



Integrating Multimedia in Journalism: Analysis of Transmedia Practices at El Comercio and La República

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of transmedia journalism on two major Peruvian newspapers, El Comercio and La República, through qualitative research that included interviews with 20 followers aged 20 to 25. The findings reveal how both newspapers have effectively integrated multimedia formats such as videos, infographics, and podcasts, enhancing the news consumption experience. The use of social media platforms has been strategic, with El Comercio excelling in sharing concise and visually appealing news, while La República stands out in detailed digital reports with interactive graphics and video interviews. The credibility and quality of information were generally perceived as high, attributed to the newspapers' historical prestige and verified sources. However, the perception of credibility varied by platform, with print editions seen as more reliable than digital versions. The study highlights the importance of consistency in visual and narrative identity across platforms, strengthening reader trust and brand loyalty. It also emphasizes the need for continuous journalist training in digital tools and more robust fact-checking processes to maintain information quality and credibility. Future research should expand to include a wider range of media and audiences, and a deeper analysis of the internal verification processes of the studied newspapers.

Keywords: Transmedia journalism, New technologies, Social Networks.

1 Introduction

In a rapidly evolving technological landscape, journalism has undergone significant transformations due to technological convergence. This evolution has altered how information is produced, distributed, and received [1]. The digital revolution has fostered a media landscape where user interaction is crucial for journalistic success [2]. In response to diminishing audience attention, journalism has adapted its delivery strategies [3]. A study by Internews and the Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (IEP) shows that 64% of the population accesses news via social media, surpassing radio (28%) and print media (7%), emphasizing the importance of online platforms [4]. Transmedia journalism, catering to a participative audience, involves expanding stories across various media to enhance the immersive experience, integrating texts, videos, audios,

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and interactive graphics [1][5][6]. Conventional media have reinvented themselves, generating innovative content across diverse platforms [6]. The Internet and digital tools have enabled instant access to news, with 66% of Peruvians favoring Facebook, and TikTok and Instagram also being popular [7]. Social media acts as a resource for information, debate, and real-time interaction [8]. It is essential to understand this transformation in the Peruvian context, examining the impact of transmedia journalism on *El Comercio* and *La República*. *El Comercio*, with its long history, and *La República*'s innovative approach, highlight the relevance of studying transmedia journalism's effect on audience interaction and news dissemination [10][11]. As the digital landscape poses challenges from technological advances and social platforms, this transformation redefines global media dynamics, particularly in Peru [12][13][14]. A study indicates that people spend three hours daily online, predominantly engaging with news on social media, followed by digital communication and video viewing [15]. This trend underscores the critical role of social media in news dissemination, leading traditional media to reassess their roles [16]. This research aims to analyze the impact of transmedia journalism on *La República* and *El Comercio* from 2022 to 2023, evaluating their strategies, examining audience perceptions of credibility and quality, and identifying the reach and virality of news on digital channels.

2 Background

Recent studies have delved into the adaptation of transmedia narratives in Peruvian journalism, focusing on impact and methodologies. García [8] analyzed *El Comercio*'s story "La Bestia de Petit Thouars," revealing that transmedia principles manifest tactically through real-world events and active public participation in content dissemination. This study highlights the need for improved transmedia strategies to enhance story expansion and reader engagement. Similarly, the evolving role of journalists in a transmedia context emphasizes the importance of adapting to new platforms while maintaining quality and credibility [10]. His qualitative analysis underscores the interaction between modern journalism and digital demands. Torres [17] explored how news sources adapt their content to Instagram and TikTok, finding that tailored content for each platform is crucial for user engagement. Additionally, [17] analyzed how digital media use transmedia narratives on Twitter and Instagram, finding that platforms like Instagram are conducive to exploring new formats.

2.1 Transmedia Journalism

Transmedia journalism represents a significant evolution in contemporary journalism [5]. It reflects the convergence of various media, synthesizing different languages and narratives for a broad audience [20]. This approach incorporates visual elements, audiovisual resources, mobile devices, and interactive tools to enrich information dissemination. It leverages the blogosphere and social media, becoming an effective content distribution platform that significantly expands reach and public engagement [20]. Henry Jenkins [6], a pioneer in this field, emphasizes that transmedia journalism's essence lies in narrative expansion across diverse media such as television, print, radio, social media, and online channels. Each format adapts the story to enhance the narrative

and foster greater immersion and participation, allowing users to interact with the content and contribute to the story's construction [6].

2.2 Transmedia Narrative

Transmedia narrative creatively tells stories through various media and screens, maintaining plot integrity and continuity. This approach challenges journalism by creating narrative worlds not confined to a single medium [6]. The primary goal is for the journalistic narrative to flow seamlessly across available channels, enriched by each new access point. There are two key dimensions of transmedia narrative: the construction of an official narrative across various media and platforms, and dynamic user cooperation. These dimensions are interrelated, as audience interaction requires reaching them through different channels and allowing active involvement. Thus, public collaboration is crucial in spreading and enriching the narrative content [22].

2.2.1 Principles and Characteristics of Transmedia Journalism

Virality is essential in transmedia journalism, referring to the ability of news or content to spread quickly among its audience through social media and other digital platforms [23]. Stories must be created to be attractive and shareable, encouraging readers, listeners, or viewers to disseminate them within their online networks [24]. In addition to virality, transmedia journalism aims to connect deeply with the audience's emotions, motivations, and experiences [22]. Beyond providing cold data, it strives to engage the audience, making information relevant and meaningful to their lives [6]. This engagement is achieved through interactive and immersive storytelling that goes beyond mere fact reporting, aiming to educate and challenge viewers to think critically. It encourages public participation, allowing comments, shares, and contributions to the conversation [8]. It also includes in-depth analysis that explores implications, diverse perspectives, and broader contexts [24].

2.2.2 Continuity and Simultaneity in Transmedia Narrative

Continuity in the narrative ensures consistency across different media and formats [6]. Whether watching a video, reading a digital article, or interacting on social media, the story maintains its identity and flow. This coherence allows users to follow and understand the narrative regardless of the medium [23]. Simultaneity in transmedia journalism is critical as events unfold simultaneously in various locations, demanding a narrative that reflects this complexity [22]. Real-time news coverage, with synchronization between traditional and digital platforms, is essential to keep readers informed and engaged [25]. Building narrative worlds is a significant evolution in news presentation [26]. Each story is conceived as a self-contained universe, meticulously crafted to enable full exploration and understanding [6]. News stories, resembling fictional narratives, consider every element crucial for advancing public understanding. Characters become critical plot components, with their relevance varying by their relationship to the facts [22].

2.2.3 **Impact of Transmedia Journalism on News Credibility**

Understanding how transmedia narration influences public perception and trust in news is crucial in the digital era, where information flows through multiple channels [30]. The proliferation of online information has heightened uncertainty about news veracity. Transmedia journalism addresses this by distributing information through multiple channels, reinforcing news credibility with consistent, multi-source-backed information. Journalists use these platforms to amplify information dissemination [31] and maintain connections with sources [27]. TikTok, originally Douyin in China, has become a major platform for creating short videos [17]. Since its launch in 2016, after merging with Musical.ly, it has grown rapidly, reaching 1.218 billion active monthly users by 2023 [DooFinder, 2024]. TikTok redefines roles for content creators and receivers, promoting active consumer participation [17]. Instagram has also become a powerful journalism tool, offering new information and storytelling sources [32]. By 2024, it had 1.2 billion users, making it a globally influential social network [33]. The 21st-century news dissemination has been transformed by online channels, enabling mass interaction and content exchange [34]. Social media has become essential for information circulation, challenging traditional media roles [35]. The transmedia audience engages with narratives spanning TV shows, movies, books, video games and comics [37]. Their ability to identify connections and subtleties across different story elements enhances their overall understanding. This technology liberates the audience from time and place constraints offering a personalized experience [22].

2.2.4 **Transmedia Narrative Theory**

Jenkins' Transmedia Narrative Theory presents a pioneering perspective on narrative and communication analysis in the digital era. He proposed this theory to understand how stories unfold and evolve across various platforms and media, creating a richer narrative experience [22]. A central concept of Jenkins' theory is the distribution of content across multiple media platforms. Instead of limiting to one platform or medium, a transmedia narrative expands through a variety of channels such as television, cinema, books, video games, and social media [8]. This approach allows media consumers to immerse themselves in the narrative world in diverse and enriching ways. Content creators use these platforms to tell different aspects of the story, delve into characters, or explore subplots, offering viewers a more immersive experience [6]. Transmedia narrative also fosters audience interaction. This encourages fan collaboration, often creating additional content, theories, and online communities to discuss and expand the narrative. Consequently, this theory has profoundly impacted our understanding of contemporary storytelling and its relationship with media convergence.

3 **Methodology**

To achieve the proposed objectives, this research adopts an interpretative paradigm based on the idea that reality perception is closely linked to individual interpretations. This approach emphasizes that a person's perspective influences their thinking and behavior [38]. It recognizes that social reality is shaped through individual views, highlighting the importance of understanding events from personal viewpoints. The

research employs a qualitative method, allowing for the collection of information from various sources [39]. This flexibility is crucial for deepening understanding, emphasizing depth over generalization [40]. The qualitative approach is ideal for interviews with followers of both newspapers to gather their perceptions and opinions. This method helps understand critical moments in citizens' lives related to transmedia information [41]. The research design is non-experimental, consistent with the qualitative method used. In this design, the researcher does not directly manipulate the independent variables as the events have already occurred [40]. This research examines the perceptions, opinions, and experiences of followers of El Comercio (10.7 million followers on social media) and La República (14.9 million followers) on transmedia journalism from January 2022 to December 2023. The study sample includes 20 individuals aged 20 to 25 years, representing the most digitally active segment of the population likely to engage with transmedia journalism. Selection was based on age, regular interaction with these newspapers, and diverse news consumption motivations, as detailed in Table 1. Gender balance was maintained to ensure varied perspectives within this age group. This age range was selected for their adaptability and influence on digital consumption trends. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format based on a set of predefined questions derived from a literature review on media consumption and journalism trends. This approach allowed for flexible responses, enabling participants to provide detailed insights into their experiences and opinions. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for accurate data analysis. The data were coded and thematically analyzed to identify common patterns and unique viewpoints on the credibility and quality of information provided by El Comercio and La República through their transmedia strategies.

Table 1. Data from the sample. Source: Own elaboration

COD	AGE	REGISTER	MOTIVATION TO CONSUME NEWSPAPERS	CONSUMER PLATFORMS
E1	22	2019	Local news, political analysis and economic information	Digital
E2	23	2017	Entertainment and local news	Both
E3	25	2017	Economic information and political analysis	Digital
E4	23	2019	Entertainment and sports	Both
E5	23	2020	Local and international news, Entertainment	Both
E6	23	2019	Entertainment and local news	Digital
E7	22	2018	Entertainment and sports	Digital
E8	22	2021	Entertainment and local news	Digital
E9	23	2019	Local and international news, Entertainment	Digital
E10	23	2018	Local and international news, Entertainment	Digital
E11	22	2017	Economic information and political analysis	Both
E12	23	2019	Local news, political analysis and economic information	Both
E13	22	2020	Entertainment and culture	Both
E14	22	2020	Political analysis, local news and economic information	Digital
E15	23	2019	Political analysis, local news and sports	Digital
E16	25	2017	Political analysis, local news and economic information	Both
E17	23	2018	Political analysis, local news and economic information	Digital
E18	22	2020	Entertainment and sports	Digital

E19	22	2020	Local and international news, Entertainment	Digital
E20	23	2018	Political analysis and economic information	Digital

4 Results

4.2 Adaptation to Transmedia Journalism

Interviewees discussed how *El Comercio* and *La República* have adapted to transmedia journalism, enhancing news consumption with videos, infographics, and podcasts. They noted *El Comercio*'s effective use of social media for concise, visually appealing news, while *La República* excels in detailed digital reports. Respondents E5, E6, and E7 reported more frequent use of both newspapers due to the accessibility of their digital platforms. E5 follows *El Comercio* on Twitter for real-time updates, E6 appreciates *La República*'s mobile-friendly formats for easy access during commutes, and E7 values push notifications to stay informed passively. E8, E9, and E10 trust both outlets for their reputation and verified sources. E8 highlighted *La República*'s rigorous investigative articles. E9 appreciated *El Comercio*'s transparency through links to original sources. E10 suggested that transmedia adaptation has helped maintain credibility and innovate presentation. E11, E12, and E13 commended both newspapers for consistent visual and narrative identity across platforms.

4.3 Audience Perception of Credibility and Quality

Among 20 interviewees, 18 affirmed their trust in the credibility of *El Comercio* and *La República*, largely due to their historical prestige. E1, E3, and E17 trust *El Comercio* for its history, while E2 and E4 view *La República* as reliable but note some biases. E1 and E3 prefer the detailed print versions of *El Comercio* over its brief social media content, highlighting how medium choice affects credibility perceptions. Discussions in comment sections and on social media are noted by E10 and E11 to often deter constructive debate due to polarization and aggression. Conversely, E13 and E14 value these platforms for enabling public expression and opinion exchange. Recommendations include enhanced fact-checking and continuous digital tools training for journalists as essential for improving information quality and maintaining credibility in a digital environment. E17 advocates for more inclusive and diverse reporting to ensure representation of multiple perspectives.

4.4 News Reach and Virality

Readers shared varied opinions on the reach and virality of news in *El Comercio* and *La República*. E11 mentioned that interaction in comments is crucial for news virality, as these can alter or reinforce opinions, especially in politically diverse contexts. E13 and E15 noted that the format and visual presentation of news, such as live videos and multimedia integration, make news more real and engaging, thus increasing its virality. E18 observed that news virality largely depends on its relevance and the medium's adaptability to digital platforms. For instance, E17 observed that *La República*'s innovative narratives on TikTok have significantly increased its virality. E12 recalled

a viral story about a panda on La República that captured local and international attention, demonstrating social media's power to expand audiences.

5 Discussion

The findings of this research emphasize the significant transformation in news presentation and distribution by El Comercio and La República through transmedia journalism. According to Jenkins [6], this approach expands narratives across various platforms, enhancing audience engagement and immersion. Both newspapers have enriched their content delivery by integrating multimedia formats such as videos, infographics, and podcasts, improving the public's informational experience [5]. Moreover, the study highlights how transmedia journalism positively impacts news credibility. The use of multiple platforms diversifies information presentation and facilitates data verification and thorough contextualization, combating misinformation and providing a more reliable source [5]. Interviewees noted the need for balancing speed and accuracy in content publication, suggesting that El Comercio and La República must continue improving these aspects to maintain reader trust [3][21]. Adaptation to digital platforms and innovative social media use have significantly increased the reach and virality of news [1]. For instance, La República has used TikTok to present innovative narratives, enhancing its audience and virality [13][17]. This approach not only improved news visibility but also fostered greater public interaction, strengthening the media-audience relationship [10]. Additionally, the creation of complex and detailed narrative worlds, where each news item is constructed as an informational universe, is a prominent feature of transmedia journalism. This method allows viewers to explore and understand events better, increasing the depth and context of the stories presented [8]. The development of these detailed narratives, which include gathering information from various sources and integrating multiple perspectives, reinforces the objectivity and credibility of the news [35], [37]. Finally, the results indicate that interactivity is an essential component of transmedia journalism, facilitating greater public participation in the informational process. This interaction not only enriches the news consumption experience but also provides journalists with valuable feedback on audience preferences and concerns, which can guide more accurate and relevant news coverage [29]. Interviewees emphasized the need to create more spaces for respectful dialogue on digital platforms to enhance interaction and credibility perception among readers [26].

6 Conclusions

The research reveals that El Comercio and La República have successfully adapted to transmedia journalism, enhancing the informational experience by integrating multimedia formats such as videos, infographics, and podcasts. Strategic use of social media has been pivotal in the evolution of both newspapers. However, perceived credibility varies by distribution platform, with print editions considered more reliable than digital ones. Consistency in visual and narrative identity across platforms has reinforced their brand and strengthened reader trust. Dynamics in comment sections and on social media are influential in shaping credibility perception and content virality.

Despite polarization and the tone of debates possibly discouraging participation, these platforms are valued as essential spaces for expression and idea exchange. A key recommendation from this study is the need for enhanced fact-checking and continuous training for journalists in digital tools to improve information quality and maintain media credibility in a competitive digital environment. Conclusively, while *El Comercio* and *La República* have made commendable progress in integrating transmedia journalism practices, there is a critical need for systemic improvements to enhance reliability and adapt to the digital media landscape. Establishing more rigorous internal verification processes and training programs for journalists could further elevate their credibility and adaptability amidst evolving media consumption behaviors. This proactive approach will not only safeguard news integrity but also fortify the trust in these long-standing institutions.

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