

Description and analysis of the use of WhatsApp as a news dissemination channel: the case of *Antena 3 Noticias* and *Informativos Telecinco*

Descripción y análisis del uso de WhatsApp como canal de difusión de noticias: el caso de Antena 3 Noticias e Informativos Telecinco



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Abstract:

This work analyses the use of WhatsApp as a news dissemination channel by Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco. The objectives include examining the usage criteria of dissemination channels on WhatsApp and exploring the characteristics of the published news, in addition to studying user reactions. To achieve

Resumen:

Este trabajo analiza el uso de WhatsApp como canal de difusión de noticias por parte de Antena 3 Noticias e Informativos Telecinco. Los objetivos incluyen examinar los criterios de uso de los canales de difusión en WhatsApp y explorar las características de las noticias publicadas, además de estudiar las reacciones de los usuarios. Para dar respuesta a estos

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these objectives, a methodology is followed based on a quantitative content analysis in which 467 news items published between October 2023 and January 2024 are examined, and variables such as type of news, geographical scope and user reactions are used. The results of this work indicate a trend towards the publication of national news, with significant differences in the distribution of local and international news. Antena 3 Noticias publishes more breaking news, while Informativos Telecinco stands out in the use of self-promotion. Additionally, news with political content generates a greater number of reactions from users. It is concluded that although WhatsApp is consolidating itself as an effective dissemination channel, to maximise its potential, greater use of audiovisual resources and a better-defined strategy are necessary. Finally, it is noted that both media outlets tend to use WhatsApp conservatively and do not take advantage of the interactive functions of the platform.

Keywords:

Journalism; WhatsApp; dissemination channels; Antena 3 Noticias; Informativos Telecinco.

objetivos, se sigue una metodología basada en un análisis cuantitativo de contenido en el que se examinan 467 noticias publicadas entre octubre de 2023 y enero de 2024 y se utilizan variables como tipo de noticia, ámbito geográfico y reacciones de los usuarios. Los resultados de este trabajo indican una tendencia hacia la publicación de noticias de ámbito nacional, con diferencias significativas en la distribución de noticias locales e internacionales. Antena 3 Noticias publica más noticias de última hora, mientras que Informativos Telecinco destaca en el uso de autopromoción. Además, las noticias de contenido político generan mayor cantidad de reacciones de los usuarios. Se concluye que, aunque WhatsApp se consolida como un canal efectivo de difusión, para maximizar su potencial es necesario un mayor uso de recursos audiovisuales y una estrategia mejor definida. Por último, se constata que ambos medios de comunicación tienden a utilizar WhatsApp de manera conservadora y desaprovechan las funciones interactivas de la plataforma.

Palabras clave:

Periodismo; WhatsApp; canales de difusión; Antena 3 noticias; Informativos Telecinco.

1. Introduction

Instant messaging is a form of online chat that allows the transmission of text in real time over the internet. With the arrival of smartphones and the rise of mobile software, free or low cost social messaging and chat applications have become an economical option in comparison with traditional SMS text messages. Many of these applications include characteristics such as group chats, and exchange of images, videos, audio messages and emoticons, among other elements.

WhatsApp is the most popular messaging application in the world in terms of active monthly users worldwide, and is particularly prominent in markets outside of the USA. With 2 billion users in January 2024, this social network has overtaken other applications such as WeChat, Facebook Messenger, Telegram, Snapchat and QQ Mobile (1.336 billion, and 979, 800, 750 and 558 million users, respectively) (Fernández, 2024). In recent years, WhatsApp has consolidated itself as an increasingly important channel for dissemination of news, at both a global level and in Spain (Agur, 2019). This social network, owned by Meta, is now the main social network for information in Spain, ousting Facebook from the top position.

27% of Spanish people use WhatsApp as a source of information or a means for sharing news. In a decade, Facebook has lost relevance as an information outlet: its use has fallen from 53% in 2014 to 26% in 2024. In the same period, WhatsApp fell from 28% to 27%, and despite this decrease, is crowned as the main social channel through which Spanish people inform themselves (Sierra, 2024).

At an international level, WhatsApp has also become an extremely popular network for the distribution of news (Boczek and Koppers, 2020); for example, in India, where the use of WhatsApp by local media has been extensively documented, due to the ubiquity of the platform in the country and its capacity for reaching large segments of the population (Belair-Gagnon, 2017);

and in Hong Kong, where WhatsApp has played a crucial role during political movements such as the Umbrella Revolution, facilitating the rapid and secure dissemination of information between activists and the general public (Swart, et al., 2019).

Launched in 2009, WhatsApp quickly reached a significant user base, and in 2016, with the implementation of end-to-end encryption, its use in the field of communication and information saw a notable rise (Dodds, 2020). This phenomenon led different media companies to use WhatsApp as a strategic tool for distributing news content and connecting with their audiences in a more direct and personalised way. The application itself has evolved and improved over the years, and it is possible to define two phases in its technological development which affect use by the media.

From its launch until 2023, the media channels publicised their WhatsApp number, the user wrote to them, and it created a list of contacts to whom to send information. This procedure generates two significant limitations. The first is that a single user account cannot be managed by several people or devices at the same time, which means that journalists have to take turns with the telephone to read and respond to messages. The second is that the application blocks the terminal when it detects a high number of messages sent, because it classifies them as spam (Fares, 2018). From September 2023, WhatsApp launched “channels” worldwide, for both iOS and Android operating systems, allowing updates to be received from people and organisations that are not in the user’s contacts. The user only needs to search for the company they are interested in (including news companies that have created a channel) and subscribe. This function is one-way, allowing information, as well as text, photos, videos, stickers and surveys to be received, but not allowing the chat function. The only interaction possible between the user and the news company is that the former can react to the news with emojis (Márquez, 2023).

In June 2013, the Brazilian newspaper *Extra* launched the first international journalism experience in which the initial technological development of this application was used as a channel for conversation with the reader and for receipt of stories sent by them. In 48 hours, the newspaper received reports and notifications capable of becoming journalistic incidents from over 350 readers. In Spain, the pioneering practice was carried out on television. As part of the 2014 football World Cup, in June of that year, the sports programme *Punto Pelota*, of the Intereconomía group, offered the possibility of registering to receive news on coverage of the World Cup. With regard to the written press, in November 2014, the local newspaper *La Rioja* launched its WhatsApp channel as a way of interacting with readers, and offered the reader the possibility of communicating with the paper. The first newspaper to use WhatsApp as a broadcast medium for information content was another local paper, *Diario de Mallorca*, in February 2015 (Fares, 2018).

Today, newspapers such as *El País*, *El Español*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Mundo* and *20 Minutos* and news agencies such as EFE now incorporate WhatsApp into their content distribution strategies, as an effective tool for increasing their reach and promoting greater interaction with their audiences (Aedo-Neira, 2022; Reyes-García and Molina-Ortiz, 2022).

In recent years, various academic studies have addressed the impact of WhatsApp on journalism from different perspectives. In the English-speaking sphere, Dodds (2020) explores how journalists use WhatsApp to gather and distribute news and highlights the flexibility and accessibility that the platform offers in contexts of high mobility and limited resources. Boczek and Koppers (2020) analyse the diverse strategies used by the media to optimise the use of WhatsApp in the distribution of news and highlight the importance of direct and personalised interaction with the user. Resende, et al. (2019) focus on the

challenges and strategies for combatting disinformation on the platform, a growing problem as more users turn to WhatsApp to consume news.

Additionally, using a case study, Kligler-Vilenchik and Tenenboim (2020) explain the use of WhatsApp as a means of audience participation in the process of creating news, and propose the concept of the *meso news-space*, referring to private digital spaces in which journalists and users produce, discuss and share news. Likewise, research such as that by Schwarz (2011) and Swart et al. (2019) deals with the use of WhatsApp for maintaining social cohesion and promoting civic participation through the dissemination of news and informal conversations within closed groups. This aspect is particularly relevant in situations where official information may be subject to censorship or strict control, because the application allows users to access news and discuss topics of common interest in a safer, more private environment.

In the Spanish-speaking sphere, significant contributions have also been made to research on the use of WhatsApp in journalism, revealing different dynamics and innovative practices. Mitchelstein and Boczkowski (2019) highlight the growing adoption of WhatsApp by the digital media for improving interaction with their audiences in Argentina and other countries of the region. Valenzuela, et al. (2020) analyse the impact of WhatsApp in Chile and highlight how the application affects knowledge of news, polarisation and political participation. Harlow (2019) examines the social media policies in Latin American newsrooms, while Cueva Chacón and Saldaña (2020) deal with transnational collaborations in research journalism. García-Perdomo (2019) explores the relationship between television and online media and includes WhatsApp as a news distribution channel in Colombia.

These studies reflect a trend towards digitalisation and adaptation of new technologies in the field of Latin American journalism and compile the opportunities and challenges faced by the media in the region.

With regard to Spain, Sedano Amundarain and Palomo Torres (2018) have produced a directory of 27 Spanish media outlets that make use of WhatsApp or Telegram. Bonete Vizcaíno (2020) describes the use of WhatsApp by five newspapers (*ABC*, *El Confidencial*, *El Español*, *Eldiario.es* and *El Periódico*) between 2015 and 2019, concluding that despite being an increasingly widespread tool, Spanish newspapers are not participating in this trend.

Negreira, et al. (2017) analyse the use of not only WhatsApp, but also another social network, Telegram, by five print media outlets (*Sur*, *El Comercio*, *Las Provincias*, *Diario de Mallorca* and *Faro de Vigo*) in 2016 and consider that although there are diverse strategies for disseminating the news, no initiative is taken for real conversation with readers. García-Avilés (2020) examines use of WhatsApp by newspapers *El País* and *La Vanguardia*, headlines that implement specific strategies for attracting and retaining the audience through this social network through the adaptation of their content to briefer, more visual formats, which in principle are more suitable for that platform.

Sádaba and Salaverría (2021) study how journalists use WhatsApp to distribute news and the way that this application has influenced journalistic practices. They recognise that this social network serves not only as a channel for distributing news, but also as a tool for verifying information and direct interaction with the audience.

Crespo Martínez, et al. (2022) focus on the dynamic of news consumption through WhatsApp and examine how the groups and mailing lists on this platform transform the way in which news is shared and consumed. They find that users perceive WhatsApp as a reliable and rapid channel for receiving news, although they also acknowledge the risks associated with disinformation.

The majority of the academic studies mentioned focus mainly on print media outlets and avoid the initiatives that have been implemented by television. This work therefore intends to contribute a new analysis of the use of the WhatsApp dissemination channels of the two largest audiovisual companies of mainstream television in Spain: Atresmedia and Mediaset. The first launched its channel in October 2023 and made Antena 3 Noticias the first mainstream television information service to have its own WhatsApp channel (Escalona, 2023). A few weeks later, Mediaset created its own with Informativos Telecinco (Redacción digital Informativos Telecinco, 2023).

2. Objectives and Methodology

This work has the objective of analysing, comparing and specifying the usage criteria of the WhatsApp news dissemination channels of the two large private broadcasters in Spain, Atresmedia and Mediaset. This concept arises after the announcement by Atresmedia and Mediaset of incorporating the dissemination channels of this social network into their news broadcast and transmission. Therefore, based on this triple objective, three research questions arise:

RQ1: What is the volume of news published by each network on their respective WhatsApp channels?

To answer this question, 3 analysis variables are created (number of news items, dissemination date and dissemination channel) allowing quantitative data collection.

RQ2: What are the main formal and content characteristics of these news items?

To answer this question, an ad hoc datasheet is designed with 10 variables (geographic scope, autonomous region, section, format, time of publication, breaking, self-promotion, direct link, type of news and body of news).

RQ3: How do users of each channel react to the news published?

To answer this question, 2 variables are determined (number of reactions and types of reactions, where the icons with which channel subscribers interact are analysed).

RQ4: What is the methodology of publication of news items by Antena 3 and Informativos Telecinco? Are these dissemination channels effective for sharing real news?

To answer this question, in-depth interviews are proposed with the managers of these dissemination channels, as well as with one of the informative news verification companies in Spain (Newtral).

2.1. Content analysis

In this research, the main data analysis tool for studying the WhatsApp dissemination channels of Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco is content analysis. According to Arandes Tinto (2013), content analysis is an ideal technique for being able to systematise and understand the object of analysis in depth. Additionally, as Andéu Abela (2002) indicates, this type of analysis tool is formed by techniques that allow logical and coherent results to be obtained.

2.1.1. Definition of the analysis

For this work, N= 467 news items were analysed, published by the WhatsApp dissemination channels of the two large private national media companies in Spain: Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco. The analysis period corresponds to the period between October 2023 and January 2024 (3 months). The chosen analysis time coincides with the start of use of the WhatsApp dissemination channels by Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco. These dissemination channels were chosen because they were the first WhatsApp channels for televised news created in Spain. A period of three months is established because quarterly analyses are common in academic research, due to allowing pertinent trends in the media industry to be observed with a manageable and representative timeframe (Pew Research Center, 2022).

2.1.2. Determination of the formal and content categories

Following the explanations of authors such as López Noguero (2002), for data collection for this analysis, the studied content was categorised into 15 variables corresponding to the common technical and formal characteristics of news items published by both channels. The main classification criterion corresponds to numerical categories to allow the use of statistical data analysis tools. In this way, an ad hoc datasheet was created, establishing the analysed variables:

Table 1. Analysed variables

Variable
Month of publication
Dissemination channel
Type of news
Scope of news
Autonomous Region referenced
Format of the news item
Publication (timeframe)
Form of publication
Breaking news
Self-promotion of the network

Direct link to the news on the internet
Contains headline
Contains body of news
Number of reactions
Type of reactions

Source: own creation

2.2. Analysis and reliability of the data obtained

To analyse the data collected, two tools were used: Microsoft Excel and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). With the latter, in the month of October, to make this work reliable, the consistency between the two categorical samples was studied using the Cohen’s Kappa measure for nominal variables (Cohen, 1960). To do so, each researcher of this work analysed 20 news items from the Informativos Telecinco dissemination channel whose data was subsequently cross-checked to obtain the Kappa value (k) and approximate significance (p) (López de Ullibarri Galparsoro and Pita Fernández, 2010).

Table 2. Kappa agreement measurement by code

Variable no.	Variable analysed	Value	Approximate significance
1	Dissemination channel	1	.001
2	Type of news	1	.001
3	Scope of news	1	.001
4	Autonomous Region	1	.001
5	Format	1	.001
6	Publication	1	.001
7	Form	1	.001
8	Breaking	1	.001
9	Self-promotion	1	.001
10	Direct link	1	.001

11	Headline	1	.001
12	Body of news	1	.001
13	Reactions	.920	.001

Source: own creation

In this way, it is shown that the consistency between the samples is perfect, there being only one almost perfect discrepancy between the “reactions” codes ($k=.920$, $p<.001$).

Having completed the consistency test, the content analysis was carried out. Subsequently, having completed it, the chi-squared test of the different variable cross-checks was examined, and only results whose asymptotic significance ($<.001$) determines a significant intersection were chosen.

2.3. In-depth interview

For the qualitative part of this research, having analysed the data and obtained the results of this work, an in-depth interview with the main managers of the Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 Noticias dissemination channels was carried out, as well as with the informative news verification company in Spain, Newtral. This technique allows understanding of a result obtained to be broadened (Taylor and Bogdan, 1987). To do so, Sonia Got, Social Media Manager of Mediaset España, Mónica Prado, Editor in Chief of the Digital Department of Antena 3 Noticias, and Joaquín Ortega, Content Director of Newtral were contacted. For both Sonia Got and Mónica Prado, structured questions related with the dissemination channels were asked, from a formal and technical perspective. For Joaquín Ortega, structured questions were chosen, taking into account the results of this work, on the WhatsApp dissemination channels as a new tool for information transmission.

3. Results

After analysing the cross-check of significant variables and having completed the in-depth interviews, two clear sections were established as results of this research. Firstly, *the use, technique and content of the WhatsApp dissemination channels by the televised news media*, and secondly, *the effectiveness of instant messaging dissemination channels as a source of information*.

3.1. Use of WhatsApp dissemination channels by Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 Noticias

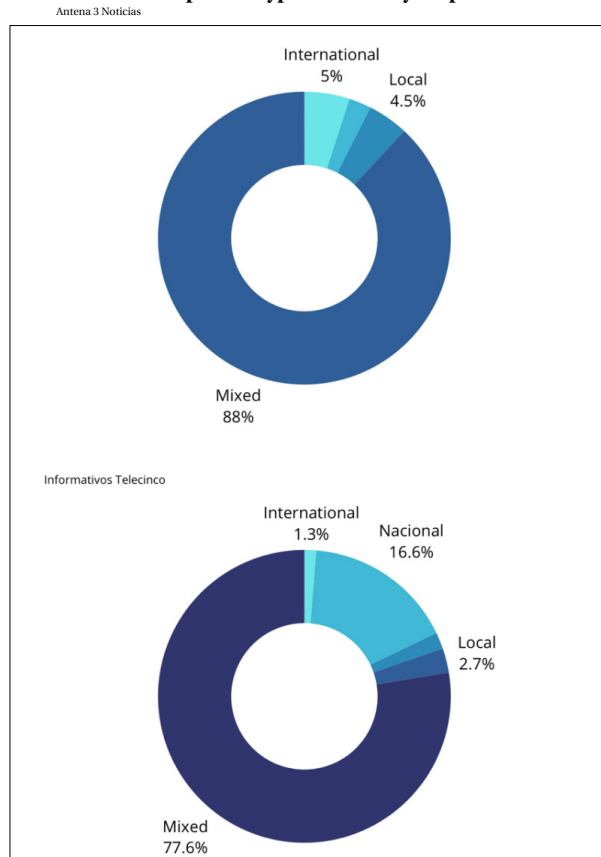
Based on the results obtained from the content analysis, eight interrelated elements are identified. At the same time, these elements are divided into two groups: *relationship between the publication and the dissemination channel* and *relationship between the type of publication and the reactions of followers of both channels*.

Firstly, the results obtained on the relationship between the type of publication and the dissemination channels are presented:

1. Relationship between the scope of the news item and the dissemination channel. There is a significant relationship between the scope of the news published and the Telecinco and Antena 3 dissemination channels ($\chi^2(5, N=468) = 10,103$,

$p=.0072$). In this way, it can be stated that there is a trend towards the publication of national news. Antena 3 Noticias publishes a total of 20% national news, while the figure for Informativos Telecinco is 16.6%. A great difference is observed with regard to the result for international news (4.10% for Antena 3 Noticias and 1.30% for Informativos Telecinco). With regard to local news, Antena 3 Noticias publishes 3.70% of this type, in comparison with 2.70% by Informativos Telecinco. Taking into account regional news, the figures are low: 1.80% of the news items published by Informativos Telecinco are regional while Antena 3 Noticias does not publish any of this type of news. It is necessary to highlight that both dissemination channels tend to publish news from different scopes in the same mailing, without separation criteria. 77.60% of Informativos Telecinco news publications correspond with this criterion, Antena 3 Noticias having a similar figure of 88%.

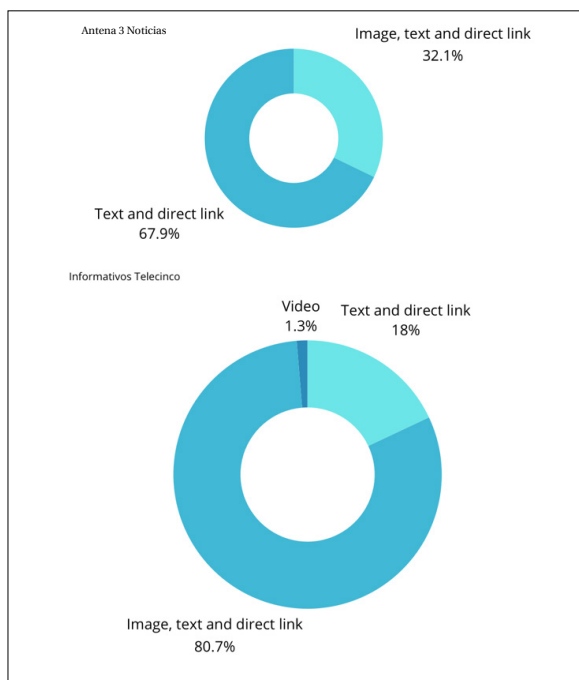
Graphic 1. Types of news by scope



Source: own creation

2. Type of publication format and dissemination channel. There is a significant relationship between the different types of publication formats on WhatsApp by the Telecinco and Antena 3 dissemination channels ($\chi^2(4, N=468) = 118,256, p=.001$). WhatsApp is a tool that allows interaction between the sender and recipient of the message. However, in the case of the analysed channels, they do not use all the technical possibilities for interaction offered by this application. With regard to the format, Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco tend to make conservative use of publications in which the use of text and a direct link to the source of the news item are the predominant formats. In this regard, clear differences are observed: firstly, 80.7% of publications by Informativos Telecinco opt for a format with a preview image, text and a direct link to the news item on its website; in turn, Antena 3 Noticias publishes 33.1% in the same way. The dissemination channel belonging to the Atresmedia group publishes news showing only text and a direct link 66.9% of the time, compared with 18% for Informativos Telecinco. In this regard, it can be stated that tools such as video and audio are not the preferred formats for these networks. Only 1.3% of the news items published by Informativos Telecinco are in video format (Antena 3 Noticias does not publish any news items in this format). Secondly, with regard to participation tools available on the application, such as WhatsApp Surveys, these are underused by both networks: Informativos Telecinco uses them 0.4% of the time, while Antena 3 Noticias does not use them at all.

Graphic 2. News publication format

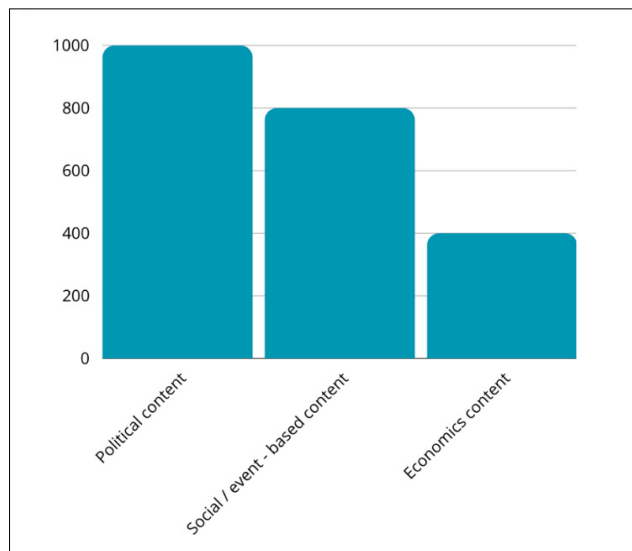


Source: own creation

3. **Publication of breaking news and the dissemination channel.** There is a significant relationship between the publication of breaking news and the Telecinco and Antena 3 dissemination channels ($\chi^2(1, N=468) = 7,297, p=.007$). It is clearly observed that Antena 3 Noticias publishes more breaking news than Informativos Telecinco, although these are not the most representative news items of its publications. Informativos Telecinco publishes 4% breaking news compared with 10.6% by Antena 3 Noticias.
4. **Use of the dissemination channel for self-promotion.** There is a significant relationship between the publication of self-promotion news and the Telecinco and Antena 3 dissemination channels ($\chi^2(1, N=468) = 5,381, p=.002$). Self-promotion is barely used by the news dissemination channels of either group, although Informativos Telecinco publishes more content of this type (6.3%) than Antena 3 Noticias (2%).

Below, the results obtained with regard to the type of news and reactions of followers are shown for both channels:

5. **Quantity and type of reactions with regard to the dissemination channel analysed.** There is a significant relationship between the reactions of WhatsApp users and the Telecinco and Antena 3 dissemination channels ($\chi^2(13, N=468) = 72,209, p=.001$). Before sharing these results, it is important to know that in February 2024, the Antena 3 Noticias channel had 211,780 followers, while that of Informativos Telecinco had 184,445. Based on this data, it can be stated that the reactions of followers to the news published usually total an average of around 100 to 200 people per publication. Informativos Telecinco has a higher level of interaction (69.1%) and achieved publications with 900 unique user reactions. The maximum reactions achieved by Antena 3 Noticias were from 600 unique users.
6. **Relationship between the type of news published and the reactions obtained.** There is a significant relationship between the reactions of WhatsApp users and the type of news published by Telecinco and Antena 3 ($\chi^2(104, N=468) = 225,051, p=.001$). Having obtained the data related with the user reactions of the dissemination channels, this work sought to ascertain the type of news causing most reactions among followers. In this regard, news with political content led the ranking of reactions and obtained feedback from up to 1,000 unique users. In second place was news with social / event-based content, with 800 unique users reacting to some publications. Third were publications of news with economics content, receiving reactions from 300 to 400 unique users. Conversely, news items related with culture and science were those which received the fewest reactions.

Graphic 3. Reactions of users

Source: own creation

- 7. Number of reactions from followers to breaking news publications.** There is a significant relationship between the number of reactions from WhatsApp users and the publication of breaking news ($\chi^2(13, N=468) = 35,690, p=.001$). In the same way as the evolution of reactions was ascertained in terms of type of news, it is observed how this criterion was affected by news that specified breaking news content. Thus, values of up to 800 reactions can be observed in the case of Informativos Telecinco. 34.30% of the analysed reactions to breaking news analysed were around 300 reactions from unique users. The opposite occurs with news items whose content is self-promotion, as the reactions decrease considerably. In the case of Informativos Telecinco, 52.60% of the reactions to self-promotion news were around 100 – 150 unique users. In the case of Antena 3 Noticias, 63.7% have the same figure.
- 8. Relationship between the written format of published news and the number of reactions.** There is a significant relationship between the format of published news and the reactions of WhatsApp users ($\chi^2(13, N=468) = 80,955, p=.001$). In this regard, it is observed that the number of reactions increases when news items published are accompanied by a longer text or body of news, beyond the headline and link. In this case, both channels show similar data, of around 400 unique user reactions for each more detailed news item with more text.

At a qualitative level, it is necessary to highlight the type of reactions by followers of the WhatsApp dissemination channels. It is observed that there is a very high number of interactions from followers who respond with a derisive attitude or intending to ridicule the news published. For example, users express themselves through the use of emoticons of this app, and among the

visual elements they use are Palestine flags on news items that have nothing to do with that issue, aubergines, especially on political news, and icons that represent vulgar and obscene gestures.

In this way, it can be stated that interactions from users with the news, in the majority of cases, are not linked with the news being shared, particularly if it is national political news.

3.2. Effectiveness of instant messaging dissemination channels as a source of information

Taking into account the results obtained after the case study, three experts of the sector were interviewed, as explained in the methodology section, to obtain a more in-depth understanding of the use of these types of channels. After the content analysis and the in-depth interviews, the questions posed in this research were answered.

3.2.1. How are the news dissemination channels on WhatsApp used by the main private news outlets?

Both Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 Noticias created these channels with the objective of facilitating the user's consumption of news content. Both broadcasters took this step in October 2023 using WhatsApp, as it is the most used instant communication social network in Spain. Neither of the two chains creates specific content for WhatsApp, instead sharing links on this social network to news items on their respective websites. The digital department of the news outlets is responsible for the use of the dissemination channel and the publication of news.

There is a clear trend to send mailings grouping different news items, and this responds to the need to carry out few mailings each day because WhatsApp penalises excessive mailings. Additionally, neither of the news outlets wishes to saturate their dissemination channel followers. In the case of Informativos Telecinco, it commits to three mailings, or "shots", per day. The majority of the publications coincide with the televised programming of its news: morning, midday and evening/night.

Both dissemination channels have opted for an image + direct link format, which when clicked on, takes the user to the news website of Telecinco and Antena 3. Both Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 Noticias opt for a larger number of national news items, aimed at the general public of Spain as a whole. Also, both channels consider their own content when sharing news, opting for self-promotion at some times.

Both Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 Noticias highlight very positive feedback from their channel followers, which is reflected in their increasing numbers and a growing interest of WhatsApp users in receiving news in this way. Even so, they state that the vast majority of their users do not click on the news links, only reading the headline or the body of news and reacting to this content.

3.2.2. Linking of traditional media with new technologies (ICT)

The WhatsApp dissemination channels of the news media were created in 2023, along with other channels of this type for other private news media outlets, and according to the people interviewed, the traditional media must commit to linking with ICT in disseminating their content. Additionally, they believe that information will be brought to the user in this way. It is a controlled environment where verified and relevant news is promoted.

Additionally, the fact-checker Newtral is a pioneer in the use of WhatsApp for combatting disinformation. In 2018, according to Joaquín Ortega, Content Director of the tool, the contact details of this app were provided so that users, if in doubt, could check the veracity of the news they found through social media. Today, Newtral has a very positive view of traditional media making inroads into social networks such as WhatsApp, because a new window for dissemination of true information and quality content is thereby created. Additionally, according to Ortega, WhatsApp is an app that brings together almost all generations existing today, therefore this content reaches any user, regardless of age.

Despite having detected many reactions attempting to ridicule the information shared through these dissemination channels, there is no concern in this regard. According to Ortega, exposure to direct audience reaction on social networks has two likely effects: greater presence of negative reactions and a perception that these negative reactions are the majority. Despite this, the impact of the news, in this case real and quality news, is much greater than the reactions that may be found.

3.2.3. From what perspective and methodology is this tool used by the two large private audiovisual groups (Atresmedia and Mediaset)?

Today, the WhatsApp dissemination channels of Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco are used to share the information content that they have on their respective news websites. At the same time, they tend to publish three pieces of content that coincide with their news broadcasts. They also use the Doc Track programme to schedule the publication of their news at weekends and on public holidays. Likewise, they use different devices to publish their content, thereby avoiding restrictions from the platform. Therefore, these channels are used to disseminate the content of their websites and televised news.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of this research identify use of the dissemination channels by the large broadcasters linked with linear broadcast of their news. The news outlets have not created teams to manage the information sent by WhatsApp, it instead being the existing website team of each channel who share the most notable news of each edition of their news programmes (morning, midday and night). This would be one of the main points to improve in the future, as the digital consumer or user does not have the same characteristics as a linear television viewer (González-Oñate; Jiménez Marín & Sanz Marcos, 2020). This issue could be improved with the use of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools applied to journalism, as it would allow a different wording of the same news item, with a focus more suited to social networks and without the need to have a team allocated to WhatsApp dissemination channels. The main problem is that today, despite the existence of plans to use AI in news composition, there are few experts in this field (Quián, A., & Sixto - García, J (2024). In spite of this, the WhatsApp dissemination channels of Informativos Telecinco and Antena 3 are consolidated as information tools, publishing an acceptable quantity of news each day. Technically, use of the resources available in this instant messaging tool is lacking, for example, greater use of videos, stickers, surveys, etc., to be able to interact more with subscribers and increase engagement with them. Furthermore, after undertaking the qualitative methodology of this work, the connection of WhatsApp dissemination channels and verification tools seems to be a natural next step. Below, after what has been presented in this work, the main conclusions drawn from this research are set out:

WhatsApp dissemination channels are shown to be effective tools for dissemination of verified and reliable news and information by traditional media outlets. Thus, they bring daily news to society in an inclusive way and without generating generational gaps, as may occur with other social networks. The use of WhatsApp dissemination channels by Antena 3 Noticias and Informativos Telecinco receives a positive response in both growth of followers and in the daily number of interactions with news items, and consolidates its role as an agile and accessible communication channel.

The main Spanish broadcasters, Atresmedia and Mediaset, must maximise the potential of the WhatsApp dissemination channels so as not to miss the opportunity to attract and retain their audience. The current approach, based on the mere distribution of existing content and self-promotion, limits the impact of these tools. It is essential for these chains to develop towards a more dynamic strategy, which includes the creation of adapted and verified content, especially in the face of the proliferation of fake news. This requires a specialised team that manages interaction with the audience and takes full advantage of the capacities of WhatsApp for strengthening the trust and commitment of users.

Collaboration between the media and fact-checkers is crucial for effectively combatting disinformation on WhatsApp. Integrating verification tools such as Newtral on dissemination channels would not only increase the credibility of the news shared, but would also allow a more rapid and precise response to potential hoaxes which may circulate on the platform among users. This synergy between the media and fact-checkers is essential for consolidating WhatsApp as a secure and reliable space for news consumption.

In any case, use of these dissemination channels is very recent and it is still necessary to wait and see what the evolution of their use by the traditional media will be. Additionally, this work opens the way for future lines of research to investigate the WhatsApp dissemination channels of national newspapers or other media, or to analyse the behaviour of fact-checkers with these channels and to compare whether there is disinformation from traditional media outlets on WhatsApp. Additionally, with the incorporation of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools on mobile devices, a new path is created for seeking information, which must be kept in mind. Finally, it would also be interesting to continue addressing, from a qualitative perspective, the interactions of WhatsApp users with the news that traditional media outlets publish on this tool.

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	Name and surname
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Methodology	Jose Antonio Cortés Quesada
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Discussion and conclusions	Jose Antonio Cortés Quesada and Carolina Abellán Guzmán
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7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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