

## **MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR THE VISIBILITY OF AN ACADEMIC-SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL: A CASE STUDY AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN PARAGUAY**

### **ESTRATEGIAS DE MARKETING PARA LA PROYECCIÓN DE UNA REVISTA ACADÉMICA-CIENTÍFICA: ESTUDIO DE CASO EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD PRIVADA DE PARAGUAY**

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#### **ABSTRACT**

##### **Keywords:**

promotion strategies, academic-scientific journal, marketing, visibility, effective communication.

This research analyses the marketing promotion strategies applied to an academic-scientific journal of a private university in Encarnación, Paraguay. A qualitative, descriptive, non-experimental and cross-sectional approach was used. Through structured interviews with the Director of Communications and the Editor-in-Chief, and a SWOT analysis of publicly available information, the promotional practices used were evaluated. The results reveal a disparity in the journal's objectives and target audiences and highlight the relevance of effective communication to improve its visibility and impact. Although some effective strategies were identified, there is a need to diversify and optimise current tactics, such as incorporating SEO and SEM techniques, as well as fostering inter-institutional collaborations to achieve greater academic and social recognition.

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#### **RESUMEN**

##### **Palabras clave:**

estrategias de promoción, revista académico-científica, marketing, visibilidad, comunicación efectiva.

Esta investigación analiza las estrategias de promoción de marketing aplicadas a una revista académico-científica de una universidad privada en Encarnación, Paraguay. Se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo, descriptivo, no experimental y transversal. A través de entrevistas estructuradas con el Director de Comunicaciones y el Editor Principal, y un análisis FODA de la información pública disponible, se evaluaron las prácticas de promoción utilizadas. Los resultados revelan una disparidad en los objetivos y públicos objetivo de la revista y destacan la relevancia de la comunicación efectiva para mejorar su visibilidad e impacto. Aunque se identificaron algunas estrategias efectivas, se evidencia la necesidad de diversificar y optimizar las tácticas actuales, como la incorporación de técnicas de SEO y SEM, así

## Introduction

Scientific journals are the main means of preserving and communicating the progress of science through the management and publication of scientific articles that communicate the results of research (Patalano, 2005). According to Valencia Agudelo et al. (2024), these types of journals and publications can be considered as a resource and as a global common good that is developed from educational institutions. Therefore, universities, particularly those of greater influence and prestige, are characterized by producing an important number of scientific journals and, thus, serve as actions that help the institution's renown in the international arena. In higher education institutions there is a culture of scientific dissemination that has become dominant and the usual form of communication of results and ideas is through their journals (Pire, 2015). According to Londoño Fernández (2024), it is estimated that there are around twenty-four thousand active journals in circulation worldwide, with those that are electronic being on the rise.

In this way, the communications of publications in scientific journals represent the generation of knowledge, which establishes one of the primary roles that universities must fulfill throughout the world. As pointed out by Hernández García de Velazco et al. (2025), behind each published article there is a human chain loaded with rigor and responsibility, a process in which editors, authors, reviewers and readers make continuous contributions with the aim of transmitting quality scientific content.

Locally in Paraguay, the number of scientific and academic journals is increasing, as is the number of scientific publications, although the attraction of foreign researchers, as well as high impact publication is limited, as are the most prestigious indexations (Sosa Benítez, 2022; CONACYT, 2022; Dávalos, 2019; Duarte et al., 2018; Duarte-Caballero and Duarte-Masi, 2014). Along these lines, access to scientific reading is not among the preferences of the Paraguayan population, as reported by the Public Perception of Science Survey (CONACYT, 2016), although there is some interest in science in the school population (Caballero and Spinzi, 2017).

In an effort to improve the local situation, the National Council of Science and Technology of Paraguay (CONACYT) launched a call to strengthen national scientific journals with a view to incorporating international standards of editorial and scientific quality (CONACYT, 2024). As can be seen in the "Guide to Bases and Conditions" of the call for papers, one of the areas taken into account is dissemination, related to visibility and marketing, which are part of the aspects influenced by editorial quality standards in order to favor access to the public at large in search of a scientific culture (CONACYT, 2024; Elsevier, 2024; Scielo Paraguay, 2023).

These communication tools are constantly used by institutions and organizations, which have understood the importance of communicating adequately with their target audience (Rodríguez, 2007). However, when communicating research findings, certain communication or promotional problems may arise due to the fact that consumers receive a myriad of stimuli originating from advertising and other marketing communications on a daily basis (Ganga-Contreras et al., 2015).

In the context of academic-scientific journals, marketing strategies play a crucial role in the effective promotion and dissemination of these publications. The marketing strategies used in this area go beyond mere promotion, encompassing aspects such as the identification of the target audience, the creation of a distinctive brand, effective communication with relevant stakeholders and the optimization of distribution channels (Guallar, 2019) with a view to keeping the journals in continuous circulation satisfying the need to

create an intellectual heritage specific to universities and for the citizenry (Mendoza, 2006).

Scientific dissemination through journals, which in its beginnings was disseminated in print, nowadays uses digital marketing, as stated by Guevara-Hernández et al. (2024), to try to increase the visibility of each published issue and the propagation of each of its articles to all corners of the planet in a single *click*, making scientific content and information reach not only the university community and possible interested parties, but the entire population in general. In the words of these authors, "editorial platforms are not enough to disseminate the contents of a digital scientific journal, so many of them have parallel means to increase their visibility" (p. 109), being advisable to adopt other methods, such as active presence in social networks and participation in shared networks.

With the development and technological progress of the 21st century, it is evident that the potential of social networks can serve to disseminate the different scientific contents, but also to increase the number of readers and even improve the impact factor thanks to the citations obtained through these mass media networks (Laidaras López et al., 2022; Eysenbach, 2011). For this reason, Curioso (2022) highlights the importance of disseminating scientific publications through social networks to obtain greater interaction with online readers and the idea of incorporating expert editors in these virtual communities in the editorial teams of scientific journals.

Although these authors paid more attention to social networks such as "X" (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram or Facebook for being, as Sancho-Ortiz (2024) points out, adequate tools, in the present time, the world of science popularization is experiencing current techniques, such as influencer marketing (Belanche et al. 2021), and also makes its place in collaborative environments of worldwide use such as Tik-Tok, exploiting this platform as a tool for the dissemination of formal content and knowledge (De-Casas-Moreno et al. 2024). An example of this is the study by Oliva Gordillo et al. (2024) on the micro-influencers that disseminate scientific content in this virtual space.

Enjoying a high level of social acceptance, "cultubers", disseminators of different academic, cultural and scientific fields, are beginning to emerge (Buitrago et al. 2022). According to Perdomo et al. (2024), these types of youtubers who create and share science content on the world's most popular digital platform, achieve significant engagement due to their reach and behavior in relation to the YouTube channels of institutions, who, as also noted by Ojeda-Serna et al. (2022), should use and incorporate these techniques due to their effectiveness in transferring knowledge with great accessibility. Thus, it can be affirmed that generating online videos on scientific dissemination is not a minor task, since, as Valeiras-Jurado et al. (2023), both for a target audience focused on the university environment and for a non-specialized one, the need arises to recontextualize the information and adapt it to the possible prior knowledge of the audience in order to achieve greater credibility, understanding, interest, *feedback* and involvement.

To overcome the limitations of scientific communication such as the lack of social inclusion and the resulting low attractiveness for audiences normally distant from these areas of knowledge, on the one hand, authors such as Ortega-Alonso et al. (2024) propose innovating through transmedia narratives and artivism and, on the other hand, Roca Marín et al. (2023) recommend the use of the scientific micro-story. However, knowledge transfer is still tinged with tradition and exclusion, to the point that electronic newsletters (usually with recipients who belong exclusively to the university context) and conferences or events (also publicized on the institutions themselves) are still two recurrent means of sharing research, reflections and advances in science. It is worth noting that the use of e-mail newsletters based on distribution lists is a method that has been used for

several decades (Russell, 2001) and that, although it is an old-fashioned technique, as Abadal et al. (2008), are still recommended.

Equally focused on the reach of the target audience, academic-scientific publications are also shared in academic networks such as ResearchGate, Academia.edu and even Mendeley, so that research results are brought closer to those users who can employ it through citations (Navas-Pérez et al., 2024).

Other marketing strategies, in addition to online and print advertising, are search engine optimization techniques, as explained by Navarro et al. (2013), on the one hand, there are the SEO (those that are developed naturally) and, on the other hand, there are the SEM (those that carry out paid promotions to appear in the first pages of searches). There is no scientific literature on their use in scientific journals.

In view of the above, this research focuses on the identification of marketing promotion strategies applied to an academic-scientific journal of a private university in the city of Encarnación.

## Method

In the present research, a qualitative, descriptive, non-experimental and cross-sectional approach was used (Avendaño, 2020). Non-probability purposive sampling was used. In this regard, the Communications Director of the institution under analysis and the Chief Editor of the journal under study were interviewed at the end of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. As for the Communications Director, he is in charge of all the institution's promotion and visibility strategies, including the magazine and all the professional marketing strategies that may be considered. As for the Senior Editor, his role as technical-scientific manager of the journal makes him a key agent in the dissemination of the journal in the academic-scientific environment through word of mouth, public presentations and *mailing* to potential interested parties and agreed institutions, as well as dissemination by the Scientific Committee.

As study variables, the characterization and representation of the promotional strategies employed in the academic-scientific journal were investigated. To carry out the data collection, a structured interview was applied to the aforementioned agents. It should be noted that the interview was validated with a pilot test conducted with a marketing specialist and a technical assistant to the magazine's main editor. In addition, it was ethically approved by the research area of the university where the research was carried out. After that, data were collected individually by interviewing each agent in his or her workspace by means of a face-to-face appointment.

An analysis of the magazine's public information was also carried out using the SWOT (Strengths-Opportunities-Weaknesses-Threats) matrix. As indicators, the provisions of the Guidelines of the "Program for Strengthening Scientific Journals" of CONACYT (2024) were taken into account. It should be noted that this part of the study complemented the one mentioned above, since the research was conducted between 2022 and 2023.

## Results

### *Interviews*

Figure 1 shows that the interviewees differed on the objective of the journal. While interviewee 1, Director of Communications, only alludes to "facilitating open access to scientific information for the academic community and the general public," interviewee 2, Senior Editor, also alludes to the dissemination of research and the promotion and

reputation of the university. This disparity may be due to the professional specialization related to science, since the Senior Editor is a member of the National System of Researchers of CONACYT, while the professional development of the Communications Director is not directly linked to science.

**Figure 1**  
*Objectives of the academic-scientific journal*

Target	Interview 01	Interview 02
01 Disseminating research and advances in the field	NO	YES
02 Promoting the university and its reputation	NO	YES
03 Facilitating open access to scientific information	YES	YES

For Seguí et al. (2015), effective dissemination not only contributes to sharing accumulated knowledge, but also promotes the training of future disseminators and the improvement of quality and effectiveness in this activity. In this context, the accessibility of scientific journals plays a crucial role, since it allows this knowledge to be published in journals that are within the reach of all interested persons, which ultimately promotes greater dissemination of scientific knowledge and its application in society. The selection of this objective in the survey can be interpreted as a commitment to the vision of scientific dissemination and its impact through accessibility and openness in the communication of research.

Figure 2 also shows a disparity in the magazine's target audience. While interviewee 1 only focuses on university students, interviewee 2 mentions other groups that are part of the university system. Given the situation, the answers do not fully fit with the selected objectives as mentioned in Figure 1, since no reference to the general public is detected among the answers of the interviewees. Thus, there may be a mismatch between the objectives of the journal, the audience and, perhaps, the ways of getting science to the general public.

**Figure 2**  
*Primary audience of the academic-scientific journal*

Primary Audience	Interview 01	Interview 02
01 Teachers and academics	NO	YES
02 University students	YES	YES
03 Research professionals	NO	YES

In this regard, it should be noted that the Public Perception of Science Survey (CONACYT, 2016) shows the limitations on scientific consumption by citizens, which is why it is possible to detect how science visibility actions are being carried out with the dissemination in journalistic media, television programs and even the call for the implementation of science outreach programs. In addition, co-funded activities, such as research projects and emerging events, also require a visibility strategy with an inclusive approach to all groups.

### *Strategies used in 2022*

Regarding the marketing promotion strategies used in the academic-scientific journal during 2022. In particular, it highlights the use of social networks as a vital tool today to increase visibility and promote the journal, as confirmed by Mert and Ozkan (2020). The

fact that the magazine uses this strategy indicates a modern approach in line with current trends in communication and promotion. In addition, as previously mentioned, social networks also allow interaction with readers and potential authors, keeping them informed about the latest news of the magazine. It is also worth mentioning the use of electronic newsletters, which represent an effective way of maintaining constant communication with university students or with the subscribed audience. In addition, another effective strategy is conferences and events, as pointed out by Alperin et al. (2018). The events represent a means to promote the journal and establish valuable connections with the scientific community. This strategy helps to strengthen ties with authors, reviewers and other professionals in the field, which can foster collaboration and the exchange of ideas, thus contributing to the continuous improvement of the journal and its impact on the academic and scientific community.

Although the interviewees did not select print advertising, their exclusion may indicate a focus towards promotional strategies more aligned with digital trends and online access, which is consistent with the current trend towards digitization and ease of access through digital platforms, which are even the forms of evaluation of journals in the criteria of the most prestigious indexers such as Elsevier (2024), Clarivate (2024) Scielo Paraguay (2023) and Latindex (2023).

**Figure 3**  
*Audience identification*

<b>Audience identification</b>	<b>Interview 01</b>	<b>Interview 02</b>
01 Through networks of contacts and collaborators	YES	YES
02 Through the use of social networks and e-mails	NO	YES
03 Using advertisements and paid advertising	NO	NO

Figure 3 reflects an approach based on the use of prior connections and established relationships to identify and target the audience. Both interviewees, recovering what is shown in Figure 4, alluded to the use of existing databases in the institution to promote the journal, which suggests a practical and effective strategy to reach their audience. Many academic journals, especially those affiliated to universities, have students and academic researchers as their main audience (Ruiz et al., 2021), an aspect that coincides with the case studied.

However, one aspect to take into account in favor of scientific culture should be the outreach to the general public, which, as mentioned above, seems to be one of the core areas of interest of CONACYT in the actions they are undertaking. Along these lines, in countries such as Spain, the Spanish Foundation for Science and Technology (FECYT) included, in the "Guide for assessing the scientific dissemination activity of academic and research personnel" (2018), indicators referring to dissemination through radio, television, blogs and social networks.

**Figure 4**  
*Marketing strategies used in the past (2020- 2021) to promote the magazine and its level of success. Interview 1*

<b>Strategies used in the past (2020 - 2021)</b>	<b>Not successful</b>	<b>Little successful</b>	<b>Moderately successful</b>	<b>Very successful</b>
Social networks		x		
Electronic newsletters		x		

Conferences and events	x
Online advertising	x
Print advertising	Does not use print advertising

In summary, the marketing promotion strategies used in 2020 and 2021, in addition to the level of success perceived by the interviewees. It can be seen that the same strategies had been implemented previously, which indicates a line of work. These modern strategies reflected an up-to-date understanding of communication and promotion trends (Mert and Ozkan, 2020). However, it was also found that there were limitations. This may point to the need to evaluate and adapt other approaches to achieve greater effectiveness, an aspect that is related to what is referred to the Public Perception of Science Survey (CONACYT, 2016), as well as to the current situation of Paraguayan scientific journals (Sosa Benítez, 2022; CONACYT, 2022; Dávalos, 2019; Duarte et al., 2018; Duarte-Caballero and Duarte-Masi, 2014). In this line, it is worth mentioning the call launched by CONACYT (2024) regarding the strengthening of scientific journals to aim at a greater professionalization of Paraguayan science. This aspect is key, since, according to the data provided by the interviewees, limitations were detected that were not addressed and may be due to situations such as the limited possibility of temporary dedication, as well as the lack of professional expertise in the area.

Continuing with regard to social networks, the digital marketing strategies used to promote the magazine do not mention the options "Search Engine Optimization" (SEO) or "Search Engine Marketing (SEM). According to the answers, everything is focused on social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...), in line with the transformation of academic-scientific marketing in the digital era, where ICTs have redefined the marketing dimension, allowing for efficient strategizing, marketing and dissemination (Membiela, 2019). However, the absence of SEO and SEM usage does not necessarily imply a lack of focus on search engine visibility optimization. It can be interpreted that the choice not to use these specific strategies is supported by the adoption of a more social network-centric strategy (Guallar, 2019).

Given the exclusivity regarding social networks, the data contained in Figure 5 shows an important aspect: investment in the magazine. Both interviewees mentioned that "almost never" paid advertising through social networks is used to promote the magazine. During the interview, both stated that the optimization of resources and alluded to the use of databases with contacts for the promotion of the magazine. However, the use of paid advertising has an impact on the reach and visibility of the journal and seems an element to explore in order to achieve a more significant impact in the current academic-scientific environment (Membiela, 2019).

**Figure 5**

*Digital marketing strategies and frequency of use of paid advertising to promote the academic-scientific journal*

Frequency of use of paid advertising to promote the magazine	Interview 01	Interview 02
Always		
Almost always		
Almost never	x	x
Never		

Regarding Figure 6, it is observed how the level of effectiveness of the journal's marketing promotion strategies is measured and the options marked include 'increase in subscriptions', 'increase in article downloads', 'increase in website visits' and 'Increase in number of journal citations'. These options highlight different aspects of the journal's impact and reach.

**Figure 6**

*How do you measure the level of effectiveness of the magazine's marketing promotion strategies?*

Effectiveness level measure	Interview 01	Interview 02
Increase in subscriptions	YES	YES
Increase in article downloads	YES	YES
Increase in website visits	YES	YES
Increase in the number of citations to the journal	YES	YES

The evaluation of scientific journals and their quality is given through bibliometric indicators, especially focused on the number of citations that articles receive (Repiso, 2015). Thus, the evaluation has a dual purpose: to provide an understanding of the journal's position in the scientific field and to establish a relationship between the results obtained, the quality of the articles and the researchers. Poveda (2019) elaborates on these indicators, including the *Journal Impact Factor (JIF)*, *Scimago Journal and Country Rank (SJR)* and the *Google Scholar Metrics (GSM) H-Index*.

The increase in article downloads and increase in website visits are also aligned with the evaluation of impact and visibility. These metrics reflect increased access and engagement with the magazine's content. Poveda (2019) further mentions how the quality and impact of journals can be assessed by the visibility and citations of articles and these measures can indicate how the community is interacting with the content.

However, it should be taken into account that the situation of scientific journals in Paraguay presents limitations of all kinds, so that, although in the case analyzed the numbers are on the rise according to what was stated by the interviewees, there are still limitations to be addressed (Sosa Benítez, 2022; CONACYT, 2022; Dávalos, 2019; Duarte et al., 2018; Duarte-Caballero and Duarte-Masi, 2014; CONACYT, 2024).

Regarding the importance of indexing as a marketing strategy, both interviewees value it. However, while interviewee 1, Director of Communications, focuses on visibility and reach at the national and international level, interviewee 2, Senior Editor, adds that indexing has an impact on increasing the quality of the articles published and on the credibility and reputation of the journal. Both responses are in agreement that the visibility of the journal after indexing, with the first indexing in Latindex in 2020, led to an exceptional improvement in visibility and, therefore, to an exponential increase in downloads and visits (Figure 6). Undoubtedly, that journals meet specific criteria to be indexed in specialized databases, which are related to the objective of ensuring the quality and scope of the journal, makes the visibility and reach increase (Valencia et al., 2017), conferring an image of quality and prestige of the journal (SCImago LAB, 2021).

### SWOT

After applying the indicators of the CONACYT call for proposals (2024) to the journal under analysis, the following SWOT matrix was prepared, available in Table 1.

**Table 1**



### *SWOT matrix of the magazine*

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management mechanisms and tools installed and in operation (OJS).</li> <li>• Indexing in Latindex 2.0.</li> <li>• Established editorial work policies and protocols.</li> <li>• Area and discipline of the declared journal.</li> <li>• Editorial Committee formed.</li> <li>• Description and execution of the peer review process available.</li> <li>• ISSN and DOI availability.</li> <li>• Magazine in electronic version.</li> <li>• Online content and open access.</li> <li>• Profile in Google Scholar.</li> <li>• Twitter profile in RRSS.</li> <li>• Use of the Research Center's fanpage to publicize the journal.</li> <li>• ORCID availability of authors.</li> <li>• International scientific committee with high degrees of specialization.</li> <li>• Attraction of articles through annual institutional congresses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility of the magazine in institutional social networks.</li> <li>• Editor-in-Chief categorized in the National System of Researchers of CONACYT.</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Threats</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low citation of articles published in the journal.</li> <li>• Not indexed in Scielo, Web of Science or Scopus.</li> <li>• Editorial errors (citations, spelling, layout).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low international projection of publications based on the number of citations.</li> </ul>

As can be seen, the journal complies with most of the indicators indicated by the CONACYT call for papers (2024), which are based on the indicators of Elsevier (2024), Clarivate (2024), Scielo (2023) and Latindex (2023), marking a basic editorial and scientific quality. However, it can be detected how aspects related to visibility are among the weaknesses and threats. Along these lines, the aforementioned CONACYT call for papers may be a stimulus to improve the journal's visibility in the future.

## **Conclusions**

Scientific journals, as vehicles for sharing findings and advances, play a fundamental role in the educational mission of universities. For this reason, marketing promotion strategies play an essential role in disseminating the knowledge generated by educational institutions, in this case reflected in an academic-scientific journal.

Analyzing the promotional trajectory and potential of this journal, which belongs to a private university in Encarnación, it can be highlighted that after applying the indicators of the CONACYT call for papers (2024), fifteen strengths and two opportunities are ob-

tained, compared to three weaknesses and one threat, the two negative aspects being centered on the low number of citations received, although the lack of indexing and editorial errors also keep it on a low level.

Both interviewees pointed out that the main objective of the journal is to facilitate open access to scientific information for the academic community and the general public, and that the main target audience is university students, leaving teachers and researchers in second place. The identification of the audience is done mainly through the contact networks and the magazine's collaborators. In addition, the two research participants have stated that they use social networks, electronic newsletters, conferences and events, and online public relations as promotional strategies, although all of them have been unsuccessful, leaving print advertising, which is now obsolete, in oblivion.

In this case study, it was detected that there are a number of marketing strategies implemented that associate quality and visibility. However, visibility still requires attention, both from the perspective of the target audience, as well as for the professionalization of the magazine's operation in terms of a marketing strategy. In fact, the promotion of an academic-scientific journal goes beyond mere dissemination, involving strategies that encourage the connection with the academic community with bidirectional strategies and spaces for debate, establishing a distinctive brand that maximizes the visibility and use of the knowledge generated by all interested social groups.

Therefore, investment in the journal seems to be, on the one hand, an aspect to be studied in order to know what the situation is and, on the other hand, an aspect to be addressed in order to continue improving the journal in view of its mission towards society. In this regard, consideration should be given to the need to sustain and increase adequate financial and human resources to ensure the effectiveness of the actions related to the journal and its objectives. This should entail, in turn, the diversification of strategies by exploring promotional options and approaches, the implementation of SEO techniques and collaboration with related institutions to open new avenues to increase the journal's visibility. Probably, although it has not been studied on this occasion, a sustainability plan for the journal is required, with constant evaluation and adaptation among its indicators.

It should be noted that the research is focused on one case, so the results should be used with caution, even though there are precedents, as well as recent indications, that the state of academic-scientific journals in Paraguay is weak.

Finally, it is proposed to expand the case studies and make comparisons, both with journals from Paraguay and other international journals, to find out which are the most effective marketing strategies in those scientific journals with higher impact factors compared to those that are still in the process of growth. Finally, the elaboration of these comparisons focused on the differences and similarities that journals coming from the private university environment may have with respect to the public one, in case there are significant data at the time of promotion or due to the success obtained.

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