

Editorial innovation on social networks of the #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance Hispanic verifiers: contents and vision of those responsible

Innovación editorial en redes sociales de los verificadores hispanos de la #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance: contenidos y visión de sus responsables

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RESUMEN

Introducción: Este trabajo explora el uso de las redes sociales por medios hispanos de la #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance de la *International Fact-Checking Network* (IFCN) ante la pandemia de la Covid-19 como herramientas para generar contenidos multimedia o interactivos innovadores con los que llegar a nuevos públicos y aumentar su visibilidad. **Metodología:** Mediante la observación y el análisis de los canales en red se identifican casos relevantes de adaptación de contenidos y se catalogan prácticas innovadoras. Y, a través de entrevistas en profundidad a sus promotores, se determina si esta producción se plantea como estrategia editorial y se recogen percepciones sobre limitaciones, posibilidades y proyectos futuros de contenidos innovadores en red. **Resultados:** Al margen de la presencia generalizada en Twitter y Facebook, las mayores innovaciones se dan sobre contenidos audiovisuales y sonoros, que van desde resúmenes y curación de contenidos a lo explicativo. Se realizan a través de redes como YouTube, Instagram e incluso TikTok, Twitch y canales de *podcasting*, empleando narrativas adaptadas a estos canales. **Conclusiones:** En el marco de determinada estrategia o de forma táctica, más allá de informar, los verificadores buscan formar y movilizar a las audiencias en la lucha contra la infodemia con formatos atractivos, comprensibles y viralizables desde los propios canales donde fluye la desinformación. Si bien algunos cuentan con recursos limitados, participar en la IFCN abre nuevas oportunidades para la innovación editorial.

PALABRAS CLAVE: verificación; desinformación; redes sociales; contenidos digitales; innovación; cibermedios; Covid-19

ABSTRACT

Introduction: This work explores the use of social networks by the Hispanic platforms of the #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance of the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) in the Covid-19 pandemic, as tools to generate innovative multimedia or interactive content with which to reach new audiences and expand their visibility. **Methodology:** By observing and analyzing network channels, we identified relevant cases of adapted digital content and we catalog innovative practices. And through in-depth interviews with its promoters, we determine if this production is considered as an editorial strategy and we collect their perceptions about limitations, possibilities, and future projects of online innovative content. **Results:** Apart from the generalized presence on Twitter and Facebook, the greatest innovations are materialized in videos and podcasts, ranging from summaries and curation of content to explanatory. They are carried out through networks such as YouTube, Instagram, and even TikTok, Twitch, and podcasting channels, using narratives adapted to these channels. **Conclusions:** These practices, developed within the framework of a certain strategy or tactically, seek in addition to informing, training, and mobilizing audiences in the fight against the infodemic with attractive, understandable, and viralizable formats from the same channels where disinformation flows. Although some verifiers have limited resources, joining IFCN opens up new opportunities for editorial innovation

KEYWORDS: fact-checking; disinformation; social media; digital content; innovation; cybermedia; Covid-19

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Translation by Paula González (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

The current way of consuming content by users (Martisi, 2020) and disseminating it on social networks implies the elimination of the information monopoly of the media and journalists (López, Vives, and Badell, 2018). This context of increasingly decentralized networks and information leads, according to Morales (2018), to misinformation amid the information age. Social networks become a source of information and, according to Masip et al. (2020), an environment of spreading hoaxes ahead of other channels and media because it appeals to the “emotions of fear or encourages specific action and the feeling of help” (Sánchez, 2020). This has contributed to the irruption of verifiers (Spivak, 2011) and to the media and journalists ensuring verified information to reinforce user trust in post-truth times.

The phenomenon of fake news, false information disguised as news to obtain a political or economic purpose (Amorós, 2018), has been extensively studied by the academy in the last four years (Blanco et al., 2019), including studies carried out in the Ibero-American sphere (Guallar et al., 2020), even more so in the face of Covid-19 and the so-called global infodemic (García-Marín, 2020).

Disinformation has caused a trust crisis in citizens and, consequently, the so-called fact-checking, a

practice focused on verifying the veracity of alleged information to detect errors and fake news, has become the backbone of the journalistic activities that have taken greater relevance (Vizoso and Vázquez, 2019). The need for truth is greater in the present century because the “probability of more lies is much greater” (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2003).

Several studies address this phenomenon and the emergence of platforms in Spain and other European countries (Vizoso, López, and Pereira, 2019; López Pan and Rodríguez, 2019; Ufarte et al., 2020; García Vivero and López García, 2020), comparing differentiated models of verifiers in terms of verification formulas, organization, and content (Vázquez Herrero et al., 2019), or evidence their essential role in electoral contexts (Noain-Sánchez, 2019; Magallón-Rosa, 2019) or in public discourse in Latin America (Palau-Sampio, 2018).

The International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN), created by the Poynter Institute in 2015, aims to promote common verification principles by ensuring the defense of non-partisan and transparent facts. Within it, the collaborative project #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance emerged in 2020 to provide help to the verifiers that make it up to combat misinformation in the face of the pandemic. We located research works that allude to this Network with specific studies of verification platforms before Covid-19 (Vázquez-Herrero, Vizoso, and López, 2019) and during it (Rodríguez, 2020; Aguado and Bernaola, 2020).

For verification organizations, social networks are a space of special importance to expand their work (Cinelli et al., 2020). Even more so considering that it is in these channels where a large amount of disinformation continues to flow in the pandemic (Salaverría et al., 2020; Sánchez-Duarte et al., 2020; Pérez-Dasilva et al., 2020; Villa and Cerdán, 2020). These social networks can channel fast-consuming interactive and multimedia content (fast-content) to capture and retain younger profiles, especially on platforms such as TikTok and Twitch that, compared to others, encourage easy and immediate participation (Ballesteros, 2020).

Certain analyzes explore the use of one or more network channels by certain verifiers. Most date from before the formation of the #CoronavirusFactCheck alliance, such as m-journalism in Maldita (Triviño and Clares, 2019) or WhatsApp by B de Bulo (Palomo and Sedano, 2018). More recently, we found case studies on eight verifiers on Twitter (Ramón-Vegas et al., 2020), Newtral and Maldito Bulo, on the same network (Conde-Vázquez et al., 2020), or Newtral on Instagram (González Fernández, 2020).

A study has also been identified (Dafonte-Gómez et al., 2019) on the social networks of the group of Hispanic verifiers of the IFCN, although this dates from before the pandemic and is limited to making a global map of their digital presence, in terms of channels and audience figures. No research works have been located that delve into their online editorial innovation practices from the double perspective of content and issuers.

This research explores the use that these verifiers make of social networks to generate and/or distribute adapted digital content with which to expand their visibility and reach new audiences in the face of the spiral of misinformation generated by Covid-19. It is determined if this production is proposed as an editorial strategy, a taxonomy of innovative practices is elaborated and the limits, possibilities, and future online innovative projects are analyzed. All this is from the observation and analysis of channels and content, as well as from the vision of its promoters.

In previous stages of the same R+D+i project, in which this study is carried out, we began the analysis of the total number of verifiers of the #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance, categorizing them according to a set of identifying, organizational, and methodological features (origin and provenance, digital presence, theme, technique and formats used to verify, theme selection criteria, and results classification, etc.).

It is now a matter of answering questions such as: What function is assigned to each social network? What type of content, of what nature and formats, on verification, are shared from these channels, and which of them are prepared ad hoc for them? how and with what resources are they carried out, do they have profiles specialized in this? what objectives do they obey, are they part of certain strategies?

which ones have had the greatest impact and how do they assess their results? What limitations do they encounter and what possibilities and future plans do they have, in terms of online editorial innovation? Does the type of media outlet affect these practices?

2. Objectives

Regarding the verifiers of the IFCN #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance that have been carrying out their work both in Spain and in various Latin American countries during the pandemic, we propose the following specific objectives:

SO1. Determine the presence of these verifiers in social networks based on available channels and volume of audiences and typology (own or shared with the media) in the case of non-independent verification sections.

SO2. Identify trends in the production/adaptation of interactive or multimedia content online for different channels or different audiences, compile reference cases, and draw up a classification of innovative practices.

SO3. Know, from the perspective of its promoters, how social networks are managed (people and professional profiles, segmentation by channels and audiences, measurement of results...) and if the generation of content in these networks is considered as an editorial strategy.

SO4. Collect their self-perception about their results in terms of recruitment/loyalty and interaction with audiences, the extension of their social function, and civic literacy through these channels.

SO5. Explore possible limiting aspects of the use of online channels today (weaknesses and threats) as well as opportunities, innovations, and future projects for online content generation (prospective vision).

3. Methodology

The Spanish-speaking census is made up of nearly thirty (29) projects of diverse geographical origin and nature, both verification units or sections and independent platforms, or foundations and non-profit initiatives.

On these, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques, research work has been developed that, between September 2020 and March 2021, has occupied several phases:

1. Categorization of verifiers, observation of digital presence, and identification of social networks (channels and number of users). We start from the results of the aforementioned previous own research on all the verifiers of the #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance (September to December 2020). In that census, we collected, among other variables, through an analysis sheet, the type of verifier (independent media outlet versus section or unit) and their “digital presence”, in terms of whether they had their own webspace and online channels or were shared with their media outlet of origin (mixed), in the case of verification sections or units. The variables that make up this file are: social network profiles, types of content published online, formats, themes, work methodology, and innovation strategies used. For this analysis, the list corresponding to Hispanic verifiers has been supervised, updating the data and incorporating new variables from their own social networks on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. In the study of fact-checkers’ social networks, the number of followers represents an important factor in the analysis because it allows knowing the scope of the activity of these media in the audience.

2. Carrying out in-depth online interviews with those responsible for 14 media outlets, a sufficient number to reach the saturation point (Callejo, 1998). A database of Hispanic verifier managers was created, contacting them via email or social networks to interview them in-depth via web conference. This form was chosen, besides the pandemic and the geographical dispersion of the projects analyzed, considering that compared to online self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face synchronous dialogue gave rise to ad hoc complementary information gathering. Between December 2020 and January 2021, 14 interviews were carried out, covering approximately 50% of the census and various cases, both verification sections and independent platforms, from different geographical locations (see table 1). All were recorded and carried out on a semi-structured questionnaire. They were asked for information on the profile of their audiences, the type of information (themes, protagonists, formats...) that arouse greater interest or have a greater impact online and recent cases, the development or not of

content adapted to different audience profiles -beyond text and hypertext- for social networks or other types of content strategies to capture new profiles or retain users, or the resources and professional profiles involved in it. Their views on the results achieved, the possibilities and difficulties, internal and external, for the development of these practices, and the possible future plans for editorial innovation on social networks were also collected. With this, besides covering deficiencies of the initial observation (triangulation), it was sought to obtain additional information (complementation) from the perspective of strategic planning and business innovation.

3. Observation and documentation of significant cases of editorial innovation in social networks detected in previous phases. Based on the initial data, between January and March 2021, special attention was paid to the visual, audiovisual, sound, and interactive multimedia content of online channels (both those published/available from the web and those created/published on external social networks) of the verifiers and their characteristics were collected. Aspects such as their language, theme, approach/ tone, format, and formal aspects (referring to the practices used by the verifiers, the type of communication, media literacy...) or usefulness for the audiences (that is, how users can access content through the different formats and initiatives offered by verifiers). Lastly, a list of innovative content on verification was drawn up, taking into account these aspects. The content sampling was intentional, seeking to guarantee the coverage of different social media platforms of the verifiers, and without filtering them by theme. With this, we consider that the most significant cases are collected. Most of the content analyzed is linked directly or indirectly to the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences (for the analysis period). Others related to carrying out the verification process, tips to combat disinformation, or informative content are also included.

Table 1. Basic data of analyzed projects and conducted interviews

Verifier Name	Country	Verifier Type	Person interviewed
<i>AFP Factual</i>	Argentina/ Spain	Section	Anella Reta (fact-checking editor)
<i>Agencia Lupa</i>	Brazil	Media outlet	-
<i>Agencia Ocote</i>	Guatemala	Section	Alejandra Gutiérrez (director and editorial coordinator)
<i>Animal Político (El Sabueso)</i>	Mexico	Section	Tania Montalvo (general editor)
<i>Aos Fatos</i>	Brazil	Media outlet	-
<i>Bolivia Verifica</i>	Bolivia	Media outlet	-
<i>Chequeado</i>	Argentina	Media outlet	Laura Zommer (executive director and journalist)
<i>Colombia Check</i>	Colombia	Media outlet	-
<i>Convoca</i>	Peru	Section	-
<i>Cotejo.info</i>	Venezuela	Media outlet	-
<i>Ecuador Chequea</i>	Ecuador	Media outlet	Erika Astudillo (editor)
<i>EFE Verifica</i>	Spain	Section	Desireé García (responsable)
<i>Efecto Cocuyó</i>	Venezuela	Section	-
<i>El Surtidor</i>	Paraguay	Section	-
<i>Estadão Verifica</i>	Brazil	Section	-
<i>La Nación</i>	Argentina	Section	-
<i>La Silla Vacía</i>	Colombia	Section	-
<i>La Voz de Guanacaste</i>	Costa Rica	Section	Gabriela Brenes (executive director)
<i>Maldita (Maldito Bulo)</i>	Spain	Section	Clara Jiménez (co-founder and co-director)

<i>Newtral</i>	Spain	Media outlet	Joaquín Ortega (responsible for content)
<i>Observador</i>	Portugal	Section	-
<i>Ojo Público (Ojo biónico)</i>	Peru	Section	David Hidalgo (news director)
<i>Periodismo de barrio</i>	Cuba	Section	-
<i>Polígrafo</i>	Portugal	Media outlet	-
<i>Salud con Lupa (Comprueba)</i>	Peru	Media outlet	Fabiola Torres (co-founder director)
<i>Spondeo Media</i>	Mexico	Media outlet	-
<i>Verificado</i>	Uruguay	Media outlet	Syndy García (fact-check journalist)
<i>Verificador de La República</i>	Peru	Section	Irene Ignacio (content coordinator)
<i>Verificat</i>	Spain (Catalonia)	Media outlet	Alba Tobella (co-director)

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Results

4.1. Coordinates and basic strategies on the network: channels and audiences

More than half of the verifiers analyzed have their own social networks. They all have a channel on Twitter, the official network of the IFCN and where most of the audiences are concentrated. According to data collected at the end of February 2021 on their own channels, practically all the media outlets exceed 15,000 followers, and some cases are around (Newtral, with 186.3k and Agencia Lupa, with 184.6k) and even exceed 200,000 (Aos Fatos, 246.9k, Chequeado with 298.5k, and Maldita, which between the general profile and the profile of Maldito Bulo exceeds 400,000 users). They also have a page on Facebook, which is directed, according to its promoters, to a middle-aged or older audience that is not present on other networks. The verification sections or units themselves, which for other networks share spaces with the media matrix, also have their own channels on Twitter and Facebook (see table 2 in the annexes). LinkedIn is also present in 21% of cases, oriented, besides sharing certain verification content, to corporate communication and networking between journalists and verifiers.

Widely used audiovisual social networks such as YouTube and Instagram are also part of the digital presence of many verifiers. While the former is conceived more as a repository from which audiences view content, Instagram lends itself to greater interaction and has large communities of followers (147k Agencia Lupa; 79k Aos Fatos, 38.2k Newtral, 30.3k Maldita, or 28.4k Polígrafo). Practically all independent platforms have a presence on at least one of the two, and 60% of the media outlets with verification sections also have channels on them where content linked to fact-checking is published.

In these and other channels shared with the media outlet, the verification sections or units develop some strategies to segment and facilitate direct access to the contents of their work. For example, most checking posts visually differ from the rest because they are accompanied by images with texts that correspond to the result of the check (true, false, etc.) and hashtags, sometimes fixed, such as #elVerificadorLR in the Verificador de La República, which, besides its own channels on Twitter and Facebook, relies on the media outlet's channels on these and other networks. Other strategies are the creation of video playlists about verifications in generic YouTube profiles, such as La Voz Chequea, Convoca Verifica, or Efe Verifica, or the use of highlighted stories on Instagram to share sections of hoaxes or give access to content from various formats, such as the podcast "Chequeo en Lengua" by Ojo biónico.

Some verifiers (20%) have podcasting channels on Spotify and the like, without massive follower numbers because they mostly act as repositories. In specific cases, we locate secondary channels on Pinterest, Flickr, Dailymotion, or Flipboard. Media such as Maldita or Newtral go a step further in terms of digital presence, with channels and a high number of followers on TikTok and Twitch, respectively, from where they generate content aimed at younger audiences.

4.2. Information flow and function of each network: between the diffusion and the generation of content

Exploring the visual and multimedia content published by the platforms analyzed on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn in comparison with those that, in their web spaces, accompany texts linked to verification (images, videos, etc.), it can be seen that in many cases are identical. They make, at most, certain adaptations in terms of size and other basic parameters for each social network, with hyperlinks to the complete information. These networks are used primarily to expand the dissemination of these publications, generate traffic to their websites, and seek interaction with users.

Social video networks such as YouTube and other podcasting networks are used as repositories where innovative content produced offline can be uploaded and published, sometimes in series or grouped by lists or series according to their type or the initiative to which they correspond. These contents are also disseminated in the form of posts or tweets on social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, or LinkedIn, which bring together larger audiences, and distributed with a link or embedded code from their websites, either individually accompanying certain articles, or as a collection through monographic microsites. In cases such as La Silla Vacía, Observador, Ojo Público, or Polígrafo, periodic newsletters that certain groups of subscribers receive are also integrated. Furthermore, there are several media outlets who, when interviewed, highlight their usefulness as support resources to address queries or verification requests that certain users send, via WhatsApp or private messaging systems on social networks.

Finally, it is worth noting the use of some social networks that have their own community and are labeled as tools from which native content is generated through autonomous strategies. This would be the case of Instagram, where besides posts more similar to those of other networks, verifiers such as Chequeado use highlighted stories to include interactive content or live broadcasts about verification. Similarly, from Twitch and TikTok, Newtral and Chequeado, respectively, have been making streaming and informal and humorous videos on which they superimpose emoticons, animated gifs, and other graphics.

4.3. Format, theme, and content approach on online verification: catalog of practices

In terms of formats and how progress has been made, image-type resources predominate, along with audiovisual and sound ones. On the other hand, data visualizations are scarce, especially interactive/multimedia ones, which appear mainly on the social networks of fact-checkers more oriented towards data journalism and with specialized profiles.

Among the content on social networks directly or indirectly linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences, we find different approaches. Extensive content abounds on the verification process, by way of explainers in various formats, based on slow journalism and explanatory journalism. And on the other hand, synthesized or curated contents based on the potential of social network communication, such as infographics or video summaries, are also frequent. Both typologies have an informative and didactic approach. We also locate information on services (guidelines to prevent Covid-19, how vaccines work, etc.), along with tips for detecting fake news and explanations to prevent health misinformation.



Figure 1: Infographic on the importance of oxygenating environments in the face of Covid-19 published by *El Sabueso of Animal Político* on Twitter in February 2021.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3IXgPvd>

They are almost always published in Spanish, except for Verificat, also in Catalan at the time of the analysis, and other media outlets that, to address the cultural diversity of their territories and teach certain ethnic minorities to read and write, produce translated versions of them. This is the case of Ecuador Chequea with videos of live fact-checks, summaries of fact-checks, etc., subtitled in Kichwa and shared on social networks such as Facebook for these segments of the population, or the podcast supported by illustrations and moving images “Chequeo en Lenguas” from Ojo Biónico on YouTube, self-defined as “Covid-19 verification for indigenous peoples”.



Figure 2: Examples of live video in the indigenous language, via YouTube of *Ecuador Verifica*, and of the Shipibo-Konibo version of the checking, via YouTube of *Ojo Público*, respectively.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3m3Sjsb> and <https://bit.ly/39m1kI5>

Next, as a non-exhaustive catalog or taxonomy according to their purpose or citizen utility, some types of visual, interactive, or multimedia content that the analyzed verifiers have been publishing on their social networks and online spaces are shared.

1. Visual announcements of the results of fact-checks or explanatory reports. We are referring to photographic compositions with the image of the protagonist or representative object of the supposed information, on which the corresponding term is normally superimposed, as we have anticipated, as a label, the result of the fact-check according to the scale of the media outlet, and, on occasions, an explanatory headline or supporting text, a hashtag, and the verifier’s logo. This type of content is present in practically all the analyzed cases. Some verifiers also include visual explainer banners in their networks, with a similar format, to promote their explanatory articles (the case, for example, of *Maldita* through its “guides” section of its highlighted stories on Instagram and other social networks).

2. Graphic/ infographic posters with service information or citizen health advice in the face of the pandemic. Of different lengths or depths, they are distributed through Twitter (the aforementioned case of *El Sabueso of Animal Político*), Instagram (*Bolivia Verifica*), or other social networks depending on the case. They are compositions where the visual information -with graphics, illustrations, or vectorial icons, sometimes taken from the internet and others created ad hoc by the media outlet- predominates over the textual information, which acts as a mere complement.





Figure 3: Excerpt from *Bolivia Verifica*'s profile on Instagram, where contents from the first two mentioned typologies are combined.

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/boliviaverifica>

3. Periodic video summaries of verifications. This would be the case of the aforementioned weekly video summary of Ecuador Chequea via YouTube, with a version translated into Kichwa and considerable repercussion on social networks like Facebook according to its promoters, and others that work as an alternative to the regular newsletters that media outlets like Salud Verifica send to their subscribers.



Figure 4: Weekly summary of video verifications via Facebook from *Ecuador Verifica*.

Source: <https://fb.watch/4tSn8PFwCP/> (ver también YouTube: <https://bit.ly/3ct7hEU>)

4. Podcasts about verification. Together with audiovisual content, they are the most frequent, as anticipated. Some media give it use similar to that of the aforementioned video-summaries, such as Maldita with its “Maldita la hora”, a pioneering weekly podcast (with more than 70 chapters) of 10-15 minutes on hoaxes, data, and a newspaper library that broadcasts on Fridays via Ivoox, iTunes, and Spotify and is also advertised on their social networks with the hashtag #malditalahora. We also found others of a diverse nature, for example, “anti-disinformation audios” within the playlists of Chequeado on YouTube; “Podcast verifica” by Agencia Lupa, launched in 2019, a pioneer in Brazil and accessible from one of its YouTube playlists and Spotify; podcasts with advice on Covid-19 health from Ecuador Chequea in Anchor; or “Chequeo amplificado”, hosted on the Speaker platform and accessible from a section of the Colombia Check website.



Figure 5: Posts about #malditalahora on Maldita’s Instagram, via story and post (on the sides), which gives access to it on Spotify (in the center).

Sources: <https://www.instagram.com/maldita.es/> and <https://spoti.fi/3u76QX3>

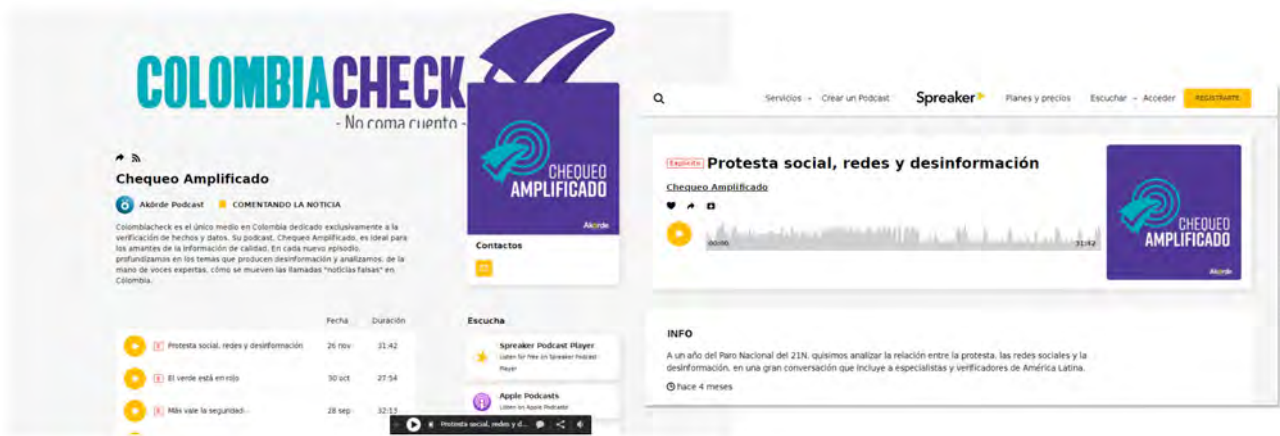


Figure 6: Excerpts from the podcast channel “Chequeo Amplificado” in Speaker of Colombia Check.

Source: <https://www.spreaker.com/show/colombia-check>

5. Audio-verification summaries. As a kind of combination of the two previous typologies, certain verifiers, such as Ojo Bionico from Ojo Público, have developed this format, 1-minute audio explanations of their verification reports that they upload to SoundCloud and insert into their articles. Its objective, according to its news director, David Hidalgo, is for people to be able to share them on WhatsApp and, thus, counteract misinformation even in areas less exposed to social networks.





Figure 7: *Ojo Público's* 1-Minute Coronavirus Checking Podcast.
Source: <https://soundcloud.com/ojopublico/sets/podcast-ojo-bionico>

6. Video interviews/ video testimonials from experts on fact-checking. This is also the case, for example, of Ojo Público, which offers video collections on its social networks where verification experts -many journalists from other verifiers- explain basic concepts about disinformation to the camera or share experiences carried out to spread the importance of the phenomenon and its consequences.

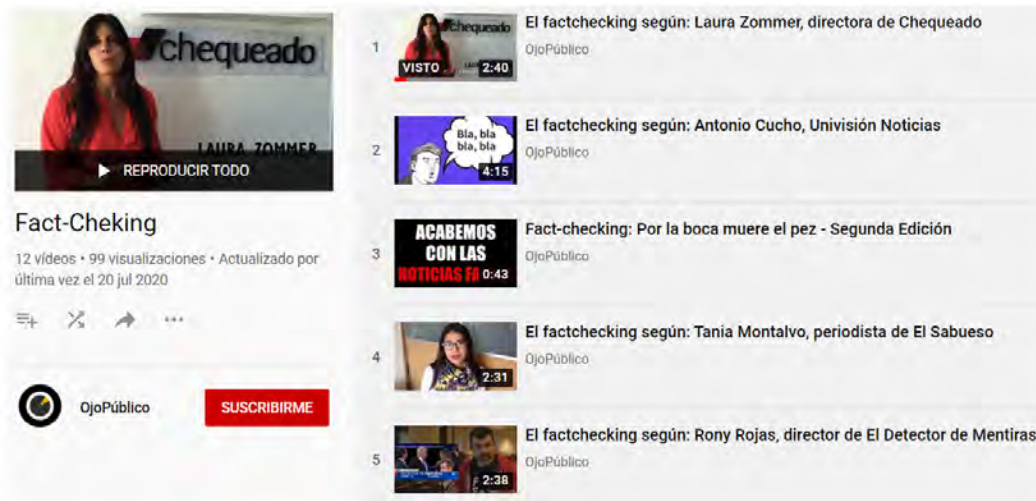


Figure 8: Videos from *Ojo Público's* “Fact-Checking” collection on its YouTube channel.
Source: <https://bit.ly/31pcF5R>

7. Video explainers with journalists in front of the camera. Of different lengths, among the longest are those of El Sabueso of Animal Político, of about 8 minutes, where they explain why something is true or false and introduce, in the middle, “jokes, details, etc. to engage the public”, according to Tania Montalvo. The narratives and tone also vary, depending on both the media outlet and the social network. The range would range from more conventional videos, such as those by EFE Verifica on YouTube, supported by explanatory diagrams and still or moving current images, to more dynamic or disruptive ones, such as “what the fake” by Newtral on YouTube, with music and examples of disinformation about the pandemic (sometimes also as a weekly summary), or those of Maldita and Chequeado on YouTube and Instagram. Some are more elaborate, while others are less technically sophisticated, such as “al grill-datos y más datos” by Ecuador Chequea on YouTube, with figures in front of the camera and montage based on text and sound effects. Some are shot on set, closer to the educational format of the original MOOCs, and outdoors and with natural light, as chronicles/visual reports.



Figure 9: Examples, respectively, of *EFE Verifica* videos on the agency’s YouTube, with the editor in front of the camera (an unusual practice at *EFE*); from the “what the fake” section of *Newtral*; and from “al grill-datos y más datos” from Ecuador Chequea.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3crvg7A>, <https://bit.ly/3w7kDP6>, and <https://bit.ly/3w6wtsC>

8. Streaming on verification. A variety of the above would be live broadcasts, also by professionals in front of the camera, carried out by certain media through social networks such as YouTube (*Ecuador Verifica*), Instagram (*Chequeado*), and even Twitch (*Newtral*). Although in the latter case, it is about informal interviews with characters linked to the Youtuber world (“chatting with...”) or current political news that is not always directly related to fact-checking, it is significant due to its pioneering nature and how they have appropriated the atmosphere and format of streaming.

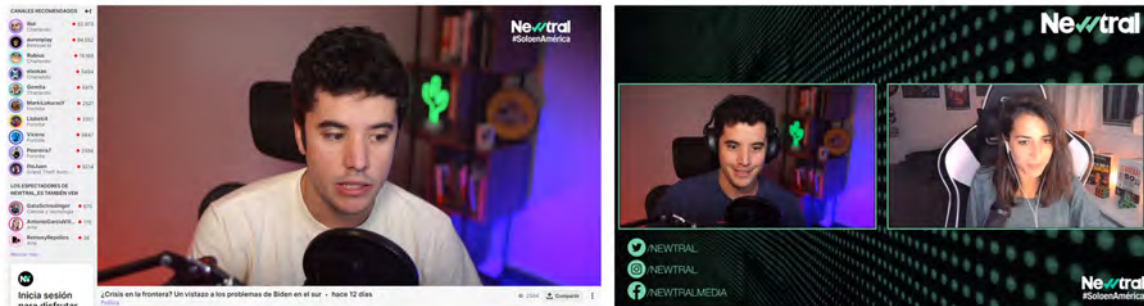


Figure 10: Examples of recordings of *Newtral* broadcasts via Twitch.

Source: https://www.twitch.tv/newtral_es

9. Various video animations or video presentations. This is the case of *Bolivia Verifica*’s “Truth Capsules” on YouTube, where animated dolls replace journalists and animations and real images are mixed, with journalists’ voiceovers about news verifications, or video guides with useful information related to Covid-19 of *Ecuador Chequea* on its YouTube, made with apps such as Powtoon.



Figure 11: Video excerpts from *Bolivia Verifica*’s “Truth Capsules” list.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2PzbfD2>

10. Video montages and other creative, fun, and even gamified video content. The formulas here are diverse. Some examples would be *Maldita*’s videos on TikTok, with a fast pace, young people in front of the camera, and music, effects, overlays, and animated gifs, or *#verifiquenvagos* from *Colombia Check* on YouTube, based on humor and wit for, according to its promoters, deny misinformation about the coronavirus in social networks.



Figure 12: Fragments of #verifiquenVagos from *Colombia Check*, about “the fakes of the coronavirus”.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3czRZ1v>

11. Serial fictional content. Among them, the comics in poster format in Instagram highlights of *Salud con Lupa*; or the serial verification videos of the Lupa Agency, as periodic short films that also use humor and meme culture to hook audiences and are subtitled in different languages.



Figure 13: One of the comic-style posters in the “visual” section of Instagram highlights from *Salud con Lupa* (left) and “#SóQueNão, Ep. 03 - Vacinas e mutação genética” (December 2020), via YouTube from *Agencia Lupa* (right).

Sources: <https://bit.ly/2P7doWU> and <https://bit.ly/3w2B4fH>

12. Music against misinformation. Some go further and use popular music genres in their territories to spread verification and get people to comment on them. This is the case of the videos on rap/hip-hop by *Ojo Público*, which even plans to release an album in 2021 with a selection of songs performed by urban artists who warn, in native languages, of the damage caused by misinformation in the country.

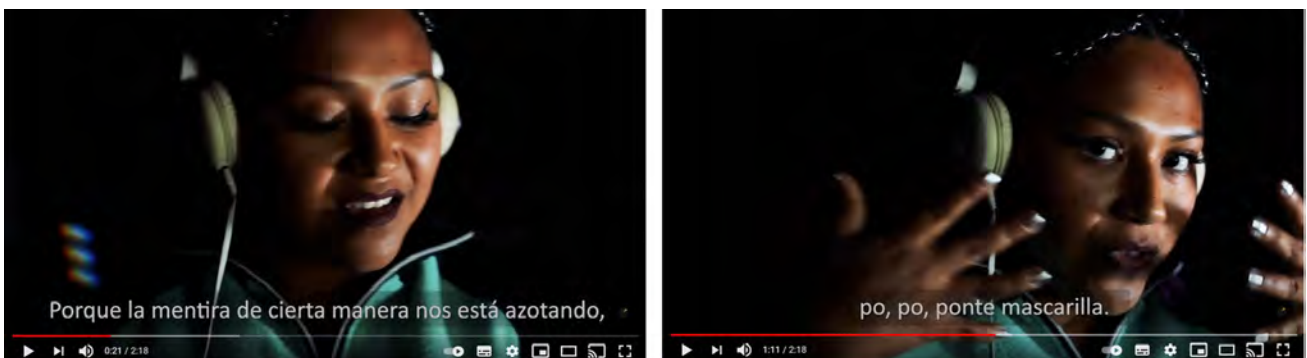


Figure 14: “Realism”, performed by La Torita, the third single from the rap album ‘Chiqapwan Takisunchis’ [Let’s talk with the truth], produced by *Ojo Público*, via YouTube.

Source: <https://bit.ly/31XQD3s>

13. Interactive visualizations on verification. They are frequent, among others, in Newtral and Verificat, which use Flourish for their website and adapt them for stories and posts on Instagram, a network in which the Lupa Agency also dedicates, in its highlighted stories, a section, “Did you know”, to explain current data with figures.



Figure 15: Some of the images from *Verificat's* Instagram post about the pandemic.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3wffQsFF>

14. Polls, surveys, and other interactive verification options. Some media (Maldita, Chequeado, etc.) use Instagram highlights to produce quizzes, games, or other ad hoc interactive content on this social network.



Figure 16: Detail of highlighted stories, with Quiz, surveys... of *Maldita* on Instagram.

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/maldita.es/>

15. Interactive specials also broadcasted on social networks. In addition to the aforementioned typologies, which occur with a certain frequency or periodicity, we also find interesting monographs on verification, of a visual or interactive nature, developed by some verifiers as part of their production strategy and also disseminated on their social networks, as we comment on later.

4.4. Resources and processes for creating content for social networks

A good part of the aforementioned typology of content implies a production time, hence these practices are more limited in the verifiers that are micro-media. Depending on the case, it is carried out by the verifiers' own personnel (with exclusive dedication or not), or by external or sporadic collaborators. In several analyzed verifiers they have visualization experts (for example, Verificat, Newtral, or Maldita)

and/or designers who “graph” the data (for example, Ecuador Chequea) on their teams. The number of workers varies, and there are small verifiers, with 4-10 journalists, such as Cotejo.info or EFE Verifica, and others such as Bolivia Verifica or La Silla Vacía, where the workforce amounts to 20-35 people. In small media outlets or verification sections, the editors themselves almost always act as community managers, and some, like La Voz de Guanacaste, have audience editors as essential figures for active listening to their online channels.

Some initiatives are possible through synergies between media, external collaborations, or thanks to the availability of grants or external financing for their production. This is the case of #Latinografías of El Surtidor, a visual journalism project on verification in collaboration with Salud con Lupa and with the support of Facebook, the International Center For Journalists, the European Journalism Center, and the Program on Independent Journalism.

In any case, for journalists from traditional media, participating in its creation is a new learning experience. Thus, for the staff of EFE Verifica, coming from the parent agency -in whose videos the editors do not usually appear-, it has been the first to record videos on camera, as its manager, Desireé García, commented. These videos are characterized by a more casual language and less rigidity than before a conventional media outlet. Other verifiers, as stated by Irene Ignacio from La República, point out the importance of skills such as visual narrative or data visualization for a journalist linked to verification, regardless of whether or not they are in charge of the final art.

4.5. Significant cases of strategic innovation in content adaptation

Besides having personnel with skills for the development of innovative content for social networks and their management, or having, where appropriate, resources to outsource these tasks, the interviewed managers agree on the importance of an organizational culture that fosters this innovation following the vision of each project. Thus, Joaquín Ortega, Newtral’s content manager, referred to the fact that “transferring all types of information to various formats” is part of the company’s DNA, which also uses its own social networks to publicize, through videos and other corporate multimedia resources, its social network content strategy.

It has been on YouTube since April 2018, and at the beginning of March 2021, it exceeds one million views according to data from the network itself. The contents here are varied, as can be seen in lists, some even about broadcasts on Twitch. Regarding hoaxes and verification, the list of “what the fake” to which we refer, with narrated examples of disinformation about the pandemic, and the “Covidpedia” project, videos made from vector animations and with voiceovers in which they share, in an informative tone, service information on the pandemic, stand out.



Figure 17: List of “Covidpedia” videos on *Newtral’s* YouTube.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3sw4fWj>

Its Instagram profile is visually very neat, with designs that are very suitable for the brand image. It has, besides data visualizations, infographics, and typographic posters, numerous videos. They use

IGTV a lot, and in the highlights, as on the website itself, there is a “verification zone” also dedicated to service information and disassembled hoaxes.

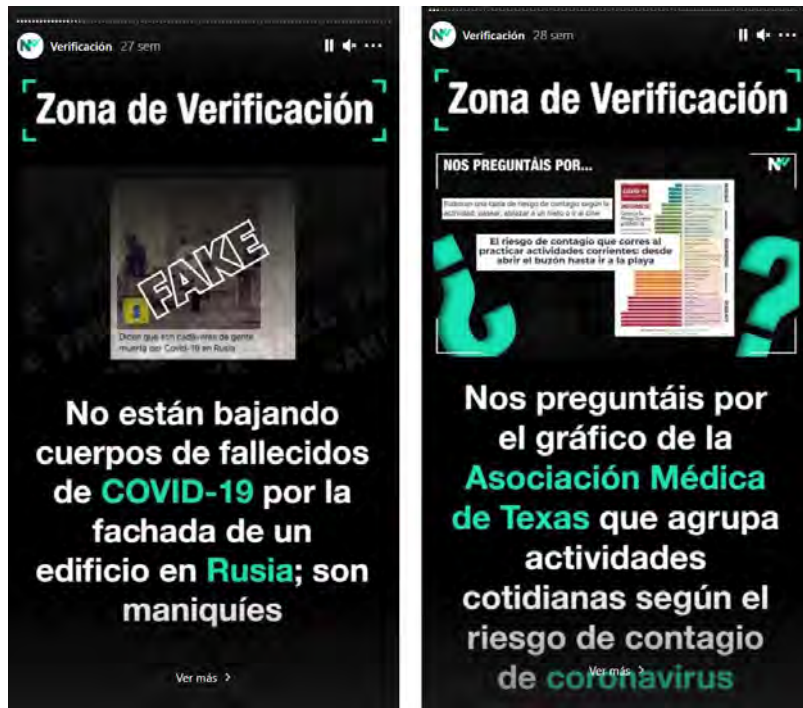


Figure 18: Newtral's Instagram Verification Highlighted Stories.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2QBd5nl>

On Facebook, they share images resulting from their verifications or from projects such as “the risk meter” - a tool that measures the risk of contagion by Covid-19 in different citizen activities with the help of experts in epidemiology and public health - and they upload as videos, the multimedia contents from other networks, among them, the aforementioned direct video from Twitch, Instagram lives, or podcasts that they also carry out, not always about verification. Their journalistic epicenter is on Twitter, where they use micro-videos and animated graphics for their posts and hashtags such as #factcheck or #verificamosparati (this one to meet audience demands) for verification issues.

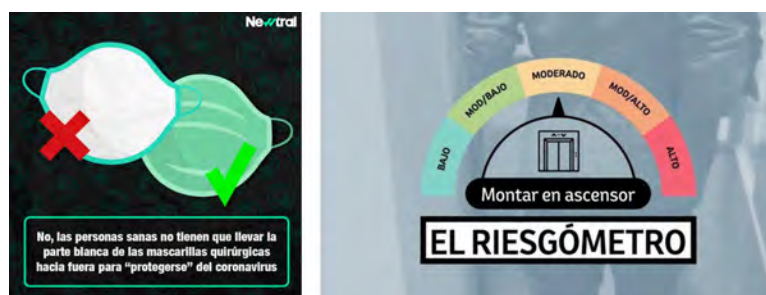


Figure 19: Designs elaborated, respectively, to share verification and “the risk meter” results and shared by Newtral as posts on its Facebook.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/NewtralMedia>

Another significant case in Spain is Verificat, a young project very oriented to the principles of digital culture. Emerged in 2019 as the first independent verification platform in Catalonia, its content on social networks, as Alba Tobella pointed out when interviewed, is the result of teamwork. They have data journalists for investigation, one of the fact-checkers is very active in data visualization, and the person who runs social networks also has skills in graphic design. In between, coordinators are the ones who decide which fact-checks can be visually told. With more than fifty views on Flourish, they have made a strong commitment to creating visual stories and views about verifications on networks

such as Instagram, and are working on special monographs.

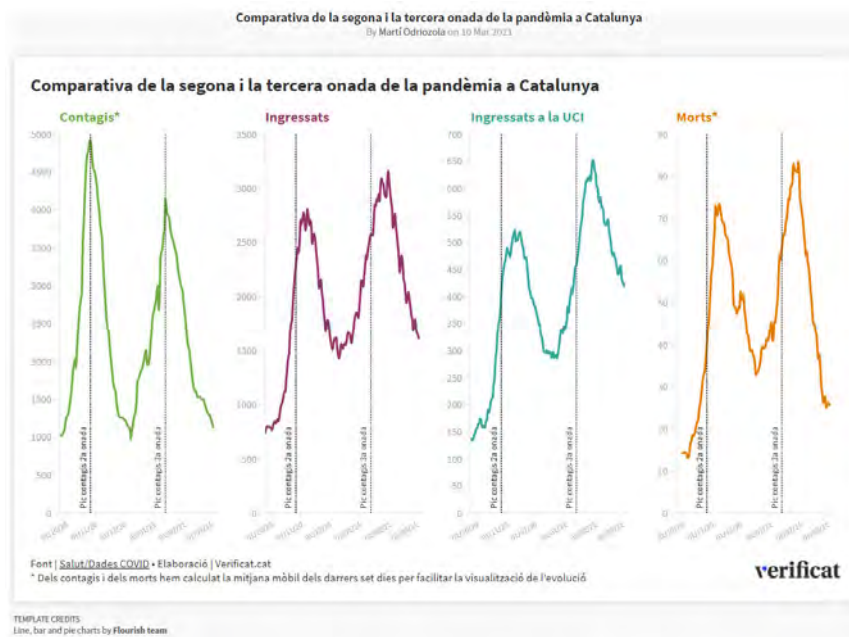


Figure 20: Detail of one of the interactive data visualizations that *Verificat* usually includes in its texts about verifications and shares in its social networks, made with Flourish.

Source: <https://bit.ly/3u0zTeB>

At the end of 2020, they carried out a crowdfunding campaign via Goteo.org, for whose dissemination they relied mainly on Twitter. In the words of Tobella, one of their objectives was to increase their community of readers since their followers on social networks respond to a younger profile than them. Similarly, Clara Jiménez, co-founder and co-director of Maldita, half-dean in Spain characterized by its innovative, close, and informal tone, and in permanent beta, pointed out that “against all odds”, its readers are over forty-five, mainly, and fifty-five years old: “We don’t have a large young audience. I think that is our challenge and we are working on it through TikTok, trying to make little pills of some things that attract younger audiences, trying to be more present on their networks.”

On this channel, opened in mid-2020 under the Maldito Bulo brand, they make one-minute videos focused, among other science topics, on practical advice to prevent Covid-19 or deny hoaxes about the pandemic, even using “challenges” (see images below). If working directly on social networks, creating visual formats that users could send via Whatsapp or Telegram or upload to their profiles on Facebook and Twitter, was one of the innovations of the project in its early days (Bernal and Clares, 2019), with these practices they are once again “early adopters” of new channels.

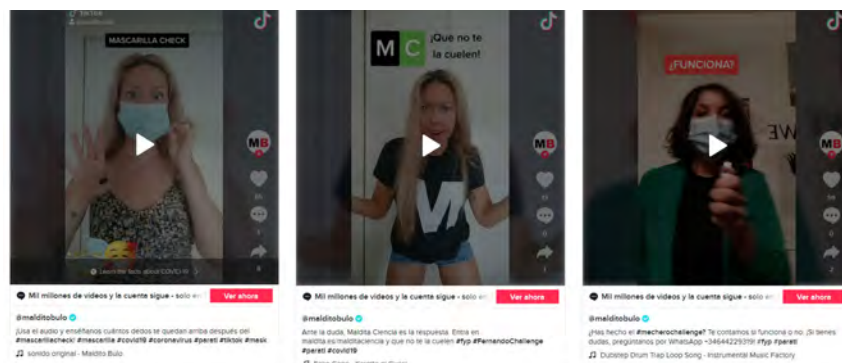


Figure 21: Examples of videos linked to the use of masks during Covid-19, one of the “star” topics in the initial phase of the pandemic.

Source: TikTok of *Maldita*, via <https://maldita.es/malditateexplica/20210118/lucha-bulos-desinformacion-tiktok/>

The Argentinian Chequeado, a pioneer in Latin America, has also been betting since its origins on putting “focus on social networks, on the crowd, as innovation and differentiation”, in the words of its founder and executive and journalistic director, Laura Zommer. Since 2015, its structure has had an innovation program from which online content projects are coordinated, giving it wide visibility on its social networks, such as the “Museum of Disinformation” -an interactive site launched in 2020 on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of Chequeado- or “I check it” -co-creation tool under development through which anyone can verify content-.



Figure 22: Microsite of the Museum of Disinformation and example of a promotional post on *Chequeado's* Instagram.
Sources: [chequeado.com/museodeladesinformacion](https://www.chequeado.com/museodeladesinformacion) and <https://www.instagram.com/chequeado>

Apart from their large community on Facebook and, above all, Twitter, in recent times they have paid more attention to Instagram, according to Zommer, considering it a “more constructive space, without trolls or haters”, and with enormous potential, like YouTube, to develop more educational content. Without a presence yet on TikTok, they affirm that their strategy has always been based on going slowly and seeking “sustained growth” over time.

Another consolidated verifier in the Latin American sphere, Salud con Lupa, has been guided by a strategy consisting of allying with scientists to produce content that is then adapted to different online formats, always prioritizing its usefulness and understanding for audiences, according to its director and co-founder, Fabiola Towers.

Among its recent editorial innovation projects, “Scientifically proven”, a special launched in March 2021 in collaboration with the Epistemonikos Foundation, responds to this spirit. In it, they analyze the most used treatments against Covid-19 and classify them according to their effectiveness, allowing users to make filtered searches or expand data on each one. Content like this, along with research results on the pandemic (#vacunagate, for example, on Twitter) and other visual literacy and dissemination content already mentioned, occupy their channels on social networks.



ACTUALIZADO AL 18 DE MARZO DE 2021

Un año después del inicio de la pandemia de covid-19, médicos de todo el mundo siguen buscando tratamientos para frenar la enfermedad que cambió la vida que conocíamos. En ese lapso se han realizado varios ensayos clínicos que ofrecen evidencia científica para confirmar la eficacia o perjuicio del uso de un medicamento o terapia con diversos pacientes que han sufrido cuadros leves, moderados y graves de la infección por coronavirus.

En este especial desarrollado en alianza con la Fundación Epistemonikos, revisamos cada semana la evolución de la evidencia disponible para 38 de los tratamientos y medicamentos más usados. Hemos elaborado una clasificación de siete niveles (desde "altamente efectivo" hasta "la ciencia no lo avala") que describe la utilidad de estas terapias.

CLASIFICACIÓN

- 7** **Alta evidencia**
Un tratamiento accesible, efectivo y seguro, para el cual la evidencia nos entrega buena certeza de que los datos obtenidos en los estudios reflejan lo que ocurrirá en la realidad.
- 6** **Listo para su uso**
Tratamiento en el que la balanza entre beneficios versus riesgos o costos está a favor de lo primero. Además, la evidencia nos entrega buena certeza de que los datos obtenidos en los estudios reflejan lo que ocurrirá en la realidad.
- 5** **En estudio**
Tratamientos en los que aún nos faltan algunos aspectos con certeza o una buena evidencia sobre...

saludconlupa.com @saludconlupa

En respuesta a @saludconlupa

Si te interesa revisar cómo evoluciona cada semana la evidencia de los 36 medicamentos más usados para luchar contra la Covid-19, revisa Científicamente Comprobado, un especial interactivo que hacemos junto a nuestros aliados de @EpistemonikosEs

Científicamente comprobado: un análisis de los tratamientos más usados contra...
En este especial analizamos 38 de los tratamientos y medicamentos más usados contra el coronavirus. Para ello, hemos elaborado una clasificación de siete ...

Figure 23: Extracts from the “Scientifically proven” microsite and tweet published on February 12th, 2021 announcing these contents.

Sources: <https://bit.ly/3w9n4AA> and <https://bit.ly/3IXSrrt>

4.6. Different phases, same consciousness

The own production of content for social networks is situated, as confirmed by its own promoters, between the strategy (with editorial plans and actions for the active listening of online audiences, monitoring, and evaluation of the results) and experimentation.

Many verifiers today focus on the quality of the information rather than on adapting their formats. Others are in the community generation phase, such as the Verificador de La República according to its content coordinator, Irene Ignacio, and leave format innovation for later phases.

Among significant cases of orchestrated adaptation of verification content for different audiences and as part of a strategy (editorial plans and media literacy), El Sabueso of Mexico stands out, besides those reviewed. As its general editor, Tania Montalvo, recounted, its main product is verification videos aimed at young audiences and whose topics are decided “based on people’s comments about a verification”. For a different audience, “a little older” they create “light” and sometimes “fun” infographics to provide them with information. With the pandemic, they also consolidated their “explainers”, long texts where they explain from start to finish, without saying if something is true or false, the details of a topic to “prevent misinformation”. All this content, besides social networks, is classified on its website.

Another verifier with a well-defined strategy adapted to the peculiarities of its territory is, as mentio-

ned, Ojo Bionico of Ojo Público. As part of its social function, it has been producing content translated into indigenous languages and designed to be distributed to audiences with limited connectivity, not only on social networks but also via mobile devices or radio, thanks to collaborations with local actors. Its news director, David Hidalgo, referred to all of this as “indie methodology” which, through the combination of art, music, and other disciplines, aims to alphabetize against misinformation about Covid-19 in rural areas.

Some managers insist on the importance of adapting content according to different levels of audience engagement and of including indicators for monitoring online results in their plans. As Gabriela Brenes, executive director of La Voz de Guanacaste, pointed out, to incorporate a journalistic product, “the first and most challenging thing” is “not to be guided by intuition and measure the impact so that the experimentation is intentional.”

5. Conclusions

None of the Hispanic verifiers of the #CoronavirusFactCheck Alliance doubts today the importance that social networks and editorial innovation in them have for their activity. As Tania Montalvo from El Sabueso of Animal Político pointed out, “disinformation has to be attacked in different formats depending on how it is moving.” In a context in which, in the words of Irene Ignacio, from the Verificador de La República, “something that verifiers are accused of is doing journalism only for journalists”, disseminating their work using the same channels and platforms from which misinformation continues to flow (Bustos and Ruiz del Olmo, 2020) and with formats that are more viral than a text or post (Bernal and Gavilán, 2019), is allowing them to reach more users and overcome this myth.

Regardless of whether they are carried out strategically or tactically and regardless of the formulas they adopt, the dissemination practices and, where appropriate, the generation of online content by verifiers, according to those responsible, have a double objective. On the one hand, they intend to contribute to their mission and act in coherence with their values and principles, of which replicability, transparency, literacy, and social function are essential parts. On the other hand, these practices seek to get closer to the audiences, meet their demands for loyalty, while capturing new users in certain social network channels, and with all this, extend their work as verifiers and be more effective in the fight against disinformation. Adapting to the needs of the various audiences becomes essential, as well as doing so under the principle of sustainability. As Gabriela Brenes of La Voz de Guanacaste stated, “you compete not so much by volume but by engagement.”

Converted, more than simple media outlets or verification platforms, into producers and distributors of online multimedia content with which to inform, train, and even mobilize citizens in the fight against the infodemic, there is a generalized positive self-perception about the results obtained by those who have developed practices in this sense.

The most innovative practices, fundamentally of an audiovisual nature, are, although incipient, very significant, and denote the possibilities of fact-checkers, due to their nature and uniqueness, to go further than conventional media in terms of experimentation. They do it with online formats and narratives that mix information and entertainment (with an educational component as well), drink from principles and formulas typical of digital culture, such as visual thinking and visualization, remixes and memes, and, in a certain way, gamification. And they are distributed in channels where boomers, Generation X, or millennials abound, also taking advantage of their consumption via mobile (Pellicer, 2019).

The truth is that these occur above all in projects that already have a certain track record or in those that arise under the philosophy of startups, with innovation as part of their mission and values and where priority is given to the adaptation of content. With few exceptions, in micro-media with limited resources or dependent on aid or grants, a large part of the efforts is still focused on traditional networks, such as Twitter or Facebook, and their presence in them is largely due to the need to have channels to communicate with the audiences and that they submit their requests for verification.

Factors such as lack of planning, time, or the availability/qualification of personnel to actively listen to networks and produce new content adapted to demands, are frequent difficulties in many of the

Hispanic verifiers analyzed. They face a challenge that is “technological, but above all narrative,” in the words of Gabriela Brenes, from La Voz de Guanacaste, who advocates a future strategy of “modular branding,” that is, “packaging what has been verified in different formats and publish content with greater impact” thinking of different audiences. Some of the sections, such as Verificador de La República, have among their plans, according to their manager, Irene Ignacio, to take advantage of the parent media teams, with experts in data visualization, to develop cross-projects.

In any case, being part of the #CoronavirusFactCheck alliance and of IFCN itself opens up new opportunities for everyone, which in fact are already bearing fruit. Among them, being able to have technologies and tools to anticipate and actively listen to misinformation on social networks. But, above all, join forces to promote collaborative editorial innovation projects or develop their own initiatives with the support of organizations and entities to which, thanks to the prestige and credibility that being part of this global network grants, they have easier access.

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ANNEXES:

Annex 1. Table 2. *Presence in social networks of verifiers*

Verifier Type	Verifier Name	Channel type	Own channels	Channels of the media outlet
Media outlet	Agencia Lupa	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flipboard, Other	
Media outlet	Aos Fatos	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	
Media outlet	Bolivia Verifica	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	

Media outlet	Chequeado	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	
Media outlet	Colombia Check	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other	
Media outlet	Cotejo.info	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	
Media outlet	Ecuador Chequea	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other	
Media outlet	Newtral	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	
Media outlet	Polígrafo	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	
Media outlet	Spondeo Media	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	
Media outlet	Salud con Lupa (Comprueba)	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube	
Media outlet	Verificado	Own	Twitter, Facebook	
Media outlet	Verificat	Own	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	
Section	Maldita (Maldito Bulo)	Mixed	Twitter, YouTube, TikTok	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Other
Section	Animal Político (El Sabueso)	Mixed	Twitter, Facebook	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flipboard, Other
Section	Verificador de La República	Mixed	Twitter, Facebook	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
Section	AFP Factual	Mixed	Twitter, Facebook	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other
Section	Agencia Ocote	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other
Section	Convoca	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, YouTube
Section	EFE Verifica	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other
Section	Efecto Cocuyó	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
Section	El Surtidor	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Other
Section	Estadão Verifica	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Other
Section	La Nación	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
Section	La Voz de Guanacaste	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
Section	La Silla Vacía	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, YouTube

Section	Observador	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Other
Section	Ojo Público (Ojo biónico)	Of the media outlet		Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
Section	Periodismo de barrio	Of the media outlet	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Other	

Source: *Own elaboration with data from February 2021*