

# Informative Contagion: The Coronavirus (COVID 19) in Italian journalism

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ABSTRACT

*In addition to becoming a global phenomenon, the spreading of the new Coronavirus, following the declaration of a pandemic, this study is to investigate how the coronavirus situation is described in journalistic communication. Starting from La Repubblica phenomenon, the excessive accessibility to sources of information (Infodemia) can be modulated by the "how" the phenomenon is reported. The SketchEngine software (Thomas, 2016) was carried out first, then supported by a Diatextual Analysis (Papapicco & Mininni, 2021).*

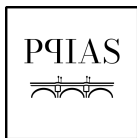
## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of January 2020, the attention of the medical-scientific community on the coronavirus (SARSCoV-2) emerged in Wuhan in China at the end of 2019.

Italy had 12.462 confirmed cases according to the Istituto Superiore di Sanità as there was a high level of contagion, understood as the spread of the virus, but the World Health Organization to coin the term Infodemia to give "a name" to the phenomenon of information overload in these days when fear of the coronavirus was raging, to point at perhaps the reality in the rumble of echoes and comments of the global community on real or virtual events.

## 2. THE STUDY

The general purpose of the exploratory study was to investigate how the coronavirus situation is described in journalistic communication. As a reference journalistic magazine, the research aimed to understand the way the restrictive measures of social distancing in the Italian context. The study starts from the phenomenon, the excessive accessibility to sources of information (Infodemia) proposed in the exploratory study is quanti-qualitative (mixed) method. A Content Analysis, a Diatextual Analysis (Papapicco & Mininni, 2021) analyzed texts, that is the online articles of *La Repubblica* on the topic of coronavirus. The study aims to analyze the "Mode", or "How" the events related to coronavirus in the online articles of *La Repubblica*.



## 2.1 Corpus, Objective and Methodology

Starting from *La Repubblica* online, as a reference journalistic magazine, the dataset of articles related to “Coronavirus” and “Covid19”. The advanced search has returned 100 articles divided into three categories: descriptive, objective, and subjective. The research, in an exploratory phase, aimed to understand the way in which the spread of contagion and restrictive measures of social distancing in the Italian context have created a social representation of the phenomenon, the excessive accessibility of information, and the role of the journalist. The methodology proposed, in fact, in the exploratory study is quantitative (Thomas, 2016) was carried out first. In support of the Content Analysis, a Diathesis

## 2.2 Results

The results of the exploratory study demonstrate the presence of a contrast between the references to places and times, with adjectives related to closing and opening, and the logic of opposition of the analyzed terms. The contrast exists at the spatial level and the intentionality of the action (“To Leave” vs “To Remain”). This logic of contrast is also reflected in the online discourse regarding the coronavirus in Italy (Papapicco, 2020). The contrast, therefore, contributes to constructing different social representations about the current pandemic. Therefore, in the context of health and economic emergency, but the verb “strike” contributes to creating a sense of urgency and future prospects, the research aims to extend the corpus by collecting more articles.

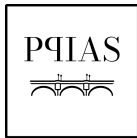
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