



Content Analysis in the Publications of the digital media CDL Noticias: An Exploratory Study

Análisis de Contenido en las Publicaciones del medio digital CDL Noticias: Un Estudio Exploratorio

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Abstract

This article is an exploratory study that aims to analyze the content of local and national news published in the digital media "CDL Noticias" during the month of November 2023. In this writing, a qualitative methodology was applied, which was developed through a content analysis, seeking to understand the informative panorama of the medium and to evaluate the importance that CDL assigns to each type of content by means of an observation sheet. The results highlighted in this research made it possible to identify the predominant topics, the approaches used and the frequency with which different types of news are addressed.

Keywords: content analysis, CDL News, local news, national news, news landscape, media agenda

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Resumen

Este artículo es un estudio exploratorio que tiene como objetivo analizar el contenido de las noticias locales y nacionales publicadas en el medio digital "CDL Noticias" durante el mes de noviembre de 2023. En este escrito se aplicó una metodología cualitativa, que se desarrolló a través de un análisis de contenido, buscando comprender el panorama informativo del medio y evaluar la importancia que CDL asigna a cada tipo de contenido mediante una ficha de observación. Los resultados que se destacan en esta investigación permitieron identificar los temas predominantes, los enfoques utilizados y la frecuencia con la que se abordan diferentes tipos de noticias.

Palabras clave: análisis de contenido, CDL Noticias, noticias locales, noticias nacionales, panorama informativo, agenda mediática

Introduction

For a long time, the media have maintained their role as producers and disseminators of information, focusing predominantly on social phenomena linked to power. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in their work "Manufacturing Consent" (1988), argue that "the media operate as filtering systems that privilege certain perspectives while marginalizing others". This mechanism not only restricts public debate, but also reinforces existing power structures in such contexts.

For a long time, the media have maintained their role as producers and disseminators of information, focusing predominantly on social phenomena linked to power. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in their book "Manufacturing Consent", argue that "the media function as filtering systems that favor certain points of view and exclude others" (1988), which limits public debate and reinforces the existing power structures within these scenarios.

Manuel Castells argues that the media have evolved significantly, moving towards a new era of communication characterized by interactivity, personalization and mobility. Castells not only recognizes the digital transformation of the media, but also warns about the emerging challenges in this new environment, such as the erosion of privacy, information manipulation and the concentration of media power in a small number of actors. It is undeniable that the media have undergone a radical transformation, migrating to digital platforms, which means that citizens are increasingly consuming information through mobile devices and in some cases through computers. In this context, networks such as Facebook play a fundamental and significant role in disseminating information, so it is essential to analyze the importance assigned by digital media to the news content of local and national media attention, therefore, what is sought is a better understanding of the news agenda of the digital media CDL noticias

located in the city of Latacunga (capital of the province of Cotopaxi, located in north-central Ecuador at 2800 meters above sea level, it is a mountainous region with an average climate of 13° (Andrade, 2021)). Through an exploratory content analysis, we seek to understand the information landscape of this medium (Facebook social network page) during the month of November 2023 with the objective of evaluating the importance that the medium assigns to local and national news.

The choice of CDL Noticias as the object of study is given because in the territorial circumscription of the city of Latacunga it is a media that exceeds 120 thousand likes and reaches about 200 thousand followers, being the digital media with more followers in the community, with acceptance and positioning. This has led to analyze the publications of this media and what is intended is to contribute to a better understanding of how the news agenda is built by CDL Noticias at local and national level in the city of Latacunga.

According to Montaña et al. (2020), most traditional media are gradually losing relevance, which has resulted in a migration towards the use of the Internet. "This trend has allowed the positioning of the smartphone as the best valued device instead of the television" (Montaña et al., 2020, p. 158). This has led to the growing interest in the consumption of information in digital media influencing the formation of public opinion and even the construction of social realities. In this sense, social networks have transformed the way of disseminating information, introducing hyperlinks that lead directly to general pages and allow to expand the information. This digital era brings information closer to the "consumer market in the different platforms managed by each journalistic brand" (Villada, 2006, p. 413).

CDL Noticias has established itself as a digital media that, using the social network Facebook, has adopted a new way of consuming information, becoming the digital media with more followers in the city of Latacunga. All this has been possible "thanks to digital platforms that help to obtain immediate information" (Montaña et al., 2020, p. 158). In this way, it "contributes to understanding the current media landscape" (Alvira Martín, 2017), which allows identifying the thematic trends that are developing in the CDL digital media and their "possible impact on society" (Dader, 2018, p. 115).

Finally, the study focuses on the month of November due to the celebration of the independence of the city of Latacunga and the Mama Negra festival, organized by the local municipality in honor of that independence. "The Mama Negra is a man, dressed as a woman, with his face painted black, and who represents the slaves freed by mercenaries" (Travelec, 2023). At the national level, in the same month, the investiture of the President of the Republic of Ecuador, Daniel Noboa, took place. Therefore, November 2023 is presented as a relevant period for an exhaustive analysis of the news corpus, in order to evaluate the distribution of media attention both locally and nationally.

The Internet has significantly transformed media work, generating new platforms for users. The digital consumer has different characteristics compared to the traditional consumer, where aspects such as immediacy and speed of content are essential for user

satisfaction. Digital communication affects both space and time, which is why Carlos Scolari (2008) argues that, in the digital environment, "the media must evolve from being mere producers of information or content to become platforms for exchange, creation and symbolic consumption, developing in an environment characterized by a wide variety of technologically interconnected topics, media and languages" (p. 18).

In these contexts, the emergence of the Internet has made it possible for various traditional media to gradually migrate or adopt lower-cost and free-access platforms. To paraphrase McLuhan, in the digital era, the Internet not only acts as a message transmission channel, but also transforms it; and, according to contextual dynamics, it even contributes to the reconfiguration of traditional media, giving rise to new forms of communication.

The Role of Digital Media in the Construction of Reality

The media not only report and circulate knowledge, but have also revolutionized the way in which information is produced and consumed in the digital scenario. The proliferation of the Internet and social networks has generated a new media environment characterized by "immediacy, interactivity and audience fragmentation" (Castells, 2001, p. 22). In this context, digital media play a crucial role in the construction of social reality by selecting, interpreting and disseminating news and content.

According to McQuail (2005), the media exercise a fundamental social function by setting the agenda of issues of concern to society. "Agenda setting posits that the media not only reflect reality, but also construct it by determining what issues are important and how they should be presented" (p. 12).

The importance of local news

Local news plays a fundamental role in the life of communities by informing citizens about events that directly affect their environment. According to Weaver and Wilhoit (2009), "local news serves several important functions, including monitoring, interpretation, socialization, and mobilization" (p. 18). However, previous studies have noted that local news is often "overrepresented compared to national and international news" (Pew Research Center, 2018, p. 20).

Deepening in the Agenda Setting Theory

Agenda-setting theory, proposed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, postulates that the media not only reflect reality, but also construct it by influencing the perceived importance of issues and their presentation. In other words, the media set the agenda of issues that are the subject of debate and concern in society.

Agenda-setting refers to a list of topics or issues that emerge from events and are organized into different types of agendas: public agenda, media agenda, and political or social agenda. The public agenda is defined as "a set of issues that society considers

important" (Petrone, 2009, p. 3). This agenda is measured through surveys in which individuals respond to open-ended questions about the issues they consider relevant (Zhu & Blood, 2002, p. 100).

In relation to the media agenda, this can be conceptualized as a list of issues with media coverage. In agenda-setting research, "the selected media that the researcher believes have the greatest impact are generally organized into thematic categories and the frequency of annotations within each category is measured." (Facundo, 2009, p. 4). On the other hand, according to Petrone (2009) in the context of agenda-setting, the political agenda is conceptualized as "the set of issues that politicians identify as a priority" (p. 4). Many studies on agenda-setting analyze the interaction between the media and the audience, while only a few incorporate the analysis of the political agenda (Facundo, 2009, p. 4).

Petrone mentions to Petrone that the social agenda is the operationalization of the public part of perhaps the most important and most significant issue. With this in mind, agenda-setting impacts society by ensuring that issues are covered and evaluated according to their relevance. The prominence of an issue in the media is quantified by its visibility, which is reflected in the size of editorial space devoted or the length of airtime in the case of audiovisual media. "The time of day or the position of the article in the newspaper or broadcast" (Zhu and Blood, 2002, pp. 100) Accordingly to the above, the agenda settings for this case study would be measured in consideration of the number of likes, interactions and reactions on each of the CDL news publications.

Facebook usage in Ecuador

The presence of social networks, and in particular Facebook, has radically transformed the media landscape, even altering the way of communicating. Traditional media have been forced to adapt to this new digital environment in order to expand their audience and strengthen their relationship with users. Ecuador has been no exception, and the presence of Facebook has acquired an undeniable relevance in the daily life of Ecuadorians, as Correa Valencia points out. Facebook has become a virtual space where the personal and the social intermingle, allowing users to connect with their communities, access diverse information and participate in public debates. Its impact on communication and social interaction in Ecuador is indisputable (Correa Valencia, cited by Lexis, 2023).

Materials and methods

This article focuses on the evaluation of the informative content of local and national news disseminated through the digital media CDL Noticias during the month of November 2023. This study began with a literature review that facilitated the preliminary understanding of the topic, constituting the first stage of the research process, since "it allows us to identify the current state of knowledge and the existing gaps in relation to the topic of interest" (Guirao, 2015, p. 7). Likewise, both a qualitative and quantitative methodological approach was employed. A content analysis was implemented, which,

according to Aigner (2009), "is the technique that makes it possible to investigate the content of communications by categorizing the manifest elements or contents present in such communications or messages" (p. 1).

Content analysis is a qualitative research technique that allows systematizing and analyzing in an objective and replicable way the content of various forms of communication, such as texts, images, audio or video (Krippendorff, 2012). In the field of the media, this technique has been widely used to study the representation of issues, the construction of discourses and the influence of the media on public opinion.

According to Berelson (1952), content analysis is defined as a research technique for making reproducible and valid inferences from textual (or other) data. This technique involves identifying categories for analysis, coding the data, and quantifying the frequencies of occurrence of these categories.

This qualitative technique allowed systematizing and objectively analyzing the content of the news published on the fanpage of CDL Noticias on the social network Facebook, specifically in the month of November 2023. Regarding the number of local news publications (Latacunga), 44 publications were recorded from November 1 to 30, 2023, and 80 national publications, giving a total of 124 publications.

Through the application of the observation sheet, a system of categories was codified as follows:

- Subjects: Politics, economy, society, culture, sports, others.
- Focus: Positive, negative, neutral.
- Sources: Government, companies, citizens, others.
- Discursive elements: opinions, facts, quotations; news structure: headline, body, introduction, development, conclusion.

Results

There are 8 political news items, with a neutral approach, with 5 government sources and 3 corporate sources. The 8 news items use facts and have only headlines. As it only has headlines, it does not present elements of structure.

Analyzing the subject of economy, we can observe 3 news items with a positive approach and a neutral one, with government sources and 2 from companies with discursive elements of fact and presenting a structure of headlines only.

In the topic of society, we observed 5 news items, 2 of which have a positive approach and 3 with a neutral approach, 3 of which are from government sources and 2 from companies with discursive elements. In fact, as it presents a headline structure, it does not have development elements.

Within the culture theme, 9 news items are observed, of which 4 with a neutral approach and 5 with a positive approach with 7 government sources and 2 from companies with

discursive elements. In fact, presenting a headline structure has no development elements.

In the segment of others, we observed 18 news items related to security and progress of works, most of them with a neutral approach and with government sources, since they only have headlines, they do not present elements of development.

The study of the digital media CDL Noticias in Latacunga shows a tendency to prioritize national news, especially political news, using mainly government sources. This suggests a possible bias that could influence public perception of the importance of local versus national events. Herman and Chomsky argue that the media act as filters that promote certain perspectives and exclude others, thus perpetuating existing power structures (1988). In contrast, Manuel Castells (2009) highlights the evolution of the media towards interactivity and mobility, and although he acknowledges the digital transformation, he also warns about the manipulation and concentration of power. The difference lies in the fact that Herman and Chomsky focus on traditional media and their role in maintaining power, while Castells addresses the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital era.

Montaña et al. (2020) point out the migration of consumers to mobile devices and the loss of relevance of traditional media. Escolari (2008), on the other hand, proposes that the media must adapt and transform themselves into spaces for symbolic exchange in the digital environment. Here, the divergence lies in the perspective on the future role of the media: Montaña et al. emphasize the change in consumption habits, while Escolari focuses on the evolution of the function and nature of the media in the digital ecosystem.

The media, historically, have acted as key actors in the production and dissemination of information, especially on social phenomena linked to power. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, in "Manufacturing Consent", argue that the media operate as filters that favor certain points of view, which limits public debate and reinforces existing power structures (Herman and Chomsky, 1988). This dynamic, evidenced in the context of the CDL Noticias study, reflects how certain media can perpetuate dominant narratives while marginalizing other perspectives, affecting the quality and diversity of public discourse.

The digital transformation of the media has been described by Manuel Castells as a shift towards interactivity, personalization and mobility. Castells also warns about the challenges associated with this evolution, such as the manipulation of information and the concentration of power (Castells, 2001). In the case of CDL Noticias, the use of digital platforms such as Facebook has enabled rapid dissemination of information, but has also raised questions about the integrity and authenticity of the information shared, underscoring the need for greater scrutiny and accountability on the part of content producers.

Mireia Montaña et al. (2020) highlights the decreasing relevance of traditional media and the growing dominance of the smartphone as the preferred device for information consumption. This change has transformed the way in which citizens are informed,

influencing the formation of public opinion and the construction of social realities. In this sense, social networks have become powerful tools for the dissemination of information, but they have also introduced new challenges in terms of quality and veracity of content, as can be seen in the analysis of CDL Noticias publications.

Digital communication, as Carlos Escolari (2008) points out, requires the media to evolve from being mere producers of information to become spaces of symbolic exchange and consumption. This is especially relevant for media such as CDL Noticias, which operate in a highly technologically interconnected media environment. The media's ability to adapt to these changes will determine its relevance and effectiveness in an ever-changing media landscape, where immediacy and audience participation are increasingly important.

The role of digital media in the construction of social reality is undeniable. As McQuail (2005) argues, the media not only reflect reality, but also construct it by setting the agenda of issues of public interest. In the context of the CDL Noticias study, it is essential to understand how this digital medium sets and prioritizes its news agenda, as this has a direct impact on how the audience perceives and understands local and national events. This influence on public opinion is a crucial issue that deserves further attention and detailed analysis. It should be emphasized that the media are changing and should adapt to new technological and social challenges and realities.

Conclusions

Although social networks have radically transformed the way in which citizens are informed, they have also posed new challenges for the journalistic community; it is therefore essential to develop a critical digital citizenry capable of evaluating information rigorously and distinguishing between fact and opinion. Likewise, the media must adapt to this new environment and find innovative ways to generate revenue and ensure the quality of their content. Facebook has proven to be a platform that continues to attract users, and for the news scenario it is a field to be exploited, as users establish a quite ideal connection with this platform that so far has been well exploited by CDL noticias.

Most of the analyzed news items belong to the political sphere, which can clearly be defined as CDL noticias plays an important role in building an interest in the political life of the community, although the approach obviously has no inclination, since 90% of its political news content is of a neutral nature, which could indicate an intention of objectivity on the part of the media. However, it is important to take into account that neutrality is a complex concept that may vary according to the interpretation of the media.

The use of especially governmental sources raises a question about the independence of the media, since most of its sources come from the government and with this it can be determined that the influence of political power is present in the construction of the news; although most of its content is based on facts and not on quotations, the influence of political power continues to predominate, which limits the possibility of contrasting

the information and this can reduce the richness of the discursive text in the construction of the news.

The absence of a developed structure, meaning a headline, a lead, the body and the closing, in the news, leads to the interpretation of the user, which, although it is true, each one perceives the information in his own way, which can divert the attention from what is really intended to inform, especially in those that only present headlines and in some cases in which headlines and leads are included, so it is understood that the editorial line of the CDL suggests a trend towards the simplification of information and less depth in the treatment of the topics.

The immediacy with which information is disseminated allows for greater interaction among users in real time, thus enabling debates, questions, answers, comments and even the creation of communities around specific topics.

These results suggest that local media coverage is influenced by a combination of factors, including the nature of the subject matter, relationships between media and information sources, and public preferences.

As a suggestion for future research, an in-depth analysis of the language used in the news can be developed to identify discursive patterns and connotations, as well as to study the interaction of readers with the publications of CDL Noticias in social networks.

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