

Streamers as Emerging Journalistic Figures: A Study on their Influence and Informative Quality

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Abstract: This study explores the influence of Twitch streamers as emerging journalistic figures on public perception in the digital age. Using an interpretative paradigm, the research analyzes responses from 20 participants aged 16 to 23, revealing a shift in media consumption habits toward dynamic, interactive platforms like Twitch. The platform's real-time interactivity and diverse content have positioned it as a significant media outlet. However, the informal nature of streamer content raises concerns about misinformation and credibility. Findings indicate that while Twitch streamers significantly shape public opinion and digital journalism, their reliability is often questioned due to a lack of formal training. Participants noted that streamers frequently share personal opinions rather than verified information, prompting viewers to cross-check with other digital sources. To enhance credibility, the study recommends that streamers adopt traditional journalistic standards, including fact-checking and source verification, while utilizing live stream and chat interactions to build trust with their audience. Upholding journalistic principles of reliability and objectivity is crucial to counter misinformation and promote informed discourse. This approach positions Twitch as a promising new platform for innovative news sharing. Additionally, the study suggests expanding research to include a broader spectrum of streamers and audiences, particularly in Spanish-speaking and Latin American regions, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the global impact of streamers on news distribution and consumption.

Keywords: Streamers; Digital Journalism; Twitch; Information quality; Objectivity.

1 Introduction

Nowadays, many young people prefer to consume news from streamers on platforms like Twitch rather than traditional media, as television usage declines [1]. The professionalism of these streamers often does not match that of trained journalists, potentially diminishing the perceived value of professional journalism [2]. Streamers frequently share personal opinions and anecdotes, which may distort the truth and spread misinformation [3]. Moreover, many streamers lack the academic and professional background to be considered journalists. Recent years have seen a decline in journalistic ethics, with many social media personalities bypassing source

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verification, objectivity, and transparency essential for thorough reporting [4]. This competition for scoops in digital journalism can lead to manipulated news and images aimed at increasing viewership [5]. This shift is crucial to analyze, given young people's growing preference to engage with news on social networks, particularly Twitch. An online survey in Spain showed that 25% of young social media users visit Twitch for about 88 minutes daily, making it their second most used platform [6]. Streamers engage young audiences effectively, fostering a sense of community and trust that influences their content preferences [7]. A study demonstrated how streamers in Bogotá build relationships with advertised products, influencing their viewers' purchasing decisions by routinely using these products on stream [9]. In other words, many young people who watch streamers feel influenced by what they share, either without first verifying the information and only trusting the relationship between the community itself created with the content creator. In itself, these persons due to the relationship with their streamer immediately trust the information, leaving aside the verification of the news. For this reason, some of them look on other social networks to verify if everything is correct. To this day, Twitch has not yet solidified itself as a journalistic medium. According to Casells [10], his final degree project demonstrated that Twitch has revolutionized communication and emerged as a leading live streaming platform, attracting numerous content creators and influencers to this new business. The novelty of Twitch with chat interaction is one of the most important instruments, because many young people seek to belong to these communities with whom they have common thoughts and feel easier to express themselves. Similarly, Almela and Mañéz [5] noted in their project that Twitch serves as a platform for journalists seeking to produce independent and freer content. It is a space that unites various industries, disciplines, and content types, fostering free expression, creativity, and community formation [11]. Considering the elements discussed, the following questions emerge: What is the impact that steamers as journalistic actors have on the public perception of information in the digital age?

Specific questions:

- 1. What is the perception of information quality among streamers in a representative sample of the audience?
- 2. What are the strategies and approaches used by streamers to present and comment on current news and events, and to what extent do these strategies impact the quality of the information provided and the building of public trust?
- 3. How do you perceive the influence of streamers considering the impact they have had on public opinion?

General objective: Analyze the impact of Twitch streamers as journalistic actors and the public's perception of their information.

Specific objectives:

- Assess the audience's perception of streamers as information sources, particularly regarding the accuracy of the information compared to traditional journalistic sources.
- Analyze how the audience perceives the credibility of streamers as journalistic actors, focusing on their influence on public opinion and information quality.

2 Theoretical Framework

The integration of Twitch as a channel for journalism is gaining academic attention. Olivares-García and Méndez Majuelos [12] investigated how journalists and communicators use Twitch to reach a younger and more diverse audience, facing the challenge of maintaining a constant production of live content. The rise of Twitch among the youth audience, identifying a change in media consumption habits, with a growing preference for digital platforms over traditional television [13]. In the field of theses, [14] examined how journalistic content is adapting to Twitch, suggesting that the platform allows new forms of journalistic storytelling that combine information, entertainment, and education. On the other hand, Soto [15] highlighted that Twitch has significantly reshaped the way audiovisual content is consumed, presenting both challenges and opportunities for the entertainment and communication industry. In addition, it is also a form of influence towards young people, in terms of purchases or even behavior, creating a sense of community where the audience follows them because they feel identified with them [16].

2.1 Digital journalism and media influence

Digital journalism has evolved considerably in the last decade, transforming media consumption and creating opportunities to share news with a greater variety, where even citizens can interact [17]. It now encompasses a dynamic media ecosystem where interactivity, personalization, and user participation play crucial roles [2]. Participatory journalism highlights the collaboration between journalists and audiences, where news consumers actively participate in content creation and dissemination to diversify voices previously silenced or ignored [5]. Digital platforms like Twitch facilitate this interactivity, allowing streamers to inform and dialogue in real time with their audience, disrupting traditional news dynamics [8]. Many streamers use eye-catching titles and provide last-minute information to attract attention, reflecting digital journalism's techniques to engage larger audiences [4]. The media's influence has been reconfigured by new forms of communication and users' growing autonomy to select trusted sources [10]. Platforms like Twitch have redefined power structures in media, enabling nontraditional individuals to influence the media agenda [15]. Algorithms and attention on these platforms restructure the flow of information, prioritizing highly interactive content. Streamers, through their unique styles and personal connections with audiences [8], significantly influence how news is interpreted and valued. Prosumers, who consume and produce content, transform the traditional unidirectional flow of information into an interactive, bidirectional network [12].

2.2 Broadcasting new voices: the journalistic impact of streaming personalities

Streamers are content creators who broadcast live on digital platforms like Twitch. Initially focusing on video games, they have broadened their scope to include journalism, attracting a young audience [17]. They manage multiple roles such as screenwriting, producing, directing, editing, and content development [18]. For instance, sports journalism streamers often perform better due to the relaxed and intimate nature of their interviews compared to traditional media, which often involves large cameras and more formal settings [19]. This led to the creation of "LaLiga"

Casters," where football matches are narrated by streamers like Ibai Llanos and Ander Cortés. In political journalism on Twitch, Alexia Ander Cortés, also known as AOC, a U.S. Congress member of Puerto Rican descent, used her Twitch channel to blend politics with entertainment. She launched her channel on March 23, 2020, and streamed for the first time on October 20, playing "Among Us" while discussing politics with a humorous and dynamic approach [17].

2.2.2 Information integrity: investigative rigor and fact-checking

Streamers on Twitch, initially focused on video games, have branched into journalism, captivating young audiences with dynamic content [17]. They handle roles like screenwriting and editing, enjoying the freedom to create content informally compared to traditional media [18]. For instance, sports journalist Rodrigo Fáez enhanced the interactivity of a La Liga match narration by adopting a conversational style with other streamers [19]. Political streamers like Alexia Ander Cortés (AOC) mix entertainment with serious discussions, utilizing games to engage viewers, showcasing Twitch's influence in contemporary political communication [17]. Twitch's appeal among young audiences underscores a shift towards more interactive, engaging information consumption. This platform fosters close relationships between streamers and their audiences, strengthening trust and community engagement, essential in digital journalism where immediacy and interaction are paramount [22]. Twitch's interactivity is exemplified by features like "bits" donations, which allow viewers' messages to appear on the live screen, fostering deeper topic engagement and connection [23].

2.3 New ways of consuming news on the Twitch platform

Twitch, launched in 2011, offers free access to content, with optional paid subscriptions at three tiers and additional benefits like exclusive emojis and ad-free viewing, varying by streamer [24]. The platform's success stems from its adaptability to the prosumer era, where consumers also act as content producers [10]. Features like live chat enhance the dialogue and can shift the discourse, creating a more informal and dynamic approach to journalism [25]. While some criticize the lack of specialized commentary, often substituted with personal anecdotes, Twitch's "Live Comments" and "Live Updates" allow streamers to provide real-time information [25].

2.4 Streamers' influence on public opinion: Perception of information

Young people, the primary audience for social networks, increasingly prefer consuming entertainment, music, and information through videos on mobile devices or computers rather than traditional television. This shift is driven by the rapid spread of news and misinformation online, where events can go viral instantly. This has drastically shortened the time needed for information dissemination, making traditional media such as television, print, or radio unable to compete with the speed of digital platforms like Twitch [25]. Additionally, modern network infrastructure enhances the global exchange of ideas and fosters participation among users who feel connected to the expansive communication landscape [26]. Ibai Llanos, a leading Spanish journalist streamer in sports and entertainment, exemplifies this trend. With 13.1 million followers on Twitch, he is known for pioneering the integration of television features into streaming, offering a more interactive and diverse viewing experience [10]. This innovation reflects a broader shift away from the less interactive and homogeneous content of traditional television [27]. In recent projects like "La Velada del Año 2," a boxing event among streamers, and "Disasters Chefs," where streamers compete in cooking challenges, Ibai continues to push the boundaries of streaming content, also creating interactive dating shows like "Buscando el amor." These initiatives showcase the dynamic and varied nature of content that modern audiences demand.

2.5 Theory of the spiral of silence

The theory of the spiral of silence, developed by sociologist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, offers a useful lens for understanding the relationship between streamers as new journalistic actors and their influence on the perception of information. to. When a popular streamer presents a particular opinion or information, their influence can be so significant that the audience may feel more inclined to adopt that perspective, even if it differs from their original opinion. This can lead to a kind of "spiral of conformity" in which opinions and viewpoints promoted by dominant streamers gain more traction and become the norm on the platform, further affecting the quality of information by reducing the diversity of voices and perspectives [28]. Therefore, the theory of the spiral of silence can provide a valuable lens for understanding how streamers can shape public perception and the quality of information provided in their emerging role as online journalistic actors.

3 Methodology

The research methodology adopts an interpretative paradigm, aiming to understand experiences, interests, and motivations through the interpretation of bibliographic data, gathering perceptions from interviewees to generate theoretical alternatives or transformations of reality [29]. This qualitative approach delves into the subjective experiences of young people regarding the quality of information received from streamers compared to traditional media and their social interaction with them. Employing "grounded theory" [30] the research design tests hypotheses about the impact of Twitch journalistic streamers on young people, beginning in 2020, coinciding with the surge in Twitch usage due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Twenty participants, divided into adolescents aged 16 to 19 and young adults aged 20 to 23, who have engaged with Twitch since 2021 or earlier, were selected. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews via WhatsApp, Zoom, or in person, exploring participants' use of Twitch, the streamers they follow, their role in digital journalism, the quality of information they provide, and their social influence¹. Each interview was transcribed manually, and then the most frequently mentioned words were coded for further analysis. During the axial coding process to assess the impact of journalistic streamers, the following codes were identified: Twitch, information, fake news, misinforming, influence, communication, and journalism. These codes helped organize the data into sub-themes: "Twitch as a new means of communication," "influence of streamers on

¹ Designed questions via the following link: https://n9.cl/bxii7

audiences," "disinformation and fake news by streamers," and "veracity as a tool for journalistic streamers." Each sub-theme was analyzed and compared with the literature to ensure a critical data analysis. Three prominent streamers were analyzed: Ibai Llanos, Alexia Ander Cortes, and Rodrigo Fáez. Llanos focuses on creating television-style events, Cortes blends politics with entertainment, and Fáez enhances sports journalism through interactive match narrations. Their significance in the realm of journalism on Twitch was evaluated using bibliographic sources. This information was compared with interview results to draw the most relevant conclusions for the research.

No	COD.	AGE	S/D/V	REGISTER
1	C1	21	Viewer	2019
2	C2	21	Viewer	2021
3	C3	17	Subscriber/Donor	2020
4	C4	21	Viewer	2019
5	C5	16	Viewer	2018
6	C6	20	Donor	2020
7	C7	22	Viewer	2016
8	C8	23	Subscriber/Donor	2020
9	C9	21	Subscriber	2018
10	C10	22	Subscriber/Donor	2015
11	C11	22	Subscriber/Donor	2020
12	C12	21	Subscriber	2016
13	C13	21	Viewer	2021
14	C14	21	Subscriber	2016
15	C15	22	Viewer	2017
16	C16	21	Viewer	2020
17	C17	22	Subscriber	2020
18	C18	22	Subscriber/Donor	2018
19	C19	21	Subscriber	2018
20	C20	21	Viewer	2019

 Table 1. Data from the 20 streamers interviewed sample. Source: Own elaboration

4 Results

In this qualitative study, interviews were conducted with 20 individuals aged between 16 and 23 years, with an average age of 19.8. Participants, identified by the code "C" followed by a numerical identifier, have been engaging with Twitch since 2015. Predominantly, they perceive Twitch as an entertainment platform but also acknowledge its emerging role as a significant media outlet. The preference for Twitch over traditional television is driven by its real-time interactivity, as well as the diversity and authenticity of its content offerings. The platform is lauded not only for its entertainment value but also for its ability to build community and provide access to live events and pertinent information, making it a more dynamic and engaging alternative to traditional media outlets.

4.1 Audience perception of streamers



Figure 1: Semantic network analysis: streamers as journalistic sources. Source: Own elaboration

Interviewees gave their opinion on Twitch streamers as journalistic actors and the trust in the information they share. "C7", "C6", "C5", and "C4" noted that many streamers tend to deliver news based on personal opinions, which can misinform the audience. "C9" stressed the importance of verifying sources to avoid errors. "C14" and "C1" highlighted that freedom on Twitch can influence both positively and negatively information. "C13" and "C3" added that because they are not professional journalists, many streamers do not properly research their sources. In the same line, "C12" and "C10" emphasized that the reliability of information depends on the sources, "C12" citing Mr. Chip as an example of a reliable streamer due to his professional experience. "C18" highlighted that the streamer's credibility is key to the public's trust, mentioning Uncle Shur as a negative example for his lack of reliable sources. "C16" added that despite credibility concerns, streamers can motivate young audiences to stay informed about current events. In short, the trustworthiness of information on Twitch is tied to the credibility of sources and streamers' focus on current news, which can positively influence a young audience that prefers these platforms over traditional media.

4.2 Interaction and live chat by followers

A majority of respondents (85%) prefer watching informative broadcasts by streamers rather than participating in activities such as donating bits or engaging in live chats. Viewer engagement varies: "C15" likes to multitask by listening to streams in the background, while "C16" enjoys the community aspect and participates in chats to feel connected. "C14" values interactive features like text-to-speech that promote audience participation. The quality of discussions on Twitch varies. For example, debates between Ibai Llanos and La Cobra about Messi's Ballon d'Or have been substantive, unlike the experiences of "C2," who points out that rapid comment flows and large audience sizes can hinder meaningful dialogue, often reflecting the streamer's approach and the audience's nature. While all interviewees agree that these interactions enrich the Twitch experience, they also believe that filtering comments to exclude off-topic or disruptive inputs could improve the quality of information and overall discourse.

4.3 Streamers in the public opinion

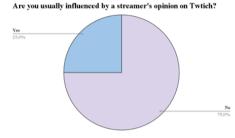


Figure 2: The influence of streamers on the audience. Source: Own elaboration

Currently, young people primarily view Twitch as an entertainment platform rather than a direct source for news, opting instead to use networks like Twitter for updates. While TV viewership is low, some do receive news from streamers. "C14" notes that in Peru, streamers rarely provide purely journalistic content, unlike in countries like the US, Argentina, Spain, and broader Europe where some engage in news reporting. "C19" believes Twitch could become an alternative news outlet given its large audience. Streamers often cover unconventional topics such as the "Deep Web" or "Reddit" threads, ensuring information authenticity. Although 75% of interviewees claim they are not influenced by streamers, they acknowledge occasional impacts on their own and others' views. For instance, "C15" observed a significant change in public perception following a streamer's favorable review of a product. Streamers could significantly influence young audiences with verified news, potentially democratizing information if they maintain source accuracy to prevent misinformation.

5 Discussion

The results show that streamers have risen as new journalistic forces due to technological advancements and shifts in news consumption habits [13]. On platforms like Twitch, these content creators attract massive audiences and significantly influence public opinion [31]. Their ability to personally connect and communicate directly has transformed Twitch into a venue where entertainment merges with informative content. enhancing expressive freedom [12]. Interviewees pointed out that many streamers tend to offer news based on personal opinions, which can misinform the audience. Therefore, verifying sources to avoid errors and confusion among the audience is highlighted. Freedom on Twitch can influence information both positively and negatively, as many streamers, not being professional journalists, do not carry out arduous research of sources. Integrating traditional journalistic standards could make Twitch a more credible news source by equipping streamers with tools for factchecking and source verification. Using the live link to show news in real time and generating a conversation-debate with the chat also leads to active participation [8]. However, concerns exist about whether streamers will adopt these practices without losing the spontaneity and personal connection that attract viewers. As the platform evolves, there is potential for policymakers and developers to establish guidelines that support ethical content creation without limiting the unique qualities of streaming media. Streamers like Ibai Llanos incorporating television features into their streams signify a shift in journalistic dynamics, emphasizing their impact on opinion formation and narrative construction [12]. That content keeps young people active within the community, where they feel free to express their opinion and don't feel that streamers are for or against a medium, due to their independence. The rise of Twitch as a significant news source illustrates changes in media consumption, where the demand for immediate, interactive, and personalized content is strong but comes with the challenge of ensuring reliability and constructive information. Continuous dialogue among streamers, viewers, industry experts, and regulators is essential to develop a media environment that marries innovation with integrity and public trust. The study indicates that if streamers cited reliable sources, Twitch could become a recognized communication medium. Currently, it remains an experimental platform offering streamers authenticity and various interaction methods [25]. The immediacy of news and direct engagement on Twitch create digital communities where users can relate closely to content creators [19]. However, the informal delivery style has led to skepticism about information reliability, with streamers often expressing personal views rather than verified facts, increasing misinformation risks [27].

6 Conclusions

The research highlights the emergence of streamers as significant journalistic forces on platforms like Twitch, fueled by technological progress and evolving news consumption habits. Streamers engage directly with vast audiences, significantly influencing public opinion and reshaping digital journalism. They combine entertainment with informative content, establishing Twitch as a crucial platform for contemporary journalism. Nonetheless, the reliability of their information often suffers due to many lacking formal journalistic trainings, which can lead to the dissemination of unverified or biased content. The credibility of content on Twitch is heavily dependent on the streamers' reputation for accuracy. Emphasizing rigorous source verification and adherence to reliable data is vital for mitigating misinformation and promoting informed public discourse, maintaining journalism's core principles of reliability and objectivity in the digital age. The study identifies key shortcomings, such as insufficient analysis of source verification and a limited focus on journalistically trained streamers. It recommends expanding research to include a broader spectrum of streamers and audiences, especially in Spanish-speaking and Latin American regions, to better understand streamers' global impact on news and media consumption.

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