INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL TELEVISION ON ECUADORIAN NEWS PROGRAMMES

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ABSTRACT

In the era of digitalisation, social television has significantly transformed the landscape of traditional media. This article examines the impact of social networks on the news programmes of major television networks in Ecuador, focusing on how these platforms influence audience interaction and perception. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study analysed behavioural patterns, comments, and engagement levels on social networks such as Facebook and X. The results highlight the digital leadership of Ecuavisa and Teleamazonas and emphasise the need for sustainable strategies to strengthen the connection between traditional media and digital environments.

1. Introduction

Social television represents an evolution of traditional media towards a more interactive experience, allowing viewers to participate in real time through social media while consuming audiovisual content. This phenomenon has not only transformed media consumption habits but has also changed how news programmes interact with their audience, especially in the Ecuadorian context, where television media play a central role in public information (Merino, 2013).

In the media sphere, television has historically been a pillar for the dissemination of information and entertainment. However, the transition to a digital age has posed new challenges and opportunities for news programmes. Digital platforms such as Facebook, X and Instagram have redefined the way audiences interact with the news, allowing for a two-way flow of communication. This change is particularly relevant in Ecuador, where the use of social media has experienced exponential growth in the last decade, establishing itself as a key tool for news consumption.

Social television involves not only watching a news programme, but also the ability to share, comment on and react to content in real time. According to recent studies, this phenomenon has contributed to greater participation by young audiences, who have traditionally shown less interest in conventional news formats (Lorente, 2011). In addition, media convergence has allowed news programmes to extend their reach and adapt to the demands of an increasingly digitalised society.

In Ecuador, television networks have adopted various strategies to integrate social media into their daily operations. However, the level of success in this transition varies significantly among different actors in the sector. The purpose of this article is to analyse the impact of these strategies, identifying best practices and associated challenges. At the same time, it seeks to answer key questions such as: What factors determine the success of a news programme in the digital ecosystem? How does interaction on social media influence audiences' perception of and trust in traditional media?

This analysis is relevant not only from an academic point of view, but also from a practical one, as it offers communication professionals tools to optimise their presence in the digital environment. Furthermore, it provides a better understanding of the role of social media in shaping the media agenda and creating a space for public debate in contemporary Ecuador.

1.1. Social television and digital convergence

Social television is an emerging media phenomenon that combines the traditional experience of television consumption with the active participation of users on social media. Lorente (2011) defines this concept as "the simultaneous use of social media and television to interact with audiovisual content". In this context, platforms such as Facebook and X allow viewers to share their opinions, reactions and comments in real time, transforming the passive viewer into an active prosumer (Napoli, 2010). This change has generated new dynamics in the television industry, where the media are seeking strategies to encourage interaction and maintain audience attention. According to Scolari (2020), social television has become a key tool for audience loyalty, as it allows for more participatory and personalised consumption.

Digital convergence has accelerated this transition by integrating information and communication technologies into the production and distribution processes of television content. In Latin America, the adoption of digital technologies has been uneven, but studies such as that by Merino (2013) highlight that 62% of consumers in the region use mobile devices to complement their television experience. This trend has led to greater audience fragmentation, as viewers can access content from multiple platforms and at different times. According to García-Avilés (2022), digitisation has forced the media to reformulate their business models and adopt transmedia strategies to expand their reach and interaction with the audience.

In addition, interactivity in social television has changed the way the impact of audiovisual content is measured. Traditional ratings measurement has been complemented by digital metrics that analyse engagement and the virality of content on social media (Sanjuan, 2019). This evolution has allowed television producers to adjust their strategies in real time, based on audience comments and reactions. According to Ruiz and Alcalá (2016), the media's ability to adapt to these new dynamics will determine its relevance and sustainability in an increasingly digitised media ecosystem. In this sense, digital convergence has not only transformed the way television is produced and consumed but has also redefined the relationship between the media and its audiences.

1.2. Social media as catalysts for media change

Social media has profoundly transformed the dynamics of interaction between the media and its audiences. According to Castillo (2011), digital platforms allow users to influence public perception and, on occasions, the development of media content. This phenomenon, known as "social audiences", is characterised by the active participation of viewers through comments, shares and reactions (Napoli, 2010). The combination of social media and television has fostered a new relationship between viewers and content, where communication with users is key, as they participate by discussing, evaluating, creating and distributing their own content (Álvarez-Monzoncillo, 2011).

In Ecuador, the "Superintendencia de Telecomunicaciones", the regulator for communications services, (2015) identifies television as the most influential medium, with 90% penetration in households. However, the growing popularity of social media has led news programmes to adopt strategies that combine both formats in order to remain relevant. This adaptation seeks to take advantage of real-time interaction and direct feedback from the audience, allowing the media to adjust their content according to the preferences and opinions expressed on digital platforms.

Audience participation in television has evolved from a passive to an active attitude, where the viewer becomes a participant engaged with the medium. León and García-Avilés (2012) point out that interactive or social television is bidirectional and personalised, satisfying entertainment and communication needs. This change has led traditional media to rethink their strategies, incorporating interactive elements and encouraging audience participation through various digital platforms.

In addition, mass self-communication is shaping a new world, where we increasingly think of social relations, institutions, power, social change, and personal autonomy as network-based realities (Cardoso, 2013). This digital environment has allowed audiences not only to consume content, but also to produce and disseminate it, generating more horizontal and democratised communication. Recognising this change, the media are seeking to integrate social networks into their strategies to harness the potential of active audiences and maintain their relevance in today's media landscape.

1.3. Metrics and impact of social television

The impact of social television is measured through various metrics that allow for the evaluation and understanding of audience interaction with content. Among the main metrics are the number of interactions, reach, and sentiment and emotion analysis. According to García-Avilés (2022), social television has transformed the way viewers consume audiovisual content, as digital participation and real-time feedback allow the media to adapt their strategies. Tools such as Hootsuite and Fanpage Karma make it easier for the media to evaluate the performance of their publications and understand how the audience relates to content on digital platforms (De-Lara-González & Arias, 2021).

These metrics are crucial for identifying trends and adapting communication strategies. Quantitative data provides information on the most popular topics, while qualitative analysis of comments allows for an understanding of the audience's tone and perception. According to Scolari (2020), studying digital engagement in social television not only provides insight into audience preferences, but also influences the production of more effective and personalised content. For example, monitoring hashtags related to television programmes helps to measure the impact on social media and identify patterns of conversation among viewers (Sanjuan, 2019).

On the other hand, audience measurement in the digital age requires an adaptation of traditional methods. According to Moreno and Pozo (2021), audience analysis must integrate digital metrics to provide a more accurate assessment of the impact and quality of television content. Recent research has highlighted that time-shifted viewing, social media interaction, and the use of streaming platforms have changed the paradigm of audience measurement (Lorandi, 2014). In this context, the combination of digital tools with advanced analytical models allows the media to develop more effective strategies to capture and retain their audiences.

In conclusion, social television has transformed the way viewers consume and participate in audiovisual content. The use of quantitative and qualitative metrics, together with specialised tools, allows the media to better understand their audience and adapt their content strategies in an ever-evolving digital environment. As digital platforms continue to expand, it will be essential to continue researching new ways of measuring and analysing interaction on social television in order to maximise the impact of content and strengthen the relationship with viewers.

2. Methodology

For this study, a mixed-methods approach was used, integrating quantitative and qualitative analyses to obtain a comprehensive understanding of audience interaction with the selected news programmes. This approach allows the precision of numerical data to be combined with the interpretative depth of qualitative observations, providing a more complete view of the phenomenon under study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), mixed methods offer a holistic perspective by allowing the integration of different types of data and analytical approaches.

2.1. Research design

Quantitative: Interaction metrics were collected from the official Facebook and X pages of the selected news outlets. Fanpage Karma and Twitter Analytics tools were used to extract data such as the number of comments, shares, and engagement rates. Fanpage Karma is a social media analytics tool that allows users to monitor and compare the performance of different profiles, providing detailed information on audience interaction.

Twitter Analytics, meanwhile, offers detailed statistics on tweet performance, including metrics on impressions, interactions, and follower analysis.

Qualitative: A content analysis of news publications on both platforms was conducted, focusing on the tone of conversations and predominant topics. This analysis allowed for the interpretation of conversation trends and audience reactions, providing a deeper understanding of audience perceptions and attitudes towards the content disseminated. According to Hernández Sampieri and Mendoza (2018), qualitative analysis is essential for interpreting the meaning of data and understanding the context in which interactions take place.

2.2. Sample

Six representative news programmes from public and private networks in Ecuador were selected: Televistazo (Ecuavisa), 24 Horas (Teleamazonas), El Noticiero (TC Televisión), La Noticia (RTS), Noticias 7 (Ecuador TV) and Gamanoticias (Gamavisión). The study period covered February to April 2024, allowing for a detailed analysis of interactions and trends during this time. The selection of this sample sought to cover a diversity of news approaches and audiences, ensuring the representativeness of the data collected.

This mixed methodology allowed for the triangulation of the data obtained, strengthening the validity and reliability of the findings. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, a more complete and enriching understanding of the interaction between news programmes and their audience on digital platforms was achieved. According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), triangulation in mixed methods contributes to a greater understanding and corroboration of results by addressing the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.

3. Results

3.1. Interactions on social media

Ecuadorian news programmes have adopted different strategies on social media, reflected in key metrics such as number of followers, interaction rates and frequency of posts. Ecuavisa and Teleamazonas lead in terms of number of followers and interactions on Facebook and X, with 3.7 million and 2.5 million fans respectively. These news programmes have managed to consolidate a large digital audience through a strategy of constant posting and relevant content.

On the other hand, Gamavisión and RTS show lower levels of engagement, which could be attributed to less frequent posting and a less aggressive digital strategy. Ecuador TV and TC Televisión, being government-backed media outlets, have maintained a stable audience, although their follower growth has been more moderate.

Analysis of the engagement rate reveals that Gamavisión has the highest figure on Facebook (0.081%), while Teleamazonas dominates on X with a rate of 0.0099%, which indicates that its audience not only consumes the content but also actively participates in the digital conversation.

Table 1. National television channels in Ecuador

Channel	Type of programming	Channel type	Coverage
Ecuavisa	General	Private	International
Teleamazonas	General	Private	International
RTS	General	Private	Ibero-American
Ecuador TV	Generalist and institutional	Public	National
TC Television	General	Public	Ibero-American
Gamavisión	General	Public	National

Source: Karma Fan Page.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

3.2 Comparison between news programmes

Ecuavisa: Leader in reach and frequency of publications, with a high volume of daily content (89 publications on Facebook and 30 on X).

Teleamazonas: Stands out for its greater engagement on social media, reflected in a higher interaction rate and sustained growth in followers.

Gamavisión and Ecuador TV: They have less consistent strategies and a lower impact on interactions and audience growth.

RTS and TC Televisión: Although they have a considerable follower base, their ability to generate engagement remains a challenge.

Table 2. Summary of news programme metrics Facebook

Channel	Page performance index	Fans	Fan growth	Post engagement rate	Posts per day
Ecuador TV	6	822K	-0.063%	0.017	24
Ecuavisa	7	3.7M	-0.54%	0.0064%	89
Gamavisión	4	528K	-0.059%	0.081%	11
RTS	2	1.6M	-0.059%	0.0026%	16
TC Television	5	3.1M	-0.051%	0.016%	24
Teleamazonas	10	2.5M	-0.083%	0.039%	57

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

The table presents an analysis of the performance of the main Ecuadorian news programmes on Social Red Facebook highlighting key metrics such as performance index, number of followers, audience growth, interaction rate and frequency of posts. Ecuavisa leads in number of followers with 3.7 million, followed by TC Televisión (3.1 million) and Teleamazonas (2.5 million), while Gamavisión (528,000) has the smallest fan base. However, all channels show negative growth in followers, with Teleamazonas (-0.083%) being the most affected. In terms of interaction rate, Gamavisión (0.081%) and Teleamazonas (0.039%) show better engagement, while RTS (0.0026%) has the lowest interaction. Ecuavisa is the channel with the highest frequency of publication (89 posts per day), although its interaction rate remains low (0.0064%), suggesting that a high volume of content does not guarantee greater participation. In contrast, Gamavisión and Teleamazonas, with fewer posts, achieve significantly higher levels of interaction, indicating that content quality may influence engagement more than quantity.

Table 3 Summary of social network X news metrics

| Channel	Page performance index	Fans	Follower growth	Post engagement rate	Posts per day
Ecuador TV	11	639K	0.57	0.0028%	7.5
Ecuavisa	6	3.1M	0.41	0.00079%	30
Gamavisión	1	638K	-0.25%	0.00025%	3.2
RTS	16	943K	0.72%	0.015%	1.8
TC Television	15	1.8M	0.86	0.0055%	5.2
Teleamazonas	42	2.9M	1.1	0.0099%	17

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

The table shows a comparative analysis of the metrics of the main Ecuadorian news programmes on the social network X, evaluating their performance in terms of followers, interaction and frequency of publication. Teleamazonas stands out with the highest page performance index (42%), followed by RTS (16%) and TC Televisión (15%), while Gamavisión has the lowest performance (1%). In terms of the number of followers, Ecuavisa (3.1 million) and Teleamazonas (2.9 million) lead the way, while Gamavisión and Ecuador TV have similar figures (638,000 and 639,000, respectively). The growth in followers is most notable in Teleamazonas (1.1%), while Gamavisión shows a decline (-0.25%). In terms of interaction rate, RTS (0.015%) and Teleamazonas (0.0099%) achieve the highest engagement, despite posting less frequently than Ecuavisa, which has 30 daily posts but the lowest interaction rate (0.00079%). This analysis reveals that posting frequency does not always translate into greater interaction, highlighting the importance of quality content and effective engagement strategies.

3.3 Analysis of posts and audience

Analysis of the posts indicates that the most successful news programmes use specific visual and thematic strategies to attract audiences. Most followers interact more with images and videos, while links and text-only posts generate less response.

Graph 1. Profiles of channels with the most followers
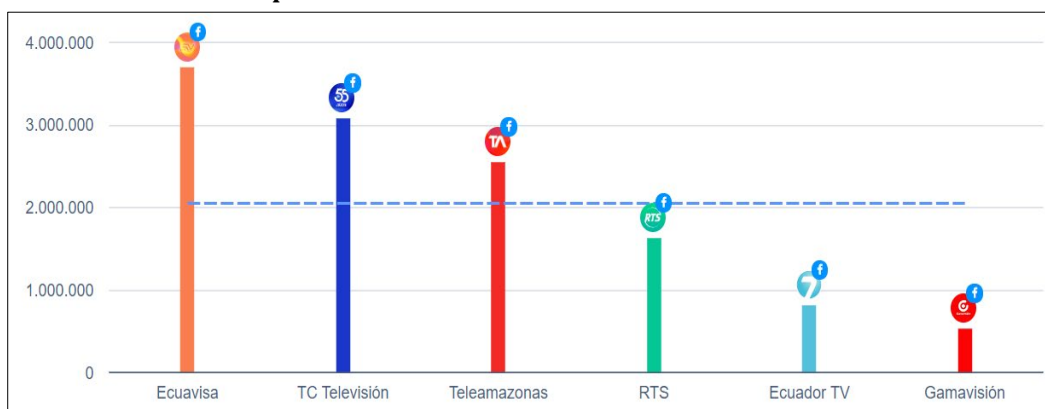
Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

Likewise, this monitoring shows that users interact most on this network with images, reaching 5,948,250, 489,484 react to videos, 32,855 to links, 19,309 to reels, and rarely react to simple statuses, as shown in Figure 19. Thus, of the six channels analysed, it is evident that users of digital channels give more likes, comments or shares to the information in the images published by news programmes, from which it can be deduced that internet users are more visually oriented.

Graph 2. Average posts per day

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

Peaks in interaction occur at strategic times, with the highest level of activity between 7:30 and 10:30 in the morning and between 19:00 and 21:00 in the evening, especially on weekdays. During the weekends, the times of highest engagement vary between morning and evening, depending on the type of content published.

Graph 3. Images most present in the news and channels analysed on Facebook
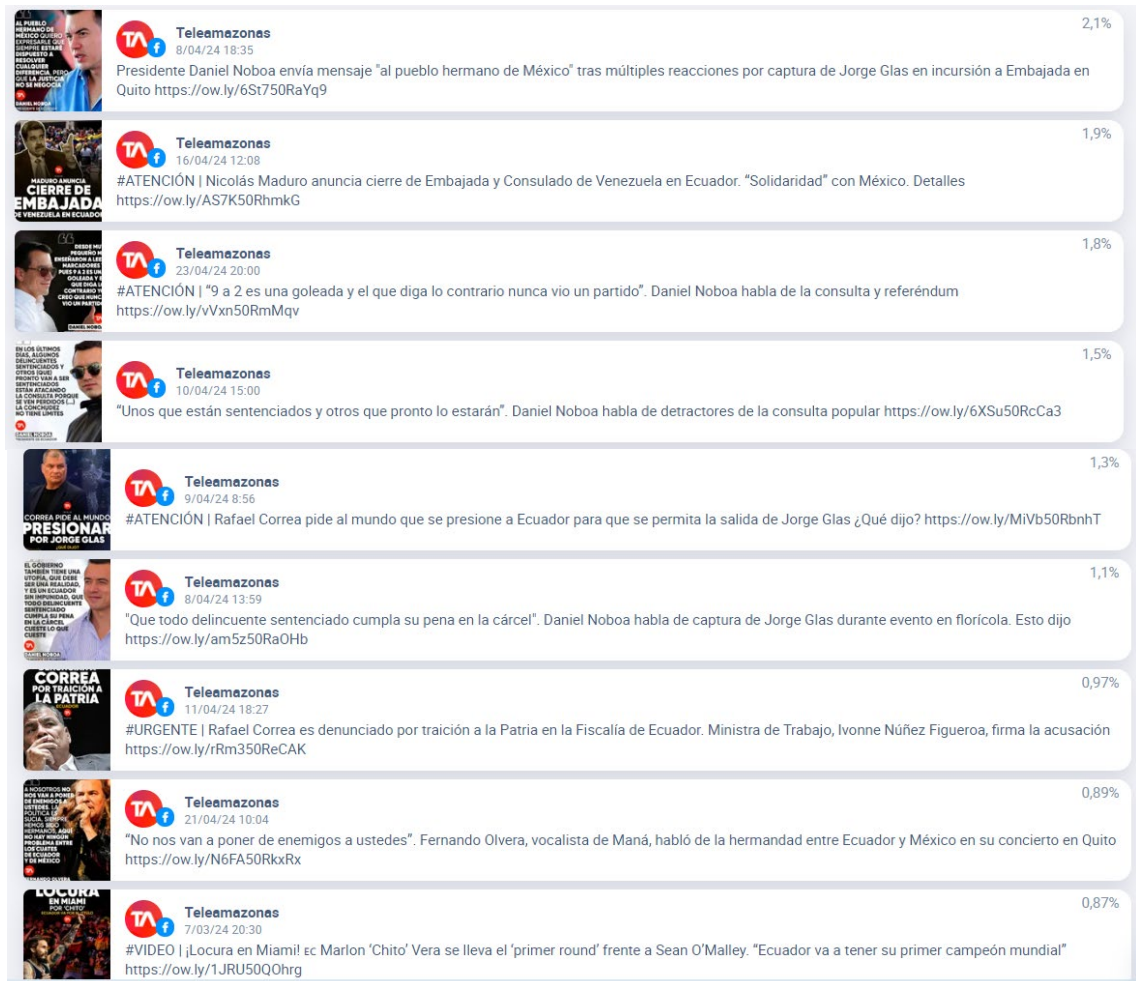
Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by*:* Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

Analysis of the images most frequently featured in the news on the channels analysed on Facebook reveals key patterns in the visual strategy used by Ecuadorian media to capture the public's attention. The predominant images are included in political topics, natural disasters, sporting events, crimes and breaking news, reflecting the preferences and editorial focus of each media outlet. Channels with higher interaction rates, such as Gamavisión and Teleamazonas, tend to use images with strong emotional or visual impact, which generate a greater response from the public. In contrast, those with lower engagement, such as RTS and Ecuavisa, may be using less striking images or images that are not well aligned with the interests of their audience.

Graph 4. Growth history
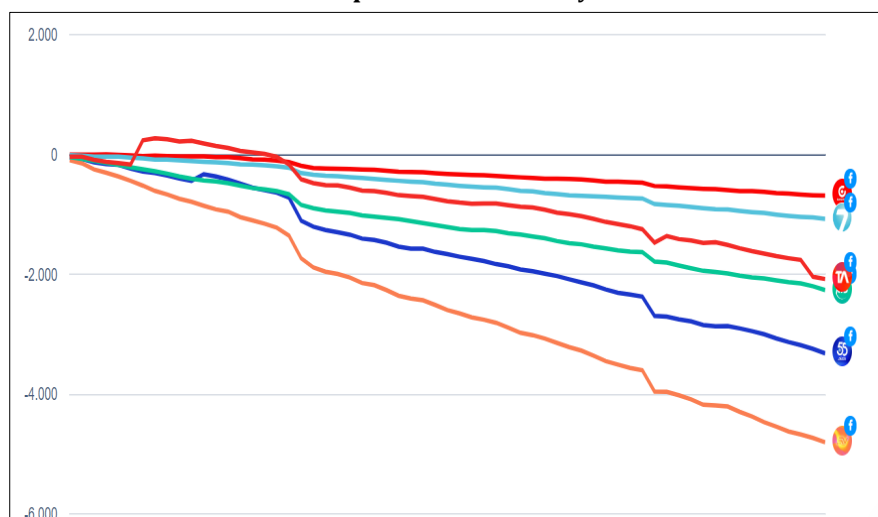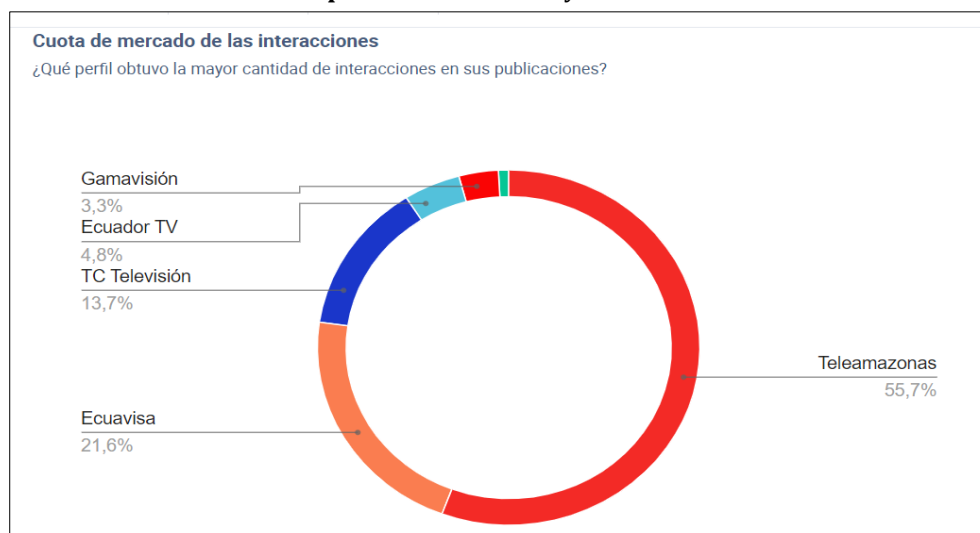

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by*: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

The ten most popular images on Facebook, according to audience interaction, show Teleamazonas at the top of the list. As indicated above, most of these images relate to the diplomatic standoff between Ecuador and Mexico over the entry into the Mexican embassy to arrest Jorge Glass.

Political content dominates interactions, especially in times of diplomatic crises or relevant national events. Coverage of the conflict between Ecuador and Mexico was one of the most commented on, demonstrating that the digital audience is interested in current political and social issues.

3.4. Impact on content strategies

The data shows that news programmes with a more robust digital strategy achieve greater audience loyalty and participation. Media outlets that publish consistently and diversify their content with images, videos and innovative formats obtain better results in terms of engagement.

Graph 5. Market share by interactions

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by*: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

Graph 5 shows the interaction rate of publications and the growth rate of followers: Firstly, Teleamazonas and Gamavisión have a greater presence, bearing in mind that the further to the right a profile is on the dotted lines, the greater its interaction with posts. Secondly, follower growth predominates in Gamavisión because, according to the table, the higher and further to the right the profile is, the greater its growth has been. The rest of the channels analysed remain on the left and at the bottom, which is why they do not have a greater presence in interactions and follower growth.

Graph 6. Summary of interaction posts

FECHA ▼	IMAGEN	PUBLICACIÓN	ME GUSTA	COMENTARIOS	INFORMACIÓN COMPARTIDA
30 abr 2024		#Nacional | Ecuador demandó a México ante la Corte Intern...	202	379	32
30 abr 2024		#CasoBlanqueoJr | #VIDEO. En el marco de una investigació...	84	31	0
30 abr 2024		#Seguridad I Doce procesados irán a juicio por terrorismo...	33	9	1
30 abr 2024		No habrá desconexiones eléctricas durante el feriado del ...	56	71	8
30 abr 2024		#Atención | Las personas que quieran cambiar de domicili...	17	0	17

Source: Fan Page Karma.
Prepared by: Ortiz, C. Maldonado, J. Silva, M. 2024

The analysis of posts and their interaction on X reveals key trends in content management by the main Ecuadorian news programmes. Ecuavisa is the channel with the highest number of daily posts (89), but its interaction rate (0.0064%) is relatively low, suggesting that the volume of posts does not always translate into greater engagement. Ecuador TV and TC Televisión, with 24 daily posts each, maintain interaction rates of 0.017% and 0.016% respectively, indicating a more balanced strategy in terms of frequency and participation. On the other hand, Gamavisión, with only 11 daily posts, has the highest interaction rate (0.081%), suggesting that content quality and audience segmentation may be determining factors. In contrast, RTS, with 16 daily posts, has the lowest interaction rate (0.0026%), which could indicate a weaker connection with the audience or a less effective content strategy. Finally, Teleamazonas, with 57 posts per day and an interaction rate of 0.039%, shows intermediate performance, combining a high-frequency strategy with moderate engagement. These data reflect the importance of finding a balance between the number of posts and the ability to generate effective interaction with the audience.

4. Discussion

The results of the study reaffirm that social television has transformed the media landscape in Ecuador, aligning with a global trend where the convergence between traditional and digital media is redefining information consumption. The ability of news programmes to generate engagement depends not only on the number of posts, but also on the relevance, credibility and appeal of the content. In a saturated digital environment, the trustworthiness and relevance of content have become determining factors in audience loyalty (Napoli, 2010).

In addition, the immediacy and interactivity of social platforms have created new challenges for news programmes, as they now compete not only with other traditional media, but also with independent content creators and the constant flow of user-generated information. As Jenkins (2006) argues, audience participation is a key element in the new media ecology, forcing news programmes to adopt strategies that promote real-time conversation and debate.

A crucial aspect of this phenomenon is the credibility of information. Unlike traditional television, where information goes through a rigorous editorial process, in the digital ecosystem, fact-checking is a constant challenge. The spread of fake news and misinformation can affect public perception of news programmes, highlighting the need to strengthen transparency and accountability in the production of digital content (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

The findings of this study are in line with previous research that highlights the importance of consolidated digital strategies to improve the reach and public perception of news programmes (Lorente, 2011). Studies on digital transformation in the media have shown that those that integrate data analysis tools and interaction metrics tend to perform more effectively in terms of audience engagement and loyalty (Newman et al., 2021).

For example, previous research in Latin America has shown that the integration of segmented content strategies and the use of artificial intelligence to personalise the user experience significantly increase interaction (Scolari, 2018). In Ecuador, this study shows that news programmes that adopt

interactive practices and diversify their content formats are better able to capture the audience's attention, reinforcing the need for a transition to hybrid information models, where social media plays a fundamental role.

An additional aspect to consider is the relationship between publication frequency and content quality. Previous research has shown that excessive posting without a clear strategy can dilute the impact of messages and reduce the audience's perception of value (Casero-Ripollés, 2016). In this sense, Ecuadorian news programmes with higher interaction rates have shown that a well-planned posting strategy with relevant content is more effective than simply increasing the number of posts.

5. Conclusions

Analysis of the data collected in the research shows that interaction on social media by the news programmes of the main Ecuadorian television channels is measured through key metrics such as the number of reactions, follower growth, number of fans and frequency of daily posts. These characteristics are decisive in evaluating the impact and relevance of each news programme in the digital environment, allowing effective strategies to be identified to increase audience engagement.

Audience decisions reflect greater interaction with the news programmes of Ecuavisa, TC Televisión and Teleamazonas, where users prefer posts that combine images, text and additional data. This finding suggests that visual content plays a crucial role in audience retention and engagement, highlighting the importance of optimising the design and narrative of posts to generate greater impact.

In terms of digital presence, Ecuavisa ranks as the news programme with the most followers on both Facebook and on X, consolidating its position as the media outlet with the highest number of daily posts. However, Teleamazonas and TC Televisión also occupy a significant space in the digital ecosystem, demonstrating active competition among news programmes to capture the public's attention and consolidate their leadership in the digital environment.

Social television has transformed the way news programmes interact with their audience, establishing strategic publication schedules that run from Monday to Friday between 7:00 and 20:00, and on weekends at midday, unless a relevant event occurs. This strategy responds to the audience's digital consumption behaviour and highlights the importance of adapting news production and distribution to the dynamics of social platforms. Furthermore, the steady growth in the number of followers confirms that social television will continue to evolve as a fundamental medium for news communication, driving new interactive and segmented content strategies.

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