Ephemeral Journalism: News Distribution Through Instagram Stories

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Abstract
Social media are increasingly integrated into media routines as channels to gain access, verify and spread information. Likewise, as mobile news consumption is standardized, the media experiment with native formats for these platforms. This study analyzes how the media use Instagram Stories, to identify the strategies that they apply, as well as the adaptation and innovation features on this platform. A content analysis was conducted from a sample of 17 online media that use Instagram Stories, both legacy and digital native. The results show an upward potential in ephemeral news production, one that is increasingly developed and unique.

Keywords
journalism, social media, Instagram, ephemeral, microformats

Over the last few decades, journalism has undergone a major restructuring (Casero-Ripollés et al., 2016) caused by the phenomenon of digitalization and media convergence (Jenkins, 2006). The rise of the Web and constant technological innovations have led to a new scenario for media outlets, where mobile, networked, and wearable media platforms are featuring "a host of new and innovative content and communication capabilities" (Pavlik et al., 2019, p. 191).

In this technology-driven media environment, professional journalistic norms and daily practices are being redefined (Spyridou et al., 2013; Van Der Haak et al., 2012), together with the organization and structure of newsrooms, the content of news, and the relationships between journalists, their readers (Pavlik, 2000), and their sources (Fisher, 2018). The limits between production and reception of contents have become blurred (Bruns, 2005; Loosen, 2015; Ross, 2012; Sundet & Ytreberg, 2009) as users hold the power not only to select, distribute, and interpret the events (Hermida, 2012) but also to take part in the news production (Kammer, 2013). Although many journalists are reluctant to give audiences a key role in the news-making process (Lewis, 2015) and some newsrooms show a lack of interest in collaborating with the public (Porlezza, 2019), the new media culture requires to shift from a newsroom-centricity perspective (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009) to a more networked one (Hermida et al., 2014), in which media professionals and their audiences are expected to co-create and work together (Deuze & Witschge, 2018).

Defined as platforms for networked flows of information (Hermida, 2013), social media are at the core of this transition. They have changed the way journalistic content is produced, distributed, used, and consumed (Kramp & Loosen, 2017; Newman, 2009), so being active on them is considered "by many news managers as an obvious and necessary step in journalism's digital-first transformation" (Lewis & Molyneux, 2019, p. 2580). Sites such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have turned into powerful channels for media to deliver information, find sources and story ideas, promote contents, and increase the traffic to their websites (Barberá et al., 2017; Hermida et al., 2012; Lee, 2016; Sacco & Bossio, 2017; Thurman, 2018), as well as another means to reach, communicate, interact, and engage with their audiences (Al-Rawi, 2017; Burnett & Bloice, 2016; Duffy & Knight, 2019; Holton & Lewis, 2011).

For users, social networking sites provide a point of access to news (Wilding et al., 2018) that have grown increasingly popular (Newman et al., 2017). In addition, as Boczkowski et al. (2017) point out, "most young users get the news on their mobile devices as part of their constant

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connection to media platforms" (p. 1785). This increase in mobile news consumption habits, which will be even more important for the next generation, draws the future of the news industry (Chan-Olmsted et al., 2013). As mobile adopters are searching for short-up-to-date news, media should produce native formats adjusted to these usage information patterns characterized by faster access and greater timeliness (Wolf & Schnauber, 2015). But, are the media facing the challenge of adapting their production models both to the new functionalities of the social networks and the news consumption behaviors?

This article aims to answer this question, focusing on the case of Instagram Stories. It analyzes if the media are using Instagram Stories as a channel for news distribution and the types, topics, resources, and purposes they are employing for. To this end, we carried out a quantitative content analysis of 17 online media (legacy and digital native) that use Instagram Stories. That was combined with a questionnaire addressing the people in charge of social channels in those media sources. Our findings show that the media are producing ephemeral stories for Instagram with the main purpose of adapting their news contents to the functionalities of this platform and the users' preferences. A literature review of research studies dealing with the transformations that social media have caused in news distribution and consumption and, specifically, the possibilities that Instagram and its stories have opened for the media are discussed in the following sections of this article.

Social Media as Channels for News Distribution and Consumption: The Incidental and Ephemeral Exposure

Social networking sites have become more and more important for online news distribution and consumption due to their convenience and ease of use to publish (Kümpel et al., 2015). In this contemporary flow of contents, news can be found "via third-party platforms but accessed on publishers own sites" (distributed discovery) or "both found and accessed on third-party platforms" (distributed content) (Sehl et al., 2018, p. 7). Social media turn into an essential element for news diffusion and access. The mass media logic is replaced by a social media logic (Van Dijck & Poell, 2013), which requires to adapt the news distribution routines to a media environment in which the dynamics of social networking sites matter (Welbers & Opgenhaffen, 2019), even considering that "the influence of social platforms shapes the journalism itself" (Bell & Owen, 2017, p. 10).

Besides its relevance as publishing platforms, social media sites are establishing new patterns of news consumption and engagement, as they enable a constant and ubiquitous connection with information (Swart et al., 2018). Together with live-blogs, these "keep audiences updated on a general subject theme" (Thorsen & Jackson, 2018, p. 1). Social media networks "emerge as places to turn to when news break and where users can search for further contextualization of events" (Heinrich, 2012, p. 767). The number of users who are active on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat as sources of information has increased (Mitchell & Page, 2015; Newman et al., 2016), particularly among younger generations. In fact, across all countries, one-third of 18- to 24-year-olds now use social media as their main source of news: that's more than online news sites (31%) and more than TV news and printed put together (29%) (Newman et al., 2017).

The centrality that social media have in news consumption changed the way in which users are exposed and engage with information (Ahmadi & Wohn, 2018; Boczkowski et al., 2017), as they can find the news even if they are not actively seeking it out (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). According to Fletcher and Nielsen (2018), people are unintentionally exposed to information when they see on social networks how other users discuss about news stories, when some posts which contain firsthand information related to news appear on their social walls or even when they are shown links to news content published by established media. This accidental (Valeriani & Vaccari, 2015) or incidental (Kim et al., 2013) exposure feeds a new pattern of consumption in which individuals hold a "news-finds-me perception," relying on social media as a source of news to maintain the feeling that they are well-informed citizens (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2017). The social media use is related to increased news use (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2018) and should be taken into account by both legacy and digital media. In fact, as Ahmadi and Wohn (2018) note, "through exposing more users to news content in an incidental fashion, news organizations may attract more social media news consumers and obtain competitive advantage" (p. 7).

The interaction between audiences and digital news contents in this unintended type of consumption tends to be fleeting and ephemeral too (Wirfs-Brock & Queh, 2019), as users spend less time watching these stories and their attention is brief, partial, and fragmented (Boczkowski et al., 2017). Thus, "ephemerality is now a central component of the user experience for many social platforms" (Bayer et al., 2016, p. 957). Audiences who consume these kinds of contents can be defined as "an engaged and ephemeral ad hoc public that has formed around a cause facilitated by social media" (Hermida, 2016, p. 90).

These new incidental and ephemeral users' consumption habits are the reason for the different "know-how" of the media (Larrondo et al., 2017), as these intensify their efforts to produce native formats (Newman et al., 2017). Short videos for web and Facebook profiles (Kalogeropoulos et al., 2016) are followed by the creation of journalistic microformats (Silva-Rodríguez et al., 2017). Smartphones turn into the main device to access the Internet (Ofcom, 2018) and consume information (Bell, 2015; Newman et al., 2019), so the shape of the news changes to accommodate navigation through them (Newman, 2018), prioritizing the use of

"horizontal storytelling mode" and Snapchat's "tap to advance mode," Twitter moments, Facebook and WhatsApp status, as well as Instagram Stories (Online Journalism Blog, 2017).

The Media and Instagram Stories: Toward a New Dimension of Ephemerality

Over the last year, many publishers have begun to focus on Instagram and its stories (Newman, 2019). Created as a visual platform and oriented toward personal private interaction (Larsson, 2018), it reaches more than 1 billion users per month and 500 millions per day (Instagram, 2019), who use it as a means to share "their life moments with friends through a series of (filter manipulated) pictures and videos" (Hu et al., 2014, p. 595). Meanwhile, the media see Instagram as a tool to interact with sources, share stories and content (Thornton, 2013), or show users what happens behind the scenes (Agosto, 2013) or behind the images (Thiruvengadam, 2013). Other reasons for the use of Instagram within the newsrooms are the enhancement of the brand's visibility and interaction with young people. Newspapers, such as *The Guardian*, are building their entire strategy around it (Stefanou, 2017).

New features implemented by this network, such as live streaming or Instagram Stories, have opened an array of possibilities for the media, which are starting to experiment with different ways of storytelling. In fact, newspapers, such as *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, have added a Q&A feature to their stories as a way of establishing a direct conversation with their readers (Schmidt, 2018).

The ephemerality turns into a characteristic of current media practices (Walden et al., 2013) due to "the explosion of online short-form contents enabled by web platforms such as YouTube" (Grainge, 2011, p. 3). As Pesce (2016) points out, the logic of digital media has favored the creation of short texts, so the contemporary media landscape is characterized by the extraordinary abundance of short-lived contents. However, the emergence of a new set of social networks, applications, and functionalities (e.g., Snapchat, Facebook status, or Instagram Stories) has incorporated a new dimension in the concept of "ephemerality."

The ephemeral is not only about the creation of contents that can be consumed in seconds or minutes (Grainge, 2011), but it is also about contents that can only be viewed a certain number of times or for a specific amount of time (Anderson, 2015). In this sense, they apply an oral paradigm that is unique and differs from previous digital online communication, as Soffer (2016) notes, because "the oral features are already integrated in the application technology design and as orality is often implemented on highly visual products" (p. 1). This temporal time-bound logic, one of the main characteristics of oral cultures, turns into an essential property of applications such as Snapchat (Soffer, 2016) or features such

as Instagram Stories, which facilitate "a distinctive sharing practice that is both in-the-moment and momentary" (Bayer et al., 2016, p. 960). They reinforce the basis of synchronous and direct communication (Bayer et al., 2016) and bring us back in time, as the contents posted are volatile, primitive, ephemeral, and do not store by default (Cavalcanti et al., 2017; Švecová, 2017).

As media face the challenge posed by producing pieces of news for these types of applications (Wilson, 2017), journalism shifts toward a new stage characterized by the ephemerality of its content, its channels, and its audiences. Journalism which creates ephemeral contents to distribute them through ephemeral platforms and tools with the aim of satisfying the consumption habits of ephemeral users is what we called "ephemeral journalism."

Although the term ephemerality applied to the journalistic practice is not new, as the essence of information is defined by its transient and ephemeral quality (Park, 1940), "what is new is the intentional design choice of ephemerality in an era when persistence is common" (Xu et al., 2018). From analogue formats to digital media, it has been a desire to store, preserve, and archive contents that are fluid and ephemeral by nature to guarantee their permanent availability across time (Karlsson & Sjøvaag, 2016). The permanence was seen as a way to document knowledge and preserve memory (Soffer, 2016). However, these new ephemeral social media platforms "subvert the old model by disposing of the fragments that pass through them by rule instead of exception" (Pedrini, 2014, p. 5). Contents and messages are available only for a limited period of time, so the logic behind these applications goes against the permanent availability to promote ephemerality as their core value.

Given this context, it is of great relevance to analyze the phenomenon of Instagram Stories as a milestone in journalism's adaptation to new channels and social networks, a necessity shaped by the logic of the so-called "platform infomediation" (Siapera, 2013). Furthermore, it points out toward an incidental and ephemeral consumption, especially among younger generations. Its future research will be crucial for a better understanding of both the audiences' needs and the contemporary social media ecology.

Method

This article will investigate the activity that media develop through Instagram Stories: an ephemeral microformat with a significant visual component, portrait orientation, and horizontal navigation adopted by Instagram in August 2016. This new functionality has meant a change in the media production models, which begins with the creation of native formats adapted for news consumption on mobile devices. Our objectives are the following: to clarify the degree of implementation of Instagram Stories and to dig

Table 1. Sample of Analyzed Media (Own Elaboration).

Media	Country	Type
BuzzFeed News	The United States	Digital native
El Mundo	Spain	Legacy
El País	Spain	Legacy
Huffington Post	Spain	Digital native
Jornal de Notícias	Portugal	Legacy
La Nación	Costa Rica	Legacy
La Repubblica	Italy	Legacy
La Vanguardia	Spain	Legacy
Le Monde	France	Legacy
Marca	Spain	Legacy
Politico	The United States	Digital native
The Guardian	The United Kingdom	Legacy
The New York Times	The United States	Legacy
The Times of London	The United Kingdom	Legacy
The Washington Post	The United States	Legacy
Vice News	The United States	Digital native
Vozpópuli	Spain	Digital native

deeper into the types, topics, resources, and purposes they are employed for. Such objectives are linked to the following research questions:

RQ1: Are international media sources using Instagram Stories as a new communication channel?
RQ2: What is their production like in terms of volume and frequency?
RQ3: What are the resources used to design the ephemeral stories?
RQ4: What are the types of stories and what are their purposes?
RQ5: What are the most popular topics for these ephemeral stories?

To answer the questions above, we have used a content analysis as this technique allows for certain variables to be measured in a systematic, objective, and quantitative manner (Wimmer & Dominick, 1991) and to obtain a summary of the features of a group of messages (Igartua, 2006) or stories, in this case. The selection of media has been made from a sample of the R&D project "Uses and informative preferences in the new media map in Spain: journalism models for mobile devices" (CSO2015-64662-C4-4-R). This sample consists of 60 news outlets, both legacy and digital native journalistic institutions, which were taken as the basis for conducting the first exploratory study and a pretest between 25 and 31 December 2017. The main objective was to detect which media sources had an active profile on Instagram and which published ephemeral stories. The final sample for this article was made up of the 17 media platforms out of 60 that had an active profile and were also using Instagram Stories in December 2017, as stated in Table 1.

The data collection was carried out in a systematic way, archiving the 1,938 stories published daily at 10 p.m. (UTC+1) over two periods of time: between 1 and 14 January 2018 ($n = 682$) and between 1 and 14 March 2018 ($n = 1,256$), covering two weekly periods in two different months to avoid circumstantial effects that could be associated with a specific period. Once the data were stored—downloaded with an extension for Chrome—the stories were coded by one of the authors and the content analysis was carried out based on a datasheet (Table 2).

In addition to the description of the stories, two dimensions that allow their classification have been analyzed: "purpose" and "type." First, the underlying purpose (Table 3) has been identified from the user's point of view by associating the message with a language function (Jakobson, 1960). The typology is proposed based on the purpose and composition of the story (Table 4). Cohen's kappa (κ) was run in a pretest to determine the intercoder reliability on the type and purpose of the stories. We obtained a very good agreement, κ = .95 for type and κ = .80 for purpose, following Altman (1991).

This study includes a questionnaire sent to the people in charge of social channels in those media sources that were subject to our analysis. Of the 17 media analyzed, 7 responded between February and March 2018 to the online questionnaire. This was made up of 19 questions, focusing on the strategy, criteria, resources, return on investment, teamwork, and future perspectives for Instagram Stories.

Results

The Media on Instagram

From the emergence of Twitter in 2006 and the appearance of other social networks such as Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Instagram (2010), and Snapchat (2011), the media have also created their own social media accounts, slowly making them part of their workflows. Out of the 60 media analyzed in the original sample, 51 (85.0%) have a profile on Instagram and 44 (73.3%) register some kind of activity within the last 3 months, according to an exploratory analysis dating back to December 2017. Nonetheless, the use of Snapchat—the social network that pioneered stories, adopted by Instagram afterwards—is almost nil, given the fact that only four media outlets have an active profile on it in April 2018. These are *The New York Times, The Washington Post, BuzzFeed*, and *Vice*, even though the last two use their general channels and not the news ones.

The current popularity and growing number of users on Instagram make it the main platform for furthering the development of ephemeral stories. In general terms, the media incorporate URLs into their profiles, nine of them as a means to link to their website and four as a method to drive traffic to specific pieces of news that were recently published in the site. Meanwhile, *La Nación* and *The New York Times* use tools such as *Iglink* and *Have2Have* to drive users to a

Table 2. Analysis Parameters (Own Elaboration).

Identification of the news organization	User name
	Active profile
	Last update
	Verified profile
Profile features	URL
	Tag
	Description
	Address
	Contact details
	Story highlights
Publications	Volume of stories published
	Daily and weekly routine
	Use of resources: photo, video, emojis, icons, text, mention, drawing, hashtag, geotag, survey, URL, video effects
Topics	Classification by the authors based on the stories collected: culture, economics, entertainment, events, fashion and beauty, health, humor, international, people, politics, science and technology, society, sports, weather
Purposes	Classification by the authors based on the analysis of the stories collected: call-to-action, inform, inform and address, inform and expand, promote, traffic
Types of stories	Classification by the authors based on the analysis of the stories collected (composition, purpose, resources, and content): introductory, summary, report, coverage, quiz, special

Table 3. Classification of Purposes in the Stories (Own Elaboration).

Function	Purpose
Referential	Inform (just one slide without link)
	Inform and address (just one slide with link to the website)
	Inform and expand (more than one slide explaining)
Conative	Call-to-action (invitation to the user to do something)
Emotive	Promote (self-centered)
Phatic	Traffic (address the audience to the website without an informative message in the story)
Poetic	(not identified in the sample)
Metalingual	(not identified in the sample)

Table 4. Classification of Types of Stories (Own Elaboration).

Type	Purpose	Description
Introductory	Inform and address Inform and expand Call-to-action Traffic	It drives traffic to the website with scarce information. It looks for the user to click on the link to expand.
Summary	Traffic	It uses diverse elements to summarize the most important news.
Report	Call-to-action Inform and expand	It is composed by several slides that present in-depth information and audio-visual resources.
Coverage	Inform Inform and expand	Reports from an event's location through photographs, videos with text, or a journalist.
Quiz	Inform	A kind of game with Instagram features, such as surveys.
Special	Promote Call-to-action	Self-promotion.

webpage where posted pictures are gathered together with the associated news. *BuzzFeed News* allows for newsletter subscription. Also, 12 media outlets use Story Highlights to extend the lifespan of these formats beyond 24 hr, occasionally breaking their ephemeral nature.

Production Volume and Publishing Pattern

Instagram Stories are a recurring resource for all 17 media analyzed. In fact, a total of 682 elements or slides were collected from the Instagram profiles. A total of 278
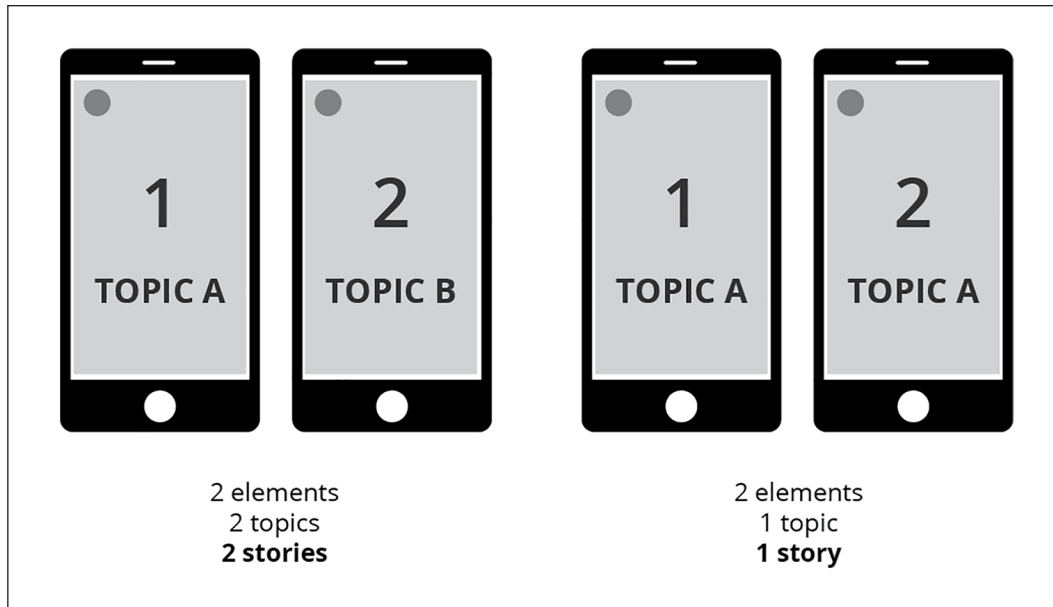
Figure 1. Single and Composed Stories (Own Elaboration).

stories—single or composed by a group of consecutive slides addressing the same issue (Figure 1)—were identified with an average of 2.7 elements per story. From this, we can differentiate two models:

1. Stories with one single element, as is the case with *Huffington Post, El Mundo, Marca*, and *La Nación*.
2. Stories with more than one element. This is the pattern followed by the remaining media analyzed. Those that use an average of five or more elements per story stand out, as is the case with *Le Monde* (17.4), *The New York Times* (14.0), *The Guardian* (8.0), *El País* (7.5), *La Vanguardia* (7.4), *BuzzFeed News* (6.8), *The Washington Post* (6.2), *Vice News* (6.0), and *Vozpópuli* (5.0).

However, 12 media rank below this average, with just one story per day. If we look at the number of days they published stories on Instagram, we see that some 43.7% do it on more than 7 days of the 14. This perspective indicates the existence of two workflows in the media:

1. One story on Instagram on days they publish: 62.5% of the media.
2. More than one story on Instagram on days they publish: 37.5% of the media.

It should be noted that, of the six media companies that publish more than one story on days they are active, four of them produce stories with one single element. Among those whose stories have five or more elements, eight publish only once a day. Therefore, the following pattern is evident:

1. The media that publish more than one story on days they are active are prone to one single element stories.
2. The media that publish one single story on days they are active are prone to using five or more elements to produce it.

If we cross the calendar with the volume of production on Instagram Stories, we obtain the following pattern:

1. From Monday to Friday: an average of 10.2 media outlets publish stories every day.
2. On the weekend and bank holidays: an average of 3.6 media groups publish stories every day.

Use of Resources

Each of the elements that make up the stories may be structured around a series of Instagram native resources or externally edited materials. Following the content analysis, we obtained a table of resource usage for the 682 elements that make up the 278 stories of the first sample (Table 5).

Image is the main content used for these microformats, accounting for some 74.5%, followed by text and video. Audio-visual contents are panoramic and portrait-oriented, which entails a framing constraint.

Some 44.9% of the cases present material externally edited, indicating that the media have used an external tool for visual compositions before uploading these as images to Instagram. This allows for more design freedom as well as video and animation editing to produce stories that are more visually appealing to an audience.

Table 5. Use of Resources (Own Elaboration).

Resource	Elements present	
Photo	509	74.6%
Native text	332	48.7%
Material externally edited	306	44.9%
Video	165	24.2%
Emojis	108	15.8%
Native icons	63	9.2%
Mention to other profile	28	4.1%
Native drawing	25	3.7%
Hashtag	20	2.9%
Mention to a journalist	19	2.8%
Geotag	15	2.2%
Survey	11	1.6%
URL as text	8	1.2%
Native video effects	2	0.3%

The third level is established by hypertextual resources, such as hashtags (2.9%), geotags (2.2%), and mentions to journalists (2.8%) and to other profiles (4.1%). Its usage allows for a story to be linked to other publications tagged by either topic or location, as well as to connect people involved or organizations related to the content.

All media analyzed, except for *Vozpópuli*, had more than 10,000 followers and therefore availed of native links to their websites within their stories. *Vozpópuli* does so by including their URL in text.

Among other resources used, emojis have particular relevance as characteristic features of the language used in mobile devices, currently integrated in smartphones' keyboards. These are present in more than 15.8% of the cases and are evidence of the adaptation to the format and its features.

Typology and Purpose

When it comes to encoding the stories published by the media, a classification by typology and purpose was established. The nature of the ephemeral story is related to the abbreviated and concise introduction of the information, especially on those that are made up of only one element. The most common story is the introductory one, which accounts for 85.6% of stories. Its objective is to drive traffic to the website. It presents scarce information and looks for the user to click on the link to expand on the introductory content.

The second most common type is the summary story (5.4%), which uses various elements to summarize the most important pieces of news, daily-featured photographs, or the new year's predictions. This was located on *The Times, Politico*, and *The Washington Post*. Its purpose is to drive traffic to navigate the related summarized contents.

Third, the report story (5.0%) is made up of various elements that present in-depth information by using more audio-visual resources. The ones that stand out the most are by *Le Monde* and *The Washington Post*. Here, the main purpose is to inform and expand content.

The three remaining types of story are significantly less present. The coverage (1.8%) reports from an event's location through photographs, videos with text, or a journalist. The quiz (1.1%) proposes a kind of game with Instagram resources, such as surveys. The proposal on fake news made by *The Guardian, Vice News*, and *BuzzFeed News*, in which they present a piece of information for the user to vote whether it is true or false, is an example of this. Some quiz stories include the presence of a journalist, as is the case with the ones prepared by *The Guardian*. Stories with special content (1.1%) have also been identified, such as those published by *The New York Times* to promote a 1-year job offer as a "52 places correspondent."

As per its main purpose, 81.3% of the stories aim to drive traffic to the website. The content introduces a topic very briefly, through a headline that rarely provides much information and that seeks for the user to click the native link to access the news from the webpage. It should be noted that 1.8% of the stories have an informative purpose. However, no reference is made to expanding the information, but the format is auto-conclusive, acting as a concise and synthetic presentation of the events. In 2.5% of the cases, users are addressed through a question that brings them into the conversation. Among the remaining categories, calls to action and promotional functions are also identified.

Topics

The media analyzed show a tendency toward stories related to sports (29.9%), society (13.7%), and people (10.4%). These three topics account for more than 50% of the published stories. However, divergences are observed depending on the number of elements these are made up of.

Sport-related stories tend to be individual. *Marca* is the media outlet that contributes the most toward this section, populated by stories all made up of a single piece. We find the opposite situation in sections such as international news and events, whose stories are composed of seven to eight elements. Although these are topics that only appear in 2% of the cases analyzed, their stories are those that have a wider deployment of the piece. In science and technology, culture, or politics—areas that have a presence of around 5%—stories with more than three elements are prioritized, levels close to those of other sections such as entertainment or health.

Timely Evolution

The sample obtained 2 months later indicates the consolidation of news media activity on Instagram Stories with the update of its routines. Despite being a short time period, it is significant to analyze a still emerging and rapidly expanding

Table 6. Comparing Stories' Volume of Production (Own Elaboration).

Media	January 2018			March 2018			Variation
	Stories	Publication days	Elements	Stories	Publication days	Elements	Stories
BuzzFeed News	12	9	81	12	12	83	0.0%
El Mundo	46	8	46	46	12	67	0.0%
El País	2	2	15	10	10	75	400.0%
Huffington Post	51	11	53	63	12	67	23.5%
Jornal de Notícias	0	0	0	15	6	18	100.0%
La Nación	41	11	41	30	13	62	−26.8%
La Repubblica	15	10	47	20	13	244	33.3%
La Vanguardia	7	7	52	16	7	48	128.6%
Le Monde	5	5	87	6	6	135	20.0%
Marca	65	13	65	63	14	63	−3.1%
Politico	5	5	20	18	12	65	260.0%
The Guardian	4	4	32	6	6	98	50.0%
The New York Times	2	2	28	4	4	74	100.0%
The Times of London	9	9	34	10	8	32	11.1%
The Washington Post	6	6	37	7	7	45	16.7%
Vice News	4	4	24	4	3	44	0.0%
Vozpópuli	4	4	20	5	4	26	25.0%
Total	**278**	**14**	**682**	**335**	**9**	**1,246**	**20.5%**

function. In addition, journalistic institutions evolve from experimentation to more developed production and a larger number of stories. Although there was no profitable business opportunity for media in the stories, they experimented with this function of the popular social network.

Between January and March 2018, all media increased their number of followers between 2.5% and 7.7%. *The New York Times* continues to be the leader with 3,476,966 followers. With an increase of more than 5%, *The Times, BuzzFeed News, La Nación, El Mundo*, and *Jornal de Notícias* are ranked from lowest to highest.

Volume and Weekly Publication Pattern

Concerning to stories' volume of production (Table 6), the following tendencies are evident:

1. There is a 20.5% increase in the production of stories, particularly on those made up of more than one element.
2. There is an increase in the number of media daily active on Instagram Stories. The most common practice is to publish more than one story per day on the days they are active.
3. Media that register a significant increase on days they are active within the 14 days the sample was taken: *Politico* (+7), *El País* (+8), and *El Mundo* (+4). There is no significant decrease (>3).
4. There is an increase in the number of media active on weekends (+24 percentage points) and the volume of stories published.

Type and Purpose

There is a decrease in introductory stories (68.4%), in favor of more developed stories such as reports (11.3%) and coverage (7.7%) (Table 7). Driving traffic to the website keeps being the main objective (67.5%). However, an increase in informative stories can also be noted—those whose main purpose is not to expand the information on the website, although they also provide a native link (Table 8).

Topics

There is an increase in society news (19.7%), although sports keep being the leader (21.8%). Culture (11.6%) increases significantly too (Table 9). We must note that certain cultural events, such as the Oscars happened in March, also had an impact on Instagram Stories. As mentioned with regard to the first sample, stories about sports and people tend to have one single element, which makes this number increase if we compare it to other sections where contents are more developed. Culture and international register a clear inclination toward stories with multiple elements.

Perspective from the Newsrooms

The media joined Instagram Stories throughout 2017 to find a new audience that inhabits this social network, as pointed out by all seven people interviewed for this article. Differentiating themselves from their competition and experimenting with stories are other reasons that lead the media to use this social

Table 7. Comparing Types of Stories (Own Elaboration).

Type	January 2018		March 2018	
	Stories		Stories	
Introductory	238	85.6%	229	68.4%
Summary	15	5.4%	23	6.9%
Report	14	5.0%	38	11.3%
Coverage	5	1.8%	26	7.8%
Quiz	3	1.1%	6	1.8%
Special	3	1.1%	13	3.9%

Table 8. Comparing Purposes of Stories (Own Elaboration).

Purpose	January 2018		March 2018	
	Stories		Stories	
Traffic	226	81.3%	226	67.5%
Inform and expand	34	12.2%	40	11.9%
Inform and address	7	2.5%	3	0.9%
Inform	5	1.8%	47	14.0%
Call to action	4	1.4%	8	2.4%
Promote	2	0.7%	11	3.3%

Table 9. Comparing Topics of Stories (Own Elaboration).

Topics	January 2018		March 2018	
	Stories		Stories	
Sports	83	29.9%	73	21.8%
Society	38	13.7%	66	19.7%
People	29	10.4%	33	9.9%
Other	18	6.5%	3	0.9%
Entertainment	18	6.5%	15	4.5%
Culture	15	5.4%	39	11.6%
Various	14	5.0%	26	7.7%
Science and technology	14	5.0%	17	5.1%
Health	12	4.3%	7	2.1%
Politics	12	4.3%	17	0.0%
Weather	6	2.2%	0	2.2%
Events	5	1.8%	17	5.1%
International	5	1.8%	9	2.7%
Fashion and beauty	2	0.7%	6	1.8%
Economics	1	0.4%	2	0.6%
Humor	0	0.0%	2	0.6%

network and the stories, which is a microformat suitable for journalism according to social media managers.

Regarding visualization data, the *Huffington Post* stands out since some 74% of their followers see their stories. *La Nación, Marca, La Repubblica*, and *La Vanguardia* register an average 12.4%. Instagram Stories traffic to websites accounts for around 10% according to the estimates provided.

Nevertheless, none of the media have specific teams working for this social network. Among the main strategies are simply their presence in this platform, reaching a new audience, positioning the brand, and improving their visual image. However, only three media acknowledge driving traffic to their website as a priority, while the analysis shows that most of the stories try to drive the user directly to the website.

Regarding future improvements, they do hope to increase live coverage through stories and to dedicate more human resources to the platform, providing training to a team of journalists and editors. One of the keys lies in the return of investment that media expect from these new channels. Based on monetization options or business models associated with Instagram Stories, they work on producing branded content—for instance, in August 2019, *La Nación* has started a series of sponsored content on Instagram.

Discussion and Conclusion

The rising number of media with active profiles on Instagram and the emerging tendency to produce ephemeral stories are the main indicators of the journalistic activity on this social media platform. More and more media are joining the production of specific microformats for social networks, designed for mobile consumption and adapted to both the functionalities of the platforms and the users' preferences.

Instagram is one of the most important social networks, with more than 1 billion users, 500 million on stories. In addition to posts, media are creating ephemeral stories with a 24-hr lifespan. Cristina Wilson pointed out in the Nieman Predictions for 2018 that this would be the year of Instagram Stories, which we agreed with, although its potential is greater than the current impact.

The influence of social media is shaping digital journalism (Bell & Owen, 2017) and the interest in spreading ephemeral stories is an example of this. The decisive influence of platforms in journalism also implies negative effects according to Wilding et al. (2018), as the production of shorter and more emotional content. In the same way, we can infer that the ephemeral nature of the stories is solely due to a specific condition of the platform, which once again defines the development of journalism practice.

Based on the definition of ephemeral journalism and concerning the study of the singular phenomenon of Instagram Stories, it can be said that the main objective is to attract the attention of the user of that platform, get a new contact, and direct him or her to access the news outlet website. However, the interest in the ephemeral format reinforces the daily presence of the journalistic brand in a section—Instagram Stories—which is gaining more and more followers. From the perspective of journalistic production, the elaboration of ephemeral stories is a challenge to maintain a constant presence with contents that disappear daily and whose exposure to the user is very short—from tenths of a second to go over it, up to the maximum duration of 15 s. This feature places the Instagram Stories next to the smartwatch information pills (Silva-Rodríguez

et al., 2017) in the so-called "glance journalism" (Shanoff, 2014). However, Instagram Stories give rise to live coverage and native formats with creative applications based on the resources of the platform, following previously identified trends (Newman et al., 2017; Kalogeropoulos et al., 2016).

Stories are visual by nature—photo and video are the main resources—and the text tends to be brief. The content is utilized to drive users to a website, what does not differ from the practice of media on Facebook and Twitter. Nevertheless, deeper and more specific formats, such as reports, coverages, and quizzes, respectively, are enhanced and benefit from the resources offered on Instagram.

The media workflow incorporates a pattern that differentiates the volume of stories on weekdays and on weekends. The most frequent guideline is the publication of at least one story per day from Monday to Friday. The recent evolution shows a tendency to increase the publication of stories, with greater development and autonomy from the website.

The search for new audiences, even though without a clear strategy, is one of the main media objectives. However, three factors have been identified as determinant to a volatile environment: what Instagram allows, what users do, and what media seek. First of all, the creation of this microformat is subject to the conditions of the platform and it is not an original creation of the media; therefore, a lot of the creative possibilities depend on Instagram's functionalities. Second, the habits of the users in this platform are not directly linked to the news consumption, although the fact that it is currently a popular medium allows the news media an alternative access to the audience—and therefore requires that journalistic organizations are also active where users are. And third, the main purpose of the media will be to increase their audience and, in addition, to strengthen their brands, generate associated incomes, and encourage public participation through social media. However, this last condition is complex on Instagram, since it does not favor participatory interaction. Ephemeral stories fit better an agile visual and consumption model, as its navigation favors speed, than in a context of network conversation. The participatory shift that occurs in general does not apply in the specific case of the stories. However, the media are located on the platform with the highest increase in use to experiment with the same format utilized by users. There is also a battle for attention, one that media are fighting to be the featured on the users' feed along with friends, leading to incidental consumption.

Looking ahead, in addition to monitoring the production of the media, it will be interesting to look into the experience from the users' point of view in the ephemeral and glance journalism. Furthermore, does creating content specific to Instagram Stories make sense or should adaptation and the aim to drive traffic to the website prevail? Given a low conversion level in click and traffic, what is the return in investment from this site? The absence of a clearly defined business model puts the media activity on Instagram Stories at risk. At the same time, the search for new ways to reach audiences

and monetize them in third-party platforms will be crucial for the industry (Newman et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, Instagram Stories are a format that will require time and distance to assess to what extent the idea of an ephemeral, speedy, and visual journalism through social networks fits into a sustainable future model.

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