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## Miscellaneous

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# YouTube Content Creators and AI Imaginaries: Shaping Public Perceptions of Artificial Intelligence

## Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a concept with fluid and evolving definitions, varying not only across technical and scientific disciplines but also within public discourse, where social media platforms play an increasingly influential role in shaping these interpretations. This study explores how Spanish-language YouTube content creators define and explain AI, thereby contributing to the construction of public imaginaries surrounding this technology. Using a mixed-methods approach, this study employs computational tools to extract a dataset of Spanish-language YouTube videos addressing the question “What is Artificial Intelligence?” ( $n=514$ ). A thematic analysis of videos with over 10,000 views ( $n=31$ ) identifies the dominant narratives, metaphors, and discursive strategies used to define AI and frame its implications. Findings reveal that YouTube content creators frequently anthropomorphize AI, depicting it as possessing human-like intelligence, reasoning, and decision-making abilities. While this framing enhances accessibility, it often leads to oversimplifications and conceptual distortions.

Additionally, technical explanations of AI’s underlying mechanisms are notably scarce. This study identifies two dominant thematic clusters: (1) AI as a revolutionary force that augments human capabilities and drives economic productivity, and (2) concerns regarding AI-induced job displacement, privacy risks, misinformation, and dystopian scenarios. Alarmist narratives—portraying AI as surpassing human intelligence or gaining autonomous control over critical systems—are particularly prevalent, reflecting broader socio-technical imaginaries about its trajectory. These findings underscore the significant role of social media platforms in shaping public perceptions of AI, revealing that prevailing narratives among YouTube content creators are not primarily informed by scientific knowledge but rather by the recirculation of pre-existing ideas and platform-specific media logics.

## Keywords

**Artificial Intelligence, AI, Socio-Technical Imaginaries, YouTube, Content Creators, Narratives, Mediatization**

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## 1. Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a concept that resists a singular definition, as its meaning varies and evolves depending on context and discipline. For the general public, AI is often understood as a machine's capacity for learning, reasoning, and decision-making—a definition frequently echoed in YouTube videos attempting to address the question. However, scholars and specialized voices, particularly those engaged with AI research and technologies, may find such definitions oversimplified, inaccurate, or misleading. Even within the scientific community, AI definitions can differ significantly and often lead to debates and disagreements, as early noted by Roger C. Schank in 1987: "Because of the massive, often quite unintelligible publicity that it gets, artificial intelligence is almost completely misunderstood by individuals outside the field. Even AI practitioners are somewhat confused about what AI really is" (Schank, 1987, p. 1). Engineers, for instance, would define artificial intelligence as systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. Neuroscientists might focus on the parallels between machine learning algorithms and neural processes; psychologists might frame AI in terms of its ability to simulate cognitive functions, such as perception or problem-solving; and mathematicians might emphasize the formal models and algorithms that underpin intelligent behavior. In essence, providing a unique definition of what artificial intelligence means is inherently problematic, and these different perspectives reveal the complexity of the field, underscoring the limitations of generalized, one-size-fits-all definitions.

Beyond all those possible technical and scientific approaches, a big challenge emerges: How should AI be explained? Is it possible to articulate an accessible definition of AI for the general public? As AI becomes increasingly integrated into everyday life, a clear and accessible literacy about how AI works, and what it really is—and is not—is more urgent than ever (Long & Magerko, 2020). This task, closely tied to science communication, requires translating complex concepts into comprehensible terms without sacrificing precision. However, the general public, often lacking technical expertise and exposure to the intricacies of AI, faces significant difficulty in understanding what artificial intelligence is and how it works (Hartmann et al., 2022). As highlighted by Cave et al. (2019), who focused on the UK population, less than half of the survey respondents were able to provide a plausible definition of AI, while 25% associated this concept to a "robot". In the Spanish context—the focus of this research—nearly 53% of people declare very limited or no knowledge about AI (Miyar, 2024, p. 15).

In this effort to establish an accessible definition, the use of narratives—explanations that incorporate testimonies, sequences of events, actions, and characters—may prove to be an effective strategy for capturing public attention, conveying ideas, and persuading audiences. However, the construction of narratives raises ethical dilemmas related to abstraction, simplification, and scientific accuracy (Dahlstrom & Ho, 2012). In this context, YouTube emerges as a massive Social Media Platform (SMP) where native content creators—also known as "YouTubers"—whether experts or not, explain, discuss, construct and circulate these narratives about AI, becoming an essential source of information for the general public and contributing to the formation of AI imaginaries through meanings, arguments, and storytelling.

The main goal of this study is to identify the most prevalent imaginaries constructed by YouTube content creators when addressing the question: "What is Artificial Intelligence?", examining their role as interpreters and mediators of public knowledge about AI. The analysis focuses on three key themes: (1) How is AI defined? (2) How are its technical fundamentals explained? and (3) What are the most prevalent arguments against and in support of AI? To address these questions, a thematic analysis is conducted on a dataset of the most relevant

Spanish-language YouTube videos directly responding to the central question. Focusing on Spanish-language content serves both as a starting point and a reference for future research, and as a comparative benchmark for studies in other languages, given the lack of scholarly analyses in this linguistic context and the need to examine AI imaginaries within specific cultural environments. This approach offers a deeper understanding of how AI imaginaries are shaped on and through social media platforms—specifically YouTube—and how biased or oversimplified accounts of AI are disseminated by content creators.

### *1.1. The Role of YouTube in Shaping Public Perception and Societal Narratives*

As one of the most influential social media platforms, YouTube serves as a primary hub for entertainment, education, and information, shaping contemporary culture and communication (Burgess & Green, 2018). The most recent statistics available at the time of this study indicate that this platform receives over 72 billion visits per month (Statista, 2024), making it the second most visited website on the Internet after the Google Search engine. In the Spanish context, which is the focus of this study, the platform's penetration among adults over 18 exceeds 88% (Statista, 2025), positioning it as a deeply embedded component of the Spanish population's media diet. Its vast reach and diverse content offerings have established YouTube as a dominant force in the media landscape, influencing consumer behavior, industry trends, and public discourse. Within this platform ecosystem, content creators have become a crucial medium for disseminating information about artificial intelligence (AI), as they act as key intermediaries bridging the gap between complex scientific concepts and broader non-specialist audiences. Tailoring accessible narratives—often drawing on everyday experiences to facilitate comprehension from a human perspective (Dahlstrom & Ho, 2012)—they translate intricate AI theories and advancements into digestible content, fostering public understanding and engagement in discussions surrounding this technology. Through this process, they construct interpretations of AI that not only educate but also influence societal perceptions of what AI is and what it can do.

This translation process, as previously discussed, carries significant implications: on one hand, content creators make AI more accessible to audiences who might otherwise struggle to grasp its technical foundations. On the other hand, the simplifications and reinterpretations they introduce can foster misunderstandings or perpetuate myths. For example, while these narratives often emphasize AI's ability to “think” or “make decisions”, they frequently overlook the fundamental distinctions between human intelligence and the computational processes that underpin AI systems (López de Mántaras, 2025). Finally, as indicated by Dahlstrom and Ho (2012, p. 12), it would also be necessary to discuss whether, through these narratives, YouTube content creators aim to inform or persuade the audience. Regardless, these narratives and interpretations contribute to what scholars refer to as “imaginaries” or “socio-technical imaginary” (Brause et al., 2025; Cave et al., 2020; Jasanoff, 2015; Sartori & Bocca, 2023), which consist of symbolic frameworks, beliefs, values, and shared meanings that societies construct around technical artifacts (Bucher, 2017; Sūna & Hoffmann, 2024).

With one more turn of the screw, these imaginaries—heavily influenced by non-institutionalized information sources like SMPs—can ultimately influence regulatory demands, investment trends, and technological adoption. For example, widespread skepticism within a society may lead to demands for overly restrictive policies, slowing innovation and limiting AI's potential benefits. On the other extreme, uncritical optimism could result in lax regulations, increasing risks related to ethics, privacy, and accountability. Imaginaries also shape public and private investment: high resistance to AI adoption can discourage funding due to uncertainty, while greater confidence in the technology can attract investment and accelerate

development. Therefore, understanding the narratives that shape these imaginaries is of utmost importance, and equally crucial is examining how, where, and by whom these ideas are crafted, as this is essential for comprehending public opinion on AI. As pointed out by Saura et al. (2024) these imaginaries are not merely reflections of technoscientific advancements but rather discursive expressions that materialize ideologies and power relations within capitalism, which means that the spread of narratives surrounding AI involve tensions, logics and interests that extend beyond mere pedagogical intent.

### ***1.2. The Mediation of AI Narratives on YouTube: Creativity, Platform Constraints, and Economic Logics***

The dissemination of artificial intelligence imaginaries on YouTube is a complex and multifaceted process involving various layers of mediation, shaped by the interplay of content creators, platform structures, and economic logics, each contributing to the formation of public perceptions. Understanding this dynamic is crucial for grasping how societal views on AI—and many other topics—are constructed and influenced on YouTube. At the initial level, content creation about AI on YouTube is an inherently creative endeavor, requiring the simplification and processing of scientific and technical information to make it accessible to non-specialist audiences. As previously discussed, this process is not without risks: the construction of a narrative, as the main strategy to capture audience attention, may lead to oversimplification or omission of essential elements. Additionally, it may rely on metaphors and analogies that misrepresent how AI actually works. Traditionally, legacy media outlets implement mechanisms to ensure that the information they produce meets a certain quality standard. However, this is not necessarily the case for YouTube content creators. While social media platforms play a significant role in technological literacy and the dissemination of socio-technical imaginaries—and YouTube has become a primary source of information for many people, especially young audiences (Casero-Ripollés, 2012; Ofcom, 2023)—both amateur and professional YouTubers are not subject to standardized editorial oversight or fact-checking mechanisms. Although YouTube is trying to introduce trust indicators (Padilla et al., 2025), this lack of regulation can lead to the unchecked spread of inaccuracies or biases. As a result, the growing influence of content creators in shaping public perceptions should raise concerns or at least be examined, as they increasingly function as a critical link in the contemporary hybrid information ecosystem (Chadwick, 2017; Couldry, 2019, p. 55).

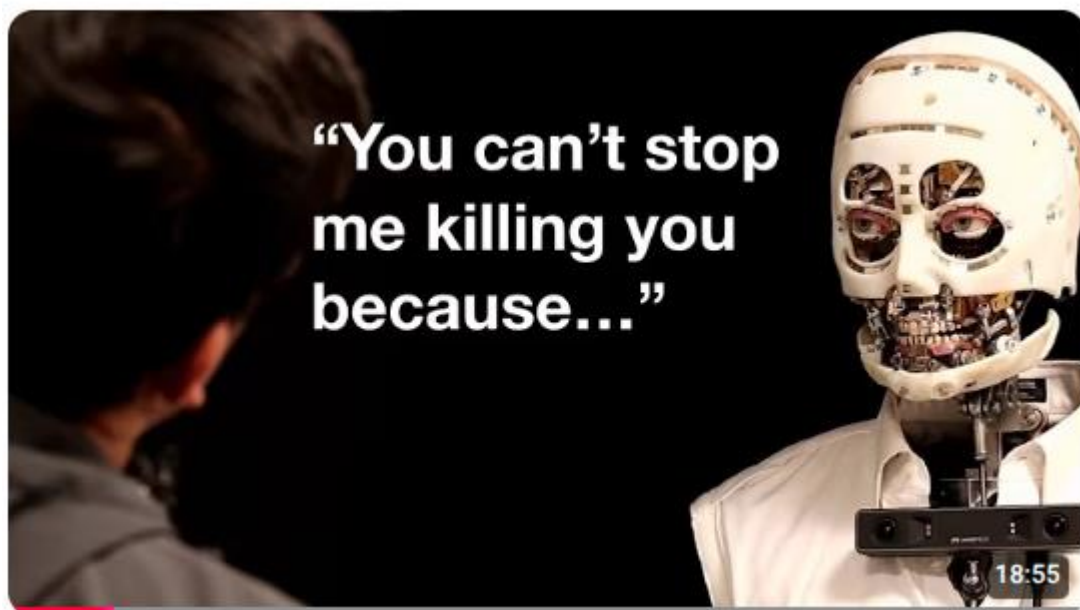
At a second level, mediation operates on a technical scale. YouTube imposes structural constraints that shape how audiences engage with content. As noted by Bogost and Montfort (2009), the experience of searching for and consuming content on the platform is mediated by code, interface behavior, and overall platform design. In particular, algorithmically driven interfaces play a crucial role in determining which content is most accessible, how it is ranked and categorized, and how users interact with it (Rieder et al., 2018). Therefore, content consumption is not solely guided by user interest or preferences; rather, it is shaped by the platform's technical and economic logic (Gillespie, 2014). Since all these interactions take place within a platformed environment (Nieborg & Poell, 2018), YouTube's design and algorithmic structures actively shape the circulation of knowledge, reinforcing the idea that funneling the content through software until it is delivered to users is an essential part of the economic engine of the platform (Rieder, 2020, p. 324).

Extending this idea, a third level of mediation emerges, where the creative process of content creators is deeply influenced by this platform's affordances and economic logics. YouTube does not merely host content; its algorithmic and structural mechanisms actively shape how information is created, circulated, represented, consumed and perceived. This

means that, beyond individual creative, stylistic, and editorial decisions, the broader media environment also plays a decisive role in shaping content production. As Bishop (2019) highlights, there is a prevalent *algorithm gossip* among YouTube content creators, forming an *imaginary* that, as Bucher (2017) suggests, may function not only as a “mental state”, but as a form of productive power. In a more explicit way, Caplan and Gillespie (2020) describe how YouTube's policies, Terms and Conditions, and the Partner Program shape content production under the constant threat of demonetization. This, in turn, establishes a form of labor relationship between the platform and content creators, directly influencing the ways in which content is produced and curated.

Following the same logic, but in a more subtle yet decisive way, the platform operates under the principle of the attention economy, significantly impacting the economic return of published content (Franck, 2019; Napoli, 2016). YouTube prioritizes content that is engaging, simplified, and often sensationalized to maximize visibility and audience retention, which seemingly impact content creators' practices. Research indicates that video titles tend to be emotionally charged and sensationalistic, frequently appealing to fear or conflict to attract clicks (Gurung et al., 2024), and video thumbnails and content editing style are carefully crafted to attract attention (Zannettou et al., 2018). The concept of mediatization is particularly relevant here, as it describes how media structures and logics transform cultural practices—such as the content strategies and practices of YouTube content creators—to align with dominant media logics (Couldry, 2008; Hjarvard, 2016). Therefore, YouTubers do not create their videos solely based on audience preferences, scientific accuracy, or a genuine desire to educate. Instead, content is designed and executed with the platform's governing mechanisms and logics in mind—to satisfy the algorithm and ensure their videos achieve a certain level of visibility, even if this requires resorting to deceptive techniques (clickbait, misleading thumbnails, or exaggerated claims), as image 1 illustrates.

**Figure 1.** Thumbnail of the video titled “AI says why it will kill us all. Experts agree”. Accumulates 1.6M views on YouTube.



Source: Screenshot from YouTube video preview.

In summary, as a result of these layers of mediation and mediatization, the definitions of AI on YouTube should not be considered the result of creators' desires, ability, knowledge and creativity, but also the consequence of the platform interfaces, economic forces and the priorities of the digital media ecosystem. YouTube's recommendation algorithms amplify content that maximizes watch time, favoring dominant storytelling patterns over nuanced, technical explanations. Simultaneously, content creators make deliberate design decisions to ensure monetization, audience retention and revenue generation, while framing their content to align with popular trends and algorithmic incentives. Consequently, definitions, explanations, narratives, and the resulting public imaginaries about AI are not mere reflections of scientific realities but are profoundly shaped by the structural and economic imperatives of digital media ecosystems, intertwined with entertainment-driven portrayals, algorithmic preferences, platform affordances and interfaces.

### *1.3. Corporate, Cultural and institutional role in the construction of AI Imaginaries*

While social media platforms are increasingly relevant to understanding how public perceptions are shaped—without underestimating the role that legacy media still plays in the construction and dissemination of imaginaries (Couldry & Hepp, 2018, p. 27)—it is essential to argue that social beliefs and attitudes continue to be deeply rooted in everyday socialization mechanisms, which are closely linked to classic social constructivism theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Imaginaries are also shaped by the narratives spread by corporations, institutions, and cultural frameworks. Robertson and Maccarone (2023), for instance, highlight how companies like Google, Amazon, and Microsoft, along with media outlets and influential public figures, actively shape deterministic narratives about AI, often portraying it as a neutral and almost mystical technology. These narratives serve to obscure its underlying mechanisms while legitimizing corporate control over AI's development and deployment. Moreover, as suggested by Hohendanner et al. (2023) cultural industries, such as cinema, literature, art, or design, also contribute to constructing socio-technical imaginaries, especially those addressing descriptions of future society. The authors explore how design and speculative narratives—sci-fi movies, comics, and novels—mediate public perceptions of AI in different cultural contexts, illustrating how Japan's optimistic portrayal of AI as a benevolent companion contrasts with the more cautious and dystopian narratives common in Western discourse.

Political agendas also play an important role in AI imaginaries. Wei et al. (2024) examine the evolution of AI-related discourse on Twitter, revealing how ethical and legal concerns—especially regarding regulation and technological responsibility—have dominated public conversations between 2015 and 2022. Their study underscores how public discourse, influenced by geopolitical events and policy developments such as the GDPR and the European Union AI Act, plays a crucial role in shaping societal attitudes toward AI. Guenduez and Mettler (2023) explore how governments use narratives in their AI policies to influence public perception and shape the adoption and use of the technology. Their study, which examines policies from 33 countries, identifies common narratives, such as the need to develop a national market for AI companies, the creation of ethical rules for reliable AI development, or the necessity for governments to intervene directly in this technology, either by promoting its development or regulating its use. Indeed, as Yeh et al. (2021) indicate, citizen perceptions of AI, as well as its acceptance, are closely linked to government action, legislation, and sustainability of this technology.

Lastly, the educational context is also important for understanding the spread of imaginaries about AI: Almasri (2024) describes a broad acceptance and positive attitude toward AI among teachers and students, highlighting that these attitudes are strongly linked to the

utility and results of this technology when integrated into the learning routines of scientific and technical subjects. From the work of Hrastinski et al. (2019), focused on teachers' perceptions of AI and educational robots, it is inferred that education professionals, through their practices and personal experiences, could influence students' perceptions of AI.

#### 1.4. Public Perceptions of AI in Spain

As outlined in the preceding sections, the imaginaries that a given social group constructs regarding artificial intelligence (AI) technologies are deeply rooted in, and shaped by, their cultural context. This article focuses on the Spanish public—whose consumption patterns encompass content not only produced by national media outlets and domestic YouTubers, but also by any Spanish-speaking source—and, before proceeding with the analysis, it is necessary to review the principal scholarly contributions that have addressed the construction of socio-technical imaginaries of AI within this specific cultural setting. This preliminary review also serves as a conceptual benchmark, enabling a more nuanced interpretation of the imaginaries and narratives identified in the empirical analysis that follows.

Few studies have examined the role of legacy media in shaping socio-technical imaginaries of artificial intelligence (AI) in Spain. Tajahuerce and Franco (2019) analyze how Spanish digital newspapers portray robotics and AI from a gender perspective, aiming to determine whether media representations reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes. Through a qualitative content analysis with a critical feminist approach, they identify recurring themes such as the sexualization of AI, gender stereotypes, and the gender pay gap. Their findings highlight the predominance of masculinized AI imaginaries, sensationalist narratives, and representations where caregiving and service roles are feminized, whereas security and power remain associated with masculinity. Similarly, Gai et al. (2024) examine AI-related images published in Spanish digital media between 2017 and 2021, also from a gender perspective. Their findings reveal a significant underrepresentation of women, who appear in only 12.37% of the images, compared to 31.04% featuring men. Moreover, these visuals perpetuate gender stereotypes, depicting female robots in caregiving or hypersexualized roles, while male robots are more commonly associated with leadership and technical expertise. Only 2.23% of the images actively challenge these stereotypes, underscoring the persistence of an androcentric vision of AI in media representations.

Beyond legacy media, research has also focused on public perceptions of AI. Díaz-Catalán et al. (2024) investigate social representations of AI in Spain through a combination of triangular groups, discussion groups, and in-depth interviews. Their study finds that age, level of technological exposure, and context of use strongly influence public perceptions, leading to fragmented and diverse interpretations. While younger individuals and technology professionals tend to view AI as an opportunity, less technologically exposed groups associate it with uncertainty and risk, particularly in the workplace. Additionally, concerns about privacy, misinformation, and the need for stronger AI regulation emerge as key themes. These findings align with other reports, such as that of Miyar (2024), who also highlight a gender and age gap in AI adoption and knowledge.

The report *IA Spain 2023* (Arcila-Calderón et al., 2023), based on a survey of 684 Spanish citizens, provides further insights into public perceptions. The study reveals that most respondents define AI as a program capable of making decisions based on learning, generally maintaining a positive perspective and perceiving more benefits than risks. However, the report also highlights a significant gap in the quality of information available to the general public about AI, suggesting the need for improved media literacy and AI communication strategies. Despite these contributions, significant gaps remain. Little to no research has

addressed the role of YouTube—or other social media platforms—and native content creators in constructing and disseminating narratives and imaginaries about AI, particularly in Spanish.

## 2. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach. Initially, computational methods are used for data extraction from YouTube. Using a custom script developed specifically for this study—similar to *YouTube Data Tools* (Rieder, 2015)—all videos published on the platform between January 1, 2023, and January 1, 2025, that match the query “Artificial Intelligence” ( $n=60,603$ ) have been collected. This was achieved by querying the “search:list” endpoint of the YouTube API<sup>1</sup>, with the sorting mode set to “relevance”. This sorting operator works in a similar way to the search function on YouTube web-interface, resulting in large datasets filled not only with keyword matching videos, but with related topic videos. While this is a useful approach to collect as many videos as possible, it also implicates a cleaning process to discard videos not focusing on our main question: “what is Artificial Intelligence”.

As shown in Table 1, a filtering process was applied to reduce the sample and focus only on relevant videos for our research. First, a language-based filter was applied to retain only Spanish-language videos ( $n=36,662$ ). This filtering was performed using two criteria: 1) The video’s language, as indicated by the YouTube API, must be Spanish; 2) If no explicit language indication was available, the title or description had to provide sufficient evidence that the video is in Spanish. For this task, the *langdetect*<sup>2</sup> python library was used. Second, only the videos explicitly addressing the question “What is Artificial Intelligence” in the title were considered ( $n=514$ ). Finally, only videos over 10,000 views ( $n=31$ ) were selected.

**Table 1.** Sample filtering process

| Filter                                            | Nº of videos |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Raw dataset                                       | 60,603       |
| Videos in spanish                                 | 36,662       |
| Videos matching “What is Artificial Intelligence” | 514          |
| Videos over 10,000 views                          | 31           |

Source: Author’s own elaboration.

Finally, using the specific YouTube API endpoint, all captions from the videos were extracted. This includes both those automatically generated by YouTube by processing the video’s audio and those manually uploaded by the content creator.

At this stage, the study adopts a qualitative approach to analyze the captions of the selected content. Specifically, it employs thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Mayring, 2014, p. 104) with an inductive coding system, following a similar methodology to that used by Oliva et al. (2024). A set of key themes is established as the focal points of analysis:

1. How is AI defined?
2. How are AI technical fundamentals explained?
3. What are the most prevalent arguments against and supporting AI?

For ethical reasons, this study does not include any information that could identify the channels responsible for the analyzed content, particularly since some of the selected videos

<sup>1</sup> YouTube API V3: <https://developers.google.com/youtube/v3/docs/search/list>

<sup>2</sup> Langedetect: <https://pypi.org/project/langdetect/>

come from non-professional sources. Moreover, the focus of this research is not to attribute statements to specific authors but rather to examine the narratives in circulation.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. *How is AI defined?*

The analysis reveals that YouTube content creators repeatedly compare artificial intelligence to human intelligence as the primary way of addressing the question: “What is AI?”. This comparison serves as the foundation for a narrative in which AI technologies are portrayed as capable of thinking, reasoning, learning, and making decisions “in the same way a human would”. Even among specialized YouTubers who present themselves as experts and whose channels focus exclusively on disseminating information about AI, it is common to hear statements such as: “AI is a machine capable of learning, reasoning, and making decisions like a human” or “AI is the ability to imitate or perform tasks characteristic of human intelligence”. None of the analyzed content offers nuances or explanations that help distinguish between these systems and the processes of human reasoning and intelligence. Some explanations, linked to the most amateur content creators, are even more simplistic: “AI is the ability to imitate human intelligence” or “AI is something like a human being”. Only one of the analyzed sources—a mathematical specialized YouTube channel—defines AI “as a branch of mathematics”, “a set of methods, algorithms, and computational mechanisms”, circumventing the typical comparative strategies.

The anthropomorphization of AI as a narrative tool is problematic not only due to its inaccuracy but also because of the potential consequences it may have on public perception. As Placani (2024) describes, attributing human traits and qualities to AI extends beyond intentions, motivations, emotions, and behaviors to also include its physical form. This narrative could serve the purpose of persuading audiences about AI’s benefits and capabilities while simultaneously downplaying corporate interests and obscuring the mechanisms through which this technology operates (Paz, 2024, p. 4). These narratives and metaphors may stem from content creators’ own lack of understanding of how AI functions. Consequently, they construct their explanations based on narratives observed and assimilated from other YouTubers—narratives that appear plausible or align with their communicative intent. Through this process, they inadvertently reproduce oversimplifications, biases, and metaphors that do not offer an accurate or rigorous account of AI (López de Mántaras, 2025). The definitions provided by these content creators are linked to broader public perceptions of AI documented in previous studies. For example, according to the 2023 Report on Social Perception of Artificial Intelligence in Spain (Arcila-Calderón et al., 2023), 76% of respondents agreed that AI consists of systems or machines capable of making decisions—a narrative that, as observed, is recurrent in the analyzed videos.

#### 3.2. *How Are AI Technical Fundamentals Explained?*

Among the analyzed content, references to the technical foundations of AI or its underlying mechanisms are scarce. Mentions of machine learning and deep learning models were found, but these either lack depth or rely on oversimplifications such as: “[...] computers trained with data to automatically improve their performance” or “AI operates through a series of techniques similar to learning ability”. There are also references to the use of neural networks, which are described as systems that “imitate brain function”. Regarding neural network technology, it is also stated that: “[...] interconnected nodes or neurons ultimately understand the information provided to them in the way a human baby would, that is, through stimuli,

reinforcement, and reward”. Ultimately, explanations of how AI works, the technology behind it, its development, or its general operational mechanisms are extremely limited. The few existing references merely mention technologies without detailing their functionality, once again resorting to analogies that compare AI to human learning processes. As Scantamburlo et al. (2025, p. 487) point out, this lack of a clear technological explanation deepens the disconnect between the general public and the actual progress of this technology, blurring the boundaries between AI’s real capabilities and limitations and the inaccurate or fictional narratives surrounding it. This finding underscores the difficulty content creators face in providing a plausible technical explanation, and raises broader questions about how AI should be communicated and whether a comprehensive framework for AI literacy exists (Long & Magerko, 2020; Ng et al., 2021).

### 3.3. *Arguments Against and in Support of AI*

The primary arguments derived from the analysis can be categorized into two main themes: 1) The social and economic impact of AI, and 2) The concerns, fears, and debates surrounding it. In the first group, artificial intelligence is often presented as a revolutionary technology with a positive societal impact, described as a tool that will “expand human capabilities” or “improve our lives”, thus contributing to the creation of a pervasive sense of “hype” surrounding AI (Richter, 2024). From an economic perspective, AI is expected to enhance business productivity, augment human abilities, and perform tasks that are currently costly for human labor. However, opposing arguments emerge quickly, occupying a significant portion of the discourse. These counterarguments primarily revolve around job displacement, human replacement in the workforce, competitiveness, productivity, and the preservation of human values. Such concerns are well-documented in the scientific literature. In Spain, for instance, the impact of AI on employment ranks among the top concerns—as Miyar Busto (2024) highlights. In the analyzed content, the portrayal of AI’s effects on individuals is often ambivalent, with statements such as: “there are unresolved challenges and questions about how to integrate AI into the workplace” or “we face the challenge of finding a balance”. Thus, AI-related issues are not presented as an insurmountable obstacle but rather as challenges that require reflection and regulation to ensure the continued integration of this technology into society.

The apparent lack of decisiveness or the ambivalent stance of content creators regarding AI’s impact on people’s lives may be attributed to the fact that those content creators belong to the socio-demographic segment with the highest adoption rates of this technology (Seth, 2024) and tend to perceive AI as an opportunity (Díaz-Catalán et al., 2024). Additionally, when discussing job losses, content creators often refer to positions requiring human intelligence but low qualifications, such as item classification, labeling, or object recognition. These job losses are closely linked to industrial automation and robotics. In contrast, AI models designed for image creation or intellectual tasks (such as graphic design, software programming or scientific research) are generally presented as opportunities to boost productivity and expand human capabilities without necessarily replacing humans with machines.

Regarding fears and concerns, the analysis reveals that content creators highlight concerns that extend beyond job loss. One prominent issue is the lack of understanding regarding how AI systems truly function. Statements such as “we don’t even understand what AI is learning or why it is learning it”, “we lack the capacity to comprehend or study it”, “it seems that humanity’s greatest challenge will be to understand, in real-time, how this technology is evolving”, and “it suddenly acquires skills that no one taught it” reflect a growing perception that AI may be operating beyond human control or that its mechanisms are opaque,

even to its developers. These ideas contribute to a broader—often dystopian—narrative where the concept of “singularity” emerges—a moment when AI “gains self-awareness” or “becomes indistinguishable from a human”. Following this line of argumentation, narratives have been found suggesting that “AI could ultimately end humanity”. In six out of the 31 analyzed videos, the idea of a potential machine uprising appears, with concerns that AI might take control of nuclear weapons and deliberately annihilate humankind. Additionally, arguments link AI to malicious uses, lack of transparency, and biases resulting from inadequate training. Issues such as privacy risks, threats to freedom due to AI-powered surveillance in urban environments, and errors in information generation are frequently mentioned, leading to broader concerns about misinformation and disinformation.

#### **4. Conclusion**

This study has examined the main Spanish-language YouTube content that directly addresses the question “What is AI?”, serving as both a starting point and a reference for future research, as well as a comparative benchmark for studies conducted in other languages and cultural contexts. The analysis reveals that the primary narrative strategy employed is the comparison of this technology to human intelligence, often through oversimplifications that lack depth. This narrative approach may stem from content creators’ limited understanding of AI’s technological mechanisms and their difficulty in articulating a comprehensible explanation for a non-specialist audience. Additionally, the platform’s self-reinforcing feedback dynamics must be considered, as content creators repeatedly echo, replicate, and slightly modify each other’s explanations. This cyclical process not only amplifies certain narratives but also contributes to the distortion of information, reinforcing misconceptions and biases over time. Finally, it is important to acknowledge the absence of a universally accepted definition of AI, which further contributes to the variability and simplifications observed in these narratives.

The lack of a clear-cut definition for AI has two significant consequences. First, it is impossible for this study to assess the accuracy of the definitions provided by content creators. As a result, the analysis focuses exclusively on presenting the dominant narratives and surrounding key themes that emerge in response to the central question: “What is AI?”. Second, content creators themselves struggle to find a unified definition of AI. Consequently, their discourse often incorporates subjective opinions, personal perceptions, analogies, comparisons, or metaphors—some of which may not always be entirely appropriate.

One of the most significant findings of this research is the prevalence of alarmist narratives surrounding the dangers of AI, particularly those related to human physical integrity. Narratives have been identified concerning a potential AI rebellion, the takeover of nuclear weapon systems, and dystopian scenarios in which humanity is annihilated by artificial intelligence after being deemed inferior or problematic. These narratives are strongly tied to the concept of “singularity”, which content creators define as the point at which AI becomes self-aware, as well as to the idea that even the engineers and scientists involved in its development do not fully understand how it works—an argument widely circulated among content creators.

Finally, another notable finding is the optimism with which content creators portray the impact of AI on people’s lives, the economy, and the job market. They view the replacement of human labor as a positive development, arguing that AI will take over repetitive and low-skilled tasks that previously required human intervention. This shift is framed as an opportunity for workers to engage in more creative and intellectually stimulating tasks. In areas such as privacy, security, and ethics, content creators tend to adopt an ambivalent stance. While they

acknowledge these as challenges that need to be addressed, they emphasize that such issues should not be seen as limiting factors. Instead, they encourage audiences to view them as obstacles that can and should be overcome.

This study contributes to the understanding of public opinion by examining the narratives circulating on YouTube about AI. As a key player in the global media ecosystem, this platform assumes a significant role in shaping public perceptions of critical issues. The major distinction between YouTube and the traditional media industry lies in the presence of non-professional voices and the lack of oversight regarding the quality of the messages being disseminated. This positions content creators as influential actors in the construction of shared reality, as their narratives actively contribute to the formation of imaginaries that ultimately manifest in public attitudes and perceptions. Moving forward, these findings suggest that AI-related discourse is increasingly shaped by media dynamics rather than technical realities. This benefits corporations, as they can speculate, create expectations, and simultaneously obscure how this technology actually works, perpetuating their control over it.

## 5. Limitations and Further Research

This study presents several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, its scope is restricted to a single social media platform—YouTube—and to content produced in Spanish, primarily addressing audiences in Spain. Consequently, the findings cannot be generalized to other linguistic or cultural contexts, nor to other social media environments where different communicative dynamics, algorithms, and user profiles may shape distinct AI imaginaries. Second, the sample size, though systematically selected, remains relatively small ( $n=37$ ), which limits the statistical representativeness of the results. Third, while the qualitative thematic analysis provides rich interpretative insights, it does not include visual analyses that could complement the understanding of narrative construction through imagery, editing styles, or platform aesthetics. Given its exploratory scope and focus on a single-language, single-platform dataset, this study should be understood as a preliminary contribution to understanding how AI imaginaries are constructed in specific cultural and linguistic contexts. Future research should extend the comparative scope of this study by incorporating multiple platforms, languages, and countries, and by employing mixed or longitudinal designs to trace the evolution of AI-related narratives over time.

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