'. Multiliteracy, as described by Fairclough (1999) and others, refers to the ability to understand and effectively use multiple forms of literacy and communication in various contexts. It is seen as a response to changes in communication methods driven by technological advancements and interactions among different cultures and languages. However, this expanded concept has removed the embedded ideological signal of good citizenship in Nordic cultures, with multiliteracy being viewed mainly as a technical tool.

Data material

Data analysis focuses on the content of four issues from each of the country's three most popular magazines: *Apu* (Finnish for *Help*; a family magazine with a readership of 150,000), *Me Naiset* (*We Women*, a women's magazine with a readership of 260,000) and *Kotiliesi* (*Home Hearth*, a household magazine with a readership of 100,000). These magazines also represent the largest magazine publishing companies in Finland, indicating a strong concentration in the sector. The first two magazines are published weekly, while the third is published biweekly. All three magazines

rely predominantly on subscriptions for revenue, with *Kotiliesi* being the most reliant.

Kotiliesi, established in 1922, has a history of promoting good housekeeping and modern kitchen machines while simultaneously adhering to conservative values. During World War II, its propaganda encouraged women to give up studies and focus on raising children for the defense of the country (Aunola, 2020).

Apu, established in 1933, aims to offer something to all family members. The magazine covers a wide range of topics, from current events to food recipes and crossword puzzles. Recently, however, its readership has declined slightly.

Me Naiset, established in 1952, is a glossy women's magazine that primarily reports on popular figures in entertainment and culture while also addressing issues related to women's status in society. In fact, in Finland, all women's magazines cover social issues to some extent.

Methods exercise

I aim to develop relevant analytical tools, drawing on the methodological approaches of McCrow-Young (2021) and Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren (2021). Although the authors examined different materials, with McCrow-Young focusing on Instagram messages and Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren on YouTube, I believe their analytical approaches can still be applied to the magazine industry.

McCrow-Young criticized quantitative content analysis because it fragments the materials under scrutiny; instead, she advocates for a platform-specific perspective. With a particular interest in visual elements, she described how visual social media blurs the line between the political and the mundane and between the extraordinary and the everyday. The analysis highlights the importance of understanding the

myriads of practices and patterns. On the other hand, Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren emphasized storytelling. People use stories to make sense of the world around them; simultaneously, stories shed light on the social conditions of the society that produces them. Both approaches combine quantitative and qualitative elements, focusing on the whole while dividing it into parts.

From McCrow-Young, I adopted the idea of dividing the analysis into macro-mapping and micro-mapping. While macro-mapping provides a broad overview of the material under study, such as the content, target and source, micro-mapping identifies repeat visual/textual frame elements. From Djerf-Pierre and Lindgren, I adopted the focus on narratives. Narrative analysis is a flexible method grounded in storytelling (Allen, 2017). Storytelling and genre are interlinked—storytelling relates to and draws on media genres. A researcher can focus on different elements: what is the substance of the story, how is the story structured, what functions does it serve and how is the story performed?

I adopted further perspectives on the study of narratives from Meretoja (2018), who developed a framework for the role narratives play in our lives. Narratives broaden and reduce the spaces of possibilities in which we act, think and reimagine the world together with others. In fact, I attempted to apply her ideas in my analysis as well.

In narrative analysis, it is common to code large blocks of text while keeping the narrative intact. I attempted to select one framework (e.g. orientation, such as time, place, situation and characters, or action, such as sequence of events and plot) and apply it as an initial set of codes.

Finally, I attempted to identify patterns of association in the texts following Meretoja.

Empirical analysis and method

I selected four issues of each magazine (print versions) from December 2020 to March 2021. Overall, 48 large articles and 12 covers were analyzed using the whole apparatus, and 118 short texts (comments, remarks, reviews and photo stories) were analyzed using only macro-mapping and micro-mapping.

In macro-mapping, I examined the following:

- Cover images (pictures, explicit themes and male/female proportions in cover caption texts)
- Composition of elements in the issue and layout
- Content components (stories, themes, domestic/foreign material, personalities and formats)

In micro-mapping, I examined the following:

- Cover: choice of cover persons, picture setup, visual style (including portrait, snapshot and mimics) and detailed text captions
- Content: domestic/foreign, time span, politics, economy, 'everyday heroes', popular figures, male/female ratio, age scale, town/countryside, sports and entertainment
- Reporters
- Text modes: vocabulary, narratives, formats, use of visualizations and monopolization

Analysis

***Apu* (Issues 52/2020, 5/2021, 11/2021 and 12/2021)⁶**

Summary of macro-mapping and micro-mapping

The social/political issues focus on themes that would interest 'ordinary people', such as COVID-19, minimum wage, memories from the countryside, sustainable development, health concerns, family values, small-scale entrepreneurship,

living costs, food waste, paperless immigrants, Finnish 'everyday heroes', pop figures and nature. Politics is rarely discussed on its own, but rather through the lens of individuals representing certain political views, which might be embedded only in the text. Extremist stands are also avoided. Of the three magazines of interest, *Apu* has the strongest general news orientation.

Similarly, women's position in society is also discussed in a fairly conservative manner; contradictions are expressed with careful wording and through personality portraits of 'safe', publicly accepted individuals (e.g. Centre party chairwoman [Table 1] and Estonian woman prime minister, who both tend to speak more on gender-related problems than party politics). Simply put, most themes are discussed through individuals.

Apu's specialty is its strong link to nature. In the analyzed issues, the magazine also consistently focuses on forests, animals and plants. Weather and the environment are also discussed, but relatively lightly. When it comes to sports, the issues studied show limited interest, but when discussed, they are addressed by sports heroes. However, in the winter-time, *Apu* regularly covers sports.

In each issue, there is a large entertainment section of regular content, including crossword puzzles, jokes, caricatures, cartoons and children's sayings. For decades, the magazine had extensive question-and-answer columns on a variety of topics, but it waned considerably in recent years.

Discussion

Apu reports about COVID-19 far more frequently than *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*. The magazine talks about figures, restrictions and medical experts' comments on the disease,

⁶ Detailed narrative analyses were conducted of two to five larger articles in each issue (altogether 15 articles in the four issues). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

including the Finnish economy and lifestyle changes under COVID. One cover story in particular detailed how an actor lost his income because of the pandemic. What is interesting is the use of a chatty tone in editorials, comments and question-and-answer columns.

Furthermore, big names (such as political leaders and famous actors) are often framed as small and ordinary. For instance, the life story of a young woman who has been newly appointed as a political leader of a conservative, agrarian-values party offers numerous themes that ordinary people can identify with (*Apu* 5/2021): the interviewee's parents' divorce, her own day-care problems, and difficulties related to the division of household work. Party aspects, however, are minimally covered.

The narratives of ordinary people frame the targets as special while also including stereotypical Finnish elements. In another example, an entrepreneur couple (*Apu* 53/2020) from central Finland encountered a tragic sequence of events: they first lost their hotel in a fire, and the pandemic only worsened their situation. Amidst all this, they found peace through visits to a pond close to the husband's childhood home. They are special because, despite what they went through, they persevered and found joy in the same kinds of activities that most Finns do.

So, it appears that the editorial policy line is to cast public figures as ordinary and ordinary individuals as special, but in both cases, an element of national stereotypes is added. Another frequent element in the narratives is the depiction of interviewees overcoming difficulties. The magazine deliberately tries to mix the extraordinary and the everyday, with a special focus on the everyday and middle-aged family

members. This policy is explicitly inclusive, and additional inclusive calls appear in numerous question-and-answer columns and in the large section of jokes, horoscopes, and cartoons. It is noteworthy that the magazine's layout gives a haphazard impression, and the paper quality is rather poor.

Each issue has one or two lengthy articles on nature or wild animals. Finns are believed to have a strong cultural connection with nature—their love for animals, forests and hiking. While this element is undoubtedly inclusive, it is offered using a 'scientific' and distancing frame. In a few foreign articles (of powerholders and Swedish royals), links to Finland are added to increase the inclusive aspects.

The magazine appears to be searching for the soul of the average middle-aged Finn. It is like a neighbor, a familiar part of the everyday without surprises. Although pictures—on the cover as well as inside the magazine—show considerably younger people than where the focus of the content appears to be, there is not much to offer for the younger Finns. This aspect is an implicit distancing factor. The large entertainment section issues straightforward calls for inclusivity, but it might be exclusive to some readers.

***Kotiliesi* (Issues 27/2020, 3/2021, 6/2021, 7/2021)⁷**

Summary of macro- and micro-mapping

The magazine could be called a home economics journal for middle-aged women. The key concepts are home and season. Politics, church, history, and literature are included, but the focus is on a balanced home life, housekeeping, and healthy meals. A literature section (books and authors) is strong in each issue; the focus is on established literature. Author interviews are frequent.⁸ The focus is strongly on domestic

7 Detailed narrative analyses were conducted on two to five larger articles in each issue (altogether 14 articles in four issues). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

8 The magazine's publisher is also one of the biggest book publishers in the country, so author interviews serve a double purpose and can be viewed as marketing tools for the company as well.

phenomena. Only two stories – one on travelling, the other on a Swedish author – deal with foreign topics.

holidays). They discuss family relations, food recipes and home interiors. COVID-19 is embedded, not explicit.

Fewer than 20% of the interviewees are men, representing medicine, literature and art. Many stories focus on an idyllic home during a particular season (Christmas, Easter, winter

Compared with *Apu*, there is greater variation in text modes, and the texts are more polished. Each issue carries several extensive narratives or historical descriptions. Furthermore,

Table 1:

Example of analysis: Cover story of the new Centre Party leader Annika Saarikko (Apu 5/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: 'The family gives strength' Smiling picture of party leader A.S.	Face portrait Ordinary-looking Smiling woman in her 30s Eye level with the reader	Politics versus family Ordinary family background Parents' divorce Local ties to two communities—rural and urban
Intro: Communal elections are soon, but A.S. does not experience stress	Mentions elections and party Notions about the party at the end Stresses on personal strength and stamina	Politics and stamina Honesty Life values
Pictures: 1 + 4 3 smiling 1 at the country home 1 with husband (close) 1 about driving in the countryside	Almost identical smiles in 3 pictures Impression of motherhood and the surrounding countryside	Embeds party ideology (farmers' party and conservative ideology) Smiles directly at readers
Content: Cover story 7 pages + 4 pictures	Slightly fragile orientation narrative Situation snapshots Brief good/bad memories from the past Brief party declaration at the end Multiple quotes Strong monologisation	Puzzles of the tragic past Happy present Family values Friends Ability to negotiate and compromise
Structure: Personality keeps a career together Family axis and politics (mentions politicians but not much about their work or opinions)	Disjointedly mentions the present, past and future Balance and happiness Sad experiences when younger	'Ordinary young woman despite politics' Hidden topicality (elections June 2021) Embeds party ties but not explicitly

Table 2:
Example of analysis: Cover story of television weather forecaster Anniina Valtonen (Kotiliesi 6/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: From a shy girl to a TV meteorologist, school bullying experience mentioned	Young woman smiling, markers of professionalism, multiple topics in cover text	Deliberate construction of 'difference' from standard (text & picture) by journalist/designer
Intro: Expert credibility vs. use of everyday language, A.V. explicitly wants to challenge professional speech conventions	Credibility vs. everyday talk Credibility vs. smile Credibility vs. young age Deliberate challenge for professionalism, afternoon paper style wording Repeated cliché markers	Clichéd perceptions of professionalism (difficult, exclusive, difficult to understand)
Pictures: 1 + 4 pictures, 2 smiling straight, red two-piece suit	Challenge for professionalism also in pictures, broad smiles, one expert look, one philosophical	Posed pictures, emphasis on happiness Contradictory elements of reflection
Cover: 6 pages + 4 pictures Content: Different attitudes to work, bad memories from past	Popularity vs. shyness, target of school bullying in the past, audience popularity, independence in work habits	Dissident views (about nature, forests, own work), the text opposes someone never named, sequence, popularity
Structure: Chronological story, emphasis on today	Jumpy structure (present vs. childhood), superficial, vocabulary youth oriented, superlatives (hate, love of things)	The writer leads the story, mix of bad past and good present

there are numerous advice texts concerning food, clothing, knitting or preparations for a particular event. Pictures are numerous and nicely composed and restful.

Featured personalities provide some surprises (e.g., a dramatic story about a woman hospital priest and her reflections about death), but most interviewees are well-known professionals. *Kotiliesi* narratives follow a sequence-of-events structure, but there is some variation in their composition. Some are constructed on the orientation of time, place and situation. For example, there is a narrative about the significance of walking alone for one's well-being.

Although all interviewees are professionals, the texts rarely explain in detail the interviewee's work. The idea is to show the personality behind the profession; however, earlier difficulties or unhappy family relations are often mentioned.

As in *Apu*, each issue includes crossword puzzles and competitions for readers, but they get less space than in *Apu*. No cartoons are included.

Discussion

Kotiliesi's modes and styles of production allow for variation, but the texts' worldview is consistent. In fact, there is a contradiction embedded in the content. The cover and layout resemble other Finnish women's magazines, and the personality orientation in the narratives also gives an impression of being 'like any other women's journal'. However, the substance in the interviews and larger articles seems to suggest that *Kotiliesi's* scope is wider – especially history is emphasized – and more solemn and orderly than in other women's journals. The textual approach is formal, with educational tones. The chatting mode found in *Apu* and the ironical comments in *Me Naiset* are absent. The sample text includes several examples of stereotyping professionalism and expertise.

The text-heavy cover page is obviously meant to be inviting, but it is clumsy and difficult to grasp at first sight – not a

top item at retail shops. Crossword puzzles and competitions represent explicit inclusiveness. However, such forms of entertainment appear as leftovers, removed from the magazine's core or substance.

The strong link to time (seasons, Christian special days, Finnish history, recommended literature) is meant to be inclusive for the key targeted readers, but this emphasis might be exclusive for all others. The reader's focus is on middle-aged women, but the interviews with professionals focus on men or young women. COVID-19 is implicitly introduced in some articles.

The various homemaking advice articles, recipes, knitting instructions and competitions aim to be inclusive for middle-aged women, although today food belongs to the specialties of any women's journal. *Kotiliesi's* recipes lean towards healthy cooking rather than exotic experiences. It is

Table 3:

Example of analysis: Interview of a couple, a woman lawyer and a deaf male rapper (Me Naiset 11/2021)

MACRO-MAPPING	MICRO-MAPPING	ASSOCIATIONS
Cover: Text only: Two cliché contradictions (deafness, rapper vs. woman lawyer)	Both contradictions stressed, difference made explicit	Drama created, to be played down later
Intro: Deafness stressed, contradictory professions in family	Both contradictions explicit, but deafness downplayed after start, harmony stressed	Deafness aspect significant in the beginning of relationship, then dropped
Pictures: 2, couple, smiles, baby	Conventional couple, closeness, smiles, harmonious setup, sign language	Presents the situation well, sign language introduced in an elegant manner
2 pictures, 4 pages Content: Deafness repeated throughout the text	Text proceeds as discussion between the two; markers of family happiness	Muffling of deafness is constructed via insignificant details; COVID-19 has given more time for family life
Structure: Sequence narrative (how they met, how they are now), stress on present	Many quotes, monologisation	Family life, bilingualism, few professionalism markers

somewhat unclear whether this material can be interpreted as inclusive in this sense, but the aim is obviously to maintain contact with readers.

The selection of interviewees is contradictory, as most are much younger than the target audience. There is an embedded link to topicality in the interviews, but no dependence on television. Obviously, topicality is viewed as being an inclusive factor for this magazine.

***Me Naiset* (Issues 52/2020, 5/2021, 6/2021, 11/2021)⁹**

Summary of macro- and micro-mapping

The layout is standard; it is easy for the reader to find his/her favorite content. In all issues, there is a news axis. Interviewees are selected because they have been in the news recently. Often texts – especially those dealing with fashion or make-up – resemble marketing: Brand names and prices are included. In each issue, there are four or five large personality stories about well-known individuals. The scope of interviewees is considerably wider than in the other two magazines, ranging from sport stars to musicians. There is a distinct dependency on television publicity among the interviewees.

At least one large food text is included in each issue, often exotic and visualized as representing distant cultures. Furthermore, home design and fashion are regularly included in the mix. Gossip 'news' with mini-size pictures – mostly from Helsinki, rarely from other towns – is part of the weekly mix. Each issue presents articles on popular music and culture, often with a witty or ironic slant.

Me Naiset also offers crossword puzzles, television program information and a romantic serial story, written by a Finnish writer but following international feuilleton standards, perhaps with slightly less romantic nuance and more adventure.

Discussion

The *Me Naiset* content is structured around topicality; it mainly serves as entertainment. The connection with readers is life in the present. Compared with *Kotiliesi*, the narratives of *Me Naiset* are superficial, but they meet the reader on an equal level. Party politics is minimized in the interview with the Minister of Education, shown as the mother of a newborn baby and stressing the common contradiction of motherhood vs. career. However, short, witty comments about the everyday world are constructed around politics as well. Topicality is an inclusive marker. The magazine is also eager to present witty or nasty views about minor news.

The number of women covered is high. Gossip pages are filled with small pictures with captions. Interviewees are well-known public figures, mainly actors or musicians. The exceptional qualities of these individuals are emphasized; the approach differs markedly from *Apu*'s reporting. The covers of *Me Naiset* and introductory pictures inside avoid formal portraits. Most are pictures expressing strength and action. These pictures can be assumed to convey an inclusive message to readers, but they differ from *Apu*'s inclusion elements. Here the person described is an ideal attaching 'ordinary people's attention and admiration, in *Apu*'s case the interviewees impress with their 'ordinary' qualities.

The interviews with well-known personalities can be interpreted as an invitation to readers as well – in the style of 'read our journals and get acquainted with these exceptional people'. COVID-19 is mentioned frequently but treated as a sidetrack. However, it is more explicit than in *Kotiliesi*. The combination of COVID-19 and the benefits and problems of remote work are frequently repeated. Thus, COVID-19, although not often

⁹ Detailed narrative analyses were conducted on two to five larger articles in each issue (21 in total). In addition, qualitative content and frame analyses were conducted.

focused on, is obviously considered as an inclusion call – something that all Finns can identify themselves with.

At least one fifth of the magazine is composed of material that focuses globally, with topics ranging from Joe Biden's daughter to Norwegian skiing queen Therese Johaug, Paris fashion designers and traveling advice. These elements can be judged as inclusive, something that youngish urban women 'must' be aware of. Compared with *Apu* and *Kotiliesi*, the food recipes in *Me Naiset* are markedly more exotic, explicitly stating that people need experiences during the limitations under the pandemic, and via exotic food, such experiences can be achieved. The preparation of exotic and unique experiences can undoubtedly be considered a call for inclusion of the target audience.

By comparison, the monotonous gossip pages can be assessed as distancing. Decades ago, such departments were popular in women's magazines, but that is no longer the case. The thrill of finding media publicity has moved to television and social media. Like *Apu* and *Kotiliesi* with their jokes, cross-words and television program pages, *Me Naiset* also obviously has difficulties in dropping the journal's traditional contact tricks even when these have become outdated.

The dominant modes of expression are narratives and chatty, often ironical tones on certain discussion pages; they have been the magazine's distinguishing feature in recent years. They are used especially in short, topical comments about the world and political events, as well as books, films and TV programs. The magazine rarely takes an open stand on social or political issues, but these chatty comments are inclusive, like calls to the reader to form an opinion.

Of the three studied magazines, *Me Naiset* is the one that regularly uses monologisation in its interviews, often creating the impression that the interviewee has volunteered to discuss the issues s/he raises without journalistic help.

Most narratives resemble snapshots. On the gossip pages, a straightforward style is dominant. Nasty comments are never made about the people presented. In each issue, there are also one or two easy, fact-oriented texts dealing with lifestyle issues as well as political or legal issues affecting modern women's lives. They are obviously meant to be inclusive.

Discussion of methodology

The exercise was motivating and informative, but profound problems remain. In the visual representation, I could not fuse the political and the mundane, the extraordinary and the everyday, as McCrow-Young recommended. I did recognize certain practices and routines typical to picture use in all three magazines. Still, I was unable to fully grasp the detailed characteristics of the visual elements of the three magazines, as pictures have their own grammar. On the other hand, the covers of the chosen 12 issues clearly indicated very similar approaches to cover style: nine covers feature smiling, relaxed women, all holding significant positions in society. The rest picture two people, one a mother and daughter, two actor couples. Their mimics were also relaxed. The texts related to these interviewees were not as one-dimensional as the pictures. According to my interpretation, the established 'rules' for these popular magazine covers are strongly standardized, while texts are allowed more liberties.

Of course, the broad-picture analysis was a serious limitation, as pictures are a decisive element in magazine analysis. However, all three used pictures in a routinised, typical manner. This type of format was strongest in *Apu*. The element can be interpreted in two ways. First, standardized layout and picture usage make it easy for a reader to recognize a magazine; thus, it can be interpreted as signaling continuity and familiarity. On the other hand, the use of standardized pictures might be boring and distancing.

Macro-mapping was reasonably easy to develop into a functioning tool. Micro-mapping opened broad avenues for analysis, but developing a relevant framework in a consistent and time-consuming manner was challenging. However, both forms of analysis revealed well how strongly standardized *Apu*'s and *Me Naiset*'s long articles were, in theme selection, in approach as well as in production of text. Both magazines aimed at catching 'what is in the air' in Finland and operated accordingly. Journalists would probably defend such practices with reference to the editorial line, but most texts go beyond merely implementing the loose statements describing the magazines' basic approach.

The array of tools was easier to apply in the case of *Apu* because of its 'packaged' concept. The methodological tools fit reasonably well, also in the analysis of *Me Naiset*, although its issues varied more. The magazine that caused me most problems was *Kotiliesi*. The tools did not adequately reveal the contradictions of the concept of composing conservative and fresh elements in parallel. *Kotiliesi* thus appeared clumsier, but it offered journalists more operational choices.

The development of narrative frameworks was inspiring, but this dimension also left much room for imagination. Four basic trends were found in the narratives: The narrative of past difficulties overcome, the narrative of love and happiness, the narrative of surprises and accidents, and the narrative of season/time. The narrative of past difficulties was the most frequent, and it was often difficult to draw a line between it and love/happiness. The surprise/accident narrative appeared only in *Apu*, the most topical of the magazines, while the love/happiness narrative was most frequent in *Me Naiset*. The season-bound narrative was strongest in *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*.

The logic of narratives as inclusion/distancing tools requires further analysis, but clearly, they are developed for the creation of the inclusion element, often called editorial policy. Especially the love/happiness narratives reveal 'cozy' forms

of happiness, not princess stories. Somewhat surprisingly, some season-bound narratives contained such elements. In these narratives, cliché elements of Finnishness are added surprisingly often, and for example, in discussions on nature, nationalistic traits are frequent. Undoubtedly, their function is inclusive, but it is not clear how deliberate this detail is.

Discussion of findings

As expected, inclusion calls are repetitive and at least subconsciously deliberate, while distancing factors are accidental in the content of the three magazines. However, journalists hardly experience their texts as deliberate calls for inclusion. They would probably say that the themes and writing styles used are interesting and align with the newsroom's editorial line. Furthermore, an analysis of 'static' (subscriber) vs. 'newcomer' (occasional buyer) inclusions is quite complex. Undoubtedly, the emphasis of inclusion elements is on inclusions focusing on subscription readers, again viewed as part of the editorial line. In addition, subscription readers receive a digital letter from the newsroom today, commenting on the journal's substance and offering privileges (movie tickets, digital books available for a limited time, etc.). Only occasionally consistent efforts seem to be made to reach potential one-issue buyers.

Topicality is undoubtedly a marker for inclusion, and the elements of topicality are adopted from television coverage in the case of *Apu* and *Me Naiset*. In the case of *Kotiliesi*, this connection is weaker. In the case of *Apu*, inclusive messages are mainly sent via topical down-to-earth stories. *Me Naiset* offers novelties and thrilling topical-oriented experiences. *Kotiliesi* wants to connect readers with seasons and values experienced as 'basic' in Finland (honesty, reliability, trustworthiness). The different shades of national framing emerged through micro-mapping.

Iquani (2012) has argued that magazine covers promote the idea that consumer culture is synonymous with Westernized societies. In this limited Finnish exercise, her claim is partly supported, especially in *Me Naiset* and *Kotiliesi*, and especially in some fashion and food covers. However, in the Finnish case, a stronger social factor appears in covers supporting the welfare society – active people in politics, expert professions and taking care of children. On the covers, there is a clear dominance of women in such activities, thus indicating a partly false balance in social roles.

The repertoires of 'old tricks' appear surprisingly long-lasting for all the magazines. The proportion of temptation gadgets such as competitions, crosswords, television program rosters or gossip pages occupies a large part of the magazine; for the researcher, these appear outdated and distancing. However, they are obviously assessed as unifying factors, emphasizing continuity and familiarity. Such elements have a long history in Finnish magazine reporting.

All three magazines try to get a handle on their core readers' everyday lives, but their routes are different. *Apu* and *Me Naiset* cling to superficial topicality and television-origin themes, while *Kotiliesi* clings to calendar and seasonal themes. All seem to consider food recipes as a tool for inclusiveness, and television entertainment appears as a frame for coziness. *Apu's* concept is the most standardized, but the other two magazines also use similar tools and topics week after week.

Apu sends inclusion calls via chatty language. Even expert talk follows the same style, thus reducing the gap between experts and 'ordinary people'. *Me Naiset* alerts readers with its witty, nasty statements, trusting on readers' ability to make linguistic distinctions. *Kotiliesi* is the most correct in its language choices. However, basically all three are cordial, *Me Naiset* allowing some wittiness and humor in commentaries.

The present broad tones of afternoon paper journalism and social media have not really spread to these magazines. One could suspect that the niceness in wording can turn counterproductive and create a distancing effect. In any case, the unique, 'own' editorial line of all three is mostly composed of rather superficial factors, frequently linked to style, layout design and picture choices, rarely matters of real substance. In the glorious decades of Finnish magazines in the 1960s and 1970s, unique substance and revelations resembling tabloid fights dominated the heavily competitive magazine industry. Today, subscription-based magazines tend to focus on soft approaches, emphasizing continuity and companionship.

In visual content, the magazines studied are very 'white'. Their pictures present only members of the majority population, mainly urban inhabitants. The countryside and places such as Lapland are occasionally included, presented as exotic. Furthermore, the individuals pictured on the hobby, food, makeup, and fashion pages appear markedly younger than the people in the interviews. Pictures of women are more frequent than pictures of men.

In conclusion, practically no elements were found that could be interpreted as evidence of genuine participation. Producers of texts and readers of texts operate in different 'compartments', and readers are called in as participants only in competitions and short opinion letters. The role of the subscription base appears contradictory: It supports continuity but seems to prevent radical changes. Relative economic safety could allow for, even urge, experiments or deep content reorientation, but such attempts were not found, at least not in this limited exercise. One would anticipate that the magazines in a 'safe' situation with a majority of long-term subscribers could afford to make sometimes even radical content changes while keeping their outlook unchanged. However, they tend to do the opposite. In the long run, such a policy might turn dangerous, especially if the dimension of agency capital (Ytre-Arne & Das 2021) is taken seriously.

Magazines are in danger of losing contact with the demands made by the changed mediascape.

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HEALTH MAGAZINES IN PORTUGAL: PUBLISHING TRENDS FROM 1993 TO 2025

HERNÂNI ZÃO OLIVEIRA

SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES FROM THE UNIVERSITY
OF ÉVORA

CITCEM – TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER FOR
CULTURE, SPACE AND MEMORY

HELENA LIMA

FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES FROM THE
UNIVERSITY OF PORTO

CITCEM – TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH CENTER FOR
CULTURE, SPACE AND MEMORY

Hernâni Zão Oliveira is an Invited Professor and Researcher at the University of Évora in Strategic Communication. He has a PhD in Digital Media from the University of Porto, a program in partnership with the University of Texas, at Austin. He is currently co-coordinating the first Portuguese Creative Laboratory for Health Literacy to address the lack of Health Information Technology tools for vulnerable populations.

holiveira@uevora.pt <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8219-0367>

Helena Lima is Associate Professor at Faculty of Humanities of University of Porto since 2008. The PhD research analyses the history of the three Oporto daily newspapers. The final thesis (2008) in Contemporary History concerns the editorial patterns of each newspaper, the way they relate to audiences and modernization processes. Her main fields of research are Journalism, Content Analysis, Media and Political Communication.

hllima@letras.up.pt <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3023-6412>

Corresponding author:

Hernâni Zão Oliveira

holiveira@uevora.pt

University of Évora, Portugal

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ABSTRACT

Although there is no clear consensus on what constitutes specialized journalism, health journalism is widely understood as fulfilling a civic role by translating complex medical and scientific information into accessible narratives for the public. This study maps the landscape of Portuguese health magazines between 1993 and 2025, analyzing their circulation patterns and thematic orientations. Drawing on longitudinal data and content classification, the findings identify three distinct phases in the sector's evolution. The first phase (1993–2006) is marked by expansion and editorial specialization, with a growing number of publications targeting niche audiences such as parents, women, and fitness-oriented readers. The second phase (2007–2016) reflects a period of contraction, characterized by declining circulation figures and the gradual disappearance of several titles, in line with wider economic pressures affecting the media industry. The third phase (2017 onwards) reveals a context of structural fragility, shaped by digital transition, audience fragmentation, and instability in media ownership.

Keywords: *Portuguese health magazines; trends; circulation; mapping*

Introduction

Specialized or beat journalism is defined by stable thematic boundaries, established source networks, and audience expectations (Becker & Vlad, 2009). Health journalism has emerged within this framework as a distinct editorial niche, although it is often still analyzed through the lens of generalist news practices (Hinnant, 2009). Much of the existing literature emphasizes journalistic routines, professional interactions, and the use of sources in shaping specific discourses (Marinho et al., 2012). However, health journalism increasingly reflects specialized professional logics and source dynamics that distinguish it from general reporting models (Magin & Maurer, 2019).

In this context, magazine studies provide a valuable lens through which to understand the intersection of commercial imperatives, audience segmentation, and editorial identity. Magazines operate by blending journalism, branding, and entertainment, often fostering trust through visual storytelling, expert personas, and emotional engagement (Holmes & Nice, 2012; Abrahamson, Prior-Miller, & Emmott, 2015). These characteristics are particularly evident in niches such as health, fashion, and lifestyle journalism. Nevertheless, Portuguese health magazines remain under-researched despite their presence in the market since the 1990s. Their study is critical to understanding how these publications mediate biomedical knowledge, foster lay health literacy, and reflect broader structural pressures in the print media ecosystem (Briggs & Hallin, 2016; Araújo, 2016).

Health Journalism: Towards the Magazine's Allure

The definition of journalistic specialization remains contested, both among professionals and within academic literature (Conde, 2005; Pérez, 1998; Tavares, 2009). Authors typically distinguish between generalist reporting

and professional specialization, the latter marked by deep topical engagement and the formation of thematic editorial sections (Borrat, 1989). Specialization often results from cumulative professional experience, leading to enhanced domain knowledge, curated networks of sources, and narrative proficiency (Marchetti, 2005).

This in-depth approach allows for the development of journalistic content organized by topics, subtopics, and thematic coherence. Such specialization implies command over a specific conceptual lexicon, sustained source relationships, and recognition by editorial leadership (Hovden & Knapskog, 2015). A central trait of specialized journalism is its capacity to produce credible, high-quality information tailored to informed and engaged audiences (Markina, 2010).

Health journalism, in particular, has historically aligned with journalism's civic mission due to its relevance to public welfare and behavior change (McAlister, 1995). From the early stages of mass journalism, coverage of epidemics and health crises has been regarded as a journalistic duty, requiring reliable, accessible information for both public authorities and general audiences (Barrera Páez, 2016). As Hodgetts et al. (2008) assert, health news occupies a prominent place in media agendas and plays a formative role in shaping public behavior, particularly through the construction of disease-related narratives.

The challenge of health reporting lies in translating technical and scientific language into accessible narratives without compromising accuracy (Tanner, Friedman, & Zheng, 2015). This often results in a dependence on institutional health sources, which, while authoritative, may limit the journalist's critical autonomy. Nonetheless, health journalism is pivotal to advancing health literacy by interpreting and disseminating complex medical information (Figenschou, Thorbjørnsrud, & Hallin, 2023). The act of simplifying scientific language for lay consumption is increasingly framed as a civic responsibility (Hodgetts et al., 2008).

Recent scholarship identifies a shift in narrative strategies within health journalism. Journalists are increasingly moving beyond their traditional roles as scientific translators to embrace storytelling techniques that emphasize human-interest angles and emotional resonance (Figenschou, Thorbjørnsrud, & Hallin, 2023). This narrative aims to enhance public engagement and broaden the reach of health-related content across diverse media platforms (Saffran, 2021).

Health journalism in the magazine format is particularly susceptible to these trends. In the United States, for example, health magazines have significantly influenced how audiences conceptualize wellness and illness (Dutta-Bergman, 2004). Len-Ríos and Hinnant (2014) argue that the consumption of health magazines correlates with readers' health literacy levels, particularly in gendered formats like women's magazines, which often blend health advice with aspirational lifestyle content. However, this also opens space for the reinforcement of gendered stereotypes and mixed health-lifestyle messages.

Defining Health Journalism and Its Editorial Context in Portugal

Health journalism occupies a strategic position at the crossroads of science communication, medical reporting, and public service (Araújo, 2016). It carries a civic obligation to translate scientific evidence into accessible narratives for lay audiences (Hodgetts et al., 2008). This translational function is central to the professionalization of the beat, requiring journalists to maintain both scientific accuracy and communicative clarity while navigating complex institutional ecosystems.

A distinction must be made between health journalism and lifestyle journalism. While the latter often relies on aspirational narratives, soft news, and personal testimonials, health journalism is expected to uphold standards of evidence-based reporting and serve the public interest (Len-Ríos & Hinnant,

2014). Nonetheless, these boundaries are increasingly fluid. Figenschou, Thorbjørnsrud, & Hallin (2023) demonstrate that legacy media outlets increasingly incorporate affective storytelling, blurring the line between factual reporting and emotional engagement. Similarly, reliance on institutional sources can reduce journalistic autonomy and promote dominant biomedical discourses (Tanner, Friedman, & Zheng, 2015).

In Portugal, the revitalization of the publishing sector following the revolutionary period (1974–1979) facilitated the proliferation of specialized titles for increasingly segmented audiences (Sousa & Lima, 2023). The post-revolutionary liberalization (1979–1995) and subsequent convergence era (1995–present) enabled the institutionalization of editorial beats, including health journalism.

Health-focused publications catered to growing public interest in wellness, disease prevention, and biomedical information. Their editorial trajectories map onto broader societal trends, such as increased consumer awareness and the mediatization of health (Gustavo & Completo, 2014). Yet, like other niche publications, they are vulnerable to commercial pressures and structural constraints within the print media industry (Conboy, 2005).

Further contributing factors include platform convergence, advertising volatility, and ownership concentration (Chandra & Kaiser, 2015). The digital transition intensified these dynamics, reshaping value chains and exacerbating financial pressures on print magazines (Stam, 2021).

Despite the importance of this editorial category, research on the history of health magazines in Portugal remains limited. While sports, business, and cultural journalism have received scholarly attention, the health specialization within magazines remains largely unexplored (Silva et al., 2017). This study seeks to address this gap by tracing the trajectory of Portuguese health magazines in relation to broader

press trends and the logics of editorial specialization. Taking this into consideration, this research work was designed to respond to the following questions: i. How have Portuguese health magazines evolved in terms of publication trends, thematic focus, and distribution strategies?; ii. What does the trajectory of Portuguese health magazines reveal about the sustainability of specialized print journalism in the context of digital media expansion?

Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative longitudinal analysis with qualitative thematic classification. Its objective was to map the landscape of Portuguese health magazines, analyze their distribution and thematic orientation, and contextualize their evolution within the broader challenges facing the news media sector.

Three main data sources informed this research: (a) Audited reports from the Associação Portuguesa para o Controlo de Tiragem e Circulação (APCT); (b) The Lisbon Digital Newspaper Library; and (c) Company filings and trade press reports. Health magazines were defined as periodicals whose mission statements explicitly commit to evidence-based medical information aimed at improving individual or public health. Titles primarily focused on fitness, fashion, or general lifestyle were excluded, unless their content addressed medically grounded health topics. Magazines produced by scientific societies and targeted at professional audiences, such as *Viver Saudável*, which is dedicated to nutritionists, were also excluded. *Saúde Actual*, founded in 2001, stands out in the Portuguese health magazine landscape for its holistic approach to health. The publication covers a wide range of topics, including complementary and alternative medicine, nutrition, environmental health, and overall well-being, reflecting an integrative perspective on health. In 2025, the editorial direction reported an average monthly circulation of approximately 5,000 copies. However, as the magazine is

not registered with the APCT, its circulation data is not independently verified. For this reason, and to ensure consistency and comparability across the sample, *Saúde Actual* was also not included in the present analysis.

Each selected publication was analyzed based on:

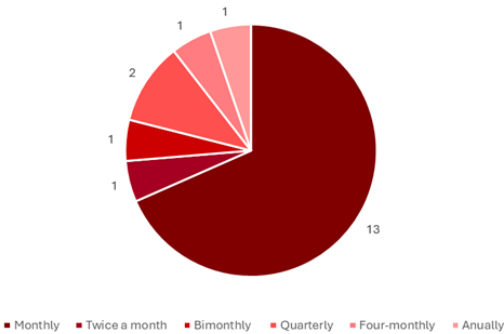
- i. Period of paid print and digital publication;
- ii. Annualized figures for paid print circulation and digital edition sales;
- iii. Thematic coverage and content organization.

Quantitative data were standardized to annual totals to ensure comparability. For qualitative content analysis, five issues per title were purposively selected. Descriptive statistics are reported in percentages to facilitate comparison across titles.

Results

Between 1993 and 2025, a total of 19 health magazines were identified as circulating in Portugal, with publication frequencies ranging from monthly to annual. Monthly publications predominated within the sample, followed by quarterly titles, reflecting a strong preference for regular dissemination of health-related content (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Distribution of the periodicity of health magazines in Portugal since 1993



The classification of health magazines into six thematic categories was made to reflect the main dimensions of health communication addressed in the Portuguese print media landscape, namely: Parenting; Child Health; Physical Activity; Nutrition; General Prevention; and Mental Health. These categories are consistent with a broad, multidimensional understanding of health and align with public health frameworks that encompass physical, mental, and social well-being.

The “Parenting” category brings together magazines primarily focused on pregnancy, childbirth, and parental roles, in which health is framed through the lens of caregiving and family dynamics. The titles *A Nossa Gravidez* (*Our Pregnancy*), *Mãe Ideal* (*Ideal Mother*), and *Pais & Filhos* (*Parents & Children*) emphasize maternal health, parenting practices, and expert guidance. This distinction is justified because these publications approach health through the lens of family and caregiving, rather than individual health alone. Although closely related to parenting, the “Child Health” category isolates magazines that specifically address children’s physical development, early-life care, and pediatric health. Examples include *Bebé Saúde* (*Baby Health*), *Bebé D’Hoje* (*Today’s Baby*), and *O Nosso Bebê* (*Our Baby*). The separation from “Parenting” highlights a more clinical and developmental perspective, focused directly on the child as a subject of health.

The “Physical Activity” category includes magazines that promote health primarily through exercise, fitness, and sport, such as *Men’s Health*, *Sport Life*, and *Performance*. It reflects the growing importance of lifestyle-based health, where physical activity is presented as an evidence-based tool for disease prevention and well-being. Magazines such as *Saúde à Mesa* (*Health at the Table*) and *Viva Melhor em Boa Forma* (*Live Better in Good Shape*) fall into the “Nutrition” category due to their emphasis on diet, healthy eating habits, and nutritional knowledge. Nutrition emerges as a specialized, autonomous field within health communication and is treated separately from general lifestyle or fitness.

The “General Prevention” category encompasses magazines with a broader scope, such as *Prevenir* (*Prevent*), *Visão Saúde* (*Visão Health*), and *Viver com Saúde* (*Living with Health*), which address health promotion, disease prevention, and public health issues. These publications justify a separate category because they adopt a holistic and preventive approach, integrating multiple dimensions of health rather than focusing on a single domain. The “Mental Health” category is primarily represented by *Psicologia Atual* (*Current Psychology*), which focuses explicitly on psychological well-being, emotional health, and scientifically grounded mental health content. While other magazines, such as *Women’s Health* or *Pais & Filhos* (*Parents & Children*), also cover mental health topics, these are not their central focus, as they place greater emphasis on broader lifestyle, parenting, or physical health issues. For this reason, only *Psicologia Atual* is classified as a dedicated mental health magazine.

Figure 2 presents a longitudinal overview of health magazines published in Portugal between 1993 and 2025, organized by period of activity. The visualization highlights the temporal distribution and overlap of publications, revealing a clear expansion of the sector in the early 2000s, followed by a gradual decline in the number of active titles after 2010.

The peak period occurred between 2006 and 2010, when the highest number of magazines was simultaneously in circulation. Several titles, particularly those focused on parenting and child health, were concentrated in this period. From 2010 onwards, a progressive reduction in print publications is evident, with many titles ceasing to be published. By the most recent period, only a small number of magazines remain active, indicating a contraction of the print health magazine market, likely associated with the transition to digital media and changes in content consumption patterns.

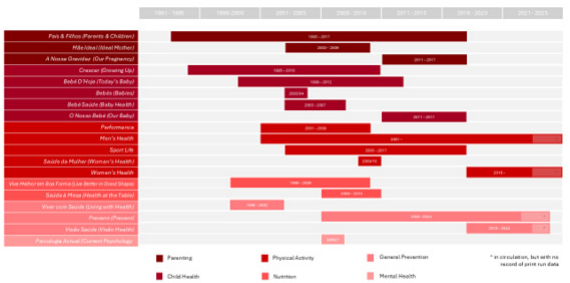
The analysis of circulation trends from the databases is consistently available up to 2021. To ensure comparability across

publications, circulation figures up to this year were used as the main reference point for longitudinal analysis. Nevertheless, it is important to note that four magazines remain active beyond this period: *Prevenir* (Prevent) and *Visão Saúde* (Visão Health), for which data extend to 2024 and 2022, respectively, as well as *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, which continue to be published at the time of writing. For *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, however, only partial data are available beyond 2021, covering two quarters of 2022.

In order to provide a more comprehensive characterization of the contemporary landscape, the quantitative analysis is complemented by a qualitative assessment of recent developments, particularly regarding the media groups that currently own and manage these active titles. This combined approach allows for a more robust interpretation of the sector, capturing not only circulation trends but also structural transformations in the Portuguese health magazine market.

The longitudinal analysis of health magazines in Portugal reveals a dynamic trajectory marked by periods of expansion, contraction, and subsequent restructuring of the sector. Rather than presenting individual titles in isolation, the results point to broader patterns in editorial orientation, circulation trends, and market sustainability. It is therefore possible to identify three phases in the evolution of Portuguese health magazines, which we outline below.

Figure 2 Longitudinal overview of health magazines published in Portugal between 1993 and 2025



Phase 1: Expansion and Specialization (1993–2006)

The first phase is characterized by a steady increase in both the number of publications and their circulation volumes. This period culminates in 2006, when the market reached its highest level of diversity, with 12 health magazines in circulation. Cumulatively, print runs also peaked in the same year, reaching 675,378 copies (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Number of printed circulations of health magazines from 1993 to 2021 in Portugal

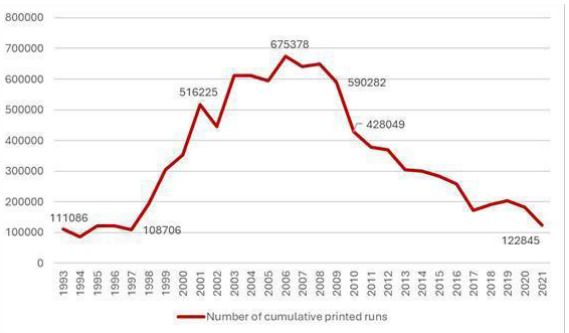
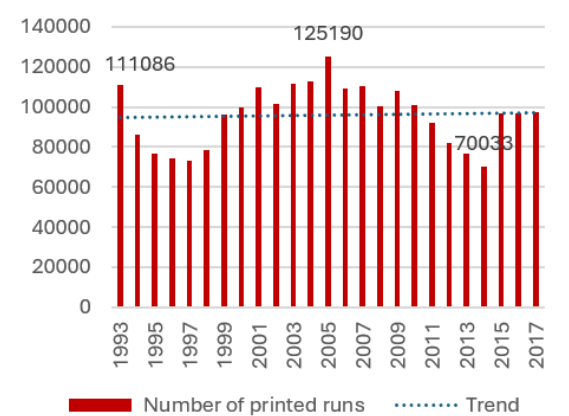


Figure 4 Distribution of printed runs of *Pais & Filhos* from 1999 to 2012 in Portugal



This expansion was supported by the emergence of highly specialized publications targeting distinct audiences. Parenting and child health magazines, such as *Pais & Filhos*, *Crescer*, and *Bebé d'Hoje*, dominated the landscape, often achieving substantial circulation figures. For instance, *Pais & Filhos* maintained consistently high distribution levels over more than two decades (Figure 4), while *Bebé d'Hoje* reached an average annual circulation of approximately 52,000 copies (Figure 5). These publications were typically structured around expert-driven content, reinforcing their role as trusted sources of health information.

Figure 5 Distribution of printed runs of *Bebé D'Hoje* from 1999 to 2012 in Portugal

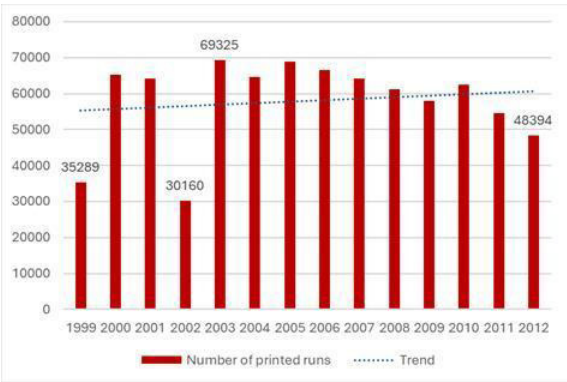
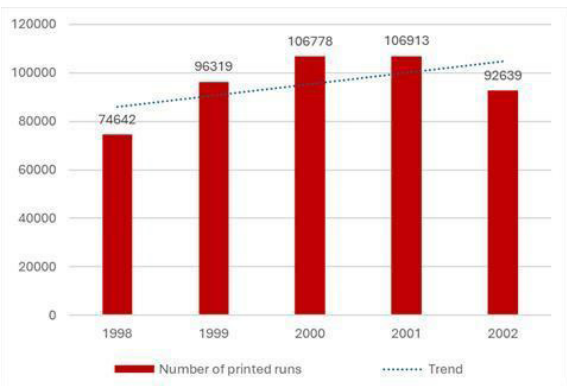


Figure 6 Distribution of printed runs of *Viver com Saúde* from 1998 to 2002 in Portugal



Simultaneously, other thematic niches began to consolidate. Titles such as *Viver com Saúde* (Figure 6) and *Viva Melhor em Boa Forma* (Figure 7) reflect an early diversification into general health and lifestyle-oriented content, while *Performance* (Figure 8) illustrates the growing relevance of fitness and nutrition as editorial domains. Overall, this phase demonstrates a strong

Figure 7 Distribution of printed runs of *Viva Melhor em Boa Forma* from 1998 to 2009 in Portugal

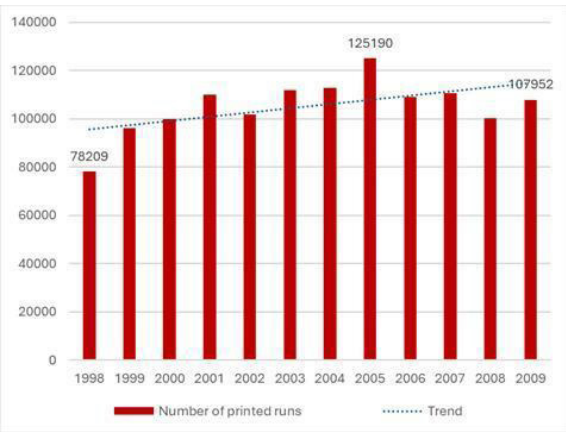
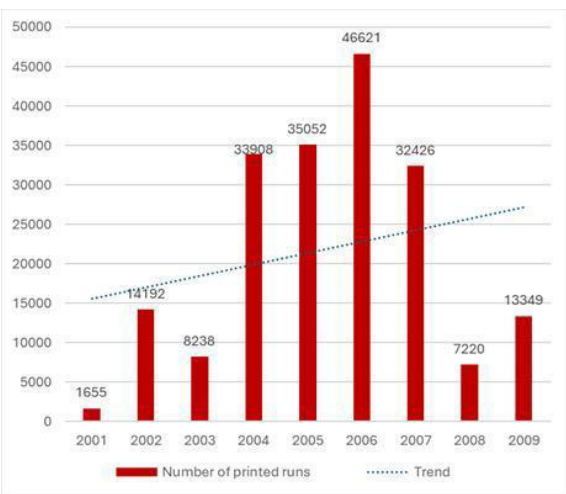


Figure 8 Distribution of printed runs of *Performance* from 2001 to 2009 in Portugal



alignment between editorial specialization and audience demand, supported by stable print-based business models.

Phase 2: Contraction and Market Decline (2007–2016)

The second phase is marked by a sharp decline in both circulation volumes and the number of active titles. Several magazines experienced decreasing print runs during this period,

Figure 9 Distribution of printed runs of *Crescer* from 1995 to 2010 in Portugal

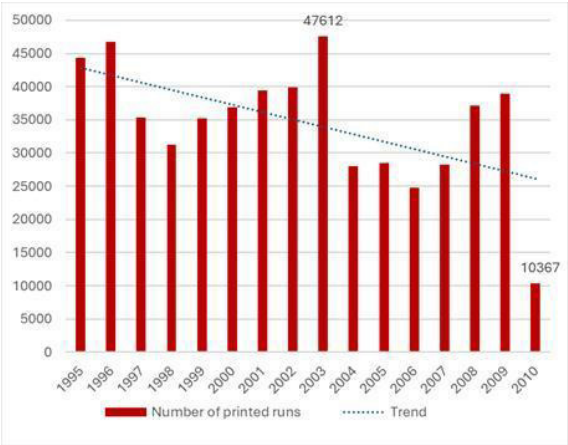
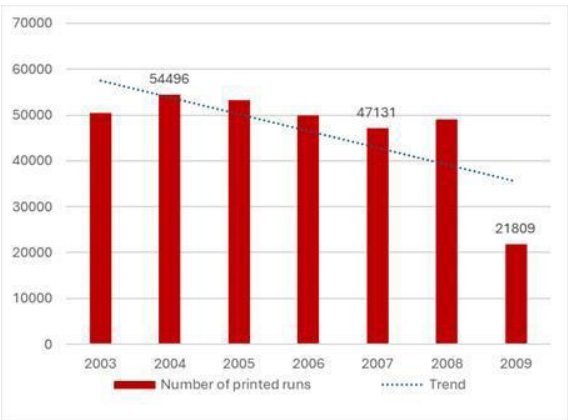


Figure 10 Distribution of printed runs of *Mãe Ideal* from 2003 to 2009 in Portugal



including *Crescer* (Figure 9), *Mãe Ideal* (Figure 10), and *A Nossa Gravidez* (Figure 11), all of which showed downward trends prior to their discontinuation. Even publications that had previously demonstrated growth, such as *Bebé Saúde* and *Performance*, were unable to sustain long-term viability.

This contraction is also visible in aggregate terms. Following the 2006 peak, total print circulation entered a sustained

Figure 11 Distribution of printed runs of *A Nossa Gravidez* from 2011 to 2017 in Portugal

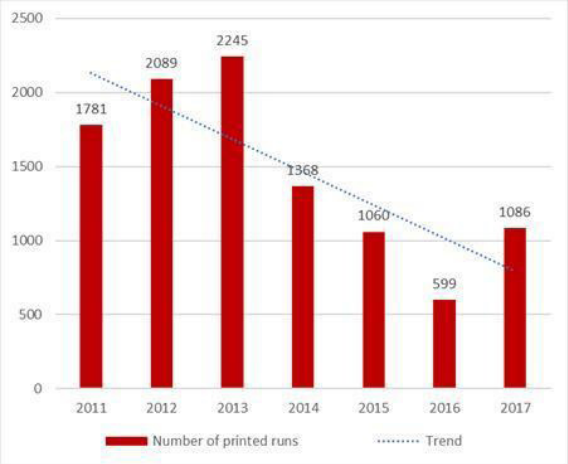
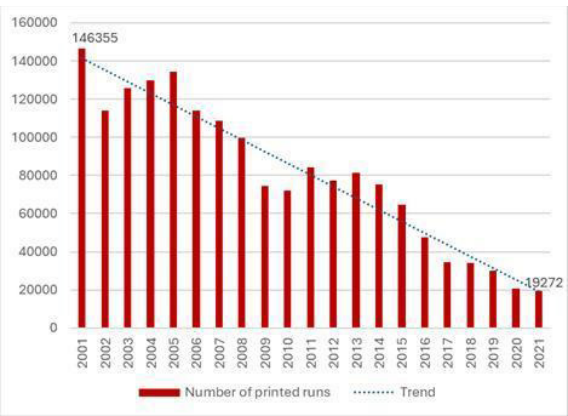


Figure 12 Distribution of printed runs of *Men's Health* from 2001 to 2021 in Portugal



downward trajectory. The decline affected both niche and generalist publications, suggesting structural challenges across the sector rather than isolated failures.

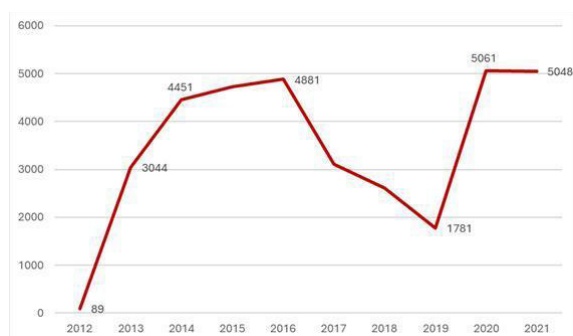
Publishers faced rising production costs, especially for paper, and declining advertising income. The closure of *Crescer, Pais & Filhos* and *Viva Melhor em Boa Forma*, and the eventual insolvency of Motorpress Lisboa, the media group that owned these titles, underscore the severity of this collapse.

Despite this downturn, some titles maintained relative stability. *Men's Health*, introduced in 2001, achieved its highest circulation at launch and sustained a long-term presence in the market (Figure 12). However, even in these cases, the broader trend points to decreasing readership and increasing pressure on print-based models.

Phase 3: Digital Transition, Media Ownership Crisis and the Fragility of Health Magazines (2017–onwards)

The shift towards digital distribution intensified from the mid-2010s onwards, with most health magazines adopting hybrid models combining print and online platforms.

Figure 13 Number of paid digital runs of health magazines from 2012 to 2021 in Portugal



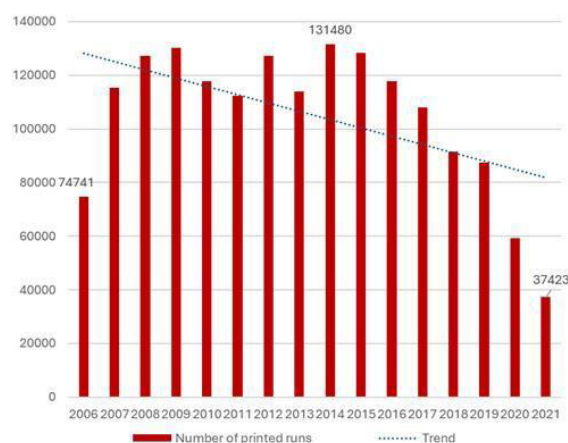
In 2012, paid digital publications began to appear in Portugal. After growing until 2016, the number began to decrease from 2016 to 2019. In 2020, it reached a maximum of 5061 copies (Figure 13).

The most recent phase is defined by a deep structural crisis affecting the media groups. While earlier phases reflected expansion and contraction in editorial supply, this period is marked by instability at the level of media ownership, with direct consequences for the sustainability of specialized health titles.

These structural weaknesses became more visible following the collapse of Motorpress Lisboa. The case of *Prevenir*, one of the most established health magazines in Portugal, illustrates the dependence of specialized titles on the financial viability of their parent companies. Despite its strong market presence throughout the 2000s and early 2010s (Figure 14), the magazine was unable to survive the collapse of How, its editorial group, which ceased operations in 2024 as part of the broader closure of the group's publishing activity.

Trust in News, the media group which played a central role in the Portuguese magazine sector, is another critical example.

Figure 14 Distribution of printed runs of *Prevenir* from 2006 to 2021

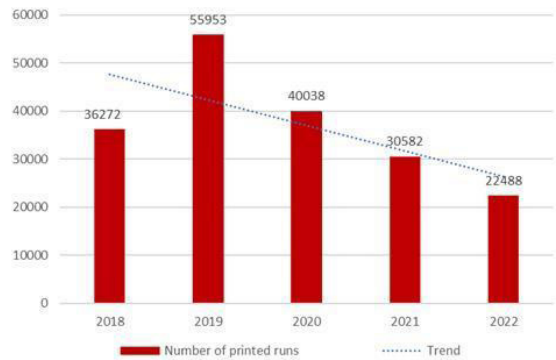


Founded in 2018, the group concentrated a significant portfolio of titles, including *Visão* and *Visão Saúde*, one of its segments.

On 4 December 2024, *Trust in News* was declared insolvent, triggering a chain reaction across its publications. This event had a direct impact on health magazines, as it disrupted editorial production, distribution, and workforce stability. In October 2025, creditors approved the cessation of the company's activity, effectively leading to the shutdown of multiple titles within its portfolio, including health-oriented publications.

A similar dynamic affected *Visão Saúde*, also published within the same media group. Although positioned as a more information-driven and medically oriented publication, its trajectory was ultimately shaped by corporate instability rather than editorial performance. Following the collapse of Trust in News, uncertainty regarding ownership and continuity placed the magazine in a precarious position, reflecting how specialized health journalism is structurally dependent on broader media conglomerates. After a steadily declining number of print runs until 2022 (Figure 15), the magazine ceased production in 2024.

Figure 15 Distribution of printed runs of *Visão Saúde* from 2018 to 2022

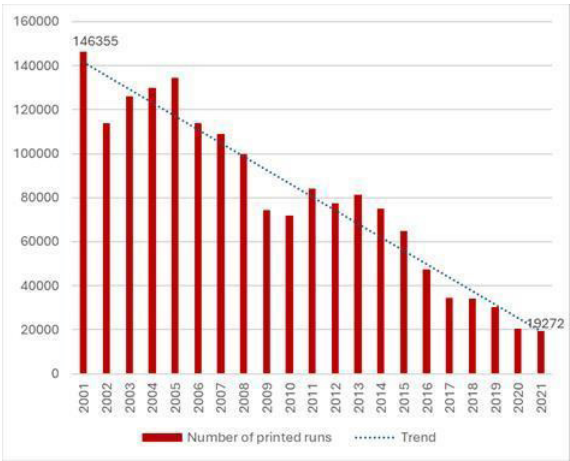


As of 2026, the outcome of the *Trust in News* case remains unresolved, reflecting the structural instability of the Portuguese magazine sector. In March 2026, the Supreme Court of Justice revoked the previous decision and approved a new insolvency plan, reopening the possibility of corporate restructuring and suspending the group's dissolution.

Concurrently, an alternative and unprecedented response emerged from within the newsroom itself: journalists from *Visão* launched a crowdfunding campaign to acquire the magazine's title at auction and ensure its editorial continuity under independent ownership. Despite the success of this initiative, the future of the group's titles remains uncertain, contingent on judicial outcomes and the economic viability of emerging ownership structures.

In parallel, international franchise titles such as *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, typically operated in Portugal through licensing agreements with national publishers, demonstrate a slightly different, yet equally fragile, model. These magazines rely on global branding combined with local adaptation, often integrated into diversified media groups. *Men's Health*, for instance, invested in digital expansion strategies to strengthen

Figure 16 Distribution of printed runs of *Men's Health* from 2001 to 2021



its online presence and audience engagement. However, this shift reflects a repositioning away from print rather than a stabilization of the magazine as a traditional editorial product, as Figure 16 points out. Similarly, *Women's Health* maintained visibility through a hybrid content strategy combining health, fitness, and lifestyle, but remained exposed to declining print revenues and market fragmentation.

Discussion

The evolution of health magazines in Portugal between 1993 and 2025 provides a comprehensive perspective on the structural transformations affecting specialized print journalism, particularly within the health communication domain. Drawing on longitudinal circulation data and thematic classification, this trajectory can be interpreted across three main phases: expansion and specialization, contraction and decline, and structural fragility within a reconfigured media ecosystem.

The first phase (1993–2006) was characterized by sustained growth in both the number of publications and their circulation volumes, culminating in a peak in 2006. This period reflects a strong alignment between editorial specialization and audience demand. Health communication was organized around clearly defined thematic niches, particularly parenting and child health, which together accounted for a significant proportion of titles. Publications such as *Pais & Filhos*, *Crescer*, and *Bebé D'Hoje* achieved high and stable circulation figures, supported by expert-driven content and a strong emphasis on health literacy.

This phase also coincided with a pre-digital media environment in which print magazines functioned as primary sources of credible health information. This provided a way to access complex information in a simplified and reliable format, produced by professional journalists. The predominance of monthly periodicity further reinforced their role in providing

regular, structured dissemination of health knowledge. Additionally, the emergence of thematic areas such as physical activity, nutrition, and general prevention illustrates an early diversification of health communication, aligned with broader public health priorities centered on lifestyle and behavioral determinants of health.

The second phase (2007–2016) marks a period of contraction, characterized by a sharp and sustained decline in both circulation volumes and the number of active titles. Following the 2006 peak, print runs entered a downward trajectory across all categories, affecting both specialized and generalist publications. This decline reflects structural pressures rather than isolated editorial failures. Several magazines exhibited decreasing circulation trends prior to their discontinuation, indicating a progressive erosion of market viability.

This contraction must be understood within the broader context of the global financial crisis and its impact on the Portuguese media sector. Rising production costs, particularly for paper, combined with declining advertising revenues, significantly weakened the economic foundations of print journalism. Between 2009 and 2010 alone, print circulation dropped by nearly 28%, marking a structural shift in the viability of niche print journalism. Publishers faced rising production costs and declining advertising income. The health magazine sector, heavily reliant on print-based models and vulnerable to market volatility, suffered disproportionately.

The closure of key titles and the insolvency of major publishing groups, such as Motorpress Lisboa, underscore the systemic nature of this crisis. Importantly, the decline affected all thematic categories, suggesting that even well-established niches, such as parenting and child health, were unable to sustain long-term viability under changing market conditions.

The third phase (2017–2025) reflects not a recovery, but a transition towards structural fragility, shaped by digital

transformation, changing audience behaviors, and instability in media ownership. While some titles persisted or emerged during this period, namely *Men's Health* and *Women's Health*, their trajectories reveal adaptive strategies rather than sectoral stabilization. These magazines increasingly adopted hybrid models that combine print and digital platforms, but circulation data indicate that digital expansion has not offset the decline in print readership. Importantly, these titles are less dependent on a single national publisher than earlier magazines; however, they remain embedded in fragile business models reliant on advertising revenues and brand extension strategies. Their continued presence does not indicate a recovery of the sector, but rather an adaptation to constrained economic conditions.

More broadly, this third period coincides with a systemic crisis affecting Portuguese media groups, characterized by restructuring processes, layoffs, and financial instability. The collapse of Trust in News in 2024, which directly impacted *Visão Saúde*, illustrates how specialized health publications are structurally dependent on the financial viability of parent companies. In this context, the sustainability of health magazines is no longer determined solely by editorial performance or audience demand, but increasingly by corporate and ownership dynamics.

Taken together, the post-2017 period reveals a shift from market contraction to structural fragility driven by ownership instability and economic constraints. Health magazines emerge as particularly vulnerable within this environment: they are highly dependent on parent media groups, have limited capacity for digital monetization, and face increasing competition from unregulated online health content.

Despite the expansion of digital media, the transition has not resulted in a revitalization of health journalism. Although paid digital editions emerged in the early 2010s and experienced a temporary increase, particularly during the COVID-19

pandemic, these gains were not sustained. Instead, the digital shift has contributed to audience fragmentation, reduced revenue stability, and increased competition from informal and non-verified sources of health information.

This transformation has important implications for public health communication. The decline of specialized, expert-driven health magazines represents not only a contraction of a media sector, but also a reduction in the availability of curated, evidence-based health information. While earlier publications were characterized by strong editorial mediation and expert involvement, contemporary health communication is increasingly dispersed across digital platforms with varying levels of credibility.

In this context, the recent developments surrounding *Visão* point to the emergence of alternative funding models as potential, albeit uncertain, pathways for the sustainability of specialized magazines. This case illustrates a broader shift in media financing logics, where traditional revenue streams are increasingly complemented or replaced by hybrid and community-driven models. Crowdfunding, philanthropic funding, and reader-supported ownership structures are gaining prominence as mechanisms for sustaining journalistic activity, particularly in niche sectors such as health communication. These models align with a growing body of research that emphasizes sustainability as a multidimensional challenge encompassing not only economic viability but also editorial independence and social value (Medina & Rodríguez, 2025). Similarly, the rise of journalism philanthropy (Lincoln, 2025) and alternative ownership structures reflects an ongoing reconfiguration of power relations within the media ecosystem, where audiences and civil society actors assume a more active role in supporting journalistic production.

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HOW DO WE FEEL ABOUT FACTS: EMOTIONALISM IN NEWSMAGAZINE COVERAGE OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II'S DEATH

ANNA BEČKOVÁ RAGASOVÁ

Anna Bečková Ragasová, PhD is the spokesperson for The Corps of Prison and Court Guard in Slovakia. She holds a Doctoral Degree in Communication Sciences from Lusófona University in Lisbon, where she researched emotional elements in online magazines. A former journalist at TV JOJ and regional newspapers, she focuses on journalism, media communication, and reliable information. In her current role, she works closely with journalists, creates institutional content, and provides training in writing and communication.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-5242-1222>

Corresponding author:

Anna Bečková Ragasová
anna.ragasova@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study, titled *How do we feel about facts: Emotionalism in Newsmagazine Coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's Death*, explores the construction and presentation of emotionalism in journalistic responses to the death of Queen Elizabeth II, examining 111 articles from three culturally and geographically distinct newsmagazines: *Time* (USA), *The Economist* (UK), and *.týždeň* (Slovakia). Using content and semiotic analysis, the research investigates the textual, visual, and structural elements that contribute to emotional engagement, sentiment construction, and potential audience influence. Emotionalism is defined as the deliberate insertion of emotional cues by journalists or content creators and the reader's interpretation of such cues within the narrative framework.

The selection of three distinct newsmagazines enables cross-cultural comparison, illuminating how editorial traditions, national perspectives, and media norms shape representations of mourning, legacy, and royal symbolism. The analysis examines headline formulation, article structure, visual design, multimedia presence, authorial voice, and nuanced elements such as image color, framing, and the Queen's prominence in photographs.

This perspective provides insights into emotionalism in journalism and shows how even restrained publications employ emotional cues. It contributes to understanding of journalistic text construction and the potential influence of media on public perception during national and international mourning, with applications in media studies, journalism ethics, and cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: *emotionalism, journalism, Queen Elizabeth II, semiotic analysis, newsmagazines, mourning.*

1 Introduction

The global reaction to the death of Queen Elizabeth II on September 8, 2022, marked a rare moment of near-universal reflection. Revered for her longevity, diplomatic poise, and symbolic continuity, Queen Elizabeth II was not only the monarch of the United Kingdom but a figure of worldwide recognition and significance. Her passing elicited widespread media attention, and news outlets across cultures and countries sought to frame the event in ways appropriate to their readerships and editorial identities. Emotions play a central role in media discourse by shaping collective experiences and public meaning, particularly during moments of crisis, transition, or national mourning (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2019, pp. 1–4).

This research investigates the role of emotionalism in news coverage of her death, with a focus on three diverse news magazines. Emotionalism, as explored here, refers to the methods by which media outlets incorporate sentiment, pathos, or affective tones into their narratives. Emotions in news media should not be understood as a deviation from rational journalism but as a constitutive element of media communication through which social meaning and relevance are constructed (Pantti, 2010, p. 3–5). It extends beyond overt emotional language to include visual symbolism, narrative framing, and subtle editorial cues that might guide reader response.

The aim of this study is to systematically analyze and compare how *Time*, *The Economist*, and *.týždeň* constructed emotionalism in their reporting. More specifically, the research focuses on how emotionalism was deliberately shaped and communicated in media narratives surrounding the death of Queen Elizabeth II, examining the textual and visual strategies through which emotion was framed, amplified, or restrained in the immediate aftermath of this globally significant event. These publications were chosen for their differing cultural lenses and editorial strategies—American, British, and Slovak,

respectively—which influence not only the topics emphasized but also the stylistic and visual choices made in the portrayal of Queen Elizabeth II's legacy.

This study asks several central questions: How do headlines guide emotional engagement? What role do visuals and multimedia play in evoking sentiment? Are there differences in how cultural proximity or political ideology affect the tone and framing of coverage? By exploring these questions through rigorous qualitative coding and semiotic interpretation, this research contributes to a nuanced understanding of how emotion is crafted and communicated in modern journalism.

2 Methodology

To address the research objectives, the study implemented a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative coding with qualitative interpretation. The sample includes 111 on-line articles published over a two-week period from September 8 to September 22, 2022. This timeline was selected to capture both immediate reactions and follow-up reflections related to the Queen's passing and funeral.

The sample comprises:

- 34 articles from *tyždeň*, a Slovak weekly magazine known for in-depth cultural and political coverage.
- 46 articles from *Time*, a globally oriented American news-magazine recognized for its accessible writing and frequent use of multimedia.
- 31 articles from *The Economist*, a British publication known for its analytical and often understated editorial style.

A Code Book was developed to guide the analysis and ensure consistency across sources. It included detailed variables such as:

- Visual characteristics: image type (photo, illustration), color (color, black and white, sepia), presence of video/

multimedia, framing, angle, facial expression, clothing, and symbolism.

- Textual elements: headline structure, tone, use of capitalization, formulation style (informative, emotional, interrogative), and personalization.
- Structural features: descriptive, explanatory, emotional, or combined structure.
- Quotes and authorship: presence of direct quotes, highlighted quotes, enunciator identity (journalist, public figure, news agency).
- Cover analysis: symbolism, emotional tone, and cultural messaging in cover imagery.

Semiotic analysis was applied particularly to cover images of selected newsmagazines and prominent visuals to assess symbolic meaning, gaze direction, posture, lighting, and composition. Visual elements in media do not function as neutral carriers of information but as signs that, through culturally shared codes, generate secondary meanings and emotional connotations beyond their denotative content (Barthes, 1977, pp. 32–36). Articles were also categorized based on their primary and secondary themes, including the Queen's legacy, funeral events, personal traits, and societal impact.

The data was analyzed both individually and in aggregate to identify publication-specific patterns and broader trends. Cross-tabulations were used to connect textual and visual features, while qualitative excerpts provided context and depth. This methodology ensured that the findings were both measurable and interpretive, allowing for a rich exploration of emotionalism in international journalism.

The selection of the three news magazines was guided by both their international relevance and their contrasting editorial traditions. *Time* and *The Economist* are weekly publications with a long-standing global readership, while *tyždeň* represents a nationally focused but culturally influential Slovak

perspective. Their shared weekly periodicity allows for meaningful comparison within the same news cycle.

The higher number of articles from *Time* reflects both its greater publication volume during the observed period and its tendency to produce multiple thematic and multimedia-driven pieces around major global events. This quantitative difference is therefore understood as an expression of editorial strategy rather than sampling imbalance.

In addition, the analysis explicitly encompasses both online articles and magazine covers, which are crucial components of the emotional framing examined in this study. Covers were treated as distinct yet integral analytical units due to their heightened symbolic density, editorial intentionality, and prominent role in shaping audience perception. Although fewer in number than textual articles, covers play a disproportionate role in the construction and condensation of emotional meaning, and their semiotic analysis significantly informs the interpretation of results presented in subsequent chapters.

3 Frequency of Articles and Publication Timing

The comparative frequency and timing of published articles offer a revealing look into editorial priorities and national news rhythms. Each magazine approached the timing of its coverage in a manner consistent with its broader editorial strategy, target readership, and publishing cadence. By analyzing the timing and volume of articles released, we gain a better understanding of how each publication valued immediacy, reflection, and ceremonial framing in the wake of Queen Elizabeth II's passing.

.týždeň, a weekly Slovak magazine, published 34 articles over the designated two-week period. Its publication pattern reveals a clustering of coverage around September 16, 2022, a date closely aligned with post-death retrospectives and funeral preparations. This concentration indicates an editorial

inclination to reflect on events rather than provide live updates, in line with the magazine's in-depth and analytical approach. Moreover, many of *.týždeň*'s articles sought to contextualize the Queen's death in terms of Slovak public opinion, international diplomacy, and shared European heritage.

In contrast, *Time* published 46 articles, showcasing an immediate and sustained response, with peak activity on the day of the Queen's death and her funeral. This aligns with *Time*'s global editorial model, which values timely reporting, multimedia storytelling, and high-volume content tailored for a diverse and digitally engaged audience. By frontloading its coverage, *Time* emphasized the dramatic unfolding of events and sought to maintain real-time engagement across its platforms.

The Economist, with its established reputation for weekly, in-depth analysis, offered a more restrained release schedule. Publishing just 31 articles, its strategy seemed rooted in reflective editorial cycles. Notably, there was a gap in publication precisely during the Queen's funeral—a time when many other outlets increased output. This strategic editorial silence might be interpreted as a deliberate pause, intended to provide the distance needed for thoughtful synthesis rather than rapid coverage.

The observed differences highlight varying editorial philosophies: *Time* favors speed and saturation, *.týždeň* aims for contextual integration and national framing, and *The Economist* prioritizes strategic selectivity and analytical depth. These differences in frequency and timing are more than logistical; they represent ideological and stylistic commitments that shape how readers experience mourning and memory in public media.

4 Visual Elements

Visual media serve as a powerful emotional conduit in journalism, particularly in coverage of solemn and symbolically

charged events like the death of a monarch. Across the 111 articles analyzed, the deployment of photographs, illustrations, captions, and multimedia varied significantly by publication, reflecting each outlet's editorial ethos and cultural context.

Time distinguished itself by employing the broadest range of visual elements. Over 60% of its articles contained multiple high-resolution color photographs, often spanning across large parts of the screen or page layout. These images frequently depicted Queen Elizabeth II in iconic settings—official portraits, public ceremonies, or moments of personal warmth. The careful selection of these images conveyed reverence, dignity, and historical continuity. Additionally, *Time* incorporated video content in several articles, utilizing archival footage, funeral procession clips, and expert commentary to deepen emotional resonance and enhance narrative immersion.

týždeň, while lacking multimedia, demonstrated a consistent reliance on photographic material, integrating images in 33 of its 34 articles. These visuals ranged from contemporary press photos to archival imagery, including photos of the Queen with world leaders, in traditional royal regalia, or attending key European diplomatic events. The images were typically placed near the article's beginning, serving to visually frame the text and establish the emotional tone. Although captions were relatively rare and generally neutral in tone, their inclusion in select articles subtly enhanced emotional engagement.

The Economist, known for its minimalist layout and analytical content, employed a markedly different visual strategy. Most of its articles were text-heavy, with only occasional illustrative elements. When images did appear, they often took the form of symbolic illustrations or minimalistic portraits. The cover image—a stark white crown against a black background—epitomized this style: an austere, powerful image that evoked mourning through simplicity rather than visual saturation. This restrained approach underscored the magazine's commitment to reflective journalism and avoided overt sentimentality.

In terms of visual tone, color and composition played key roles. *Time*'s use of warm and sometimes vibrant hues created an atmosphere of reverence and nostalgia. *týždeň* favored images with muted tones or sepia filters that reinforced a historical dimension. *The Economist*, by contrast, relied heavily on monochromatic and negative-space aesthetics, invoking solemnity through visual minimalism.

Across all publications, the Queen's gaze and body language were crucial nonverbal elements. Direct gaze, upright posture, and formal attire were recurrent visual motifs symbolizing authority, composure, and tradition. These elements functioned as silent conveyors of emotional cues, subtly guiding the reader's perception of loss, legacy, and reverence.

Taken together, the use of visuals across these magazines illustrates how emotionalism in journalism is not always tied to explicit content. Instead, it is often embedded in visual selection, layout, and tone—inviting the reader to experience emotion through image as much as through word.

5 Headlines

Headlines are among the most immediate textual features readers encounter and serve as crucial entry points to journalistic narratives. Their structure, tone, and visual presentation play a key role in shaping expectations and emotional resonance. This section dissects how *Time*, *The Economist*, and *týždeň* crafted their headlines following Queen Elizabeth II's death, focusing on formulation types, emotional overtone, and graphic features.

5.1 Formulation Types

The majority of headlines across all three publications followed the informative model, delivering factual, concise information such as "Queen Elizabeth II Dies at 96" or "Britain Mourns a Monarch." This approach aligns with traditional

journalism standards, where the headline functions as a summary rather than an interpretive tool. Informative headlines were particularly prevalent in articles republished by news agencies, as seen in *.týždeň*, which published 20 such pieces. These headlines often aimed for neutrality and clarity.

Appealing or dramatic formulations came next in frequency. These headlines, while still rooted in fact, utilized emotional or value-laden language to enhance their draw. For example, *Time* featured titles like “The End of an Era” and “A Queen Remembered,” both of which evoke nostalgia and finality. *.týždeň* occasionally used dramatic phrasing when quoting prominent figures or summarizing editorial reflections, which added a layer of subjectivity and emotion to otherwise factual reporting.

Interrogative headlines were rare, appearing in only a few instances but having a noticeable impact when used. For example, *.týždeň* asked, “Kto je nový britský kráľ?” (“Who is the new British king?”), which invited readers into a narrative of discovery. These headlines functioned not only as informational hooks but also as rhetorical tools that subtly guided emotional engagement by stimulating curiosity and concern.

5.2 Emotional Overtone

The emotional tone of headlines varied considerably across publications. *Time* leaned into emotional storytelling, frequently using language that conveyed reverence, loss, or admiration. Headlines such as “The Queen’s Last Journey” or “Her Majesty’s Enduring Grace” were intentionally evocative, aimed at establishing an emotional connection with the audience before they engaged with the main content.

.týždeň maintained a more balanced tone. While many of its headlines were neutral or purely informative, several incorporated emotional or reflective elements, especially when attributed to national or religious leaders. Titles like

“Prezidentka Čaputová: Kráľovná Alžbeta bola symbolom stability” (President Čaputová: Queen Elizabeth Was a Symbol of Stability) signaled the importance of linking positions of power with emotional pointing to personality traits.

The Economist, true to its analytical style, consistently utilized neutral, succinct headlines. It avoided overt emotional cues in favor of understatement, allowing the emotional content of the article to emerge gradually. Even so, the simplicity of titles like “Elizabeth II” or “The Queen” carried emotional weight through context and cultural resonance, demonstrating that emotionalism can arise from minimalism when paired with meaningful subject matter.

5.3 Graphic Features

Visual manipulation of headlines—such as use of color, font variation, or typographical emphasis—was minimal across all publications and it was focused more on functionality than on content attractivity. This suggests a preference for content-driven emotional engagement over visual spectacle. However, some use of capitalization was observed, particularly in *.týždeň*, which published live update articles under the format “.týždeň ONLINE: Kráľovnú Alžbetu II. pochovali...” (“.týždeň ONLINE: Queen Elizabeth II Was Buried...”).

This minor use of graphic emphasis helped delineate article type or urgency rather than intensify emotional tone. Across all three magazines, headlines were visually uniform, typically appearing in bold face without additional stylization. The restraint in graphical headline treatment mirrors the broader editorial tone of each magazine—emphasizing clarity and consistency over emotional flair.

Taken together, these headline strategies reveal a complex interplay between content, context, and editorial philosophy. While *Time* used its headlines to establish immediate emotional resonance, *The Economist* preferred an austere

approach, and *.týždeň* straddled the line between neutrality and sentiment, depending on the article's origin and focus.

6 Citations and Authorship

The attribution of articles and use of quotations play a pivotal role in shaping journalistic authority in connection with an emotional tone. Across all three magazines, patterns in authorship and the integration of quotes varied, reflecting both editorial practice and the intended impact on the reader.

Time and *.týždeň* consistently credited individual authors. In *Time*, articles were typically written by staff journalists or contributors specializing in history, politics, or international affairs. This allowed for a more personal tone and contextual framing, especially when the authors embedded personal observations or interpretations. *.týždeň* followed a similar pattern, often naming Slovak journalists and editors, and in some cases, prominent figures such as politicians or theologians, who contributed op-eds or reflective pieces.

In contrast, *The Economist* maintained its longstanding practice of anonymity. None of its articles were signed, reinforcing the magazine's collective editorial voice. This impersonal style created a tone of institutional authority and detachment, which minimized the role of individual emotion in favor of collective analysis. While this reduced overt emotionalism, it also allowed for a calm and unified editorial stance, especially in articles that addressed constitutional implications or historical evaluations.

Regarding quotations, direct citations from Queen Elizabeth II were notably scarce. Among the 111 articles reviewed, only one quote from the Queen was identified, and it was not highlighted. This omission likely stems from editorial choices to focus on her public legacy rather than personal expressions. More commonly, quotes came from political leaders, royal

experts, religious figures, and in *.týždeň*, from local Slovak authorities.

Highlighted quotes—those visually separated or emphasized—were infrequent, appearing in only 10 of 111 articles. Of these, seven carried emotional undertones, expressing admiration, solemnity, or reverence. In *Time*, these themes were often reinforced. *.týždeň* used them to convey national sentiment, as seen in quotes from President Čaputová or European diplomats. *The Economist*, consistent with its style, did not use highlighted quotes at all.

In summary, authorship and quotation practices serve as both structural and emotional tools. By selecting whose voice is heard—and how prominently—editors influence both the authority and emotional atmosphere of an article. The varying uses across these three publications reflect differing approaches to reader engagement, emotional resonance, and journalistic identity.

7 Structural Analysis of Articles

The structure of an article—the arrangement and prioritization of its content—not only shapes how information is delivered but also influences the reader's emotional journey through the text. In the case of coverage surrounding Queen Elizabeth II's death, the three magazines demonstrated marked differences in structural tendencies that aligned with their respective editorial missions and audience expectations.

The majority of articles in all three publications were either descriptive or explanatory. Descriptive articles typically recounted events in a chronological or thematic manner, summarizing key developments such as the Queen's passing, the official response, and the details of the funeral. These were especially common in content sourced from news agencies, as seen frequently in *.týždeň*. In contrast, explanatory articles went a step further, placing these events in historical or

political context, evaluating their significance, and exploring the implications for the monarchy and broader society.

Articles that employed an emotional structure—those that foregrounded sentiment, reflection, or personal tone—were less common but particularly impactful. Contemporary journalism has undergone an emotional turn in which emotions have become a legitimate narrative and professional resource rather than a violation of journalistic norms (Wahl-Jorgensen & Pantti, 2021, pp. 2–4). In *týždeň*, three notable examples stood out: a personal letter from Pope Francis, a message from Slovak President Čaputová, and an editorial reflection by a columnist. These pieces were characterized by a softer, more reverent tone, emphasizing themes such as continuity, dignity, and the monarchy's moral symbolism. Their structure often began with a personal or philosophical statement, followed by praise of the Queen's virtues and a broader reflection on leadership and legacy.

Time exhibited a hybrid structure in many of its articles, combining factual recounting with reflective analysis. For instance, pieces would open with a timeline of events, then transition into a discussion of the Queen's impact on global diplomacy or her representation in media. These structural shifts allowed for a blending of emotional and analytical elements, inviting readers to understand both what happened and its human and historical significance.

The Economist, adhering to its established editorial voice, favored a reserved, analytical structure. Articles typically opened with a brief acknowledgment of the Queen's death, followed by a deep dive into constitutional implications, political traditions, or comparing monarchs. Emotional engagement was more often implied than stated, emerging through carefully selected vocabulary or historical references. Even in its more reflective pieces, *The Economist* prioritized argumentation over sentiment.

The strategic use of structure, therefore, served multiple purposes. It dictated the pace at which information was delivered, influenced the article's emotional rhythm, and revealed the underlying editorial intent—whether to inform, interpret, or memorialize. By examining these patterns, we gain insight into how emotionalism is embedded not only in what is said but in how it is said.

8 Covers and Semiotic Analysis

The cover of a news magazine is arguably its most iconic visual element, offering a distilled representation of editorial sentiment and setting the emotional tone for the entire issue. In the two-week period following Queen Elizabeth II's death, all three publications—*Time*, *The Economist*, and *týždeň*—dedicated at least one cover to her memory. These covers, though visually distinct, shared common thematic threads and carried significant semiotic weight.

Time chose a full-color portrait of Queen Elizabeth II that radiated warmth and solemnity. The Queen's expression was calm and dignified, her posture upright, and her attire formal. The background was subtly lit, drawing attention to her face and regal bearing. This choice of image communicated stability, respect, and reverence. The absence of any cover text, apart from the magazine title, allowed the image to speak for itself—an editorial decision that magnified its emotional impact. Moreover, *Time's* historical trend of featuring iconic figures in statesmanlike poses was clearly continued here, reinforcing its visual storytelling tradition. The Queen's facial expression, which could be interpreted as serene and wise, was likely chosen to evoke both feelings of loss and admiration.

The Economist adopted a starkly artistic approach. The central image features a monochrome figure of King Charles walking forward, superimposed on a red-and-blue silhouette of the late Queen's profile—symbolizing both continuity and

change within the British monarchy. The use of the Queen's outline in national colors (blue and red) evokes a strong sense of identity and legacy, while the black background signifies mourning and solemnity. The headline "Into the Carolean era" not only announces the new reign but also references historical echoes of past King Charleses, subtly suggesting a mixture of uncertainty, tradition, and expectation. The composition's minimalism and stark contrast reinforce *The Economist's* tone of analytical gravitas. Altogether, the cover encapsulates the cultural and political significance of this royal transition, positioning Charles as both heir to a historic legacy and the figure stepping into a new, possibly uncertain future. This was in line with *The Economist's* traditional visual language, which often relies on symbolic abstraction to comment on complex events. Such abstract imagery invites readers to reflect rather than react emotionally in an overt way. The lack of text, photography, or decorative detail amplified the cover's symbolic nature, placing full emphasis on the monarchy as an institution and on its transition.

týždeň selected a historical photograph of the Queen, one in which she appeared engaged and approachable. The muted color palette and retro aesthetic reinforced a sense of continuity and historic reflection. This cover seemed intended to resonate emotionally with a Central European audience, connecting them to the broader narrative of European monarchy and tradition. The choice of image underscored the Queen's long-standing diplomatic role and her interactions with world leaders, subtly including Slovakia within her sphere of influence. The visual decision to present her in a setting that suggests both formality and approachability helped the audience feel included in a moment of global mourning.

From a semiotic standpoint, several visual elements across the covers reinforced emotional themes:

- **Gaze:** In covers where the Queen's face was visible, her direct or upward gaze projected calm authority and emotional poise. It functioned as a nonverbal signal of connection, strength, and resolve.
- **Color:** Darker backgrounds and muted tones were used to signify mourning, while touches of gold, white, or blue



Figure 1 The Queen. The picture was retrieved on May 27, 2025 - <https://api.time.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Queen-Cover-Final.jpg?quality=85&w=840>



Figure 2 Getting the job done. The picture was retrieved on May 27, 2025 - <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/archive?year=2022>



Figure 3 Into the Carolean era. The picture was retrieved on May 27, 2025 - <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/archive?year=2022>



Figure 4 Kráľovná 20. storočia. The picture was retrieved on May 27, 2025 - <https://static.tyzden.sk/data/media/issues/ab6fb169f64d2ee8e83bd86893a2ad59.jpg>

symbolized dignity, stability, and legacy. These choices were not accidental; they communicated specific cultural associations with grief, leadership, and reflection.

- **Composition:** Centered imagery and symmetrical layouts conveyed balance and reverence, subtly reinforcing the monarch's stabilizing presence in times of uncertainty.

From a semiotic perspective, such visual strategies operate as systems of signification that produce meaning through composition, symbolism, and cultural codes rather than through explicit textual explanation (Barthes, 1977, pp. 38–41). In addition to visual symbolism, the covers reflect each publication's editorial priorities. *Time's* focus on emotive human expression matched its broader tendency to emphasize narrative and personal connection. Its use of portraiture created intimacy. *The Economist's* preference for symbolic abstraction echoed its analytical stance, encouraging contemplation rather than emotional release. *.týždeň's* decision to use an archival photo highlighted its focus on cultural memory and historical continuity, offering a tribute grounded in European experience.

Furthermore, the Queen's visual representation aligned with the archetype of the monarch as a source of unity and permanence. The framing of her image on each cover functioned as a visual metaphor for the role she played in public life. Upright posture, regal attire, and composed facial expressions communicated strength, serenity, and leadership without the need for accompanying text. In this way, visual minimalism served as a powerful editorial tool. By choosing restraint over excess, each magazine reflected its national and institutional character.

Collectively, the covers functioned as cultural artifacts. They preserved a specific moment in time through curated imagery and design. Each one captured a different angle on collective mourning—personalized through *Time*, universalized through *The Economist*, and contextualized nationally through

.týždeň. In doing so, they illustrate how emotionalism can be embedded not only in what is shown but in how it is framed, colored, and symbolized.

These visual strategies worked in tandem with the textual content to create a comprehensive emotional experience. Even in the absence of emotive language, the cover designs themselves served as powerful conveyors of editorial tone, national identity, and collective grief. Through semiotic analysis, we see how emotionalism in journalism can be constructed as much by silence, symbolism, and design as by words and images.

9 Key Findings

Through the comparative analysis of 111 articles across three news magazines, this study identified a range of editorial strategies used to construct emotionalism following the death of Queen Elizabeth II. While the emotional tone varied in intensity and expression, all three publications used a combination of visuals, structure, and subtle language choices to guide readers' emotional engagement.

One of the most prominent findings was the differential use of emotionalism through editorial framing. *Time* emerged as the most emotionally expressive, leveraging high-impact visuals, personal narratives, and reflective editorials to connect readers to the Queen's life and legacy. *Time's* coverage frequently began with vivid descriptions or symbolic headlines and continued with embedded quotes and emotional references, fostering a deeply immersive experience.

.týždeň displayed a blend of informative and reflective content, with a tendency to contextualize events in Slovak or European perspectives. Its emotionalism was often more restrained, surfacing in pieces authored by public figures or moral authorities. This hybrid approach enabled *.týždeň* to maintain journalistic integrity while still engaging with the

emotional weight of the moment. As we have already mentioned, quotations from national leaders, cultural commentators, and religious figures enriched its coverage with a localized emotional context.

The Economist, true to its editorial identity, opted for a more analytical and distanced approach. Yet even within its reserved prose and structured analysis, emotional undertones were detectable. Through symbolic imagery, minimalist headlines, and historical reflection, it crafted a tone of quiet reverence. Its choice of a stark cover with symbolic imagery underscored its commitment to subtlety while still acknowledging the cultural and historical gravity of the Queen's death.

Visuals were found to be powerful carriers of emotion. The strategic use of color, composition, and historical imagery helped each magazine shape its own narrative. *Time* favored bright, high-resolution photography and multimedia; *.týždeň* preferred solemn and archival photos; *The Economist* used abstract visuals to communicate mood. Despite their differences, all three used imagery as a primary means of constructing affective responses.

Headline analysis revealed that while informative structures were most common, emotional and appealing headlines—especially in *Time*—played a crucial role in engaging readers. In contrast, *The Economist* used sparse and succinct titles, while *.týždeň* combined informative styles with occasional emotional or nationalistic expressions, particularly when quoting official figures.

Emotions and affect should be understood not as individual inner states but as socially organized practices that emerge within specific cultural and discursive contexts (Wetherell, 2012, pp. 4–7). This study also showed that emotionalism was more frequently constructed through article structure and editorial selection than through direct expressions of sentiment. This suggests a strategic layering of emotion

within journalistic storytelling, one that aligns with each publication's cultural, political, and professional identity.

Overall, these findings emphasize the importance of editorial tone, national context, and journalistic tradition in shaping how emotionalism is conveyed in media narratives. The presence of emotion was not uniform but emerged through a careful balance of language, visuals, and structure.

10 Conclusion

The coverage of Queen Elizabeth II's death by *Time*, *The Economist*, and *.týždeň* provides a compelling case study in the nuanced construction of emotionalism in journalism. While these publications differ in language, geography, readership, and editorial style, they each engaged in processes of emotional storytelling, whether through evocative visuals, reflective structures, or symbolic cues.

Time employed a rich, multimedia-driven narrative that directly engaged emotions. It drew readers into a shared space of public mourning, memory, and admiration. By doing so, it affirmed its editorial approach centered on human interest, visual engagement, and emotional accessibility. The use of bold visuals and sentimental framing positioned *Time* as the most affectively immediate of the three.

.týždeň presented a balanced editorial voice. Its dual commitment to informative reporting and cultural reflection resulted in a layered emotional landscape. When emotionalism was present, it often came from attributed voices—leaders, intellectuals, and religious figures—rather than from journalists themselves. This created a tone of respectful solemnity, aligning well with the magazine's mission to blend public discourse with civic engagement.

The Economist, while most emotionally reserved, demonstrated that emotionalism need not be overt to be effective.

Through symbolic covers, selective phrasing, and historical retrospection, it conveyed a powerful sense of significance without departing from its traditional analytical format. Its understated tone encouraged readers to reflect rather than react, offering a more contemplative form of emotional engagement.

Together, the three magazines illustrate the diversity of emotional journalism and the editorial decisions that shape it. They highlight how emotion can be constructed through visual design, structural pacing, and narrative framing—even when not explicitly expressed. Emotionalism in journalism, as evidenced here, is not solely about sentimentality; it is about evoking a response that resonates with audience expectations, cultural norms, and the occasion's magnitude.

This analysis underscores the vital role of media in shaping collective emotional experiences during historic events. As journalism continues to evolve in a digital and globalized world, understanding how emotional narratives are constructed, moderated, or amplified becomes essential not only for journalists but also for scholars, media educators, and informed readers.

Furthermore, the study reveals that emotionalism can serve various journalistic purposes—from fostering national solidarity and historical remembrance to reinforcing editorial values and identity. The subtle balance between fact and feeling, between narrative and neutrality, is, based on researched journalistic practice, a defining feature of quality journalism during moments of public grief. As seen in the articles and covers analyzed, the emotional tone is rarely accidental; it is curated and embedded through decisions about imagery, authorship, language, and structure.

In this light, emotionalism is not a weakness or lapse in journalistic integrity, but rather a strategic and often necessary tool in communicating the depth of human experience. Whether through the solemn black crown of *The Economist*, the dignified portrait in *Time*, or the contextual resonance in *.tyždeň*, each magazine made editorial choices that acknowledged the collective emotional weight of the Queen's passing.

Looking forward, continued research into emotional framing in journalism can expand our understanding of how different audiences respond to emotionally charged content and how those responses shape democratic dialogue. It also invites deeper reflection on the responsibilities of the press—not only

to inform, but to help society process and honor moments of global significance.

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List of Figures:

[1] The pictures were retrieved on May 27, 2025, from the following sources:

Picture 1: <https://api.time.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Queen-Cover-Final.jpg?quality=85&w=840>

Picture 2: <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/archive?year=2022>

Picture 3: <https://www.economist.com/weeklyedition/archive?year=2022>

Picture 4: <https://static.tyzden.sk/data/media/issues/ab-6fb169f64d2ee8e83bd86893a2ad59.jpg>

A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF COVID-19: METAPHORS ON MAGAZINE AND JOURNAL COVERS

DAMLA YILDIRIM

Damla Yıldırım is an independent researcher. She holds an MA in Applied Linguistics from the Autonomous University of Madrid and a bachelor's degree in Philosophy from Ankara University. Her research focuses on multimodal discourse, magazine studies, and creative language.

<https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0200-0567>

Corresponding author:

Damla Yıldırım

damla-y@outlook.com

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Abstract

Magazine and journal covers became important sites for communicating the COVID-19 pandemic, conceptualizing complex scientific and social issues in accessible ways. This study examines metaphorical framings of the COVID-19 pandemic on magazine and journal covers published between 2020 and 2024, focusing on how metaphors are constructed through the interaction of visual and verbal modes. The analysis identifies WAR as the most frequent source domain, alongside less frequent domains such as BURDEN and CONTAINER. The results further indicate that metaphors are most frequently realized multimodally, with cover design playing a crucial role in structuring how images and cover lines interact to cue source and target domains. The study highlights the role of multimodality not merely in enhancing rhetorical impact, but also in shaping how metaphorical meaning is created and interpreted within a highly condensed communicative space.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic; magazine covers; journal covers; multimodal metaphor*

1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 pandemic, media discourse played a central role in informing the public, acting as a primary intermediary between scientific knowledge and society (Anwar et al., 2020). Metaphors are widely recognized as powerful tools in science communication, capable of simplifying complex concepts while also shaping how scientific knowledge is interpreted (Kueffer & Larson, 2014). In the context of COVID-19, metaphorical language was widely employed, as it allowed complex and unfamiliar experiences to be understood through more familiar domains (Semino, 2021a).

Previous research on COVID-19 metaphors has primarily focused on political speeches and newspaper cartoons, demonstrating how figurative language shaped collective understandings of the crisis (Asenjo Alcalde & Gil, 2023; Castro Seixas, 2020). While cartoon studies have contributed significantly to the analysis of multimodal metaphor in pandemic discourse, the inclusion of magazine covers within such datasets risks overlooking their distinct communicative functions (Wang, 2021:552). Unlike public service advertisements, which promote protective behaviors (Feng & Wu, 2022), or cartoons, which often rely on humor or critique (Asenjo Alcalde & Gil, 2023; Filardo-Llamas, 2021), covers operate under distinct communicative constraints. They must convey the content of an issue while also reinforcing brand identity and fulfilling marketing functions.

Research on magazine covers within metaphor studies remains relatively limited and has primarily focused on economic and political crises, leaving metaphorical representations of health crises underexplored (Silaski & Durovic, 2017; Tseronis, 2015). Moreover, this gap extends to journal covers, where metaphorical analysis remains limited despite their important role in disseminating scientific knowledge (Wu et al., 2024). In this study, magazine and journal covers are analyzed together as distinct yet comparable communicative

environments. Although they address different audiences, in both contexts the cover provides an initial representation of content and identity. To achieve this, covers rely primarily on visual and verbal modes, which may operate independently or in combination.

Building on this background, the present study aims to identify and analyze the metaphorical framings of the COVID-19 pandemic on magazine and journal covers published between 2020 and 2024. Focusing on covers as a multimodal genre, the study explores how image and verbal text interact within a single page to conceptualize the pandemic across both public-facing and scholarly contexts, highlighting how metaphor contributes to rendering the pandemic more accessible. The study is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are the most frequent metaphorical source domains used to frame COVID-19 and related target domains?

RQ2. Through which modes are metaphors represented on the covers?

RQ3. How is the COVID-19 pandemic conceptualized metaphorically?

2. Theoretical Background

According to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), introduced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980:36), metaphor is a cognitive process through which we understand one domain in terms of another. Metaphors are fundamental to human cognition as we think and act metaphorically (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980:154). Everyday thinking is thus structured by metaphorical concepts that shape how individuals perceive, reason about, and interact with the world.

Metaphor involves a cross-domain mapping between two conceptual domains. This process is captured in the formula *A is B*, where the target domain (A) is understood in terms of the source domain (B). Metaphorical mappings are typically

unidirectional, meaning that properties of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain (Kövecses, 2010:6).

Through this process, familiar and embodied experiences provide a basis for understanding more complex or less tangible phenomena such as argument or time.

Building on CMT, Forceville (2009, 2016) argues that if our thinking is metaphorical, metaphors should also be observable in non-verbal modes such as images, sounds, and gestures. In this framework, a “mode” can be understood as a sign system through which meaning is communicated. Following Forceville (2009), this study distinguishes between monomodal and multimodal metaphors based on how the source and target domains are conveyed. In monomodal metaphors, both the source and the target are conveyed within the same mode, for instance, entirely through language or entirely through images. In contrast, the source and target domains of multimodal metaphors are represented “exclusively or predominantly” in different modes, for instance, when the target is conveyed verbally and the source visually (Forceville, 2009:25). However, in many multimodal metaphors, the source, the target, or both are cued in multiple modes simultaneously (Kövecses, 2010:72).

3. The Genre of Covers

Periodical publications constitute an important form of mediated communication, fulfilling a wide range of social functions, including contributing to public debate, disseminating knowledge, supporting professional communication, and providing both information and leisure (Prior-Miller, 2015). A distinction is commonly drawn between consumer magazines, which address a general readership, and trade or professional publications targeting specific occupational communities (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007; Prior-Miller, 2015). Scholarly journals, in turn, constitute a distinct category, typically comprising peer-reviewed contributions that advance

knowledge within specific academic disciplines (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007; Prior-Miller, 2015).

Within this communicative landscape, covers emerge as visual gateways that condense editorial identity and content into a single, highly structured page. They provide a preview of the publication's content by highlighting major themes, topics, or featured contributions, while also influencing how readers encounter and make sense of what follows. In both magazines and journals, covers foreground what is considered novel and relevant, although this function operates differently across contexts.

Research on magazine covers has come to recognize them as distinct multimodal texts that combine images and text, blending art, editorial content, and marketing strategies aimed at attracting readers (e.g., Held, 2005; Spiker, 2015). Magazine covers typically draw on broader social issues and ongoing trends, targeting a general readership (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007). They guide readers' interpretation of current issues in line with the perspective the publication seeks to promote (Silaski & Durovic, 2017:126). Their role, therefore, extends beyond commercial goals by not only capturing attention but also highlighting particular aspects of a topic and influencing how it is understood.

A comparable development can be observed in scholarly publishing, where journal covers have become increasingly visually oriented. High-prestige journals now frequently feature a visually striking cover image for selected articles, reflecting a relatively recent shift in scientific publishing compared with the long-established use of cover stories in the popular press (Wang et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2024). These covers highlight selected research contributions and function strategically in disseminating scientific knowledge, shaping journal branding, and increasing the visibility of selected articles, particularly in digital publishing environments (Kong & Wang, 2020; Wang et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2024).

As a result, cover design is becoming central to how scientific articles are presented in prestigious and high-impact journals.

Covers do not merely present content but also communicate expectations about how that content should be approached and by whom. Despite differences in audience and institutional context, magazine and journal covers converge in their communicative function: they attract attention, communicate identity, and foreground selected content across both print and digital environments (Kong & Wang, 2020; Spiker, 2015; Wu et al., 2024). Therefore, covers can be understood as a communicative genre in their own right, rather than as a merely decorative feature.

From an analytical perspective, this implies that cover design functions as a structuring factor that shapes the production of meaning. Drawing on the cover typology proposed by Johnson and Prijatelj (2007), cover designs differ in the number and arrangement of images and text, ranging from poster covers (single image, no cover lines) and

all-typographic covers (text-only), to more complex multi-theme layouts combining images and cover lines. These structural differences are not merely formal but determine the semiotic resources available for metaphor identification. As Tseronis (2021) suggests, metaphorical meaning is construed when elements on the cover appear conceptually incongruous, prompting viewers to establish similarities between domains.

Front covers operate primarily through two modes: visual and verbal, which together shape how metaphorical meaning is realised (Silaski & Durovic, 2017). Depending on how these modes are deployed, metaphors may be monomodal, in which both the source and target are conveyed within a single mode, or multimodal, in which meaning is distributed across visual and verbal elements. In some covers,

metaphors may also involve forms of double coding, in which metaphorical mapping is reinforced across both image and text (Tseronis, 2021).

Building on this, the analysis shows that the combination of images and cover lines enables multiple metaphorical framings to coexist within a single cover, particularly in multi-theme covers. For instance, a central image and accompanying texts may draw on different source domains. Figure 1 illustrates this interaction, showing how a multi-theme, one-image cover can simultaneously activate a GAME metaphor visually and a WAR metaphor through a subheadline.

4. Data and Method

4.1. Corpus compilation

The analysis is based on a corpus of 70 magazines and journal covers published between 2020 and 2024 that address the COVID-19 pandemic. The dataset consists predominantly of English-language covers ($n = 69$), with one Swedish example analyzed with the assistance of DeepL Translator. Covers were collected from Google Images and official publication archives, with particular attention to source authenticity. Relevant examples were identified through targeted keyword searches (e.g., "COVID-19 magazine cover," "coronavirus magazine cover," "COVID-19 journal cover") and by systematically filtering official archives by publication date.

Figure 1 *U Magazine*, Fall, 2020.



Following Silaski and Durovic (2017), metaphor identification is treated as dependent on the interaction of visual, verbal, and contextual cues, with the target domain (COVID-19) established prior to analysis. While previous studies of magazine covers have often been able to determine topical relevance based on the cover alone (e.g. Silaski & Durovic, 2017; Tseronis, 2021), this was not always the case in the present corpus. Because virus-like imagery may refer to diseases beyond COVID-19, explicit verbal references (e.g., 'COVID-19', 'coronavirus', 'corona', 'SARS-CoV-2') were used as the primary criterion for corpus selection.

Where the cover alone was insufficient, the issue's content was consulted to confirm relevance. This was particularly important for poster-style covers without text, where the topical focus is not always explicitly stated (see Figure 2). Of the 70 covers analyzed, 52 were confirmed directly through the cover itself, while the remaining 18 were verified by consulting the content of the corresponding issue.

4.2. Method

The study adopts a mixed qualitative–quantitative approach, with a primary focus on qualitative analysis and descriptive use of quantitative measures. The identification of visual, verbal, and multimodal metaphors was guided by previous procedures (Forceville, 2009; Pérez-Sobrino et al., 2021; Šorm & Steen, 2018; Steen et al., 2010). A representation was coded

as metaphorical when a cross-domain mapping could be established between a more concrete or embodied source domain and a more abstract or complex target domain.

Metaphors were classified as verbal (both domains cued verbally), visual (both domains cued visually), or multimodal (domains distributed across modes). All coding was conducted manually by the author.

Each cover was first examined holistically to establish its overall meaning by describing images and cover lines. Target domains were identified primarily through explicit verbal cues and images, excluding unrelated text (e.g., headlines about other topics). To ensure consistency in identifying visual representations of the coronavirus, this study adopts the CDC's (2020) illustration of SARS-CoV-2 as the primary visual reference (see Figure 3 below). Characterized by its spherical form and protruding spike proteins, this image serves as a baseline for recognizing visual depictions of the virus across covers. Verbal references to the virus include words and expressions such as 'corona', 'coronavirus', 'Omicron', 'SARS-CoV-2', and 'virus,' which explicitly cue the target domain. Abstract phenomena such as COVID-19 as a disease, the pandemic, long COVID, and lockdown do not have conventional visual representations within the scope of this study and were therefore identified through verbal cues, typically appearing in headlines or subheadings.

Target domains were classified into the following categories: the virus itself (CORONAVIRUS, SPREAD OF CORONAVIRUS, EVOLUTION OF CORONAVIRUS VARIANTS, CONTROLLING CORONAVIRUS); the disease (COVID-19, CONTROLLING

COVID-19, RECOVERING FROM COVID-19, LONG COVID); the pandemic as a broader event (PANDEMIC); government interventions (LOCKDOWN); and health-related efforts (VACCINE, VACCINATION, FINDING A VACCINE, HEALTH CARE WORKER). Source domains were identified

Figure 2 *The New Yorker Magazine*, March 2020.



through non-literal elements in visual and/or verbal representations. These were grouped under broader conceptual domains such as WAR, JOURNEY, GAME/RACE/SPORTS, NATURAL ENTITY/DISASTER/FORCE, BURDEN, CONTAINER, and OBJECT. Some source domains are grouped together because they share a common underlying conceptual structure. For instance, GAME, RACE, and SPORTS are grouped as they all frame the pandemic in terms of competition and rule-governed activity. Similarly, NATURAL ENTITY, DISASTER, and FORCE are grouped together as they conceptualize the pandemic as a non-human phenomenon, emphasizing its externality and scale.

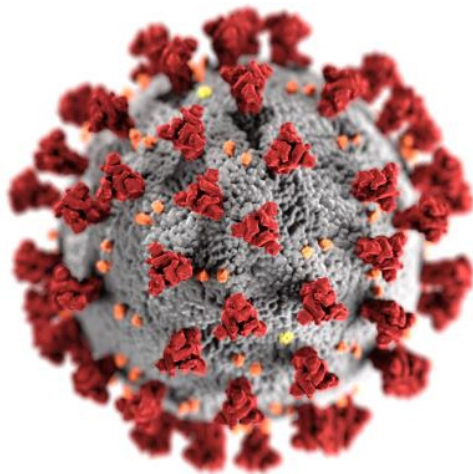


Figure 3 Illustration of coronavirus created at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Credit: CDC, Eckert, A. (MSMI) & Higgins, D. (MAMS) (2020).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1. Metaphoric source domains

As shown in Figure 4, WAR emerges as the dominant source domain, appearing 24 times across the corpus. Metaphors drawn from the RACE, GAME and SPORTS domain ($n = 20$) follow closely, framing the pandemic as a competitive process governed by speed and skill, shifting the emphasis from heroic struggle to coordination and strategy.

NATURAL FORCE, DISASTER and ENTITY ($n = 15$), including storms, floods, fires, as well as animals and plants, are also prominent, representing the pandemic as part of the natural world and positioning it as external to human society. JOURNEY metaphors ($n = 10$) conceptualize the pandemic as a process unfolding over time, marked by obstacles, stages, and milestones.

Less frequent but still significant are metaphors drawn from the domains of BURDEN ($n = 6$), OBJECT ($n = 4$), and CONTAINER ($n = 3$), each contributing additional perspectives to the pandemic's overall metaphorical framing. OBJECT metaphors conceptualize the coronavirus and responses to it through concrete artefacts or tools, such as an emergency alarm, umbrella, telescope, or hiking pole. BURDEN metaphors conceptualize the crisis as a weight that must be carried or endured, highlighting the strain placed on individuals

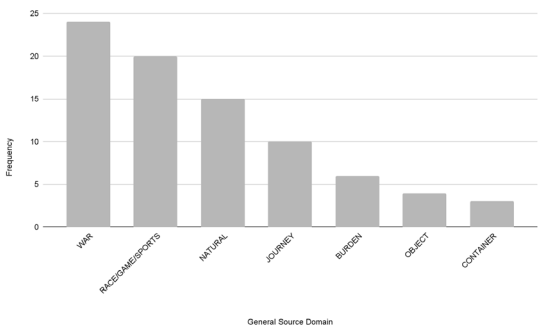


Figure 4 Distribution of general source domains.

and societies. Finally, CONTAINER metaphors translate abstract public-health measures into embodied experiences of confinement and boundary.

5.2. Distribution of metaphors across modes

Figure 5 illustrates the distribution of metaphors across multimodal, monomodal verbal, and monomodal visual realizations. Multimodal metaphors clearly dominate the corpus (n = 50), typically involving visual representations paired with metaphorical headlines or taglines that reinforce or clarify the conceptual framing. By comparison, monomodal visual (n = 17) and monomodal verbal metaphors (n = 15) occur with similar frequency.

The predominance of multimodal metaphors reflects the communicative constraints of covers, which must condense complex issues into a limited and visually engaging space.

Within this setting, cover design emerges as a key structuring factor. Drawing on the typology proposed by Johnson and Prijatel (2007), the type of cover shapes how metaphors can be realized by determining the number and arrangement of images and verbal texts available for interpretation. Visuals, particularly when combined with text, are more persuasive than text alone. As a result, this enhances the rhetorical impact of covers while increasing reader engagement (Silaski & Durovic, 2017; Wu et al., 2024). This interaction is also central to metaphor identification, as verbal elements can guide, clarify, or reinforce the metaphorical mapping suggested by the image.

From this perspective, different cover types enable distinct forms of metaphor realization. Covers combining images and text tend to facilitate multimodal metaphors, whereas poster-style covers consisting solely of imagery primarily support visual metaphors, and all-typographic covers restrict metaphor realization to the verbal mode. At the same time,

multi-theme covers introduce a further layer of complexity. In these covers, the relationship between image and text is not always aligned: while a main headline may reinforce the image’s metaphor, additional cover lines can introduce metaphors drawn from different source domains. As a result, a single cover may simultaneously evoke multiple conceptualizations of the same issue.

5.3. Examples of COVID-19 pandemic covers

The New York Times Magazine is a long-running Sunday supplement of The New York Times newspaper, targeting a broad readership with news and current affairs content. It is known for its long-form journalism and visually distinctive covers that address major social and global issues. The cover of its July 19, 2020, issue provides a clear example of a monomodal verbal WAR metaphor (see Figure 6). Although the cover image depicts a fatigued health care worker, the metaphorical framing is activated verbally through the headline “Why We’re Losing the Battle with COVID-19,” which explicitly represents COVID-19 as an enemy. The subheadline reinforces this metaphor by stating that the escalating crisis in Texas suggests the United States could have “the worst coronavirus response in the developed world,” linking the idea of losing the battle to shortcomings in the national response. As shown in prior research, militaristic metaphors play a central role in

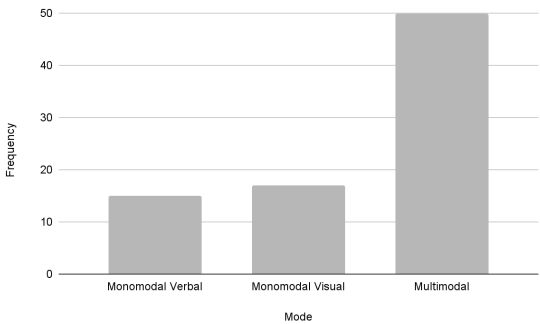


Figure 5 Distribution of metaphors across modes.

structuring public understandings of COVID-19, particularly in political discourse, where they are used to mobilize citizens, legitimize extraordinary measures, and foster resilience (Castro Seixas, 2020). In contrast, the metaphorical framing on this cover shifts the emphasis from mobilization to vulnerability, drawing attention to the perceived shortcomings of the pandemic response. In doing so, the metaphor frames the pandemic not as a conflict that will necessarily be overcome, but as a struggle in which institutions and public health systems are under severe strain.

Allergy, the official journal of the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology (EAACI), is an international peer-reviewed journal that publishes research in allergy and clinical immunology, targeting healthcare professionals and researchers. The March 2021 issue cover depicts a scene in which the coronavirus is anthropomorphized, that is, given human-like qualities or agency, and positioned as an opponent in a card game against a masked medical professional (see Figure 7). The headline “COVID-19” anchors the visual scene to the pandemic context.

The metaphor is visually activated by the depiction of a game setting in which both the virus and the scientist appear to be players. The coronavirus is represented with human-like facial features and posture, suggesting intentionality and agency. As Forceville (2009) notes, personification constitutes an

important type of multimodal metaphor, allowing non-human or abstract entities to be understood in terms of human characteristics such as agency and intentionality. In this case, the virus is represented as an intelligent adversary participating in a game against scientific expertise. By portraying the coronavirus as a game opponent, the cover reinforces the idea that the virus can plan and counter human efforts, much like an intelligent rival.

The cards placed on the table depict elements associated with scientific research, including antibodies, genetic material, and medical treatments, while the scientist holds a card showing a syringe, symbolizing vaccination. Through this arrangement, the cover metaphorically frames the pandemic as a contest between scientific intervention and the evolving virus. The metaphor CORONAVIRUS IS A GAME PLAYER therefore conceptualizes the crisis as a calculated interaction between competing forces, in which scientific knowledge and medical innovation function as the human player’s strategic moves against a responsive opponent.

The Guardian Weekly is an international news magazine published by The Guardian, offering a curated selection of reporting and commentary. The cover of the April 24, 2020, issue exemplifies an all-typographic cover design (Johnson & Prijatel, 2007) using bold typography (see Figure 8). The word “LOCKDOWN,” rendered in large, stacked black

Figure 6 *The New York Times Magazine*, July 19, 2020, depicting COVID-19 IS AN ENEMY metaphor.



Figure 7 *Allergy*, Vol. 76, Issue 3, March 2021, depicting CORONAVIRUS IS A GAME PLAYER metaphor.



letters that occupy nearly the entire cover, visually creates a sense of compression and enclosure.

The typographic arrangement constrains visual space, producing a sense of confinement that echoes the experience of lockdown. The red, slanted overlay “HOW DO WE BREAK OUT OF IT?” introduces a contrasting visual dynamic. By cutting diagonally across the rigid black structure, the text evokes urgency and signals a desire to disrupt or escape the imposed constraints. The design thus creates a visual tension between containment and rupture.

This tension activates the metaphor LOCKDOWN IS A PRISON, an instance of the CONTAINER metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lockdown is conceptualized as a bounded and restrictive space analogous to imprisonment, from which individuals seek release. The metaphor highlights the experiential distinction between “inside” and “outside,” reinforcing perceptions of social restriction and limited mobility, and representing lockdown as a spatial condition that constrains movement and agency.

Nature Immunology is a peer-reviewed journal that addresses advances in immunological research, targeting scientists and healthcare professionals in the field. The February 2024 cover illustrates the metaphor CORONAVIRUS IS A BURDEN, visually capturing the prolonged impact of the virus beyond the acute phase of infection (see Figure 9). The imagery corresponds with the issue's theme, “Immune dysregulation in long COVID,” linking biological dysfunction to the experience of enduring, persistent effects.

The cover depicts a solitary human figure straining to drag a colossal red coronavirus particle resembling the widely circulated CDC visualization of SARS-CoV-2. The dramatic disparity in scale between the small human silhouette and the oversized virus creates a form of visual hyperbole that amplifies the sense of disproportionate weight and effort. Rather

than presenting the virus as an immediate biological threat, the image illustrates it as an overwhelming load that must be carried and managed over time.

The act of pulling the virus foregrounds exertion and endurance, suggesting that long COVID involves a prolonged struggle rather than a clearly bounded episode of illness. In this way, the cover simplifies a complex immunological condition into an accessible visual message, conceptualizing long COVID as an ongoing process of bearing the lasting consequences of infection rather than overcoming a single, discrete adversary.

6. Discussion

The findings highlight the communicative importance of magazine and journal covers as a distinctive site of multimodal meaning-making in media discourse, guiding audiences toward particular ways of understanding salient issues and developments at a given moment.

Through the strategic combination of visual and verbal elements, covers shape how the main story is understood (Tseronis, 2015). Within this constrained yet impactful format, metaphor emerges as a particularly effective figurative device, enabling the rendering of abstract and complex phenomena, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, more accessible.

Figure 8 *The Guardian Weekly*, Vol. 202, No. 19, 24 April 2020, depicting LOCKDOWN IS A PRISON metaphor.



The findings suggest that magazine and journal cover employ broadly similar metaphorical framings to conceptualize the COVID-19 pandemic. The prominence of the WAR domain aligns with previous research on COVID-19 metaphors (Crespo-Fernández, 2021; Feng & Wu, 2022). Across the corpus, WAR metaphors are realized through both verbal expressions (e.g., fighting, frontline, battle) and visual references to military imagery. Closely related representations portray the virus as an opponent or enemy (Asenjo Alcalde & Gil, 2023; Feng & Wu, 2022), reinforcing the perception of the virus as an autonomous agent capable of attacking, spreading strategically, or responding to human actions (Crespo-Fernández, 2021:24; Kremer & Felgenhauer, 2022:7). Such representations often rely on personification, a type of ontological metaphor in which nonhuman entities are conceptualized in terms of human characteristics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

RACE, GAME, and SPORTS metaphors frame the pandemic response in terms of competition, speed, and strategic action, particularly regarding vaccine development, often described as a “vaccine race” (Pedrini, 2021). Visually, this metaphorical framing appears through imagery associated with stopwatches, hourglasses, play, and athletic competition, reinforced by verbal expressions such as sprint, rush, racing, and winning, which frame the pandemic not only as a contest against the virus, but as a time-sensitive process in which delay carries significant consequences. JOURNEY

Figure 9 *Nature Immunology*, February 2024, Vol.25 No.2, depicting CORONAVIRUS IS A BURDEN metaphor.



metaphors similarly introduce a temporal dimension, emphasizing endurance, unpredictability, and the absence of a clearly defined endpoint, while still implying the possibility of eventual movement toward resolution.

Metaphors drawing on natural entities, disasters, and forces often frame the pandemic in terms of non-human phenomena that appear external to human society, such as storms, floods, and wildfires, thereby emphasizing the urgency of societal and governmental response (Charteris-Black, 2021:74). These metaphors are realized through images of virus-filled waves or natural elements reimagined as coronavirus particles. The WAVE metaphor, widely used to describe successive rises in infection rates (Charteris-Black, 2021:79), reinforces the perception of the pandemic as an external force beyond human control. In contrast, the FIRE source domain foregrounds a form of controllable threat, as fires can be contained or mitigated through coordinated action, underscoring the role of collective response (Semino, 2021b). Similarly, representations that conceptualize the virus as a living organism further reintroduce human agency, for instance, when controlling the virus is represented as taming an animal, suggesting that the threat can be managed.

Another notable finding of the present study is the presence of CONTAINER and BURDEN metaphors, which have received comparatively less attention in previous research on COVID-19 metaphors. BURDEN metaphors shift attention from action and confrontation to endurance, representing the virus as a prolonged weight borne by individuals and societies.

Rather than depicting an external enemy, these metaphors emphasize the cumulative physical and emotional toll of a sustained crisis. In the corpus, this is visually realized through representations of the virus and its long-term effects as heavy objects to be carried, pulled, or pushed. Human figures are shown struggling to drag oversized coronavirus particles

or support them with ropes, reinforcing the sense of ongoing strain and effort.

CONTAINER metaphors, in turn, spatialize restriction by representing lockdown as enclosure, translating abstract public-health measures into lived experiences of boundedness and limited movement. In this corpus, this source domain is consistently mapped onto the target domain of lockdown rather than the virus itself, shifting attention away from action and response toward conditions of restricted mobility and limited agency. This framing foregrounds the inside-outside distinction, in which being “inside” is associated with safety, containment, or obligation, while the “outside” is rendered inaccessible, restricted, or potentially dangerous. Visually, this is realized through imagery that emphasizes enclosure and blocked movement, such as figures positioned within closed or partially sealed spaces, or exit routes obstructed by the virus. In doing so, these metaphors not only represent physical restriction but also evoke the social and psychological dimensions of lockdown, including isolation, separation, and the disruption of everyday spatial routines.

7. Conclusion

Magazine and journal cover emerge from this study as distinct yet comparable multimodal sites where the COVID-19 pandemic is framed and interpreted through metaphors. While covers primarily serve a commercial and editorial function by attracting attention and summarizing the theme of an issue, they also play an important role in shaping how major events are conceptualized. The findings demonstrate that covers frequently employ metaphors to translate complex and abstract aspects of the pandemic into more familiar and emotionally resonant representations. They also indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic is conceptualized through a range of metaphors, with WAR as the dominant, while BURDEN and CONTAINER point to less widely

discussed ways of framing the pandemic, foregrounding experiences of endurance and restriction.

The findings indicate that the use of covers for presenting content is not limited to popular magazines but has become increasingly prevalent in scholarly journal publishing (Wang et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2024). Despite the differences between magazines and journals, their covers rely on similar design elements, including images, headlines, cover lines, and typographic arrangements, that perform comparable communicative functions. Across both publication types of these elements are used to convey key aspects of the pandemic before readers engage with the issue’s content.

A further contribution to this study concerns the role of cover design in shaping the realization of metaphors. The arrangement of image and cover lines constrains the semiotic resources available for interpretation and influences whether metaphors are expressed visually, verbally, or across modes. In this sense, cover design operates not as a neutral container but as an active contributor to the construction of metaphorical meaning.

Importantly, the analysis reveals that a single cover can incorporate multiple metaphorical mappings, drawing on different source domains in both the image and the cover lines.

Taken together, these findings suggest that covers do not merely reflect public discourse on global crises but actively participate in shaping how such crises are conceptualized across different communicative contexts. The study highlights a shared visual communication strategy across public-facing magazines and journals, positioning cover design as a key site where complex societal and scientific developments are interpreted and given meaning. Future research could extend this analysis by examining metaphorical framings on covers across languages and cultural contexts to

explore potential cross-cultural differences in the multimodal representation of global health crises.

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Appendix

For copyright reasons, images of the original magazine and journal covers are not included in this article. The data analysis, including the URLs of all covers, is available via an Open Science Framework (OSF) repository and will be made public upon completion of the peer review process.