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## **An Approach of the Current Cuban-Russian Relations in the Content on the Online News of the Russian Information Agency "RIA Novosti"**

Yarileisy Barcelay Ramírez <sup>a, \*</sup>, Natalia S. Gegelova <sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University), Russian Federation

### **Abstract**

This study has been developed on the basis of the current scenario between Cuba and Russia where the relationship has been strengthened. It is an important requirement that would help to form a positive image and contributes to the development of the two countries, based on a long-term relationship, it is also the presentation of reliable content in the official media on the current relationship. The content expressed in the official digital media of both countries helps to create a favorable international image and opinion for both governments in the current geopolitical conditions arena. In the framework of this research, the content approach of the Russian news agency "RIA Novosti" is analyzed to find out the current reflection of Cuban-Russian relationship in this official media. Some evaluation criteria were defined as same as the analysis dimensions on the texts published by the RIA Novosti news on Cuba and it was done systematically from March to June 2020, an intentional sample (N = 273) was taken, corresponding to the news published from January to December 2019 on the RIA Novosti website. The methodology used allowed to carry out the thematic content analysis and the semantic content analysis of the "RIA Novosti" texts, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques, which showed that on the media agenda of "RIA Novosti", during 2019, it was given higher priority to issues on politics, related to Cuba, than to some issues on economy and society. Thus, it is inferred that, the "RIA Novosti's" language used, presents the political facts, economic and social news on Cuba, some the linguistic resources are used to influence positively the audience.

**Keywords:** Cuban-Russian relations, content analysis, digital media, media text, RIA Novosti, political discourse, image of states.

### **1. Introduction**

Digital media are spaces for discussion that promote open access to information, debate among audiences, exchange of opinions and criticisms. However, the digital media community has generated what could be called "mass digital journalism", where consumers themselves have become, at the same time, producers of all kinds of content available to the masses. Such autonomy does not exactly guarantee the correct practice of journalistic ethics in digital media, and it has been the subject of research in different disciplines such as Psychology and Sociology, and more recently the Theory of Communication. Interdisciplinary studies on these fields particularly focus on the content of media texts in the constant search for the effect of digital media on audiences, expanding theoretical knowledge on the subject from different points of view.

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\* Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: [yaribarcelay@gmail.com](mailto:yaribarcelay@gmail.com) (Y. Barcelay Ramírez)

Nowadays, it is very important the study of the content approach reflected in digital media and multimedia resources on Internet in general is of the great importance, as it is well-known, today digital media are the most common tool to develop good reputation to States, built, fundamentally, on the basis of the statements of influential national personalities and of political and public leaders. Thus, digital media have acquired importance in the political processes.

According to Carey (Carey, 1997: 241) and taking into account the role of the media in political events "one of their functions is that of builders/spokespersons for public opinion from which politicians shape their agendas and make their decisions". Studies in relation to digital media also focus their attention on the analysis of political discourse.

In this context, the online content of the official and internationally recognized news agencies becomes relevant, basically dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of operational, objective and current information on international political, economic, social and cultural events.

This study analyzes the reflection of current Cuban-Russian relationship, taking into account as a reference the news content on the official website of the Russian information agency "RIA Novosti". This agency publishes updated, relevant and reliable information on the bilateral relationship between Cuba and Russia under current conditions.

The perspective of this research on both foreign and national theoretical conceptions about the influence of digital media texts in the formation of the political image of governments are taken into account, mainly and specifically the role of the official media.

## 2. Materials and methods

The content analysis that requires the interpretation of texts is not an easy task, although it may seem so. A super task is to study the texts of the information media, to: a) know the effect they cause on people and, b) know how these texts are created, which produce a great influence (Fedotova, 2017: 95).

In his studies on propaganda H. Lasswell implements content analysis as a systematic method for the study of the media and its effect on audiences. Content analysis works from the perspective that verbal behavior is a characteristic of human behavior, that the flow of symbols is part of the flow of facts, and that the communication process is an aspect of the historical process ... content analysis is a technique which focuses on describing with optimal objectivity, precision and generality, what is said about a given topic, in a given place, at a given time (Lasswell, 1938).

Nowadays, content analysis remains as one of the most used methods for studying content published in the media. "Content analysis is a research technique to formulate inferences by systematically and objectively identifying certain specific characteristics within a text" (Hostil, 1969: 5).

It is relevant in this proposal, first, the fact that content analysis does not necessarily have to be "quantitative" and "manifest" and, second, the idea of "formulating inferences". León opines that inferences form the core of human understanding, interpretation and explanation (León, 2001: 114).

In our sphere of research — the media — inferences can be considered to be as the message implicit in the text that the communicator wants to convey to his audience. The importance of analyzing the manifest content (explicit, obvious) aimed at studying the values clearly shown in the text that expresses the meaning of what the author wants to communicate and the latent (implicit, hidden) in search of the implicit values in the semantic nuances of the message that the author intends to convey.

This research aims to analyze and interpret the content approach of the online messages of the "RIA Novosti" agency published during 2019 to reach conclusions about the reflection of the relations between Cuba and the Russian Federation under current conditions.

For this, an empirical research model framed in the qualitative paradigm is used (Andréu Abela, 2001; Berelson, 1952; Fedotova, 2017; Hostil, 1969; Lasswell, 1938; Macnamara, 2005; McQuail, 1994; Shoemaker, 1996) focused on descriptive aspects, specifically through content analysis. However, the research is also supported by the use of the quantitative method, using statistical techniques to count the variables defined for the analysis of the texts.

It should be highlighted that in this research two key types of content analysis are carried out: 1) thematic content analysis and 2) semantic content analysis.

According to Andréu Abela (Andréu Abela, 2001: 20) "the thematic content analysis only considers the presence of terms or concepts, regardless of the relationships that have emerged

between them. The most used techniques are frequency lists, thematic identification and classification, and the search for words in context” and he emphasizes that these themes must be selected and defined before starting the analysis.

The semantic content analysis studies the internal structure of the text, composed by the topic (the central idea of the news), the argument (the development of the topic and the presentation of secondary ideas) and the structure (description of the ideas that are developed in each of the parts), for which the following types of analysis were carried out: 1) morpho-syntactic analysis; 2) lexical-semantic analysis; and 3) semantic-stylistic analysis.

Content analysis is used as the main technique. The sample selected to collect the relevant information is intentional. The researcher performs a theoretical sampling to analyze and encode the data, and also relies on personal knowledge about the subject of study to select the evaluation criteria. The coding was developed on a corpus of N = 273 news items, systematically analyzed during the months of March to June 2020.

The author determines his own analysis process (relying on the procedure proposed by [Andréu Abela, 2001](#)) for content analysis: 1) determining the object or topic of analysis; 2) determine the encoding rules; 3) determine the category system; 4) check the reliability of the coding-categorization system; 5) inferences.

To study the phenomenon "the content approach that reflects current Cuban-Russian relations in RIA Novosti" an explanatory model supported by Cantril's theory ([Cantril, 1965](#)) is built. In this model we rely on the value of the orientation for the search of the dimensions selected for the content analysis ([Yadov, 1995](#)) and the aspirations are measured in the continuum: "strong", "medium", "weak", where the topics with the highest percentage of publication are "strong" and those with the lowest percentage "weak".

#### *Analysis units*

Three types of analysis units are determined ([Andreu Abela, 2001](#); [Krippendorff, 1990](#)):

*Sampling units*: these are the portions of the observed universe that will be analyzed (“RIA Novosti” agency website).

*Registration unit*: the part of the sampling unit that can be analyzed in isolation considering (the headlines, the sentences, the texts of the “RIA Novosti” news).

*Context unit*: it is the portion of the sampling unit that has to be examined in order to characterize a recording unit (the news in its entirety).

#### *Variables and the analysis category system*

To measure the reflection of current Cuban-Russian relationship in the content of RIA Novosti messages, the indicator to be measured is “content”, which the classification criterion of thematic categories is used. In this case, the analysis variables are the news topics about Cuba.

In the thematic content analysis, the following news classification schemes are taken into account: 1) the number of news per month on each given topic, 2) the repetition of the same headline in the month, 3) length of the news and, 4) the enhancement of the letter or the text within the content of the news.

Taking into account the selection of registration units, the following category system is defined to carry out the content analysis in our research. Some dimensions were chosen from the categorization system proposed by [Andréu Abela \(2001\)](#).

#### *1. Politics*

a. International relations: topics on diplomatic relations, political and military interaction, governmental collaboration between Cuba and Russia, mutual political and military support between Russia and Cuba in the face of political conflicts, unilateral sanctions.

b. Institutional functioning: government actions towards the country's national institutions, decision-making in crisis situations.

c. International political conflict: participation of Cuba in diplomatic or military conflicts involving the Cuban government, bilateral political conflicts, unilateral sanctions; support or accusations from other countries and international organizations (USA, UN) regarding Cuba in the face of international political conflicts.

d. National conflicts: internal conflicts of power, internal political conflict, political crisis or internal power in Cuba.

e. Political debate: news about elections, parties, constitutional reform, polls in Cuba.

f. Political corruption: all kinds of news about political corruption or scandal about Cuba.

g. Terrorism and espionage: news about terrorism and espionage in Cuba.

h. International news: news that mention of Cuba linked to other issues of international repercussion (diplomatic relations with other countries, involvement of Cuba in political conflicts of other governments).

### 2. Economy

a. Economic policy: economic actions of the Cuban government or administrations to improve the national economic situation.

b. Economic bonanza: news about studies or economic surveys that show positive data regarding the internal economic situation of the country, growth of the national economic production "GDP".

c. Economic crisis: negative economic data.

d. Economic conflict: economic conflict between the Cuban government and social agents; economic conflict between Cuba and Russia, or towards Cuba. Criticisms or social complaints regarding the Cuban national economy. News about threat, demand or economic conflict in Cuba, or regarding Cuba, strikes, demonstrations, economic fraud.

e. Collaboration: news about Russian aid to Cuba or vice versa, about collaboration agreements in the economic, energy, educational sectors. Financing of collaborative projects, financial loans, and foreign investment.

### 3. Society

a. Social events: recognition, awards, invitations, cooperation, national and international events on education, health, environment. Favorable news on food, on life quality, social security, and means of public transportation in Cuba.

b. Science and technology: recognition, awards, patents, national and international events of science and technological innovation on Cuba.

c. Culture: news about awards, recognitions, exhibitions, festivals, events on the different cultural manifestations, which mention Cuba.

d. History and heritage: news about historical events, customs and traditions of Cuba, or about the history experienced between both countries. Recognition, acknowledgment on history and/or heritage that reflects Cuba.

e. Sport: news about sports (events, exchanges, recognition.)

f. Tourism: all kinds of information on tourism, statistical analysis showing the level of Cuban tourism in Russia.

g. Social problems: news about scandals or problems that affect Cuban society, about the environment, racism, communication, food, health, public transportation, life quality, social security, national security, accidents, natural catastrophes.

### Coding system

The coding system is defined, where a numeral encoder (1, 2, 3) is assigned to each variable and an alphabetic encoder (a, b, c, d ...) to each semantic unit. For the coding of the recording units, the enumeration and the counting rules referred to by Andréu Abela are taken into account.

- *The presence or absence* of certain topics in the "RIA Novosti" news. For example, we code the dimension "national conflicts" as strong (more than 15 holders), medium (from 8 to 14 holders) or weak (from 1 to 7 holders) according to the presence or absence of holders per month in "RIA Novosti" on this theme.

- *The frequency of appearance* of a registration unit determines the ranking of the most relevant topic to be published. In this case, the sum of the news published about Cuba in 2019 for each of the 3 categories gives us the ranking of the variable with the greatest relevance, taking into account the following measurement scale: strong ( $\geq 50$  news), medium (from 20 to 49 news) and weak (from 1 to 19 news).

- *The intensity of the content* where the opinion of a certain topic is shown. For example, the repeated use of adverbs of manner, qualifying adjectives, verbal combinations: "Russia supports Cuba", "The government of Cuba thanks Russia for its support." In this way, we can catalog the degree of intensity of the reflection of current Cuban-Russian relationship in the official digital media, where 1 is intense (from 5 to 14 repetitions) and 5 ( $\geq 15$  repetitions) is very intense.

- *The length of the news* is measured according to its structure. The author determined his own measurement parameters: from 1 to 4 texts – normal, from 5 to 7 texts – not very extensive, from 8 to 10 texts – extensive and  $\geq 11$  texts – very extensive.

### Results or inferences

The quantitative data are interpreted by the researcher, and from the analysis of the symbolic material (the subject, the content, and the texts) the scientific data are obtained as a result of the research.

### 3. Discussion

A relevant topic in digital media research in the last decade has been its role played in the formation of a mutual positive image between governments in the era of globalization and the role played by diplomacy as an effective and promising tool in this process (Capriotti, 2013; Echeverri et al., 2012; Fedotova, 2014; Gegelova et al., 2019; Pocheptsov, 2001). As Pocheptsov points out, the image exists because we ourselves respond positively. It is just cultivating the correct reactions ... the perceived image is how others see us (Pocheptsov, 2001).

The image is formed with all intention, depending on certain interests. In this sense, governments need to manage their image, giving birth to country-image studies during the last two decades.

In Russia, as a rule, the study of the country-image related to the term country-brand is highlighted. The term country-brand was first introduced in 1996 by S. Anholt, who believed that the reputation of countries (as well as regions and cities) was formed by according to the same schemes made by companies, their trademarks and products on image corporations. As the researcher (Anholt, 2010) the country-brand image has a great impact on its destination in the social, cultural, economic and political levels.

The country-image is a mental representation or association of a given country, regardless, whether the attributes of a given nation are real or nonreal. The components of the country-image at the same time form the image of the State, since everything that happens within the country, its surrounding and its actions in the international sphere, form before the world some general idea of the State. However, the country's political situation, precisely reflected through the political discourse of the media, is a determining factor in the reputation that a State gains in the consciousness of the world community. Putting into context, political discourse is defined as any practical activity or special event where its aims, goals and functions are primarily political ... Political discourse can be highlighted as a prominent way of "doing politics" (Van Dijk, 1999: 17).

According to Van Dijk, the fact that political practices and actions are at the same time discursive practices is specifically interesting for the analysis of political discourse, since the forms of text and speech have political implications and functions ... it should be thought that part of the media discourse (for example, the quotes) are textual consequences of the off-record conversation and at the same time have a political function (Van Dijk, 1999: 15).

That is why the importance of the analysis of the media discourse that reflects the political context of current Cuban-Russian relations, as Van Dijk points out, a large part of the news transmitted in the different media, as long as it is about politics, needs to be and should be classified as political discourse (Van Dijk, 1999: 34). Both the analysis of political discourse and the content of new media texts and their influence on society are still being studied in different spheres by scholars from different countries (Castells, 2009; Kentikelenis, Seabrooke, 2017; Lee, Tandoc, 2017; Lehmann et al., 2017; Reunanen, Kunelius, 2020; Stubbs et al., 2020;). These themes deal with the manipulation of public consciousness through media content.

There are two scholars, Kultysheva and Fisenko, who refer on the process of social manipulation through modern media texts. In their study, they highlight the close relationship between the political life and the media manipulation, taking into account the objective of political manipulation is the acquisition and preservation of power (Kultysheva, Fisenko, 2019: 521).

The State's authority takes advantages on its power, and the media is the perfect and strongest instrument used by governments to create an image and also to gain in power and authority. Today, the easiest way to build the image of the State is through the political discourse of the media, especially digital media. And it is well-known that digital media employ strategies – sometimes even manipulative – in the process of forming public opinion, such as, for example, transmitting negative messages or suppressing some facts and emphasizing others, tendencies called "disinformation" or "fake news".

Taking into account not only the constant monitoring of the headlines of the current events covered in the state digital media, but also the analysis of the content of the news, the speech and writing style, as it is shown in the study carried out and conducted by Kuiken (Kuiken et al., 2017) on the Internet news headlines, questions, direct links, statistical analysis and the negative



emotional tone are the techniques used in order to be effective in attracting the reader's attention and to influence the potential reader's opinion. However, an advantage that new media give us is the possibility that the audience receives the same topic but with different approaches. Each digital medium focuses the content of the subject depending on its purpose.

Updated research (Pearson, Knobloch-Westerwick, 2018) shows that many Internet consumers prefer to receive news from professional media rather than from suspicious sites or social networks, so they turn to quality and reliable sources of information. In this context, the official media play an important role, which must transmit objective and reliable messages and information, oriented towards a rational and non-emotional reaction states. In this context, media agencies and government structures play an important role, whereas they must be in charge, in addition to countering media manipulation at the democratic level, making society literate based on the use of media and its information consumption on virtual space (Levitskaya, Fedorov, 2020: 431; McDougall et al., 2018: 6; Wilson, 2019: 5). The media culture is also the responsibility of the media. It is reason the official media must transmit objective and reliable messages and information, oriented towards a rational and non-emotional reaction states.

The official media, and mainly the state media, are committed to "reporting", not "misinforming" or "manipulating the information. Consequently, they must assume responsibility on distributing "true, verifiable" news that counteracts and counterattacks the flow of "false or fake" news that circulates freely on the Internet through the different opinion groups, taking into account that recent experiments on the dissemination of fake news through a third person (Chung, Kim, 2020; Jang, Kim, 2018) show a greater belief that others (third-party perception) are more influenced by the news than oneself and that the news is evaluated in a more negative way when exposing fake news with fact-checking information versus fake news without fact-checking information.

Undoubtedly, it is important news agencies with international repercussions, and in this particular case reference made to the Russian information agency RIA Novosti, they have published operational news with quality content and above all, with reliable information that guarantees a positive impact in society, due to fake news which plants a seed of mistrust by misusing political, regional and religious currents issues and facts (Wardle, Derakhshan, 2017) and deliberately persuading the audience to accept false beliefs that circulate on the web to promote specific agendas (Shu et al., 2017).

Regardless of their political interests, the official media are of utmost importance for the formation of the international political image, which influences, in due course, the maintenance of beneficial political relations between the two governments.

At present, taking into account the role played by Russia in international politics arena and Cuba as its main Latin American ally, the homogeneous presentation of current issues and facts on the online content of the state media of both countries are relevant, reflecting a positive approach, constructive and the transparency of the political, economic, social, and cultural reality, either in Russia or Cuba. All of this will help to improve the international geopolitical image of both States against the dark aspects reflected and used on social media networks, the increase misinformation and the coping strategies displayed and distributed on social media networks (Bakir, McStay, 2018; Kaur et al., 2018; Malik et al. 2020; Saurwein, Spencer-Smith, 2020) increasingly intensified. The Official media, also, adapted to the new changes on virtual communication, where they cannot forget their main purpose of existence, and their main strength compared to other branch industries: it is their social responsibility and accountability to inform the public (Garton Ash, 2016: 89; Helberger, 2020: 845).

In relation to the concepts and antecedents addressed, the hypothesis that will guide the investigation is formulated: In the content of the RIA Novosti media agenda, political issues related to Cuba are given higher priority than economic and social issues.

#### 4. Results

During the analysis of the thematic content, 8 sections of the "RIA Novosti" official website were studied: Politics, World, Economy, Society, Science, Culture, Sports, and Tourism. 273 news about Cuba were identified, published from January to December 2019, organized in this research into 3 thematic categories: Politics, Economy, and Society.

Microsoft Excel is used for data processing. The total of the news about Cuba published in 2019 is equal to the sum of the total of the news published per month of each of the established

categories ( $TNC = \sum Tn * M$ ). The result of the analyzed sample was thus obtained:  $TNC (273) = \sum TnP (167) + TnS (55) + TnE (51)$

**Table 1.** Total news by category, published on Cuba in 2019.

CATEGORIES	TOTAL NEWS ON CUBA IN 2019
C1-POLITICS	61 % (167)
C2- ECONOMY	19 % (51)
C3- SOCIETY	20 % (55)
TOTAL	100 % (273)

The total news (273) analyzed about Cuba, published in 2019, 61 % (167) is from Politics, 20 % (55) from Society and 19 % (51) from Economy. Obviously they prioritize political issues related to Cuba on the RIA Novosti agenda.

Classification of the news. Political Category (see [Figure 1](#))

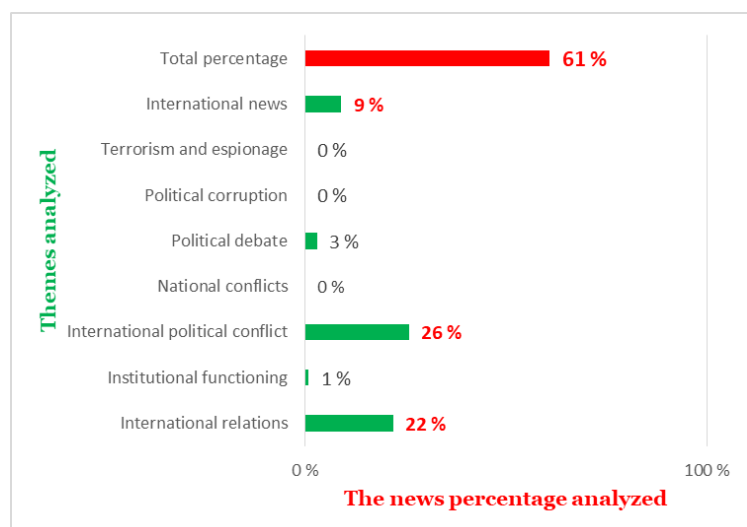
Correlation of the classification criteria: a) number of news per year and b) repetition of the same holder per month.

The 61 % (167) of Politics news published about Cuba during 2019, 26 % (71) are from international political conflict and 22 % (61) from international relations. It is left with 9 % (25) from international news, 3 % (9) from political debate and 1 % (1 news) from institutional operations.

It is considered relevant that there were categories for which no news was shown throughout the year. For example, on national conflict, political corruption and terrorism, no issue was identified, neither negative nor positive. In this case the presence level is "null". Obviously, the issue of foreign policy is addressed more than domestic policy on Cuba.

However, the appearance of news about international relations (22 % of the total – 61 %) and international political conflict (26 % of the total – 61 %) throughout the year is relevant, both variables were classified as strong according to the quantity criterion news per year. The relevance they attribute to the current diplomatic relations between Cuba and Russia in the "RIA Novosti" agenda is evident.

Only in February, March and August there was no news on international relations identified, on the contrary, in October, news were repeatedly published on the state of the relationship and cooperation between the two countries, given the visit of the Russian Prime Minister D. Medvedev to Havana this month. Thus, the international relations variable was evaluated as strong with 13.5 % of the total published news of this variable (22 %) according to the criterion of repetition of the same holder per month.



**Fig. 1.** Total "Politics" news published on Cuba in RIA Novosti in 2019

Given the political landscape at this time, in October, headlines related to D. Medvedev's political agenda repeatedly appear and emphasize the role of Cuba as an ally of Russia in Latin America continent. Examples of headlines analyzed:

Medvedev promised Cuba the support of Russia, 03.10.2019, 21:41; Medvedev called Cuba as an important ally of Russia in Latin America, 03.10.2019, 21:42; Medvedev said that the United States meddles in the affairs of Latin American countries, 04.10.2019, 17:10; Medvedev ruled out irrevocable assistance to Cuba, 05.10.2019, 16:33; Medvedev spoke about the full restoration of relations between Russia and Cuba, 10.10.2019, 16:55.

Obviously, the degree of intensity of the reflection of current Cuban-Russian relationship is classified as "very intense" in the month of October. The broadcast of news on the same topic, on the same day, reflecting the constant interaction between Cuba and Russia, and in short intervals of time, prevails on the "RIA Novosti" website.

Given the political situation that highlights the relations between Havana and Washington, the permanent political conflicts between both governments are evident. Faced with this situation, Moscow always shows its support for Havana. Thus, the variable political conflicts was evaluated as strong with 6.9 % of the total news published for this variable (26 %) according to the criterion of repetition of the same holder per month.

Taking into account the relevance on the subject and the amount of news per year, the international news variable was evaluated on a 9 % average over the total – 61 % news on "Politics". Given the current political scenario, characterized by permanent conflicts and the sanctions imposed by the United States against Cuba and Venezuela, that type of news is repeatedly published on this subject.

Obviously, Russia supports Cuba in the international media fight, advocating against the unilateral sanctions imposed on Cuba by the United States. In all possible scenarios, including before the United Nations, Russia shows its collaboration with Cuba in the face of the bilateral conflicts historically experienced between Havana and Washington. Similarly, Moscow criticizes the US pressure on Latin American countries and its intervention in the internal politics of those countries.

In the international media agenda of "RIA Novosti", great relevance is attributed to foreign policy issues that reflect the relationship between Havana and Moscow, which corresponds to the interest of this official agency.

Correlation of the classification criteria: c) body of the news (length) and d) enhancement of the text of the news content.

Typical of current circumstances, the news content on the "RIA Novosti" official website is accurate, objective and current, in most cases. Generally, the headline of the news is shown in Arial 27 highlighted in bold. The content of the text in Arial 11. Citations highlighted within the text are sometimes shown in Arial 11 in quotation marks, and other times in Arial 18 highlighted in bold.

The quantitative analysis shows that in the Political category of 167 news published about Cuba, 75 were classified as "normal" (from 2 to 4 texts), 71 as "not very extensive" (from 5 to 7 texts), 11 as "extensive" (From 8 to 11 texts) and 10 "very extensive" (more than 11 texts).

The 75 news items cataloged as "normal", 40 are from international relations, 25 from political conflict and 10 from international news. The balance maintained in the content writing style is relevant. For example, of the 40 news items on international relations, 11 are of 2 texts, 13 of 3 texts, and 16 of 4 texts. In all cases, they exhibit a similar content structure: a short heading where they introduce the topic of the event, answering the questions what, where and when, followed by a quotation corroborating the fact, then they present a short paragraph where they add some kind of brief information on the subject, but also with a quote or paraphrasing the information given by some official information source (president, minister, spokesperson, document or official site). Verbatim or paraphrased citations are always shown in quotation marks, and are often highlighted in bold and with a larger font (Arial 18) than the remaining content (Arial 11). Within each section, in the list of headlines there are some highlighted with large font (Arial 18) in bold. In the "Politics" section, it was noted that the highlighted headlines are, on the one hand, those that address issues about political conflicts between Cuba and the United States, particularly those that reflect the United States' sanctions and restrictions on Cuba; and on the other hand, those that reflect the aid given by Russia to Cuba. For example:

An expert explained about the introduction of new US measures against Cuba, 22.04.2019; The United States expanded the list of restrictions to Cuba, 25.04.2019; Russia will help Cuba in



modernizing the railways, 25.01.2019; Russia helps Cuba in modernizing the energy system, 25.01.2019; Russia will grant Cuba a loan of 38 million euros for the purchase of military equipment, 06.02.2019.

The group of news cataloged as "extensive" (11) and "very extensive" (10), most are of an analytical-informative nature, classified in the variable international relations, external political conflict and political debate, in which the issue of current relations between Cuba and Russia, changes in the island's political scene with the mandate of the current president Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez, as well as the external political conflicts between Cuba and the United States. For example:

Medvedev said the United States sticks its nose in the affairs of Latin American countries, 29.10.2019 (13-text information note)

Capitalism or death. "Perestroika" threatens Cuba, 27.02.2019 (analytical and opinion note, of 25 texts)

Cuban presidential election procedure, 10.10.2019 (informative note of 13 texts)

Without Castro, but so far with Moscow. What does the new Cuban leader want from Putin? 29.10.2019 (analytical-informative note of 19 texts)

The analysis of the "RIA Novosti" online texts at the structural and morphosyntactic level shows a balanced set of characters. At the syntactic level, dynamic, informative, objective texts are appreciated and they repeatedly use verbal combinations and names with adjectives that give a semantic load to the discourse. These resources play an important role in the political discourse of news texts.

Classification of the news. Category Economy (see Fig. 2)

Correlation of the classification criteria: a) number of news per year and b) repetition of the same holder per month.

Of the 19 % (51) of Economy news published about Cuba during 2019, 13 % (34) is of economic collaboration between Cuba and Russia, and 5 % (16) of external economic conflict. It has 1 % (1 news item) left on economic policy in Cuba. Obviously, the most relevant issues on Cuba are economic collaboration and external economic conflict. Thus, both variables were evaluated on the medium according to the criterion of number of news per year.

However, there were dimensions in which no news was identified throughout the year, neither negative nor positive, for example, economic bonanza and economic crisis.

The economic collaboration variable was evaluated as strong in the month of October according to the criterion of repetition of the same holder per month, with 5.5 % of all news items (13 %) in this variable. This shows the relevance they attribute to this issue in the Russian state media agenda, especially in this year in which new collaboration projects were signed and agreed during the official visit of Russian Prime Minister D. Medvedev to Havana from 3 to 4th of October.

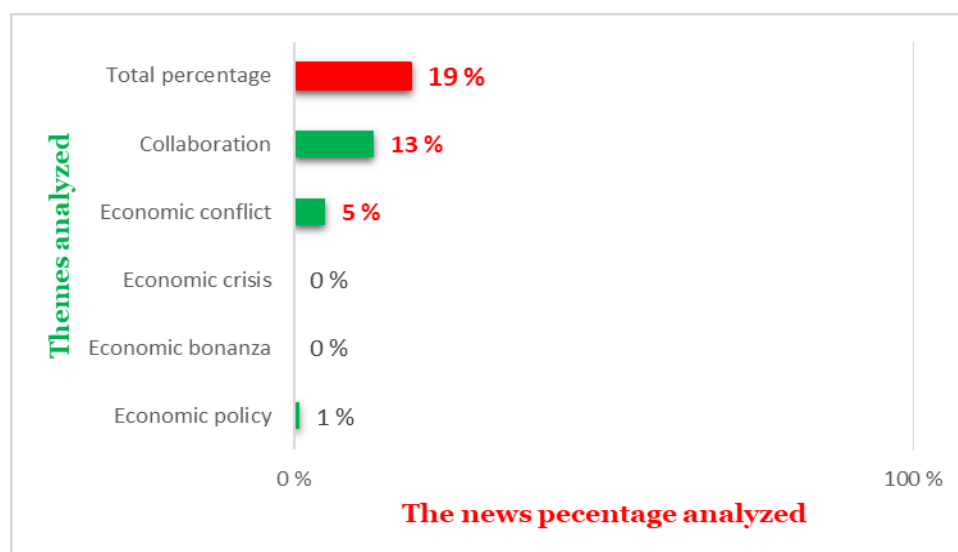


Fig. 2. Total "Economy" news published on Cuba in RIA Novosti in 2019

Therefore, this month the content on the topic of economic collaboration is evaluated as “very intense”. Verbal combinations are repeatedly seen in relation to cooperation between the two countries, as well as the help that Russia provides to Cuba in this sector under current conditions. Some of the analyzed headlines are shown below:

Rosatom will create an irradiation center in Cuba, 03.10.2019; Moscow and Havana will resolve the issue of food security in Cuba, 03.10.2019; Shuvalov spoke about Cuba's absence of delinquency on loans from the Russian State Development Corporation, 03.10.2019; Russia and Cuba will continue to strengthen the strategic partnership, 03.10.2019; Russian companies delivered 841 freight cars and 53 locomotives to Cuba, 03.10.2019; Cuba is ready to pay all its debts with Russia, Medvedev said, 05.10.2019.

There is a balance noted when addressing the issue of external economic conflict. 5 % of the total news (19 %) of "Economy" about Cuba were identified in this variable, observing that in almost every month of 2019 some news on this topic is shown, with a strong degree of intensity. It means that this issue is systematically monitored on the Russian media agenda, taking into account that Moscow constantly supports Havana in confronting the conflicts and economic sanctions that the United States historically imposes on the island.

Correlation of the classification criteria: c) body of the news (length) and d) enhancement of the text of the news content.

In the "Economy" category, as in the "Politics" category, most of the news have a short and precise structure. Of 51 published "Economics" news about Cuba, 29 were classified as "normal." Of these, 22 of economic collaboration, 6 of external economic conflict and 1 of economic policy. There are 17 news with a “not very extensive” structure, 4 “extensive” and 1 “very extensive”. Obviously, most news have an objective, clear and well defined speech, as is typical in online news texts.

There were 5 news identified with the name of the headline highlighted in bold and large type (Arial 18). These news refer to the economic support that Russia provides to Cuba. For example:

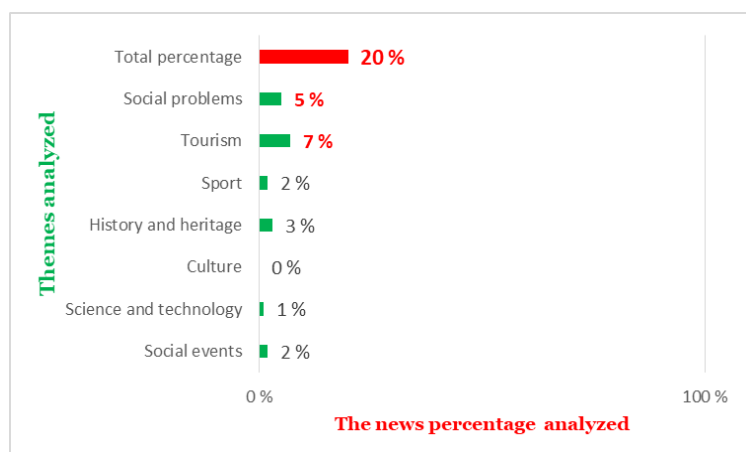
Russia will help Cuba to modernize its energy system, 25.01.2019; Russia will help Cuba in modernizing the railways, 25.01.2019; Russia will grant Cuba a loan of 38 million euros for the purchase of military equipment, 06.02.2019; Russia agreed on the parameters of the loan to Cuba for the purchase of weapons, 06.02.2019.

Obviously, they highlight the role that Russia plays in supporting the Cuban economy and repeatedly use verbal combinations that demonstrate this.

#### 4.3 Classification of the news. Category Society (see Fig. 3)

Correlation of the classification criteria: a) number of news per year and b) repetition of the same holder per month.

Of the 20 % (55) of Society news published about Cuba during 2019, 7 % (20) are from tourism, 5 % (13) from social problems, 3 % (7) from history and heritage, 2 % (6) from social events, another 2 % from sports and 1 % from science and technology. According to the criterion of number of holder per year, all the variables were evaluated as weak, except for the variable “tourism” evaluated as medium, with 7 % of the total number of published holder of “Society” (20 %). In this category there is a balance between the variety of topics in the publications. Only in the culture variable, no news was identified during 2019. Obviously they downplay this issue despite the good socio-cultural relations that exist between both nations.



**Fig. 3.** Total "Society" news published on Cuba in RIA Novosti in 2019

According to the criterion of repetition of the same headline per month, all the variables were evaluated as weak. The figures show the "little" level of intensity with which they reflect the issue of relations between Cuba and Russia in the social sphere, since every month they publish a news on tourism and social problems, but not repeatedly.

The variables with the highest number of publications were: tourism and social problems, in both cases in a timely manner it is reflected, on the one hand, the high tourism potential that Cuba represents for Russians, and on the other hand, the good level of security in Cuba for citizens, reflecting social problems related to traffic accidents or natural phenomena. Obviously, in "RIA Novosti" Cuba is shown as a safe country.

Correlation of the classification criteria: c) body of the news (length) and d) enhancement of the text of the news content.

In this category, news from "normal" to "very extensive" were identified. Of 55 published news of "Society" about Cuba, 22 were classified with a structure "not very extensive", 21 as "normal", 10 as "very extensive" and 2 as "extensive".

Most of the news (10) on social problems have a "normal" structure and the body of the news is short and precise, and purely informative. However, tourism news are generally "very extensive", informative, but also analytical, descriptive and promotional. Its content highlights quotes and descriptions in quotation marks, in large type (Arial 22.5) and in bold: "And at night, 365 days a year: concerts by local musicians, bars, special rooms for cigar smokers and clubs nocturnal". Multimedia content is displayed that complement the verbal content.

#### Inference

The thematic content analysis showed that, in the thematic agenda of "RIA Novosti", special attention is paid to issues of international political conflict, in which they positively and impartially reflect Moscow's support Havana in the face of the resurgence of Washington's hegemonic policy in the Latin American continent. At the same time, they highlight the news of international relations, demonstrating at a high level the development of Cuban-Russian relations in the current era.

The absolute absence of topics on Cuba of national conflict, political corruption and terrorism demonstrated the respect of certain ideological guidelines in "RIA Novosti's" content policy. Generally, they do not express an ideological modality explicitly, therefore, the discourse lacks expressions of evaluation, judgment, and comment. In a positive way, Cuba is seen as a totally safe country.

The system of values and orientation represented in the texts of the "RIA Novosti" news is generally implicit in the content. They select the fact and reflect its value objectively and accurately. They rely on the use of a large number of verbatim or paraphrased quotations. Although, in relation to the unilateral sanctions of the United States imposed on Cuba, they repeatedly use phrases with evaluative connotations that express Moscow's support Havana.

The thematic content analysis helped to identify some news of political debate, which specifically addressed two issues of international repercussion that mark the internal political context of Cuba during 2019: the approval of a new Constitution and the election of a new president: Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez.

The semantic analysis of these texts showed the use of linguistic means (foreign words) that represented the internal political changes in the country, called "perestroika" or "upgrade", focused on the improvement and rapid development of the country and, paradoxically, they highlight that these changes are conceived under socialist ideals.

The thematic content analysis showed that, in the "RIA Novosti" agenda, a homogeneous follow-up is given to the themes of "Economy" and "Society" on Cuba. In relation to the topics on "Economy" they attribute greater relevance to the events related to the economic collaboration between Havana and Moscow. They repeatedly reflect Russia's economic support for Cuba, and at the same time emphasize that Cuba complies with its payments in this new stage of current relations. It was learned that the content that reflects internal economic policy issues on Cuba is practically nil on the "RIA Novosti" agenda.

Regarding "Social" issues, the results of the thematic content analysis revealed that, in the "RIA Novosti" agenda, more attention is paid to tourism issues on Cuba. The topics of science and technology, culture, history and heritage, social problems in Cuba, for example, are scarce in the content of this official media.

## 5. Conclusion

The thematic content analysis showed, in relation to Cuba, in the thematic agenda of “RIA Novosti” they attribute greater relevance to foreign policy issues on Cuba than to domestic policy. Thus, the hypothesis that arose at the beginning of the investigation was corroborated.

Finally, it was concluded that “RIA Novosti's” online news texts are operational and accurate, adapted to the digital age. Informative texts prevail where reliable information sources are used to justify the content of the media texts. Relevant events reflect the current political facts and economic issues on Cuba are reported in a short interval time, facilitating constant monitoring of the event by the interested audiences. In the thematic content analysis, the frequency of the news transmitted during D. Medvedev's official visit to Cuba in October was tracked. The great connotation that this fact had in the political relations between both governments in 2019 caused a high degree of intensity of the reflection of the Cuban-Russian relationship in the political discourse of “RIA Novosti”. The repeated use of verbal expressions and the combination of linguistic and stylistic resources (clichéd phrases, foreign words, metaphors) that perform the ideological, cultural and social function of the discourse, positively influencing the audience, were observed.

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