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Government advertising and the war on drugs: the narrative proposed by the Mexican Federal Government (2006–2012)

Abstract

This academic article is based on the results obtained from doctoral research defended in May of 2016¹, with the title: "Government advertising in the construction of cultures of peace: the case of the Mexican Federal Government (2006–2012) in the framework of the war on drugs", which highlights the potential of government advertising for the promotion of values, behaviors and actions that build collective well-being. The research analyzes qualitatively 127 T.V. spots issued by different Departments of the Mexican Republic during the six-year presidential term of Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa, to unveil that the Mexican government, instead of using its advertising efforts to contribute to the pacification of the country, used this communicative tool to legitimize its strategy of facing drug trafficking through an armed approach. Throughout the messages presented in the T.V. spots, a clearly differentiated story between "good" and "bad" people is described, using the threat of drugs as the axis of its persuasive strategy and transmitting a culture of fear that generates more concerns and insecurities than the values needed to counteract violence. At the same time, the promotion of cultures of peace in the story offered by the Mexican Federal Government is minimal and circumstantial, from what it can be affirmed that it does not offer keys to understand and transform the conflict, but a narrative that reinforces the war on drugs and legitimizes it.

Keywords

Government advertising, peace cultures, Mexico, war on drugs, social change.

1. Introduction

The sociopolitical situation experienced in Mexico over the past 10 years as a result of the War on Drugs, the prevailing need to reverse this reality and the lack of a General Law of Government Advertising in

¹ The document can be found at: <http://www.tdx.cat/handle/10803/386514>

Mexico² that should regulate the contents of this type of public communication, give relevance to the ideas presented below, which aim to contribute to the social, academic and political debate on how to overcome this period of violence and guide the country towards a well-being zone.

To do so, the research aims to solve three objectives: first of all, to determine the existence of peace promotion capacities in government advertising; secondly, to analyze the narrative transmitted through publicity between December 2006 and November 2012 by the Mexican Federal Government, in the context of the War on Drugs, to determine if it contributed to the pacification of the country, or on the contrary, legitimized the culture of violence, and finally, to propose a series of elements that could improve Mexican Government advertising, to transform it into a genuine tool for the promotion of cultures of peace.

Structurally, the article is divided into 4 sections: methodology; government advertising and its relation to peace promotion; case study and conclusions/recommendations.

2. Methodology

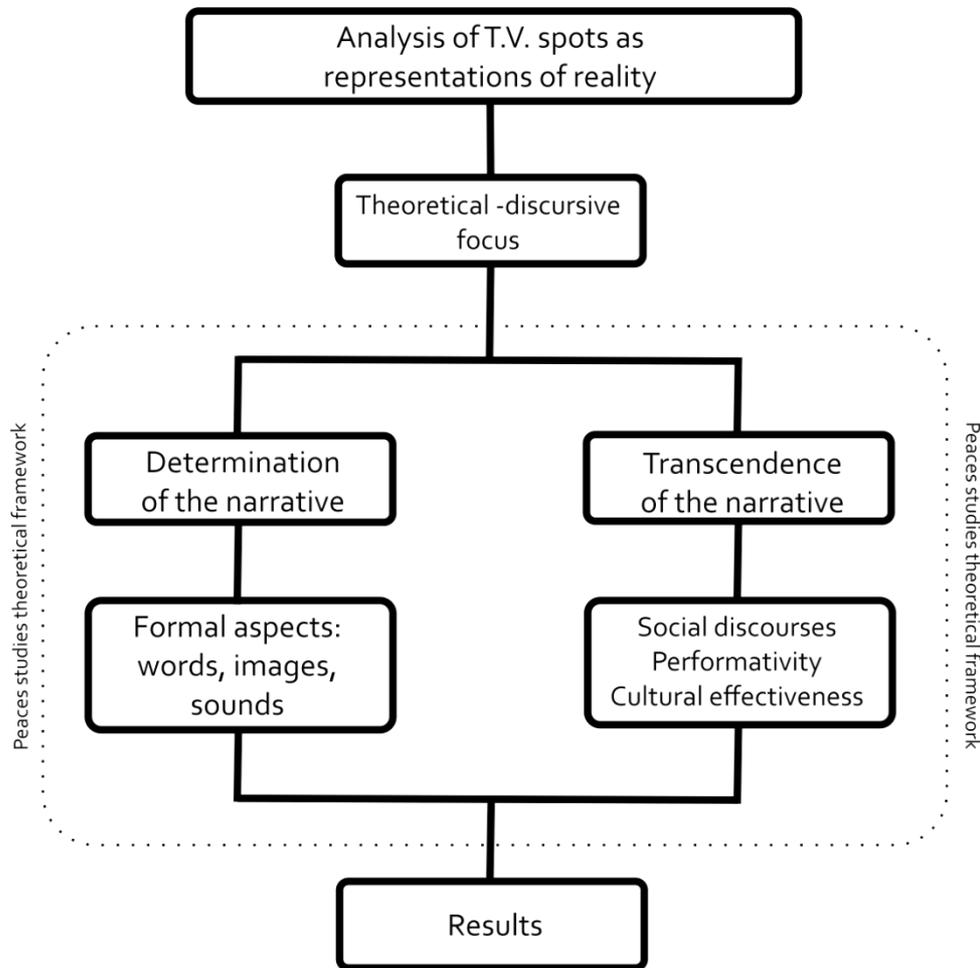
Once having determined the research objectives, I decided to carry out a theoretical analysis of the social functions of advertising, its performative nature and its cultural efficacy, through a relevant and updated bibliographic review. Regarding the case study, I decided to study every TV spot issued by the Mexican Federal Government between the 1st of December, 2006 and the 30th of November, 2012, which were related both, to the promotion of peace and to the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime³. For its analysis it was determined that the best option was to carry out a qualitative approach, addressing TV spots as representations of reality (de Andrés, 2010; Casetti & Di Chio, 1993; Benavides, 1997).

Specifically, a discursive theoretical approach is used to determine in every TV spot both, the publicity narrative transmitted through formal aspects (words, images and sounds), following the classification proposed by Benavides (1997: 301) and the social relevance of the story. The research method is therefore, a discursive and communicative approach to the advertising narratives, which analyzes the formal and cultural aspects of the spots, revealing the issuer's construction of the topics, but also the variables incorporated by the context and intertextual dialogue (Nos Aldás, 2007: 166), everything with a transversal discussion contributed by the theories of peace studies. To clarify the previous ideas, the following scheme presents in a graphic manner the methodology to be used in the analysis of the spots.

² On October 27, 2017, the First Chamber of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation published a draft judgment in favor of the international organization "Article 19", which, if approved, would force the Mexican Congress to discuss and implement a regulatory law on official advertising at the latest on April 30, 2018. In any case, the draft judgment focuses on the rendering of accounts, leaving aside the regulation of the content of official advertising.

³ To obtain all the advertising pieces to be analyzed, I contacted the Mexican National Institute of Transparency, Access to Information and Protection of Personal Data (INAI), to ask the 21 Secretariats of the Republic, existing during the study period, the full list of TV spots issued by each of them during the six year term of President Felipe Calderón, whose objectives were related to the promotion of peace or peace cultures. Subsequently I requested the list of TV spots issued by SEDENA, MARINA, PRESIDENCIA, SSP, PGR and SEGOB Secretariats whose objectives were related to public safety and the fight against drug trafficking. Here are the serial numbers of such requests: 0000400042715, 0000400143415, 0000400042815, 0000400255315, 0000500052215, 0000600068915, 0000700030115, 0000700030215, 000070010815, 0000800035515, 0000900087915, 0001000042215, 0001100085515, 0001100150115, 0001100313315, 0001100448315, 0001200096515, 0001300011315, 0001300011415, 0001300036915, 0001400022915, 0001500019815, 0001600078815, 0001700063615, 0001700063715, 0001700099415, 0001700175815, 0001800015415, 0002000024115, 0002100013515, 0002700062015, 0210000017015, 0210000017115, 0210000070115, 0210000078815, 0220000003415.

Figure 1. Representation of the methodology



Once the methodological proposal has been defined, the technique used to obtain the necessary information of every spot is presented below. It is a template based on the content analysis model proposed by Cortés González (2009), which is formed as follows: first, general information about the analyzed piece is shown and the advertising message is briefly described. Afterwards, the formal aspects are addressed, for which a literal transcription of the dialogues (words) is presented and what is shown and heard (images and sounds) in the spot is described. Subsequently, the formal aspects of the spot that may be part of the communication strategy of the Federal Government are identified and the most significant findings of each piece in terms of the promotion of the culture of violence or cultures of peace are presented, as demonstrated in the template:

Table 1. Analysis template

| General information | |
|---|--|
| Name of the spot | |
| Campaign | |
| Year | |
| Emitted by | |
| General description | * The content of the spot is briefly explained |
| Number of exhibitions on TV | |
| Screenshot | |
| * This section contains a sample screenshot taken from the spot | |
| Transcription (words) | |
| * Literal transcription of what is said in the spot | |
| Images and sounds | |
| * The content of the spot is described in terms of image and sound. The section is made up of the following details of the advertising message: staging, characters, lighting, soundtrack and editing | |
| Key elements of the communicative strategy | |
| * The formal aspects (words, images and sounds) of the spot that support the communicative strategy proposed by the Federal Government (regarding the war on drugs) are identified. | |
| References and appeals to cultures of peace and/or culture | |
| * The formal aspects and key elements of the communicative strategy of the spot are put in dialogue with the theoretical framework of peace studies to determine the characteristics of the spot related to cultures of peace and/or culture of violence, respectively. | |
| Other comments | |
| * If necessary, other relevant aspects of the spot are described | |

3. Government advertising and peace cultures

To begin with this section it is necessary, in the first place, to establish the point of view from which advertising is studied. This article does not understand advertising as a tool of the *marketing mix*, used for selling products or positioning brands. It is understood as Detienne (1996); Benavides (1997); García (2001), and Nos Aldás (2012) do: a space in which different social groups debate their ideas, live and interact, as a form of communication that seeks to make public the ideas shared by a community and above all, as "a language whose purpose is to influence behaviors through persuasion and seduction" (Moreu, 2005: 188).

Paying attention to these aspects of advertising, beyond their commercial capabilities, makes it possible to identify different social functions that it carries out: advertising creates public opinion (Lomas, 1996); creates culture (de Andrés, 2010; Benavides, 1997), has repercussions on collective imagination (López, 2005; Cortés, 2006; García, 2009); has informative and educative components (Aznar & Catalán, 2000; Correa, 2000); has an impact on individual behavior (Benavides, 1997; Pajuelo de Arcos, 1993) and, consequently, has an impact on collective behavior (Mujika, 2003; Benavides, 1997). In other words, advertising messages are performative as they seek intersubjectivity and the involvement of the recipients in the causes they pursue. Due to the above, I am in favor of the evaluation of advertising not only in terms of its business or communicative effectiveness, but also in terms of its cultural efficacy: being aware of the social significance of its messages and demanding, consequently, appropriate socio-cultural and transformative content.

Above all existing types of advertising, undoubtedly the one that has more responsibilities in terms of the social significance of its messages, is the governmental one, due to its nature of public communication. This type of advertising, carried out at any level of the Government, through any means of communication and inserted in the spaces intended for commercial advertising, has the aim to inform about procedures and deadlines related to the services provided by the Administration; to positively educate or achieve

acceptance of a code of conduct or values aimed at improving the social relationships of citizens with the social, physical and natural environment (Cortés, 2008: 234).

It is therefore, public communication used by the different administrations (national, regional or local) to provide useful information to citizens, as well as to convince society of the values to be shared in the community (Cortés, 2005: 355). Government advertising represents an important contrast with respect to conventional one, since its objective is not to promote products or services with a commercial purpose, but rather the promotion of values and good behaviors, which is why it is understood as the type of advertising with the most social implications.

Considering its degree of specification, there are several classifications of government advertising, but broadly speaking we can say that there are three types of campaigns: those that are limited to provide information on public services (such as vaccination campaigns of the Ministry of Health, information campaigns of the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit or those where the Ministry of Communications and Transport report on new infrastructures); the ones that attempt to sell a product or public service to a specific target group (example of this are the commercial campaigns developed by the Mexican Post Service or the spots of the Ministry of Tourism that intend to promote a destination); finally, there are those that seek to modify social attitudes, such as campaigns of the Ministry of Health to promote better eating habits or focused on preventing drug use. In this article we are interested in the last ones, identified as government advertising of social promotion or government educational-social advertising.

This typology of communication is one that seeks to promote different social, educational, cultural or health public interests with the main purpose of involving people in their achievement: promoting values and behaviors in favor of democracy, freedom, coexistence or solidarity; sensitize people in favor of social well-being; prevent and protect the physical and material integrity of citizenship or favor the existence of positive habits for individuals and society as a whole.

Taking that into account, the promotion of peace or peace cultures can be one of the issues promoted through government advertising, understanding peace not as the absence of war, but as a state of well-being that allows people to decide the kind of life they want to live. In this context peace cultures are understood as the praxis of peace, the implementation of specific actions that promote collective well-being. Thus, it is proposed to use government advertising as a strategic communication tool for peace, understanding communication as a configurator of social discourses and relational processes that can help to energize a cosmopolitan, global, informed, active and constructive citizenry, towards parameters of a culture of peace (Nos Aldás, 2010: 131).

This proposal to make use of the government advertising to promote peace has been studied by different authors (Cortés, De Andrés, García, Alvarado). In fact, it is already being used institutionally at a national level by some countries, such as Costa Rica, where there is a Vice-Ministry of Peace and a National General Directorate dedicated to the promotion of cultures of peace and civic coexistence, or the Netherlands, where more than half of its government advertising promotes cultures of peace, according to the research developed by Cortés (2009).

As in any proposal, there are also criticisms and detracts, which in this case question the fact that the current dominant model of government advertising is unidirectional, vertical, imposed, massive and has little participation of citizens in its preparation, while communication for peace seeks to work with multidirectional, horizontal and interpersonal communication platforms with a strong component of citizen participation. However, there are several cases of good practices at the international level that show that it is possible to transform the prevailing model of government advertising towards a more participatory prototype aligned with communication for peace: an example of this can be found in Italy,

through *amministrazione condivisa*⁴, studied by Arena (1997) and supported by the principle of subsidiarity of the Italian Constitution, or in Canada, where an independent team, made up of a multidisciplinary group of experts, evaluates the objectives, necessity, opportunity and effectiveness of the government campaigns, followed by a pre and post campaign inquiry, with the participation of citizen committees, with the objective of determining the response of people to the messages and their opinion on them.

4. Case study

Once the theoretical framework was constructed, the case study is presented below. In this case, first contact was made with the 21 Ministries of the Republic that existed during the mandate of President Felipe Calderón, to request detailed information on all those television advertising campaigns transmitted during that period, which had the objective of promoting peace or cultures of peace. 20 of the 21 Ministries responded that they did not issue any advertising campaign with these characteristics. The only positive response came from the Ministry of Public Education (SEP), who reported on the transmission of 8 TV spots with such content.

Subsequently I contacted the six Ministries related to public security and the fight against drug trafficking: Presidency, Governance, Public Security, National Defense, Navy and General Attorney of the Republic, to request detailed information on all those television advertising campaigns with the objective of public security and the fight against drug trafficking and that have been transmitted during the administration of Calderón Hinojosa. The previous dependencies reported on the transmission of 119 advertising pieces with these characteristics. In this way, with the 8 spots contributed by the SEP, plus the 119 given by the aforementioned Ministries, the total universe of study was formed, which consists of 127 TV spots⁵. Next, the results of the analysis of the spots destined to narrate the conflict for the drug trafficking are presented, while later presenting the same analysis of those that contain elements for the promotion of peace.

4.1 Advertising campaigns of the Mexican Federal Government (2006-2012) related to public security and the fight against drug trafficking

The following pages present the results obtained from the analysis of the 119 advertising messages aimed at public security and the fight against drug trafficking. The TV spots will be divided by types and their main messages will be identified, as well as the words that occur most often throughout them, to later determine their discursive actors and other outstanding aspects. Likewise, an analysis is presented of what is not shown and what is not said in the spots, that is, the aspects of reality emanating from the war on drugs in Mexico that were omitted in the official narrative.

Beginning with the type of content they transmit, there are the 5 types of spots that can be found: those that focus on presenting results of the combat strategy (arrests of alleged criminals, drug seizures, arms or money seizures). Those that have a merely informative nature, since they transmit data on actions carried out by the Government (as long as they do not present results), contain messages of institutional nature or clearly explain the characteristics of the strategy to combat drug trafficking. There are other TV spots using phrases like "we work so that drugs do not reach your children", "the fight is worth it, the reason is you" or "we work for your safety and that of your family", so they clearly focus on justifying the armed strategy to combat drug trafficking used by the Government of Felipe Calderón. In other publicity pieces, what clearly stands out is the attempt to exalt or

⁴ Shared administration.

⁵ The 127 TV spots can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzHCNTMGbQofghAtoSgbfPQ/featured>

magnify the armed forces, since they show police, soldiers or marines carrying out risky actions, protecting the population against natural disasters or organized crime while in other cases they are directly identified as heroes. Finally, a fifth category is represented by those spots that are inserted specifically within the information campaigns that are held once a year in Mexico, on the occasion of the presentation of the annual government report.

The most recurrent type of spot observed during the analysis was the presentation of results (36%), followed by the presentation of information (26%). Those that directly justify the combat strategy represent 17% of the total and those that focus on exalting the armed forces an 11%, leaving the remaining 10% to government reports:

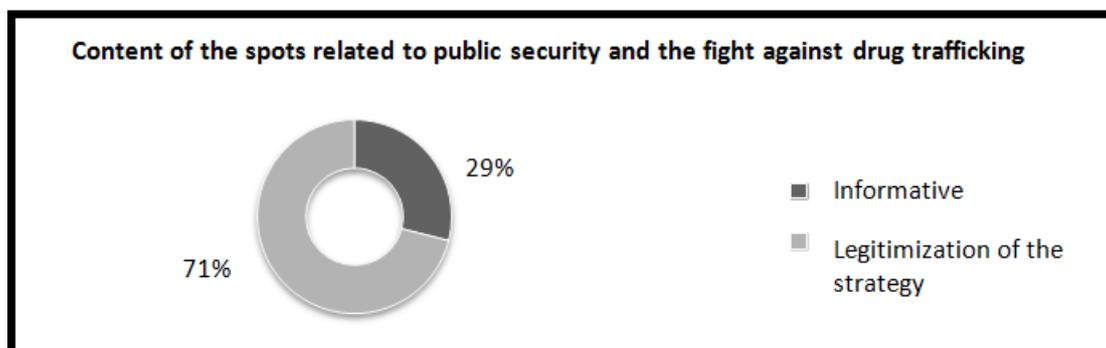
Table 2. Classification of the spots by type, percentages

| Type | Number of spots | Porcentaje |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|
| Results | 43 | 36% |
| Information | 31 | 26% |
| Justification | 20 | 17% |
| Exaltation | 13 | 11% |
| Government reports | 12 | 10% |

The above data provides information to perform diverse analyses: On the one hand, the presentation of results can be considered as just another way of justifying the strategy: at a time when public opinion was critical on the frontal fight against organized crime, mainly because of the serious consequences it was generating in terms of homicides and disappearances, constantly showing results in terms of arrests and seizures, is a way of justifying the strategy, by transmitting that it is succeeding.

On the other hand, it can be considered that those spots that exalted the armed forces also legitimize the strategy, by configuring a heroic and protective image for police, soldiers and marines, with which their presence on the streets and their combat actions are justified and strengthened. If we analyze the spots related to the government reports, we find that in many of them the strategy of combat is justified in different ways and the work of the armed forces is exalted. In fact, only 3 of the 12 spots related to government reports could be classified as merely informative. For all that has been said, it can be affirmed that only 29% of the spots destined for public security and the fight against drug trafficking were informative. The remaining 71% were used to legitimize the combat strategy undertaken by the Government of President Felipe Calderón.

Figure 2. Content of the spots destined to public security and the fight against drug trafficking



Given the above, it is interesting to present which were the words and phrases that were repeated the most throughout the 119 spots, with the aim of determining what messages were a priority in those years. Starting with the phrases, attention was paid to the information that was repeated more frequently, either within the same advertising piece or in the set of them, finding the following:

Table 3. Main phrases used in the TV spots

| Phrase | Number of spots where it is used |
|--|----------------------------------|
| "So that drugs do not reach your children" | 40 |
| "We are working for your safety" | 32 |
| Other phrases ⁶ | 22 |
| Phrases related to the exaltation of the armed forces ⁷ | 10 |
| "The fight is worth it" and "we won't step back in this fight" | 9 |
| "The security strategy recovers and strengthens your community" | 6 |
| | 119 |

In percentage terms, the phrase "so that drugs do not reach your children" appears in 34% of the spots, followed closely by "we are working for your safety" with 27%. The rest of the sentences do not reach the 10%. It is interesting to note that the most recurrent phrase throughout the 119 spots represent a direct justification on the combat strategy. The systematic use of this phrase is not accidental and encourages a culture of violence and fear, not only because it represents a direct legitimacy of the combat strategy, but also since it emotionally connects children with the fight against drug trafficking, trying to introduce the fear to the spectators that drugs can reach their children, therefore, something must be done about it.

Turning to the analysis of the words with more repetitions along the spots, making use of the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA, the 14,367 words emanating from the literal transcriptions of the 119 advertising pieces were processed to obtain the list of the 50 words with the most repetitions. It should be noted that prepositions, conjunctions, adverbs and articles were not taken into account in the preparation of the list, since they do not provide relevant information for this work. Below is a graphic representation of these 50 words, assigning a proportional letter size to each of them, with respect to the times they were repeated.

⁶ In the "other phrases" category, those messages that do not correspond to any of the other categories of phrases presented here were considered. Some examples of them are: "listen, hang up and call 088, your call helps to end this crime (extortion)", "in the fight against organized crime we work to have a safer Mexico" or a message transmitted on the occasion of the New Year 2012.

⁷ Some examples of phrases used to exalt the armed forces are the following: "there are heroes who risk their lives so that our children can realize their dreams", "with more and better police we build a stronger Mexico", "with the protection of the Marines we sowed the seeds of a safer Mexico, or "honest and committed policemen risk their lives and work day by day to put a stop to crime".

Figure 3. Graphic representation of the words with more repetitions 1



Considering the five words with the most repetitions, the advertising narrative shown in the spots could be easily built: The *Government of Mexico* and its *police* seek the *safety* of your *children*. If you add the sixth word with the most repetitions, *drugs* (with only one mention less than children), the circle would be completed and a sentence like the following could be constructed. The *Government of Mexico* and its *police* seek the *safety* of your *children* against *drugs*.

Continuing with the analysis, the main discursive actors were identified (all those figurants that appear in the story and form part of the narrative), finding three characters that frequently appear throughout the spots: the armed forces, the citizens and the alleged criminals. Below are the main characteristics and attributes transmitted in each of the cases:

Table 4. Character: armed forces

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Character | Armed forces (police, soldiers, marines) |
| Role played | Hero |
| Characteristics | Honesty, strength, intelligence, technology, protection, service, victory, heroism |
| Physical description | Most of the images of policemen, soldiers or marines correspond to young, athletic and strong men, wearing their corresponding uniform and equipped strongly with long guns and bulletproof or tactical vests. They often wear helmets and have their faces covered with balaclavas, so the only parts of their face that can be seen are their eyes. If their faces are not covered, they are shown staring at the camera or the horizon, with a serious face if they are escorting criminals, seizures or working in intelligence areas and with relaxed body language and smiling if they are interacting with citizens |
| General description | The armed forces play heroic and protective roles, most of the time they are shown escorting or subduing suspected criminals, carrying out operations and training, guarding confiscated weapons and drugs or performing intelligence functions. On other occasions, they are shown helping and protecting civil society, whether by rescuing hostages or helping people in areas devastated by natural disasters |
| Justification | It is affirmed that the role played by the armed forces in the narratives is that of heroes, since they appear in the spots systematically and at the peak moments, they move nimbly and show themselves in action, very often they are shown in a position of superiority in front of the alleged criminals, to whom they submit and defeat. In addition, in different spots the elements of the armed forces are directly referred to as "heroes" and their actions are considered "heroic" All these characteristics correspond to the description of the heroes in the audiovisual narratives proposed by García Jiménez (1996: 294, 295) and demonstrate the use of the hero as an instrument to consolidate the social order (Benet, 2013) |
| Visual examples |  |

Table 5. Character: alleged criminals

| Character | Alleged criminals |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Role played | Villain |
| Characteristics | Danger, evil, cruelty, violence, defeat, death |
| Physical description | Most of the alleged criminals that are shown in the spots are young and middle-aged men. We do not see a constant in the dress, because sometimes they wear humble clothes and other times dress formally. What is observed is that often, regardless of the clothes worn, they are wrinkled and disorganized, the result of arrests. In several spots the detainees show clear signs of having been beaten and most times they are shown handcuffed and being escorted by elements of the armed forces |
| General description | The alleged criminals transmit an attitude of defeat and submission, they show themselves crestfallen and almost never look at the camera. Several spots present them as "targets to be shot down" and when they are referred to, derogatory words are often used (traitors to the homeland, poisoners, murderers of children, etc.) |
| Justification | Following the characteristics of the hero designation proposed by García Jiménez (1996: 294, 295) and applying the inversion of the roles with respect to the hero, in the case of the alleged criminals it is affirmed that they occupy the role of villains within the narrative because they constantly appear in the peak moments of the spots. They are shown captured, subdued and defeated by the armed forces and in some cases they are explicitly referred to as the "enemy", "the bad guys" or "the disgraced" |
| Visual examples |  |

Table 6. Character: civil society

| Character | Civil Society |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Role played | Victim |
| Characteristics | Fear, gratitude, passivity, conformity, need for protection. |
| Physical description | Most of the time, society is represented by young children, under the age of five, who are generally shown in middle class environments and carrying out daily games and activities. Most of the adults who appear are middle-aged and appear to be of middle socioeconomic class. |
| General description | Civilians assume the role of victim in the analyzed spots, either because they are at risk of getting hooked on drugs or because they physically suffer violence (since they are kidnapped, extorted or detained by alleged criminals). Other times they are shown suffering the effects of natural catastrophes and being aided by the armed forces. In short, they are shown as powerless subjects that need protection and security. |
| Justification | It is stated that children are presented as victims in the spots because they are constantly shown in danger of receiving drugs. Different TV spots show alleged drug traffickers offering drugs to minors and some of them show children as alleged hostages being released by the armed forces. In the case of adults, they transmit their fear of the situation because their children may fall into drugs and in various examples they are shown justifying the combat strategy, showing conformity or thanking the armed forces for their actions. |
| Visual examples |  |

Continuing with the analysis, attention was given to those situations that were happening in the Mexican reality but were not mentioned in the advertising narrative, since they did not appear in the spots analyzed, acquiring a status of silenced or hidden realities.

The first of which is the lack of references to direct violence: in a country where homicides amounted to more than 100,000 people during the period studied, only 3 spots, representing 2.5% of the total, show cadavers. The word "homicide" is not mentioned in any spot; "murder" is repeated only twice and "death" 3 times. It is also important to mention that there is no reference to casualties suffered by the armed forces in the fight against drug trafficking and that although there were more than 26,000 disappearances in the years of study, no spot refers to the problem nor are sequences of images related to it shown. The

words "disappearance", "disappearances" and "disappeared" do not appear at any time in the transcription of the 119 spots.

Another silenced reality has to do with the lack of references to the causes of the conflict: no spot addresses social inequality, corruption or impunity, the drug consumption market in the United States of America, arms trafficking or the profits from drug trafficking, all of which are key elements to understand drug trafficking as a criminal phenomenon in Mexico.

The scope of the security results is not put into perspective either, since although it is true that many spots are aimed at informing the population about seizures of arms, drugs and money, or about the capture of important criminal leaders, the numbers presented are not nuanced in terms of the total seizures during the entire study period nor compared with the results obtained in other presidential mandates.

Finally, and as expected, no TV spot addresses the accusations and denunciations to different elements of the armed forces for carrying out actions in detriment of Human Rights. Quite the opposite: advertising always convey positive feelings about police, soldiers and marines, even more, some messages directly exalt them and describe their actions as "heroic". The omission of discourses on Human Rights is serious at a time when the country was suffering several acts of direct violence. The phrase "human rights" is mentioned only once throughout the 119 spots, while the word "violation" is not used in any spot.

4.2 Advertising campaigns of the Mexican Federal Government (2006-2012) related to the promotion of peace or peace cultures

In the case of the 8 spots provided by the Ministry of Education, related to the promotion of peace or peace cultures, there are several aspects to highlight. The first one is that the word "peace" or the phrases "cultures of peace" or "peace cultures" do not appear in any of its objectives, nor in the literal transcriptions of the spots, so it would be interesting to know what criterion they followed to affirm its commitment to the promotion of peace.

Secondly, it could be said that only one of the eight spots effectively promotes cultures of peace, since it is positioned in favor of non-violence, respect, and dialogue between students, teachers and parents. The other 7 turn out to be merely informative pieces about a test applied to elementary students and the "universal evaluation campaign" for primary school teachers, where the only elements of promotion of the cultures of peace that could be found were the promotion of education in Mexico or the promotion of the involvement of parents in the studies of the children. Therefore, in those 7 spots that supposedly had the promotion of peace as one of their objectives, it is difficult to appreciate elements that do so, since the images or phrases of social promotion observed in them are secondary and the communication objectives of the pieces are clearly others, such as improving the perception of the "universal evaluation" among teachers.

While it is true that in none of the 8 spots provided by the Ministry of Education there are elements that promote the culture of violence, the few examples of peace promotion observed in 7 of them make these advertising pieces to be classified as informative, but not as authentic examples of social promotion. On the other hand, and surprisingly, in some of the 119 spots broadcast by Presidency, Governance, Public Security, National Defense, Navy and General Attorney of the Republic, which sought to promote public security and the fight against drug trafficking and that did not have the promotion of peace as one of its purposes, interesting messages can be found regarding the promotion of peace. It was observed that 42 of these advertising pieces contained elements of social promotion that could be identified as promoters of cultures of peace, which represents 35% of these 119 spots.

In these 42 spots, 69 elements that promote peace were detected (messages or images), the most recurrent one being the promotion of the prevention or treatment of drug use (27

times), that is, the approach to the phenomenon of drug trafficking from a perspective that also identifies it as a public health problem. The second most transmitted message was the approach to the fight against drug trafficking as a joint task between civil society and government (12 times). The importance of the recovery of public spaces (9 times), the promotion of the culture of legality (8 times) and the promotion of citizen complaints to police (5 times) are other elements that are repeated in these advertising examples.

Despite this, it is important to mention that in 31 of these 42 spots, in addition to messages or images that promote peace cultures, there are also elements that promote a culture of violence, mainly because they justify the strategy of armed combat undertaken against the criminals groups by the Federal Government, because they emotionally relate the war on drugs with the well-being of children or because they exalt the arms race. The remaining 11 spots are authentic examples of social promotion advertising, since they promote directly and exclusively the culture of peace. The results obtained from the analysis of these 11 spots⁸ are presented in the following pages.

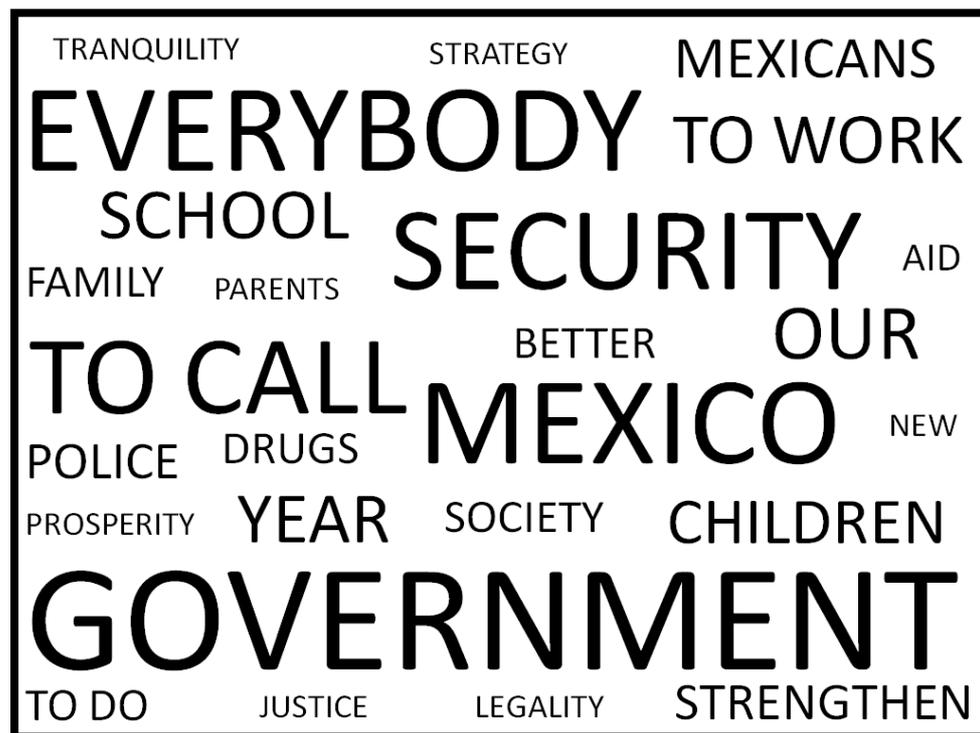
Beginning with the type of spots they represent, the content of these 11 advertising pieces is intended to present information to Mexican society. There is no intention to legitimize the strategy to combat drug trafficking or to focus on presenting results. Instead, its messages are limited to inform the population about initiatives and programs developed by the government, related to the prevention of crime and drug consumption, and civil society is invited to get involved in these initiatives.

The main message that is tried to transmit in these spots is, with clarity, the importance of the involvement of civil society in the fight against organized crime, either through the prevention of drug addiction in schools, through citizen complaints for acts of extortion or simply asking the collaboration of citizens in the improvement of legality in the country. A second important message conveyed in them has to do with an integral approach to the conflict for drug trafficking that goes through the strengthening of communities and the reconstruction of the social fabric.

In the case of most repeated words, the 1665 words that make up the transcription of the 11 advertising spots that are being analyzed were processed. Attention was paid to those words that were repeated more than five times and that were not prepositions, conjunctions or articles. The graphic representation of these words assigning a proportional letter size to each of them with respect to the number of times they were repeated is the following:

⁸ The eleven spots analyzed in this section are numbered 1, 20, 33, 43, 49, 50, 83, 85, 87, 98 and 100 in the total list of the 127 pieces analyzed, which can be found at the following page:
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCzHCNTMGbQofghAtoSgbfPQ/featured>

Figure 4. Graphic representation of the words with more repetitions 2



We can see that in the case of the 11 spots that we are working on there are some words that do not appear in the diagram presented previously, these are: our, tranquility, Mexicans, prosperity, to do, year, aid, strengthen, to call, new, and society. All of them with neutral or positive character, while terms with negative character disappear: delinquent, delinquency, criminal, criminals, narco, crime, kidnapping, cartel, weapon, or cocaine.

The words that are repeated in both schemes are: everybody, strategy, work, security, school, family, parents, better, drugs, children, Mexico, law, legality, justice, police and government; but what is most interesting when comparing them is that the words in the last scheme appear more balanced. If in the first of them the terms security, Mexico and Government appear disproportionate to the rest, in the one presented later those terms are shown with a similar size to the words: everybody, to work, to call, school, our and year.

It also draws the attention the importance of the word "everybody" in the spots related to the promotion of peace, being the third term with more repetitions in the transcriptions of the 11 spots studied. Attending to the words present in this scheme we can say that the security challenge is presented as a shared task, hence the constant repetition of terms such as school, parents, society, family or Mexicans.

In the case of the discursive actors, in these 11 spots that are being analyzed, the armed forces, the citizens and the alleged criminals are mainly named with generic names. In no case derogatory or negative terms are used to refer to the alleged criminals or the phenomenon of drug trafficking. Similarly, terms that exalt the armed forces are never used. It is also interesting to notice the constant repetition of terms such as "united", "together" or "everybody" to refer to citizenship.

Thus, the phenomenon of drug trafficking is presented as a challenge that does not fall exclusively on the government and the armed struggle is not presented as the only possible option to counteract it. On the other hand, the importance of education, the regeneration of the social fabric, the recovery of public spaces, the prevention of drug consumption, the

importance of citizen complaints and the involvement of parents, teachers and families in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime are emphasized.

Although the importance given to the involvement of civil society in the face of drug trafficking is appropriate, it is important to note that citizens are always placed in a subordinate position with respect to the government, that is, the government is in charge of every action, either through the "Safe School Program", the "New Life Centers", through the "operatives and programs to clear drugs and delinquents from schools and squares" or through "the recovery of public spaces". Therefore, citizens do not appear empowered, but always protected by the government, the body that plans and administers the aforementioned actions and that limits itself to inviting the population to get involved in them, hence the reference to the word "aid" in 4 occasions in the 11 spots that occupy us, configuring the idea that the government is fighting against drug trafficking and it is up to Mexican citizens to help in that fight.

In any case, it should be noted that the conflict is addressed in a broader sense and fear is not used to legitimize any strategy. Unfortunately, the impact of this alternative narrative to the conflict during Calderón's six-year term was minimal.

5. Conclusions

In global terms, the analyzed spots transmit a narrative about the conflict where, due to the supposed risk of Mexican children to fall into drug addiction, it is decided to carry out a frontal battle against drug trafficking, by using the armed forces. This is justified by communicating that police, soldiers and marines are "effective", "honest" and "heroic" in the fight against alleged criminals, who are "the enemies of Mexico", "traitors to the homeland", the ones who "kidnap, kill and extort". Throughout the spots analyzed, a clearly differentiated story between "good" and "bad" people is described in which civil society, represented especially by children and women, appears as a victim of the alleged criminals and as a vulnerable group that needs the protection and guardianship of the armed forces and the government in general.

In the great majority of the advertising examples studied, children are related to the fight against drug trafficking, transmitting the great risk they run of falling into drugs. Taking into account the ideas about fear in advertising developed by García López (2010: 6-10), it could be said that the Mexican government advertising constructs and legitimizes the culture of fear, using the threat of drugs as the axis of its persuasive strategy, which generates more fears and insecurities than the values needed to counteract violence.

The transmission of fear in the advertising is underpinned by the intervention of an enemy (represented in this case by the alleged criminals) and a hero, "an instrument to consolidate the social order" (Benet, 2013), in the figure of armed forces. This strategy of creating an enemy and dichotomizing the story between good and bad people is a classic element of propaganda communications, according to Keen (1990). The creation of an enemy and its dehumanization creates the perfect framework that justifies any act that can be carried out by the issuer, in this case the securitization of the drug trafficking phenomenon in Mexico and the use of the armed forces as a strategy to eliminate it, which repeatedly strengthens the culture of violence.

The promotion of peace cultures in the narrative offered by the Mexican Federal Government is, on the other hand, minimal. If we take into account the 127 spots that make up the total universe of study, it is observed that only one of them was aimed at the promotion of peace or peace cultures and certainly did it through the messages and images that it showed. Although it is true that there were 42 other spots identified without peace promotion as one of their objectives, that contain messages or images that promote peace cultures, in 31 of them there are also elements that promote a culture of violence, so that in

general terms it can be said that of the 127 spots analyzed, only 12 of them promote exclusively the culture of peace and not that of violence. These spots represent less than 10% of the total.

In view of the above and taking into account that 20 of the 21 Ministries contacted ensured that they did not promote peace in their advertising messages, it can be affirmed that peace and cultures of peace were addressed in an insignificant and circumstantial manner in the narrative about drug trafficking offered by the Mexican Federal Government through its government advertising between 2006 and 2012. Paradoxically, the culture of violence was constantly exalted in a narrative about drug trafficking that focused on legitimizing again and again the strategy undertaken against drug trafficking and especially to terrorize the population with the idea that there was a great danger because the drugs were circulated without control through the streets and the children were exposed to them.

This communicative strategy of fear for the supposed increase in the consumption of drugs and the legitimacy of the combats falls under its own weight when observing the official rates of drug consumption and direct violence in Mexico during the administration of Calderón Hinojosa. Throughout its mandate the number of addicts remained stable and represented less than 1% of the population⁹, while the use of the army to combat drug trafficking generated more than 100,000 homicides, 26,000 disappearances, hundreds of thousands of displaced people and numerous cases of violations of Human Rights committed by members of the armed forces. The consumption of drugs did not decrease, no more drugs were seized in this sexennium than in the previous ones¹⁰ and in 2018 Mexican population is continue suffering the consequences in the form of direct violence of the combat strategy started in Morelia, Michoacán on December 11, 2006.

With all of this data on the table, it can be stated that the government advertising transmitted in the context of the war on drugs by the Mexican Federal Government during the term of President Felipe Calderón does not represent an advertising narrative that offers keys to understand and transform the conflict, but instead a story that reinforces the problem and legitimizes it. The analyzed TV spots do not seek security, as it is proclaimed over and over again in their messages, on the contrary, through the representation of the reality they show, they establish insecurity in Mexican society through the transmission of fear and the legitimization of the use of armed forces as the only way to deal with drug trafficking.

6. Final recommendations

In an attempt to make this research proactive and not just critical, here is an alternative to the configuration of Mexican government advertising communication that uses communication styles that formulate a social and political debate that aims to influence both the daily relationships of Mexican citizens as in the legislation and structure of advertising itself, in such a way that the advertising narrative could foster a transformation of reality, in accordance with the security challenges currently found in Mexico:

- We understand that, being a topic of common interest, drug trafficking could be addressed through official advertising, but this approach should be much more complete than has been done so far.

⁹ In this regard, the information presented in the National Addiction Surveys in its versions of 2002, 2008 and 2011 can be consulted.

¹⁰ See the reports presented by "Colectivo de Análisis de la Seguridad con Democracia" of 2010 and 2012, detailed in the bibliographic references.

- To do so, performative messages that seek the involvement of the different actors related to the transformation of the conflict should be transmitted.
- Instead of continuing to broadcast a warmongering narrative, messages about drug trafficking in government advertising should be ethically committed to the transformation of the conflict.
- The creation of dichotomies and polarizations, the dehumanization of the alleged criminals and their presentation as enemies/villains, as well as the exaltation of the armed forces and any other narrative that promotes the culture of violence should be avoided.
- To seek, in short, the construction of cultures of peace through government publicity, by transmitting messages that promote education for peace, sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between men and women, democratic participation, understanding, tolerance and solidarity, the free circulation of information and knowledge and the search for peace and human security in Mexico.

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