

# Emerging Media: Keys to New Information Consumption by Journalism and Communication Students in South America

## *Medios emergentes: Claves de los nuevos consumos informativos de estudiantes de Periodismo y Comunicación en Sudamérica*



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### Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to understand the consumption of emerging media by students of Communication and Journalism courses within their information habits. Qualitative methodology was used in 87 focus groups with the participation of 704 students from 29

### Resumen:

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo conocer los consumos de medios emergentes por parte de estudiantes de carreras de Comunicación y Periodismo dentro de sus rutinas informativas. Se ha utilizado la metodología cualitativa en 87 grupos focales con participación de 704

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universities in 5 South American countries. It was found that YouTube is the most used platform, with attributes of curator medium, connection generator, among others. A tendency towards nomadic consumption is observed, causing the media to tend to fragment; at the same time, it can be pointed out that there is a hesitation among audiences when responding about news consumption on the platforms they commonly frequent because it does not resemble what they learned about the journalistic genre in the classroom.

**Keywords:**

Information; journalism; communication; emerging media; students.

*estudiantes de 29 universidades en 5 países sudamericanos. Se encontró que YouTube es la plataforma más utilizada, con atributos de medio curador y generador de conexión, entre otros. Se aprecia una tendencia a un consumo nómada, con el cual los medios tienden a fragmentarse; a su vez, existe una vacilación de los participantes al solicitarles identificar contenido como “noticia”, debido a que el contenido que frecuentan se distancia de lo que les fue enseñado sobre este género periodístico en las aulas.*

**Palabras clave:**

*Información; periodismo; comunicación; medios emergentes; estudiantes.*

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, numerous studies in the field of communication have shown a growing interest in understanding the media and information consumption habits of young people (Newman, 2024; Maldonado, 2024; Albarello et al., 2022; Newman et al., 2016). This audience segment draws particular attention, as it is where the most dynamic changes occur. Indeed, their rapid adoption of new digital technologies is closely associated with clear transformations in how they seek out and engage with news (Albarello, 2022).

Studying the characteristics of information consumption is essential for understanding the transformation of today’s media ecosystem, particularly from a renewed ecological perspective (Scolari, 2015). According to ecological theory, media function as “species” that, through their evolution, alter the entire system; at the same time, they form an environment that feels natural, yet actually shapes how individuals perceive their surroundings (McLuhan, 1969). In other words, the media ecosystem is an interface (Scolari, 2019) that connects people with reality in a particular way, according to its own logic.

The main objective of this study is to understand how university students majoring in Journalism and Communication across South American universities consume news. More specifically, it aims to identify the media, platforms, and software applications through which these students access news, and to explore the distinctive features and innovations offered by emerging media that make them appealing to young people.

The study is based on the analysis of 87 focus groups conducted with over 700 Communication and Journalism students from 29 universities in five South American countries. It is part of the collective effort *Investigar en Red* (Researching in Network), a collaborative initiative involving academics from nearly forty universities across nine countries, dedicated to investigating their students’ information consumption habits.

From this overarching research project, valuable insights have emerged for understanding traits of digital culture, such as incidental consumption, news avoidance, and attitudes toward misinformation (Mitchelstein & Boczkowski, 2018). However, this paper focuses specifically on identifying students’ news preferences: what media they choose—and why.

This study holds particular value because it is based on a population that, by definition, shows interest in news. It is assumed that, due to their academic background and career path, these students have greater awareness of how they engage with current events.

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1. *Emerging media in the digital ecosystem and their impact*

The increased access to computers and the widespread use of smartphones have encouraged the development of media (García, 2015) whose consumption logic differs significantly from traditional uses, leading to a meaningful change in how public opinion is shaped.

It is essential to understand this impact in a context where technology has become the core of communication (García, 2021), and digitalization drives the emergence of new media and social changes (Nicolini, 2023; Huiling, 2021; Baricco, 2018; Van Dijk, 2016).

Media changes cannot be studied as isolated phenomena, nor is it enough to simply acknowledge the emergence of new media. The focus must be on analyzing the new modes of interaction that arise and how these alter an ecosystem that, in turn, impacts culture (McLuhan, 1964). From an ecological perspective, media are seen as “species” that inhabit the environment but also create a network of relationships whose structure influences perception beyond the content itself (McLuhan, 1975).

Digital convergence, intensified by the rise of interactive internet, is the space where “old and new media collide” (Jenkins, 2006, p.14). Nevertheless, the evolution of platforms and digital social networks has cemented media hybridity, rendering the binary distinction between old and new media obsolete.

There are several reasons to abandon this dichotomy. On one hand, what are traditionally referred to as old media are no longer characterized by a single type of content or distribution platform. Today, we see the rise of digital media “not based on broadcasting logic but on a completely new communication model founded on networks and user collaboration” (Scolari, 2008, p.32). On the other hand, what is considered “new” quickly becomes commonplace. The continuous evolution of species in the media ecosystem means that innovations soon become widespread practices.

The term *emerging media* is more appropriate to describe today’s media devices, according to Li (2016, as cited in Scolari, 2024, p.151). The concept of *emergence* focuses on process rather than product or outcome. For Scolari (2024), emergence is continuously transformative and adaptive.

Emerging media are typically identified by their material nature, as their technological expression marks their emergence. However, it is important to consider the underlying processes, especially those involving interaction and cognition. These include handling large volumes of information, algorithm-driven consumption, content curation, and processes involving artificial intelligence. According to Sun et al. (2024), they are dynamic systems that originate in communication and are defined by emergent processes.

In material terms, they allow information to be transmitted using various forms of media –audio, video, infographics, text, or animated graphics– and enable personalized contact with audiences if desired (Chávez et al., 2024). Constant technological innovation has led to media offerings marked by convergence across established formats, styles, and platforms, such as websites, graphic writing, television, radio, mobile apps, and podcasts focused on general or specialized topics (Negredo & Martínez, 2022).

Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, X, Twitch, and other social networks serve as effective sources of current information, where interaction plays a key role. If, as McLuhan (1969) claims, the appearance of a new medium transforms the media ecosystem as a whole, interactive platforms have undoubtedly accelerated that evolution.

Interaction and the potential for collective content creation transform news agendas and distribution methods. The “new” is what has changed and evolved. Traditional media adopt the languages, content, styles, formats, and platforms of emerging media to the extent that it becomes difficult to recognize the former medium behind the new proposal.

Technological advances have not only changed media themselves but also the way they are consumed (Benlloch, 2020). Audiences now seek interactive experiences with content (Castro et al., 2024; Canavilhas, 2015; Tubella & Alberich, 2012), generating a convergence between content production by the media industry and that by users, who now play a central role (Nicolini, 2023).

Consumers themselves are now content producers, blurring the line between creators and spectators, listeners, or readers. This consumption is largely mediated through social networks (Canavilhas, 2015), adapting information practices to the needs of new consumption patterns (García, 2021; López et al., 2019; Manovich, 2013).

The diversity of emerging media today is reflected in streaming platforms and social media apps, which are widely identified by young people as their primary sources of news—often mentioned by name: YouTube or Twitch (Carrera et al., 2020), TikTok (García et al., 2022), X, Instagram (López, 2022), Facebook, podcasts, and newsletters.

Finally, it is worth highlighting the immediacy and real-time transmission as key attributes of the platforms these audiences choose to access information (Carrera et al., 2013).

## 2.2. *Interfaces of a dynamic ecosystem*

The direct connection between media and technological evolution determines many of their defining characteristics (Jenkins, 2006). In the current media ecosystem, these features include: high-speed information dissemination, the possibility of massive and immediate interaction (Castro et al., 2024; Huiling, 2021; Guitton, 2012), multimedia language (Alberich & Gómez, 2019; Sánchez et al., 2015), multi-platform distribution, and the inclusion of a wide variety of topics (Lugo, 2015).

These features shape the interface (Scolari, 2018) through which content is accessed; at the same time, they define it. In the case of emerging media, technology enables conditions of speed, scale, multimediality, multitasking, and diversity that are closely tied to new formats and languages, as well as to the ways users access them—in other words, interaction.

Interfaces offer a means to explore social processes. Today’s information devices constitute an interface through which complex dynamics of exchange are played out (Scolari, 2018). The emergence of new media is closely linked to the rise of mobile

devices, which have also altered the social modes of media consumption—shifting from group-based and static practices to more individual and mobile forms of appropriation (Canavilhas, 2015).

The interface is the site of interaction (Scolari, 2018). It is a signifier populated by meanings through use, exchange, and context. Its cultural contribution is neither obvious nor transparent, as users are immersed within it. Given the above, interfaces are dynamic and evolve alongside their users, as Scolari (2018) explains.

Understanding emerging media as interfaces implies moving beyond mere technological or digital constructs. It requires viewing them as a network of social actors, technologies, and processes where different resources, interests, and needs are negotiated and contested. Each platform offers a unique offering, yet all are shaped by interaction. Thus, the narrative interface is dynamic and unpredictable—just like the emergence of media itself.

### 3. Methodology

This study is part of a broader research project conducted by the *Investigar en Red*<sup>1</sup> collective, which aims to describe the emerging news consumption habits of young Journalism and Communication students across thirty-eight universities in nine Latin American countries: Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela. Participation by the institutions and their students in this research was voluntary.

The methodology used is qualitative, characterized by its effort to approach the studied reality (López, 2023) in order to understand it in depth from the perspectives of the various actors involved (Fassio, 2018). Regarding the study population in this work, since the participants are students of programs directly tied to news and media interests, a high level of awareness and reflection on media use is assumed, which enhances the depth and relevance of the analysis.

The focus group technique was employed, as it is effective in capturing narratives from audiences and their personal stories in specific everyday contexts (Vasilachis, 2006). This technique allows for semi-structured dialogue that reveals multiple realities, which are often overlooked by researchers (Lara et al., 2022). In focus groups, participants build knowledge and interact with both the interviewer and fellow participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The discussions were guided by a standardized questionnaire<sup>2</sup> used across all participating institutions and moderated by faculty members from the network. Students from each institution participated voluntarily and provided consent for the recording and use of their testimonies. Each focus group session lasted approximately ninety minutes. The conversations were recorded in digital audio and video formats and later transcribed for textual analysis.

<sup>1</sup> See <https://investigarenred.ar/>.

<sup>2</sup> The complete guide used for the *Investigar en Red* project— from which the information used to address the “emerging media” code in this study was obtained— can be accessed at the following link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/14oVQvxu-bJHdDCOikAsJ7DHhyNtBNkPS/view>.

### 3.1. Coding and content analysis

All content compiled by *Investigar en Red* was categorized using thirty predefined codes. These covered variables such as modes, spaces, and preferences for interacting with information, relationships with news and media, disinformation, and more.

Coding involved marking excerpts that corresponded to the defined variables—essentially, assigning units of analysis to specific categories (Albarelo, 2024). The ATLAS.ti software was used, with the transcribed interview documents uploaded and manually annotated to highlight the passages relevant to each code. The result was a comprehensive collection of citations for all thirty codes, which were then shared across the research network.

### 3.2. Sample for analysis

This study focused on content coded as “Emerging Media / Emerging News Consumption.” The sample was drawn from the total dataset by selecting countries with at least two participating universities, and within those, only institutions that conducted at least two focus groups. Therefore, the final sample followed a convenience sampling method based on the fulfillment of these criteria. Such an approach aims to achieve qualitative representativeness through an open call, where selected participants must meet certain criteria relevant to the research (Hernández & Escobar, 2019). Convenience sampling is appropriate when individuals voluntarily take part in the study (Blanco & Castro, 2007).

The criteria for selecting the sample were as follows:

- Participants had to be **majoring in communication, journalism, or related degree programs.**
- They had to be in either their first or final year of studies.

Additionally, the selection criteria for the universities included in the sample were:

- They had to be members of the *Investigar en Red* research group.
- Each university had to have conducted more than one focus group.

The resulting corpus consists of 584 excerpts, drawn from 87 focus groups in which 704 students from 29 universities across five countries participated. The content addresses two main variables: preferred media for consuming information and the attributes valued in these media. In the recorded excerpts, participants respond to questions regarding how they access news, what media they consume, and the reasons behind their preferences.

**Table 1: Sample for the code “Emerging Media / Emerging News Consumption”**

| Countries | Universities | Student participants | Focus groups | Corpus       |
|-----------|--------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
|           |              |                      |              |              |
| 5         | 29           | 704                  | 87           | 584 excerpts |

**Source: Created by the authors**

**Table 2: Participating universities in the study**

| Country         | University                                                      | Acronym* |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Argentina<br>AR | Universidad Austral                                             | UA       |
|                 | Universidad Blas Pascal                                         | UBP      |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Comahue                                 | UNCOMA   |
|                 | Universidad Nacional del Centro de la Provincia de Buenos Aires | UNICEN   |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Jujuy                                   | UNJU     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de La Plata                                | UNLP     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de La Pampa                                | UNLPAM   |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Lomas de Zamora                         | UNLZ     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Rosario                                 | UNR      |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto                              | UNRC     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de Salta                                   | UNSA     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de San Juan                                | UNSJ     |
|                 | Universidad Nacional de San Martín                              | UNSM     |
|                 | Universidad del Salvador                                        | USAL     |
|                 | Universidad Católica de Santa Fe                                | UCSF     |
|                 | Universidad de San Isidro                                       | USI      |

|              |                                               |      |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------|------|
| Colombia COL | Universidad Javeriana                         | UJ   |
|              | Universidad de La Sabana                      | ULS  |
|              | Universidad Politécnica Gran Colombiano       | UPGC |
|              | Universidad del Quindío                       | UQ   |
|              | Universidad Sergio Arboleda                   | USA  |
|              |                                               |      |
| Chile CH     | Universidad de Chile                          | UDC  |
|              | Universidad de Los Andes                      | UDLA |
|              | Pontificia Universidad Católica de Valparaíso | UPCV |
|              | Universidad de La Serena                      | USER |
|              |                                               |      |
| Peru PE      | Universidad de Lima                           | UDL  |
|              | Univesidad Privada Antenor Orrego             | UPAO |
|              |                                               |      |
| Uruguay UY   | Universidad Católica del Uruguay              | UCU  |
|              | Universidad de Montevideo                     | UM   |

**\*The acronyms listed will be used to identify the origin of excerpts cited in the results section.**

**Source: Created by the authors**

4. Results

4.1. Preferred media for news consumption

Emerging media have a dominant presence in the news consumption routines of the youth segment; they scarcely mention traditional mass media. In order of priority, references are concentrated on the following platforms: YouTube, Instagram, podcasts, X (formerly Twitter), and Twitch. These are accessed through mobile devices, enabling autonomous and unrestricted consumption anytime and anywhere.

For the group studied, information is considered a valuable asset; it is understood as having a general notion of current affairs. There is some hesitation regarding the concept of “news,” as it is associated with traditional journalistic genres. They prefer to refer to it as “information.” When faced with the need to understand what is happening in the world, young people turn to social media:

"I have a general sense of what's going on, and I think a lot of that is thanks to social networks like Instagram. I also use Twitter and YouTube a lot." (UANDES, CHI).

### *YouTube: the dominant platform*

The groups studied show a clear preference for YouTube, where they can identify specific programs or individuals they follow. Their consumption takes two forms: live, by watching streams from specific creators, and on-demand, where they consciously search for content. In the latter case, participants frequently stated that if a topic on social media or in conversations sparks interest, they turn to YouTube to understand or explore it further.

"I use more streaming channels, like Urbana Play or LuzuTV, which are leaning more toward information. Early in the morning, I tune in to María O'Donnell" (Lara, UNICEN, AR).

### *Other platforms*

After YouTube, the second most mentioned platform was Instagram. As part of their information routine, it is appreciated for its brevity and visually appealing audiovisual pieces.

"I have a good grasp of what's happening, and I think a lot of that is thanks to social networks like Instagram" (UANDES, CHI).

Third, the students mentioned podcasts as a source of information. Unlike social networks, in this case, the mention refers to the format itself rather than a specific platform or app. They value the ability to listen while doing other activities.

"I have a routine: I wake up and listen to three informational podcasts" (UQ, COL).

"Do I consider podcasts a way of staying informed? In my case, yes. I regularly listen to them every day—at least an hour, maybe an hour and a half." (Carlos, UL, PE).

Next, the app X / Twitter emerges as an informative source, regularly consulted by those interested in news. Known for its immediacy, X is used to keep up with the latest headlines by following journalists.

"On Twitter, I find out what's going on, including the trending topics. It appears quicker. And then, if I want something more in-depth, I go online to read an article or something" (Ignacio, USAL, AR).

While the study shows that the aforementioned platforms dominate the students' information routines, it also highlights the diversity and fragmentation of their media consumption. Thus, there are numerous references to other emerging platforms.

TikTok appears in the discourse, but it is not recognized as a reliable source of information. Instead, it is identified as a trigger for news interest, presenting fragmented content that requires further investigation elsewhere.

"I use TikTok a lot, and if I see a clip that seems odd, I go to YouTube" (Lara, UNICEN, AR).

"On YouTube, they often cover TikTok content. They refer to what a certain person on TikTok said about, for example, dollarization. Then they explain that topic in more depth" (UNSJ, AR).

Twitch is primarily a streaming platform for video game content, but in this study, it was also mentioned as a source for interview shows. The informative value of the conversations that occur during gameplay was also recognized, highlighting the influence of non-expert figures.

Television is scarcely acknowledged as a source of news; the few mentions relate to family-based consumption contexts.

“Every once in a while, I’ll watch TV. For example, once I was watching *La Encerrona* [a short news program on social media from Peru], and I found out something and told my mom. She said, ‘Let’s see what the news is saying,’ and we flipped through channels to see if there was anything on it” (Sandra, UL, PE).

The television is also used as a device to stream platforms.

“I don’t have cable channels, and, well, everything I watch on YouTube I watch on the television. But I don’t watch regular TV” (Manuel, UNLPAM, AR).

### *Valued attributes in emerging media*

This section explores why these platforms are preferred sources of information. It identifies key features that keep this audience engaged with these interfaces.

Although content preferences are highly personal and diverse, the research revealed several shared values across the emerging platforms mentioned.

#### *Credibility: trust in the individual*

Throughout the focus groups, there were numerous direct mentions of media figures by name. These individuals are regarded as trusted sources, with credibility stemming from their knowledge and ability to communicate effectively.

“There’s a show called *Sin Guion* by Rosa María Palacios. And another one by Augusto Álvarez Rodríguez, where they also cover topics I’m interested in” (Geanelle, UL, PE).

#### *Watching and connecting: the illusion of being part of it*

A major strength of interactive emerging formats lies in the visual connection: seeing the speaker, feeling seen, and appreciating the informal, relatable style. Students feel a connection through the topics, language, and humor, demonstrating an emotional dimension in their news consumption.

“In the video, you can see how the person expresses themselves; they convey things that a written piece can’t (...) and when you put on headphones, you feel like you’re part of it” (María, UCU, URU).

“Suddenly I start hearing them act, and I look: I feel like I’m part of it” (Agnes, UA, AR).

### *Humor: because it's fun and relatable*

Information framed with entertainment and informality is appreciated. This lighter tone is seen as a distinctive advantage compared to traditional media.

"When I watch *La Pulla*, I do it purely for entertainment, not to get informed (...). Although they do share serious information, I end up learning things. But it doesn't feel overwhelming; you enjoy it—they add humor, memes, and current topics. They know how to make the joke at the right moment" (Helena, UJ, COL).

### *Alternative agendas: talking about the untold*

It is valuable for young people to find emerging agendas within emerging media. These often involve taboo subjects or perspectives that are absent from public discourse or mainstream media. The shared audience interests reveal how alternative agendas cluster around topics and approaches often missing from 20th-century media.

"I listen to a podcast where someone talks about social issues that we all know exist, but no one talks about (...) They're usually taboo topics that we all know about but never mention, or it's just their perspective" (Martina, UA, AR).

### *On-demand: when I want it*

Emerging media provide a clear value associated with independence and freedom. In this sense, they stand in contrast to the traditional broadcaster, which imposes a fixed schedule and is now perceived as intrusive. Media consumption on platforms and social networks is closely linked to the use of mobile devices, which adapt to individual rhythms.

"I think podcasts have taken over a big part of the media. For me, they're very useful. They're recorded programs, and it's great because you can listen to them anytime" (UANDES, CHI).

### *Multitasking: while doing other things*

There is an appreciation for the speed at which available information can be absorbed. The time saved is also a notable factor in the multitasking consumption characteristic of emerging media.

"I get home at night and, while I cook, I play a YouTube video with daily news by a YouTuber who covers global topics" (José Carlos, UL, PE).

"I prefer podcasts over reading because I can do other things at the same time" (UNSAM, AR).

### *Mobility: while commuting*

Emerging media allow students to stay informed while on the move, such as during bus or taxi rides. Given that time is seen as scarce, this flexibility adds substantial value.

"In the morning, while I get ready and then on the way to university, it's like two hours listening to podcasts or watching something on my phone" (Silvana, UL, PE).

“Streaming is like podcasts; you never listen to a podcast sitting still” (Franco, UA, AR).

This reflects the acceleration and the negative perception of passive or “stationary” media consumption.

*Curation: selects and summarizes for me*

In the attention economy, this is a crucial value. Many emerging media offer curated content—metacontent—that summarizes or references other sources.

“With *La Encerrona*, I knew that in those 18 minutes there would be a bit of everything. It was like a mini summary of everything that happened” (Richard, UL, PE).

“I don’t know if you know Brett Cooper—she posts 15–20-minute clips of a much longer podcast, and I watch those on YouTube instead of the full two-hour show” (Bartolomé, UA, AR).

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The perspective on the evolution of media, or “evolutionary turn” (Scolari, 2024, p. 387), allows for an analysis of media not only as environments and species coexisting within an ecosystem –as McLuhan (1964) proposed– but also, within the current digital ecosystem, from the standpoint of consumption and interaction. That is, from participation, which is always unpredictable.

In this sense, the analysis conducted reveals the predominance of digital platforms and social media in young people’s information preferences. Nonetheless, these are forms of consumption that the study participants do not necessarily recognize as “news” in the traditional sense, but rather as spaces of interaction where they get informed while also engaging in social and entertainment functions. This reflects an “affective” consumption (Papacharissi, 2020), where emotional engagement is a major trigger of participation. As the author notes, social media facilitates a feeling of participation by enabling the sharing of stories imbued with emotion. The informal and relatable style fosters emotional connection, allowing audiences to resonate with current issues on a personal level or feel part of a community.

These practices align with what is now described as “emerging media” –a term that, as Li (2016, cited by Scolari, 2024, p. 151) argues, is more appropriate than “new media,” as it captures platforms in continuous development and evolution. This also underscores the recognition of these platforms as media in themselves, not only as channels of information but as cognitive processes (Sun, 2024).

This study contrasts with a previous investigation conducted by *Investigar en Red* in Argentina (2020–2021), also with Communication and Journalism students, in which participants mentioned specific digital news outlets, such as *Infobae*, *La Nación*, *Clarín*, and *Página/12* (Bergero et al., 2022). In this study, however, when asked where they get their news, participants referenced generic platform names. Such a finding reinforces Li’s (2016) view that “emerging media” is the most accurate term for recently developed content platforms.

Moreover, social media emerges as the primary platform through which young audiences inform themselves, a pattern evident across the entire sample. These platforms foster horizontal conversations, where both renowned personalities and anonymous users can express opinions on everyday matters with high emotional value (Farré, 2022). As such, they become a type of refuge for university students –not only places where they can be seen and heard, but also where they can hear others and build referents across diverse topics. At this point, the critical thinking developed by students inside and outside the classroom plays a crucial role in how they assimilate the vast flow of information they receive.

Regarding the use of social media, no significant differences were found between countries. Although this research did not aim to conduct a comparative analysis, it can be stated that YouTube stands out the most in Peru, Chile, and Argentina. This coincides with global data from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman, 2024), which indicates that 31% of young people use YouTube weekly to stay informed. Future research should explore this phenomenon in greater depth.

Continuing the ecological metaphor, YouTube has undergone a sort of regeneration since its creation in February 2005, offering new solutions in a previously saturated media ecosystem. Today, it supports two main consumption strategies: live streaming and on-demand content. The first has essentially replaced television, while the second positions YouTube as a searchable information source for deeper understanding. This offers new opportunities for programming, where audiovisual content management becomes a core requirement.

Conversely, while social consumption is typically characterized by a lack of source identification, an emerging pattern shows that the audiences analyzed do recognize influential content creators who address current topics of interest. Alternative agendas and credibility grounded in emotional connection, facilitated by the horizontal structure of social media, often exclude professional sources and traditional newsworthiness criteria (Wardle, 2021). In this regard, the author has studied how audiences native to social media platforms can contribute to “information disorders,” whether intentional or not. In both cases, content is shared based on the trust placed in the source, which underscores the importance of questioning where information comes from and defending the role of professional journalists when it comes to reporting facts. This presents a significant challenge for academic institutions, which should actively promote these discussions within the classroom.

Despite the relatively homogeneous results across different countries, a diversity and fragmentation of individual consumption habits was observed. One might speak of a nomadic consumption, characterized by changing preferences, which aligns with the fragmented current media ecosystem and the growing platformization of journalistic content. This platformization contributes to a diminished awareness that such content is produced by “media” entities, as participants often hesitate to recognize them as such. Undoubtedly, this places media organizations, journalists, and communicators in a constant race to understand and anticipate their audiences’ movements to meet their expectations.

In a context where both interest in news (with 40% of the global population actively avoiding news) and trust (only 33% of people trust the news) are declining, according to the Reuters Institute (Newman, 2024), it is critical to ask: What remains of the media? What still works? What is needed? These are challenges that must be addressed by the academic community within Communication and Journalism programs, taking into account both the current media ecosystem and the expectations of audiences.

One notable finding is that humor in content is highly valued by university students. It fosters emotional connection while enabling cognitive disconnection from the rational object of the news. The entertaining style of many emerging news formats enhances the emotional engagement that Papacharissi (2020) refers to. Meanwhile, research into the use of humor in science communication reinforces these findings, suggesting that humor positively influences both audience enjoyment and interaction (Cacciatore et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the digital conversation ecosystem has enabled personal interest topics to break into public discourse. These discursive formations “gain momentum, even prompting mainstream media agendas to adapt to citizens’ voices, often taken directly from a tweet” (Farré, p. 28). As a result, media sometimes elevate topics of limited global relevance to the level of newsworthy discussion, blurring the boundaries between what is and is not news.

In a fast-paced world where technology often provides micro-level solutions but meso-level challenges, multitasking has become a perceived necessity. According to Entschew (2021), this reflects a broader sense that time is scarce—there is no room for pause, and life progresses under pressure. This same characteristic also underlies mobility, another attribute valued by youth when consuming information via emerging media. The need to do other things while acquiring information stems from the perception that pausing to watch, listen, or read is a waste of time. Nevertheless, this trend poses a risk: it may reduce opportunities for critical thinking and deeper reflection, essential elements in the academic formation of students.

The findings of this research offer insights that go beyond mere adaptation for survival; they open pathways to resilience and regeneration. These include: promoting digital literacy aimed at countering misinformation; raising awareness about the professional role and its responsibilities; exploring ways to combine brevity with depth; reclaiming humor as a reconnection tool for meaningful content; and re-evaluating the cognitive impact of acceleration, all while encouraging the creative potential of slowing down.

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7. Specific author contributions

|                                                                                                     | Full name                        |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Conceptualization and study design                                                                  | Luis Miguel Absi y Marcela Farré |
| Methodology                                                                                         | Luis Miguel Absi y Marcela Farré |
| Data collection and formal analysis                                                                 | Luis Miguel Absi y Marcela Farré |
| Discussion and conclusion                                                                           | Luis Miguel Absi y Marcela Farré |
| Writing – original draft, visualization, writing – review & editing, and approval of final versions | Luis Miguel Absi y Marcela Farré |

8. Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

9. Bibliographic reference

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