

## THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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### Abstract

*The article presents the results of an investigation carried out between 2021 and 2022, which has as a general objective to unravel the ideology and power contained in the messages disseminated by social networks in the 2018 presidential electoral contest in Colombia. Political propaganda is selected as the object of analysis. Methodologically, the socio-critical paradigm is adopted with a qualitative approach and as a type of research, discourse analysis. The corpus is made up of messages from the candidacies of Iván Duque and Gustavo Petro. Among the results, it is evident that social networks constitute a broad and important scenario in the dissemination and transmission of content, particularly in electoral campaigns; that in this type of message, discursive power is used to uncritically spread and reproduce ideologies that lead to prejudice and discrimination; that political discourse acquires particular importance through propaganda, as this is used by elites as a form of power and social control by making deliberate use of symbols whose purpose is to manipulate people's beliefs and ideas, or mental representations, regardless of the discursive strategies used to achieve it. As conclusion, it is highlighted that in the 2018 Colombian presidential electoral contest, social networks play a decisive role in the dissemination of propaganda messages, whose purpose is to reproduce ideologies and impose power mechanisms to influence public opinion and, consequently, legitimize or delegitimize one's actions. or another party.*

**Keywords:** political discourse, political propaganda, social networks, ideology, power.

### INTRODUCTION

Colombia lived in 2018 one of the most controversial presidential electoral processes in its history as a result of the messages transmitted by social networks, which powerfully influenced the election of the right-wing candidate Iván Duque.

Since the legislative elections and the presidential first and second round elections, the Electoral Observation Mission (MOE) analyzed nearly 45 million messages that were registered on social networks and detected phenomena such as the impact of false news and the characters of the public life that generated the most reactions on social networks (MOE, 2018). The entity observed a high degree of intolerance, particularly in the first round of May 27, when the greatest number of interactions with attack content occurred. While in the congressional campaign and inter-party popular consultations, the main arguments were hatred against the FARC (34%), corruption (26%) and Castro-Chavismo (24%), in the first presidential round the main issues were paramilitarism (3.4%), corruption (29%) and the Farc (25%) and, in the second round, there were similar attacks between the supporters and opponents of the two candidates, Petro and Duque, with Venezuela being the greatest source of intolerance (33%), the Farc (27%) and corruption (22%). The report states that the candidate Gustavo Petro was the one who most generated a community of intolerance and fear among his defenders and detractors, as a result of the repetitive speech of the opposition party about turning Colombia into a "Castrochavista" and being a friend of the unarmed guerrilla. of the FARC.

Similarly, the MOE reports that another of the main protagonists of the elections was false news, known as fake news, which has a short life cycle (maximum seven days), unless a political figure



denies it or share them. This situation generates concern given the little evaluation of the veracity of the information transmitted through social networks, given that a propaganda function prevails instead of an informative one.

Although the functions of the media include informing, educating, forming an opinion, denouncing, criticizing, and influencing viewers, it is common for social networks to also attack, attack, and discredit the contender, or to try to convince or persuade the receiver in an unethical way and regardless of the political and ideological ideas that are held, generating adhesion or rejection, in some cases.

Taking into account the above, the problem that is being investigated is the role that social networks played in the dissemination of messages of political content, on the eve of the 2018 presidential electoral contest in Colombia, which strongly influenced the election of the candidate of the Centro Democrático party and the defeat of that of Human Colombia.

In consideration of the above, the thesis is proposed according to which, in the 2018 Colombian presidential electoral contest, social networks played a decisive role in the dissemination of messages whose purpose was to reproduce ideologies and impose power mechanisms to influence public opinion. and, consequently, legitimize or delegitimize the actions of one or the other party.

The research questions are: What is the role of social networks in the public dissemination of messages? In what way does the dissemination of messages on social networks influence the legitimization of power and in the production of ideologies? What strategies of legitimization and delegitimization characterize the various messages disseminated through social networks in the electoral campaign?

As a general objective, we sought to unravel the ideology and power contained in the messages disseminated through social networks in the 2018 presidential electoral contest in Colombia, in order to demonstrate the ways in which the mechanisms that lead to persuasion are reproduced, legitimized, and delegitimized. of public opinion.

As specific objectives pretended determine the role played by social networks in the transmission and public dissemination of propaganda messages; identify the ideological aspects and the mechanisms of power contained in the political text messages transmitted by social networks; to characterize the legitimization and delegitimization strategies present in the various messages disseminated through social networks in the electoral campaign.

Based on the fact that the media, including social networks, interpret events and social reality through discursive strategies that are invisible to the unsuspecting reader, it was considered relevant to carry out an analysis of the discourse that circulates through them in order to reveal the meanings in the aforementioned messages, in such a way that elements of critical reading can be provided that contribute to the understanding of sociocultural phenomena and foster the conditions for a more democratic political and social change in Colombia and Latin America.

The foregoing became evident in the political messages that were disseminated through social networks headed by both parties. On the one hand, the Democratic Center, and specifically Álvaro Uribe Vélez, was in charge of propagating the idea that if Gustavo Petro, given his guerrilla incursion, won the elections, he would turn Colombia into a second Venezuela, intimidating the citizens who confidently believed in his word. On the other hand, Colombia Humana focused on exposing the unethical and corrupt acts carried out by the Democratic Center.

### **1. Theoretical foundation**

In accordance with the above, a discourse analysis was carried out taking into account, firstly, the theoretical approaches of Charaudeau (2002, 2005, 2009, 2010, 2012) and Van Dijk (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2009), with respect to political discourse, particularly, ideology, power, and persuasion; second, the foundations of Domenach (1979), Bernays (2008 [1928], 2019 [1923]) and Roderó (2000) on political propaganda and, thirdly, the contributions of Becerra (2019), Pérez (2018) and Terrasa (2019), in relation to social networks, specifically, the WhatsApp instant messaging application on the Internet. dissemination of messages with political content.

#### **1.1 Political discourse, ideology, power and persuasion**



At present, social networks are especially important in discourse analysis, as they promote a communicative exchange between the actors that generates great social and cultural changes, because, beyond the depth of the topics discussed and the messages shared, their Power resides in virality, "in the ability to channel and disseminate information at levels never before achieved" (Mancera and Pano, 2013, p. 50). In this virtual environment, political discourse has found an ideal space, since it not only facilitates public participation in political life, but also becomes an effective political tool for the dissemination of electoral campaigns.

To understand the implications of political discourse, it is necessary to refer to Charaudeau (2002), who raises several postulates about the importance of political discourse in the development of a society, among these: "political discourse has no meaning outside of action and action entails, for the political subject, the exercise of power" (p. 110). From this perspective, the linguist states that discourse is constructed as an action to achieve power. A power that is materialized through two components: discourse and action: the first leads to action, and the articulation of these leads to a social exchange. It is important to clarify that these components have their own autonomy (Charaudeau, 2002). In this way, the sense of an exchange through language is born.

The communicative intention is directly related to the objective to which the action is directed, seeking to achieve it. This requirement completes the communicational intention through an action objective, it consists of placing the target subject in a situation that he is forced to comply with, that is, a relationship of submission to the position of the subject that communicates (p. 111) and, at the same time, it exposes him to the sanction in which the actor exercises an authority when communicating, recognized by the other actor who interacts in the discourse. That is, as soon as this authority is recognized by the partner, the influence project acquires a certain force of action (the perlocutory force of pragmatics), the target subject has placed itself in a position of dominated, the authoritarian subject in a position dominant, and both participate in a power relationship (p.

In this relationship of power, or sovereignty, the actor who represents a situation, group or place has the authority to speak on behalf of the interlocutor to represent their values and ideas, as expressed by Charaudeau (2002).

In accordance with the above, it is necessary to recognize that, through sovereign actors and communicative actions, social positions are taken from the ideology of the elites, the technocratic ideology and the ideology of the masses.

In this study allusion is made to discursive power, which is produced and reproduced by text and speech, and penetrates the minds of people to induce them to act in one way or another. This power is held by elites, who have privileged access and control and exercise it to control speech and sometimes use it to control people's minds. In this exercise, basic social, political or ethical principles are not always respected and it leads to the abuse of power.

Regarding the political discourse itself, Charaudeau (2009, pp. 264-266) mentions the drama, the simulation that contains the word uttered publicly, insofar as this does not constitute a truth in itself, but a set of values that are presented according to a dramatic script capable of moving the public in a positive or negative way, either to make them adhere to the project that is defended, or to dissuade them from following an adverse project. Thus, he speaks of a triadic scenario of political discourse made up of a political instance, an adverse one, and a citizen one, in which the first two compete for the conquest of the third. This scenario is made up of three discursive moments: 1) proving that society is in a disastrous social situation and that the citizen is the first victim,

And just as political discourse achieves great diffusion and acceptance in social networks in obtaining power, so does the reproduction of ideology, which is understood by van Dijk (2005) as a system of social representations that defines social identity. of a group. As representations are understood the shared beliefs about their fundamental conditions and their modes of existence and reproduction. The author conceives the analytical study of the discourse of ideology within a multidisciplinary theoretical framework constituted by discourse, cognition and society.



According to Van Dijk, ideologies are defined by various groups that share them, such as social movements, political parties, professions, churches, and these are acquired, expressed and reproduced through discourse. They control and organize other social beliefs, providing ideological coherence to the beliefs of a group, thereby facilitating their acquisition and use in everyday situations. In addition, they specify the cultural principles and values of importance to the group (freedom, equality, justice). Likewise, being the socio-cognitive foundation of social groups, ideologies are acquired gradually, through multiple forms of text and speech in formal education and in the media, and change or disappear throughout life, so they need to be relatively stable.

Mental models built from communicative experiences are what Van Dijk (2001) calls context models or contexts or, in other words, mental representations of something. The author states that mental models are reproduced every time people face a similar situation and respond accordingly. Thus, social representations make up the global contents and structures of the (situational) models that people make for each social event and for each discourse, and these models represent the understanding and evaluation of each discourse.

In the same way, persuasion plays a fundamental role in political discourse, as it serves as a mind control mechanism that involves the control of mental models. Through persuasion, discourses are shaped and adjusted according to the preferences of the speakers or producers, and the recipients are persuaded to believe and do what they say, or to consent, as Gramsci put it, out of free will and not coercion.

When analyzing the identities and power relations established between individuals living in society, Charaudeau (2010) argues that there are no social relations that are not marked by relations of influence.

Influence relationships are staged in language according to a principle of alterity (there is no "I" without "you"). Therefore, becoming aware of oneself as a communicating subject depends on the possibility of recognizing the existence of the other in their identity difference as a speaking subject. This identity difference represents a possible threat for each of the subjects in the presence, which implies strategies to solve this problem by rejecting or preying on the other.

The best way to exercise discursive power and persuasion is through the media and social networks (Van Dijk, 2009). With respect to the media, these are in the hands of the elites, who exercise dominance in the political and economic aspects of a country and have the power, through the discourses that are produced and reproduced in them, to influence large social groups. In the case of social networks, with respect to the control of the political issues under discussion and the definition of the situation as it is represented in the mental models, it is the candidates and political leaders of one or another party who control the formation of mental media and also define, probably, social representations, given that these are mediated and directed by new media monopolies (Castells,

## **1.2 Propaganda and political power**

In political discourse, propaganda plays a preponderant role, particularly in electoral elections to propagate political ideologies. Its objective, as stated by Charaudeau (2012), is to influence people's decisions, for which the speaking subject uses discursive strategies focused on the emotion and feelings of the interlocutor to seduce him or to cause fear. A process of dramatization or a discursive trap destined to imprison the other in the networks of their emotional impulses.

for Bernays (2008 [1928]), "Modern propaganda is the consistent and enduring attempt to create or shape events with the aim of influencing public relations with a company, idea or group" (p. 33). Young (1991) defines it as "the deliberate use of symbols with the purpose of changing people's beliefs and ideas and, ultimately, their actions as a form of power and social control" (p. 109). On the other hand, for Pineda (2006), it is "a communicative phenomenon of ideological content and purposes through which a sender (individual or collective) transmits a message with interest and deliberately to achieve, maintain or reinforce a position of power over thought or the behavior of a receiver (individual or collective) whose interests do not necessarily coincide with those of the issuer" (p. 228).



But, without a doubt, the one who has contributed the most with his contributions to the field of propaganda, in particular, to the theory of public relations and manipulation, is Edward Bernays, son of Ana Freud and nephew of Sigmund Freud. The publicist and journalist were born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1891 and passed away in March 1995, at the age of 104. In 1928 [2008] he published the book *Propaganda*, in which he used ideas about the individual unconscious, inspired by Freud, for mass persuasion. In this regard, he points out that many of man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes for the desires he has been forced to repress, and that human desires are the steam that drives the social machine. Only by understanding these can the propagandist control that cast and loose mechanism that is modern society.

In his book *Propaganda*, he considers techniques to get people to behave irrationally, through manipulation, managing to link products or policies with their emotions and desires.

But, despite Bernays's conception of the need for propaganda to organize chaos in a democratic society and the certainty that nowadays, it necessarily intervenes in everything that is relevant on the social level, be it in the field of politics or finance, industry, agriculture, religion or education, propaganda has been used irresponsibly, particularly in the political field, as long as it provides partial or biased information by presenting only one side or aspect of an argument. It is usually repeated and broadcast in a wide variety of media in order to obtain the desired result in the attitude of the audience. In this sense. It is usually used as a "weapon of war" in the ideological struggle, as Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945) actually did in World War II, sociologist and minister for public enlightenment and propaganda of the Third Reich and collaborator of Adolf Hitler, who, inspired by Bernays's writings, in particular his book *Crystallizing Public Opinion* (1919 [1923]), used it to extol feelings of pride, promote hatred, lying and convincing about aspects that are far from reality, as the basis for their destructive campaign against the Jews of Germany. Somewhat shocking, given that Bernays was of the Jewish religion. as the basis for his destructive campaign against the Jews of Germany. Somewhat shocking, given that Bernays was of the Jewish religion. as the basis for his destructive campaign against the Jews of Germany. Somewhat shocking, given that Bernays was of the Jewish religion.

Its effects confirmed the effectiveness of the mechanisms of persuasion and manipulation of propaganda, not without reason, Lasswell (1927, p. 220) states that "it is one of the most powerful instruments in the modern world." Goebbels, known for the famous phrase: "If a lie is repeated a thousand times, it becomes the truth," published the article *The Eleven Principles of Propaganda*, which spread Nazi ideology among the German population of his time.

### 1.3 Political propaganda and social networks

Social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Messenger, WhatsApp, Telegram, among others, are digital tools managed by large technology companies, which allow users to create and share messages, photos, and videos on the Internet with other people. With improvements in Internet access and the affordability of cell phones, their use has increased in the last decade, becoming a daily habit for many.

Thus, these digital platforms, originally designed to connect family and friends, are today widely used not only in the commercial field, but also in the social, political and religious fields, creating a direct and unfiltered channel with users. However, As Bradshaw points out (cited by Becerra, 2019), what was anticipated as a force for freedom and democracy is under scrutiny for amplifying misinformation, inciting violence, and diminishing trust in the media and institutions. democratic. This is the case of the use of techniques such as fake news, which disseminate false or unproven information, creating discomfort and stimulating users with negative feelings.

Regarding negative publicity, in the study carried out in 2019 by Samantha Bradshaw, a researcher at the Internet Institute of the University of Oxford (cited by Becerra, 2019), it is revealed organized manipulation of campaigns on social networks in 70 countries, while in 2018 there were 48 and in 2017, 28 countries. According to the document, in every country there is at least one political party or government agency using social media to influence public attitudes.





Bradshaw's research reveals that people are more susceptible to misinformation when trust in the political system is low and political polarization is high; conditions that describe many of the Latin American democracies. The negativity of social networks exacerbated in these contexts suggests that the region is especially vulnerable to the risks posed by unregulated social networks. He also mentions a survey (Pew) that was carried out in eleven countries, three of them in Latin America, which reveals that the vast majority believe that social networks make them more informed, but also more susceptible to being manipulated. . In other surveys (Latinobarómetro), the fraction of those who believe that social networks do not serve democracy has gone from 30% in 2015 to 40% in 2020. On the other hand,

Regarding Colombia, the Oxford Institute's research identifies politicians, political parties and private contractors as the type of actor that uses social media for influence operations. In relation to the strategies, tools and techniques used to spread propaganda or disinformation, the report ensures that in 87% of countries manipulators use human accounts on social networks; 80% accounts with 'bots', 11% cyborg accounts, and 7% stolen or hacked accounts. In Colombia, it identifies the use of human accounts and bots for propaganda and disinformation campaigns, while the use of 'bots' is typical of low-capacity teams, such as those in the country; In addition, the propagated messages fall into the category of support for a cause or political actor,

In the same way, according to Becerra (2019), in Colombia, distraction or diversion of conversations, criticism not related to important issues, and the suppression of participation through personal attacks or harassment are frequently incurred, practices that were not identified by the Oxford report. And, finally, regarding communication strategies, the investigation says that in the country they are used for the creation of disinformation or 'trolling', the latter phenomenon being described as a growing global challenge and threat to fundamental human rights.

#### **1.4 Use of WhatsApp in the political scene**

According to Pérez (2018), WhatsApp reached 1,500 million active users in 2018 with some 60,000 messages sent every day, which makes it the most used instant messaging platform in the world. Likewise, the journalist affirms that in the report *Digital News Report*, prepared that same year by the Reuters Institute of the University of Oxford, ensures that the use of WhatsApp for the consumption of information has doubled in the last four years, coinciding with the Facebook crisis and the collapse of the press.

But without a doubt, the most impressive aspect of its use is the growing boom that WhatsApp has taken on the political scene, to become a very effective and attractive tool to spread the ideological content of the various electoral campaigns. Free from public scrutiny and from the professional and ethical responsibility required by open social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram, when sharing controversial content, WhatsApp is presented as a more reserved space for sharing memes, informative messages and propaganda with family and friends. policy that is considered to be of mutual interest. Said contents are, on the one hand, received, sent and forwarded by the receivers confidently without taking into account the source from which they come, with which one falls into an uncritical attitude and reproduces ideologies that lead to misinformation, prejudice and discrimination. And, on the other hand, they generate discomfort, discrepancies and resentments among those who do not share the opinions or points of view of the content that is disseminated.

And it is that, as Gutiérrez-Rubí affirms (quoted by Terrasa, 2019), "WhatsApp is an ideal channel to feed people's self-convictions and prejudices day by day, drop by drop." In this, the dissemination of political propaganda takes great force, according to the author.

On the other hand, in this game of political contention, false news or fake news, rumors and black propaganda spread rapidly and to many people, according to Fumanal (cited by Terrasa, 2019).

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The socio-critical paradigm with a qualitative approach was adopted; As a type of research, discourse analysis was privileged, with which it was intended to observe, describe and interpret a social and cultural phenomenon in which the discursive subjects in the statement are involved. According to this position, we opted for a discursive subject that legitimizes the discourse.

The primary sources of information collection consisted of texts, images and videos disseminated through social networks such as WhatsApp. Among the secondary ones, the following were taken into account: theses, scientific articles, books, magazines, specialized newspapers, Internet pages, etc. The data collected was processed and recorded in reading sheets (bibliographic, thematic, summary, textual citation, non-textual citation, among others).

As phases of the investigation, we considered, firstly, the corpus, which is made up of four messages, two of each candidate, transmitted by WhatsApp during the 2018 presidential electoral contest. Second, the analysis of the messages selected from the communication and enunciation situations proposed by Charaudeau (2002) and Martínez (2005). Third, the discussion of results in light of the emerging core categories: legitimization of power and reproduction of ideologies, confronted with the theories on which the research is based. And fourthly, the conclusions.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter reports on the results of the analysis of the propaganda messages transmitted by WhatsApp in the 2018 political contest and its influence on public opinion, considered from the communication and enunciation situations raised by Charaudeau (2002) and Martínez (2005).

In the analysis of each one of the relevant units, or messages, we start from the description of the genre and the social contract of speech that is established between the participating interlocutors; then we proceed with the identification of the communication situation and the enunciation situation, to culminate with the identification of the discursive strategies used by the Announcer in each one of the texts, from which the discourse is legitimized or delegitimized (Charaudeau, 2012; Martínez, 2013).

These selected messages were:





The discussion of the results obtained in the analysis of each of the messages was carried out in light of the theoretical foundations that support them. These results are grouped into two central categories of emerging analysis: legitimization of power and reproduction of ideologies.

### 3.1 Legitimation of power

According to Charaudeau (2002, p. 110), "political discourse has no meaning outside of action and action entails, for the political subject, the exercise of power." According to what was expressed, the discourses analyzed in each of the messages were constructed as actions to achieve power. The struggle that is debated in the elections is for the sovereign power between the actors: in a relationship of dominator-dominated power.

Regarding the 2018 presidential elections, the analyzed propaganda messages reflect the prejudices, stereotypes and major social and political conflicts that persist in the country, as well as the recurrence of themes such as: hatred of socialism (Castrochavism, guerrillas), paramilitarism, corruption, ballasts of a "political country" that is increasingly moving away from the "national country", as Gaitán pointed out.

According to the analysis, it is found that political discourse acquires particular importance through propaganda, since it is used by elites as a form of power and social control (Young, 1991), by making deliberate use of symbols whose purpose is to manipulate people's beliefs and ideas, or mental representations (Van Dijk, 2001).

In message 1, the thematic intention is to intimidate, including in the message all opponents of the Democratic Center, with the purpose of convincing voters not to vote for their candidate, to reject the government proposal of Human Colombia. Fear becomes the strategy with which the announcer seeks to legitimize himself before his interlocutor through the use of an aggressive discourse that frightens and prevents (Charaudeau, 2002, 2010). In addition to using the principles of propaganda to attack and discredit the opponent, the Announcer uses strategies such as drama, complicity, concern and indignation to stimulate aggression and confrontation, thereby seeking to delegitimize the discourse of Human Colombia. and legitimize that of the Democratic Center. In this sense,

In message 2, the contender (Colombia Humana) is presented as a serious threat to the nation, through the use of biased words such as the guerrilla used to attack its weak point (Domenach, 1979): the incursion of the candidate and some of the party activists in the demobilized Colombian guerrillas.

In the statement there is a clear identification of the enunciator with the enunciate and with the third party, with whom he seeks to legitimize his patriotic position as the hero destined to win the elections to save the nation from the socialist ideas advocated by the left (Charaudeau, 2002, 2010, Martinez, 2001).

In the principles of the black propaganda used by the Announcer and other strategies such as: the analogy with soccer, the warning, the color, the soccer and patriotic symbology, the legitimization of the discourse that the Democratic Center seeks to access power is supported. as well as the delegitimization of the discourse of Human Colombia, due to the incursion of its activists into the demobilized guerrillas (M-19 and FARC). In messages like this, discursive power is used to spread prejudices and stereotypes, which influence the minds of voters and their actions (Van Dijk, 2001, 2006).

Message 3, alluding to Petro's campaign, presents as a theme the double standards of the Democratic Center party, by highlighting the collaboration of former M-19 militants and former EPL guerrillas, Iván Duque and participation in the government by Alvaro Uribe Velez.

In the statement, a power relationship is presented between enunciators who dispute sovereign power (Charaudeau, 2002) over the enunciators. An E1 that intends to unmask his adversary by revealing his alliances with ex-guerrillas; an E2 that seeks to hide these alliances by preaching hatred and rejection of former guerrilla militants. This message shows how the enunciators have the power to exercise their authority to influence the opinions of their constituents and establish consensus, the art of manipulating the masses and controlling their minds, as proposed by Charaudeau (2002, 2005) and Van Dijk. (2001).





The Announcer's intention regarding the issue is to inform, with the purpose of convincing voters not to fall into the traps of the contender, legitimize themselves before them and delegitimize what is referred to. The discursive strategies used in the statement such as disclosure, and its opposite side: concealment, refers to the inevitable relationship between knowing and not knowing and, according to Pardo (2007, p. 141), is expressed in partial knowledge, interests, fragmentation, distortion, among other resources. Likewise, the strategy of disclosing reveals the principle of silencing Goebbels (Diario Constitucional.cl, 2018) in which the opponent incurs, by concealing the news that favors his adversary. According to this, disclosing alliances with ex-guerrillas favors Human Colombia,

In message 4, corresponding to Petro's campaign, the positive actions of Human Colombia are highlighted in opposition to the negative ones of the Democratic Center, from which it is urged to choose the correct side.

As in the previous message, the statement presents a relationship between enunciators in dispute over sovereign power (Charaudeau, 2002, Van Dijk, 2001), through a discourse that exposes the values and anti-values of the enunciators. This grabbing of power is understandable when looking at the usufruct that right-wing politicians have made of the country's wealth, by resorting to illegal and unconstitutional actions such as those mentioned in the message and alluding to E2; with these actions E1 seeks to delegitimize the opponent. Among the strategies used by the Announcer to build the third are:

First, the induction by the model. In this case, the model is the value that has been assigned to the one who represents it (honesty, dignity, justice, which provokes the inference through an incitement to imitate the model, to "do like the other, according to Martínez (2002, p. 176).

Secondly, it makes use of the argument for values, which is a resource, equally, with persuasive intentions. In this, the following tactics are used: it alludes to specific values, establishing a parallel between the values and the anti-values of the activists of both parties; Photography is used as an inductive procedure (Martínez, 2002), which allows reinforcing what is referred to by E1, by seeking a relationship of identity and empathy with its speakers from the experiences and correct acts of the activists. This constitutes a kind of incitement to adherence in the minds of the voters and works as a commentary on what is intended to be proven, according to Martínez (p. 175). In addition to the image

Political legitimacy entails great power, while political power that is perceived as legitimate is mostly obeyed, while that perceived as illegitimate is disobeyed, regardless of whether the reasons are rational or emotional (Charaudeau, 2002; Van Dijk, 2001, 2004). What the message denounces is a clear example of abuse of power, in which politicians legitimized by the State enrich themselves with public money, murder, dispossess, disappear, stigmatize citizens with impunity. And also, the manipulation of the mental models of citizens who do not have the resources to resist them constitutes an important form of abuse of power, as Van Dijk warns (2004, p. 15).

Discursive domination, that is, the abuse of power through discourse, is really efficient if we are not only able to bring out preferred mental models of specific events but also if we can persuade people to form social representations. preferred by the power elites (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 17). In this sense, under the dominant influence of Uribe, in the minds of citizens is the belief that he is the only one who can defend the country from guerrilla attacks, through the argument of democratic security, even if they are demobilized. This belief is instilled in people when they are persuaded that the left is bad and that it always seeks to attack the country. This is how our attitudes about us (Centro Democrático-Uribe) and them (Colombia Humana-Petro) are formed, converted into socially shared beliefs and considered as something that is taken for granted. In this way, the representations preferred by the power elites are legitimized.

### 3.2 Reproduction of ideologies

looked with Charaudeau (2012) that the objective of propaganda is to influence people's decisions by propagating political ideologies and, for this, the announcer uses discursive strategies focused on the emotion and feelings of the interlocutor to seduce him or to cause fear.



Considering the above, it is found that the propaganda texts analyzed seek to influence, seduce or provoke fear in the voters. In messages 1 and 2, for example, the idea is spread that the Human Colombia party, made up mostly of ex-guerrillas, constitutes a threat to the country, due to its left-wing ideology, and for this it uses an aggressive discourse. and frightening, which also brings to the mind of the voter the reiterated idea spread by the Democratic Center party that the guerrillas are terrorists and that Colombia led by the left can become a second Venezuela. We call these fundamental, very general social representations ideologies and, according to Van Dijk (2004, p. 17), once people have these social representations, on each relevant occasion they will tend to build the specific mental model that is a manifestation of social representation. In this way, once those who are against us have been labeled and cataloged as terrorists then a negative representation of the terrorists will be enough to form the desired negative mental representation of any future events that are declared as terrorists. an event in which terrorists are involved as agents.

For its part, in messages 3 and 4, Human Colombia seeks to warn voters, through the use of counter-propaganda (Domenach, 1979) attacking the weak points of the opponent. In the case of message 3, he presents the alliances of the Democratic Center with ex-guerrillas of the M-19 and the EPL to demonstrate with this that the adversary's propaganda against the left and the guerrillas is in contradiction with the facts and, in the case of message 4, attacking the opponent by making visible issues such as: investigations of party activists for corruption, dispossession of land, disappearances, homophobia, among others.

Accordingly, the fundamental ideologies of our society are based on widespread discursive practices deeply rooted in people's minds. Thus, social representations, in general, and ideologies, in particular, are not formed or changed in one day, since they frequently require varied and repeated discourses regarding various events and from various sources. Words, texts, speech samples and images are needed (Van Dijk, 2004).

Through the strategy of repetition, Uribe makes use of the principle of orchestration which, as we saw before, consists of presenting a small number of ideas on the same subject and tirelessly repeating them over and over again from different perspectives. According to this principle, repetition drills into the subjectivity of the receiver, penetrates it, takes possession of it, which is why when he speaks, he repeats the same sentence. This is activated, for example, when the voter sees messages 1 and 2, for which reason he fears that Colombia will become a "second Venezuela" if it were to be governed by the guerrillas. Said principle, in propaganda, is also related to the use of paranoia, as it seeks to make one feel fear, insecurity, and danger in the face of the adversary.

In accordance with Van Dijk (2004), words not only express concepts and meanings, but evaluations associated with those meanings. In this sense, the lexicon is an obvious and powerful means to manage the opinions of the recipients and can contribute to polarizing mental models. Through the polarization strategy, the fundamental ideologies that underlie many of our social representations are organized and, as Van Dijk says, to manufacture them, ideological discourses resort to the general rhetorical strategy of emphasizing or subtracting emphasis. This is evident in message 2, by placing the supporters of the Democratic Center on the side of "Colombia" and those of Human Colombia on the side of the "guerrilla." Using this strategy, the Announcer manifests a form of stereotyping against the adversary (Colombia Humana) that places him in inferior conditions in relation to his party (Democratic Center). According to Van Dijk (2006), global themes or meanings control local ones and arise from them as they are expressed by words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. Therefore, the local meanings of the discourse, that is, its propositions (agents, patients and beneficiaries), as well as the relations between them, the themes and the words, become important in said control.

Messages 3 and 4 also show the polarization strategy (Van Dijk, 2004), by negatively presenting the opponent on the wrong side and the opponent on the right side. Through the use of this strategy, the contender seeks to dismantle the ideology spread by the opponent, wanting to demonstrate that the information about the danger that the party of the leftist candidate represents for the



nation is unfounded and rigged and that, on the contrary, disinformation on the actions of the contending party leads the reader to accept them wrongly and without question.

On the other hand, the categories of general topics express underlying prejudices, group norms and goals, as well as dominant ideologies, which influence the minds of people and their actions. Messages 1 and 2 seek to build the mental model that the Democratic Center has in relation to the issue of democracy. In this sense, propaganda is the means to control the mental models of the recipients, to open up the active discourse of the elites and the passive discourse of large audiences and, as Fajardo (2017) points out, it serves as a builder of fictitious worlds, assumed by the citizen as real and through which those who hold power propose to build enraged passions against the invented enemy; incite hatred, violence, tares, tears using suggestion and lies.

Hence the vital importance of controlling public discourse since it is especially through public discourse that we can control the formation of social representations (Van Dijk, 2004, p. 19). In this sense, the repeated discourses of the Centro Democrático lead to negative mental models and, by highlighting generalizations, they are used to form a specific negative evaluation that becomes part of a negative social representation of Human Colombia. These practices have impacted the mental models of people facing eternal situations of violence and are recalled every time security is warned, as Uribe did during his government of democratic security.

Continuing with Van Dijk, if people can be manipulated to accept the preferred ideology, that is, that of the elites, discursive power becomes the most efficient, since in that case people not only form the desired mental models of specific events but also the desired social representations of all kinds of events, people, and situations.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In the 2018 Colombian presidential electoral contest, social networks played a decisive role in the dissemination of propaganda messages, whose purpose was to reproduce ideologies and impose power mechanisms to influence public opinion and, consequently, legitimize or delegitimize the actions of one party or the other.

In the study it was possible to show that social networks constitute a broad and important scenario in the dissemination and transmission of content, particularly in electoral campaigns, while their use allows a good participation of the voting public with the candidates and with the members of his political community. However, due to freedom of expression and the lack of regulations that regulate its use, the information that circulates in these is not always truthful and reliable, as is the case in practices such as: fake news, bots, trolls, and cyborgs, among others. which contribute to misinformation and feed the aggressiveness, fear, hatred, doubt and distrust of readers. In this type of message, discursive power is used to uncritically spread and reproduce ideologies that lead to prejudice and discrimination.

In the dramatic scenario exhibited in the messages analyzed, it is possible to see the three discursive moments present in the populist discourse, mentioned by Charaudeau (2010), focused on the achievement of power: a) proving that the country is in danger and that the voter is the first victim, b) presenting the opponent as the source of evil and c) proclaiming himself as the savior. Discursive strategies that seek, through excess, to affect the reason and emotion of the public. The drama staged in political propaganda thus becomes a comedy for the alert and critical citizen, but for the uncritical and unprepared citizen it becomes a matter of hate, of resentment, which distorts the electoral political task of seeking a better situation. economic, social and cultural for the country.

In the messages studied, it is evident that political discourse acquires particular importance through propaganda, as this is used by the elites as a form of power and social control by making deliberate use of symbols whose purpose is to manipulate the beliefs and ideas of people, or mental representations, regardless of the discursive strategies used to achieve it. According to this, the fundamental ideologies of our society are based on discursive practices that are widespread and deeply rooted in people's minds.



In other words, ideological manipulation is the most efficient form of abuse of discursive power and in Colombia it obeys emotions, not reason; to “passionate democracy”, as defined by Fajardo (2017), which encourages savagery and towards which the passionate crowd leans. According to the author, lies, cheating, cynicism, hostile jokes, assassinations of opponents, corruption, illegality, have become official and legitimized in the country and their multiple manifestations go viral through the media and the social networks. It is not without reason that Bernays (2019 [1923], p. 15) affirms: “those who govern us, shape our minds, define our tastes or suggest our ideas.”

Regarding propaganda strategies, it is found that the Democratic Center party uses fear to legitimize themselves before their interlocutor through the use of an aggressive discourse that frightens and prevents, in addition to drama, complicity, concern and indignation to stimulate aggression and confrontation. Likewise, that discursive power is used to spread prejudices and stereotypes that influence the minds of voters and their actions through repetitive and paranoid discourses that drill and take over the subjectivity of the recipient. In this case, propaganda is used to promote hatred, lie and convince about aspects that are far from reality, thus building the image of an uncritical interlocutor, who responds more to emotion than to reason.


For its part, among the promotional strategies of the Human Colombia party, disclosure, illustration, induction by the model and argumentation by values were used, with which the candidate intends to legitimize himself and delegitimize the contender before public opinion, contributing elements that give credibility to the discourse and seeking to ingratiate himself with the voters so that they see him as a valid and participatory political force in the electoral elections.

In conclusion, if we want to close the page of violence and corruption that prevails in the country, it is necessary to cut with the repeated and Manichaeist CastroChavista and hate speech directed at any policy of change that is intended to be implemented. In this regard, the media instead of reproducing and legitimizing the elites in power, in accordance with their social function of informing and educating, should explain and clarify the messages that are disseminated through social networks that seek to reproduce ideologies of hatred and legitimize the classist practices and corruption immersed in all State institutions.

Thus, visualizing “the codes they use and the logics generated by the various discourses and especially the discourses of transmission of ideologies and knowledge”, as Martínez (2015a, p. 146) points out, can contribute to the understanding of sociocultural phenomena. and promote the conditions for a more democratic political and social change in Colombia and Latin America, while preventing and warning to citizens so as not to fall into the traps of manipulating political discourse.

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