



Toward a Psychology of Communications: Epistemological Foundations, Integrative Paradigms, and the Redefinition of the Communicational Object*

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How to cite this paper: Pata, D.K. (2026) Toward a Psychology of Communications: Epistemological Foundations, Integrative Paradigms, and the Redefinition of the Communicational Object. *Open Access Library Journal*, 13: e15694.
<https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1115694>

Received: June 25, 2026

Accepted: July 20, 2026

Published: July 23, 2026

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Abstract

Communication is today a fragmented scientific object, analyzed through multiple approaches—sociological, semiotic, informational, and technological—but rarely unified around its psychological foundations. This article proposes an epistemological refoundation of Information and Communication Sciences (ICS) through the concept of the *Psychology of Communication*. Drawing on a narrative synthesis of the literature on foundational paradigms—behaviorist, cognitivist, constructivist, interactionist, systemic, and digital—the study highlights the limitations of fragmented models and argues for an integrative approach centered on the cognitive, affective, social, and symbolic processes that structure communicational acts. The article proposes a renewed ontological definition of the communicational object, conceived as a dynamic psychological system embedded in technical, cultural, and algorithmic devices. This contribution aims to stabilize a unified theoretical framework capable of strengthening the scientific cumulativeness of ICS and opening new methodological perspectives, particularly in digital contexts.

Subject Areas

Psychology

*This article is part of a series of scientific publications produced within the research program of the Laboratory of Communication Psychology (LaPsyCom) at the University of Information and Communication Sciences (UNISIC). Conducted between 2024 and 2025, these studies aim to develop the theoretical, methodological, and applied foundations of a Psychology of Communications, conceived as an integrative framework for understanding the cognitive, affective, social, and symbolic processes involved in communicational phenomena.

Keywords

Psychology of Communications, Epistemology of CIS, Communication Paradigms, Cognition, Digital Communication

1. Introduction

Since their academic institutionalization, Information and Communication Sciences (ICS) have been characterized by a fruitful theoretical plurality that has also generated significant conceptual fragmentation. Communication has been alternatively conceived as information transmission, social interaction, symbolic construction, or techno-mediated dispositif. While this diversity has fostered extensive empirical development, it raises a major epistemological challenge: the absence of a unified explanatory core centered on the psychological processes underlying all communicational situations.

The central hypothesis advanced in this article is that communication cannot be fully understood without the systematic integration of the cognitive, affective, social, and symbolic mechanisms that shape the production, circulation, and interpretation of messages. From this perspective, we propose the concept of the *Psychology of Communication* as an integrative theoretical framework capable of overcoming the traditional disciplinary boundaries that characterize ICS.

2. Research Problem and Scientific Positioning

Information and Communication Sciences (ICS) face a dual structural epistemological gap that weakens the coherence and explanatory power of many contemporary theoretical models (Bougnoux, 1993 [1]; Miège, 2004 [2]; Wolton, 2009 [3]).

First, there has been a progressive over-technologization of the communicational object, particularly since the rise of digital media and algorithmic platforms. Numerous studies tend to approach communication primarily through its technical infrastructures, media dispositifs, or informational architectures (Castells, 2009 [4]; Van Dijck, Poell, & de Waal, 2018 [5]). Although these approaches have provided valuable insights into the industrial, economic, and algorithmic logics of contemporary media systems, they sometimes lead to an instrumental reduction of communication, equating it with its supports, channels, or formats (Wolton, 2012 [6]). In such perspectives, technology becomes the central object of analysis, often overshadowing the psychological processes through which individuals produce meaning, interpret messages, and engage in symbolic exchange.

Second, ICS exhibits a persistent under-theorization of the psychological dimension of communication, a paradoxical situation given the discipline's reliance on psychological concepts. Indeed, many notions frequently mobilized in communication research—including perception, attention, memory, cognition, emotion, influence, and persuasion—originate directly from cognitive and social psy-

chology (Neisser, 1967 [7]; Bandura, 1986 [8]; Kahneman, 2011 [9]; Moscovici, 2003 [10]). However, these concepts are often employed implicitly or instrumentally, without being incorporated into an explicit, coherent, and cumulative psychological framework. This situation generates a form of unexamined conceptual dependency in which mental mechanisms are invoked without being rigorously modeled or systematically articulated.

The tension between these two tendencies—namely, the increasing technicization of the communicational object and the weakening of its psychological foundations—has produced theoretical models that are descriptively effective in mapping media dispositifs, user practices, and informational flows, yet explanatorily fragile when addressing the dynamics of meaning-making, processes of appropriation, cognitive and affective effects, or mechanisms of social influence operating within communication situations (Quéré, 1991 [11]; Jouët, 2000 [12]).

The scientific challenge, therefore, is neither to replace ICS with psychology nor to dissolve the specificity of communication into a general psychology. Rather, it is to establish a transversal psychological foundation conceived as a common theoretical infrastructure. Such a foundation would enable the rigorous articulation of different levels of analysis—micro (individual cognitive and affective processes), meso (interactions, organizational and media dispositifs), and macro (cultural, ideological, and societal dynamics)—in accordance with the principles of complexity epistemology (Morin, 1990 [13]) and interactionist approaches to meaning construction (Mead, 1934 [14]; Berger & Luckmann, 1966 [15]).

It is within this perspective that the proposal for a *Psychology of Communication* emerges. It is conceived not as a competing discipline within ICS but as a principle of epistemological integration aimed at strengthening scientific cumulativeness, conceptual coherence, and explanatory power in communication research, particularly within contemporary digital environments characterized by algorithmic mediation and cognitive offloading (Clark, 2008 [16]; Floridi, 2014 [17]).

3. Literature Review

It must be acknowledged that reflection on the relationship between psychology and communicational processes is not new. Its foundations can be traced to several intellectual traditions that have progressively highlighted the cognitive, affective, relational, and symbolic dimensions of communication phenomena.

3.1. Pioneering Contributions to the *Psychology of Communication*

Among the pioneering contributions are the works of Alex Mucchielli (1995) [18], who emphasized the role of meaning-construction processes in communication situations; Jean-Claude Abric (1996) [19], whose work on social representations demonstrated their function as cognitive mediators of interaction; and the analyses of Marcel Bromberg and Alain Trognon (2005) [20], which focused on the psychological mechanisms underlying communicational exchanges. Likewise, Claude Chabrol and Miruna Radu Lefebvre (2008) [21] deepened the study of the psychoso-

cial dimensions of mediated communication, while Philippe Castel and Marie-Françoise Lacassagne (2011) [22] contributed to linking communication, cognition, and social identity. In a similar vein, Kachar (2012) [23] emphasized the need for a more systematic consideration of psychological processes in the analysis of contemporary communication practices.

These contributions demonstrated that communication cannot be reduced to the mere transfer of information between a sender and a receiver. Rather, it mobilizes cognitive operations, affective dynamics, social representations, and symbolic mechanisms that jointly contribute to the production of meaning. However, these approaches often remain fragmented and do not always provide an integrative framework capable of articulating all the constitutive dimensions of the communicational phenomenon.

3.2. Digital Communication and the Transformation of Communicational Processes

The digital transformations of recent years have profoundly altered the conditions under which messages are produced, circulated, and received. Recent research indicates that digital platforms have become cognitive environments within which individuals construct their perceptions of the world, develop social relationships, and shape their digital identities.

The work of Nick Couldry and Andreas Hepp (2021) on *Deep Mediatization* [24] highlights that digital technologies no longer merely transmit information; they actively participate in structuring social experience. From this perspective, communication appears as a process increasingly embedded within technical infrastructures capable of influencing behaviors, interactions, and collective representations.

Research on social media platforms further reveals the growing importance of attentional, emotional, and identity-related mechanisms in the circulation of content. Consequently, the attention economy has become a central factor in determining the visibility and dissemination of messages within the digital public sphere.

3.3. Platform Governance and the Architecture of Meaning

Between 2021 and 2025, numerous studies emphasized the structuring power of major digital platforms in organizing social exchanges. The work of José van Dijck, Thomas Poell, and Martijn de Waal [5] demonstrates that platforms have evolved into sociotechnical institutions capable of shaping the cultural, economic, and political practices of contemporary societies.

Platform governance is no longer based solely on explicit rules but also on invisible technical mechanisms that influence information flows, content hierarchies, and the forms of interaction available to users. This evolution suggests that digital infrastructures themselves participate in the production of meaning and in the structuring of communicational spaces.

These observations reinforce the argument that the study of contemporary communication must incorporate the analysis of the technical dispositifs that frame and modulate human interactions.

3.4. Algorithmic Mediation and the Co-Production of Meaning

Algorithmic mediation has become one of the major themes of contemporary communication research. The works of Tarleton Gillespie (2022) [25], David Beer (2023) [26], and Taina Bucher (2024) [27] demonstrate that algorithms now intervene in the selection, personalization, recommendation, and visibility of content.

Algorithmic systems function as mediators that shape individuals' informational trajectories. They influence the content to which users are exposed, the interactions they develop, and the representations they construct of the social world.

This evolution requires moving beyond classical communication models centered exclusively on human actors. Contemporary digital environments rely on hybrid forms of interaction in which humans and computational systems jointly participate in the circulation and transformation of meaning.

The key question is therefore no longer simply how individuals communicate, but also how algorithmic architectures influence the very conditions under which communication takes place.

3.5. Media Psychology and Digital Environments

Media psychology has experienced significant development in recent years. Contemporary research demonstrates that digital media influence not only informational behaviors but also cognitive, emotional, and identity-related processes.

The work of Patti Valkenburg, Ine Beyens, and their collaborators (2022-2025) [28] [29] highlights that the effects of digital media largely depend on users' psychological characteristics, contexts of use, and mechanisms of social mediation. Media thus emerge as complex psychological environments whose effects cannot be adequately understood through simplistic causal models.

Furthermore, studies on digital emotions, polarization, information bubbles, online engagement, and identity dynamics confirm the need for theoretical frameworks capable of simultaneously articulating the cognitive, affective, social, and symbolic dimensions of communication.

Finally, an examination of this body of research reveals a progressive convergence among communication studies, psychology, digital sociology, and media studies. Despite this convergence, knowledge remains dispersed across disciplinary traditions that employ distinct concepts, methods, and levels of analysis. This situation underscores the need for a meta-epistemological reflection aimed at identifying the common principles underlying the study of communicational phenomena and constructing an integrative framework capable of articulating the cognitive, affective, social, symbolic, and technological dimensions of communi-

cation.

It is within this perspective that the proposal for a *Psychology of Communication* is situated—as a unified theoretical framework for analyzing contemporary communicational processes.

4. Meta-Epistemology of Communication

The studies reviewed in the previous section demonstrate that communication is an inherently plural scientific object, situated at the intersection of heterogeneous theoretical frameworks. A meta-epistemological approach makes it possible to examine the conditions under which knowledge is produced in Information and Communication Sciences (ICS), to identify the implicit assumptions underlying dominant paradigms, and to clarify the different levels of analysis mobilized within the field. Such an approach is essential for overcoming the theoretical fragmentation that characterizes ICS and for establishing an integrated understanding of communicational phenomena.

Information and Communication Sciences have developed through a succession of heterogeneous theoretical paradigms, each contributing to the understanding of a specific dimension of communication. From behaviorism to cognitivist, interactionist, systemic, and more recently digital approaches, these frameworks have successively enabled scholars to analyze communication effects, mental processes, meaning construction, the complexity of interactions, and the role of technological dispositifs.

However, this paradigmatic richness has been accompanied by epistemological fragmentation. Each paradigm tends to privilege a particular level of analysis at the expense of a comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying communication. As a result, communication research often remains compartmentalized, with explanatory models focusing on isolated dimensions rather than on the dynamic interrelationships among cognitive, affective, social, symbolic, and technological processes.

A critical examination of these paradigms and their limitations, therefore, constitutes a necessary step toward identifying the theoretical blind spots of ICS and justifying the search for an integrative framework capable of restoring the cognitive, affective, and symbolic depth of communicational phenomena. Such an undertaking is particularly relevant in contemporary digital environments, where communication increasingly emerges from the interplay between human actors, sociocultural contexts, and algorithmic infrastructures.

The following **Table 1** provides a synthetic overview of the major paradigms that have shaped communication research, their principal contributions, and their respective limitations from the perspective of a *Psychology of Communication*.

This comparative analysis highlights that each paradigm captures a specific and legitimate dimension of the communicational phenomenon, yet none, when considered in isolation, succeeds in accounting for its full psychological complexity.

Table 1. Major communication paradigms: contributions and epistemological limitations.

No.	Paradigm	Main Contribution	Epistemological Limitations
1	Behaviorist	Analysis of communication effects, observable stimuli, and responses	Reduces communication to stimulus-response mechanisms, neglecting mental processes and meaning construction
2	Cognitivist	Modeling of information processing (perception, memory, inference)	Focuses primarily on the isolated individual, with limited consideration of social, cultural, and interactional dimensions
3	Interactionist	Intersubjective construction of meaning and dynamics of social exchanges	Difficulties in theoretical formalization and cumulative generalization
4	Systemic	Feedback loops, circularity, and communicational complexity	High level of abstraction, sometimes disconnected from concrete psychological mechanisms
5	Digital/ Algorithmic	Examination of the role of platforms, algorithms, and technological mediations	Risk of dehumanization and marginalization of human subjectivity

The behaviorist paradigm, historically foundational, made it possible to objectify the measurable effects of communication, particularly in media and persuasive contexts (Skinner, 1957 [30]; Lasswell, 1948 [31]). However, its methodological rejection of references to mental states leads to a reductive conception of the communicating subject, who is viewed primarily as a passive recipient of stimuli.

The cognitivist paradigm subsequently reintroduced mental processes into communication analysis by emphasizing information processing, cognitive schemas, and interpretive inferences (Neisser, 1967 [7]; Kahneman, 2011 [9]). Nevertheless, this approach tends to isolate individuals from their interactional and cultural contexts, thereby producing a form of cognitive individualism that is only partially compatible with the fundamentally social nature of communication (Jouët, 2000 [12]).

Interactionist and constructivist approaches, in turn, repositioned meaning at the center of communicational exchanges by emphasizing its situated and intersubjective construction (Mead, 1934 [14]; Berger & Luckmann, 1966 [15]). While these perspectives have significantly enriched the understanding of communicational practices, they often suffer from limited formalization, making the accumulation of comparable findings and the modeling of underlying psychological processes more difficult (Quéré, 1991 [11]).

The systemic paradigm enabled scholars to conceptualize communication as a set of circular and dynamic processes, integrating the complexity of human and organizational interactions (Watzlawick *et al.*, 1967 [32]; Morin, 1990 [13]). However, its high level of abstraction sometimes tends to dissolve the psychological subject into the system itself, at the expense of a detailed examination of individual cognitive and affective mechanisms.

Finally, the digital and algorithmic paradigm, which has become increasingly influential in contemporary research, highlights the structuring role of platforms,

technical dispositifs, and algorithms in the production and circulation of meaning (Van Dijck *et al.*, 2018 [5]; Floridi, 2014 [17]). Although it provides valuable insights into the contemporary transformations of communication, it also carries the risk of analytical dehumanization, whereby human actors are reduced to functional nodes within computational systems.

From this perspective, the challenge is not to establish a hierarchy among these paradigms but rather to recognize both their partial complementarity and their respective blind spots. It is precisely this paradigmatic fragmentation that justifies the need for an integrative framework capable of articulating the contributions of these approaches around a common core: the psychological processes that make communication possible, intelligible, and socially effective.

The *Psychology of Communication* is therefore proposed as a meta-epistemological structure designed to move beyond paradigmatic juxtaposition and to restore the cognitive, affective, and symbolic depth of communicational phenomena. By positioning psychological processes as the foundational infrastructure of communication, this framework seeks to integrate the diverse theoretical traditions that have shaped Information and Communication Sciences while preserving their respective contributions.

It thus becomes relevant to define, from an ontological perspective, the nature and scope of this emerging discipline.

5. Ontological Definition of the *Psychology of Communication*

We define the *Psychology of Communication* as the scientific study of the mental, affective, social, and symbolic processes involved in the production, mediation, interpretation, and regulation of communicational acts in both analog and digital environments.

This definition is grounded in an expanded conception of communication, one that is not reduced to the mere transmission of information but is instead understood as a psychologically structured process embedded within specific social, cultural, and technological environments (Watzlawick *et al.*, 1967 [32]; Berger & Luckmann, 1966 [15]).

It is based on four fundamental ontological postulates.

5.1. All Communication Is Psychologically Mediated

Every communicational situation mobilizes complex psychological mechanisms—including perception, attention, memory, emotions, intentions, and expectations—that shape both the production of messages and their interpretation (Neisser, 1967 [7]; Kahneman, 2011 [9]). Communication cannot, therefore, be adequately understood independently of the mental and affective states of the actors involved, whether they function as senders, receivers, or mediators.

This postulate challenges purely transmission-based models of communication and reaffirms the centrality of the cognitive and emotional subject in communicational analysis.

5.2. Meaning Is Constructed, Not Transmitted

Meaning does not circulate as a pre-existing entity; rather, it emerges through the interaction between actors, contexts, and interpretive frameworks (Mead, 1934 [14]; Berger & Luckmann, 1966 [15]). Messages possess no intrinsic meaning. Their symbolic value is acquired through situated processes of interpretation that are historically and culturally constructed.

This postulate situates the *Psychology of Communication* within a constructivist and interactionist perspective, emphasizing the dynamics of meaning co-construction and the active role of participants in communicational processes.

5.3. Technical Devices Function as Cognitive Co-Actors

Communication technologies are not merely neutral channels or supports. They actively participate in the cognitive and decision-making processes of individuals and collectives. Digital platforms, interfaces, and algorithms orient attention, structure memory, influence judgments, and modulate emotions (Clark, 2008 [16]; Floridi, 2014 [17]; Van Dijck *et al.*, 2018 [5]).

From this perspective, technical dispositifs may be regarded as cognitive co-actors integrated into the extended psychological systems that characterize contemporary communication. Communication is therefore increasingly shaped by hybrid assemblages in which human cognition and computational processes operate in close interdependence.

5.4. Communication Is a Dynamic System

Communication should be understood as an open, evolving, and non-linear system characterized by feedback loops, emergent effects, and continuous adjustments between actors and contexts (Watzlawick *et al.*, 1967 [32]; Morin, 1990 [13]). Communicational acts transform the psychological states of participants, which in turn influence subsequent interactions.

This systemic dynamic endows communication with its own temporality and justifies an integrative approach attentive to the interrelationships among individual, interactional, organizational, cultural, and societal levels of analysis. Communication is thus conceived as a dynamic process of psychological regulation and meaning production rather than as a simple exchange of information.

Taken together, these four ontological postulates establish the foundations of the *Psychology of Communication* as a unified theoretical framework. They position communication as a psychologically mediated, socially constructed, technologically extended, and dynamically evolving phenomenon, thereby providing a coherent basis for integrating the diverse traditions that have historically shaped Information and Communication Sciences.

6. Toward an Integrative Model of Communication

In order to overcome the paradigmatic fragmentation of Information and Communication Sciences (ICS) and to restore the psychological complexity of com-

municational phenomena, this article proposes an integrative model structured around five complementary analytical levels. These levels should not be understood as independent layers but rather as interdependent dimensions that are simultaneously activated in every communicational situation.

6.1. Cognitive Level

The cognitive level refers to the mental processes involved in the reception, processing, and interpretation of messages, including perception, attention, memory, categorization, and inferential reasoning. These mechanisms determine the selection of information deemed relevant and guide the construction of meaning (Neisser, 1967 [7]; Kahneman, 2011 [9]). Communication, therefore, presupposes a situated cognitive activity shaped by available mental resources and contextual constraints.

6.2. Affective Level

The affective level encompasses emotions, their valence (positive or negative), and the associated motivational dynamics. Emotions are not merely epiphenomena of communication; they significantly influence attention, memory, persuasion, and communicational engagement (Damasio, 1994 [33]; Lazarus, 1991 [34]). In media and digital environments, emotions play a central role in content virality, audience engagement, and opinion polarization.

6.3. Social Level

The social level refers to the interactional and normative frameworks within which communicational acts occur. Social norms, roles, power relations, and mechanisms of influence structure exchanges and shape communicational behaviors (Mead, 1934 [14]; Moscovici, 2003 [10]). This level highlights the fundamentally relational nature of communication, which cannot be reduced to a purely individual activity.

6.4. Symbolic and Cultural Level

The symbolic and cultural level concerns the systems of representations, values, beliefs, and collective imaginaries that give meaning to messages and communicational practices. Communication contributes both to the reproduction and to the transformation of the symbolic universes through which individuals interpret the social world (Geertz, 1973 [35]; Hall, 1997 [36]). This level situates communicational processes within a broader historical and cultural perspective, emphasizing the role of shared symbolic frameworks in the production of meaning.

6.5. Technical and Algorithmic Level

The technical and algorithmic level refers to the material, digital, and computational dispositifs that mediate, orient, and transform contemporary communication processes. It encompasses technical infrastructures, digital platforms, inter-

faces, artificial intelligence systems, and the algorithms responsible for content recommendation, filtering, ranking, and personalization.

Far from functioning as neutral channels of transmission, these dispositifs actively participate in the selection, prioritization, and circulation of information, thereby influencing the cognitive, affective, social, and symbolic processes of communicational actors (Latour, 2005 [37]; Gillespie, 2014 [38]; Couldry & Hepp, 2017 [39]).

Within digital environments, algorithms contribute to structuring conditions of information exposure, shaping attentional trajectories, and modulating social interactions. They operate as mediating agents capable of reinforcing specific representations, encouraging particular communicational behaviors, and generating effects of visibility and invisibility within the digital public sphere (Beer, 2017 [40]; Zuboff, 2019 [41]). Communication can therefore no longer be conceptualized solely as a relationship between human senders and receivers; rather, it must be understood as a hybrid process in which technical systems participate in the co-production of meaning.

Importantly, this level is not conceived as an isolated or autonomous dimension. Instead, it operates transversally across all other levels of the model. It influences cognitive information processing, triggers or amplifies affective responses, reconfigures social interactions, and contributes to the dissemination, reinforcement, or transformation of symbolic and cultural universes. From this perspective, digital technologies and algorithmic systems emerge as structuring mediators of contemporary communication, whose analysis has become indispensable to any comprehensive understanding of communicational phenomena.

Integrative Dynamics of the Model

Taken together, these five analytical levels form an integrated framework in which communication is understood as a multidimensional psychological process operating simultaneously across cognitive, affective, social, symbolic, and technological domains. The communicational act emerges from the continuous interaction among these dimensions rather than from any single factor considered in isolation.

This integrative model, therefore, provides a common theoretical architecture capable of articulating the principal contributions of behaviorist, cognitivist, interactionist, constructivist, systemic, and digital paradigms. By placing psychological processes at the center of analysis while recognizing the structuring role of social, cultural, and technological environments, it offers a unified framework for understanding communication in both analog and digital contexts.

The *Psychology of Communication* thus appears not merely as a new subfield of inquiry but as an integrative epistemological framework capable of reconnecting the diverse traditions of Information and Communication Sciences around a common explanatory core: the psychological production, mediation, regulation, and transformation of meaning.

7. Naming, Scope, and Originality of the Proposed Model

7.1. Naming and Scope of the Model

The model proposed in this article, which conceptualizes communication through five constitutive and interdependent dimensions—cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical-algorithmic—may be designated as the Pentadimensional Model of Communication (PMC).

This five-level model provides a unified theoretical framework for analyzing a wide range of communicational phenomena, including organizational, media, political, and digital communication. It enables the articulation of individual psychological processes with broader social and cultural dynamics while simultaneously incorporating the growing role of technical and algorithmic dispositifs. In this respect, the model constitutes a transversal conceptual foundation capable of enhancing both the comparability of research findings and the cumulative development of knowledge within Information and Communication Sciences.

7.2. Originality of the Model

The present proposal differs from existing integrative traditions in communication studies and media psychology in several important respects. Classical approaches to the *Psychology of Communication* have primarily focused on the cognitive, affective, or interactional mechanisms involved in human exchanges, whereas media psychology has concentrated more specifically on the psychological effects of media environments on individuals. Mediatization theories, for their part, have emphasized the social transformations generated by media and digital infrastructures. Although these approaches have made substantial contributions to the understanding of communicational phenomena, they generally privilege a particular level of analysis or a specific domain of investigation.

The *Psychology of Communication* advanced in this article pursues a different ambition. It is neither a branch of psychology applied to communication nor a simple extension of media psychology. Rather, it is conceived as a meta-theoretical framework aimed at redefining the communicational object itself through five interdependent dimensions: cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical-algorithmic.

Its originality lies in the simultaneous integration of these dimensions within a single analytical model capable of accounting for both traditional interpersonal interactions and contemporary digital environments mediated by platforms and algorithms.

Whereas classical models often regard technologies as channels or contextual factors of communication, the present framework conceptualizes them as active mediators participating in the co-production of meaning. In this sense, the *Psychology of Communication* offers a renewed interpretation of communicational processes by integrating insights from psychology, communication studies, media studies, and digital systems research within a unified conceptual architecture.

8. Implications for Contemporary Information and Communication Sciences

The adoption of a framework grounded in the *Psychology of Communication* and the Pentadimensional Model of Communication carries significant implications for the contemporary development of Information and Communication Sciences, both theoretically and methodologically.

8.1. Theoretical Contributions

First, this framework contributes to the conceptual stabilization of the communicational object. By defining communication as a psychologically mediated process embedded within social, symbolic, cultural, and technical dynamics, it makes it possible to move beyond the partial or implicit definitions that have historically fragmented the field of ICS (Miège, 2004 [2]; Wolton, 2009 [3]). The communicational object is no longer reduced to information, media dispositifs, or isolated interactions but is instead conceived as a complex system articulating cognition, affect, sociality, culture, and technology.

Second, the *Psychology of Communication* strengthens scientific cumulativeness. By proposing a transversal theoretical foundation, it provides a common framework capable of accommodating heterogeneous empirical studies without merely juxtaposing them. This structuring effort responds to the requirement for cumulative knowledge emphasized by research-program epistemologies, facilitating the comparison, replication, and progressive integration of research findings (Kuhn, 1962 [42]; Lakatos, 1978 [43]).

Finally, the framework establishes a structured dialogue between Information and Communication Sciences, psychology, and digital studies. It clarifies the conceptual borrowings from cognitive and social psychology while integrating recent advances in research on algorithms, platforms, and artificial intelligence (Floridi, 2014 [17]; Van Dijck *et al.*, 2018 [5]). This interdisciplinary positioning contributes to strengthening the scientific legitimacy of ICS in the analysis of contemporary communicational environments.

8.2. Methodological Contributions

From a methodological perspective, the *Psychology of Communication* opens the way for the development of psycho-communicational indicators, designed to systematically measure dimensions such as cognitive load, affective engagement, trust, influence, and meaning construction. These indicators make it possible to operationalize the psychological processes underlying communication while remaining adapted to the specificities of media and digital environments (Anastasi & Urbina, 1997 [44]; Pata, 2026 [45]).

The framework also promotes the emergence of psychological communicometrics, understood as a methodological field dedicated to the rigorous quantification of communicational phenomena through psychological, social, and symbolic indicators. This perspective extends the traditions of psychometrics and measure-

ment sciences while addressing the specific needs of Information and Communication Sciences in evaluating communicational dispositifs, practices, and effects.

Furthermore, the framework encourages a stronger integration of mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative techniques (surveys, scales, indices, statistical analyses) with qualitative approaches (interviews, discourse analysis, observations). Such methodological articulation enables researchers to capture both the subjective depth of communicational experiences and their embedding within broader social and technological dynamics (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011 [46]).

8.3. Operationalization of the Five-Level Model

Beyond its theoretical significance, the proposed model may be employed as a multidimensional analytical framework for the study of communicational phenomena. Each of the five identified levels corresponds to a specific set of research questions, observable variables, and measurable indicators that can be operationalized in empirical investigations. As shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2. Operational framework of the five-level model.

Level	Central Question	Main Variables	Examples of Indicators
Cognitive	How is the message processed?	Comprehension, memory, attention	Comprehension score, recall rate
Affective	What does the actor experience emotionally?	Emotions, motivation, trust	Emotional intensity, degree of adherence
Social	How is interaction structured?	Influence, participation, network dynamics	Participation rate, network centrality
Symbolic-Cultural	What meaning is attributed to the message?	Values, beliefs, representations	Degree of symbolic convergence
Technical-Algorithmic	How does technology influence communication?	Recommendation, visibility, personalization	Exposure rate, algorithmic mediation index

The principal strength of the model lies in its capacity to analyze these five dimensions simultaneously, thereby accounting for the complexity of contemporary communicational phenomena. Depending on research objectives, each dimension may be measured independently or integrated into a multidimensional analytical framework aimed at explaining the production, circulation, and transformation of meaning across diverse communicational contexts.

9. Limitations of the Model

Despite its integrative ambition, the theoretical framework of the *Psychology of Communication* presents several limitations that should be acknowledged in order to clarify its scientific scope and avoid any excessive interpretation of its domain of application.

9.1. Limitations of the Conceptual Scope

The *Psychology of Communication* does not claim to encompass the entirety of the phenomena studied within Information and Communication Sciences (ICS). Its primary focus is on the cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical mechanisms involved in the production, circulation, interpretation, and appropriation of meaning. Other important dimensions of ICS—particularly economic, legal, political, historical, and institutional approaches to communication—are only indirectly addressed within the proposed framework. Consequently, the model should be understood as a specific analytical perspective on communicational phenomena rather than as an exhaustive theory of the field.

9.2. Overlaps with Psychology and Media Studies

The proposed framework necessarily maintains close relationships with several neighboring disciplines. On the one hand, it draws upon concepts from cognitive, social, cultural, and emotional psychology to explain the individual and collective mechanisms underlying communication. On the other hand, it intersects with key concerns developed within media studies, particularly regarding media effects, digital practices, platforms, and technological mediation.

These disciplinary overlaps may raise questions concerning the theoretical autonomy of the *Psychology of Communication*. However, the objective is not to replace psychology or media studies but rather to provide an integrative framework capable of articulating their contributions around a specifically communicational object. The added value of this approach lies precisely in its ability to connect dimensions that are often examined separately.

9.3. Risk of Conceptual Overextension

One of the principal risks associated with any integrative framework is conceptual overextension. By seeking to combine the cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical dimensions of communication, the model may be perceived as overly encompassing or insufficiently delimited. Such expansion could weaken its explanatory power and reduce its analytical precision.

To mitigate this risk, the proposed model should be viewed as a heuristic framework designed to organize the analysis of communicational phenomena rather than as a grand unified theory of communication. Its value lies less in claiming to explain all communicational phenomena than in providing a coherent structure through which different levels of analysis can be articulated and dialogue among theoretical traditions can be fostered.

9.4. Perspectives for Validation

The present contribution remains primarily conceptual and epistemological in nature. The propositions advanced here would benefit from empirical validation across diverse contexts, including organizational communication, digital interac-

tions, media practices, intercultural communication, and communication environments increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence.

Future research could contribute to refining the indicators associated with each level of the model, testing the relationships among them, and evaluating their explanatory power across different communicational situations. Such investigations would help determine the empirical robustness of the framework and further clarify its theoretical and methodological contributions to Information and Communication Sciences.

10. Illustration: Facebook Use during a Presidential Election Campaign

To illustrate the explanatory potential of the proposed model, let us consider the case of a young voter who accesses Facebook during a presidential election campaign and encounters a video published by a presidential candidate presenting a program aimed at reducing youth unemployment.

10.1. Cognitive Level: Understanding and Interpreting the Message

The user watches the video, listens to the candidate's arguments, and processes the information received. In doing so, they mobilize prior knowledge regarding the country's economic situation, compare the candidate's proposals with those of competing candidates, and evaluate their credibility.

Their attention is drawn to certain promises, while memory activates personal experiences and information previously encountered through other media sources. The meaning of the message, therefore, emerges through a cognitive process involving perception, comprehension, evaluation, and interpretation.

10.2. Affective Level: Experiencing and Engaging Emotionally

Beyond the objective information conveyed, the candidate's discourse elicits emotional responses. A young, unemployed graduate may experience hope upon hearing promises of job creation. Conversely, an individual disappointed by previous political promises may react with skepticism, frustration, or anger.

These emotional reactions significantly influence the evaluation of the message. Political support thus depends not only on the quality of the arguments presented but also on the emotions they generate.

10.3. Social Level: Group Influence and Social Interaction

After viewing the video, the user examines comments posted by friends, influencers, and members of their online community.

If their social environment expresses strong support for the candidate, mechanisms of social conformity and normative influence may reinforce favorable attitudes. Conversely, repeated criticism may encourage reconsideration of the candidate's credibility and proposals.

Meaning construction, therefore, appears as a collective and interactional pro-

cess rather than a purely individual cognitive activity.

10.4. Symbolic-Cultural Level: Collective Representations and Shared Values

The candidate's message also mobilizes symbols and cultural values. References to the nation, youth, patriotism, social justice, or economic development evoke collective representations deeply embedded within the social imagination.

Individuals interpret these symbols through the lens of their personal histories, cultural affiliations, and belief systems. Consequently, the same political discourse may be perceived as a source of hope by some audiences while appearing as a mere political slogan to others.

10.5. The Role of Algorithms: Technical Systems as Cognitive Co-Actors

The user did not encounter the video by chance. Facebook's algorithm selected and displayed it based on browsing history, expressed interests, previous interactions, and inferred preferences.

The digital dispositif thus functions as a genuine cognitive co-actor. It directs attention, filters available information, shapes exposure patterns, and indirectly influences political opinions and behavioral intentions.

From this perspective, communication is no longer solely the result of interactions between human actors; it is increasingly mediated by computational systems that participate in the construction of communicational experiences.

10.6. Integrated Interpretation

This situation illustrates the central thesis of the *Psychology of Communication*: communication cannot be reduced either to the transmission of information or to a simple social interaction.

The reception and interpretation of a political message simultaneously involve:

- Cognitive processes (comprehension, evaluation, and interpretation);
- Affective processes (emotions, attitudes, and motivations);
- Social processes (influence, interaction, and normative regulation);
- Symbolic-cultural processes (values, beliefs, and collective representations);
- Technical and algorithmic processes that shape exposure, attention, and communicational experience.

This example confirms that communication constitutes a dynamic psychological system within which individuals, social groups, cultural frameworks, and technological infrastructures jointly participate in the production of meaning.

Moreover, the illustration highlights one of the distinctive contributions of the proposed framework: the explicit recognition of digital platforms and algorithms as cognitive co-actors. Rather than functioning merely as channels of transmission, they actively contribute to the structuring of communicational environments and to the co-production of meaning, a phenomenon that lies at

the very heart of the *Psychology of Communication* advanced in this article.

11. Discussion and Future Directions

In the age of digital platforms and artificial intelligence systems, communication can no longer be conceived as an exclusively human activity. It is progressively becoming a space of cognitive and affective delegation in which functions traditionally performed by individuals—such as information seeking, memory management, attentional orientation, decision-making, and emotional regulation—are increasingly entrusted, at least in part, to technical and algorithmic systems (Clark, 2008 [16]; Floridi, 2014 [17]). This profound transformation affects not only communicational practices but also the psychological structures that underpin them.

Within this context, the *Psychology of Communication* emerges as a particularly relevant framework for analyzing contemporary transformations of communicational phenomena. By articulating individual cognitive and affective processes, social and symbolic dynamics, and the active role of technical dispositifs, it makes it possible to move beyond traditional dichotomies such as human versus machine, message versus medium, and content versus channel. The algorithm is no longer understood merely as a tool but rather as a mediating actor that participates in shaping attention, organizing information hierarchies, and modulating collective emotions (Van Dijck *et al.*, 2018 [5]).

The perspectives opened by this framework are manifold. At the theoretical level, they invite scholars to reconsider notions such as cognitive autonomy, influence, and communicational responsibility in light of algorithmic mediation. At the empirical level, they encourage the development of observational and measurement tools capable of capturing the psychological effects of human-algorithm interactions, particularly in terms of cognitive overload, digital trust, algorithmic dependency, and affective polarization. At the societal level, they highlight the ethical challenges raised by increasingly automated communication environments, where cognitive and affective delegation calls into question the preservation of individuals' and communities' critical and reflective capacities.

Consequently, rather than constituting a mere extension of existing paradigms, the *Psychology of Communication* opens a forward-looking research program centered on the analysis of hybrid communicational ecosystems in which human actors, technical dispositifs, and artificial intelligence systems jointly co-produce meaning, emotions, and decisions.

12. Conclusions

This article proposes an epistemological refoundation of Information and Communication Sciences through the framework of the *Psychology of Communication*. Far from adopting a reductionist perspective, this proposal is part of an integrative project aimed at restoring the cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical dimensions of communication, dimensions that have often been

fragmented by the coexistence of multiple theoretical paradigms. By defining communication as a psychologically mediated process embedded within interactional, cultural, and technological dynamics, the article contributes to clarifying and stabilizing the communicational object at the core of Information and Communication Sciences.

This perspective opens the way for new research programs capable of rigorously articulating the contributions of psychology, communication studies, and digital sciences, particularly in the analysis of communicational environments increasingly shaped by platforms, algorithms, and artificial intelligence. It also prepares the ground for the development of measurement instruments adapted to contemporary transformations of communication by encouraging the construction of psycho-communicational indicators and indices capable of enhancing the comparability, cumulativeness, and explanatory power of empirical research.

More broadly, the framework proposed here contributes to the emergence of a unified theoretical architecture capable of integrating the major explanatory dimensions of communicational phenomena within a coherent analytical system. Through the Pentadimensional Model of Communication (PMC), communication is conceptualized as a dynamic process operating simultaneously across cognitive, affective, social, symbolic-cultural, and technical-algorithmic levels, thereby providing a common foundation for future theoretical and empirical developments.

Thus conceived, the *Psychology of Communication* is not merely a complementary theoretical framework. Rather, it constitutes a structuring scientific horizon and an emerging research program capable of accompanying the evolution of Information and Communication Sciences in response to the profound transformations of communicational practices in the digital and algorithmic age. By placing the psychological production, mediation, regulation, and transformation of meaning at the center of analysis, it offers a renewed perspective on communication and contributes to strengthening the scientific coherence and future development of the field.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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