

Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the covid-19 pandemic: a semiotic approach

Lógicas da propagação da informação e da desinformação no contexto da pandemia de covid-19: abordagem semiótica

CONRADO MOREIRA MENDES^a

Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais, Pós-graduação em Comunicação Social.
Belo Horizonte – MG, Brazil.

GEANE CARVALHO ALZAMORA^b

Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação Social.
Belo Horizonte – MG, Brazil.

ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of research that investigated the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts propagated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through exploratory research and subsequent preparation of the *corpus*, the investigation sought to understand the transmedia dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, launched in the *Combate ao Coronavírus* Brazilian TV show (Rede Globo), and understand how the propagation of disinformation was constituted in this context. Based on the analysis of the *corpus* in dialogue with discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics, a model is proposed that theorizes about the logics of propagation of information and disinformation.

Keywords: propagation of information, propagation of disinformation, COVID-19, discursive semiotics, sociosemiotics

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta resultados de pesquisa que investigou as dinâmicas de propagação e a construção de sentido de textos propagados no contexto da pandemia de covid-19. A partir de pesquisa exploratória e posterior configuração do *corpus*, procurou-se compreender a dinâmica transmídia da propagação e a construção de sentido de textos (visuais, verbais e sincréticos) relacionados à hashtag #perguntacorona, lançada no

^a Coordinator (2022-2024) and permanent professor of the Programa de Pós-graduação em Comunicação Social at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais. Post-doctorate in Social Communication from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (2021). PhD in Semiotics and General Linguistics from the Universidade de São Paulo (2013), having completed a one-year doctoral internship at the Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis, France (2011-2012). Adjunct Professor III of the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (PUC-MG), working in the Departamento de Comunicação Social. Researching member of the Centro de Pesquisas Sociossemióticas of Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo, and leader of the Mídia, Interação & Sentido research group (PPGCOM PUC Minas), which is part of the Semiótica, Interações e Materialidades Midiáticas research network. Researcher of the Fundo de Incentivo à Pesquisa de Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais (FIP Process 2023/28996). Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3721-8578> E-mail: conradomendes@yahoo.com.br

^b Associate Professor at the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (Departamento de Comunicação Social), productivity scholar of Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq) (process: 312279/2022-1), researcher of the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de Minas Gerais (Fapemig) (process: PPM-00562-18), member of the permanent faculty of the Programa de Pós-graduação em Comunicação Social at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, coordinator of the Núcleo de Assessoramento de Pesquisa (NAPq) of Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas of the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, leader of the Mídia, Semiótica e Pragmatismo – Mediação research group (CNPq), which is part of the Semiótica, Interações e Materialidades Midiáticas research network. Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2994-8308>. E-mail: geanealzamora@ufmg.br

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programa de televisão *Combate ao Coronavírus* (Rede Globo), e entender como se constitui a propagação da desinformação nesse contexto. A partir da análise do *corpus* em diálogo com a semiótica discursiva e a sociosemiótica, propõe-se um modelo que teoriza sobre as lógicas de propagação da informação e da desinformação.

Palavras-chave: Propagação da informação, propagação da desinformação, covid-19, semiótica discursiva, sociosemiótica

THIS ARTICLE PRESENTS results of postdoctoral research that studied the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of these texts propagated in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, in which there was a major increase in the dissemination of fake news and similar items. According to Jenkins et al. (2014, p. 26), the terms *propagating*, *propagable* and *propagability* refer to the publics' – technical and cultural – potential of sharing content. In the context of this transmedia and sharing culture, the COVID-19 pandemic was characterized by that which the World Health Organization (WHO) called infodemic, that is, “too much information including false or misleading information in digital and physical environments during a disease outbreak,” in this case about the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the new coronavirus (Alzamora et al., 2021, p. 18).

Such context is deeply marked by what Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) called informational disorder, related to the large-scale circulation of problematic or dubious information, including *disinformation*, *misinformation*, and *malinformation*. According to the authors, disinformation refers to information fabricated and distributed intentionally to harm or mislead a person, social group or organization, while misinformation is not intended to cause harm. In turn, malinformation is used to harm a person, social group or organization, even if such malinformation is true. Therefore, the semantic universe of informational disorder that characterizes the COVID-19 infodemic is much broader than the notion of fake news as an antithesis inferred from true news.

According to Alzamora (2020), based on Allcott and Gentzkow (2017) and Wardle and Derakhshan (2017),

[...] the production, distribution and circulation of fake news is not a recent phenomenon [...] nor easy to classify, as it comprises a myriad of informational manifestations [such as] manipulation of informational context, fabrication of connections between events, and production of misleading content (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2).

According to Alzamora (2020), the novelty in relation to the distribution of these news – also understood as informational disorder – is the transmedia

dynamics that extends their reach: “It is a type of news that often employs technological resources in its production, involves a multiplatform distribution strategy, and achieves massive circulation through social and algorithmic action coordinated in a network” (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2). According to the author, the circulation of fake news “is boosted by the social engagement produced around the common belief mediated by the news, even if it is clearly fake” (Alzamora, 2020, p. 2).

Therefore, according to Alzamora et al. (2021, p. 18):

The infodemic indicates the definitive transition from the information society – characterized by the advancement of information technologies in the 20th century, which gave rise to the networked society (Castells, 1999) – to the disinformation society. This is characterized by the rise of fake news as an endemic phenomenon of the information society (Marshall, 2017).

For studying this phenomenon, the chosen empirical evidence consisted of texts propagated on the Twitter network (posts, contents from links, users, and other hashtags) related to the hashtag #perguntacorona (that means, in English, both #askaquestioncorona and #questioncorona). This hashtag was created by the Globo TV network in the *Combate ao Corona Vírus* (*Combat against Coronavirus*) TV show, hosted by journalist Marcio Gomes, after the channel changed its programming schedule, starting to emphasize news on the theme, due to the advance of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil. Launched in the show, which aired from March 17 to May 22, 2020, the hashtag was aimed at encouraging Internet users to send questions about the pandemic through online social networks so they could be answered during the show. The hashtag #perguntacorona featured among Twitter’s trending topics (TT) from March 19 to May 1, 2020. The collection was carried out between January 26, 2020, the first occurrence related to the coronavirus on the Brazilian Twitter, and June 21, 2020, one month after the end of the aforementioned TV show.

The dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of these texts were analyzed based on the theoretical-methodological concepts of the discursive semiotics of Algirdas Julien Greimas (Greimas & Courtés, 2008; Fiorin, 2006) and of the socio-semiotics of Eric Landowski. As for the first, we considered the discursive semantics of the generative path of meaning and, as to the second, the interaction and meaning regimes (Landowski, 2014), the propagation regimes (Fechine, 2019) and the discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013). The question that guided the research was: how was the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona effected and, more generally, how was the propagation of disinformation constituted?



Ultimately, the following question arises: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, information?

It should be said that approaching the phenomenon of disinformation from the perspective of discursive semiotics is justified, firstly, by the recent proposal of Fechine (2019) for studying the propagation in online social networks, which proved useful to understand the logics of propagation of information and disinformation in this study. Secondly, we highlight the still current relevance of the Greimasian concept of veridiction contract, that is, “a more or less stable balance arising from an implicit agreement between the two actors of the communication structure” (Greimas, 2014, p. 117) for approaching disinformation as a contemporary phenomenon¹.

¹ In this regard, Ribeiro et al. (2022) demonstrate that belief is one of the main supports of disinformation.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The research whose results are presented here was part of a larger project, titled “Dinâmica transmídia de notícias sobre coronavírus” (“Transmedia Dynamics of Coronavirus News”)². In this context, the research data were collected by researchers from the Mídia, Semiótica e Pragmatismo – MediaAção (Media, Semiotics and Pragmatism Research Group), according to the procedures transcribed below.

² This research, in turn, is linked to two research projects, both coordinated by Prof. Dr. Geane Alzamora: “A dinâmica transmídia de notícias falsas sobre ciências: jornalismo e educação” [The transmedia dynamics of fake news about sciences: journalism and education], carried out in the Institute of Advanced Transdisciplinary Studies of UFMG, and “A lógica comunicacional da dinâmica transmídia: produção e circulação de fluxos informacionais em jornalismo e educação” [The communicational logic of the transmedia dynamics: production and circulation of informational flows in journalism and education], with a research scholarship from CNPq (Process 311914/2016)

By means of exploratory research on the theme, through the collection of hahstags that featured in Twitter’s trending topics (TT) from January 26, 2020 (the date of the first occurrence related to the new coronavirus in Brazil, according to our data collection) to June 21, 2020, we elected as an empirical focus of investigation the forms of mediation established on Twitter by the hashtag #perguntacorona, due to its transmedia nature and informative purpose concerning the pandemic. (Alzamora et al., 2021, p. 16).

The automatic collection of #perguntacorona was carried out by adapting scripts from the Twitterscrapper project and extracting data from *tweets* that used it. The collection retrieved about 5,100 *tweets* from March 17 to June 20, 2020. This period includes the initial broadcast of the informative TV show until the end date of the collection, about one month after the TV show stopped being broadcast. [...] We prepared the *corpus* by cross-examining some of these metadata. The main cross-examinations were the following: image urls x url count; links x link count; hashtags within a tweet x hashtag count; mentions of users x mention count (Góis & Alzamora, 2021, p. 28).

Thus, the collected data were divided into four categories: (1) posts (visual, verbal or verbal-visual/syncretic texts); (2) links; (3) other hashtags; (4) users

related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. This empirical material served as the basis for studying the propagation of texts (visual, verbal and syncretic) that circulated through the hashtag #perguntacorona and their relation with disinformation.

Then, the research sought to understand the dynamics of propagation – understood as a transmedia dynamics³ – and the construction of meaning of texts related to such hashtag and understand how the propagation of disinformation is constituted. To this end, the corpus was divided into the ten most shared elements of each category. Thus, we analyzed: the ten most shared posts (visual, verbal or syncretic texts) referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the content of the ten shared links referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the ten most shared hashtags referring to the hashtag #perguntacorona; the ten main users related to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

This *corpus* was analyzed based on the theoretical-methodological path presented below. Firstly, we observed themes and figures of the four categories of the *corpus*. Then, the thematic and figurative paths were traced in order to establish isotopies (recurrence of semic traits scattered throughout the discourse that give it a reading plan) of the *corpus*. The survey enabled categorizing the propagation of the contents based on the propagation regimes proposed by Fecine (2019): *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention*, presented in the following section. As a result, relations were established between the interaction and meaning regimes with those constructed discursively between enunciator and enunciatee, in order to understand how they constitute interactions with a greater or lesser degree of transitivity, through the hashtag #perguntacorona. This theoretical-methodological path, based on a semiotic approach, investigated the propagation of information and disinformation in the context under analysis.

³That which involves a media setting, online or offline and that “establishes provisions and configures ways of acting through the network that constitutes it” (Alzamora et al., 2017, p. 69, our translation).

MEANING, INTERACTION AND PROPAGATION

As indicated, the theoretical framework of this research is supported by the discursive semiotics of Algirdas Julien Greimas (Greimas & Courtés, 2008), the developments of the sociosemiotics of Eric Landowski (2014), and the semiotic approach to propagation proposed by Yvana Fecine (2019). The theoretical elements are presented in the same order in which the corpus of this research is analyzed. Thus, firstly, we present the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy (Greimas & Courtés, 2008; Fiorin, 2006; Fecine, 2019); then, we present the interaction and meaning regimes (Landowski, 2014), the propagation regimes (Fecine, 2019), and, finally, the theoretical model of discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013).



The presentation of the operative concepts of the research begins by the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy, which refer to the discursive semantics of the generative trajectory of meaning, whose synthesis is presented in the following table:

Table 1
Generative trajectory of meaning

	Syntactic component		Semantic component
Semionarrative structures	Deep level	Fundamental syntax	Fundamental semantics
	Surface level	Narrative syntax	Narrative semantics
Discursive structures	Discursive syntax		Discursive semantics
	Discursivization (actorialization, temporalization, spatialization)		Thematization Figuratization

Note. Adapted from Greimas and Courtés (2008, p. 235).

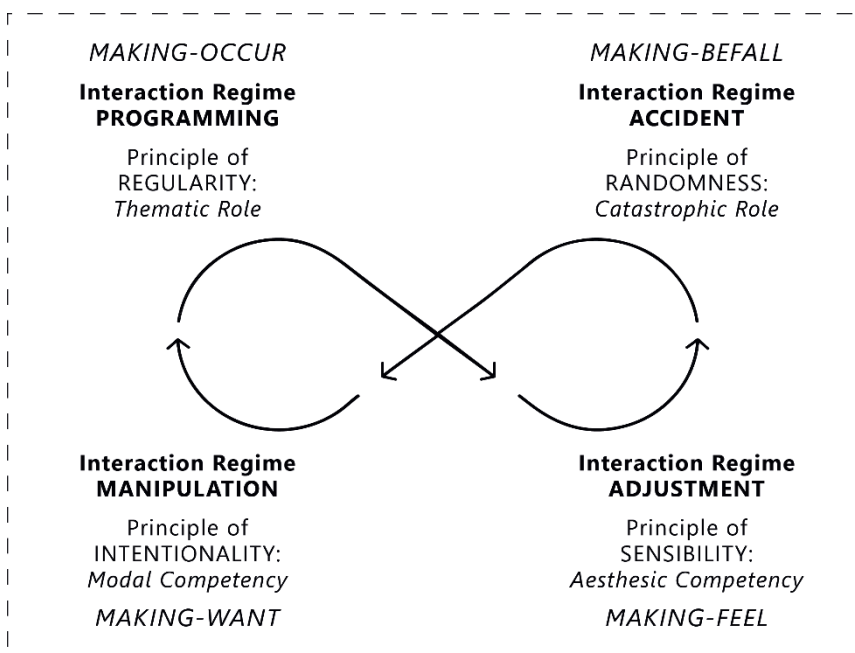
According to Fiorin (2006, p. 90), narrative schemes, when converted to the discursive level, will necessarily be thematized and, when they receive figurative investment, are figurativized. The concept of figure is a semantic element that refers to the natural world, that is, “it is all content of any natural language or any system of representation that has a perceptible correspondent in the natural world” (Fiorin, 2006, p. 91). The theme is a semantic element of an abstract, conceptual nature: “themes are categories that organize, categorize, order the elements of the natural world” (Fiorin, 2006, p. 91).

Themes and figures are disseminated in the discourse so as to form thematic and/or figurative paths. A thematic path links themes that, together, allow the construction of a thematic coherence; similarly, a figurative path groups figures that, in the same way, have the same thematic basis. Thus, a text is given coherence by the reiteration of semic traits (thematic or figurative) so as to result in a reading plan, which, in semiotics, is called isotopy: “the recurrence of semic categories, whether thematic (abstract) or figurative [concrete]” (Greimas & Courtés, 2008, p. 275). Therefore, the isotopy establishes a mode of reading the text as a function of the semantic recurrence disseminated in such text. It is worth saying that, depending on the various thematic and figurative paths of a text, it is common to find pluriisotopic texts, that is, with more than one possibility of reading. According to Fechine (2019, p. 36), memes, for example, have a pluriisotopic character par excellence, because “a meme is only a meme in relation to another meme with which it maintains some isotopic connector, that is, a common connecting element through which the relation between them is established and recognized.”

Next, we present the interaction and meaning regimes and the propagation regimes. In order to explain the production of meaning in and through

interaction, Landowski (2014) conceived a general syntax of interaction, that is, a comprehensive theoretical model capable of explaining the meaning production mechanisms of all forms of interaction. Such general syntax consists of four interaction and meaning regimes: *programming*, *manipulation*, *adjustment*, and *accident*. Such regimes are supported, respectively, on the principles of regularity, intentionality, sensitivity and randomness. Figure 1 below illustrates, in the form of an ellipse, the positions of each interaction and meaning regime.

Figure 1
Interaction and Meaning Regimes



Note. Adapted from Landowski (2014, p. 80).

Based on the interactional syntax of Landowski (2014), Yvana Fechine (2019) proposes a model for studying the propagation in digital social networks. The author is premised on the concept of “propagating,” “propagability,” “propagable media,” as employed by Jenkins et al. (2014), that is:

[...] modes of circulation of media content supported by the filters, procedures, motivations and dispositions of the public to participate in a collaborative production provided by Internet platforms and applications that came to be known as Web 2.0. In this cultural and technological setting, corporate logics and practices of the

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private market coexist with others that are collective, voluntary and non-profit in the midst of tensions and a very tenuous demarcation of the boundaries between them (Fechine, 2019, p. 23, our translation).

Based on research on the propagation of memes on the digital social network Facebook, Fechine (2019)⁴ proposes an interactional syntax – according to the logic of the semiotic square and of the Landowskian “elliptical square,” which are interdefined through relations of contrariety, contradiction and implication – composed of the following propagation regimes⁵: *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation*, and *invention*⁶. Such regimes are homologous, respectively, to the programming, manipulation, adjustment and accident regimes. In Figure 2 below, these relations are shown in a schematic manner:

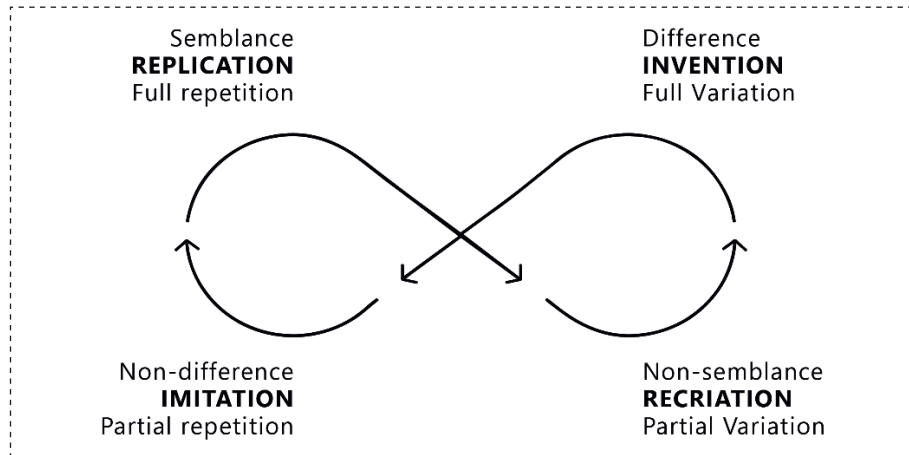
⁴It should be said that, although Fechine (2019) has postulated a syntax of propagation considering online social networks, such proposition dialogues with phenomena related to intertextuality and interdiscursivity, whose study and development are prior to the existence of such networks.

⁵Although Fechine (2019, p. 33) designates the terms *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention* as “propagation categories,” we prefer to call them “propagation regimes.”

This choice is not only terminological, but carries with it implications. That is because, firstly, the propagation regimes are interdefinable and homologous, term by term, to the interaction and meaning regimes. Secondly, a regime, in sociosemiotics, is a kind of *locus* in which interactional processes take place. Thus, within each regime, interactional processes with their own characteristics are developed.

⁶The idea of the terms *replication*, *imitation*, *recreation* and *invention* can be traced back to Ferdinand de Saussure and Gabriel Tarde.

Figure 2
Propagation regimes



Note. Fechine (2019, p. 33).

According to the author, replication is the most primary form of sharing: “it consists in the exercise of disseminating, ‘spreading,’ ‘passing on’ a certain text from the internet [...] without any other agency on the content other than the sharing itself” (Fechine, 2019, p. 40). Such regime implies a form of propagation in which the change in content is considered minimal. Replication is homologous to the interactional regime of programming, which is based on the principle of regularity. Thus, users who share or transmit certain content do so based on predicted and/or predictable behaviors of social networks.

Imitation, in turn, is based on a relation of no difference in relation to the generative form. Fechine (2019, p. 41) argues that “It is the mode of propagation of memes par excellence.” Imitation corresponds to a varied repetition, that is, it corresponds to the modification of a pre-existing text to different extents. From the point of view of content, they are reinterpretations around the same discursive topic or theme addressed by a given text. According to the author, imitation, as it is homologous to the manipulation regime, implies a oriented doing, that is, the recipient of a certain text, by imitating it, is placed as a participant in a hierarchical relation in which the sender occupies a higher level. Thus, in the case of imitation, the theme of the text that generated it is maintained with a degree of modification.

Recreation is a propagation regime that, according to Fechine (2019, p. 49), “involves a thematic or figurative variation of the second degree.” In other words, recreation promotes variations on texts that have already undergone variations. This means that, in the case of recreation, there is greater transformation in relation to the theme of the generating text. According to the author, this propagation regime “depends on a set of allusions, implicit or explicit, to the imitated forms” (Fechine, 2019, p. 49). Thus, recreation requires that netizens have prior knowledge, because the recreated form can only be recognized based on this knowledge. Therefore, just as in adjustment, recreation implies a doing together, that is, a constant game of updating the encyclopedic knowledge of both the one who recreates and of the one who recognizes the recreation and the form that gave rise to it, in a constant intertextual game.

Finally, invention can be “considered both the starting point and the ending point of a cycle of transformations of a given content” (Fechine, 2019, p. 56). The author argues that this propagation regime corresponds to a “creative accident,” which produces something new and becomes part of a new propagation cycle. According to the author, the propagation regime of invention – in which something new is created – is homologous to the interactional regime of accident, characterized by the principle of randomness or unpredictability. This means that such regime – according to the proposal of Fechine (2019) in dialogue with Landowski (2014) – implies invention based on the principle of randomness, that is, the aforementioned “creative accident.” Thus, invention is the starting point of any propagation cycle.

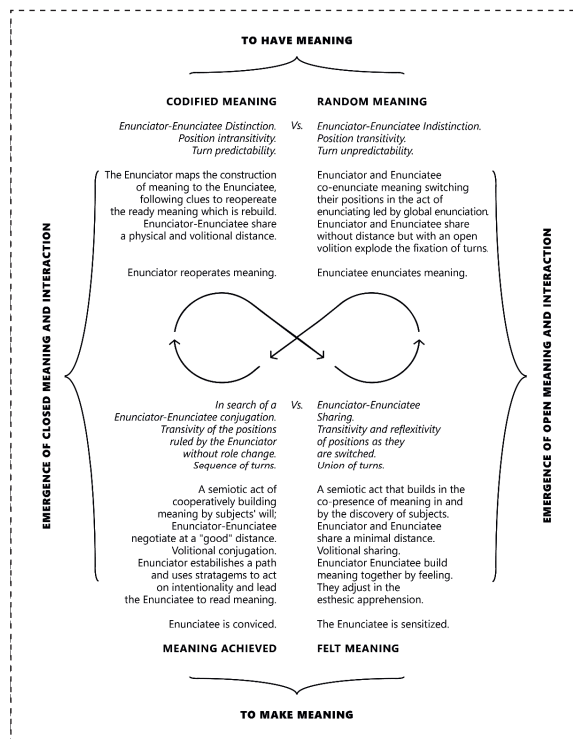
The last section of this theoretical framework concerns the concept of discursive interactions, postulated by Oliveira (2013), based on the Landowskian interactional model, no longer considering the interactions between actors, at the narrative level, but between enunciator and enunciatee, at the discursive level.

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Based on what she calls presence regimes, the author conceives that enunciator and enunciatee can relate through a relation of (a) intransitivity, in which the enunciator leads the enunciatee; and of (b) transitivity, which can be considered at three levels: (1) from a lower transitivity, “fixed through the interest of the subject who commands the interaction (Oliveira, 2013, p. 245), (2) to a transitivity “resulting from the exchange of positions between the two subjects as partners” (Oliveira, 2013, p. 245), or, also, (3) when enunciator and enunciatee occupy “an interchangeable position in which the roles of the enunciative relation are open and can be exchanged as the two process the meaning in their turn.” In Figure 3 below, prepared by Oliveira (2013, p. 246), these relations are presented in detail:

Figure 3
Discursive interactions



Note. Oliveira (2013, p. 244).

Therefore, to the left of the ellipse, interactions between enunciator and enunciatee are more hierarchical, thus constituting more closed interactions,

correlated to the programming and manipulation regimes; to the right of the ellipse, interactions between enunciator and enunciatee are more horizontal, thus constituting more open interactions, correlated to the adjustment and accident regimes.

Hence, the theoretical framework presented in this section – consisting of the concepts of theme, figure and isotopy; interaction and meaning regimes; propagation regimes; and discursive interactions – constitutes a theoretical-methodological framework capable of covering the study of transmedia dynamics of (dis)information, specifically, in the case of this research, about the coronavirus.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST SHARED POSTS

Based on the methodological framework pointed out, we analyzed seven of the ten most shared posts, which are presented in a table in order of sharing.

Table 2

Posts and their number of shares

Post	Number of shares
1	40
2	40
3	24
4	24
5	24
6*	20
7*	20
8*	20
9	20
10	20

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

*Posts unavailable, links do not open.

The analyses on the theme, figure and isotopy of the posts were grouped, because of the limits of this article, highlighting the recurrences in thematic, figurative and isotopic terms. As mentioned above, the hashtag #perguntacorona was launched by *Combate ao Coronavírus* [*Combat against Coronavirus* TV show], which is defined as follows: “Tv show hosted by Márcio Gomes provides the latest information about the pandemic and tips to protect yourself. On Globo TV, Monday to Friday⁷.” Therefore, we can deduce from the TV show and its hashtag the following themes: combat against coronavirus, information on the pandemic, information on prevention. The isotopies deduced are health communication and provision of services to the community. Ultimately, the health communication (or health literacy) isotopy appears as the main one.


⁷<https://g1.globo.com/bemestar/coronavirus/ao-vivo/ao-vivo-combate-ao-coronavirus.ghtml>

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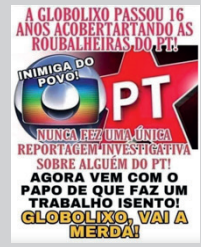

Thus, the relations of identity and difference between the themes and isotopies of the hashtag #perguntacorona and of each of the posts are established through the health communication isotopy, related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. To this end, the themes (thematic paths) and isotopies of each post are presented and then grouped with those that are similar so they can be compared to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Table 3
Recurrences in post contents

Post Number	Post in reduced size	Themes	Isotopies
1	 <p>Atenção evangélicos e pessoas de bem de todas as religiões.</p> <p>Porque será que a rede globu ataca com toda a força o Presidente JAIR BOLSONARO e o prefeito do Rio de Janeiro?</p> <p>Será que é porque eles vivem na pratica salmos 01 e João 8 versiculo 32?</p> <p>Vamos abrir o olho!</p>	Religion, politics/Bolsonarism and truth (euphoric themes) vs. Atheism, media and lie (dysphoric themes), Pro-Bolsonarism.	Political-Religious and science denialism
2	 <p>Vendo cloroquina. Quem não entende não atrapalha meu negócio. 😄</p>	Profit, scam, deceit, complicity, death, crudity.	Deception and science denialism.
3	 <p>Como uma flexibilização do comércio com redução de horários vai diminuir às aglomerações?</p> <p>Se temos uma redução de horário tecnicamente temos um aumento de aglomerações. São mais pessoas, em menos horários.</p> <p>A conta não bate, é algo impossível de acontecer.</p>	Inefficiency of measures such as social distancing and easing of commercial restrictions. Pro-Bolsonarism.	Science denialism.
4		Racial affirmation/black pride and fashionism.	Racial affirmation.

Continue...

Continuation

Post Number	Post in reduced size	Themes	Isotopies
5		Capitalism, sales through digital social networks, beauty.	Commercial.
9		Dishonesty and lack of journalistic impartiality. Pro-Bolsonarism.	Politics, science denialism.
10		Fall/impeachment, science denialism, political ineptitude, demonstrations in favor of the impeachment of Bolsonaro. Anti-Bolsonarism.	Politics.

Note. Prepared by the authors.

Posts 1, 3 and 9 share the fact that the isotopy of science denialism is deduced from them. In addition, posts 1 and 9 share, in addition, the political isotopy, while the isotopy of neoliberalism is deduced from post 3. Therefore, these three posts are semantically close. Post 2, in turn, figurativizes chloroquine in a crude way, so that the isotopy of deception is deduced. However, this deception, this scam, is about deceiving an entire population so they can profit from the ineffective treatment using chloroquine against COVID-19. Therefore, in addition to this humorous trait, the isotopy of science denialism is also observed, since this is a prerequisite for accepting the use of chloroquine to treat COVID-19. Thus, the isotopy of science denialism is traced as identity trait between posts 1, 2, 3, and 9.

The isotopy of health communication is also deduced from post 10, as well as from posts 1 and 9. However, post 10 is anti-Bolsonarism and criticizes Bolsonaro’s science denialism. Therefore, it is pro-science. This makes this post the post that comes closest semantically to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Post 4 – whose isotopy is of racial affirmation – is unrelated to the hashtag #questionacorona, but is mainly opposed to posts 1, 3, and 9, because they are

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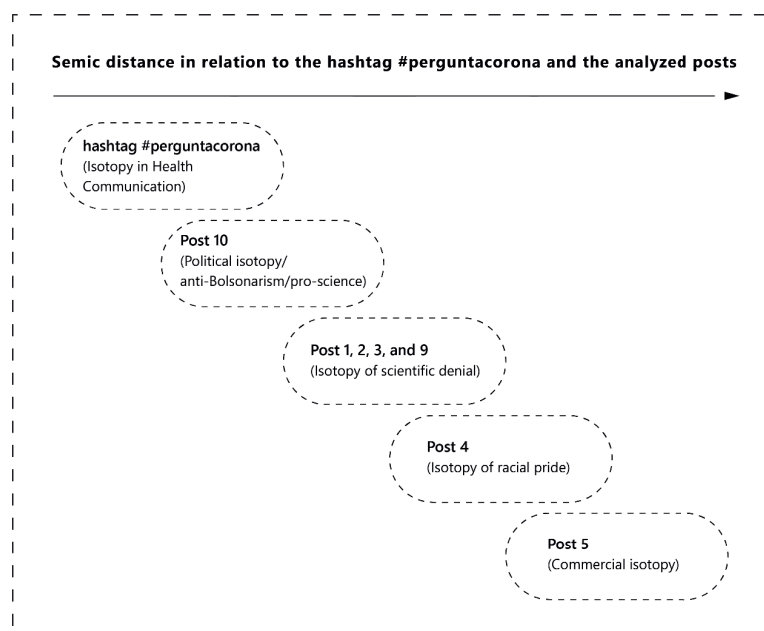
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pro-Bolsonarism and because, from an interdiscursive point of view, Bolsonaro is against affirmative action, considering that he appointed, as chairman of the Palmares Foundation, Sergio Camargo, who, in 2020, on Black Awareness Day, after the murder of a black man in a supermarket in Rio Grande do Sul, claimed that there is no structural racism in Brazil and that it is a left-wing discourse (“Presidente da Fundação Palmares”, 2020). Thus, due to the semic trait of racial affirmation, this post is related by contradiction with posts 1, 3, and 9.

Finally, post 5, from which is deduced the isotopy of product advertising, is related to post 3, based on the isotopic identity trait of neoliberalism. With this, it is possible to visually represent the semic distance between the hashtag #perguntacorona and the most shared posts, as shown below in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Semic distance in relation to the hashtag #perguntacorona and the analyzed posts



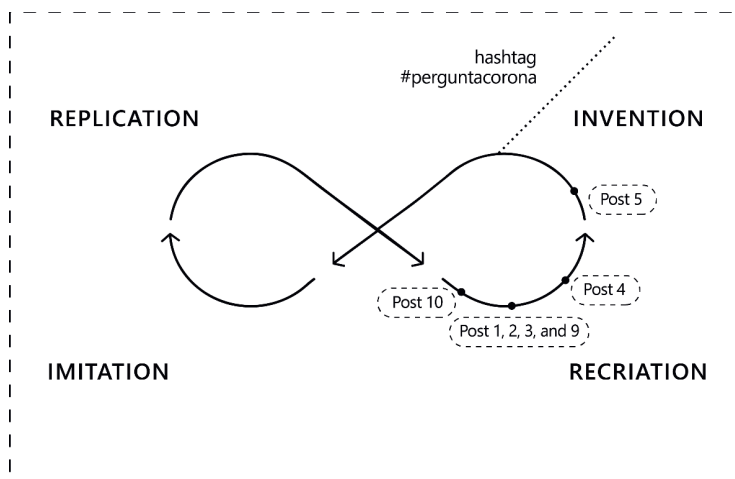
Note. Prepared by the authors.

Based on the model proposed by Fechine (2019), it is assumed that the hashtag #perguntacorona is the generating form in relation to which posts began to circulate that, through the aforementioned hashtag, promoted changes in the meaning proposed by the enunciator, Globo TV Network. Therefore, if the degree of semic change moves from replication to imitation and from

imitation to recreation, as described in the previous analysis section, it is possible to think, in tune with the relations of the elliptical square, a circuit that starts from a “ground zero,” that is, invention, passes through replication, imitation, recreation and closes the cycle in a new invention.

Thus, based on the analyses related to themes, figures and isotopies, we observed a semic distance between the isotopy underlying the hashtag #perguntacorona and the analyzed posts. First, it is worth saying that none of the posts imitates or replicates the generating form, that is, the hashtag #perguntacorona. Post 10 and group of posts 1, 2, 3, and 9 can be considered recreations based on the hashtag #perguntacorona. That is because, as Fachine (2019) shows, in the case of recreation, there is use of several allusions and knowledge shared between the one who produces the generating form, the one who recreates it, and the one who reads it as a recreation, through intertextual or interdiscursive relations. Thus, it is possible to think – based on the theoretical proposal of Fachine (2019) – how the analyzed posts can be arranged in the elliptical square composed of the terms replication, imitation, recreation and invention.

Figure 5
Analyzed posts and propagation regimes



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Accordingly, it is concluded that, in terms of propagation regimes, the analyzed posts tend toward recreation and, to a lesser extent, invention.

Considering, now, the most shared posts from the perspective of discursive interactions (Oliveira, 2013), based on the semic distance previously analyzed,



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only post 10 would fall under what the author calls discursive interaction regime entitled “meaning to meaning.” That is because the enunciatee, sensitized, produces (or circulates) a text that minimally conveys the pro-science isotopy. In all other posts, the enunciatee rejects the contract proposed by the enunciator, subverting the initial proposal. Thereby, the enunciatee begins to enunciate a dissonant meaning in relation to the enunciator’s proposal. They refuse the role of teleguided (related or programming regime) and of manipulated willingly or unwillingly (referring to the manipulation regime) and subverts the meaning of the first enunciation, starting to enunciate another meaning. Thus, analysis of the posts leads to a deduction of a subversive enunciatee, who shifts, transforms, “deforms” the meaning of the proposal set forth by the enunciator Rede Globo according to their own values and beliefs.

ANALYSIS OF THE MOST SHARED LINKS

Continuing, the analysis of 8 of the 10 most shared links is presented, as was done in relation to the posts. The following table shows the links, with their corresponding number of shares, in descending order.

Table 4

Links and corresponding number of shares

Link	Number of shares	Link transcript
1	66*	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yWH47rQkgt4#bbb2o
2	55	http://glo.bo/3dc4VIR
3	43	http://youtu.be/pQB9nlm7wro
4	28*	https://twitter.com/shwpoethic/status/1252832743605415938/video/1
5	26	https://twitter.com/BrunoEnglerDM/status/1248611916630507520
6	20	https://www.tvgazeta.com.br/videos/relacao-entre-disturbios-endocrinos-e-a-covid-19-26-05-20/
7	20	https://twitter.com/em_com/status/1261287719591972864
8	20	https://dizupubli.digital/?indica=229801
9	18	https://youtu.be/awEch-Y6FpU
10	16	https://twitter.com/washingtonpost/status/1261045493171437569

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

*Links unavailable

Thus, considering the analyses of the links, based on the health communication isotopy, related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, we established the relations of identity and difference between the themes and isotopies of the hashtag #perguntacorona and each of the most shared links. To this end, we examined again the themes and isotopies of each link and then grouped them with similar ones so they could be considered in relation to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Table 5
Recurrences in the content of the most shared links

Post	Link Title	Themes	Isotopies
2	<i>Combate do Coronavírus</i> program, aired on 05/22/2020	Questions of viewers	Health communication.
3	Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante	Death, suicide, incompetence of the Bolsonaro administration to deal with COVID-19.	Of death, politics and health.
5	Tweet by @BrunoEnglerDM	Pro-Bolsonarism, dysphorization of the press and blaming of China as the creator of COVID-19.	Health and politics.
6	<i>Plantão da saúde coronavírus</i> program, aired on 05/26/2020	Relation between heart disease and COVID-19; relation between COVID-19 and endocrine disorders, among others.	Health and health communication.
7	Tweet by the newspaper <i>Estado de Minas</i> : “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”	Relation between COVID-19 and disease that affects children.	Health and health communication.
8	Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu	Innovation, technology, financial gains, digital marketing.	Service advertising.
9	Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 03/19/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Vídeo da Ducati no final”	1st part: inevitability of death; neglect of the elderly; shortage of goods in supermarkets; selfishness; importance of the sense of collectivity; inevitability of contamination by the coronavirus.	Part 1: Society and health.
		Part 2: freedom, motorcycling, technology, speed.	Part 2: Motorcycling.
10	Tweet by the newspaper <i>The Washington Post</i> : “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”	Despair/desperate search, indecision, imminent death (a dying man), lack of beds for treating COVID-19 in hospitals, precariousness of the Brazilian health care system.	Health and politics.

Note. Prepared by the authors.

The links 2 (*Combate do Coronavírus* program, aired on 05/22/2020), 6 (*Plantão da saúde coronavirus* program, aired on 05/26/2020) and 7 (Tweet by the newspaper *Estado de Minas*: “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”) are the ones that come closest to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to the hashtag #perguntacorona, in thematic terms and, more generally, because they convey the health and health communication isotopies. Then comes link 10 (Tweet by the newspaper *The Washington Post*: “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”), which

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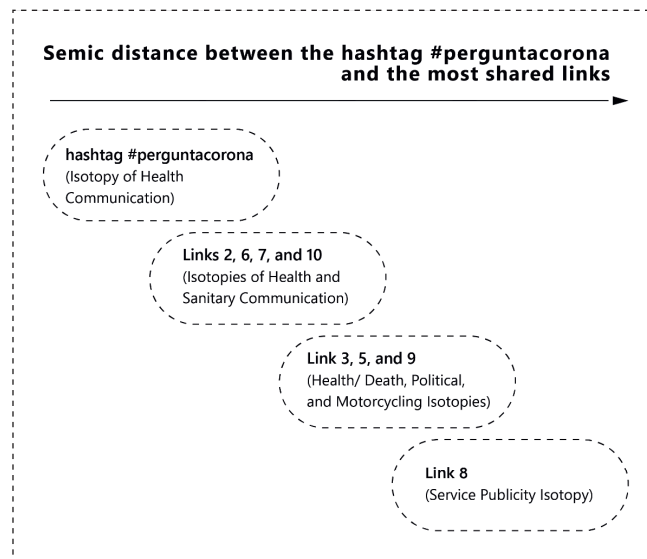
conveys the isotopies of health (addresses the theme of COVID-19) and politics (deals with the situation of calamity in northern Brazil).

In turn, links 3 (Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante), 5 (Tweet by @BrunoEnglerDM) and 9 (Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 03/19/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Video da Ducati no final”), despite the identity trait, health isotopy, begin to deviate from the enunciator’s proposal because they convey themes such as pro-Bolsonarism (link 5) and death/suicide (link 3). In the case of link 9, in the first part, from the point of view of the identity of meaning, there is the health isotopy. As for otherness, there is the social isotopy. In the second part, there is no apparent identity trait, only otherness, because the motorcycling isotopy is conveyed.

Finally, link 8 (Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu) conveys the service advertising isotopy and, therefore, is the one that most deviates from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from the hashtag #perguntacorona, because there is no semic identity trait related to such proposal. Figure 6 below represents the semic distance between #perguntacorona and the most shared links.

Figure 6

Semic distance between the hashtag #perguntacorona and the most shared links



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Thus, based on the model proposed by Fechine (2019), it is assumed that the hashtag # questioncorona is the generating form in relation to which there

was circulation of links that, through the aforementioned hashtag, promoted changes in the meaning proposed by the enunciator Rede Globo. Therefore, such hashtag falls under the invention regime.

In this case, the second most shared link, that is, “*Combate do Coronavírus* program, aired on 05/22/2020”, falls under the replication regime, since, according to Fechine (2019, p. 40, our translation), replication is the “primary mode of propagation.” Thus, the content of the link is directly related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, since such hashtag was launched in the *Combate do Coronavírus* TV show. Consequently, it can be said that the content of the *link* refers directly to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to the #perguntacorona, constituting a phenomenon that we are calling enunciative recursivity, that is, the enunciator of the generating form – as if in a house of mirrors – refers to itself. As a result, the degree of transformation of meaning, in the case of the second most shared link, is minimal.

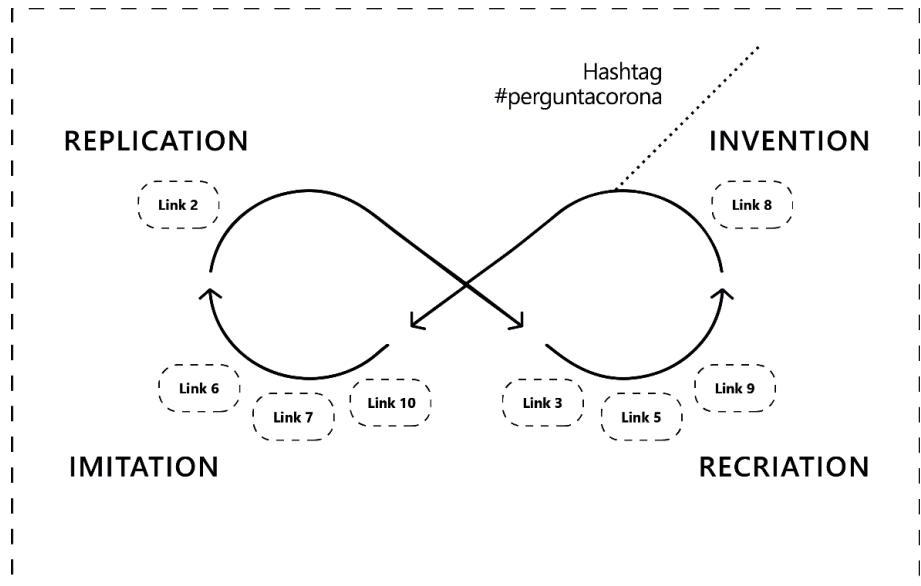
In turn, the imitation regime implies “modification of a pre-existing text to different extents” (Fechine, 2019, p. 41, our translation). In the case of imitation, there is a guided doing of a recipient, who accepted the contract proposed by a sender, which is why imitation is homologous to the replication regime. Thus, the sixth most shared link (*Plantão da saúde coronavirus* program, aired on 05/26/2020); the seventh most shared link (tweet by the newspaper *Estado de Minas*: “Estados Unidos alertam sobre doença vinculada à #COVID19 em crianças”), and the tenth most shared link (Tweet by the newspaper *The Washington Post*: “In Brazil, a desperate search for an open bed”) fall under this regime because they come close thematically and isotopically to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and to #questionacorona.

The recreation regime includes the third most shared link (Video on the channel #ShopCulturalShow – LobaDoSCSeQuiromante), the fifth most shared link (Tweet de @BrunoEnglerDM), and the ninth most shared link (Video on the channel RENATOUSA, uploaded on 05/22/2020, “O OUTRO LADO DO CORONAVÍRUS. Vídeo da Ducati no final”), which means there is “a thematic or figurative change of the second degree” (Fechine, 2019, p. 49, our translation). In other words, despite a semic identity trait, that is, the health isotopy, the contents of these links begin to deviate from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from #perguntacorona because they convey, respectively, themes such as pro-Bolsonarism, death/suicide, and motorcycling.

Finally, the eighth most shared link (Advertisement piece by the digital marketing company Dizu) conveys the isotopy of service advertising, which does not present any semic identity trait related to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and the #perguntacorona and, therefore, falls under the invention regime,

so as to establish another propagation chain. Figure 7 below illustrates the distribution of the links according to the propagation regimes under which they fall.

Figure 7
Analyzed links and propagation regimes



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Now we move on to the analysis of the relation between enunciator and enunciatee, based on the model of Oliveira (2013). The analysis of the most shared links found – unlike the analysis of the posts – links that fit all propagation regimes, namely: replication, imitation, recreation and invention. In the case of replication, there was one occurrence; in the case of imitation, three occurrences; in the case of recreation, three occurrences; and, in the case of invention, one occurrence.

Thus, we observed different discursive interactions, both those with lower transitivity and closed emergence of meaning and interaction (second, sixth, seventh and tenth most shared links) and those with higher transitivity and open emergence of meaning and interaction. This means that, according to the analysis of the most shared links, there is a plurality of discursive interactions, including those in which the enunciatee simply reoperates the meaning (second most shared link), those in which the enunciatee is convinced (sixth, seventh and tenth most shared links), and those in which the enunciatee partially rejects the contract (third, fifth and ninth most shared links), and, finally, that in which

the enunciatee rejects the contract and coenunciates another meaning that is completely different from the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo and from the #questionacorona (eighth most shared link).

ANALYSIS OF THE HASHTAGS

We now move on to the analytical section about the ten hashtags that most related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, which had 13,547 mentions during the collection period. Table 6 below shows the aforementioned hashtags, in descending order of mentions, with the number of times they were cited.

Table 6

Ten hashtags most related to #perguntacorona

Descending order of mentions	Hashtag	Mentions
1st	#PerguntaCorona	327
2nd	#perguntacoronavirus	283
3rd	#coronavirus	237
4th	#G1	184
5th	#COVID19	181
6th	#combateoCoronavírus	139
7th	#coronavirusbrasil	95
8th	#covid	89
9th	#bbb20	77
10th	#redebbb	75

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

Thus, the hashtags # PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus, #coronavirus, #COVID19, #combateoCoronavírus, #coronavirusbrasil and #covid, respectively the first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth in descending order of shares, present very similar themes. #PerguntaCorona, written with uppercase initial letter, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus are variations, either of the writing of the generating form #perguntacorona, or of the TV show that created this hashtag. While #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil and #covid are hashtags that thematize the disease and the pandemic. Therefore, seven of the ten hashtags analyzed relate directly to the proposal of the enunciator Rede Globo / #perguntacorona (1st, 2nd and 6th) or relate to the name of the disease (third, fifth, seventh and eighth). Hence, from the seven hashtags referred to here, the health communication isotopy (as in the case of the TV show that created the generating form #perguntacorona) or the health isotopy can be deduced. The fourth hashtag with more mentions, #G1, refers to the news website *G1*⁸, which, like the *Combat against Coronavirus* TV show, also belongs

⁸<https://g1.globo.com>



⁹<https://g1.globo.com/saude/coronavirus/>

to the Globo TV network and carried out intense coverage of COVID-19 during the pandemic, considering the news items on COVID-19 of this news website⁹. Therefore, the health communication isotopy can also be deduced from the hashtag #G1.

The only hashtags that do not relate directly to the generating form #perguntacorona are the ninth and tenth, namely #bbb20 and #redebbb, which thematize the Globo reality show *Big Brother Brasil*. The entertainment isotopy can be deduced from the two hashtags. A possible reason for the relation between the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb and the hashtag #perguntacorona was the period in which the data were collected, which coincides with the airing of the Globo reality show¹⁰.

¹⁰The *Big Brother Brasil* 20 TV show started to be aired around the time the pandemic began and achieved record-breaking ratings and sponsorship. Available at: <https://propmark.com.br/bbb20-tem-edicao-historica-com-recordes-de-audiencia-e-patrocios/>. Accessed: Jan 19, 2021.

Thus, from the perspective of propagation regimes, #PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus fall under the replication regime, since they are minimal variations, whether in spelling or relative to the name of the TV show that created the hashtag. In turn, #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil, #covid and #G1 would be categorized into the imitation regime, that is, conceived as no difference. Regarding the ten most analyzed hashtags, we observed none that fit the recreation regime. Finally, the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb – as they lack a semic identity with the proposal of #perguntacorona – fall under the invention regime, coming to constitute another propagation chain.

From the point of view of discursive interactions, seven of the ten analyzed hashtags are characterized by lower transitivity and closed emergence of meaning and interaction, and, in #PerguntaCorona, #perguntacoronavirus and #combateoCoronavírus, the enunciatee reoperates the meaning. As for #coronavirus, #COVID19, #coronavirusbrasil, #covid and #G1, the enunciatee is convinced, that is, there is a transitivity of the positions governed by the enunciator of #perguntacorona. Only in the case of the hashtags #bbb20 and #redebbb, the enunciatee rejects the contract of the enunciator and begins to enunciate a meaning that is different from that proposed by the enunciator. Only in this case, there is greater transitivity and open emergence of meaning and interaction.

ANALYSIS OF USERS

In this last analytical section, we examine the ten Twitter profiles that most related to the *hashtag* #perguntacorona. The following table presents the users referred to, in descending order of mentions, and the number of times they were cited.

Table 7

Ten users most related to #perguntacorona

Descending order of mentions	User	Mentions
1st	@RedeGlobo	248
2nd	@perguntacorona	87
3rd	@MarcioGreporter	65
4th	@g1	42
5th	@alcione	32
6th	@jairbolsonaro	22
7th	@MarcioGreporter.	21
8th	@RedeGlobo.	14
9th	@GloboNews	11
10th	@flamengo	10

Note. Grupo MediaAção (2021).

It is observed that the users @RedeGlobo, @perguntacorona, @MarcioGreporter, @g1, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo., and @GloboNews – respectively the first, second, third, fourth, seventh, eighth and ninth users in descending order of mentions – make direct or indirect reference to the hashtag #perguntacorona, launched in the *Combat Against Coronavirus* TV show, aired by Rede Globo and hosted by journalist Marcio Gomes. Of these users, @perguntacorona does not exist and @MarcioGreporter. and @RedeGlobo. are spelled with a dot (.) at the end, being, therefore, variations of @MarcioGreporter and @RedeGlobo. With the exception of @perguntacorona, which is a variation of #perguntacorona, the others refer either to the journalist who hosted the TV show responsible for the hashtag in question, or to one of the brands of the Globo TV network: Rede Globo, G1 and GloboNews. Therefore, all of them, in some way, thematize the COVID-19 pandemic, thus conveying an isotopy of health communication.

The user @jairbolsonaro, sixth in descending order of mentions, refers to the then president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, a political actor linked to the theme of science denialism.

In turn, the user @alcione, fifth in descending order of mentions, refers to the Brazilian female singer Alcione. In a cross search on Google with @alcione and #perguntacorona, it was observed the announcement of the singer's first solidarity live stream¹¹ on April 20, 2020, which refers to the health and entertainment/culture isotopies. The user @flamengo refers to the Rio de Janeiro soccer team Flamengo. Apparently, @flamengo was a trending topic on Twitter that, for some reason, started to relate to the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Thus, considering the propagation regimes, the user @perguntacorona, because of a minimal agency on the meaning, fits into the replication regime. While users @@MarcioGreporter, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo, @g1,

¹¹ Alcione Marrom (April 16, 2020). *Alcione apresenta: Live Solidária!* Facebook. <https://bit.ly/3Ur0HDj>



@RedeGlobo. and @GloboNews imply a small semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator #perguntacorona, falling under the imitation regime. In turn, @bolsonaro and @alcione relate to the recreation regime, considering a change of second degree. Finally, the user @flamengo, for lacking, *a priori*, any semantic link with #perguntacorona, fits the invention regime, coming to constitute another propagation chain.

Taking into consideration now the model of discursive interactions, it is understood that the user @perguntacorona reoperates the meaning, such that it constitutes an intransitive interaction, while users @MarcioGreporter, @MarcioGreporter., @RedeGlobo, @g1, @RedeGlobo. and @GloboNews are convinced by the enunciator #perguntacorona, such that they constitute an interaction with low transitivity. In such cases, the emergence of meaning and interaction is closed. While as to users @bolsonaro, @alcione and @flamengo, the emergence of meaning and interaction is open, and there is, therefore, more transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee.

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

As previously presented, this research is built around the following question: how are the dynamics of propagation and the construction of meaning of texts related to the hashtag #perguntacorona effected and, more generally, how is the propagation of disinformation constituted? Ultimately, the following question arises: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, information?

The analytical path considered a corpus that comprised the ten most shared posts, the ten most shared links¹², the ten most related hashtags and the ten most related users related to the hashtag #perguntacorona. This hashtag, as said, was launched by the *Combat Against Coronavirus* TV show, broadcast by Rede Globo TV network, soon after the pandemic arrived in Brazil. The methodological path considered four major conceptual blocks that covered: (1) analysis of themes, figures and isotopies; (2) recurrence in the content; (3) interaction and meaning regimes and propagation regimes; (4) relations between enunciator and enunciatee and discursive interactions.

The analysis of a broad *corpus*, composed of texts of different natures – posts, link contents, other hashtags and users – was essential to represent this complex transmedia ecosystem that arose around the hashtag #perguntacorona.

Regarding the most shared posts, there was a greater semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona. This can be proven, for example, by four posts with denialist content. The greater the semic deviation

¹²In the case of posts and links, not all were available or opened, as explained in the corresponding sections.

or change in meaning, the closer to the recreation and invention regimes. With regard to the discursive interactions, the enunciatee, in most cases, rejects the contract proposed by the enunciator, that is, it conveys texts from which it is possible to deduce the isotopy of health communication, and starts to coenunciate the meaning, addressing themes such as science denialism, racial affirmation, or commercial advertising. As for the analysis of the posts, the emergence of meaning and interaction was open.

As for the analysis of the most shared links, the results indicate a lower degree of transformation of meaning or semic deviation from the proposal of the enunciator #perguntacorona. Only two of the analyzed links partially rejected the enunciator's proposal and one did so completely. Taking into consideration the propagation regimes, most fall under the imitation regime, which means a closed emergence of meaning and interaction.

As for the analysis of other hashtags and Twitter users most related to the hashtag #perguntacorona, we observed a result very similar to that of the analysis of the most shared links. Based on the analysis of themes, figures and isotopies, most fall under the imitation regime, which means a closed emergence of meaning and interaction.

The plurality of results – which indicates different degrees of transformation of meaning, different propagation regimes that characterize the *corpus*, as well as discursive interactions, ranging from intransitivity to maximal transitivity – points to a type of transmedia ecosystem marked by multiple and multifaceted communicational flows. Therefore, answering the question that guided this study, the dynamics of propagation and construction of meaning of texts (posts, links, other hashtags and users) related to the hashtag #perguntacorona occurred in different ways, thus there was not a singular dynamics, but a plurality of dynamics of meaning: that is, from a lower degree of transformation of meaning in relation to the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona, which implies the propagation regimes of replication and imitation and closed emergence of meaning and interaction, to a greater degree of transformation of meaning in relation to the proposal of the enunciator of the hashtag #perguntacorona, which implies the propagation regimes of recreation and invention and open emergence of meaning and interaction. Góis and Alzamora, about the *corpus* of the research that was also the object of analysis of this investigation, state:

[...] the results seem sufficient to support the conclusion that the transmedia dynamics of a hashtag with informational purpose acquires disparate aspects in contexts of social appropriation typical of online social network platforms.



This process, as varied as it is unpredictable, we called the ecosystem of disinformation in transmedia dynamics (Góis & Alzamora, 2021, p. 36).

Therefore, the approach to the *corpus* through discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics corroborates this ecosystem of disinformation in transmedia dynamics. The next item of this article, based on the analyses, proposes a conceptual discussion about the propagation of disinformation to answer the second part of the research problem, that is: how to think semiotically about the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its contrary term, information?

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: LOGICS OF THE PROPAGATION OF INFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

For the proposition of the model of propagation of information and disinformation, it is necessary to revisit the concepts of veridiction and veridiction contract. It should be noted that Greimas' semiotics does not deal with ontological truth, but with veridiction, that is, with a truth-saying, which seems true, disconnected from the external referent:

By postulating autonomy, the immanent character of any language and, for the same reason, the impossibility of resorting to an external referent, Saussurian theory forced semiotics to include among its concerns not the problem of truth, but that of truth-saying, of veridiction (Greimas & Courtés, 2008, p. 530).

Thus, a discourse is read as true when a truth-believing is installed between enunciator and enunciatee, that is, in the intersubjective relation based on the belief between both. Thus, truth, falsehood, lie and secrecy "Are only established in the form of a more or less stable balance arising from an implicit agreement between the two actors in the structure of communication. It is this tacit agreement that we choose to designate with the term *veridiction contract*" (Greimas, 2014, p. 117). Therefore, the veridiction contract implies, on one side, a persuasive doing on the part of the sender and, on the other side, an interpretative doing on the part of the recipient. Thus, the sender proposes a contract to the recipient of the communication, and the latter, based on their values, beliefs, knowledge and passions, accepts it or not. In this context, there is the epistemic act that refers to the transformation of one state of belief into another. Such operation occurs through the verification of what is new and unknown in relation to what is old and known:

[The] epistemic act [...], which serves as a prelude to communication, is not a simple affirmation of itself, but a step that is taken, a request for consensus, a proposal for a contract, which the enunciatee will continue with an acceptance or a rejection (Greimas, 2014, p. 135, our translation)

Thus, in order for the enunciatee to believe in the “truth” of the enunciator, it is necessary that they resort to their cognitive universe within which are found the fiduciary variant, linked to *believing*, and the logical variant, linked to *knowing*. Such cognitive universe “is not a simple encyclopedia full of images of the world, but a network of formal semiotic relations among which the epistemic subject selects the equivalences they need to receive the veridictory discourse” (Greimas, 2014, p. 145). Thus, the subject’s cognitive universe is constituted by the modalities *knowing* and *believing*.

Hence, based on the analyses, it is possible to say that the enunciatee rejected, but also accepted the enunciator’s contract based on their cognitive universe. In this case, although the modalities *knowing* and *believing* belong to the same cognitive universe, there is a “stretch,” a polarization, between these modes, so that the enunciatee sometimes choose the fiduciary variant, linked to *believing*, and sometimes choose the logical variant, linked to *knowing*. Therefore, there were cases in which the enunciatee rejected the enunciator’s contract and began to enunciate their own discursive “truth,” based mainly on *believing*, and there were cases in which the enunciatee accepted the contract proposed by the enunciator of #perguntacorona. In this case, especially according to the analysis of the posts, there was a non-acceptance on the part of the enunciatee, who proved inflamed, sensitive, driven by passions, considering the posts related to the themes of denialism and pro-Bolsonarism, themes that allow to recover a pathemized enunciatee. In this sense, according to Barros (2020, p. 28):

When the interpretation is based mainly or only on the beliefs and emotions of the interpreting recipient, lying discourses are understood to be true. In other words, as absurd as they may seem, discourses whose values are in accordance with the beliefs and feelings of the recipient are considered by them to be true. This is the so-called confirmation bias, a tendency of people to believe in information that supports their views and values, and disregard information that says otherwise.

Based on the elements addressed thus far, we can think of a semiotic model for the propagation of disinformation and its relation to its opposite term, that is, information. Such model is aimed at thinking semiotically about the propagation of information and disinformation.

A

Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

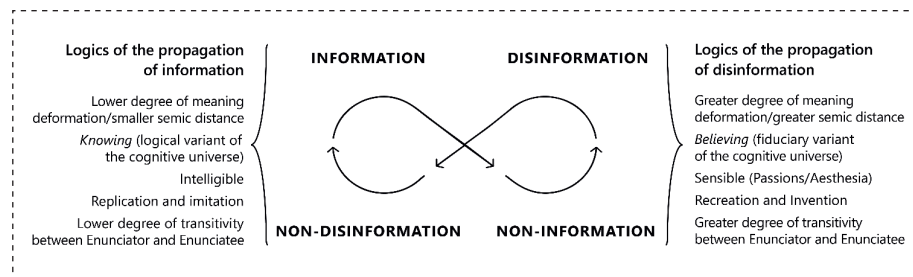
Therefore, it is possible to affirm the following: the propagation of disinformation is related to a semic shift, or to a “deformation” of meaning, carried out by the enunciatee, considering the enunciator’s proposal; the propagation of disinformation is related to the propagation regimes of recreation and invention; the propagation of disinformation implies a greater degree of transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee, in which the enunciatee often rejects the enunciator’s proposal, becoming another enunciator; the enunciatee’s adherence to the discourse of disinformation is supported by the fiduciary variant of the cognitive universe, that is, by *believing* modality; such adherence is supported, according to Barros (2020), by passions, generally malevolent and related to intolerance (hate discourse), or, according to Landowski (2014), it has an aesthetic basis, that is, linked to feeling.

In contrast, the propagation of information is related to a lower degree of semic shift performed by the enunciatee, considering the enunciator’s proposal; the propagation of information is related to the propagation regimes of replication and imitation; the propagation of information implies a lower degree of transitivity between enunciator and enunciatee, in which the enunciatee accepts the enunciator’s proposal; the enunciatee’s adherence to the information discourse is supported by the logical variant of the cognitive universe, that is, *knowing* modality; such adherence is also based on more intelligible than sensitive aspects of the production of meaning.

Thus, founded on the elements addressed thus far, it is possible to propose a model that considers the propagation of both information and disinformation. Arranged in the semiotic square, information and disinformation unfold in the sub-opposite terms no information and no disinformation. The complementary terms form regions that we call, respectively, logics of information and logics of disinformation (Figure 8):

Figure 8

Logics of the propagation of information and disinformation



Note. Prepared by the authors.

Finally, the dialogue carried out here between discursive semiotics and sociosemiotics to analyze the empirical evidence under investigation enabled the recognition of two articulated logics, the logics of information and the logics of disinformation, which have distinct characteristics, although they are prone to mutual feedback, according to the flows of the ellipse (Figure 8). We believe that the study described here can serve as a theoretical-methodological inspiration for other studies interested in the propagation of disinformation. It should be noted that this model considers disinformation and information always *in relation to* an utterance, that is, they are responsive utterances that arise from a generating form, which, in this case, was the hashtag #perguntacorona. Thus, notions of logics of information and disinformation, each with its specificities, seem relevant to understand the propagation of disinformation, which, from a communicational point of view, defines the disinformation society (Alzamora et al., 2021), marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the infodemic. ■

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