

ARTICLE

HOW DO TRADITIONAL MEDIA INCORPORATE STATEMENTS FROM POLITICAL ACTORS IN SOCIAL MEDIA?

An analysis of the framing of Jair Bolsonaro's tweets in Brazilian journalism



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ABSTRACT – This paper analyzes how three of Brazil's largest national newspapers (*Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*) addressed tweets from the President of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro, in the first four months of his government. The methodology consists of a qualitative content analysis of the news motivated by the president's publications on *Twitter*, as well as the messages themselves, in order to identify the framing adopted by said newspapers and whether that framing fits the approach of Bolsonaro. Moreover, the study uses descriptive statistics (Chi-square test) to identify links between the following pairs of variables: issues and frames, months and issues, months and frames. The data is composed of 351 news pieces collected from these media's websites. The results show that conflict and moral were the issues that media covered the most concerning Bolsonaro's tweets, and the newspapers used news and interpretive frames equally.

Key words: Framing. Twitter. Journalism. Political communication.

COMO OS MEDIA INCORPORAM DECLARAÇÕES DE ATORES POLÍTICOS NAS REDES?

Uma análise do enquadramento dos *tweets* de Jair Bolsonaro pelo jornalismo impresso brasileiro

RESUMO – O artigo analisa como os *tweets* do presidente Jair Bolsonaro que pautaram três dos maiores jornais de circulação nacional no Brasil (*Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo*, *O Globo*), nos quatro primeiros meses de governo, foram abordados pelo jornalismo. A metodologia consiste na análise de conteúdo qualitativa das notícias motivadas pelas publicações do presidente na referida rede, assim como dessas próprias mensagens, a fim de identificar o enquadramento que os jornais adotaram e se ele condizia com a abordagem de Bolsonaro. A pesquisa lança mão de estatística descritiva (Qui-quadrado) para identificar associações entre os seguintes pares de variáveis: temas e *frames*, temas e meses, meses e *frames*. Foram analisadas 351 notícias, coletadas dos webportais dos referidos jornais. Pode-se afirmar que conflito e moral foram os temas dos *tweets* que mais receberam atenção dos jornais, que utilizaram equilibradamente *frames* noticiosos e interpretativos na abordagem das mensagens analisadas.

Palavras-chave: *Framing*. *Twitter*. Jornalismo. Comunicação política.

¿CÓMO INCORPORAN LOS MEDIOS LAS DECLARACIONES DE FIGURAS POLÍTICAS EN LAS REDES? Un análisis del encuadre de los *tweets* de Bolsonaro por el periodismo impresso brasileño

RESUMEN – El artículo analiza cómo los *tweets* del presidente de Brasil, Jair Bolsonaro, que se presentaron en tres de los periódicos nacionales más grandes de Brasil (*Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo* y *O Globo*), en los primeros cuatro meses de gobierno, fueron cubiertos por el periodismo. La metodología consiste en un análisis de contenido cualitativo de las noticias motivadas por las publicaciones del presidente en *Twitter*, y estos propios mensajes, para identificar el marco que adoptaron los periódicos y si se ajusta al enfoque de Bolsonaro. La investigación utiliza estadísticas descriptivas (Chi-cuadrado) para identificar asociaciones entre “temas y marcos”, “temas y meses”, “meses y marcos”. Se analizaron 351 artículos de noticias, que se recopilaron de los sitios web de estos medios. Conflicto y moral fueron los temas de los *tweets* que recibieron la mayor atención de los periódicos, que utilizaron equilibradamente los marcos noticiosos y interpretativos en el enfoque de los mensajes.

Palabras clave: *Framing*. *Twitter*. Periodismo. Comunicación política.

1 Introduction

Since the popularization of online social networks in the early 2000s, digital media have gradually become an official source of political communication and, as such, have led to studies on media effects (Gomes et al., 2009). The impact these media have had on the political field is observable in Brazil. This new communicative ecology has had an increasing influence on the elections and political communication in Brazil as of 2010.

The current president, Jair Bolsonaro, has shown an affinity for digital social networks, using these platforms as official spaces for

government communications, particularly on *Twitter*. Consequently, this study investigates the frameworks adopted by newspapers on *Twitter* messages from the president. In order to do this we analyzed the frameworks of the news published in three Brazilian quality papers (Hallin & Mancini, 2004) during the first four months of Bolsonaro's government (Jan-Apr/2019): *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*.

Studies on framing seek reflections and foundations in cognitive theories of psychology and, together with the theories of agenda-setting and priming, form the triad of what is known as Cognitive Media Effects. A large number of studies on media effects explore areas of political communication, such as campaign strategies which influence and impact public opinion on certain issues, mainly through the use of mainstream media. This is therefore an important issue to observe in this study as digital media started to impact the way certain leaders communicate, using digital channels as tools to maintain their popularity and political image, which consequently attracts the attention of traditional media. Gomes (2004) states that campaigns are now merged with mandates, creating a kind of "endless election", as is the case with the Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, one of the focal points of this study.

In that regard, this article discusses the concept of framing by looking at one of the most recent communication strategies (the political use of *Twitter*), and then presents the collection and analysis strategies adopted for the investigation. A qualitative content analysis was carried out in order to identify how traditional media, in this case the *Folha de S. Paulo*, *O Estado de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*, frame the Brazilian President's messages. A statistical analysis was then carried out in order to identify links between "themes and frames", "months and themes", "months and frames".

2 Journalism, political communication and framing

The intersection between the fields of journalism and politics extends throughout studies since the work of Lippmann (1922), which establishes how journalistic activities help to promote public debate and form opinions about socio-political issues. One of the theories of media effects is framing, that is, how the field of communication presents what is said by others. The concept, disseminated in media studies and other areas of social sciences, does encounter some differences in opinion.

One of them is a difficulty in understanding between framing and the second level of agenda-setting: the agenda of attributes.

McCombs and Shaw (1972) conceptualized agenda-setting as a relationship between issues raised in the media and public opinion. The issues that the media places importance on tend to have an influence on what the public will consider to be important. In other words, the media agenda sets the public agenda (McCombs, 2005, p.22). McCombs defines five stages of agenda-setting. Some authors believe that the second stage, the attributes agenda (an importance that is given to a certain aspect of an object or question), is similar to framing (Ghanem, 1997; Maher, 2001) or is complementary to it (Gutmann, 2006; Kosicki, 1993; Scheufele, 2000).

Some authors, however, consider this correlation between agenda-setting and framing to be limiting. Carragee and Roefs (2004), for example, believe that it neglects how certain framings apply to different subjects, that is, a single subject may be susceptible to more than one framing.

In addition to the dialogue with agenda-setting, framing also faces a theoretical dead end due to its different views and applications in literature (Reese, 2007; Entman, 1994; Scheufele, 1999). The concept was born as a sociological idea from Goffman (1974), who systematized the concept from the perspective of social interactions. He also worked with the idea of framing as a way of organizing and guiding social reality. In general, this idea was “locating, perceiving, identifying and labeling an apparently infinite number of concrete events” (Goffman, 1974, p.21).

The literature then goes on to understand framing as a way to categorize and select what the media says (Scheufele, 1999). In this regard, Entman (1993) also defines framing as selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more relevant in a communication text (such as newspaper articles) in order to define a particular problem, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for a described item.

A number of studies have analyzed framing in the news, either by analyzing different mediums of communication or a specific part of an issue (Gamson & Lasch, 1980; Reese & Buckalew, 1995; Smetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In addition to the understanding of organization, other authors who work with framing in the news also address the descriptive character of the theory, and seek to explain how it is applied in the messages conveyed by the press.

Scheufele (2000) states that in framing the changes to the description of a situation, even if they are mild, can affect how audiences interpret said situation. In other words, framing is a context in which the media chooses certain frames that will directly impact public opinion. Gamson (1992) says that the concept deals in several languages (such as catch phrases, metaphors, representations and visual images) and reasoning devices (such as causes and consequences, appeals to principles, or moral claims). Framing also influences how the public thinks – audience frames, thought frames or individual frames (Scheufele, 1999; Maia, 2009); i.e., how they think about the problems and issues that media present. Therefore, these framings tend to influence how media information is ultimately interpreted. In an attempt to synthesize the approaches on the issue, Scheufele (1999) presents a model of how to research the theory of framing by analyzing inputs (the cognitive processes that build and receive frames) and analyzing the results from the application of frameworks, from the perspective of media and audiences, which includes journalists.

Araújo and Prior (2020) analyze the frames applied to coverage of Jair Bolsonaro's electoral campaign, the extreme right-wing candidate who was elected president of Brazil in 2018. They were trying to identify characteristics of populist rhetoric in editorials from international and Brazilian newspapers (the same editorials analyzed for this study). Araújo and Prior mapped two types of framing about the political situation in Brazil: those of “populist leaders, who challenge the social order and the system, and try to raise a framework of injustice that is in need of repair or reform; and the traditional media institutions, which respond with the need to foster respect for institutions, law and social order” (p.6). These authors came to the conclusion that Brazilian newspapers have somewhat contributed to the extreme right's rise to power by using frameworks that try to neutralize the threats to democracy that the rhetoric of these political actors represent, the rhetoric that sways public opinion in favor of the right.

There are, however, more recent studies that take the focus away from the communication industry, and talk about a kind of “bottom up model of framing” (Nisbet, 2010, p.75). According to this model, the new communication ecology, which was created with the advent of digital social networks, shifts the analytical focus away from traditional media and “hierarchical gatekeepers [targeting]

ordinary, everyday citizens that easily and regularly produce (online media” (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013, p.564). They become the creators, collaborators and commentators of online informational content.

Many studies have sought to understand how the new relationships between digital and traditional media take place (McCombs, 2005; Lee et al., 2005; Tedesco, 2005; Stromer-Galley & Baker, 2004), and also how political discourses have been framed in this new space.

It should be noted that political actors have also sought to establish their own frameworks, something which has been observed closely in studies for some years. Bichard (2006), for example, examined the blogs of candidates George W. Bush and John Kerry during the 2004 US presidential elections. The results of his study determined that John Kerry was more likely to place an emphasis on social and international issues, while Bush placed more of a focus on individual and community framework. Hemphil et al. (2013), on the other hand, studies how digital media provides politicians with the means to bypass traditional media and directly influence public opinion and behavior, thus establishing specific frames for specific problems. These authors also point out that political elites and journalists share frames which, in turn, have the potential to increase the impacts of framing.

Porto (2004; 2007) defines two types of framing in his study on how journalism and politicians frame their messages in the Brazilian 2002 election: news and interpretive. The news frames are composed of standards for presenting, selecting and emphasizing which journalists use to organize their reports. Journalists refer to this as the “news angle”, the point of view of the news text that highlights certain elements of a reality over others. On the other hand, interpretive framing promotes “a particular assessment of political issues and/or events, which include defining problems, assessing causes and responsibilities, offering possible solutions etc.” (Porto, 2004, p.15). These interpretive frames, however, can also be found in journalistic activity. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) and Tuchman (1978) identify at least five factors that influence the way journalists frame themes: a) social norms and values; b) organizational pressures and restrictions; c) pressures from interest groups; d) journalistic routines; and e) ideological or political views of journalists.

Literature on framing also discusses the specificity of the issues which are being investigated (Entman et al., 2009; Matthes, 2009). Some authors focus on framing specific issues and subjects (issue-specific frames) such as economic policies, while others focus on a more generic theme (generic frames) such as war. For example,

Smetko and Valkenburg (2000) analyzed framings and their widespread presence in print newspapers and television during the 1997 European heads of state meetings in Amsterdam. They analyzed the following tables: Attribution of responsibility; Conflict; Human Interest; and Moral and Economic Consequences. They found that the framings of responsibility were used the most in the news, followed by Conflict, Economic Consequences, Human Interest, and Moral framings, respectively. That study was based on another study by Neuman et al. (1992), which highlighted Conflict, Economic Consequences, and Human and Moral impact as the main framings in US news.

The new communication layout requires one to have knowledge of the empirical variables analyzed in framing studies in order to define how the new phenomena can be studied, such as the growing use of digital networks by political actors, discussed in the next section.

3 Twitter and the state: the age of communication on social networks

Twitter is one of the most popular social networks in Brazil for issues on politics¹. Its inclusion of public and/or political figures arose from the need to speak directly to a public that is interested in and identifies with the discourse of these figures. Added to this is the rise of extreme right-wing politicians to power who increasingly use social networks to make statements. This occurs mainly because of two factors: 1) the ability to frame their own speeches and not be just a source of information for communication vehicles (Hemphil et al., 2013; Paletz, 2002); or 2) the constant attempt to discredit and delegitimize traditional media as a reliable means of information, which we can see with the rise of populist communication around the world (Mont'Alverne & Mitozo, 2019).

This approximation between representatives and those who are represented on digital social networks means the goal of impacting public opinion is no longer limited to elections; it has become a government strategy. In this respect, *Twitter* is not only used by politicians as a tool for personally promoting their campaigns, but it has become a platform for official government communications. Consequently, what once pertained to the sphere of political communication has now moved into the sphere of public communication.

Duarte and Monteiro (2009) highlight that establishing a dialogue to help provide services to the public and disseminating actions

of general interest are two of the principles of public communication. The need to discuss both the politicians' use of digital media and public communication recently came to light through the American Court of Appeal's decision² that President Trump should unblock his *Twitter* users. The Court declared that the *Twitter* page of the president is an official channel, despite Trump's appeal that it is an individual forum. The Court stated that, if the president uses the *Twitter* account to communicate with foreign leaders and announce foreign policy decisions and initiatives, then his profile is a government tool and is thus considered to be a governmental channel, a public forum.

Once considered a tool of the Executive Power, the traditional media now uses statements published on the social network in its reports; personal opinions are not expressed in traditional media, but information that is of interest to citizens is, whether that information refers to government actions or public policies (Duarte & Monteiro, 2009). Thus, the Trump case demonstrates the importance of debating how media use the statements made by public agents on the networks, particularly since Trump refuses to speak with a large number of journalistic institutions.

Waisbord and Amado (2017) analyzed the *Twitter* use of populist Latin American presidents in an attempt to identify whether populism represents a radical change for political communication. The results demonstrated that there is no communicational change since digital media continues to be a platform for the top-down approach of these leaders with their citizens. The use of *Twitter* as a communication tool by U.S. President Donald Trump, for example, reinforces Waisbord and Amado's thesis (2017). According to Ott (2017), Trump's messages use a framework which simplifies problems through simplistic, rash and impolite discourse. As stated by Kreis (2017), these are expressive characteristics of Trump's populist rhetoric; his messages constantly framing the idea of the heartland, the construction of an "us versus them" discourse, and referring to situations that pose a danger to this pure nation (such as immigration).

Thus, traditional media are practically obligated to create news based on politicians' social media accounts just in order to maintain their audiences. When doing this, they often resort to statements on social media that emphasize conflict or economic frameworks (Vlatković, 2018). Meeks (2019) provides an example of this in his survey, analyzing how Trump used frames of attack against traditional media before and after his election. According to that survey, the

president mentions the newspapers and journalists in almost a fifth of his *tweets*: almost half of the messages directed at media contained a frame of conflict (through attacks and prejudice aimed at non-conservative media), and one-third of them contained a bias (toward conservative media). In addition, Trump employed more framings of attack once he became president than when he was a candidate. The survey also found that attack and biased framings were attractive to twitter audiences because they lead to more *retweets*.

In their analysis of the presidential primaries that selected Trump as a delegate in 2016, Wells et al. (2016) examined the factors that promoted coverage on Trump in the news, noting that *Twitter* had an impact on media coverage, and Trump's campaign even used that network to increase its coverage, demonstrating that he was running a hybrid media campaign.

The use of digital communication tools by public agents also occurs in Brazil, as President Jair Bolsonaro uses different social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *WhatsApp* as a way to dialogue directly with his audience through posts and opinions that generate controversy (Carreiro & Matos, 2019). The President's personal Twitter account (@jairbolsonaro) became a voice for his arguments, reports, decisions and political practices. As a result, his stance attracts mass media attention, after all, what the president talks about, with whom he talks to, and about what is reinforced and shared by traditional media (Costa et al., 2019).

For Hemphil et al. (2013), social media offers politicians an opportunity to bypass traditional media and directly influence the opinion and behavior of their audience, and establish their own frames for problems. These authors also point out that political elites and journalists often share frames. This sharing potentially increases the impact the frames have. However, it is still unclear in their research how journalists directly use politicians' *tweets*, particularly Bolsonaro's, as official sources for their stories (Lariscy et al., 2009; Evans et al., 2011; Parmelee, 2013).

4 Methodology

This study aims to investigate how three of Brazil's most influential newspapers framed *Twitter* messages from President Jair Bolsonaro in their news articles. To do this we analyzed the *tweets* from Bolsonaro's official *Twitter* account (@jairbolsonaro) between January 1st and April 30th, 2019, which were included in the following newspapers:

O Globo, *Folha de S. Paulo* (which shall be referred to as *Folha* from now on) and *O Estado de S. Paulo* (which shall be referred to as *Estadão*). These newspapers were chosen because they rank as the three largest circulation newspapers in the country, according to the Instituto Verificador de Comunicação³. *Folha* is in the lead with 194,855 copies in circulation, followed by *O Globo* with 173,527, and *Estadão* with 134,103. Even though all three newspapers are based in a single region of the country (in the Southeast), the circulation rates are reflective of their coverage of political issues at the national level. In addition, these newspapers primarily address politics in their main and editorial news (Marques et al., 2019), which attracts more attention and greater audience interaction on social media in the country (Mitozo et al., 2017).

In terms of the significance of these newspapers, Araújo and Prior (2020, p.6) came to the conclusion that their editorials largely contributed to Bolsonaro's rise to the Presidency as they swayed public opinion in favor of extreme right-wing rhetoric and convinced the public that he was an outsider, despite having been in the Legislature for 27 years. One example of this is illustrated in an article published in *Estadão* under the title "A very difficult choice"⁴, which compares the positions of Bolsonaro and Haddad (competitors in the second round) and their possible threat to democracy. This was the newspaper that published the most editorials indirectly supporting Bolsonaro during his campaign and directly supported him in his first few months as president.

The range of news was collected manually using the search systems on the newspapers' websites. The following keyword combinations were used in the search: Bolsonaro + Twitter; and Bolsonaro + Social Networks. Manual data mining was then performed in order to eliminate any material that did not mention the president's *tweets*. This entire process resulted in 351 news items from the three newspapers. We then collected the Bolsonaro *tweets* which were used as sources for the articles in our sample size. The data was then organized for coding and analysis.

The study is based on two questions:

RQ1) Do the media framings of Bolsonaro's *tweets* consist of journalists presenting, selecting and emphasizing *tweets* (news frames) or are they interpretations of a contradicting nature based on discordant frames and analyses of the president's report (interpretive frames)?

RQ2) Which issues addressed in the president's messages do newspapers adopt the most discordant frames for? Which ones do they adopt the most contradictory presentations and analysis for?

A qualitative content analysis was carried out to answer these questions. The first step was to conduct a pre-analysis, where the 351 articles and the *tweets* they cited were organized. Next, the main frames raised in the Bolsonaro *tweets* cited in the articles were categorized. We used previous studies that analyzed news and/or *Twitter* as a basis for this (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Neuman et al., 1992; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Marques et al., 2019; Carreiro & Matos, 2019).

Categories were then defined and codified, when two codifiers were trained to assign similar categories for similar cases, and the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, a coefficient that aims to test the coherence of a group of analytical categories, was applied to verify the categorization consistency⁵. This consistency test resulted in the categories below.

Table 1 – Categorization of frames in news citing Bolsonaro *tweets*.

Issue	Description
Economy	Issues related to the economy and also to the economic consequences of certain measures: spending cuts, economic reforms, privatizations, concessions, indices and budget targets.
Moral	Issues addressed through the lens of religious principles or moral prescriptions.
Personal	The president's tasks and activities of a personal nature, as well as activities that give a tone of personality and normality to Bolsonaro's daily life.
Conflict	Emphasis on conflict between individuals, groups or institutions as a means of capturing public interest (involving the president, attacks he has made on his <i>Twitter</i> account). It does not refer to matters of foreign policy and/or armed conflicts, which have their own categories.
Administration	Appointments, dismissals, disclosure of ordinances and other administrative acts; or rules and procedures for the everyday functioning of public institutions and policies.
Political Games	Issues dealing with political games such as: voting; party politics; negotiations; physiologism; governance and government crises.
Social Issues	Everyday issues and events that are not linked to government or the state. Articles on international issues (terrorism, climate/environmental events).
Public Safety	Crime or matters related to public security, such as the arms decree.
Foreign Policies	Issues relating to foreign policy relations and the country's international relations. This includes immigration, economic partnerships between Brazil and other nations, or international conflicts.
Others	Issues that do not fit in any of the previous categories.

Source: the authors.

A second analysis stage was subsequently carried out to determine whether the frames on Bolsonaro's *Twitter* statements were news or interpretive. The approach of Porto (2004; 2007) was used for this analysis. 'News' framing is understood here as only the journalist's cut of the president's tweet. The 'interpretive' category included material containing sources that interpreted the *tweets* (either the journalists themselves, through their opinion columns or blogs, or sources that oppose or express differing opinions from those declared by the president in the news). After this step, the data was cross connected in order to understand which issues use news or interpretive frames more.

Table 2 – Categorization of frames in material citing Bolsonaro *tweets*.

"News"	"Interpretive"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use Bolsonaro tweet as only source - Only sources presented are of Bolsonaro, members of government or social actors who support Bolsonaro's position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Presents blogs or opinions on Bolsonaro's <i>tweets</i> - Uses contrasting sources for framing Bolsonaro <i>tweets</i> - Adopts a different framing from that presented in Bolsonaro <i>tweets</i>

Source: the authors.

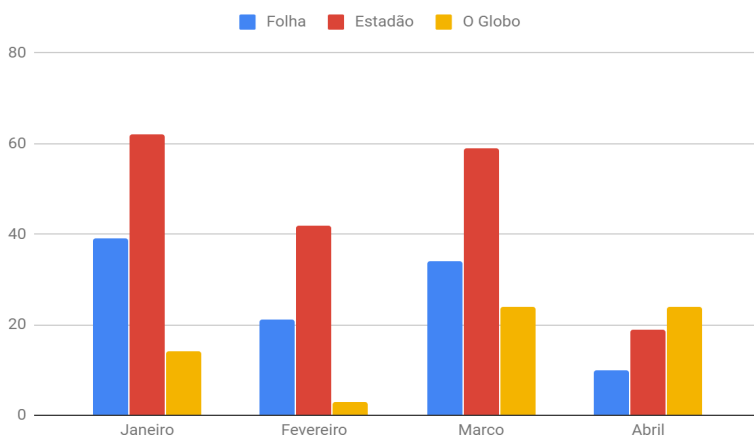
Data analysis began once coding was completed. The Chi-square test was used for this type of analysis, a coefficient that indicates relations between pairs of categories of variables, adopting a 95% confidence interval; i.e., a *p-value* coefficient of less than 0.05. The smallest Chi-square coefficient value for cross checking two binary variables is 9.0 (with two categories each). The cross checking of variables established for this test were: "Issues vs Frames", "Issues vs Months", "Months vs Frames".

5 Results

The analysis of the newspapers demonstrates that *Estadão* gave greater attention to Bolsonaro's *Twitter* as it published the largest number of articles with the president's messages as the official source (182 publications), followed by *Folha*, which published 104 articles, and *O Globo*, with a total of 65 publications, all during the analysis period. We also noticed a greater concentration of these

articles in March (117) and January (115) – a month which one would expect to have more coverage of the new president - with each newspaper presenting around twice as many articles as they do in the months of February (66) and April (53) together. The month by month distribution of the individual articles is shown in Graph 1, below.

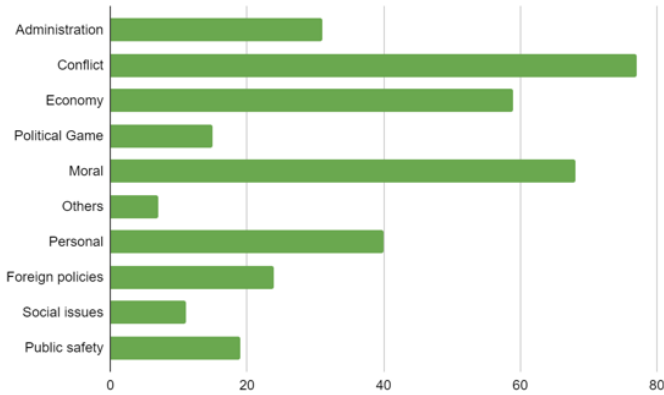
Graph 1 – Material in the analyzed newspapers citing Bolsonaro *tweets* between January and April 2019.



Source: the authors.

In terms of the main issues addressed over the months, we observed that the president *tweets* most cited by media were those dealing with Conflict⁶ (26 mentions in *Folha*, 40 in *Estadão* and 11 in *O Globo*). This was followed by the following issues, respectively: Morals⁷, Economy⁸ and Personal⁹ (Graph 2). These issues were distributed differently month by month. Conflict, Economy and Administration¹⁰ predominated in January while the issues of Personal, Conflict and Economy dominated in February. It should be noted that the second most discussed topic (Moral) was dominant only in the month of March, together with Conflict (the most mentioned) and Political Games¹¹. This leads us to believe that there was an unusual event that occurred in the month of March which garnered a lot of media attention. The issues of Economy, Conflict and Foreign Policies¹² were mentioned the most in the month of April.

Graph 2 – Frames of Bolsonaro *tweets* used by newspapers.

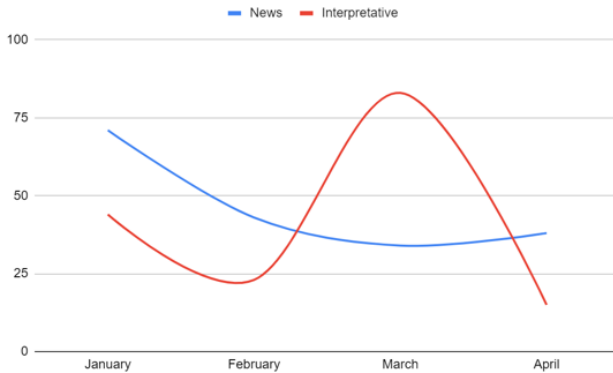


Source: the authors.

When analyzing the types of framing adopted in the articles using President Jair Bolsonaro’s *tweets* as a source of information, we can see that there were 186 articles presenting news framing¹³ and 165 of an interpretive nature¹⁴ during the four-month analysis period.

Articles with news frames (71) and 44 with interpretive frames were published in the month of January, while in the month of February there were only half as many published (43 news and 23 interpretive). It is worth mentioning that there was an increased number of interpretative articles in March (83 articles) and a low number in April (15 articles with interpretive framing) which led to more space for news framing.

Graph 3 – Month by month analysis of news and interpretive frames



Source: the authors.

For cross-checking variables, we can see that the Chi-square value (χ^2) for each category pair was not significant in all cases, as shown in Tables 1, 2 and 3.

Table 1 – Issues x frames.

Issues / Frames	Interpretative	News
Administration	1.99	6.84
Conflict	14.81*	7.12
Economy	4.84	11.97*
Political Games	2.56	1.71
Morals	16.81*	2.28
Others	0.57	1.71
Personal	1.42	9.97*
Foreign Policies	1.99	4.84
Social Issues	0.28	3.13
Public Safety	1.71	3.42

*These values represent a level of $p < 0.05$.

Source: the authors.

The cross-analysis of data demonstrates that the issues of Conflict and Moral are more associated with interpretive matters ($\chi^2 = 14.81$ and $\chi^2 = 16.81$, respectively). A greater relationship can be found with Issues and News framing between Economy and Personal ($\chi^2 = 11.97$ and $\chi^2 = 9.97$); i.e., the articles that address these two frames of the president's tweets tend to be less interpretive.

Table 2 – Issues x Months.

	January	February	March	April
Administration	0.05	1.14	0.57	1.99
Conflict	7.12	4.27	7.40	3.13
Economy	5.70	3.13	3.99	3.99
Political Games	2.28	0.28	1.14	0.57
Morals	0.28	0.00	17.66*	1.14
Others	0.85	0.28	0.57	0.57
Personal	4.27	6.84	0.28	0.00
Foreign Policies	1.99	2.28	0.00	2.56
Social Issues	1.14	0.57	1.42	0.28
Public Safety	3.99	0.00	0.28	0.85

*These values represent a level of $p < 0.05$.

Source: the authors.

Moral is the only frame that shows a dependency relationship in the month of March. Table 2 also shows the lack of relevance and acceptance of the null hypothesis (that there are no relationships) as far as the other pairs of categories are concerned (quadrants).

Table 3 – Months x Frames.

	Interpretative	News
January	12.54*	20.23*
February	6.84	11.97*
March	23.36*	9.97*
April	4.27	10.83*

* These values represent a level of $p < 0.05$.

Source: the authors.

Table 3 demonstrates that the interpretive frames in the months of February and April were the only ones that did not show significant Chi-square. Thus, it can be said that the issues demonstrated in Tables 1 and 2 above, even if not specifically, were addressed under both frameworks observed in this paper: interpretive and news, the latter being more prevalent when the president *tweets* were the source of the newspapers' agendas under study.

6 Discussion of results

This study is based on the inclusion of President Jair Bolsonaro *tweets* in the three quality papers analyzed based on results found in Costa et al. (2019). We do this in order to do more than just observe the phenomenon of agenda-setting, and thus we analyze the framework in two stages: the first is to understand which frames of Bolsonaro's *tweets* the newspapers used, and the second is to understand the type of framing for the articles that are based on his statements from his official *Twitter* account. Bolsonaro officially used *Twitter* and the newspapers we studied used his *tweets* as a source for many of their reports. This process includes the framing and interpretation of news events since the news companies themselves are the ones that determine not only what to cover, but also what elements or questions about an event are worth addressing and in what way.

In light of the data, we can observe that, at certain times, the media used the president's *Twitter* account more as an official source, as they did in the months of January and March, 2019. In January, this increased use was due to the beginning of the new government and the president's hospitalization on January 27th¹⁵. In March, the "Golden Shower"¹⁶ statement made on *Twitter* during carnival (03/05/2019), which had national and international repercussions, led newspapers to include more material on the president. This is exemplified by the greater relevance of the Moral theme in March (Table 2).

As demonstrated in the results presented in Graph 2, the Conflict category was the most recurrent over the months, meaning that the president's *tweets* in this framing often set the media's agenda, and their articles addressing this issue are more interpretive. It is important to highlight the socio-political context that allows traditional media to select Bolsonaro's *tweets* on a recurring basis. In addition to the increased political speech on *Twitter* from extreme right-wing populist leaders (Judis, 2016; Kazin, 2016), as is the case with Bolsonaro, it is clear that he (Bolsonaro) uses Conflict in his messages, especially when it comes to the field of journalism itself, which happens to occur in many countries throughout the world (Vlatković, 2018; Meeks, 2019). On the other hand, Economics had a greater association with news frames, and was the third most cited issue out of the most discussed *tweets* in Bolsonaro's profile over our four-month analysis period, which may demonstrate a certain agreement between the traditional media and government policies in this area.

The fact that the interpretative approach is growing and the news follows a linear behavior (Graph 3) means that media do not only look to transcribe the President's speeches on *Twitter*. For example, Moral and Conflict had a greater dependency relationship with interpretive framing (Table 1) and showed a greater association in the crossmatch between frames and months in March (Table 3). Given this information, we can say that the newspaper articles, in relation to some issues, present a contradictory nature; i.e., discordant frames and analyses when reporting on the president, which is answer to RQ1. However, it is worth noting that, for the most part, there was almost an even number of stories with interpretive and news frames, both in terms of occurrence (186 news stories; 165 interpretive stories) and association analyses (Table 1).

Regarding RQ2, we can say that Conflict and Moral were the issues containing the highest number of interpretive frames, that is, somehow more conflicting frames, contradictory presentations and analyses are adopted when these issues are the focus of the stories. In this regard, media are not impartial observers, they have rules and practices that influence what and how messages are relayed to the public.

7 Conclusions

Digital media as official government sources have been gaining space in the news production process, and show that the framing process does not only follow a logic from which elites manipulate the public: it is a method of any form of communication. Thus, media frames can imitate or question (following the same logic as political speeches) others, which politicians, activists, other media, or even citizens use (Porto, 2004).

The content on *Twitter* has shaped the mainstream coverage of traditional media, and is also being used as a space to confront this coverage (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013). It is evident, therefore, that this social media platform has played a central role for politicians and citizens to communicate about, for, and with others, during and after electoral campaigns, particularly at a time when it provides a safe place for populist leaders to express themselves, as we have seen in this study. It is true that this type of discourse is attractive to media because it meets the criteria of news in that it is “politically incorrect” and provides a scandal which media often want to see. As stated by Araújo and Prior (2020, p.6), “personalization, drama, and spectacles are characteristics of the current media logic that match the discursive strategies of ‘pop politics’, so widely used by many populist leaders”, such as Berlusconi, Trump and Bolsonaro.

It is up to the press to assume a democratic role and report the statements as they are issued by the primary source, but it must also critique the narratives of politicians by using interpretative frames that dialogue with the contradictory. In this case, the newspapers are decoding statements on social networks and are not just simply reporting the speeches, which can lead to the naturalization of certain political frameworks and distort the democratic process, such as political polarization (Aldé, 2001).

The results of this study open the door to new investigations on studies of media effects, ones that focus on the issues the Brazilian president has raised the most on his social networks. This perspective can help identify whether journalism uses these messages as a source to report on what the president pays the most attention to, or if there are agenda-setting criteria that select certain messages over others. Likewise, this study highlights the need to update the analytical perspectives of the relations between media and politics, which are so traditional in literature, and discuss the growing connection between politics and social media (Mont'Alverne & Mitozo, 2019), and the relationship between traditional media and digital social media, which is analyzed in this paper.

NOTES

- 1 According to data from *Twitter* in a survey conducted in 2018. Almost 70% of Brazilian users access the network to obtain information on politics. (See: <https://canaltech.com.br/redes-sociais/brasileiros-recorrem-ao-twitter-para-se-informar-sobre-politica-diz-pesquisa-119914/>). Created in 2006, the network is a microblog whose posts are limited to 280 characters, and allows the uploading of videos and images. In this network, in addition to making an opinion public by posting (tweeting) and sharing (retweeting), users can respond publicly, and receive and send messages privately. In this way, the response and retweet functions contain interactions on the social network capable of building and reinforcing issues supported by the account owner.
- 2 United States of America (2019). *United States Court of Appeals 2 For the Second Circuit*. Apelante: Knight First Amendment Institute at Columbia University. Apelado: Donald J. Trump, and Daniel Scavino. United States District Court 29 for the Southern District of New York. Decided in July, 9 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=0000016b-d745-d768-ab6b-d7ff25ce0001>
- 3 Instituto Verificador de Comunicação (2018). *Circulação digital dos grandes jornais cresce no país*. Retrieved from <https://www.meioemensagem.com.br/home/midia/2019/01/30/circulacao-digital-dos-grandes-jornais-cresce-no-brasil.html>

- 4 Editorial. *Estadão*. <https://opinio.estado.com.br/noticias/geral,uma-escolha-muito-dificil,70002538118>.
- 5 In the first round of tests, when 10% of the *corpus* was analyzed, the reliability index was less than 0.6. Thus, the coding team reviewed the previously established categories for a second round of analysis, which corresponded to a new variant of 10% of the *corpus*. In this second round, Cronbach's Alpha was greater than 0.9, and so we continued and completed coding.
- 6 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Conflict": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetconflito>.
- 7 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Moral": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetmoral>.
- 8 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Economy" - <http://bit.ly/materiatweeteconomia>.
- 9 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Personal": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetpessoal>.
- 10 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Administrative": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetadministracao>.
- 11 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Political Games": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetjogopolitico>.
- 12 Example of material that cites the *tweets* categorized as "Foreign Politics": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetpexterna>.
- 13 Example of material categorized as "News": <http://bit.ly/materianoticiosa>.
- 14 Example of material categorized as "Interpretative": <http://bit.ly/materiainterpretativa>.
- 15 Material that cites Bolsonaro tweets while he was hospitalized: <http://bit.ly/internacaobolsonaro>.
- 16 Material that cites Bolsonaro tweets on "Golden Shower": <http://bit.ly/materiatweetgoldenshower>.

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