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THE CIPER AND IDL-REPORTEROS' CONTENT STRATEGY:

consequences of changing platform from *Facebook* to *Twitter*

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ABSTRACT – This work examines why non-profit investigative journalism organizations, CIPER and IDL-Reporteros, switched from *Facebook* to *Twitter* as a strategy to reach wider audiences and gain greater influence in society. To undertake this study, we triangulated secondary data analysis together with a content analysis of their social media accounts and conducted in-depth interviews with their managers. Our work has identified a significant transition from *Facebook* to *Twitter*, with the latter social networking service giving the two organizations greater visibility and reach than we expected.
Key words: Non-profit investigative journalism. *Twitter* journalism. Content strategy. CIPER. IDL-Reporteros.

A ESTRATÉGIA DE CONTEÚDO DA CIPER E DO IDL-REPORTEROS:
consequências da mudança de plataforma, do Facebook para o Twitter

RESUMO – Este trabalho examina por que as organizações de jornalismo investigativo sem fins lucrativos, CIPER e IDL-Reporteros, mudam do *Facebook* para o *Twitter* como uma estratégia de conteúdo para atingir públicos mais amplos e obter maior influência na sociedade. Para realizar este estudo, triangulamos a análise de dados secundários juntamente com a análise de conteúdo de suas contas de mídia social e conduzimos entrevistas detalhadas com seus gerentes. Nosso trabalho identificou uma transição significativa do *Facebook* para o *Twitter*, com a última rede dando a eles maior visibilidade, alcance e mais do que esperávamos.
Palavras-chave: Jornalismo investigativo sem fins lucrativos. Jornalismo no *Twitter*. Estratégia de conteúdo. CIPER. IDL-Reporteros.

LA ESTRATEGIA DE CONTENIDO DE CIPER E IDL-REPORTEROS:
las consecuencias del cambio de plataforma, de Facebook a Twitter

RESUMEN – Este trabajo examina por qué las organizaciones de periodismo de investigación sin ánimo de lucro, como CIPER e IDL-Reporteros, cambian de *Facebook* a *Twitter* como una estrategia de contenido para llegar a un público más amplio y obtener una mayor influencia en la sociedad. Para realizar este estudio, triangulamos el análisis secundario de datos junto con el análisis de contenido de sus cuentas de redes sociales y realizamos entrevistas detalladas con los responsables de su gestión. Nuestro trabajo identificó una transición significativa de *Facebook* a *Twitter*, consiguiendo mayor visibilidad, alcance y más de lo que esperábamos.
Palabras clave: Periodismo de investigación sin ánimo de lucro. Periodismo en *Twitter*. Estrategia de contenido. CIPER. IDL-Reporteros.

1 Introduction

Over the past 10 years, the number of non-profit investigative news organizations in Latin America has experienced important growth and enjoyed increasing success (Salaverría et al., 2019). This proliferation of non-profit investigative journalism institutions is due, in part, to a remarkable effort made by their respective governments and institutions to return to democracy over the past 20 years (Saldaña & Mourão, 2018); also, to greater availability of international funds to sustain research initiatives and finally, to intelligent management developed by their founders, most of them expert and experienced professionals, whose capability in the fight against corruption continues to guide them in the arduous task of making their way into the Latin American public space and consolidating their position within those democracies.

Despite this, the high level of perception of corruption – by their own citizens – has barely improved, and their democracies remain very fragile (Transparency International, 2019), with few guarantees for investigative journalism. Faced with these types of threats, non-profit organizations have formed international alliances to combat the loneliness of their countries of origin, managing training, they attempt to get their issues seen or visible on international agendas.

They have won several international awards (Higgins Joyce & Harlow, 2020), uncovered some of the most important scandals in the region, and helped to set the news agenda across South America (Higgins Joyce, 2016), bringing about accountability to power in ways that journalism in the region has not done for decades. Moreover, research has shown that these organizations indeed practice public service journalism in ways that the legacy media did not (Ferrucci, 2017). These efforts have been mostly supported by international funding, which has allowed many regions in the Global South to restore capacities around investigative reporting, which had diminished over the previous years (Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Scott et al., 2018).

The new digital-native organizations in that part of the world tend to be non-profit-oriented by nature – small in size with fewer than five journalists who are often junior reporters under the direction of veteran investigative journalists – and are only present on online platforms. These organizations have scored unprecedented success in terms of breaking news stories through investigative reporting, and have won some of the most important prestigious awards in the field of news reporting such as: sharing the Pulitzer Prize for their work on the Panama Papers; the Premio Gabo 2019; the Prize of the Alliance Against Poverty; and, the Global Shining Light Award by the Global Investigative Journalism Network, among others (Lugo-Ocando, 2020; Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Salaverría et al., 2019).

However, these organizations have often struggled to reach a wider audience beyond specific elites and creating a force to initiate some form of change or social movement within the public. In the case of Latin America, previous research suggests that these organizations are limited to a small segment of the public (Meléndez-Yúdico, 2014; Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014). Although these digital-native news organizations are not commercially driven (Tejedor et al., 2020), nevertheless, they do need to justify their existence, and

the resources provided to them by funders, by demonstrating their reach and impact (Olmedo-Salar & Lugo-Ocando, 2018).

In response to this, the digital-native news organizations have made efforts to promote their content by actively engaging with social media as a valid alternative distribution channel (Tejedor et al., 2020) and, foremost, as a strategy to make these media outlets far more visible among the general public. They do this because many within these organizations consider that social media can allow them to reach a critical and influential mass of people while helping them define the news agenda (Sembramedia, 2017; De Burg, 2008.) Indeed, news sharing across different social media platforms is increasingly impacting news habits. However, as scholars have already pointed out when referring to *Facebook* and *Twitter*, "we know very little about what makes news popular in these settings" (Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018).

To explore and assess these efforts, we have analyzed how these digital-native news organizations use their social media accounts to increase visibility and reach wider audiences. We do so by triangulating quantitative and qualitative data. We have carried out this analysis using CIPER from Chile and IDL-Reporteros from Peru as subjects of study, as they are both particularly well-known and relatively well-established digital-native news organizations in Latin America, having won several international awards for their investigative work. This allowed us to draw insight into how social media are used by these organizations to create a level playing field with competitors and increase their influence in the race to attract a broader audience.

Our overall data show how between 2013 and 2017 there was a fundamental shift from *Facebook* towards *Twitter* as a preferred social media platform for both organizations. This was due to two important developments. Firstly, a change in the algorithm used by *Facebook* that in the past privileged traditional media. Secondly, an increasing expansion of the number of *Twitter* followers that, at a certain point, overtook the number of *Facebook* friends for each of these organizations. Moreover, the quantitative data also suggests that journalists from both of these organizations felt that they had more control when using *Twitter*. In the end, the shift from *Facebook* to *Twitter* meant that both organizations were able to achieve greater audiences. Therefore, beating both their digital-native competitors as well as that the legacy media (particularly in news beats such as politics).

2 Highlighting news on *Twitter*

The way the media ecology is currently structured in the region is at a crossroads, as the configuration of the digital, as Castells would say, is no central to the construction of power and counter-power and, therefore pivotal in defining the social contract with the media. However, the problem in defining any new social contract is that these new actors are not all the same, nor can they be interpreted as a single effort of counter-power since they have different traditions, business models and are managed by individuals with their own ideologies and agendas. Moreover, they are dependent upon a variety of funding pots that represent a variety of corporative and geo-political interests (Lugo-Ocando, 2020; Olmedo-Salar & Lugo-Ocando, 2018; Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014).

These organizations focus their resources and efforts towards niche audiences (Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014) that legitimize their actions and existence in the eyes of their funders. They exert great influence among other journalists and can define and shape the news agenda to a certain degree. However, there are more structural barriers to their ability to reach the wider public. Their focus on investigation means that their content is, in most if not all cases, serious hard news that is critical of governments and corporations. While the legacy media publishes the good and the bad, the serious and funny, the non-profit organizations have to dedicate all their space and resources to serious and critical news stories that center on what is deficient, failed, or corrupt.

As these organizations primarily seek to monitor political and corporate power, their actions are conditioned by the need to make it accountable to people. In this way, monitoring local, regional, and national policy is the main function of these organizations, especially at a time when investigative journalism in Latin America has been in decline in countries where there is still a strong concentration in media ownership (Guerrero & Márquez-Ramírez, 2014).

This set-up represents a challenge for these non-profit organizations if they are to find their place within the democratic framework. Indeed, media ecologies that ought to contribute to democracy cannot simply focus on the 'bad'. Democracy needs hope, good examples, and positive cases of good practices that mobilize citizenship and keep cynicism and political detachment at bay. A liberal democracy, with its imperfections and the shortcomings in its

media systems – such as the well-known excesses in its corporate media – might not be the best system to aspire to, however, it is the best one we have had, so far. One should always remember that it is under permanent construction. In this sense, investigative journalism in Latin America seems to have found in this niche formula a way to survive and even thrive while delivering truth without undermining the legitimacy of the whole democratic system. Despite this, one needs to acknowledge that they continue to be confined to these niche audiences and, given the nature of their focus, are unable to expand.

Having said that, for investigative journalism organizations operating as digital-native in Latin America, attracting the public's attention is crucial as, increasingly, more of their funders require them to provide evidence of reach and impact (CIMA, 2019; Schiffrin, 2017). Indeed, these digital-native organizations face the challenge of developing business models that go beyond depending upon the traditional sales and advertising model. If then they do not necessarily seek profitability, they are at least on a quest for sustainability (Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Salaverría et al., 2019). So far, however, investigative journalism media in Latin America receive most of their financing from international donors and in doing so they have generated various collective funding strategies. The external donors often condition the allocated resources to continuous assessment and evaluation around transparency and impact (Becker et al., 2005; Browne, 2010; Meléndez-Yúdico, 2014; Wright et al., 2019).

Without doubt, outreach and impact are increasingly important factors for donors (Howard, 2003), as they are accountable to their stakeholders (taxpayers, philanthropists, etc.), who demand evidence of not only how their taxes and donations are being used – and for what – but they also want to see tangible 'results'. These demands for results often translate into quantitative measurable elements such as, in the case of digital-native media, the number of people they reach and their ability to set the news agenda. Consequently, these digital-native news organizations are looking for ways to expand their audiences by making active use of social media to promote their work among wider audiences, until they reach 20% audience penetration (Tejedor et al., 2020).

In turn, this requires them to define in very specific and measurable terms who their audiences are as a means of operationalizing the way they are assessed by donors. In this sense, news audiences have been generally referred to as the public that

needs to be informed by journalists to function as responsible citizens, highlighting the role that journalism is supposed to play to ensure a vital democracy (Meijer & Kormelink, 2019). This contrasts with the term 'news consumer', which instead emphasizes the profitable character of journalism consumption that does not apply to these organizations in Latin America, given their current funding model.

However, even by the standards set by the early definition of an audience, non-profit investigative journalists continue to fail to achieve a significant level of visibility for their work concerning the overall size of the public. This is despite the fact they effectively accomplish the accountability of those in power and force different institutions and public figures to be more transparent in their use of public funds and resources. The fact remains that for years non-profit investigative journalism organizations have not made a sufficient impact among the citizenry to activate the necessary collaboration and social commitment to influence politics on the scale that one might expect (García-De-Torres et al., 2015; Requejo-Alemán & Lugo-Ocando, 2014).

The other important limitation that these digital-native news organizations face in reaching greater audiences is their own news cultures, which in the past failed to break from traditional practice. As with most traditional newspapers, these organizations continued to conceptualize the dissemination of news stories as a 'publication routine' that uses its platform and assumes that people will buy or visit their content as long as it is good, instead of developing a wider strategy of connecting and coordinating with other institutions that carry out the judicial processes of investigation, and seek collaborative networking and inter-support to generate wider engagement and dissemination (Nalvarte, 2019). In other words, while these digital-native organizations operate in the World Wide Web, for years they still did so under a culture of isolationism and competition that does not wire them to the outside world in ways that could activate collective action.

Besides, these organizations face the limitation of an overall approach that tends to be unidirectional, which emphasizes the publication itself but without accounting for the need for dialogue in the public arena as an intrinsic part of their digital and interactive nature. This lack of adaptability to the new media ecology in which they operate in the face of public expectations frequently hinders their potential to reach out to wider segments of the public. In this sense, the social accounts of these institutions tend not to make full use of the response codes (preceded by @). The mentions and hashtags are

not explored sufficiently, and they tend to omit retweets from other institutional sources, preventing the establishment of a wider network that connects them to other, similar, and often complementary actors.

Finally, the digital-native news organizations also had to contend with the fact that the public figures under investigation by them were often better resourced to take advantage of their greater number of followers on social media to upset and silence investigative journalism. Those in power and subject to investigation often have greater access to resources to manage public tweet discourse, while making use of state or private resources to pay for support from experts and trolls to attack the non-profit organizations attacking them. As a veteran journalist from IDL-Reporteros, Gustavo Gorriti points out, sometimes defending investigative journalism itself is far more difficult than defending the actual work carried out,

> Doing investigative journalism in Latin America and in other parts of the world has two parts: the first part is about the investigation itself with all its great challenges and the second part, which is not talked about much, is the defense of the investigation, and that is almost as complex or sometimes more than the investigation itself. (Nalvarte, 2019).

As our data from 2013 to 2017 suggest, digital-native news organizations have evolved over the years and adapted their organizational cultures and self-promotion strategies to face these challenges. The changes, in our view, have paid dividends, and these organizations are now in a much stronger position than they were some years ago.

3 Methodology

All in all, we have developed in this paper an explanatory model, which claims that by shifting social media platforms, some digital-native news organizations in Latin America have been able to beat the trend and position themselves as leaders in particular news beats such as politics. It also means, according to our model, that particular platforms are not only far more suited to news content – something that is not surprising as other scholars have already pointed out (Kalsnes & Larsson, 2018; Schulte, 2009) – but also that they are far better at helping digital-native organizations compete in the overall media ecology.

To explore this explanatory framework, we triangulated a series of variables and chose two of the non-profit investigative journalism organizations registered in Latin America (Meléndez-Yúdico, 2014). We study how the non-profit investigative journalism organizations achieved visibility by using *Twitter* and other social media in order to support their work and achieve greater reach among audience. In our view, the real potential in their engagement of social media is based on their ability to show the consistency of their work, particularly concerning following up their investigations and keeping people engaged with their stories.

The digital-native news organizations studied here were CIPER from Chile and IDL-Reporteros from Peru as they are two of the oldest and best known. The acronym CIPER stands for the Chilean Centre for Investigative Journalism (in Spanish). It was founded on May 1st, 2007 by Mónica Gonzáles and Álvaro Siahe. It has been active for more than 12 years and investigates present and past government actions and decisions to keep political power under surveillance. IDL-Reporteros, on the other hand, is a branch of Legal Defense Institute, a human rights NGO that operates in Peru. It was created on February 14, 2009, by award-winning and returned-from-exile journalist Gustavo Gorriti, mainly to carry out investigative reporting using databases that have been transferred or compiled from information previously released by international organizations or people.

We assessed two of their official *Twitter* accounts over two periods of time: between 2013 and 2014 and between 2016 and 2017. Data from 2013 and 2014 were taken from Klout Score and Twitonomy. Unfortunately, Klout disappeared in 2015. From 2016 and 2017 we extracted data from Twitonomy. We have dimensioned social media performance data provided by Twitonomy and Klout divided by the internet penetration factor (IPF) established by the United Nations and Nielsen, for the entire region. This factor has made it possible to establish comparisons between countries and cases. For example, the comparison between CIPER and El Mercurio de Chile. For the analysis of *Twitter* in both cases, although the universe of analysis consisted of more than 3.000 tweets per institution (N = + 6000 tweets), we finally chose around 400 tweets for each period and account (n = + 1600), discriminating by the level of engagement score (X = 164 for CIPER and X = 123 for IDL-R), according to Twitonomy figures. We then compared this with data from their most valuable influencers and included semi-structured interviews with publishers and journalists of

Latin America's native-digital organizations, which were not limited to these two organizations to better contextualize our discussion.

We chose to examine statistical information of tweets, retweets, and likes by using secondary analysis of data. We focused on *Twitter* even though this social medium continues to be a less-used channel for managing public and relevant information in Latin America when compared to other social media (Statista, 2020; TD, 2017). However, we took into consideration that the influence of this particular social media platform does not reside only in the number of active users, but also in the ability to highlight the visibility of the stories (Dans, 2019), which is at the center of our model.

Following the work of other scholars about the need for triangulation in this field (Bruns & Burgess, 2012; Marwick, 2014), we also carried out semi-structured interviews with journalists working with these organizations as well as reviewing interviews and self-reflecting material by others also working with, or in charge of this digital native news-desk. By doing this, we were able to explore in more comprehensive and contextualized terms the significance of the quantitative data. Also, the triangulation of the data not only provided insight into the nature of engagement between these organizations and the social media platform but also gave a better understanding of the rationale behind the adaptation of their original strategy.

4 Data and discussion

Our work overall confirms that these digital-native news organizations still have, in broader terms, a limited reach among the general population; they are mainly centered on those in full-time employment and who are highly educated (the elite of the region). This implies, in turn, that these organizations have had to face a change regarding the journalistic paradigm, which had the traditional mission of reaching out to a large audience that was heterogeneous and widely dispersed. Instead of this, the digital-native organizations had to communicate with niche audiences, which meant trying to influence a 'qualified' public such as experts and opinion leaders.

However, the most important aspect that we can draw from our data is that shifting from *Facebook* to *Twitter* had a fundamental impact on the asymmetry between digital-native non-profit investigative journalism and the traditional legacy media. We find that the change

meant that starting from a position of being almost invisible to the wider public, the digital-native news organizations on *Twitter* managed to catch up closely with the legacy media, in terms of reaching the general public through particular news beats such as politics.

The results also highlight how, because they have fewer resources than their legacy media competitors, the digital-native news organizations opted for a strategy of managing their presence on social media by centralizing their efforts on *Twitter* and from that platform projecting their overall presence into *Facebook* and other platforms. In doing so, they effectively maximized their resources and achieved success in the face of the mainstream legacy media competition to the point that they are now punching above their audience share.

Our first analysis used Klout Score (a tool that is no longer available but that can be replicated with other existing analytic tools), which amalgamates into one indicator the number of followers, interactions, and reach. We normalized Klout data by using Internet Penetration Rate, provided by Internet World Stats, for each country. It was carried out between 2013 and 2017, to provide a more equitable comparison. It was an important and freely available reference point on internet interaction. Today this index has become part of another company. However, its values allow us to highlight that the @CIPER and @IDL_R accounts performed better than their traditional media peers in the area of politics. They started in 2013 with many limitations but then, by 2017, became much better positioned.

Table 1 – Klout Score. *Twitter* Performance CIPER/IDL 2013-2017
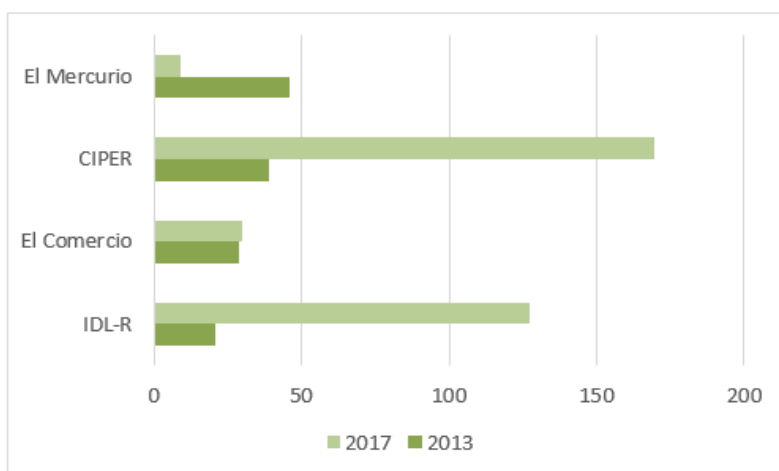
Source: elaborated with Klout Score data, 2013 and 2017.

These results show that digital-native organizations are effectively catching up with their legacy media competitors. This is a very important landmark in terms of the role of these organizations in society to provide news and inform the public.

One explanation for this improvement by digital-native non-profit investigative journalism organizations is explained by the transfer of news posts from *Facebook* to *Twitter*. For almost five years, *Facebook* was the main internet traffic platform for traditional media, with *Twitter* in a distant second place (Galeano, 2018) and it was also the main vehicle for the dissemination of news on the Internet in Latin America (La-Rosa, 2014). *Twitter*, on the other hand, has historically represented a complementary interest for legacy media, which rather neglected it in favor of *Facebook*. New digital-native organizations have instead made *Twitter* their priority in their strategy for visibility and placed it at the center for managing their other social media platforms. According to César Batiz, director of Poderopedia and El Pitazo,

> Twitter allowed us to really position and compete on a level playing field with others. It allows us to reach most of our readers and let them know what we have. Most of our audiences do not visit our website regularly. They come to us when we tell them that there is something important, which they know because they follow [the news?]. Twitter notifies our followers when we tweet a particular highlight or breaking story. That does not happen with Facebook or other platforms. (Personal communication, March 21, 2020).

Our data suggest that between 2009 and 2013 IDL-Reporteros and CIPER undertook similar approaches to those of many traditional media outlets. That is, they used *Facebook* and *Twitter* as the main channels for disseminating their work (La-Rosa, 2014), which brought them modest results in terms of social media performance. However, from 2014 onwards, they started to re-focus on *Twitter* and attract a greater number of followers.

Table 2 – % *Twitter/Facebook* followers. LA investigative non-profit 2014
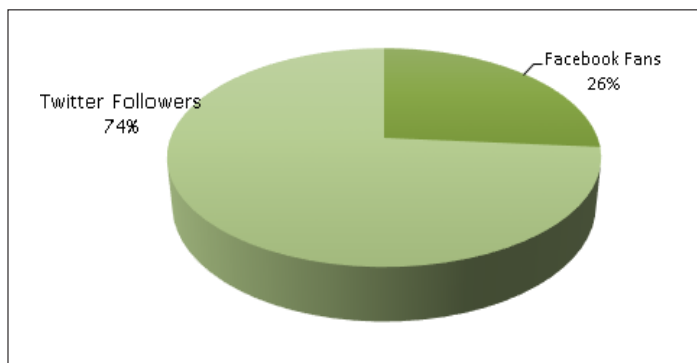
Source: own authorship. May, 2014.

To obtain percentages above we went to each of the accounts of eight non-profit investigative journalism projects in May 2014 and added the total number of Facebook followers and the total number of Twitter followers. Focusing on *Twitter* made it easier for these organizations to participate in the public debate in a more effective way. According to César Batiz, this is because,

> Managing your social account on Twitter is easier than on Facebook, for several reasons, but the main one is that bluebird company, since the very beginning, allows you to control both accounts much better, not the other way around. The second reason could be that, from the user's perspective, the follow-up was simpler, who was much more familiar with the Twitter narrative style: breaking news than with a more extensive Facebook-style which, sometimes, requires too many clicks to access the message. (Personal communication, March 21, 2020).

The switch to *Twitter* also meant a very different way of managing and using social media, particularly concerning how that social media is used in relation to journalistic activities. For Juan Andrés Guzmán, editor of CIPER, the digital-native had a very different experience to that of legacy media,

> For us, the digital world was where we were born. That meant we had a digital culture from the start and had to create our own work dynamics and [organizational] cultures. The legacy media had to move into this world, either because of the changing landscape or because they simply stopped publishing in print. In any case, they brought with them the culture at the start that cyberspace was a space to promote

their other content and that basically, they would do the same they had always done but just in a different way. (Personal communication, September 16, 2019).

Guzmán goes further to argue that CIPER treats *Twitter* as a different medium in itself, one that "has its own logic". He explains how he is in charge of CIPER academics, which is a branch of CIPER that focuses on the news but that is based on the use of peer-reviewed academic work. He explains how their strategy in the use of Twitter changed over the past few years,

> We put out Tweets that are based on proper research. I mean, our strategy is to Tweet properly peer-reviewed work that has gone through a thorough revision. That has brought about great positive feedback as on that particular platform there is a lot of unsubstantiated stuff. Yes, at the start we were perhaps too focused on tweeting links to our CIPER content, which is what the traditional [legacy] media still do. However, that makes little sense on these types of platforms even if you are trying to increase your traffic. Instead, we went from using Twitter to promote our stories in CIPER to actually positioning stories on Twitter itself. (Personal communication, September 16, 2019).

IDL-Reporteros went through a similar change in their approach to social media, although it took a bit longer. For Hernán Florindez, journalist of IDL-Reporteros it was a revelation to discover by 2016 that over 50% of the readers of their site came through social media. In light of that,

> From 2016 onwards, thanks to one of our editors, Romina Mella, we changed our strategy. It was in that year that we started to move towards Twitter. By mid-2016, we were paying more attention to it and started to produce stories, graphics, and images specifically designed for Twitter (…) It also required us to understand different ways of communicating news in 140 characters, (now 280). This was a learning curve for us and one we undertook in a short period. (Personal communication, July 26, 2019).

Hernán Florindez adds that one of the key reasons to pay more attention to *Twitter* happened after observing changes in the news audiences' habits and patterns of consumption:

> That year we reported the changes in users' habits, which showed that our audiences that came from social media duplicated that of the visitors that came by other means or channels. Now, we have done what we can with the limited resources we have. You see, the IDL-Reporteros team is small, and we have to prioritize how we use our resources and on what we focus to be more effective. As we say here in Peru, it's not always the prettiest girl who

> has the best dress for the party, but she will always make up for it with how she dances. (Personal communication, July 26, 2019).

However, Florindez warns that we cannot say that *Twitter* on its own is the best option and reminds us that, from their own experience, these platforms need to be part of a broader strategy that takes into consideration multiple elements:

> Audiences behave differently in terms of news consumption depending on if they are using Twitter and Facebook. As journalists, we are constantly facing this. In some stories, it is better to use one, while in others, not. However, given the need to reach an audience, and we are currently going through a process of requesting funding, we focus on Twitter. However, it is not really about giving preference to one over the other but about what is more convenient in a particular context and effective to a news story. (Personal communication, July 26, 2019).

Florindez emphasizes that IDL-Reporteros does not just have one person dedicated exclusively to work with social media, but that all members of the team have to do it. "We all considered it as part of what we do", he added.

From these interventions, we can see that re-focusing on *Twitter*, and the engagement with social media platforms in general, was not only a matter of switching platforms but that it also signaled a fundamental re-conceptualization of what to do with these platforms. They posed the digital-native organizations a challenge, that of coming up with a strategy that departed from old habits and news cultures. In the beginning, the first results of this change of strategy to transfer efforts, resources, and focus on *Twitter* seemed somewhat limited.

Table 3 – *Twitter* Influence CIPER/IDL-Reporteros

| Non-profit Org.	Twitter Followers	Twitter Estimated Reach	Internet Penetration %	Influence Ratio	Influence Coefficient
IDL-Reporteros	50652	130072	34	0,9	2,6
CIPER	150699	164408	59	0,6	1,1

Source: own calculation, registered data from *Twitter* between July 18th-22nd, 2013.

Nevertheless, the digital-native strategy did pay off in the end, something that was registered by some of the key metrics companies such as Comscore and Socialbakers (Fosk, 2013; Lima, 2020). Soon the digital-native organizations started to increase their presence among the public in their countries and were attracting a larger amount of attention from them.

However, the level of interaction was not the only reason why these digital-native organizations switched social platforms. Another key factor was the control over the way their content was presented and disseminated. Although both legacy and digital-native media initially used *Facebook* as their preferred platform to manage their content, this would not be the case for long. The fundamental shift happened in 2017 when *Facebook* announced changes to its algorithm, and many organizations, even digital-native ones, started to rapidly lose presence and relevance in the public discussion (Dusster, 2019; Lacort, 2018).

The new strategy of switching platforms also meant using *Twitter* to create spaces for dialogue and opinion. The activity of the @CIPER account revolves mostly around the label/hashtag #CIPER Alert, with some 534 tweets accounting for 34% of its labeling activity. But if we include all hashtags such as: 'Opinion', 'Archive', 'Column', etc., it is worth noting that most of the activity recorded in this account is aimed at self-referencing their work, with links to their material and very little, almost 7%, aimed at facilitating dialogue, providing answers, mentions to readers, under the label "readers' opinion", among others.

Table 4 – @CIPER most-used hashtags 2016-2019
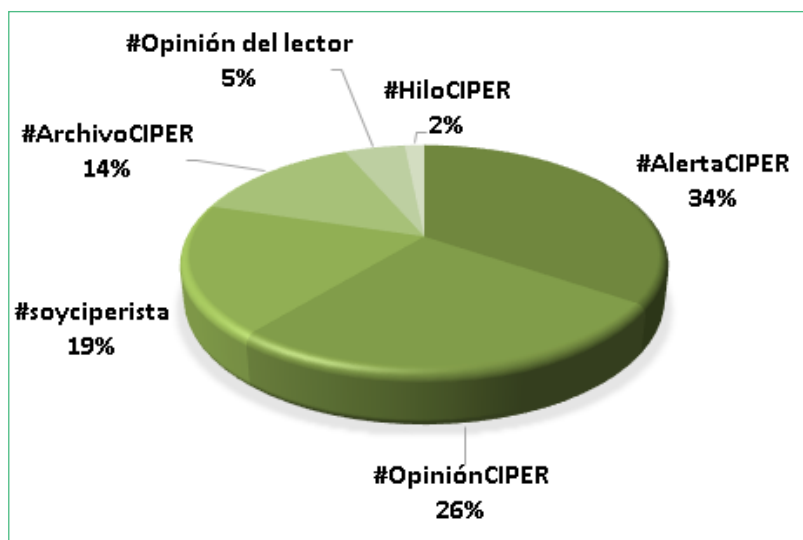
Source: own authorship, 2019. Configured using Twitonomy data.

The case of @IDL_R is similar, although with less variety. Its use of tags/hashtags coincides with the topics addressed by the account, so we could say that there is little evidence of taking part in conversations or dialogue on the platform. Having said that, the overall data suggests, rather, that the administration of the *Twitter* accounts by both institutions is still carried out in a unidirectional way with little scope for any participation. In this sense, the case of @IDL_R is more pronounced than that of @CIPER, which encourages more interaction with its users. It remains to be understood if the verticality of the Peruvian non-profit organization is motivated by the nature of the investigative journalism it develops.

Nevertheless, for digital-native organizations such as IDL-Reporteros, the change of platform also meant it was not able to face systematic attacks from the public figures whom they were investigating and which we could also claim is part of a broader capacity for dialogue or at least public response. Indeed, the visibility of the @IDL_R's investigative work was, at some point, much lower than that of the former Peruvian presidents accused of corruption, as shown in the graph on the Google Trends platform.

Table 5 – Google Trend. Search Terms Peru – 2018/2019
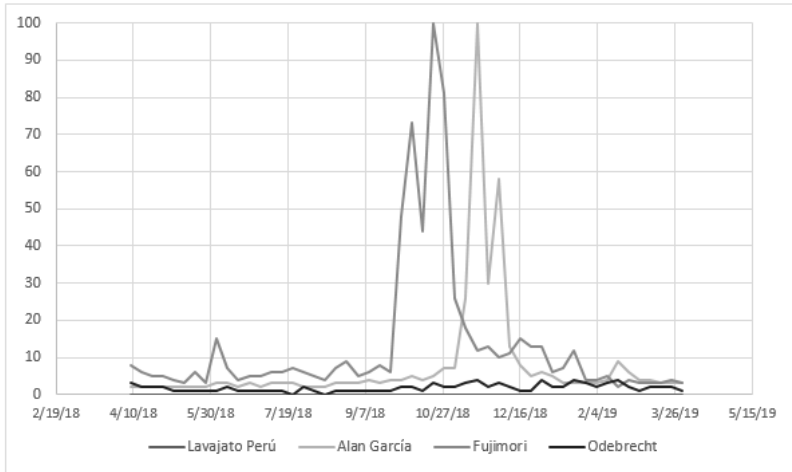
Source: own authorship, with data from Google Trends (2019)

It is important to emphasize that the main attacks against IDL-Reporteros were made from former Peruvian President Alan García's *Twitter* account, which mostly disseminated unsubstantiated claims and accusations against the journalists involved. They referred to things and claims that the IDL-Reporteros director, Gustavo Gorriti, in fact never said but that was further spread by trolls sympathizing with former president García (Salinas, 2019). On March 16, 2019, there was another attack on the IDL-Reporteros' *Facebook* account, precisely when they were replicating the former president's attacks, in a video conference.

The attackers, Gorriti confirmed, were trolls akin to former President Alan García Pérez (IDL-Reporteros, 2019). At this stage, there was still poor visibility of the @IDL_R account compared to the account of former president García (@AlanGarcíaPerú). Moreover, from the total 3197 tweets selected for the study, only 637 used the #LavaJato hashtag (19.9%) to link to this judicial investigation, the most important corruption case in the history of Latin American continent (Gonzalez-Ocantos & Baraybar, 2019). Hence, the strategy of former Peruvian president Alan García and his followers was to deflect attention from the scandal itself by questioning the news media's accusers.

Nevertheless, contrary to the accusations made by García and his followers, there was 'no obsession' with his public figure.

Instead, as our data show, the highest @IDL_R breaking news on corruption was aimed at other former presidents and politicians who were also embroiled in corruption such as some of the former mayors of the city of Lima, the capital of Peru. Moreover, the politicians most mentioned were former president Alberto Fujimori, formerly the main leader of the main opposition party, and his daughter Keiko Fujimori. This occurred (or happened or took place) although Alan García was the second most investigated politician.

In any case, the data suggest that in switching to *Twitter* the digital-native organizations have been able to improve their visibility in all areas. @CIPER now appears in the top 5 when using terms such as "Corruption + Chile" on Google's organic results page. This did not happen with @IDL-R organization that doesn't even appear in the first four pages of a Google search result. The change of platform strategy has been crucial in associating these digital-native organizations' names with the idea of public scrutiny and bringing transparency to power.

All in all, for @IDL_R and @CIPER, the change of emphasis and efforts from *Facebook* to *Twitter* has translated into increased visibility and power to respond to external attacks. It is important to note that the activity of both accounts, despite reaching levels exceeding three thousand RTs and likes, still did not achieve greater visibility among the broader and more general public. Sometimes, associating with more general journalism accounts such as Rosa María Palacios (@rmapalacios) in Peru and/or Mónica Rincón (@tv_monica) in Chile, could favor a higher level of dissemination of the material. However, in light of this, it is important to remember that these organizations are more dependent on reputation than on traffic. As Juan Andrés Guzmán from CIPER points out,

> We are not in the business of having a mass public. Yes, we need ample outreach but not in the sense of the traditional media. Our business is not to create a media space and then go to advertisers and say, hey look, I have so many people visiting our page. Come and advertise with us. No, that is not what we do. Our business is to produce good stories that bring accountability to those in power. All the time I listen to radio stations, which literally read our web page on air but give us no credit. That is OK with me. I have no problem with that. After all, the story is getting out there. (Personal communication, September 16, 2019).

This last intervention suggests a very different idea of the nature of intentions around engagement with social media. And one that prioritizes dissemination of content rather than just attracting traffic towards a particular website, as explicitly pointed out by one of the interviewees. If this is the case, and the data suggests that it is, then switching to *Twitter* seems to have been the right choice.

5 Conclusion

There is little doubt that the overall engagement of digital-native organizations with social media platforms, studied here in general terms and, in particular their change from *Facebook* to *Twitter*, have brought them greater visibility in the public sphere.

Having said that and to use a well-known parable, the stone thrown by David did not deliver a fatal blow and Goliath is still very much alive. In the journey of the new digital-native media outlets to the promised land they still have a long way to go. The accounts of the two digital-native organizations still need additional attention, support, and resources. This is particularly the case when they manage their tools to both disseminate their content and enhance their overall performance on social media platforms.

Moreover, they should do this in a way that allows them to transform their material into something more informative and allows them to gain greater influence with the general public, either directly without intermediaries, or through their own colleagues in the other media outlets. It is an effort that will also demand content that is easily adaptable to a variety of outlets, hence improving access and the ability to be distributed. The current experience of these organizations in using *Twitter* shows that it is not enough to just re-use the story and adapt it to other platforms, but that the content has to be conceptualized for each platform in very distinctive ways from the start.

The change of platform, from *Facebook* to *Twitter*, in the management of their published information, has also allowed them to find a usual place for themselves in the new social media configuration. *Twitter* has brought these organizations greater visibility, which proved useful for them in the face of the very public attacks made by presidents, ex-presidents, and all kinds of public

figures. This also allowed them to better handle controversy around the legitimacy of their work. The contrast between the mentions in their accounts and the scope of their mentions in Google Trends overwhelmingly makes this case.

The switch to *Twitter* proved to be more than just a strategic move: how they have managed their accounts has created a new tactic of shaping the political agenda (De Burg, 2008; Higgins Joyce, 2016), although we should note they still have some method to go before they can construct their own in the public eye at least on the same terms as those achieved by the legacy media, for more than a century. Therefore, the new strategy of these organizations follows the logic of supporting their investigative work by weaving a network through other institutions of civil society, such as the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Judiciary, and even the Police.

This framework creates a protective shield of vigilance that has a great impact on, and resonance with, the day-to-day and is something impossible for society and the rest of its institutions to ignore. Furthermore, it is additional protection against both the new and traditional powers, which have been operating in the region for decades. We might say, therefore, that although this new form of editorial management has not yet killed the giant powers of the "Goliath" of yesteryear, nevertheless it has at least attracted their attention through its greater effectiveness.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that reaching large audiences is not, and probably never will be, the main aim of these digital-native news organizations; even though foreign and national donors and some experts in the Global North seem almost obsessed with the need to assess 'quantitatively' these organizations employing outreach. As we have seen here, they are well-established as a 'source of sources' and influential enough to play a fair role in producing 'journalism for journalists', which makes them already acting players in shaping the news agenda. This happens, because investigative journalism in itself, with its uncomfortable truths and critical stories, was never really meant to be a product that was directed to the masses but rather a practice that is embedded as a democratic function of news reporting to challenge power.

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