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The role of the media with regard to news aggregators. Their presence on Menéame

Abstract

The development of web 2.0 has brought with it new communication platforms based on the active role of users and their mutual collaboration. In this new media ecosystem, news aggregators have come into being and these have led to a new way of distributing journalistic content over the social web. This article analyzes the origin of contents promoted to the front page of Menéame, the most successful Spanish-language news aggregator. The main objective is to discover which media outlets the news published during its first ten years of existence (2006–2015) comes from, in order to identify the most linked media and find out about their development during that period.

Keywords

Menéame, news, media, online communication, social networks, consumption.

1. Introduction

The development of the web 2.0 has brought with it the appearance of new communications platforms based on the active role of citizens and on their mutual collaboration. The concept of audience (as a passive public) is becoming obsolete, since the profile of users is moving away from being one of consumers of content created by the media, to being prosumers (producers–consumers), that is to say, they themselves create and share content. We are faced with a new media ecosystem, in which mass communication is being replaced with networked communication.

In this context, news aggregators have appeared, giving rise to a new form of distribution of journalistic content –and news content, in general– through the social web. It is no longer just the media organizations that disseminate their news, because now users also compile news for publishing. What has appeared is not just a different way of distributing news, but also a new way for users to consult information, since they do not need to go directly to the media when they browse the Internet, and so the aggregators have facilitated a change in

news consumption habits on the net.

The forerunners of news aggregators were the news compilation services which appeared in 1997 with Slashdot, a site for which a group of editors collected and structured news sent by users for publication. The adaptation of this kind of news centres to the web 2.0 made it possible for the public to comment and vote on news, and in this way it was decided which news would be published. The first aggregators of this kind were Digg, which appeared

in late 2004, and Reddit, which appeared in June 2005. In December of that year, Menéame, the most successful Spanish-language news aggregator, came into the world.

The goal of this article is to contribute to research into the role of the media given the appearance of aggregators. It is framed within a context characterized by the displacement of the analytical focus from the media to mediations, as explained by Martín Barbero (1987, p. 203), that is to say, to the links between communication practices and social communities. Specifically, the aim is to analyse the source of the news of the Menéame aggregator.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. A new media ecosystem

The new technologies and the expansion of the Internet have brought with them a new “networked society”, as it has been called by Castells (2009), in which traditional paradigms of communication have been transformed. According to the model put forwards by Lasswell in the mid-20th century, in each communication there is a communicator who sends out a message; this is transmitted over a medium and is aimed at an audience, on whom it will have a certain effect. This uni-directional model, which puts certain powerful media –in opposition to other weak subjects– at the centre of the communication process, was replaced in the second half of the 20th century by another, bi-directional model that minimizes the influence of the media and establishes that the communicator and audience exchange positions during the communicative process. Both models have been eclipsed, in the 21st century, by a new paradigm in which the subjects are permanently connected and act without distinction and simultaneously as communicators and audience, and in which not only communicator and audience participate since these actors receive many responses from different groups of people who are also connected with other groups and other people.

In the words of Orihuela (2002, p. 10), the Internet has transformed many of the paradigms used until now to help us understand communication processes in the mass media. We are immersed in a new media ecosystem in which new and old media come together. There are no limits to the number of media that can co-exist, or to the volume of information that each of them can offer. Furthermore, the cost of publishing information is similar for all of them (Orihuela, 2002, p. 13).

The media ecology theory is based on McLuhan’s research, with the goal of extracting from them elements that aid in the understanding of the complex processes that are occurring in this new ecosystem. Different authors analyse how the media affect perception, understanding, feelings and human values, and how the relationship with these media increases or reduces the probabilities of survival (López & Reinoso, 2016, p. 682). Scolari (2011, p. 38) talks about an “ecosystem of media,” which features processes of convergence that show the hybridization of different media, organizations or languages. The convergences create new professional figures and business models in the media, produce technological ruptures, create new habits of consumption and impose other forms of relating. Islas (2008, 2010) takes up the concept of “prosumer” introduced by Toffler (1981) in order to designate users in this era of convergence, these being the new actors of the communication process who produce goods, services or experiences in order to consume them, rather than to sell them. The traditional division between producers and consumers is eliminated, since the networks allow former consumers to share with their audiences the content created by them, without the imposition of criteria by an economic or political group. Gillmor (2004) talks about the consumer of media not only as a producer, but also as an active user of news. Castells (2009) on the other hand, talks about mass self-communication for this process, according to which a person creates the message, defines the possible audience and selects specific content, which potentially may reach a mass audience.

According to Cagé (2016, p. 11-12), we live in the best and the worst of times: information producers have never been as numerous as they currently are and, at the same time, the media have never been so weak. In this new and complicated communications scenario, anonymous producers of content can attract the same, or even more, attention from the public than traditional messages created according to the logics of industrial production of the media companies (Levy, 2008). This has meant that these companies have lost much of the territory they gained during the second half of the 20th century, both in the area of their business models and as regards their credibility and reputation.

The new media paradigm involves a multiplication of the number of voices, but also dilutes their authority, since the system for editorial control prior to the public dissemination of information has broken down (Orihuela, 2002, p. 13). The methods of producing and distributing news are altering, as are the functions of journalism, since the traditional undertakings of bearing witness, reporting back and leading opinion are shifting over to the large variety of digital and social media available (Picard, 2014, p. 6). According to Orihuela (2002, p. 13), the role of gatekeepers of the editors and the classic agenda-setting function of the media –which until recently were the exclusive powers of professional communicators– are today included among the functions of Internet websites that are dedicated to seeking information and filtering, checking, editing and publishing it, based on criteria of relevance, timeliness and interest.

The Internet makes possible the direct access of the public to information sources without the mediation of professional communicators, as well as access to a worldwide publication system that works apart from the editors of the traditional media (Orihuela, 2002, p. 13). For Ramonet (2011, p. 16, 23), we are passing from the era of mass media to the era of masses of media, where information no longer travels in one single direction, but the vertical logic that characterized the traditional relationship between the media and their audiences is ever more horizontal or circular. So, the flow of information that travelled from the few to the many is being modified to a growing extent by the creation and interaction of horizontal media in which the flow travels from the many to the many (Ramonet, 2011, p. 13).

The public has a capacity for selection, to the extent that it can relate directly with the contents of the media and can dialogue, exchange and strike up a relationship with other users or with journalists (Cruz & Suárez, 2014, p. 130). This capacity for participation that the public has is precisely the main characteristic of the current media ecosystem, which enlarges the range of tools available for creating and disseminating news and information. In this regard, an important debate in the academic literature focusses on whether this new participative scenario constitutes a threat or an opportunity for the conventional media, which have undergone alterations in terms of their own mediatic essence.

The increase in the participation of users in the communications process is creating tensions between the traditional news producers and their audiences (Picard, 2014, p. 8). The media companies look on with certain misgivings at phenomena such as the multiplication of blogs, sites dedicated to specialized information about any subject, which are becoming significant informational spaces for the dissemination of opinion and news, with the advantage that their points of view are not mediatized by the interests of a particular media organization, while also offering readers a freedom from taking up a commitment with a particular media outlet. In this regard, blogs can be thought of as avant-garde media, as new sources of information and opinion in a situation which complements that of the traditional media (García & Capón, 2004, p. 116), with whom they often compete in the race to gain audience share and credibility. Furthermore, the social media can also be considered as potential competition to the media, since they stimulate changes in information consumption habits on the Internet, offering a new way to consult information to users, who no longer need to access media directly. This phenomenon is more frequent among younger publics, who use social media not only to communicate with each other and be in contact with other people,

but also to get news on the current social or political scene (García, Fernández & Porto, 2017, p. 133-134).

Leaving aside the financial harm that the Internet has caused to the conventional media –especially newspapers, as a result of the loss of readers of the paper format–, different authors indicate that the development of digital social tools has been beneficial for journalism as a social function. Thanks to these tools, the number of people interested in information has increased considerably and the readerships of written media are larger than ever; the content created by journalists can be seen by users, who can add a comment, a photo, a video..., in a work of collective intelligence; the media are adopting new production routines that facilitate their work, working in a more networked manner, cooperating with other producers and suppliers of information and interacting with audiences; and new communication narratives are being favoured, ones that seek a greater involvement of users.

2.2. The appearance of news aggregators

One of these digital social tools is the news promotion systems, also known as aggregators. These are websites for sharing information that function based on relationships established among registered users, who send news fragments they consider to be relevant, linking in the original source. Later these news are voted and commented on by other users in such a way that –based on the combination of these opinions and news algorithms– the most highly rated pass to the main page for the day, where they obtain greater visibility. Different authors (Leavitt & Clark, 2014; Suran & Kilgo, 2017; Straub-Cook, 2018) have indicated that these social news platforms are fulfilling some of the traditional functions of the media, such as agenda-setting and deliberation on public matters. However, little research has analysed, in a theoretical way, the content they disseminate (Leavitt & Clark, 2014, p. 1.496).

News aggregators do not produce any original content: they are intermediaries between the media and the public. This circumstance means that the press industry has requested the intervention of the authorities in order to regulate these sites, alleging that they benefit financially from the news created by the media and, at the same time, cause a decrease in the incomes received by these media organizations for the news in question.

However, different investigations which have analysed this issue state that there is no clear evidence that the aggregators have negatively affected the press. Chiou and Tucker (2017) examined the consequences of Google News no longer hosting Associated Press content and found little evidence that users utilize aggregators as replacements to the websites of traditional media; instead, they found evidence of a “traffic effect” in which the aggregators complement the consumption of other, related news sites, and so they may benefit the media. Athey, Mobius and Pál (2017) analysed the consumption of news from Spanish newspapers after Google News stopped indexing their content because of the 2014 Intellectual Property Law –which obliged Google to pay a fee to the media to reproduce their content– and concluded that the aggregator has a positive effect on consumers’ capacity to access certain kinds of news that are not well covered in their favourite media, while also highlighting the fact that the major media may not experience significant changes in overall visits to their website as a consequence of the aggregators, although it is possible that they lose traffic to their homepages, and have a reduced importance in terms of their role as gatekeeper. Llobet (2015, p. 173) went further, and determined that after their abandonment by Google News, the Spanish newspapers lost a potential source of income, and visits to many of them have come down significantly. Calzada and Gil (2016) carried out the same analysis and they compared it with consumption in Germany where –after state regulation– Google eliminated content from that country’s newspapers, leaving only the link. Their conclusions were similar to those of the other studies, showing the existence of a market expansion effect by which the news aggregators increase consumers’ knowledge of the media’s content, favouring an increase in the number of visits to these media outlets.

In this study, we have focussed on analysing the news aggregator Menéame, regarding which there is hardly any previous research. Only Orduña and Ontalba (2008) have done a content analysis in which they measured the presence and distribution of the Spanish press on Menéame between January 2007 and April 2008, concluding that 36.4% of news came from traditional press media. Ferreras (2009) carried out a general descriptive study into the most important aspects of the social promotion of news, in which the aggregator's main characteristics were sketched out. Kaltenbrunner, González, Ruiz de Querol and Volkovich (2011), from a more sociological point of view, studied the behaviour of Menéame users when sharing websites between December 2005 and July 2009, and they concluded that it promotes interaction not only among friends but also that users are more motivated to share content than to establish relations of friendship, which could have positive implications for the design of a networked community. Aragón, Gómez and Kaltenbrunner (2017) detected that a change in the interface used by Menéame to show discussions caused a significant increase in debate among users. No other research has been carried out regarding the aggregator that is being studied in this paper. Tackling the analysis of Menéame content over the long term, as it does, makes this study the most complete that has been carried out until now regarding this subject matter.

3. Methodology

This article's general aim is to find out the media sources of the news published by Menéame during the first ten years of its existence (2006–2015). Furthermore, it aims to analyse the development of this provenance during the period analysed. Two starting hypotheses are considered:

H1: Most of Menéame's news comes from conventional media sources, understood as those traditional news media that also publish using media other than the Internet.

H2: The importance of conventional media dropped considerably over the ten years analysed, in favour of media which only publish on the Internet and in favour of the social media, such as blogs and social networking sites.

In order to meet these objectives and demonstrate or refute these hypotheses, we have carried out a quantitative content analysis of the news published on the front page of the Menéame aggregator during its first 10 years of existence. The study universe is made up of the 156,800 news items that appeared during this period, which were grouped in 7,840 front pages of 20 news items each. In accordance with this characteristic, in order to select units, cluster sampling has been carried out: 400 front pages, containing a total of 8,000 units, were chosen at random. This means that we are working with a 99% confidence and a 1.5% margin of error. The 400 front pages were downloaded from Menéame manually on 19 May 2016 and the 8,000 news items were analysed over the following 12 months.

The origin variable is one of the 11 categories that have been used in the study. In order to codify it, nine sub-categories have been established: 1) Conventional Spanish news media outlet; 2) Conventional foreign news media outlet; 3) News agency; 4) Digital Spanish news media outlet; 5) Digital foreign news media outlet; 6) Social networking service; 7) Website or portal; 8) Blog; 9) Other.

It is important to specify that, although all the news that reach Menéame originate on digital media –that is to say, they are pieces of content that are on the Internet–, some of the media have an offline aspect, since they originated in the traditional press, radio and television; these are the ones we have called *conventional*. Others, however, are digital natives, because they have been online since they were founded; these are those which we have called *digital*. We have considered news agencies as conventional media, without entering into further considerations about their nature or geographical origin, and remembering that they do not have a significant presence on the aggregator and that during recent years they have experienced a fast and profound transformation that is not the subject matter of this study.

4. Results

4.1. Origin of the news items

The total number of news items analysed during the first ten years of Menéame has been 8,000, of which 3,324 (41.6%) come from conventional media and 4,676 (58.4%) from digital media. With regard to the quantity of media outlets present during the period studied, there are a total of 2,841, of which 491 (17.2%) are conventional media and 2,350 (82.8%) are digital media. On Table 1 these figures are broken down:

Table 1: Source of new items.

| | | No. of media | Total% of media | No. of news items | Total% of news |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Conventional media | Spanish news media outlet | 245 | 8.6 | 2,533 | 31.7 |
| | Foreign news media outlet | 223 | 7.8 | 510 | 6.4 |
| | News agency | 23 | 0.8 | 281 | 3.5 |
| Digital media | Spanish news media outlet | 239 | 8.4 | 1,075 | 13.4 |
| | Foreign news media outlet | 81 | 2.9 | 125 | 1.6 |
| | Social networking service | 67 | 2.4 | 337 | 4.2 |
| | Website or portal | 678 | 23.9 | 1,186 | 14.8 |
| | Blog | 1,179 | 41.5 | 1,830 | 22.9 |
| | Other | 106 | 3.7 | 123 | 1.5 |
| Total | | 2,841 | 100.0 | 8,000 | 100.0 |

Source: Own elaboration.

The large number of media outlets present on the aggregator are unequally distributed with regard to the number of news items published by each one, given that just a few of them have many news items, while most of them disseminated very few. Of the 2,841 media outlets identified on Menéame the ones that published most news items were the following:

Table 2: The 30 news outlets with greatest visibility on Menéame.

| Position | Media outlet | No. of news items | Total% of news |
|----------|--------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1 | elmundo.es | 286 | 3.58% |
| 2 | elpais.com | 282 | 3.53% |
| 3 | europapress.com | 217 | 2.71% |
| 4 | publico.es | 199 | 2.49% |
| 5 | youtube.com | 181 | 2.26% |
| 6 | 20minutos.es | 167 | 2.09% |
| 7 | eldiario.es | 125 | 1.56% |
| 8 | elconfidencial.com | 123 | 1.54% |
| 9 | lavanguardia.com | 123 | 1.54% |
| 10 | abc.es | 120 | 1.50% |
| 11 | ecodiario.economista.es | 110 | 1.38% |
| 12 | lainformacion.com | 89 | 1.11% |
| 13 | cadener.com | 77 | 0.96% |
| 14 | elperiodico.com | 67 | 0.84% |
| 15 | yahoo.com | 66 | 0.83% |
| 16 | terra.com | 53 | 0.66% |

| | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------|----|-------|
| 17 | vozpopuli.com | 52 | 0.65% |
| 18 | lavozdegalicia.es | 51 | 0.64% |
| 19 | bbc.com | 49 | 0.61% |
| 20 | elplural.com | 47 | 0.59% |
| 21 | levante-emv.com | 46 | 0.58% |
| 22 | adn.es | 44 | 0.55% |
| 23 | twitter.com | 42 | 0.53% |
| 24 | es.gizmodo.com | 40 | 0.50% |
| 25 | rtve.es | 37 | 0.46% |
| 26 | bandaancha.eu | 36 | 0.45% |
| 27 | elboletin.com | 29 | 0.36% |
| 28 | libertaddigital.com | 29 | 0.36% |
| 29 | escolar.net | 28 | 0.35% |
| 30 | xataka.com | 28 | 0.35% |

Source: Own elaboration.

When analysing the development of the different kinds of category during the period, it was noticed that there had been a growth in news from conventional media in the early years, which went from publishing 24.2% in 2006 to 50.31% in 2010. From then on, they experienced a falling trend (47.82% in 2011; 42.74% in 2012; 40.03% in 2013), that was much sharper in the last two years (24.28% in 2014, 29.28% in 2015). The digital media, on the other hand, remained quite stable over the course of the period, with the exception of the first and the last two years (75.8% in 2006; 58.65% in 2007; 51.25% in 2010; 59.97% in 2013; 70.02% in 2015).

Within conventional media, it was the Spanish ones that underwent the greatest decrease, while the foreign ones show a slight increase in presence over the years. The same happens with the agencies, which have a rising importance on Menéame, although bearing in mind that this weight is slight. In the case of the digital media the trend is the opposite, given that what stands out is the increase experienced by the Spanish news media (4.8% in 2006; 8.67% in 2009; 16.19% in 2012; 29.98% in 2015), while foreign news media have a falling presence (going from 2.8% in 2006 to 1.6% in 2016). It is striking that the significance of the blogs descends gradually over the course of the period of time analyzed. Websites and portals in general stay at the same level of presence; it is the same with the social media, although these media do experience a slight increase in the last years of our period.

4.2. Conventional media

491 conventional media outlets have been identified, that is to say, press, radio or television news media organizations or news agencies that exist off the Internet, or, being only available digitally, had a conventional origin. Of them, 245 (49.9%) are Spanish media, 223 (45.4%) foreign and 23 (4.7%) agencies. With regard to the Spanish outlets, just ten of them have a 58% share of all the news from all the conventional media outlets, as can be seen on Table 3. This figure is worth mentioning, since it indicates that 4% of the conventional media organizations based in Spain included on Menéame generate over half of all the news items published in their category.

Table 3: Conventional Spanish media outlets with the greatest presence on Menéame.

| | No. of news items | % of the total from conventional Spanish media |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| elmundo.es | 286 | 11.29% |
| elpais.com | 282 | 11.13% |
| publico.es | 187 | 7.38% |
| 20minutos.es | 167 | 6.59% |
| lavanguardia.com | 123 | 4.86% |
| abc.es | 120 | 4.74% |
| ecodiario.economista.es | 110 | 4.34% |
| cadenaser.com | 77 | 3.04% |
| elperiodico.com | 67 | 2.65% |
| lavozdegalicia.es | 51 | 2.01% |

Source: Own elaboration.

The main conventional Spanish media whose news ends up on Menéame are general information newspapers, four of which stand out: *El País*, *El Mundo*, *Público*¹ and *20 minutos*.

In 2014 seven of these media outlets disappear from Menéame: *El Mundo*, *El País*, *Abc*, *elEconomista*, *El Periódico*, *La Voz de Galicia* and *La Vanguardia*. From then on, only *Público*, *zominutos.es* and *Cadena Ser* continue to be present. As a result of this disappearance, the quantitative importance that the conventional media had in terms of providing news to Menéame fell, going from a maximum share of 38.85% in 2010 to a minimum of 13.26% in 2014.

Looking now at foreign news media, the data indicate that two television companies stand out over and above newspapers: the BBC (9.61%) and CNN (4.12%). These are followed by *dailymail.co.uk* (3.73%), *guardian.co.uk* (3.14%), *actualidad.rt.com* (2.55%), *clarin.com* (2.55%), *telegraph.co.uk* (2.55%), *eluniversal.com.mx* (2.35%) and *infobae.com* (2.35%). No other media outlet achieves a figure above 2%. The ten conventional foreign media outlets with greatest visibility on Menéame make up 34.9% of the total of 510 news items from media classified as in this category.

The news agencies have a much smaller presence than the other conventional media. Among the 23 found, the top ten contribute 95.4% of all the news disseminated on Menéame with an origin in this category. The prominent agency is *Europa Press* (77.22%), followed at a considerable distance by *Reuters* (7.12%), *SINC* –an agency that specializes in science, technology and innovation– (3.56%) and *Agencia Efe* (3.2%).

4.3. Digital media

A total of 2,350 digital media have been identified, of which 239 (10.17%) are Spanish news media, 81 (3.45%) foreign news media, 1,179 (50.17%) blogs, 678 (28.85%) portals/websites, 67 (2.85%) social media, and 106 (4.51%) have been classified as Other.

If the 239 Spanish news media outlets are considered, the ten that register the highest number of publications provide half of the news from this kind of media, specifically 50.23%. It is the same as with the conventional media: ten media outlets make up close to half of the news disseminated in the category.

In this classification, *eldiario.es* stands out from the others (11.63%), even more so considering that it only began in 2012, that is to say, that it is only present in the second half of the period analyzed. It is followed by *elconfidencial.es* (11.44%) –which has been published since 2007– and *lainformacion.com* (8.28%) –whose appearance dates from 2009–.

It is also worth mentioning *vozpopuli.com* –which has a notable presence (4.84%) although it was only created in 2011–, *soitu.es* (1.95%) –which was only published for two years

¹ The *Público* newspaper is a digital one, since it only publishes on the Internet. However, we have considered it as conventional because since it was founded (September 2007) until February 2012 it had a paper edition.

(2008 and 2009)–, huffingtonpost.es (1.86%) –founded in 2012– and elmundotoday.com (1.58%) –which appeared in 2010–.

With regard to the 81 foreign news media, the ones that hold the top positions are two television companies: sp.rian.ru (6.4%), a Russian news channel in Spanish, and news.com.au (5.6%), an Australian television channel.

With regard to blogs, the first point to highlight is the large number: a total of 1,179. Table 5 sets out the ten which individually provide the highest number of news items with their origin in this kind of media outlet:

Table 4: Blogs with the greatest presence on Menéame.

| | No. of news items | % of the total from blogs |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| es.gizmodo.com | 40 | 2.19% |
| escolar.net | 28 | 1.53% |
| xataka.com | 28 | 1.53% |
| fogonazos.es | 20 | 1.09% |
| microsiervos.com | 20 | 1.09% |
| genbeta.com | 17 | 0.93% |
| cookingideas.es | 14 | 0.77% |
| elblogsalmon.com | 14 | 0.77% |
| abadiadigital.com | 12 | 0.66% |
| mimesacojea.com | 12 | 0.66% |

Source: Own elaboration.

Despite the fact that these ten are the blogs that contribute most news, they only provide Menéame with 11.2% of the total news classified as from this kind of source. In fact, these sources show very low percentages in terms of publications if we take into consideration the total volume of news from blogs (22.9%). In general, the large majority of them are only mentioned once, twice or three times, which is related to the vast quantity of blogs that exist on the Internet. As an outstanding piece of data, it is worth mentioning that only 13 of the blogs present on Menéame contributed ten or more news items.

If we look at portals and websites, which achieve a total of 678 items, it can be seen that the ten with greatest contributions provide 21.6% of the news created by websites. This is just over a fifth of the news included in this category.

The main websites that are included on Menéame are yahoo.com (5.56%), terra.com (4.47%) and bandaancha.eu (3.04%). As occurred in the blogs category, the percentages that these three portals contribute are very small, due to the large number of portals and websites that are present on the aggregator, and apart from these none have a presence larger than 2%.

Lastly, the social media section includes a total of 67 of these sources. The following table shows the ten that contributed most news items to Menéame during the period analyzed:

Table 5: Social media with the greatest presence on Menéame.

| | No. of news items | % of the total from social media |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| youtube.com | 181 | 53.71% |
| twitter.com | 42 | 12.46% |
| flickr.com | 18 | 5.34% |
| google.dirson.com | 7 | 2.08% |
| facebook.com | 6 | 1.78% |
| video.google.com | 5 | 1.48% |

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-------|
| vimeo.com | 5 | 1.48% |
| sindinero.org | 4 | 1.19% |
| wikipedia.org | 4 | 1.19% |
| thebigfoto.com | 3 | 0.89% |

Source: Own elaboration.

The total percentage of news that originate on the ten social media with the greatest presence is 81.6%. YouTube stands out significantly above the rest, contributing more than a half of news items (53.71%), leaving behind other social media such as Twitter (12.46%), Flickr (5.34%) and Facebook (1.78%).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The relevance of this article is justified by the need to find out the source, in terms of media outlets, of the content that users can find on news aggregators, with the goal of contributing to research into the function of the media in the new communications ecosystem. With the appearance of the Internet, the media no longer act as privileged gatekeepers of information but rather have to accept the fact that citizens have other tools with which to access sources and participate in communication processes (Gronemeyer, 2006, p. 26). Furthermore, these tools offer the public the capacity to interfere in processes of agenda-setting and framing characteristic of the major media organizations, since the Internet makes it possible to disseminate information creating one's own media, which will potentially be widely disseminated (Candón, 2012). For these reasons, it is essential to find out what kind of media are those that have the highest visibility on the big news aggregators.

The study carried out established that most of the Menéame news items come from digital media, and so the first of the hypotheses considered (H1) is therefore refuted, according to which the conventional media would have a more important presence than the digital ones. None of the previous studies into Menéame have analysed this aspect, and so it is impossible to compare results. However, in the literature, it is possible to find different authors (Ramonet, 2011; Candón, 2012; Picard, 2014) who share the thesis that Internet users continue to go onto the net in search of access to traditional media outlets, and so these continue to dominate the public agenda. The data² regarding media consumption confirm this reality, showing that in Spain the conventional media are those preferred by users who wish to inform themselves (59% offline, 39% online), much more than the social media and blogs (16%).

It seemed reasonable that if the traditional media are the ones most used to obtain information, then they would be the ones that have the greatest presence on Menéame, this being the reason for our first hypothesis (H1). However, we believe it is worth adding some nuance to these unexpected results. In October 2014 a modification of the Intellectual Property Law came into force, demanding that aggregators pay considerable sums of money to publish the contents of the major newspapers. Months before this measure was introduced, in February, Menéame users began a boycott against the websites of the Asociación de Editores de Diarios Españoles (Association of Spanish Newspaper Publishers) –which promoted the legal measure–, which meant that a number of newspapers disappeared from the front pages of Menéame. From that time on, the relative presence of conventional media reduced, when compared with digital media, and so we might tentatively state that, if it had not been for this measure, the average importance of the digital media and traditional media would have been shared out at practically 50%.

The second hypothesis (H2) is only partially confirmed, in that we conclude that the conventional news media have lost considerable weight during the first ten years of Menéame –results partly explained in the paragraph above– but only in favour of new digital media and

² Source: Digital News Report 2017, written by the University of Navarre's Center for Internet Studies and Digital Life. Retrieved from <http://www.digitalnewsreport.es>.

not of social media (blogs and social media). In 2012, eldiario.es appeared, and from 2013 it became the medium most accessed by users, while the blogs fell in terms of importance and the social media maintained their position. These data do not coincide with those of the Digital News Report, according to which people's use of social media to inform themselves has increased in recent years. It is possible that later studies that analyse Menéame content, taking into consideration the user age variable, might be able to explain these conclusions, given that the cited study also indicates that Internet users aged 18 to 44 prefer to access online media for information (with similar percentages for digital and social media), compared to those over 45, who choose conventional media and digital news media to a much greater degree than social media and blogs.

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