Social media live streaming (SMLS) in the digital news media

Social media live streaming *(SMLS)* *per a cibermitjans*

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ALEXIS APABLAZA-CAMPOS

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ABSTRACT:

Social media live streaming (SMLS) offers the possibility of making and broadcasting live videos in different formats via the social networks, at the same time enabling broadcasters to obtain instant feedback about the number of users connected as well as to receive messages and emoticons from their audiences.

Here, we undertake a thorough review of existing publications and previous initiatives related to SMLS. We illustrate our discussion with a number of different case studies and undertake a specific comparative analysis to explore the way in which Periscope and Facebook Live can exploit SMLS technologies, and to understand their role as leading agents in the innovation of digital journalism.

KEYWORDS:

social media live streaming, SMLS, Periscope, Facebook Live, digital news media, news outlets.

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RESUM:

El *social media live streaming* (SMLS) ofereix la possibilitat de realitzar i distribuir vídeos en directe, en diferents formats, a través de les xarxes socials. A més, permet a l'emissor rebre retroacció de manera instantània: conèixer el nombre d'usuaris connectats i rebre missatges i emoticones dels espectadors.

A través d'una anàlisi comparativa i d'estudis de casos, s'explorarà com Periscope i Facebook Live utilitzen les tecnologies SMLS i quina funció tenen com a agents destacats dins de la innovació i les tendències del periodisme digital. Així mateix, es durà a terme una revisió exhaustiva tant de les publicacions com de les iniciatives prèvies relacionades amb l'SMLS. Tot això es fa amb la finalitat d'assegurar la màxima qualitat i la solvència conceptual de les anàlisis realitzades.

PARAULES CLAU:

social media live streaming, SMLS, Periscope, Facebook Live, cibermitjans, mitjans de comunicació.

1. Introduction

1.1. Social media live streaming

It all dates back to little more than a decade ago, on February 14, 2005 to be precise, when YouTube saw light of day. It took just twenty months for this video-sharing portal, which managed to overcome bandwidth problems, to be acquired by Google for US$1,650 million, as a result of which *Time* magazine chose "You" as its person of the year,[2] putting on its front cover a computer screen with the window of a YouTube-like video player. *Nación* reported this achievement as follows:

> *Time* believes YouTube changed the rules of information exchange because, over the last twelve months, thousands of people have become famous, whether seeking to be or not, thanks to a video posted on this electronic site. (*Nación*, 2006)

As YouTube grows and seeks to solve its problems with copyrighted content,[3] Netflix, which at that time was no more than an incipient online store selling DVDs and Blu-ray discs, is currently aiming to establish itself as a massive digital video library, securing for itself a turnover of US$8,288 million in 2016 and attracting 93.8 million users worldwide (Rodríguez, 2017).

> The appearance of YouTube changed the way we watch television forever. The major channels realized how users were spontaneously uploading a series of contents (past and present) for a community that enjoyed them, either because they could not watch them during the usual schedule or simply just to watch them again. Today it is typical to hear people say: "Last night I didn't get to see my favorite show. No problem: tomorrow I'll look for it on YouTube".
> This phenomenon was an invitation for the media to generate their own video platforms, or official channels on YouTube to control the dissemination and reproduction of their copyrighted content. It is this which explains the success enjoyed by Netflix. (Apablaza Campos, 2017: 149)

The growth of both platforms has been stimulated not only by the high consumption of online videos, but also by higher quality Internet connections and their different formats, including mobile environments. All this provides the perfect setting for the creation of live streaming social networks, as Guillermo Bustamante explains:[4]

> The world today operates in real time, we find out about what's happening almost immediately. People are now used to getting out their cell phones and recording what is taking place and this application makes this practice widespread. Connectivity is growing and growing and video generates a greater degree of commitment in people. It has fewer entry barriers, it's more visual and more practical. (*El Economista América*, 2016)

Despite all these promising signs, the first main live video streaming website to establish itself was Justin.tv. It began lifecasting on March 19, 2007 (largely paralleling the growth enjoyed by YouTube and Netflix), but by August 5, 2014 it had been shut down, with its parent company Twich opting to focus all its efforts on video game live streaming.[5] By contrast the emergence of Meerkat was yet more grandiose,[6] a mobile application to broadcast and share live videos on social networks that was widely applauded throughout the media and in academic studies until, overnight, it disappeared from the app stores.

In the light of these failures, how did Twitter justify the purchase of Periscope for US$100 million in 2015 when it was nothing more than a test application and two months later manage to launch it on the market? This decision, perhaps, more than anything else should allow us to understand that *social media live streaming* (SMLS)[7] is more than simply live video.

Indeed, for a technology to be considered as SMLS, it must comply with the following characteristics:

1) Offer the possibility of making and distributing live videos, in different formats, via social networks.

2) Permit broadcasters to obtain instant feedback about the number of users connected as well as to receive messages and emoticons from their audiences.

Interactions of this type allow broadcaster and receiver to be constantly switching roles, enabling users of live video to be active participants in the content while facilitating live decision making on the part of communicators as they seek to satisfy the standards of their audiences.

Although this switching of roles might appear somewhat asymmetric if, for example, we consider reactions solely in terms of emoticons, the relationship acquires greater symmetry if we bear in mind that the user has the option to respond by broadcasting a video of their own. This is true of Instagram Live Stories (see Figure 1), where the broadcaster of the live video invites one of the viewers to join the broadcast, and so goes from being a receiver to being a co-host (Bradford, 2017).

This phenomenon is comparable to that of popular TV shows, which are constantly seeking to adjust their content to their audiences' tastes, and making them active participants:

> [Social media live streaming is] a scalable system that involves the broadcaster and receiver in each retransmission: there are no passive users, since even the viewer interacts in real-time with the scene. (Ossorio Vega, 2015)

> In an era of social media, live-streaming becomes a part of journalists building their own personal brands to navigate post-Fordist labour markets. Journalists are extending the workplace as new technologies facilitate greater audience connection, but this, in turn, leads to increased audience expectations of seemingly omnipresent reporting. Journalists are required to tweet and be "live" as Periscope augments the demands of immediacy. There is no excuse not to be constantly broadcasting. (Rugg & Burroughs, 2016: 67)

SMLS

YouTube Live Events
Any user can broadcast live from a desktop or laptop computer having first opened an account.
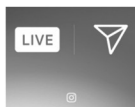
Snapchat Live Stories
It has a function that allows users and brands attending featured events to share live content.

Tumblr
Users can stream only through third parties, such as Kanvas, YouNow, Upclose and YouTube.

Instagram Live Stories
Prioritizes vertical content, it offers various features, such as sharing content as a story to Facebook profiles.

Figure 1. SMLS technologies and functionalities
Source: Elaborated by author.

While the impression might be given that Periscope (SMLS as social network) and Facebook Live (SMLS as profile functionality) are the most widely used live streaming channels, there are in fact a whole series of resources available in other social networks, as Figure 1 shows.

With Donald Trump's election to office in the United States, and the controversial ban on immigrants from certain countries from American territory, Periscope decided to take the step of including the following tagline on the app's loading screen: "Proudly made in America by immigrants".

This taste for daring would also appear to be written in the DNA of founder Kayvon Beykpour who, during the launch of the app, in March 2015, explained that the chief goal of social media live streaming is "to build the closest thing to teleportation".

Periscope needed just four months to reach 10 million user accounts and figures of around 2 million daily active users watching 40 years' worth of video per day, results that led Apple to award it the 2015 iPhone App of the Year (*Publimetro Chile*, 2016). Today, it is fully integrated with its Twitter matrix, so with just one tweet the user can broadcast a live video that will be distributed on both platforms.

In the light of its competitor's results, Facebook responded by gradually offering SMLS within its family of apps. It started as an exclusive feature of Facebook Mentions,[8] and later provided the app for profiles and fan pages[9] – what we today know as Facebook Live – and finally included it in Instagram, as shown in Figure 1.

In April 2017, Facebook's head of video, Fidji Simo, announced that not only had they overtaken Periscope, but also that one of every five videos reproduced on their social network was live broadcast:

A year ago today, we made it possible for people around the world to share live video on Facebook. Since then, we've focused on making the Facebook Live experience more engaging, more fun, and more social. (Constine, 2017)

As the site with the third highest number of visits in the world (Alexa, 2018) – on which many of the brands, media companies and influencers operate their social channels, thus avoiding that their followers have to move to another network to watch a live video and so they can increase the organic reach of content of this type – Facebook Live leads the SMLS race, a competition that has come under the close scrutiny of the Royal Television Society of the United Kingdom.

What Facebook Live offers is depth and breadth. Being a very large social-media beast in that jungle, it has the capacity to reach a larger slice of people internationally on any given story. (Frankel, 2016)

1.2. Methodology

In this study, we first conduct a *systematic review* of both technical and academic publications on the subject, in order to present the state of the art in this field, and so as to be able to relate developments to those in the neighboring disciplines of cybermedia, social networks and visibility of journalistic information.

Second, we draw on *expert analyses* to examine specific SMLS profiles, applying a series of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure their effectiveness, understood as the ability to achieve a result that has been accurately specified precisely in the form of KPIs.

We also undertake a *comparative analysis* and use benchmarking strategies to generate a series of proposals that clarify the objectives towards which the contents of live videos should evolve, and so satisfy the expectations of their target audiences.

2. Discussion

2.1. Options for journalism

Paul Lewis, of *The Guardian*, was the first journalist to use SMLS technologies to cover a news story. It was in April 2015, when in the middle of the crisis triggered by the deaths of African Americans at the hands of the US police, he decided to use his cell phone to broadcast to the world the unfolding violence on the streets of Baltimore.

Later, in August of that same year, journalist Paul Ronzheimer was sent by *Bild* to the Greek island of Kos to report how Syrian refugees were trying to travel to Germany. Streaming a live video of the journey was far from easy (see Figure 2): as

Figure 2. ***Bild*** **journalist Paul Ronzheimer seen with Syrian refugees as he thanks his Periscope audience from Bulgaria**
Source: *Ronzheimer, 2015.*

camouflaged among the Syrians he broadcast the news as if he himself were one of the undocumented refugees.

If we analyze the use of SMLS as part of a well-planned digital media strategy, and not so much as a personal decision taken by an editor as a news story breaks, then we need to highlight the experience of Xataka, a portal specialized in technology and gadgets,[10] which at the Consumer Electronics Show 2016[11] provided its correspondents with exclusive mobiles to broadcast on the media's Periscope channel. During each broadcast, the journalists presented various technological devices so that the community of viewers could request which prototype they wanted to know more about via message chat. Thus, the transmission allowed users connected around the world to feel as if they were actually participants in the event.

Based on an analysis of the behavior of the digital media and the way in which they generate their content, we can conclude that the main uses to which journalism can put (and is putting) broadcasts via social media live streaming are:

1) Press conferences
2) Breaking news coverage
3) Backstage programs
4) Broadcasting TV signals

Ken Doctor, an expert analyst of the media industry, created the term *newsonomics* (running the words "news" and "economics" together) to analyze how digital environments have changed – and are changing – the business model of newspaper companies and the job opportunities for information professionals. His

vision is that you do not need to be employed by a media firm to be a journalist, as social networks provide an ideal showcase.

> Reporters could produce more content when they dropped their journalistic shoulders a bit, worried less about convention and structure, and just wrote. Readers liked the more informal, more conversational Web style of writing. (Doctor, 2010: 148)

The best example of this is the case of the Venezuelan opposition leader, journalist and businessman Leocenis García, who after being imprisoned by the Government on numerous occasions and having his publishing group 6to Poder confiscated, chose Periscope to continue broadcasting even from prison.[12]

There are also cases of journalists who, forming part of the media, have used SMLS to strengthen their public image. Jorge Ramos, Mexican news host based in the United States, has shared some of his news stories via Facebook Live for the Univision and Fusion TV networks, increasing his audience to such a degree that Facebook has acknowledged his example as a "success story" (see Figure 3).

The strength of these emerging links between journalism and social media live streaming was one of the central themes at the 18th International Symposium on Online Journalism (ISOJ),[13] where the following opinions of digital media editors are illustrative of the trend.

> It's not a broadcast, we aren't trying to be TV. We want reader feedback, we want the comments, we want to be able to respond in real time. **Micah Gelman, _The Washington Post_**

> In China [where neither Facebook Live nor Periscope operate, and more than 80 apps offer live video services] it is basically some of the major apps which are trying to be dominant in terms of live stream platforms, not just having live stream functions… I'm sure half of them will die at the end of this year or next year but we still have plenty burning money. **Wang Jiapeng, _Caixin_**[14]

> Out of the top 50 videos the _Express Tribune_ produced in the last year, 21 were Facebook Live videos, and two of them reached the million mark… The best part is that we don't have to spend any money to use Facebook Live, we just turn on the phone camera and shoot at the scene. **Shaheryar Popalzai, _Express Tribune_**[15] (Nazario, 2017)

This process has led to the appearance of a new figure in digital media, the social media live streaming content editor. At _The Washington Post_, the position is held by T. J. Ortenzi, who heads a four-person team. In a recent interview he passed on four useful lessons for journalists who wish to work in this area:

1. Plan and test everything in advance.

2. Use two phones: one to communicate with the newspaper's headquarters and another to shoot the video.

3. Check various cameras as well as all connectivity and production options.
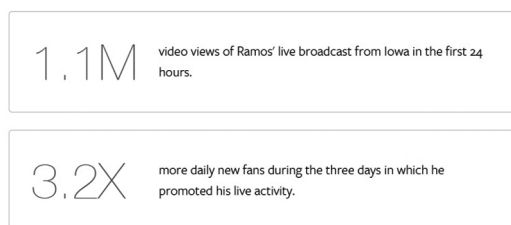
Results

Figure 3. The impact of Jorge Ramos' broadcasts on Facebook Live
Source: Facebook Media, no date.

4. Actively moderate comments and recognize people when asking their questions live on air. (Nelson, 2017)

2.2.   Video and its new formats

As far as forecasts go, the most optimistic prediction has been made by the "Digital News Project 2017" report, published by the Reuters Institute of the University of Oxford, which claims this will be "the year of social and live video". More specifically, they write that:

> These developments are partly about using video's power to capture more attention (and thus more advertising) but also combine new forms of self-expression with a growing interest in "what's happening right now". (Newman, 2017: 5)
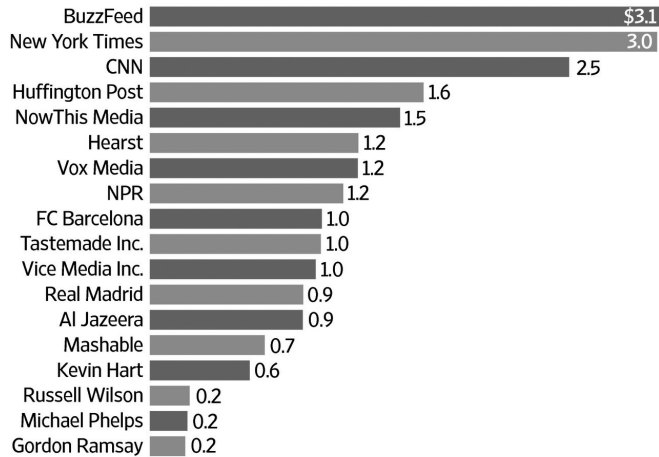
The report also highlights how Facebook was introduced, both rapidly and overwhelmingly, in the dispute to lead the way in the consumption and generation of SMLS content. It achieved this by taking two primary actions:

1) The declarations made by Mark Zuckerberg about the future of the news feed: "Fast-forward five years, it's going to be mostly video" (Ingram, 2016).

2) Paying US$50 million to digital media firms, brands and influencers to provide live video content and so stimulate the use of Facebook Live – see details in Figure 4.

Both Periscope and Facebook Live have developed a series of tools that allow them to stimulate the creation of SMLS contents employing a more professional profile – the specific cases of Periscope Producer[16] and Facebook Live API[17] – tools

Now Playing, Live on Facebook

A selection of companies and individuals paid by Facebook to provide live video content. **Amount of contracts, in millions of dollars**

Company	Amount
BuzzFeed	$3.1
New York Times	3.0
CNN	2.5
Huffington Post	1.6
NowThis Media	1.5
Hearst	1.2
Vox Media	1.2
NPR	1.2
FC Barcelona	1.0
Tastemade Inc.	1.0
Vice Media Inc.	1.0
Real Madrid	0.9
Al Jazeera	0.9
Mashable	0.7
Kevin Hart	0.6
Russell Wilson	0.2
Michael Phelps	0.2
Gordon Ramsay	0.2

Source: Document reviewed by the Journal

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Figure 4. Infographic showing Facebook Live investment in live video content

Source: *Perlberg & Sheetharaman, 2016.*

that any user able to broadcast high resolution videos and with access to suitable connection speeds can register to use.

Currently, both Facebook Live and Periscope allow the production of immersive – 360° videos – and mixed reality contents – virtual reality and augmented reality –, taking the live streaming experience to the different dimensions currently permitted by digital video, as shown in Figure 5.

The Associated Press (AP) is one of the leading media firms both in terms of its storytelling in 360° and for its use of augmented reality.[18] Paul Cheung, the

	f LIVE	Periscope
Immersive Videos/360°	**Facebook 360 Video**	**Live 360**
Augmented Reality	**AR Studio** *(This or That and GIPHY Live)*	**AR Selfie Mask**
Virtual Reality	**Gear VR**	**Periscope Producer**

Figure 5. Immersive and mixed reality resources for SMLS

Source: *Elaborated by author.*

company's director of digital and interactive news production, believes that the next step is to include these techniques of audiovisual narration in SMLS (Facebook Media Blog, 2017).

2.3. From SMLS to SMLTV

While some journalists, like Jorge Ramos, believe that SMLS may replace conventional television in the future, others argue that they are different concepts because live streaming allows the audience to direct the broadcast via the comments posted below the video (Frankel, 2016: 47).

The reality is that today many media outlets are using their social media live streaming channels to replicate their television signals. However, is SMLS likely to evolve into social media live television (SMLTV)?[19] What is undeniable is that social networks are beginning to develop in this direction.

Twitter has been a pioneer in the field, signing an agreement with the NFL in 2016 that has allowed the streaming of a free weekly game around the world and sports analysis programs exclusively through Periscope. Now it plans to go one step further and is about to launch a live streaming channel, providing coverage 24/7, together with *Bloomberg*.[20]

Facebook, meanwhile, does not want to be left behind. It has expressed an interest in streaming MLB games, and is currently preparing its own television programs, details of which it will announce presently, though it would appear to involve short, high-quality videos – no more than 10 minutes long (Salza, 2017).

3. Results

3.1. Latin American ventures

In the report entitled "Innovative Journalism in Latin America", the opinions offered by digital media content editors are clear when it comes to which SMLS network to use: Facebook Live, their choice being made on the grounds of stable growth in their organic reach, more detailed information as to who can view the video, hashtag tracking, and a greater mass audience.

> The numbers with Periscope were good, but afterwards we decided to switch to Facebook Live because of a question of massive reach. People are on Facebook in large numbers. Beyond the fact that journalists like Twitter better, people are on Facebook, period, and we have to produce where people are. **Máximo Tell, Cadena 3 (Argentina)**

> Periscope is a natural platform for live journalistic content due to its real-time, open and public characteristics. News spreads faster and efficiently in the platform, making it a key tool for media organizations in Latin America. **Leonardo Stamillo, Twitter**

The volume of comments is 10 times greater in a live video compared with a normal video on Facebook. As for playing time, people are watching live content three times longer than they spend watching recorded material. It is an incredible tool. When you combine interactivity and real time, it's an incomparable force. **Luis Renato Olivalves, Facebook** (Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, 2017: 4-5)

Figures 6, 7 and 8 record the successful broadcasts emitted by the digital media in the United States, Mexico, Chile and Peru, reporting the type of news coverage, the date of broadcast, the engagement achieved, the duration of the news content, a description of the news team and technical equipment employed, and the lessons learned in order to optimize future SMLS content.

UNIVISION (United States)
Source: Selymar Colón, senior managing editor of digital at Univision

BROADCAST: Orlando gay bar massacre VIDEO 1, VIDEO 2
DESCRIPTION: Coverage of journalist and news anchor Jorge Ramos in Orlando after the killing of more than 50 people at a gay bar
DATE: June 12, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 1.7 million views in 2 broadcasts
DURATION: 11:53
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 2 reporters (on-screen) + a cameraman
LESSON LEARNED: When there's a breaking news event, Facebook Live can be used to give information in advance as reporters are en route to the scene.

BROADCAST: U.S. Election Night VIDEO 1, VIDEO 2
DESCRIPTION: Coverage of the U.S. elections from the Univision newsroom
DATE: November 8, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: more than 14 million views in 2 broadcasts
DURATION: 8 hours
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: TV broadcast equipment
TEAM: Univision News staff (on-and-off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: The time limit that Facebook established for a Facebook Live broadcast is four hours, and the coverage exceeded that time, so the broadcast had to be divided. For the Donald Trump inauguration coverage, Univision requested Facebook to extend the limit to 8 hours.

REFORMA (Mexico)
Source: Jorge Jiménez Fonseca, digital editorial coordinator at Reforma

BROADCAST: Slacklining record between two skyscrapers in Mexico City VIDEO
DESCRIPTION: The German slackliner Alexander Schulz broke a record by walking on a tight rope from the top of one building to another, 246 meters in the air.
DATE: December 4, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 306,000 views
DURATION: 34:40
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: When the event is curious or unusual, it generates more interest among the audience.

BROADCAST: Donald Trump's speech about the executive orders regarding border security VIDEO
DESCRIPTION: Narrated broadcast of the speech, taken from the official White House signal
DATE: January 25, 2017
ENGAGEMENT: 291,192 views
DURATION: 37:21
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: Online video broadcast equipment
TEAM: 10 Reforma video staff members (off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: They found a way to enrich the broadcast of an external signal by having a journalist translating and commenting on the events in real time, taking advantage of the technical resources of the newsroom.

Figure 6. Univision and Reforma broadcasts on Facebook Live

Source: Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, 2017: 25.

ANIMAL POLÍTICO (Mexico)
Source: Mael Vallejo, general editor at Animal Político

BROADCAST: Protest #VivasNosQueremos VIDEO 1, VIDEO 2, VIDEO 3, VIDEO 4
DESCRIPTION: Thousands of people in several areas of Mexico City protested violence against women, murdered women and gender inequality.
DATE: April 24, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 33,600 views for 4 broadcasts
DURATION: 17:44
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (on-and-off-screen) + 1 cameraman
LESSON LEARNED: Mobile connectivity in Mexico City is unstable, mainly when a big crowd is present.

BROADCAST: Juan Gabriel funeral at the Fine Arts Palace in Mexico City VIDEO 1, VIDEO 2, VIDEO 3
DESCRIPTION: Thousands of fans waited in long lines to see the urn for the ashes of Mexican songwriter Juan Gabriel
DATE: September 5, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 40,000 views in 3 broadcasts
DURATION: 8:40
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (on-and-off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: Announcing the broadcast previously in social media engages more audience members. Previous trial runs in the reporters' personal accounts allow the opportunity to fix problems with image, sound and signal.

EL MOSTRADOR (Chile)
Source: Claudia González, multimedia journalist at El Mostrador

BROADCAST: Teaser of El Mostrador's "Pasajeros del Lado Sur" VIDEO
DESCRIPTION: Behind the scenes of the filming of a pilot of a new show produced by El Mostrador.
DATE: June 30, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 13,560 views
DURATION: 1:48
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 staff member (off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: Even though it was a brief behind-the-scenes teaser, users complained via the comments about bad sound quality.

BROADCAST: Protest No+AFP VIDEO 1, VIDEO 2
DESCRIPTION: More than one million people marched against the retirement fund system in Santiago, in what became a historic protest
DATE: August 21, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 37,000 views in 2 broadcasts
DURATION: 33:24
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (off-screen)
LESSON LEARNED: They had issues with the sound captured by smartphones, so they had to purchase an external microphone.

Figure 7. Animal Político and El Mostrador broadcasts on Facebook Live
Source: Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, 2017: 25-26.

An analysis of the data corresponding to ten SMLS news broadcasts, as reported by five Latin American digital media firms[21] between April 24, 2016 and January 24, 2017, allows us to identify various patterns of behavior (see Figure 9) and to draw a series of lessons:

— With the exception of Reforma, all the media outlets analyzed achieved higher engagement in the second news broadcast studied here.

— Except when the conventional television signal or the images received via satellite were replicated by SMLS (Univision and Reforma), the technical equipment employed was always a smartphone.

— Among the broadcasts made exclusively with a smartphone, at least half involved a cameraman and a reporter.

LA REPÚBLICA (Peru)
Source: Michael Solís, multimedia editor of La República

BROADCAST: Live interview with Mexican pop duo Río Roma <u>VIDEO</u>
DESCRIPTION: Mexican band Río Roma visited the newsroom and answered questions from fans connected to the live broadcast.
DATE: April 14, 2016
ENGAGEMENT: 28,000 views
DURATION: 22:12
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (off-screen) + 1 cameraman
LESSON LEARNED: Interviews in the newsroom are a good option to broadcast, even with the same staff and technical equipment as an outside broadcast, as long as the interviewee will attract an audience.

BROADCAST: Flooding in Chaclacayo and Chosica <u>VIDEO 1</u>, <u>VIDEO 2</u>
DESCRIPTION: Visit to the area affected by major flooding in several districts of the Province of Lima
DATE: January 24, 2017
ENGAGEMENT: 62,600 views in 2 broadcasts
DURATION: 18:29
TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT: 1 smartphone
TEAM: 1 reporter (on-screen) + 1 cameraman
LESSON LEARNED: Photographers that team up with reporters can take advantage of their expertise capturing images by serving as cameramen once they finish their job taking pictures.

Figure 8. La República broadcasts on Facebook Live

Source: Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, 2017: 26.

— As Univision was unaware that Facebook Live broadcasts have a four-hour limit, they were forced to establish an agreement with the social network to avoid a sudden break in the signal.

— According to the average duration of the SMLS content and the average engagement obtained (see Figure 9) the media firms analyzed obtained an average of *98 users reached per second of broadcast*.

Mean number of videos per news story covered	2.4
Mean engagement	488,994
Mean duration of broadcast	1:23:16

Figure 9. Mean number of videos, engagement and duration of SMLS broadcasts

Source: Based on data from report studied.

3.2. Univision (Facebook Live) versus Antena 3 (Periscope)

That references to Univision should appear in various sections of this study is no coincidence. Indeed, the firm's content is highlighted in the respective news sections of both Facebook Live and Periscope, thanks to the fact that it has a news program entitled *Noticiero Univision Televisión Digital* that is broadcast exclusively on SMLS platforms. Both Univision and its direct competitor, Telemundo, offer a type of content that is highly attractive to the online Hispanic community in the US: experts in migration resolving problems in real time.

Antena 3, on the other hand, was one of the first news outlets in the world to forge partnerships with Periscope and Twitter for the use of live streaming, revealing

Politics	2	10
Government/Law courts	1	11
Environment	1	1
Weather	/	2
Culture	11	3
Sports	3	1
Economy	2	1
Royal family	1	/
Catalonia	1	/
Society	1	5
Fashion	/	2
Food	/	2
Behind the cameras	2	3
Outside links	/	1
Total number of items broadcast	**25**	**42**

Figure 10. Number, themes and location of the SMLS content of Antena 3 and Univision

Source: *Based on data from report studied.*

the behind-the-scenes of their newsrooms, a strategy that did not always go so smoothly in the beginning,[22] but which it has learned to take advantage of. This agreement allowed its sister network, La Sexta, to be the first in the history of Spanish television to present a simulcasting with SMLS 360° video coverage.[23]

Journalist Marina Mancebo García undertook a month-long comparative analysis – from March 26 to April 26, 2016 – of the use of Facebook Live channels by Univision and of Periscope by Antena 3, coinciding with the first anniversary of the network born under the wing of Twitter.

The analysis of the coverage considered the following aspects: items, themes, duration and engagement; production and strategy; formats and languages and professional implications (Mancebo García, 2016: 334). Figure 10 shows the number of contents studied and their typological classification.

The data studied show that Univision generates more content than Antena 3, which is no surprise considering the potential size of a media outlet that broadcasts in open access to the whole of the United States and many of the Spanish-speaking countries compared to another that is the audience leader in Spain but which internationally only has a presence in pay-per-view television.

Although the analysis focused more on the generation of content than on the results – as it was considered that Facebook Live metrics and those of Periscope are

not comparable[24] – certain factors in common could be extracted in terms of the discursive tone employed by the broadcasters.

> While television is based on a script and careful preparation, with the formality that that entails, resulting in a greater rigidity in the words used, Facebook Live and Periscope are streaming apps that encourage spontaneity and improvisation in news broadcasts.
>
> This more natural way of reporting, linked to the language and tone used, is an added bonus for the audience, where the filter is reality itself. It offers the public something more than it might see in a normal news broadcast or what the media firm might ask the journalist to do. With this extra content, media outlets seek to get closer to their viewers to thank them for being there and for following them every day. (Mancebo García, 2016: 342)

4. Conclusions

The emergence of social media live streaming has to be understood within the broader context of the digital environment, characterized by increasing Internet connection speeds and the increasing consumption of online videos. Combinations of live video broadcasting software with the characteristics of social platforms have facilitated the exponential growth of SMLS in just two years.

Various types of program offer SMLS technologies, the most widely used being YouTube Live Events and Instagram Live Stories, but only Periscope and Facebook Live combine mobility – that is, the ability to broadcast with any device that has a camera and connectivity – with the appropriate metrics – that is, engagement during and number of views both during and after the broadcast.

Periscope had a great 2015 and a good 2016; but it has been surpassed by Facebook Live which, to reach the top, paid brands, influencers and digital media to use their SMLS functionality within their profiles and fan pages.

Just a few months after the development of social media live streaming apps, they began to be incorporated by the news media. Initially, journalists spontaneously used their cell phones when on location, but quickly understood that this is a space in which they can communicate with their audiences and where they can exercise their profession regardless of whether they are affiliated to a particular news outlet.

In a matter of months, SMLS reporting has come to form part and parcel of the journalistic routine. Large media firms have identified the need to appoint a social media live streaming editor in charge of a team with the skills to make live video broadcasts when the news warrants it.

Prestigious organizations dedicated to the study of journalism as well as the CEOs of digital companies recognize that the present and future of online video

– and with it the present and future of SMLS – is extremely promising and in constant growth. For this reason, social networks already offer the option to broadcast content in a more professional manner, adapting this content to the new formats, i.e. immersive and mixed reality environments.

While debate rages as to whether social media live streaming is merely a complement to or whether it will replace the "live television" format, the major social media companies are entering into joint agreements to launch live TV content via their platforms over the forthcoming months.

With the growth of Facebook Live, several news editors from Latin America switched from Periscope to obtain greater engagement for their content. Studies of their SMLS publications show that, in the majority of cases, their audiences have grown as has the mean number of users reached per second of broadcast.

A comparative analysis between a media firm broadcasting its content on Facebook Live and another that does so via Periscope shows that, in both cases, a more informal and improvised tone is used than that employed in more conventional broadcasts. It appears that, in line with the "uses and gratifications theory", in adopting these live streaming apps news outlets are expressing their gratitude to an audience that is following them from the open television signal to the SMLS format. ◖

Notes

[1 Correspondence address: Alexis Apablaza-Campos. Carrer de Sostres, 21, entresol 1a. E-08024 Barcelona, EU.

[2 "You" was chosen in 2006 as *Time* magazine's Person of the Year recognizing the millions of persons that anonymously contributed, and continue to contribute, user-generated content to the GNU/Linux operating system, wikis (including Wikipedia), YouTube, MySpace, Facebook, and the multitudes of other websites featuring contributions from anonymous users. For more information see *https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/You_(Time_Person _of_the_Year).*

[3 After a series of legal disputes (including a millionaire lawsuit filed by the Viacom group), YouTube has constantly had to change its copyright policies. Currently, whoever owns the rights to a content may ask the video portal to take down unauthorized published content, or to pay the royalties generated from including advertising. Despite these rules, material with unauthorized copyright exists in abundance.

[4 Academic and director of the Escuela de Comunicación Digital at the Universidad del Pacífico de Chile.

[5 Twitch was set up in 2011 as a spin-off of Justin.tv, but these roles were rapidly reversed. Since 2014, it has been owned by Amazon, and its site content can be viewed live or via video on demand.

[6 Meerkat was a mobile app released in February 2015 and shut down in October 2016. It enabled users to broadcast live video streaming via their Twitter account and to share the information with their followers. However, the Bluebird network blocked its access in order to promote Periscope. The last known statistics are for May 2016, when it announced reaching the two million user mark.

[7 Henceforth social media live streaming and SMLS are used, indistinctly.

[8 App created exclusively for public figures to share content with their fan bases. Since the January 20, 2016 update, it allows artists to stream live from their mobile devices.

[9 Although Facebook announced that as of March 2016 both users of profiles and administrators of fan pages would be able to broadcast live videos, it was not until April 2017 that they made it official that everyone with a social network account could make this type of content on any device with an inbuilt camera.

[10 *http://www.xataka.com/*

[11 Event held in Las Vegas (USA), at which the world's leading technology firms showcase their advances and the products soon get a market launch.

[12 As of June 18, 2017, Leonecis García's Periscope channel *https://www.periscope.tv/LeocenisOficial/* had more than 94,000 followers, and more than 8.3 million likes in its contents. The last broadcast analyzed – on June 16 – lasted nine minutes and had more than 1,200 viewers.

[13 ISOJ 2017 was held on 21 and 22 April. For details see *http://www.isoj.org/*.

[14 One of the main financial media companies in China. It has a version in English and Mandarin at *http://www. caixinglobal.com/*.

[15 Pakistan newspaper, affiliated to *The New York Times*, and published in English. Available at *https://tribune. com.pk/*.

[16 User manual available at *https://www.periscope.tv/help/external-encoders*.

[17 User manual available at *https://developers.facebook.com/docs/videos/live-video*.

[18 Last April AP published a report entitled "The Future of Augmented Journalism" in which it discussed how the use of augmented reality will impact the generation of digital media content over the next few years. In addition, it provides specific training for journalists around the world in the use of cameras allowing them to shoot immersive videos. For details see *https://media.fb.com/2017/01/05/how-the-associated-press-trains-its-journalists-to-shoot -in-360-degrees/*.

[19 Henceforth social media live television and SMLTV are used, indistinctly.

[20 In addition to the agreement with Bloomberg, Twitter announced 12 new streaming projects thanks to agreements with large digital media firms, most of which will broadcast from September. For details see *https:// mediaweek.com.au/twitter-2017-content-deals-buzzfeed-bloomberg/*.

[21 Although it broadcasts from the United States, Univision is considered a Latin American media outlet, because its contents are in Spanish and it has coverage (via both open and paid channels) in different Spanish-speaking countries.

[22 On January 21, 2016, the day's main news broadcast from *Antena 3 Noticias* began with a report on an alleged link between two Spanish political parties (Podemos and CUP) and ETA with the Government of Venezuela. When the story was on the air, host Sandra Golpe said to her co-host, Álvaro Zancajo, "they will get us for this, well and good", forgetting that they were on Periscope, their reaction quickly going viral.

[23 During the broadcast of the program *Zapeando* on March 1, 2017, in addition to the open signal, a camera was used in 360° to stream via Periscope and Twitter. It obtained more than 288,000 live viewers, and exceeded 2,600 tweets.

[24 During the period studied, Periscope contents automatically expired after 24 hours, unlike those of Facebook Live that are stored in the video section of each profile/fan page.

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