



Revista de Comunicación

ISSN: 1684-0933

ISSN: 2227-1465

Universidad de Piura. Facultad de Comunicación

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Periodismo en Twitch: análisis exploratorio de las primeras iniciativas informativas
Revista de Comunicación, vol. 23, no. 1, 2024, March-August, pp. 221-239
Universidad de Piura. Facultad de Comunicación

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26441/RC23.1-2024-3433>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=589478541011>

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Journalism on Twitch: an exploratory analysis of early news initiatives

Periodismo en Twitch: análisis exploratorio de las primeras iniciativas informativas

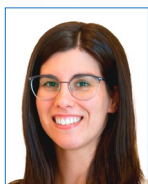
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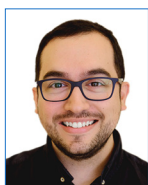
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Received: 29-09-2023 – Accepted: 15-12-2023

<https://doi.org/10.26441/RC23.1-2024-3433>

ABSTRACT: News media and journalists must adapt to emerging platforms in order to respond to changing news consumption habits. This article addresses the trend of Social Media Live Streaming on Twitch, a platform that has experienced significant growth since 2020. The research pursues the main objective of finding out how Spanish media and journalists are adapting to this platform and what possibilities it offers to the journalistic profession, in terms of business model as well as in communicative style, formats and relationship with the audience. An exploratory analysis made it possible to identify 55 channels and to establish, in the first phase of the research, two categories of study: channels driven by journalists—with a background in digital or legacy media—or by news media—digital natives or legacy ones—. In a second phase, seven representative cases were studied through content analysis of their profiles and streams, as well as interviews with the promoters. The results reflect an initial stage in the development of news initiatives on Twitch, characterized by experimentation and diversity of projects. In general, there is no great innovation in content and formats, which are based on conversation. There is a hybridization of information and entertainment in live broadcasts which, although providing rigorous information and featuring experts, maintain a relaxed tone and make use of humor. The relationship with the audience is built through the chat—a central element during broadcasts—and subscriptions from viewers, which are the main source of income for the channels.

Keywords: Twitch; streaming; social media; journalism; journalist; information media; digital platforms; access to information; communication

RESUMEN: Los medios de comunicación y los periodistas deben adaptarse a plataformas emergentes para responder a unos hábitos de consumo informativo cambiantes. El artículo aborda la tendencia del Social Media Live Streaming en Twitch, una plataforma que experimenta un notable crecimiento desde 2020. La investigación parte del objetivo general de conocer cómo se adaptan medios y periodistas españoles a esta plataforma y qué posibilidades ofrece a la profesión periodística, tanto en modelo de negocio como en términos de estilo comunicativo, formatos y relación con la audiencia. Un análisis exploratorio permitió identificar 55 canales y establecer, en una primera fase de la investigación, dos categorías de estudio: canales impulsados por periodistas —con trayectoria en medios digitales o tradicionales— o por medios —nativos digitales o matriciales—. En una segunda fase, se estudiaron siete casos representativos a través del análisis de contenido de sus perfiles y streams, así como de entrevistas con los promotores. Los resultados reflejan una etapa inicial en el desarrollo de iniciativas informativas en Twitch, caracterizada por la experimentación y la diversidad de proyectos. En general, no se observa una gran innovación en los contenidos y en los formatos, que se basan en la conversación. Sí se identifica una hibridación de la información y el entretenimiento en unos directos que, aunque aportan información rigurosa y cuentan con expertos, mantienen un tono distendido y hacen uso del humor. La relación con la audiencia se construye a través del chat, un elemento central en las retransmisiones, y las suscripciones de los espectadores, que son la vía principal de ingresos en los canales.

Palabras clave: Twitch; retransmisión; medios sociales; periodismo; periodista; medios de información; plataforma digital; acceso a la información; comunicación

1. Introduction

Media and journalists are in a continuous struggle for the attention of audiences in a communication ecosystem increasingly dominated by platforms (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018). Reaching their users, and especially reaching new potential audiences, involves maintaining content and interaction strategies adapted to the most used social networks in each context, remaining attentive to their updates and positioning themselves on emerging platforms.

Connecting with younger audiences is one of the main challenges of journalism today. Young audiences, who usually consume news incidentally through social networks (Galan, Osserman, Parker & Taylor, 2019), are sought through their presence on the platforms where they spend most time —such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube or Twitch— and through news formats and topics that capture their interest (Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey & Sixto-García, 2022). Twitch is a platform that has recently aroused the interest of media and journalists due to its remarkable growth since 2020. The average number of simultaneously connected users has increased from 1.35 million in January 2020 to 2.33 million in September 2023, while the average number of concurrent streams has risen from 52,800 to 94,700 in the same period (TwitchTracker, 2023). In Spain, 25% of social network users connect to Twitch daily, where they spend on average of 1 hour and 28 minutes on the platform, being the second social network in daily usage time (IAB Spain, 2023). Its audience is predominantly male and 26% of its users are between 18 and 24 years old.

This growth has contributed to the diversification of streamer profiles and the subject matter of the live streams that users can find on Twitch. Although video games and sports competitions continue to predominate, among the most successful profiles on the platform there are also streamers who popularize conversational content, create new programs or show part of their personal lives (Sixto-García & Losada-Fernández, 2023). The diversification of content allows media and journalists to explore the possibilities of Twitch to connect with young users who remain hooked to long-lasting live streams looking for entertainment, social interaction, and feeling part of a community (Hilvert-Bruce, Neill, Sjöblom & Hamari, 2018).

The study of the development of journalistic initiatives and content on Twitch is still at an early stage. To date, the synergies and hybridization between traditional television and streaming on Twitch have been analyzed, addressing the possibilities offered by the platform for a more interactive audiovisual entertainment consumption experience for specific audiences (Quintas-Froufe & González-Neira, 2022; Spilker, Ask & Hansen, 2020). The study of successful profiles

has also been addressed to learn about their programming strategies, creation of formats or relationship with users (Sixto-García & Losada-Fernández, 2023) and the convergence between sports broadcasting through television and radio with those carried out on the platform (Marín-Sanchiz, Valero-Pastor & Rojas-Torrijos, 2022). With a more general approach, the profiles of audiovisual media, matrix, and digital natives on Twitch (Rodríguez Hernández, Ortega Fernández & Padilla Castillo, 2023) and of journalists and communicators (Olivares García & Méndez Majuelos, 2022) have been analyzed to study the adaptation of narrative solutions, the setting for recording, or the search for connection with the young audience.

In this research we start from the general objective of knowing how the media and journalists are adapting to develop their professional work on Twitch, with a broad view that allows us to identify and study the diversity of journalistic initiatives that are being developed on the platform in the Spanish context. The following specific objectives are pursued:

- O1. To identify informative initiatives on Twitch in Spain, driven by media and journalists, in order to explore the possibilities, the platform can offer for journalism in the current context.
- O2. To analyze the formats, functionalities and business models used by the media channels and journalists active on Twitch.
- O3. To characterize the communicative codes that prevail in journalistic channels on Twitch to explore the blurred boundaries between information and entertainment in an environment dominated by young audiences.

2. Background

2.1. Twitch and the rise of Social Media Live Streaming

Social Media Live Streaming (SMLS) refers to any technology that allows live videos to be made and distributed through social networks by means of their own applications associated with them, providing instant feedback to the sender of the same (Apablaza-Campos & Codina, 2018). Its boom, in the context of a society immersed in social networks, is reliant on capturing the viewer's attention and the development of content in a more "live" way (Herrero de la Fuente & García Domínguez, 2019, p. 45).

One of the pioneering platforms in SMLS was Periscope (Apablaza-Campos, Morales Vargas, Lopezosa, Salvat & Codina, 2020), a live streaming application bought by Twitter in its development phase in 2015 and which became a trendy place to follow all kinds of events (Jiménez Cano, 2016). A contemporary example is Twitch, a medium that "combines broadcast video with open IRC chat channels" (Hamilton, Garretson & Kerne, 2014, p. 1). The foundations of the platform therefore lie in the conjunction of two communicative pathways: video broadcasting and textual communication derived from live chat. Its origin dates to 2007, the year in which Justin Kan, Emmett Shear, Michael Seibel and Kyle Vogt created the Justin.tv website to show for 24 hours a day the life of the former (Ramis, 2021; Rice, 2012). In 2014 Amazon acquired the platform for \$970 million (Zhang & Liu, 2015), a year in which Twitch already ranked as the fourth largest source of peak US Internet traffic (Pires & Simon, 2015).

Throughout its history as a platform, Twitch has been incorporating a series of tools aimed at improving the experience of streamers and viewers, turning their browsing into an enriched experience (Valero, 2023). First, Twitch offers the option to the follower of a channel to subscribe by means of a payment—in three levels—to financially support that streamer and obtain rewards linked mainly to the use of chat (Ramis, 2021). The chat is one of the key pieces of Twitch, understood as a space where users can share and exchange impressions in real time about what the streamer is transmitting (Ramis, 2021). Another of the functionalities

that Twitch presents and that allows structuring and classifying the transmissions is the system of categories and tags that streamers put on their live streams according to the content to be broadcast (Ramis, 2021).

There are three types of recognition as a streamer within Twitch (Ramis, 2021), each with their respective advantages and privileges. At a first level, there is the regular streamer, with which one begins to create content on the platform, without the ability to open subscriptions, the ad system or the donation of bits —the platform's own virtual currency. As the frequency of transmissions and the average audience increases, the streamer can become an affiliate or partner, acquiring greater functionalities and a higher percentage of revenue from subscriptions. Although brands continue to play an important role in financing —through sponsorships or advertisements— the main source of income for streamers is the content they generate (Sixto-García & Losada-Fernández, 2023).

The aforementioned interaction or live feedback of SMLS puts the focus on community generation. Live streaming platforms that incorporate interaction functionalities generate a “singular atmosphere” (Buitrago, Martín-García & Torres-Ortiz, 2022, p. 62) between viewers and content creators. This phenomenon derives largely from the fact of sharing a series of common verbal, graphic and even environmental codes. However, the premise for a user to come to take part in a broadcast is the existence of a common motivation (Zhao, Chen, Cheng & Wang, 2018). It is worth emphasizing the establishment of ties with young people, social interactions, and the formation of a sense of community (Hilvert-Bruce *et al.*, 2018) as key aspects when understanding broadcasts as those “virtual third places” (Hamilton *et al.*, 2014, p. 9) in which informal communities socialize and participate are growing.

The motivations of the streamer —to obtain feedback, interaction, and engagement with users (Zhao *et al.*, 2018)— and the motivations of social and community interaction (Sjöblom & Hamari, 2017) are intertwined in the community. The content creator fosters a space in terms of hospitality (Introna & Brigham, 2007) so that the user feels at all times that they are important and influential within the community (Hilvert-Bruce *et al.*, 2018) at the same time that the users themselves also suppose a strong emotional support for the streamers (Wohn, Freeman & McLaughlin, 2018).

2.2. Brand journalism: new roles at the frontier of journalism and marketing

The capacity of influence that the journalistic profession still has with respect to citizens (Tascón & Pino, 2014) encourages brands to increasingly bring their positions closer to journalism. This phenomenon is closely related to what is known as brand journalism, based on the “generation of useful or interesting content for a brand's audience with the aim of connecting the brand with the consumer” (Hernández, 2007, p. 90), through news that “resemble journalistic publications in terms of content and layout” (Koch, Viererbl & Schulz-Knappe, 2023, p. 2). It is a product positioning strategy that takes advantage of the availability and low cost of digital tools (Ossorio-Vega, 2015) to give the content created a journalistic appearance, in many cases generated by the medium itself. Micó (2019) defines it as “journalism on the outside, but something else on the inside” that can have profoundly negative consequences on the reputation of the journalistic profession —a profession that has already been punished in recent times.

Questions about the blurred boundaries between journalism and marketing have their extension in debates around the figure of influencers, subjects with the ability to influence a certain group and change their opinions (Santamaría & Meana, 2017). In most cases, journalists prefer to consider these network figures as “peripheral actors” (Perreault & Hanusch, 2022) who, despite sharing habits with them, largely belong to other fields such as advertising. This limits them in issues that are essential to journalism, such as independence and neutrality (Perreault & Hanusch, 2022), although they may maintain an informative purpose in the content generated (Negreira-Rey, Vázquez-Herrero & López-García, 2022).

Mellado and Hermida (2021) propose three roles of journalists in social media that represent part of journalistic routines nowadays: promoter, celebrity, and joker. The promoter role is an increasingly notable trend in journalistic discourse (Hanusch & Bruns, 2017; Molyneux & Holton, 2015). The journalist becomes an “authentic and commodified self” (Jerslev & Mortensen, 2016, p. 3) in social media that pushes professionals to brand themselves (Mellado & Hermida, 2021) and to distinguish themselves from other information providers for the benefit of flexibility and polyvalence (Deuze, 2007a). In fact, self-promotion is one of the most recurrent online activities of journalists (Al-Rawi, 2020).

Celebrity was defined by Turner (2004, p. 9) as “a commodity traded by the promotions, publicity, and media industries that produce these representations and their effects.” The fact of increasing one’s exposure and visibility supposes in the current media ecosystem a “central strategy” (Ottovordemgentschenfelde, 2017, p. 6) to be able to profit from the platforms —this is also a conscious activity (Mellado & Hermida, 2021).

The role of the joker, third in Mellado and Hermida’s (2021) proposal, is based on the conception of humor as a form of communication and a cultural process that is fully integrated into social relations (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002). Thus, the joker has been a key figure throughout history since “to exist, an individual or group of people must generate humor” (Mellado & Hermida, 2021, p. 6). Journalists use humor and sarcasm as resources to connect and interact with the audience (Holton & Lewis, 2011) and to negotiate the meaning of informational content in multiple ways (Mellado & Hermida, 2021).

Beyond the role of journalists on social platforms, marketing is reflected in the search for entrepreneurial solutions, self-employment, and personal brand management, due to a critical economic scenario. The irremediable loss of profitability represents one of the biggest problems for the media sector, which has led them to a loss-making business model (Abejón-Mendoza, 2021). The fall in advertising investment revenues led to the emergence of new business models and the diversification of income in the media (Casero-Ripollés & Izquierdo-Castillo, 2013; Vara-Miguel, Sádaba, Negrodo & Sánchez-Blanco, 2023), as well as the scarcity of opportunities in the journalistic labor market and precariousness (APM, 2022; Deuze, 2007b), in the context of a professional crisis that also accompanies an economic and confidence crisis (Nielsen, 2016), leading to a situation in which journalists are forced to seek alternatives to survive professionally.

Connected to the development of the network and new technologies (Goyanes, 2016), entrepreneurial journalism emerges, defined as “a set of initiatives led by journalists for the creation of new media promoted by themselves and that move away from the traditional industrial model, whose shareholding corresponds to large media groups or companies outside the sector” (Manfredi, Rojas-Torrijos & Herranz-de-la-Casa, 2015, p. 70). Among the contributions that entrepreneurial journalism offers to the profession (Casero-Ripollés, 2016) are economic and labor dynamization, the establishment of new models of information companies that also transform the facet of the content creator, the renewal of formats and genres, and the democratic impulse through the incorporation of new voices in the media field. The Twitch platform is one of the new supports for the development of entrepreneurial journalism.

3. Methods

The research is based on a case study, framed in a mixed methodological design —with a quantitative and qualitative approach – in three phases. Such a methodology is frequently applied to the analysis of profiles, messages and audiences on Twitch and other emerging platforms (Obreja, 2023; Quevedo-Redondo & Gómez-García, 2023; Snelson, 2016; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey & López-García, 2022). An initial exploratory study was developed to identify journalistic profiles on Twitch between March 29 and April 5, 2023. The sampling is based on channels identified during the literature review and similar channels suggested on

the platform, incorporating those that refer to the informative activity linked to a media outlet or identifying as a journalist or communicator, as well as a direct search of the most consumed media in Spain according to the Digital News Report (Newman, Fletcher, Robertson, Eddy & Kleis Nielsen, 2022) and the General Media Study (AIMC, 2022). The sample resulting from the exploratory study was made up of 55 channels belonging to the media or journalists.

Table 1. Analysis sheet applied to the channels in the second phase

Presence	Origin and characterization of the channel
	Number of followers
	Audience interaction strategies
Activity	Frequency of live streams
	Stream archiving
	Scheduling of streams in calendar
	Exclusivity of content on the platform
Content	Existence of defined programs
	Program structure and dynamics
	Dominant formats in the streams

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Categorization of Twitch channels with journalistic activity

Channels driven by a journalist or communicator		Channels driven by media outlet	
Digital career	Traditional media career	Digital native	Legacy
@facudiaz	@2010misterchip	@100yardas	@COPE_es
@GataSchrodinger	@AngelMartin	@agorafutbol	@crtvg
@iratiprat	@carlos_bosch	@CdeCiencia	@Diario_AS
@LaHiperactina	@fcastarlenas	@DAZNES	@DiarioMARCA
@marcosfutfem	@ferevangelio	@DescifrandoLaGuerra	@DiarioSport
@nanisimo	@gerardromero	@drafteadosNBA	@el_mundo
@Radiocable	@Kanciller_	@elDiarioes	@ElChiringuitoTV
@RafaelEscrig	@MiguelAngelRomanTV	@elsaltodiario	@eurovisionRTVE
@tamayovision	@NicoAbadTV	@Labasepublico	@La_SER
	@PepeBrasin	@LaFuturaChannel	@OndaFutbol
	@rubenmartinweb	@LaMedialnglesa	@Radioestadio
	@sirolopez56	@MALDITAes	@RTVE
		@Newtral_es	@tiempodejuegocope
		@OkdiarioTV	
		@PandemiaDigital	
		@playz	
		@Relevo_Deportes	
		@Scenio	
		@SoyMotor	
		@sphasports	
		@SRevolution	

Source: own elaboration.

In the second phase, an analysis sheet (Table 1) was applied to the sample, between April 5 and 19, 2023, observing the characteristics of the streams (live during the analysis period and those archived) of the journalistic channels identified on the platform. As a result, a categorization was established differentiating channels driven by journalists or communicators and by media, as well as a second level according to previous career (Table 2) —in the case of individual professionals, mainly digital or derived from traditional media and supports; for media outlets, both digital natives or legacy.

For the third phase of the research, a subsample of seven channels was built that responds to the representation of the categories previously established and assesses the activity identified in the second phase. It is approached as a case study based on content analysis and interviews. The content analysis contemplates quantitative and qualitative parameters (Table 3) and was carried out between May 1 and 8, 2023, except for @La_SER, which had no activity during that period —the stream from April 25 was analyzed instead. Personal interviews were conducted with the people responsible for these channels on Twitch (Table 4) between May 8 and 16, 2023, focusing on aspects of content strategy, community management, viability and sustainability of the project, as well as the limitations and strengths of this platform.

Table 3. Analysis sheet applied to profiles and streams in the third phase

Profile	Audience	Total followers
		Average audience
	Business model	Partner
		Subscribers
		Sponsors
	Activity	Programming in calendar
		Hours streamed
		Hours watched
Stream	Identification	Title
		Stream date and time
		Duration
	Content	Topic
		Format (talk show, interview, etc.)
		Language and communicative style
	Audience and community	Average audience data
		Peak audience
		Following balance
		Live chat interaction strategies
	Audiovisual production	Composition of the scenes
		Type and variety of shots
		Audiovisual resources used
	Journalistic activity	Reference to sources of information
		Participation of experts
		Updating of information
	Multi-platform strategy	Exclusivity/simultaneity of multi-platform broadcasting

Source: own elaboration.

Table 4. Case study sub-sample in the third stage

Channels driven by a journalist or communicator	Digital career	@marcosfutem	Marcos G. Rayado, publicist and owner of the channel
	Traditional media career	@fcastarlenas	Francisco Castarlenas, sports journalist and owner of the channel
Channels driven by media outlet	Digital native	@elsaltodiario (generalist)	Yago Álvarez, economic journalist and host of the channel
		@agorafutbol (sports)	Roque Oller y David Adán, journalists and owners of the channel
		@MALDITAes (fact-checker)	Beatriz Lara, journalist and community manager
	Legacy	@La_SER (generalist radio)	Sara Mejjide, journalist and host of the program #EITaburete
		@DiarioMARCA (sports newspaper)	Javier Estepa, journalist and head of new platforms

Source: own elaboration.

4. Results

4.1. Approach to informative channels on Twitch

A first look at the journalistic initiatives identified on the Twitch streaming platform reveals a series of clear differences between channels that make up a sort of communicative miscellany in which there are digital native initiatives (38.2%), legacy media (23.6%), journalists and communicators with a career in traditional media (21.2%) and digital trajectory (16.4%). The analyzed group presents a diverse character and, although there is a commitment to content to differentiate brands, there is also an adherence to common patterns on the platform.

Firstly, it is important to note that there is no correlation ($r = 0.531$) between the volume of followers of the channels studied and their volume of activity (Table 5). Although large accounts such as Gerard Romero (576,200 followers), Siro López (290,600) or *El Chiringuito* (883,400) have an almost daily presence on Twitch, this also applies to profiles with smaller communities such as Fran Castarlenas (451 followers), *El Salto* (5,000) or *La Futura Channel* (2,700). In contrast, some channels such as Rafael Escrig (44,000 followers), Tamayo (80,000) or *Playz* (29,700), with a remarkable following at the time of this research (April 2023), have virtually no activity on the platform.

Another of the salient aspects that can be extracted from this exploratory study is that the majority rely on the main image for their channels using a single professional —such as *elDiario.es* with Ignacio Escolar— or a small group of protagonists —for example, *Diario AS* (Tomás Roncero, Pepe Brasín, Alba López or Juanma Rubio) or CRTVG (Esther Estévez, Gabriel Fuentes, Yaiza López or Merce Silva, among others). A brief inquiry into the origin and professional trajectory of these figures shows a majority group of professionals who combine their work on Twitch with their activity —in many cases with long careers— in traditional media and communication support such as radio or press. There is also a group of communicators with a dominant presence in digital environments, both professionally linked to journalism —Carles Tamayo or *Ágora Fútbol*— or from other sectors —publicist Marcos G. Rayado or La Hiperactina, a graduate in Biomedical Sciences.

Table 5. Frequency of activity on the ten channels analyzed with the most followers

Channel	Followers (thousands)	Frequency of activity ¹
El Chiringuito de Jugones	883.4	Daily
Gerard Romero	576.2	Daily
Siro López	290.6	Daily
Rubén Martín	159.0	Almost daily
Soy Motor	144.0	Almost daily
Ángel Martín	133.8	No activity
DrafteadosNBA	108.3	Sporadic
Mister Chip	98.3	Weekly
Facu Díaz	82.4	Weekly
Carles Tamayo	80.0	Weekly

Source: own elaboration.

¹ Frequency represents the number of directs performed during the analyzed two-week period: daily (≥ 14), almost daily (7–13), weekly (3–6), sporadic (< 3).

It should also be noted that the vast majority of channels, regardless of their degree of activity, offer specific programming with formats that are given their own name. With the media profiles, this differentiation of formats also serves to distribute their professional staff, in a very strong program-director association, as in the case of *Los Mundos de Charcastrology* (*La Futura Channel*) with Charas Vega, or *#NanísimoenNewtral* (*Newtral*) with journalist Emilio Doménech. These streams are in most cases exclusive to Twitch, although occasionally other platforms such as YouTube or TikTok are used to store fragments of the same and favor promotion and feedback between platforms, as is the case with *Newtral*, Siro López, or Marcos Futfem.

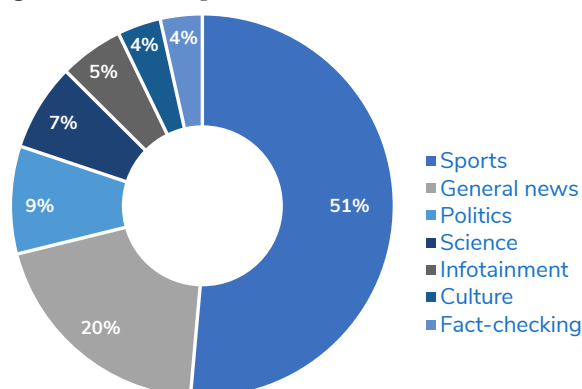
In certain cases, especially in individual profiles, live programs are organized around a single program that encompasses all the channel's broadcasts. This is the case with Fernando Berlín's *La Cafetera* and Facu Díaz's *Buenos Días In The Morning*, accounts on which there is no clear distinction between channel and program.

Within the diversity of informative initiatives on Twitch, sports predominate (Table 6), together with generalist channels specialized in politics, science, culture, or fact-checking, as well as channels fully focused on infotainment. Analysis of the content incorporated by the different media and journalists in their broadcasts shows a clear predominance of formats related to current affairs on a specific topic, either with expert guests or in conversation with viewers. To a lesser extent, live broadcasts are used to rebroadcast events —such as the conferences of *elDiario.es* or the space launches of *C de Ciencia*— or broadcasts of programs from other media in the form of “visual radio”— such as *El Ágora de Hora 25* on *Cadena SER* or *Tiempo de Juego* on *COPE*.

Table 6. Ranking of news channels identified on Twitch

Category	Channels	%
Sports	28	50.9
General news	11	20.0
Politics	5	9.0
Science	4	7.3
Infotainment	3	5.5
Culture	2	3.6
Fact-checking	2	3.6

Source: own elaboration.

Figure 1. Ranking of news channels identified on Twitch

Source: own elaboration.

Regarding timing, it is worth mentioning the use made by the analyzed channels of the option to establish a precise calendar to guide their followers (43.6% of the channels use a calendar), a function that usually coincides with a greater program volume. Those channels that offer a greater number of programs and specific and differentiated content —such as *Diario AS*, Nico Abad, *Maldita* or *El Salto*— include a calendar oriented to the schedule of each program. Media and journalists with sporadic presence on the platform do not use the calendar function, or in some cases, such as CRTVG, it is incomplete.

The analysis of the relationship between the channel and the viewers allows us to identify a general intention to create a two-way communicative environment in which there is frequent conversation with the viewers and reference is made to the messages left by them in the chat. However, some profiles such as Gerard Romero's or Fran Castarlenas' (among others) grant a higher level of presence to the audience, incorporating them more intensely into the broadcasts. In the case of the former, there is a strategy of converting the viewers themselves into potential reporters who travel and collaborate in the provision of information. Castarlenas, on the other hand, incorporates personal conversations with viewers into specific content of live broadcasts. On other accounts such as *Tiempo de Juego* de COPE or *OkDiario*, there is no contact with viewers at all.

4.2. Journalism on Twitch: case studies

The observation of the quantitative data on the community and business models (Table 7) of the profiles selected for a more exhaustive analysis shows the dimensional diversity of the sample.

Table 7. Community and business model of the analyzed profiles

	Marcos G. Rayado	El Salto	Cadena SER	Marca	Ágora Fútbol	Maldita	Fran Castarlenas
Total followers	2.235	5.177	13.099	27.765	26.531	17.155	453
Type	Affiliate	Affiliate	Regular	Partner	Partner	Affiliate	Affiliate
Subscribers	37	5	N/A	N/A	365	6	71
Sponsors	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Source: own elaboration with data extracted from TwitchTracker.

One of the main aspects that needs to be addressed is the economic-financial one. The data collected show that only two of the channels studied —*Marca* and *Ágora Fútbol*— have partner status, which allows them to obtain a higher profit from subscriptions, since none of the

accounts receive income from sponsorship. It is precisely these channels that have a higher level of followers, although the volume of followers does not necessarily imply a higher ranking. An illustrative case is that of *Cadena SER* which, despite being the fourth channel in terms of number of followers, is at the lowest position on the platform due to the scarce and intermittent activity it carries out on it. This irregular frequency, according to Sara Meijide from *SER*, may be caused by “the fear that it is a passing fad and that it may burst.”

When asked about economic sustainability, the individual profiles are those that have a more negative view of the possibilities of success on the platform. Fran Castarlenas speaks of “ruin” and Marcos G. Rayado, despite highlighting the advantages of monetization—an aspect also mentioned by Yago Álvarez of *El Salto* and Roque Oller of *Ágora Fútbol*—points out that the activity on Twitch lacks sufficient profitability to be considered a job. While maintaining a general critical view, the media are committed to a presence on this type of platform, pointing to its innovative nature (as noted by Beatriz Lara from *Maldita*), how it complements communication (as Yago Álvarez from *El Salto* observed), and the possibilities of interaction (according to Javier Estepa, from *Marca*).

The relationship between hours broadcast and hours viewed by audiences (Table 8) shows the logical link between volume of followers and views, such that, while each hour broadcast by *Marca* generates 2,589 hours of views, in the case of Fran Castarlenas it barely reaches 44 hours of viewing for each hour broadcast. These inequalities are also reflected in the volume of viewers. Despite having a notable viewer community in terms of number of followers, the smaller channels also grow at a much slower pace than the big ones such as *Marca* or *Ágora Fútbol*, whose audience ratings also bring them dozens—even hundreds—of new followers per week.

Table 8. Ratio of hours broadcast by the streamer and hours watched by the viewer

	Marcos G. Rayado	El Salto	Cadena SER	Marca	Ágora Fútbol	Maldita	Fran Castarlenas
Hours streamed	641	210	530	1128	1509	790	32
Hours watched	39.0 K	10.3 K	107 K	2.9 M	526 K	151 K	1.4 K
Ratio streamed/ watched (hours)	1/61	1/49	1/202	1/ 2589	1/348	1/191	1/44

Source: own elaboration with data extracted from TwitchTracker.

In terms of organization, all the cases analyzed, except Marcos Futfem, have a section on their profile in which they set out the streaming schedule of their content. In some cases, however, the schedule appears outdated or incomplete when contrasted with the broadcasts they develop, as in the profile of *Marca* or *Maldita*. On the other hand, all channels include in their biography a link to their main social media (Twitter/X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and/or YouTube), except in the case of *El Salto*, which uses this space to include links both to the media’s website and to its subscription section.

In general terms, live programs have a similar duration (Table 9), around an hour and a half, with a notable upturn in the case of *Ágora Fútbol*, whose daily program is longer than two hours. This circumstance coincides with the objectives set by Marcos G. Rayado in the short term, with “fewer and longer direct programs.” This is one of the aspects that is part of the program strategy that works, as mentioned by Javier Estepa and Fran Castarlenas, based on “trial and error.”

Table 9. Duration of streams and audience of the analyzed profiles

	No. analyzed streams	Average duration (h)	Average audience	Peak audience	Following balance ¹
Marcos G. Rayado	5	1.47	67	117 (08/05/23)	+10
<i>El Salto</i>	3	1.66	42	147 (03/05/23)	+12
<i>Cadena SER</i>	2	1.36	41	95 (08/05/23)	0
<i>Marca</i>	4	1.43	1.914	9,407 (05/05/23)	+54
<i>Ágora Fútbol</i>	3	2.18	655	1,944 (01/05/23)	+121
<i>Maldita</i>	4	1.14	45	91 (04/05/23)	+5
Fran Castarlenas	4	1.24	41	56 (02/05/23)	+3

Source: own elaboration with data extracted from TwitchTracker.

¹ The following balance shows the variation in the number of followers during the analysis period (01/05/23-08/05/23).

In the face of the wide variety of topics (including soccer, economics, politics, society) addressed by all channels—in line with their diverse nature—a common bond emerges when developing certain formats. The talk is the type used by all the profiles analyzed and, together with the interview, they are the dominant formats, in line with the intention of “incorporating voices outside the debate,” as Yago Álvarez from *El Salto* observed. All channels handle a notable volume of experts—around five on average—incorporating up to twelve specialized figures in the case of *Maldita*. In most cases, they try to review current affairs. Even so, some interviewees, such as David Adán from *Ágora Fútbol*, speak of a commitment to “improvisation” and “fresher formats,” as described by Beatriz Lara from *Maldita*.

In terms of communication, all channels use an informal register, typical of the relaxed atmosphere they are trying to create. In the case of media linked to traditional media, such as *Cadena SER* or *Marca*, there are clear differences that serve to exemplify two ways of approaching information on the platform. While the live programs that orbit around *El Ágora de Hora 25* or Javier Estepa have a more formal and serious character without interrupting the relaxed atmosphere—for example, the neutral monitoring of press conferences and news related to the final of a sports competition; in the case of *#ElTaburete* and David Sánchez humor and irony are much more present—in addition to assessing controversial aspects in a very personal way.

Roque Oller and David Adán of *Ágora Fútbol* even incorporate jokes and comedy into their streams, an emotional component that Marcos G. Rayado also defends, given that “the platform requires a combination of humor and information to develop journalistic work.” For Sara Meijide from *Cadena SER*, on Twitch “naturalness is rewarded without losing credibility,” a view shared by Yago Álvarez from *El Salto*, stating that “it is possible to do journalism and end up with a joke.”

The interviewees agree that instant interaction with viewers is one of the strong points offered by the platform. At a basic level, this relationship with the chat is carried out by referring to the messages left by users during the live stream, incorporating these contributions in the course of discussions, interviews or current affairs overviews. In media such as *Marca* the relationship is much less intense than in channels such as *El Salto* or *Ágora Fútbol*, where the opinions and messages from viewers have a direct impact on the structure of the broadcast on a continuous basis.

There are complementary resources to the chat, such as the survey, which gain strength in profiles such as Marcos G. Rayado’s or *Ágora Fútbol*, which frequently use games and dynamics of a playful nature in their broadcasts. The emphasis is on the ability to create “a small but loyal community that can communicate about what it likes,” as Rayado notes, but which “is not always easy to manage,” according to Roque Oller and David Adán.

Considering the characteristics of the journalistic activity developed by the channels in the study, a clear dominance of interpretative and opinionated journalism can be appreciated. Although the provision of more serious and neutral information also plays an important role, such as the injury of a soccer player (in the case of Marcos Futfem) or the denial of hoaxes on issues such as transphobia or cybercrime (in *Maldita*), the personal aspect is the essence that surrounds most of the broadcasts. The commitment to the participation of experts who complement the broadcasting of channels such as *El Salto* or *Maldita* coexists with the incorporation of personal experience, anecdotes, and personal opinions used to get closer to the viewer.

This personal touch is much stronger on individual profiles, in which there is usually a greater weight of opinion, such as Marcos G. Rayado or Fran Castarlenas. The latter has a specific section (*El Comentario*) in which he writes a very personal chronicle about the matches or the current affairs of the Real Zaragoza soccer club since, in the words of the journalist himself, “people do not want to know things like the new signing of Zaragoza, but my opinion about it.”

Sara Meijide from *Cadena SER* conceives the essence of Twitch as “an opportunity for journalism to play its trump cards” and “adapt its discourse to the new demands.” Meijide and Marcos G. Rayado, Fran Castarlenas, Beatriz Lara and Roque Oller agree in highlighting the figure of Ibai Llanos, a person who, as Sara Meijide points out, “made chats and ramblings fashionable” and who pointed out a market niche for the profession.

Legacy media such as *Marca* give more space to more neutral information —the lives streams not conducted by David Sánchez— since their objective is “not to renounce ethical codes” (Javier Estepa). In this sense, the latter also stresses the idea of “enhancing the strength of the brand,” an aspect that is evidenced in self-referential pieces produced by the media itself, carried out by both *Marca* and *Maldita*.

5. Conclusions

The study allows us to conclude that, in the changing scenario of journalism, with blurred boundaries and adaptation to the new platforms that dominate the communicative ecosystem (Van Dijck, Poell & De Waal, 2018), Twitch emerges as another space for the development of informative activity. It involves limitations and open debates, in a still incipient phase, with the purpose of expanding and taking advantage of the interactive potential to reach new audiences (Quintas-Froufe & González-Neira, 2022).

One of the objectives guiding the research was to identify journalistic initiatives promoted by media and journalists on Twitch to investigate the potential of this platform for contemporary journalism (O1). The study managed to capture an accurate, albeit exploratory, overview of the news activity on the platform. Even though each channel has developed a different treatment, the possibilities of engaging with the audience are a key element in attracting the presence of both journalists and the media.

The exhaustive analysis of the channels and profiles made it possible to draw a portrait of their activity and learn about the formats, functionalities, and business models they can implement (O2). No great innovation was identified in the channels studied and most rely on formats based on conversations, such as interviews or talk shows. The chat is the tool around which all their activity revolves, based on subscriptions from viewers, which, although they are only an economic complement at this level, is the main source of income for the channels analyzed.

The streams analyzed provide evidence of the characteristics that dominate the communicative style of these profiles on the platform (O3): humor and the relaxed nature of the live streams, which combine the entertainment typical of a gaming platform with the provision of rigorous information, with expert voices that take on special relevance and play an important role in the content of the channels.

These first journalistic experimentations on Twitch point to some trends, such as the predominance of channels dedicated to sports journalism —as pointed out in previous studies by Marín-Sanchiz, Valero-Pastor and Rojas-Torrijos (2022) and Rodríguez Hernández, Ortega Fernández and Padilla Castillo (2023)— as well as profiles of communicators who, as individuals, carry out their own initiatives. The media usually has a reference person, highlighting the relevance of putting a face to the media and generating trust in the audience with regular transmissions and with the same people representing the organization. Consistent, daily activity is a trend —and a necessity— on Twitch news channels, even if it does not correlate with subscriber volume. For better organization, channels offer programming with their own title and format, with elements inherited from television (Sixto-García & Losada-Fernández, 2023).

Regarding the roles of journalists on social networks, taking up the proposal of Mellado and Hermida (2021), we found that this classification is valid on Twitch. The role of joker is evidenced in the informal register and the language of personal and even emotional character. The celebrity is linked to the aforementioned media figures, whose opinions and personal interpretations of the facts are manifested as the main activity of the channels. Both roles converge in the role of promoter, with the intention of promoting a personal message and seeking differentiation from other channels.

Despite the complex issue of economic sustainability on the platform, as a complementary resource alongside other media and for brand promotion and positioning, the great strength of the platform is the value of community. With a limited audience of followers, the creation of a community of interest is based on interaction and participation (mainly through chat), establishing a close connection with the streamer. Another challenge lies in the need for adaptation and regularity in the streams, seeking space for journalism on a platform with origins in gaming communities.

The study has elaborated an approach to journalism on Twitch, in a context of certain complexity for the informative activity due to important challenges of adaptation to the dynamics of the platform, community loyalty, sustainability and tensions in the exercise of the journalistic profession. Similarly, limitations are recognized in the research due to its exploratory nature, which invites studying the development of journalism on Twitch from new methodological perspectives and in other regions based on these findings.

Acknowledgments

The authors are thankful for the willingness of interviewees to collaborate: David Adán, Yago Álvarez, Francisco Castarlenas, Javier Estepa, Marcos G. Rayado, Beatriz Lara, Sara Meijide, and Roque Oller. This research is part of the R&D project Digital-native media in Spain: Strategies, competencies, social involvement and (re)definition of practices in journalistic production and diffusion (PID2021-122534OB-C21), funded by MCIN / AEI/10.13039/501100011033/ and by “ERDF A way of making Europe”.

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