



Call for Authors (1/3)

The Database of Variables for Content Analysis (DOCA) invites researchers to submit variable entries on the broad overarching theme of **digital publics**.

What We Are Looking For – Thematic Focus: Digital Publics

Digital publics are communicative spheres that emerge through networked digital media in which individuals and groups engage in the exchange, negotiation, and formation of opinions on matters of public relevance. Standardized content analyses enable the systematic identification of actors, communication channels, and recurring patterns within digital public spheres.

We are currently looking for authors for the following variable entries related to the overarching theme of digital publics.

All of these variables can be examined across **many research areas**, including political and science communication, health and sports communication, climate and environmental communication, technology communication, social and activist communication, cultural and fan communication, brand and consumer communication, as well as strategic and crisis communication. Variables systematized in sections below serve as analytical orientations rather than strict boundaries; variables may be relevant across multiple sections. DOCA entries are not limited to **manual content analysis** but also accommodate **automated approaches**. Key variables and constructs such as emotions, topics, actors, or polarization can be measured not only through human coding but also using dictionary- and rule-based methods as well as machine-learning and AI-based approaches.

Section: Basics / Procedures

- Types of digital/social Media (blogs, professional networks, platforms...)
- Actor type of space (e.g., institutional, activist, community-driven, commercial)
- Platform affordances (e.g., interactivity, anonymity, algorithmic curation)
- Publicness level (private group, semi-public community, public feed)
- Community governance (moderation rules, admin presence, participation norms)
- Displayed participation norms (visible behavioral expectations or guidelines)
- Visual content presence and format (e.g., images, videos, infographics, memes)

Section: News / Journalism

- Audience engagement rate (likes, comments, ...)
- Deliberative quality (argumentative depth, respect, reciprocity)
- Networked visibility (algorithmic reach, hashtag amplification, cross-platform)
- Issue publics formation (presence of topic-focused ad-hoc publics)
- Collective identity markers (shared slogans, memes, group self-references)
- Opinion leadership signals (central actors, mentions, endorsements)
- Connectivity framing (posts that invite tagging, sharing, linking to expand publics)
- Discursive polarization level (degree of opposing camps in comment networks)
- Community sentiment balance (ratio of user discourse around topic)
- Visual framing and imagery use (e.g., news images, symbolic visuals, emotional imagery)



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Section: Organizational / Strategic Communication

- Strategic engagement design (use of CTAs, polls, tags, community formats)
- Stakeholder publics activation (organizations mobilize digital publics deliberately)
- Reputational publics feedback loops (real-time public reactions)
- Trust in digital publics (signals of credibility in communities, e.g., verification)
- Strategic visual communication (e.g., branded visuals, logos)

Section: User-generated Media Content

- Participatory content creation (memes, remixes, co-created narratives)
- Hashtag publics (user discourse organized around hashtags)
- Community storytelling (narratives emerging bottom-up in digital publics)
- Public discourse contribution type (informational, mobilizing, expressive, deliberative, relational)
- User-generated visuals (e.g., memes, screenshots, videos, visual remixes)

Section: Automated Content Analysis

- Engagement metrics (interaction counts, engagement rate, virality score)
- Comment network structure (density, clusters, centrality of actors)
- Sentiment in publics (community-level sentiment, not only individual emotion)
- Meme detection / cultural symbols (shared visuals or narrative symbols circulating)
- Collective reaction patterns (coordinated commenting, reaction cascades)
- Visibility analytics (estimated algorithmic reach, diffusion path prediction)
- Discourse topic clustering (themes forming publics or sub-publics)
- Polarization and consensus signals (linguistic or network indicators)
- Public interaction types (deliberative vs. expressive vs. mobilizing reactions)
- Visual polarization signals (diverging visual repertoires across opposing publics)

Of course, you can also send us suggestions for further variables anytime.

Submission Procedure

- If you are interested in authoring a DOCA entry, please email mfg@ikmz.uzh.ch by **May 3, 2026**, briefly indicating the variable or construct you intend to contribute.
- You will receive feedback on acceptance and detailed author guidelines within two weeks.
- Final entries (approximately 2-3 pages) are due by **June 28, 2026**.
- Each submission undergoes a peer review by two reviewers.
- Accepted entries will be typeset, published open access, and assigned a DOI (Digital Object Identifier). No submission or publication fees apply.



About DOCA (3/3)

The open-access database DOCA is a methodological infrastructure that compiles, systematizes, and critically evaluates content-analytical variables used across communication research. In doing so, it serves as the basis for how variables are developed and operationalized.

Benefits of DOCA

- simplifies access to widely used and tested variables for content analysis research.
- serves as a foundation for addressing questions of research design and operationalization using content analysis and
- supports the standardization and comparability of studies.
- promotes equal opportunities among all researchers through its Open Method approach, providing free access to key academic resources.

Structure of a DOCA Entry

Each database entry follows (more or less) the following structure:

- A brief description of the variable or theoretical construct
- A brief description of the most common field of application / theoretical foundation
- (If applicable) combination with other methods of data collection
- Two sample operationalizations including information about the selected studies (research question(s); analyzed media type) and information about the variable or construct (level of analysis, reliability score, categories / values)
- (If available) the codebook / code

Structure of DOCA

The variables are systematized into five thematic sections of the database:

- Basic Variables
- Variables for research on news & journalism
- Variables for research on fiction & entertainment
- Variables for research on (professional) communicators & strategic communication
- Variables for research on user-generated media content
- Automated Content Analysis

Contributions from authors from the [Global South](#) are especially encouraged. Adding perspectives from underrepresented regions strengthens global inclusivity and improves the validity and comparability of communication research.

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We are very much looking forward to your submissions.