

## Editorial

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Dear SComS readers,

We are pleased to introduce the first issue of 2024's *Studies in Communication Sciences* (SComS). Following a two-year trial period, the thrice-yearly publication rhythm is now firmly established. Thanks to our reviewers and the additional efforts of the whole editorial team, it permits us to accommodate the growing number of submissions.

The General Section includes an article by Konstantin Schätz and Susanne Kirchhoff from the University of Salzburg. Combining conceptual metaphor analysis and qualitative frame analysis, they explore how Austrian newspapers portrayed the initial outbreak of COVID-19 in March 2020. Building on the distinction between rhetorical and technical devices of journalistic framing, the article suggests considering metaphors as an additional “reasoning device.” Thus, ontological metaphors emphasized the fragility of the collective “we,” needing to stand together while guarding the distance. The analysis reveals a consistent journalistic framing in a neutral tone that may have favored a responsible public discussion during the crisis.

This edition of SComS features a Thematic Section titled “Images, clusters and types – Making sense of (large) image corpora and related practices in and with digital media.” With the pervasive use and sharing of images across social media and beyond, the need and opportunity to study and classify the vast amount of visual content and image-related practices have grown. The Thematic Section, curated by Wolfgang Reißmann, Ulla Autenrieth, and Rebecca Venema, comprises seven articles that tackle methodological challenges and innovative approaches in visual communication research. By providing literature

reviews, case studies, and analyses of image corpora, including larger datasets, the papers contribute to methodological developments in the analysis of image clusters. They draw on qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, and computational approaches to analyze personal photos and images shared on Instagram, Twitter/X, and weblogs. The guest editors have overseen the review process for this section. In the Guest Editorial, they provide expanded insights into the origin, scope, and articles of this Thematic Section. We are grateful to all guest editors and authors for opting for SComS as their publication platform and for their exceptional collaboration throughout the process.

This issue also features an article in the Community Section discussing Botlitica, an innovative tool leveraging GPT-3 technology. Designed with journalists in mind, Botlitica serves as a prototype demonstrating the potential of human-computer interaction and generative artificial intelligence to help journalists navigate political campaigns on social media platforms. Developed by Elena Musi, Edgar Everardo Garcia Aguilar, and Lorenzo Federico, this chatbot utilizes the OpenAI API. Botlitica extracts its information from Twitter and Facebook posts belonging to Italy's three main political parties – Fratelli d'Italia, Partito Democratico, and Terzo Polo – during the communication campaign preceding the Italian snap elections. The chatbot ensures transparency by accompanying its responses with the source social media messages. The article outlines Botlitica's key features and discusses the results of a focus group of 18 journalists who tested and evaluated the tool.

The *Botlitica* article illustrates the evolution and significance of the Community Section within SComS. Introduced in 2020, this



section typically shares brief pieces that are not peer-reviewed but are vetted by the editorial team. It serves as a platform for current debates and important issues relating to the development of research fields (Cantoni et al., 2020), methods, tools, and research infrastructures (Oehmer-Pedrazzi et al., 2023), as well as working conditions (Ryffel et al., 2022) prevalent in Swiss communication and media research. Furthermore, the Community Section includes obituaries of revered colleagues and long-term SACM members (e.g., Bonfadelli et al., 2021), as well as summaries of exceptional dissertations that won the SACM Dissertation Award (e.g., Arafat, 2022). A big thank you to all the authors of the ten articles published to date for giving this section breath and life. We cordially invite interested colleagues to contribute similar articles to SComS.

The issue is rounded off by a review of the anthology “Podcasts. Perspectives and Potentials of a Digital Medium.” Fabio Sandmeier examines the broad and deep insights of the 20 contributions, focusing on the communicators, recipients, conditions, and contents, from both academic and practical viewpoints. He praises the introductory chapter for revealing how crucial innovation, authenticity, and storytelling have been for the establishment of podcasts as an integral part of people’s media habits. Sandmeier also praises the editors, Vera Katzenberger, Jana Keil, and Michael Wild, for their meticulous curation that lends the book encyclopedic importance for both novices and experts.

A note from Thilo von Pape on behalf of the entire SComS team: I would like to end this editorial with a heartfelt goodbye to Silke Fürst and Mike Meißner. Silke has been working with SComS since 2020, first as a journal manager and then as co-editor since 2021. She developed and put into action our submission guidelines, as well as the criteria for the SComS Best Paper Award, thereby raising our standards significantly. Silke also extended our reach by tirelessly sharing online first papers and new issues on social media and newsletters. Mike has been our journal manager since 2021. During his tenure, he efficiently managed an influx of submissions and smoothly transitioned us to producing three issues per year. He also revitalized and expanded the SComS Editorial Board.

Silke and Mike, together, not only maintained a regular publishing schedule but also got SComS listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). Our remaining three editors wish to express their gratitude for Silke and Mike’s exceptional creativity, commitment, and rigor, as well as their congeniality, which made collaborating with them a joy. Stay with us for our next editorial, where we will announce their successors.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue.

Thilo von Pape, Silke Fürst, and Mike Meißner

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