Harnessing Data and Digital Journalism in Latin America

Cultures and Contexts

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Introduction

An Endless Source of Inspiration

Latin America is composed of a diverse group of countries, all with particular landscapes, peoples, and cultures. It is generally understood that the region consists of the entire continent of South America besides Central America, and the islands of the Caribbean and Mexico. Despite this diversity, the context of the region is marked by a news ecosystem

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often criticized for the concentration of political clientelism, ownership, and a consistent failure to represent its pluralism (Porto, 2016). This scenario has begun to change with the emergence of Latin American digital media, which provided new ways to communicate and consume information.

A prior study analyzed the survey results conducted by the nonprofit organization SembraMedia (2017), which has been dedicated to mapping the digital media ecosystem in Latin America. It has identified five critical elements for the development of these initiatives: the active participation of women; the search for financial sustainability; a need for training, including the use of technologies; market-oriented production; and the reliance on collaboration, including with traditional media outlets (Salaverría et al., 2019).

Similarly, Latin American journalists face precarious circumstances not well understood in the Western world, as precarity is perceived in wealthy nations as job insecurity. However, in the Global South, particularly in Latin America, insecurity is translated into the risks and fears that typically accompany each phase of news reporting. Therefore, Latin American journalists live under censorship, political oppression, and other forms of repression, requiring them to unleash their creativity to produce content that positively impacts their society (Matthews & Onyemaobi, 2020).

These characteristics have been exacerbated with the advent of the information age and the changes brought about by digitalization. Thus,

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news outlets across the region embraced news norms, routines, and practices (Boczkowski, 2005). Latin American news organizations are finding new avenues of growth, optimizing operations, and paying attention to topics that other latitudes were not focused on, which has opened new opportunities and diversified the news media ecosystem.

In other cases, these challenges have also contributed to adjustments in the professional values that guide journalistic work. In this chapter, we will explore several compelling examples of Latin American journalistic practices that have been shaped and redefined by advances in technology and data. Through a combination of content analysis and interviews conducted between 2019 and 2020, we discuss that Latin American news organizations are finding their own way to innovate and harness data and digital journalism in their newsrooms despite the lack of technological and research resources available in Western democracies. By merging, contrasting, and adapting from Western "ideals" and non-Western "realities," journalism in Latin America builds onto a journalism culture that is not in opposition, but instead in confluence and convergence with international trends, but with a strong appeal of innovation, collaboration, and participation. To demonstrate this, we look at five topics to shed light on the future of journalism in the region, namely praxis, business models, data journalism, audience participation, and platforms.

PRAXIS

Journalism Shaped to Resist

The evolving digital landscape serves as a response to the over-concentrated and politicized regional media systems. Looking at Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) characterized the Latin American media system by its 'low level of newspaper circulation, a tradition of advocacy reporting, instrumentalization of privately-owned media, the politicization of public broadcasting and broadcast regulation, and limited development of the overall media industry' (177). Further research studies have identified that civil society has more fragile ties in the region (Waisbord, 2009). In contrast, the media system of different Latin American countries have been highly influenced by both the State and the market (Fox & Waisbord, 2009). These influences are mainly due to the economic investment that the State provides to the media industry, such

as official propaganda. Thus, governments have consolidated themselves as the region's leading financier of the media, which persists until today.

Previous studies have identified that the so-called mainstream media in Latin America dominates over 80% of the region's production, access, and distribution of content and news across the region (Becerra & Mastrini, 2010; Gutiérrez & Ocampo, 2019). Scholars have emphasized that the Latin American mainstream media presents common traits, such as large audiences, commercial orientation, and proximity to official sources. Even among the most ideologically progressive outlets, these characteristics tend to reproduce certain discourses that reinforce the status quo (Carvalho, 2017). Thus, private media preponderance directly affects the content disseminated, as the media in the region does not necessarily search for the public interest but rather to expand its audience.

In this context, incorporating the new deployments of information and communication technologies into the media environment resulted in changes in journalistic practices to overcome the media system's dominant structures. It allowed the emergence of countless new actors as active editorial content producers, disconnected from the mainstream media. To combat the disruption of its social role, journalism as a profession engages in new models and formats that bring communities and other social actors together.

Journalism has suffered a disruption by new information and communication technologies that deranged and reorganized the circuitry of practices in different ways. To analyze the praxis in Latin America, we circulated a questionnaire with around a hundred news organizations. Data were collected in three phases between late 2018 and the beginning of 2020. First, an initial questionnaire was designed and then submitted to the feedback of Brazilian practitioners. A second phase was sent to other Latin American countries. Lastly, some of these practitioners were invited for interviews in the first half of 2020. Our data brought two main findings: Latin American digital media organizations see the need for innovation in journalistic practices and the widespread adoption of technologies will result in new norms and routines in newsrooms.

Embracing New Practices

As an example of new practices, collaboration has been one of the most common strategies to deal with the complexity of the local context. The Brazilian media organization #Colabora defends the idea that

collaboration should feature intrinsically in the journalists' work, that is, this should be employed not only when there are working ties, but in their daily activities. The organization's members believe that collaboration should spread across different parts of the world, providing information needed in real-time and forming a worldwide "network of collaborators." The initiative also considers collaboration between independent media outlets, which can share resources helping to overcome their limitations to reduce costs, such as sharing physical space and legal support. Other news organizations have relied on alliances to expand access to information in more distant locations, such as the Peruvian Wayka. The outlet mainly uses community radio stations to bring information from remote areas in Peru.

However, collaborating does not mean working for free. Among the initiatives heard in the interviews, employees' paid work prevails, either as duly registered employees, such as in the case of Wayka, or through recurring scholarships (for example, the Brazilian news outlet Amazônia Real dedicated to covering the Amazon region). In other cases, the payments are made for production, such as the case of #Colabora. On the other hand, #Colabora admits the volunteers' participation, that is, people who like the project and want to collaborate for free.

However, the remuneration paid by the digital media in Latin America is insufficient. According to the respondents, only 18.3% said employees could keep working exclusively in these media organizations. Among the others, 34.4% said that they could not maintain themselves in any way only with the work carried out in these journalistic groups. In comparison, another 43% claimed they could partially support themselves, having to perform other services to supplement their income. The low or even the lack of remuneration often hampers the exclusive dedication of journalists in digital media organizations, which could potentially impact their content's quality and frequency.

Even with the rough and precarious conditions, Latin American journalists are looking for ways to engage with the public and work with professionals from different backgrounds. For this, sharing content, workforce, and financial strategies became essential features in the region. However, journalism's central core values remain unchanged. The search to bring diversity, a plurality of voices, hold power accountable, and deliver quality information to the public remains the primary purpose and commitment of these organizations.

Consequently, this is set to become another means of distinguishing between digital and traditional media. While the mainstream media is associated with the stigma of the defense of the interests of the most influential players, the digital media seeks to focus its practices on truth-seeking work. Thus, the reaffirmation of traditional journalistic mission and values combined with a position that emphasizes journalism's social role in the fight against injustices and inequalities to build social transformations become the primary justification for the existence and survival of the digital journalistic groups in Latin America.

Business Models

A Never-Ending Search for Sustainability

As we discussed, change is constant in the media landscape. With the digital revolution, the legacy media business model based on ads revenue had its success limited in an online and networked environment where platforms hold power (Sirkkunen & Cook, 2012). In the search for a sustainable model, Latin American media organizations have explored different revenue streams that could turn journalism into a viable product.

From Basic to More Innovative Ideas

While target advertising continues to be an essential revenue source with programmatic ads, native advertising, and sponsored content, many news outlets worldwide are also adopting subscription models based on audiences' funding (Arrese, 2016; Chyi, 2012; Pickard & Williams, 2014). Historically, Latin American news organizations have increasingly relied on funding from government advertising and subsidies differently from their Western counterparts, which translated into a state interventionism culture (Waisbord, 2014). In contrast, Latin American digital news media has relied their business model mostly on philanthropic funding (Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Rashidian et al., 2018). To circumvent this dependency, some organizations have focused on niche markets to sustain their business models, such as the case of Nexo Jornal and JOTA (both from Brazil). Other news media are relying on funding journalism through more innovative ideas, such as training, workshops, and consulting, such as Ojo con mi pisto (Guatemala).

In another vein, news outlets in the region adopt affinity clubs as a strategy to make their subscription model more competitive and robust for audiences (García-Santamaría et al., 2016), such as La Nación and Clarín (both from Argentina). In it, any reader can have discounts on a myriad of products and services, reducing the costs of the subscription plan to almost zero. Thus, audiences can see a return on their investment through these offered discounts.

Another interesting source of income comes from the sales of goods (merchandising products) on news websites, such as t-shirts and cups, working as an "alternative means of financing news" (Harlow, 2020, p. 1), such as GK (Ecuador). Latin American news outlets are also embracing an audience-centric model (Carpes & Sanseverino Gruszynski, 2020). In it, the public is invited to become a member and help news outlets in part of their news production process. This model was adopted by Red/Acción (Argentina) and La Diária (Uruguay), for instance.

In interviews with 18 Latin American news outlets, our respondents bemoaned that it is hard to make the audience pay for news in the region, even though crowdfunding has become popular in Western countries. In fact, only some news outlets, such as The Intercept (Brazil) and Rutas del Conflicto (Colombia), could raise a significant sum of money from the audience.

Two Main Sources of Funding

To deploy potential innovation and transform newsrooms into more tech-savvy spaces, media organizations need a substantial amount of funds. In the region, two main revenue streams are overcoming these structural limitations and driving innovation in these outlets. Philanthropic funding and temporary grant-giving became essential resources for many organizations in Latin America. Most philanthropic grants are provided by Western family businesses using corporate (family-owned) capital, posing risks to bottom-feeding and shaping news agendas with specific interests of these institutions (Lancaster, 2008; Salar & Lugo-Ocando, 2018). Conversely, foreign aid can be essential for media plurality by introducing new voices and viewpoints into the media ecosystem. However, this soft intervention through policy-making has impacted vital areas, such as education, health, and the economy (Salar & Lugo-Ocando, 2018).

By relying on "large grants from foundations" (Konieczna, 2020, p. 135), media outlets can sustain their business and support several

projects. Despite some hope that foundations could be a potential solution to the failure of conventional business models in the news media industry (Benson, 2018), critical voices have pointed out the level of independence of these publishers (Schwab, 2020; Scott et al., 2019; Wright et al., 2019). Furthermore, philanthropic funding cannot be sustained long-term, as it cannot be renewed after the first round (Harlow, 2020).

Thus, news media always look for novel ways to sustain their business strategies. Many partnerships with technology companies, such as Facebook and Google, have emerged recently. In these projects, news outlets deploy cutting-edge solutions in their newsrooms, such as AI technology or data-driven projects (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2021). Similar to foundations' funds, news outlets also depend on these grants with an expiration date to hire temporary project managers, journalists, and technologists to deploy projects (Smith, 2020). An example is Aos Fatos (Brazi), which developed bots with big tech grants. However, most of these projects are one-time monetary awards with their funds ending with the projects' life cycle. After that, these projects, which require updates, tend to vanish due to the low income of these news outlets. For this reason, some Latin American news organizations decided to rely on a multi-revenue stream along with new practices, norms, and routines that can bring strategic value to their business models.

Data Journalism

Bringing Data Storytelling Principles to Latin American Newsrooms

The need for creativity and innovation, along with the deployment of information communication technologies, have motivated news media to rethink how they work and incorporate these technologies into newsrooms (Koivula et al., 2020). Data journalism was popularized by *The Guardian*'s Datablog in 2009. However, the concepts behind this practice have been around for a long time. Its roots lie in the broader use of social science methods and data analysis to generate and test journalistic hypotheses, which was known as computer-assisted reporting (CAR) (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2021).

In the Global South, especially in Latin America, two events are critical milestones in using data journalism software tools and mobile collaboration: the offshore bank investigations of Panama and the Paradise Papers

(Baack, 2016; Obermayer & Obermaier, 2016). Led by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), this investigative series on offshore banks joined journalists from the five continents to analyze a leaked set of 11.5 million documents from a secret source. These projects helped journalists change their mindset from the lonely wolf to the radical sharing model by creating a culture of collaboration (Mesquita & de-Lima-Santos, 2021; de-Lima-Santos 2022).

Data journalism in Latin America has its unique set of hurdles that could be overcome using distributed innovation and a coordinated collaboration effort to accelerate the deployment of the practice (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021). Since its introduction in the region, several organizations have collaborated to disseminate knowledge and support data reporting. In Central America, Internews organized several courses and training programs in data storytelling for journalists in the Northern Triangle of Central America, which includes Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. Similarly, *Escuela de Datos* (School of Data) has also contributed to the development of the practice with courses, seminars, and published works for the Spanish-speaking community in Latin America. Brazil has also played a prominent role in developing data-driven storytelling in newsrooms in South America. In the country, an independent chapter of the *Escola de Dados* (School of Data) was founded in 2013. Almost at the same time, a Hacks/Hackers chapter was launched in São Paulo (Brazil) (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021).

These international grassroots communities that bring journalists and technologists paved the way for regional data reporting, leading to successful cases. In Argentina, *La Nación* became a data journalism powerhouse in the region, becoming internationally recognized for its excellence (Palomo et al., 2019). Recently, new organizations in other countries of South America have evolved to focus exclusively on data and investigative reporting and becoming recognized for their outstanding work, such as *Convoca* (Peru), *Ojo Público* (Peru), *Postdata.club* (Cuba), *Rutas del Conflicto* (Colombia), among others.

A Range of Challenges to Overcome

Behind this flourishing industry in Latin America, there are a considerable number of practical hurdles that need to be overcome. These limitations demand time and resources that newsrooms are, in most cases, unable to provide. These constraints take many shapes and forms. An example is the

freedom of information (FOI) and open data cultures that remain a persistent issue in the region. According to the UN, only 19 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have national FOI laws (Borges-Rey, 2019). In many countries, these laws do not echo in easy access or even the quality and integrity of the data. Latin American nations did not adopt digital and structured formats that enable organizations to grasp the knowledge quickly from these data. Some data journalists interviewed bemoaned that they spent much of their time in two tasks: negotiations to have access to the data or transformation of non-machine readable documents to digital formats.

Another challenge faced by the Latin American data journalism community is the lack of resources and staff that may explain the absence of attractiveness for certain news products. Many data journalists mentioned that they do not have a data team or have to work with technologists that work for the whole newsroom. It mirrors the approach taken in other newsrooms around the world, which do not "immediately afford specialized staffers, so single members as a 'one-man-band' (Hollifield et al., 2001) are in charge of various tasks" (Stalph, 2020, p. 2). This limits data journalists' ability to work on more extensive and complex stories.

Finding Solutions Through Cooperation

The expansion of the traditional definition of journalism (Carlson & Lewis, 2015) and the significant rise of peripheral actors (Schapals, 2022) and interlopers (Eldridge, 2017), which support the work of data journalism, have impacted the way journalists do their job. These changes allowed newsrooms to embrace innovative and cooperative mindsets in order to overcome economic hurdles and staff shortages (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021). In fact, collaborations have had a greater return on an organization's productivity and performance, such as the Lava Jato scandal (also known as Operation Car Wash) that unfolded in Brazil in March 2014, after a police investigation. This event is considered Latin America's largest known corruption scheme in living memory (Lagunes & Svejnar, 2020).

In Peru, this investigation was primarily undertaken by news outlets that identified the relationship between the government and the Brazilian conglomerate Odebrecht. IDL-Reporteros (Peru) led an alliance between journalists in the region to become more powerful across the region and "win the game." Joining forces with journalists from La Prensa (Panama),

La Nación (Argentina), Armando.info (Venezuela), and Sudestada (Uruguay), the alliance called the Latin American Network of Structured Investigation helped, despite the lack of resources and workforce that these outlets face, unveil the case of corruption.

These practitioners relied on data journalism skills to analyze "26 years of contract of Odebrecht and other companies that belong to this club of corruption," said Romina Mella, an investigative journalist from IDL-Reporteros (November 2020). Similarly, other smaller data projects have also relied on data and collaboration to produce cross-country stories. "Pequeñas Inocentes" (Little Innocents), led by Ginna Morelo from El Tiempo (Colombia) with the collaboration of El Universal (Mexico), El Comercial (El Salvador), La Nación (from Argentina and Costa Rica), El Comercio (Peru), El País (Uruguay), showed the numbers of gender-based violence in those countries.

Another critical aspect that boosted their efficiency and effectiveness was using third-party tools to support data-driven storytelling (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2021). For newsrooms struggling to develop data units due to the lack of institutional backing, these tools come in handy to assist journalists that do not have the technical skills required to produce data stories. In particular, newsrooms with small teams or single data journalists use these tools more often than those with data units composed of journalists, technologists, and professionals with other backgrounds, such as La Nación (Argentina). For instance, the Chilean public-service media, 24 Horas, has a two-person data team, which makes it excessively difficult to produce data stories. Thus, they rely on a range of third-party tools to build data stories in their newsroom, such as Infogram.

In summary, we can describe a threefold approach chosen by the Latin American data journalism community: (1) a collaborative effort among the different institutions, such as media organizations and civil society entities, to enhance and facilitate the practice and promote open data, (2) the expansion of boundaries of skill sets found in newsrooms, and (3) leveraging existing out-of-the-box solutions to overcome the barriers that exist. Although some of these practices are found in Western countries, the Latin American data journalism community brings specially-designed characteristics to its work to support the lack of funding and staffing.

User-Generated Content

Punctual, But Promising: Engaging the Public to Make the News

As newspapers are thrust into the dynamics of the internet, where everyone with an opinion can be heard, User-Generated Content (UGC) has become an essential part of journalism. However, journalists, media companies, and researchers still have plenty to learn. These professionals should consider the regionalities and particularities of UGC when adopting its use. For example, limited local resources and complexities and context specificities can be particularly complex to benefit the public content. Additionally, they can change how journalism is produced.

In Latin America, the appropriations of UGC by news sites vary just like the organizations, whose practices change according to their origin, structure, and publishing platforms. Latin American news organizations must continuously adapt to their audience's demands and new technological advancements. At the same time, they also need to respond to a change in social (economic, political, and cultural) contexts (Salaverría et al., 2019).

Having a big picture of the current development in Latin American news sites, the authors could identify the limited appropriations of users' content, especially for storytelling. User participation is still met with moderation and limited to specific spaces and activities. Comment boxes and buttons that ask the user to share the content via email or social media are now nearly rudimentary tools for news sites. Still, they remain popular resources to provide an interactive feature for users across the region, even providing a minimal form of engagement with the reader and limited participation in the news process (Peters & Witschge, 2015).

In the end, news outlets in the region produce quality journalism, thorough collaborative investigations, innovative multimedia resources, and creative presentations of data storytelling reporting but without public engagement. Consequently, this reflects how resources and tools have arisen with the advent of the internet and new technologies, as they expanded the interactivity via multiple channels. However, the innovative uses of UGC, which go further than the simple use of these tools, are still punctual in Latin American news sites. Unfortunately, they do not automatically correspond to an expansion of the adoption of UGC in journalism and the willingness of news organizations to make room for unfettered participation by the public.

In Time of Crisis, the Wise Build Bridges

While UGC is still limited, recent events might help to change it. The COVID-19 health crisis has called for creativity from news outlets worldwide. While the health crisis has brought many challenges, exciting initiatives that use audiences' content also emerged. GK (Ecuador) launched a few special projects because of the spread of COVID-19 in the country, such as "Los que no aparecen," a series of stories that delivers first-person reports of those who are looking for the bodies of missing relatives during the height of the emergency in Ecuador.

Red/Acción (Argentina) is another prominent example. The newsroom puts user participation at the forefront of its journalistic model. The news outlet has created a channel for collaboration on stories between its journalists and the most active members. Similarly, Red/Acción always has an open call for partnerships with its members, continuously creating stories that mix content from readers and journalists. During the pandemic, the news outlet launched a series of stories, combining personal testimonials about the changes in routines from users and narratives from its journalists to bring different perspectives of a new reality, such as love, caring, and human connection. This was a way to stimulate people as life went from 'real' to digital environments (Sinay, 2020a, 2020b).

Similarly, The Intercept Brasil (TIB), the Brazilian edition of the American The Intercept, brings an exciting approach to the use of UGC. TIB has engaged the audience to enhance its journalism. The organization adapted to the circumstances imposed by the pandemic, maximizing and optimizing the use of social media platforms. For example, Instagram was used as a space for audience consumption and participation (Vázquez-Herrero et al., 2019). In covering the pandemic, TIB has made a consistent and systematic effort to make room for testimonials from people who came from people outside the newsroom that were rarely heard, even in times of crisis. TIB published a series of testimonials of users affected by the coronavirus pandemic in a dedicated section called "Voices" on its website (Carvalho & Sousa, 2020; Fernandes, 2020), relaying stories such as the loss of loved ones and the lack of resources and support by different institutions.

All of these stories come from users whose voices gained for the first time space in media outlets brought to life the different aspects of the human side during the COVID-19 pandemic. These examples illustrate how Latin American news outlets are overcoming their limitations to

create an environment for public participation in the creation of narratives, using their content to help tell the story and incorporate their point of view into the news (Gruszynski Sanseverino & de-Lima-Santos, 2021). This does not preclude mediation or diminishes the journalist's work, but opens different possibilities for storytelling in news reporting. This demonstrates that the public can help journalism make the news if organizations are willing to encourage participation, making a proper space for UGC that fits the audience into their idea of the profession and exceeding the traditional transactional relationship with the public. By placing the crowd at the, Latin American newsrooms have also made progress for active public participation. However, considering the technological advances, this is still insufficient.

Platforms

Finding a Balance Between Dependence and Strategic Use

The relationship between news organizations and platforms, in general, has evolved in contradictory ways over the years. During most of the 2000s, concerned with copyrights of their content, publishers were cautious and even refractory to have a presence on Google News, Facebook, and Twitter (Smyrnaios, 2018). The game changed during most of the 2010s when these structures became the most influential players in the digital economy and helped news organizations constantly reach bigger audiences through their algorithmic selection tools. During this stage, news media began to adopt more features and increasingly comply with distribution guidelines proposed by the technology giants. This scenario led the Tow Center for Digital Journalism, for example, to assume the term platform press to refer to the mainstream legacy and digital native media, which seemed already resigned to having most of its content distribution intermediated by these structures (Bell & Owen, 2017; Rashidian et al., 2018).

The tide started to change again from the end of 2016, when Facebook made a series of modifications in its algorithms, whose effect was to limit the distribution of news at the expense of content published by family and friends—in theory, the type of material that achieves greater engagement within the platform (The Infinite Dial, 2019). Thus, publishers realized that the search for larger audiences through social media to convince

advertisers to drive revenue to their digital properties was over (Rashidian et al., 2019).

Most scholars have almost exclusively focused on the U.S. or European media markets. However, the scenario in Latin America is not radically different. It seems more complex because news companies usually have fewer resources and audiences are among the heaviest users of the Internet and social media platforms (Clement, 2019, 2020a, 2020b). At the same time, the public is the least inclined to spend their limited purchasing power on subscriptions and memberships to news media services (Newman et al., 2020). Hence, Latin American news publishers are less reliant on these tech companies and are hoping to develop strategies that drive more subscriptions or memberships instead of simply getting page views. Sometimes, it means adopting a more significant number and variety of platforms in different ways and depending less on a single one (Bell & Owen, 2017; Cornia et al., 2018; Nielsen & Ganter, 2018; Rashidian et al., 2018, 2019).

Conversely, Folha de S. Paulo, the leading legacy media in Brazil, took a radical and unusual approach to the world's most popular social network: it simply quit sharing its content on Facebook and stopped its chatbot on Messenger1. On the other hand, the newspaper decided to enhance its presence on Instagram by sharing not only posts of pictures and short videos but also stories and longer videos on IGTV, including live streams with journalists. The news outlet also produced a series of short video documentaries that complement its print and digital news pieces for YouTube. Similarly, the news organization is partnering with Spotify Studios to create "Café da Manhã," one of the most listened to podcasts in the country. During the elections, Folha de S. Paulo also opened channels on WhatsApp, the top messaging application in Brazil and Latin America (Campos Mello, 2018, 2019a, 2019b; Dias, 2018; Tardáguila et al., 2018). Unsurprisingly, this increasing proximity to the readers has already resulted in rising audience numbers and, consecutively, subscribers2.

Several Latin American news organizations are following similar strategies for platforms with some variations. For example, La Nacion (Argentina) received the 2020 World Digital Media Award from the WAN-IFRA on Social Media Engagement for its relaxed and entertaining approach to stories on the platform without losing sight of the informative side of their content. Interestingly, the company developed filters for audiences to use on their pictures and videos, as well as a series of 'good

stories' to improve people's spirits during the difficult period of confinement because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Diario El Vistazo (Venezuela) even managed to monetize its stories on Instagram and the statuses of WhatsApp. The local daily uses a format similar to its well-known public service announcements to enable individuals and companies in the El Tigre community (about six hours Southeast from Caracas with a population of around 240,000 inhabitants) to run their ads and classifieds for more than 70,000 followers on both platforms. According to the general manager Nilsa Varela Vargas, the organization had its best financial year in 2019 due to this investment (April 2020). Telefe Notícias (Argentina) took advantage of a Google News Initiative program to accelerate the development of news channels on YouTube. The organization made its local teams produce national programs on the platform. This was a challenge for traditional journalists who were used to the old-fashioned TV formats. Furthermore, most of these professionals were not so tech-savvy and lived in less developed areas far away from the capital Buenos Aires limiting their exposition to innovative formats, as explained by the company's digital news manager Leandro Camino (May 2020).

Some digital natives are focusing their efforts almost solely on platform distribution these days to reach sustainability. It is the case of companies like Posta (Argentina) and Rádio Novelo (Brazil), which are using their expertise in radio and podcast production to news organizations to provide content with distinctive formats in partnership with Spotify Studios. The Argentine producer focuses primarily on explanatory journalism. In the same vein, the Brazilian does in-depth narrative experiments like Retrato Narrado (Narrated Portrait), where each season draws a profile of a prominent personality, seeking to explain its origins, motivations, successes, defeats, and contradictions. The YouTube-based channel MyNews (Brazil) also took a grant from Google to build a larger team, experimenting with new formats and developing new partnerships to scale the business and launch a new membership program with exclusive content. Focused on memberships, Correio Sabiá and Seu Panorama (both from Brazil) are betting their chips on providing a daily curation of the leading news topics only on WhatsApp. Robot LaBot (Chile) developed a chatbot on Telegram to deliver a weekly conversation on a single subject and focused on more in-house investigations after receiving grants from international foundations, as explained by the founder Francisca Skoknic (May 2020).

The path to avoiding platform dependency seems to be more complicated for these emerging companies dedicated almost exclusively to a single application—such as YouTube, Spotify, WhatsApp, or Telegram—to grow than those diversifying their presence on them to explore their benefits strategically. On the other hand, if these "platform natives" have fewer resources, they also have less to lose with experimentation and are already born more accustomed to a digital environment where constant adaptation is necessary (Nieborg & Poell, 2018).

The Future of Journalism in Latin America

The Latin American news media industry has undergone profound and structural changes. While most technologically developed and economically powerful countries have seen a rapid expansion of digital technologies in newsrooms, the region has been trying to overcome its structural limitations, such as economic hurdles and staff shortages, to innovate (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021; Salaverría et al., 2019). Despite these challenges, our findings indicate that newsrooms are taking the opportunities that are presented to themselves to embrace novel technologies to create more developed ways to engage with the audience, such as the use of UGC and platforms.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has given impetus to the development of innovative uses of UGC in newsrooms. The isolation gave space for creativity, bringing audiences to the storytelling. Furthermore, newsrooms saw the opportunity for user content as various lockdowns and quarantines in different parts of the world restricted these professionals from reaching their sources.

Even to a limited extent, empowering a portion of these newsrooms to adopt novel technologies helps advancing their journalistic formats. Our findings show that the increased processing capabilities and the proliferation of pervasive devices allowed new forms of journalistic content to emerge in the region, such as automated journalism, artificial intelligence, audience analytics, and data journalism. Remarkably, the latter has become more routine and integrated into the ever-complex business models of Latin American news organizations.

While new forms of content bring better opportunities that can contribute to generating revenue and growth, Latin American news outlets are still seeking a sustainable solution for their business models that allow

them to adopt technological innovations in their newsrooms (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2022).

In the future, ubiquitous journalism can become more evident and organizations will need to keep pace with technological changes to produce something that engages their audiences (Salaverría & de-Lima-Santos, 2020). We are seeing an ever-growing trend toward the ubiquity of technology in our life brought by the Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, and the further deployment of AI systems. This promises a new revolution that combines advanced production techniques with intelligent technologies (de-Lima-Santos et al., 2022). However, without financial support, these projects will simply cease to exist.

One of the paths found by publishers in Latin America to develop these new forms was having big tech companies and philanthropic backing to prop up a model and create an appearance of viability. Through these grants, they can introduce technological evolutions causing the transformation of norms and routines in newsrooms (de-Lima-Santos & Mesquita, 2021). Similarly, the dependence on platforms is evident for emerging companies dedicated almost exclusively to a single application to build their business. In contrast, more prominent news outlets are diversifying their presence on different platforms to explore their benefits strategically without creating a strong path dependence—even though it still exists.

This chapter shows that the Latin American journalism industry has a bright future by bringing different ways to produce and consume journalism, despite facing multiple challenges that organizations and professionals face. Still, to become more prevalent in the news ecosystem, it needs to continue on a path of innovation to create business models that do not rely on funds that have an end date. By using their own practices and models of reporting, Latin American practitioners overcome their limitations to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and tools that could assist them in their daily tasks. This chapter contributes to further delineate the actual practice these journalists encounter in non-Western countries and helps to foster an understanding how journalism is practiced in different parts of the world.

Notes

1. *Folha* stops publishing on Facebook (Folha deixa de publicar conteúdo no Facebook). (2018, February 8). *Folha de S.Paulo.* Retrieved from

https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2018/02/folha-deixa-de-publicar-conteudo-no-facebook.shtml. Accessed 4 Mar 2020.

2. *Folha* achieves an audience record in two months in a row after political and coronavirus crisis. (Folha tem recorde de audiência pelo segundo mês seguido com crise política e coronavírus). (2020, May 1). Folha de S. Paulo. Retrieved from https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2020/05/folha-bate-recorde-de-audiencia-pelo-segundo-mes-seguido-com-coronavirus.shtml?origin=folha. Accessed 3 June 2020. Leading newspaper in Brazil, Folha consolidates its digital growth. (Maior Jornal do Brasil, Folha consolida crescimento digital). (2020, June 26). Folha de S. Paulo. Retrieved from https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/poder/2020/06/maior-jornal-do-brasil-folha-consolida-crescimento-digital.shtml?origin=folha. Accessed 30 October 2020.

3. Two *La Nación*'s editorial projects are awarded. (Dos proyectos editoriales de La Nacion, premiados a nivel mundial). (2020, October 22). La Nacion. Retrieved from https://www.lanacion.com.ar/sociedad/dos-proyectos-editoriales-la-nacion-ganadores-world-nid2485558. October 22, 2020.

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