## Journalists and comedians in the new digital age: a discussion on Spanish audiovisual infotainment between professionals and consumers

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#### **Abstract**

Spanish television is increasingly subject to transmedia consumption. Faced with traditional models in which journalists limited themselves to rigorously transmitting information to strengthen their audiences, the networks' commitment to infotainment, as well as the competition with platforms or with figures from YouTube and Twitch, forces professionals to reinvent themselves, often by resorting to entertainment and show business resources. TV programs such as El intermedio (La Sexta, 2006) and El hormiguero (Antena3, 2006) have been working for years to bring journalists and comedians together in the same space, and others such as Todo es mentira (Cuatro, 2019) interact with audiences through social networks such as Twitter and Instagram. The question is whether these efforts are sufficient or whether we are witnessing a transition period in which interviews conducted by content creators such as Ibai Llanos or Jordi Wild will end up being more highly valued than those of a journalist. To answer these questions, six professionals from the current audiovisual scene were interviewed: Vicente Vallés, Antonio Castelo, Cristina Pardo, Rocío Vidal (La Gata de Schrödinger), José Antonio Lavado, and Jorge Gallardo Camacho, and their reflections were contrasted with those of three focus groups with audiences of different ages. It was concluded that the professionals recognize the necessity of adapting to the digital era and to the new needs of their audiences, but prioritize traditional journalistic rigor and do not fear competition from figures such as Ibai Llanos. However, the audience focus groups consulted, especially the younger ones, admit that they consume more audiovisual content on the Internet than on television.

## **Keywords**

Infotainment; Audiences; Reception; Comedy; Journalism; Hosts; Streamers; Television; Audiovisual communication; Social media; Social networks; YouTube; Twitch; Interviews; Focus groups.

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## 1. Infotainment and the current Spanish audiovisual context

Infotainment is the tendency to address news information in the form of entertainment or show business. Starting from the premise that being interested in entertainment involves "a cultural process that is not limited to the media, but is observed in different aspects of contemporary society" (Debord, 1967 cited in Redondo-García and Campos-Domínguez, 2014, p. 77), it is understood that the very idea of "culture" becomes confusing and multifaceted, making "space for much of human activity", as it is approached from "a multitude of points of view and disciplines" (Rodrigo-Alsina et al., 2016, p. 1091).

García Avilés (2007, p. 51) reasons that "content and narrative forms are selected taking as the principal criterion the impact they can have on the audience, rather than their ability to provide relevant information in the most rigorous way possible", hence, for example, YouTube transforming into a catch-all, ranging from videos known as "tutorials," where "formal and informal educational knowledge" is shown (Padilla; Portilla; Torres, 2020), to other audiovisual proposals of an analytical or opinionated nature in which "very active creators such as youtubers have become opinion leaders and massive phenomena" (Rodríguez-Breijo; Gallardo-Camacho; Sierra-Sánchez, 2018, p. 1048).

It is worth asking whether this is due to the fact that they are more accessible than other traditional media figures, as it is possible to have a "new conversation" with them that is "subjective and free, insofar as conversations begin and end, are resumed or abandoned without protocol" (Benítez-Eyzaguirre; De-Marcos; Acosta-Calderón, 2023, p. 291), which implies a new consumption that is dependent on "the circulation of everyday and expert knowledge, how it is appropriated or not, and, of course, to whom it implies a border, and thereby exclusion" (Amaya, 2019, p. 53) or integration. Twitch also represents another major competitor to traditional television, with some studies showing that Spanish consumers "believe that Twitch has the potential to equal television as a favorite audiovisual entertainment medium and even surpass it to become the first choice for entertainment in the long term" (Barrea, 2023, p. 36), although live streamers, in principle, do not seem to differ so much from those of television, except that time limits disappear and that "content creators are aware that most people who follow their broadcasts have them as background while doing other things", in a so-called radio mode, that is, "something that allows the same channel to be used as television or radio depending on the attention paid by the user" (Olivares-García; Méndez-Majuelos, 2022, p. 59).

In terms of new trends or audiovisual formulas, for some authors it does not seem so necessary to name or classify programs, spaces, or sections, instead prioritizing the final feeling that remains after viewing them; or, in other words, to assess whether a viewer has been informed and/or had fun watching them, and which of the two feelings predominates, understanding that "the hybrid phenomenon is also related to a change in the audience's reception of the messages broadcast by television media" (Van-Zoonen, 2005, cited in Ortells-Badenes, 2015, p. 48).

Likewise, "interesting, fresh, and original content" is necessary "since the public, generally synchronous, seeks surprise from a clear concept that corresponds to a pioneering idea" (Gascón-Vera; Marta-Lazo, 2023, p. 14), and another point in favor that is gaining more and more followers is the option of participation, either through Twitter, in the case of traditional television, or chat, donations, and subscriptions, in the case of YouTube and even more so Twitch, since "it offers a direct opportunity to interact, talk, and create a community around the figures of content creators", despite the fact that "the very development of the platform suggests concomitance with the old formula of success of television communication: the live audience, sharing the same content synchronously" (Gutiérrez-Lozano; Cuartero, 2020, p. 172). Regarding television, one should not forget the changes produced since its first stage in Spain, when the channels offered were expanded in 1990, which ended TVE's monopoly and marked "the passage from captive to shared audiences" (Roel, 2014, cited in Quintas-Froufe, 2018, p. 169), or when digital terrestrial television was implemented in 2010, establishing the duopoly of Mediaset España and Atresmedia, which together retain 58.4% of the audience. In the case of Atresmedia, hybrid proposals ended up being established when it came to planning the programs, with an infotainment more linked to humor and politainment (Nevado, 2020) predominating, so as to continuously resort to political information, since "Atresmedia's strategy consists of dumping all the programs with political content on its second channel, La Sexta" (Albújar-Vi-Ilarrubia, 2015, p. 847), which is the case of El intermedio (La Sexta, 2006), broadcast since its establishment. Similarly, other formulas such as Espejo público (Antena3, 2006), in its morning magazine format, alternates news topics with formulas that appeal to the audience. Additional, more recent examples can be seen, such as Todo es mentira (Cuatro, 2019), which is another prominent case of an infohumor program that analyzes fake news broadcast by television or other media, relying on resources such as social networks to interact with potential audiences and even to incite debate. Furthermore, there are also media figures who, in addition to hosting their own programs –hybrids between journalism and show business- participate as collaborators in entertainment programs, such as Cristina Pardo, cohost of Más vale tarde (La Sexta, 2012) and Thursday night talk show host of El hormiguero (Cuatro, Antena3, 2006), not to mention the fact that these programs increasingly resort to occasional contributions from specialized analysts who are mainly found on YouTube, such as Juan Ramón Rallo or Rocío Vidal, La Gata de Schrödinger.

## 1.1. Transmedia consumption and the new challenges facing infotainment professionals

Because television has been "the main cultural mode we have to know ourselves" (Gómez-Tarín, 2011, p. 123), and the fact that the Internet and social networks are increasingly present, such presence in turn must be increasingly perceived on television, especially in infotainment, which "constantly pursues the approval of the public" (Bourdon, 2001, cited in Ortells-Badenes, 2011, p. 142), causing hybrid trends to become inseparable from the concept of social television

(Halpern; Quintas-Froufe; Fernández-Medina, 2016, p. 369). This stems from the practice of question-asking, which "generates an extension of the main content on other platforms and establishes some cross-media productive routines with the purpose of generating a permanent dialog with the audience on second screens to achieve a greater engagement with the broadcasted content and their protagonists" (Franquet-Calvet et al., 2018, p. 158).

When engagement is delved into in a deeper way, "the audience is no longer understood as a passive entity, which is placed at the end of the content distribution process and whose only value is to be reflected in the industry's information systems" (González-Bernal et al., 2016, p. 999), hence traditional television networks increasingly emphasize "transmediation" strategies (Cheong; Lundry, 2012) that retain younger audiences and allow them the option of consuming their content for free through other channels. Thus, some argue that audiences are migrating to new, on-demand television services, independent of live broadcasting, and others consider that we are witnessing the "decline of the medium owing to the new possibilities of delayed consumption, although they recognize that it is still early to guarantee a change in trend because there are still no data available on the convergence of audiences in the media" (Gallardo-Camacho; Lavín, 2018, p. 141).

Regarding political information, Twitter has been positioned as the main network for communicative exchange thus far "for its ease of use, for allowing real-time commentary regarding what is viewed, and encouraging interaction with other users, with the program itself, and its protagonists" (Saavedra-Llamas; Rodríguez-Fernández, 2018, p. 126).

However, users have become increasingly accustomed to the use of social networks "to comment on what is happening in their daily lives and to share their television experience: 85% of active Twitter users talk about television in prime time" (Orban et al., 2014, cited in Gallardo-Camacho; Lavín; Fernández-García, 2016, p. 273), finding in digital platforms a new, more dynamic television, with charismatic figures such as Ibai Llanos, who "is currently the owner of the Spanish-speaking channel with the largest audience on Twitch and the fourth worldwide" (Gutiérrez-Lozano; Cuartero, 2022, p. 268), and which has generated enough media impact for journalist Jordi Évole to interview him on his program Lo de Évole (La Sexta, 2020) on March 7, 2021.

However, although a "change of control" is discernible in terms of ceding some prominence from the professionals to the viewers, this does not mean that the latter take advantage of all the "technological opportunities to personalize television viewing" (Dhoest; Simons, 2016, p. 181), owing to the fact that, in most cases, they consume fiction and entertainment, so "some viewers intersperse their Internet conversation with comments about their daily routines and personal circumstances, and use Twitter to recommend entertainment to other users" (Deller, 2011, cited in Lacalle-Zalduendo; Gómez-Morales, 2017, p. 200).

Thus, the audiovisual trend has evolved from a primitive television, imitating cinema or old journalism, to a more reciprocal and inspiring one, as "streaming, social networks and digital media in general provide spaces that traditional media have systematically denied to ordinary people" (Bolognesi, 2023, p. 10).

To this is added the idea of simultaneity, in terms of the habit of being able to enjoy several forms of content at the same time thanks to the availability of different devices, which is known as multiscreen consumption: "the action of reading, commenting on, and sharing information about television content on second screens from secondary consumption devices" (Coromina et al., 2020, p. 474), thus "there are thousands of examples of audiovisual consumption that are not being recorded and are being lost" (Gallardo-Camacho; García; Puebla-Martínez, 2023, p. 15), which Teso-Alonso and Piñuel-Raigada (2015) qualify by noting that,

"while the screen that used to occupy the central stage of the home, called the 'desktop', is increasingly larger and has a more panoramic and spectacular format, others are becoming increasingly lighter and more transportable" (p. 94).

Media, as well as content options, are multiplying, so it is not surprising that competition is increasing between spaces and professionals in the same way.

## 2. Objectives and methodology

This research proposes to deepen the understanding of what is currently viewed and consumed on hybrid audiovisual products in Spain in terms of information and distraction, understanding that infotainment can be broadcast both through the traditional means of the television set as well as through digital channels. The idea was thus to approach programs, sections, or spaces that dealt with news issues with resources associated with entertainment and comedy. The object of study, however, was not to analyze these types of program, since there are already numerous works dedicated to content analysis, but rather the professionals involved in them, since many of them belong to one of the branches of infotainment, whether journalism or entertainment, and might be forced to adapt to the needs of other spaces in which they participate, or to the needs of the receiving public.

The main hypothesis holds that the figures most valued by viewers are those who are most adaptable to the topics covered and the context in which they are addressed, regardless of whether such communicators belong to journalism or comedy, which in reality would imply being suitable for both in the eyes of viewers. As a complementary hypothesis from the audience's point of view, audiences seem to appreciate the professionals who are a bit more unpredictable, as long as they do not attempt to go against the rigor of their original profession, i.e., a journalist making jokes with certain



Figure 1. Ibai Llanos with Jordi Évole on Lo de Évole (left); Jordi Évole with Ibai Llanos on his Twitch channel (right). Sources: Atresplayer.com and Marca.com.

unacceptable lines, or a comedian not overreaching in their comments on the news of the day. In this sense, taking into account personalities such as Ibai Llanos, brimming with "energy and spontaneous impudence" (Roig-Telo, 2021) and who continually repeats that he is not entitled to give his opinion on news issues despite conducting interviews with people involved in them, another research question is whether audiences hold figures such as Llanos in higher regard than established journalists on the Spanish audiovisual scene. The third hypothesis is related to the perspective of professionals, suggesting that they feel some unease toward personalities such as Ibai Llanos or Jordi Wild and see their interview spaces on Twitch or YouTube as an increasingly invasive emerging competition.

To corroborate or disprove these reflections, a qualitative methodology composed of in-depth interviews and focus groups was applied. The interviews were conducted with communicators and/or audiovisual professionals. For the selection of profiles that compose the sample, some previous studies took into account "the circumstances in which the communicative products to be analyzed are constructed" (Meléndez-Malavé, 2005, p. 30), paying attention not only to those who appear on screen, but also to the "agents of production" Pérez-Pereiro, 2007, p. 70), while other authors take as a reference parameter the success of a space as associated with its longer broadcasting time (Gascón-Vera; Marta-Lazo, 2023), thus establishing its creators in the collective imagination. For this study, the interviewees were selected according to their functions, roles, and specific characteristics, with at least two people belonging to similar occupations to identify similarities or differences in the performance of their role. Therefore, it was deemed convenient to consider the profession of the presenter/host of programs, preferably involving a certain polemic relevance; so for example, Vicente Vallés and Antonio Castelo, the former a journalist and presenter of Noticias2, the evening news program of Antena3, and the latter a comedian and collaborator of Todo es mentira, an infohumor space, represented two totally different ways of approaching information. The same contrast was intended to be made in terms of the female figure, thus Cristina Pardo, co-host of Más vale tarde and collaborator of El hormiquero, and Rocío Vidal, influencer and content creator for her YouTube channel, La Gata de Schrödinger, and who has participated in various journalistic talk shows such as La sexta noche (La Sexta, 2013), were interviewed. The role of the program director was also considered, so José Antonio Lavado, deputy director of Todo es mentira, and Jorge Gallardo Camacho, deputy director of the morning magazine Espejo público (an afternoon and morning program) were interviewed, although both with the purpose of dealing with newsworthy issues in a manner closer to infotainment than to classic moderate information. The six interviews were conducted by telephone or online and lasted an estimated 20 minutes, consisting of 6-8 questions regarding their professional dynamics, their impressions of other media figures, or their impact on Spanish audiences.

To address the contrast of opinions within the audience, three focus groups were conducted with potential consumers of television infotainment and Internet audiovisual products that were the object of the research. They were recruited through social networks such as Twitter or WhatsApp, or by resorting to the snowball method through social networks (Martín-Crespo-Blanco; Salamanca-Castro, 2007, p. 2) to identify participants who were interested and involved in the field of study. With the purpose of bringing to light generational factors that could influence group dynamics (Aguilera-García, 2019), one of the groups consisted exclusively of eight young people aged 20-34 years; the second of eight participants aged 41-68 years; and the last of nine people aged 21-64 years. That is, there were a total of 25 informants between the ages of 20 and 68 years, of whom 13 were women and 12 were men. The two groups differentiated by age were carried out first, then the six interviews with professionals, and finally, the group composed of participants

from both generations of consumers, with whom the results obtained in the first groups and in the meetings with journalists, comedians, and content producers were compared. The scripts of the dynamics revolved around the following themes: the interest of whether to address newsworthy issues with entertainment formu-



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las; whether there are professionals and/or figures who are more legitimate than others to work in infotainment; and whether the channel on which these media personalities appear is important in terms of their credibility and establishment.

## Preferences depended on the content offered, the clarity and convenience of how it was presented, and whether one communicator or another was able to retain and secure their audience



#### 3. Results

When reflecting on audiovisual consumption, the question that arose from the outset, both in the interviews with professionals and especially in the audience focus groups, was that of the principal way in which they viewed content, that is, whether they used traditional media or online resources. In this sense, perceptions about the boundaries between one medium or another were blurred, and in all cases, preferences depended on the content offered, the clarity and convenience of how it was presented, and whether one communicator or another was able to retain and secure their audience, regardless of which branch they originally belonged to: journalism, entertainment, or humor.

"I have journalists who I like the way they tell me things. [...] And I think the new generations are looking for personalization. [...] Then, as they feel they are connected to streamers and youtubers, well, in the end that is what they attract, and that is not informative, but pure entertainment" (woman, 21 years old, mixed group1).

Despite the explanations given by the participants in the discussion groups, and their conviction that they know how to distinguish one channel from another, or one audiovisual proposal from another, the professionals interviewed argued that, for them, preferences depended first on what was provided to the user-spectator, both in terms of platform and content, and then, subsequently, a viewing criterion was generated according to the nature of the space or the type of communicator offering it:

> "Many people, many young people especially, are not only informed through traditional media, but they are in their free time, or when they



Figure 2. Antonio Castelo in Todo es mentira (left) and Susana Griso on Espejo Público (right).

Sources: Cuatro.com and Antena3.com.

have time, and they open YouTube, for example, and say 'oops, this person has talked about this topic so let's see what they think' and from there draw their own conclusions, and also have a good time. So, I think that balance between entertainment and information generates an engagement that makes people want to continue watching your videos because; apart from the classic information, it is also a video that can be entertaining for them" (Rocío Vidal, La Gata de Schrödinger).

"I really like my work in Todo es mentira because I think it is the purest function of the comedian that there is; it is also a bit similar to what I do in A vivir que son dos días, because all the time I am playing against reality; to go against it is the natural function of the comedian, and it is summarized in the question I ask all the politicians when they come on the program as guests: 'Have you ever been forced to tell the truth?' It is engaging in current affairs from a critical-philosophical point of view" (Antonio Castelo, Todo es mentira).

"Both Susana Griso, as well as Espejo público as a whole, is an opinion leader, because she is a person who is not limited to being a talking head because of the identity that presenting a program like that gives her; then, precisely in that part of -tainment, of infotainment, that is where a presenter is allowed to be human, to have personal assessments, and to empathize a little more with the viewer" (Jorge Gallardo Camacho, Espejo público).

This question as to whether audiovisual professionals can continually move from information to analysis, opinion, and commentary, or to humorous nuances gave rise to continuous debate among those consulted. The professionals interviewed seemed to approach this issue with greater permissibility than the audience focus groups, as they considered that the same barriers between programs, and even between media and channels, are disappearing, and that presenting or collaborating in an informative program had nothing to do with participating in an entertainment space via traditional television or Internet platforms:

"When someone goes in front of the TV, what you're looking for is for them to be the best communicator they can be. They may or may not be a journalist; they may or may not agree. A journalist is something else, or may be the same, it may happen that there are different communicators who are journalists and perform this double function, but they communicate the journalistic product that is produced by a newsroom with people who specialize in that product" (José Antonio Lavado, Todo es mentira).

"I have always believed in the possibility of sharing current affairs in a lighthearted way, without losing credibility. I believe in rigor, but not in rigor mortis. And El hormiguero is not La isla de las tentaciones, where it would perhaps be more complex to defend a purely journalistic approach. You don't have to have so many complexes" (Cristina Pardo, Más vale tarde and El hormiguero).

"Making a program that is not entertainment, purely informative, does not imply that you can't also go to an entertainment program at a certain



Figure 3. Cristina Pardo on El hormiguero (left) and Vicente Vallés presenting Noticias2 (right).

Source: Antena3.com.

time and deal with the topics you may be a specialist in in a more lighthearted way. This is not something that we have invented in Spain, the programs of British, French or American television, there are many entertainment programs that also deal with informative matters, let's say, in quotation marks, serious, in a more casual way" (Vicente Vallés, Noticias2).

The participants of the audience focus groups did not entirely agree with this view of the professionals, and respected one or the other more or less depending on whether they did not overstep their predominant functions. In other words, they could understand an occasional appearance on entertainment and variety shows, or in interviews and talk shows on YouTube or Twitch, but this second part had to be very complementary and anecdotal so as not to consider that the professional was straying too far from their competencies. They could give them credit as long as the comic-political role of the media character was well defined and well delineated, as far as the format in which they appeared allowed this:

"I don't watch youtubers. And, what's more, I don't even like that kind of hybrid program, because there are many programs of that type on TV. What do I know, [David] Broncano has been on Movistar+ since the beginning, and his programs are still being broadcasted and such. I don't find them interesting, because, man, sometimes I've seen a little bit and they don't entertain me, nor do I think that what they inform me about is very interesting" (woman, 59 years old, mixed group).

"I think that, for example, the character of Risto [Mejide] is useful above all to generate controversy and use controversy to get a lot of information, right? Because when he is polarizing, he forces people to place themselves in one extreme or another, and that is something that I really like about the character he plays, that it can be considered favorable if you want to learn something new" (man, 28 years old, young group).

Considering whether audiovisual communicators are overreaching is precisely what led to the concern about the politicization of the spaces, an issue that, in principle, most participants disliked. Furthermore, they only considered it to be legitimate when the professional communicates in advance what they think and takes a personal position, but never in a masked or subversive way while presenting or analyzing news content:

"I believe that the greatest achievement they have obtained here in our country is Atresmedia. Atresmedia has managed to make a coin with two sides: one is Antena3, the other is La Sexta, and each of the channels gives the bait to those political followers they have, with Antena3 giving a more right-wing version, and La Sexta in theory being the left-wing one" (man, 60 years old, mature group).

"It's just that that is the issue. Do we know how to distinguish opinion from news? Maybe not. But, when I realize, when I say 'this is an opinion', it makes me very angry. [...] When I realize that, it makes me very angry and I clench my fists, because it's as if you've slipped me your opinion and I've realized it, I've seen it" (man, 32 years old, mixed group).

Regarding the position of the professionals interviewed, they stated that they deeply respected their consumers, viewers, and followers, insofar as their intention was to offer them a consistent audiovisual product, tailored to the format, the channel, or broadcasting impact, since they understood that each space marked its rhythms and languages, which did not necessarily have to be shared by everyone who watched them, so their discourse could be modulated according to the lesser or greater diversity of audiences:

"In this program we play a lot, we laugh a lot, and we create a lot of humor, but we take it tremendously seriously, and every time we make a decision, each and every one, it is based on deeply respecting that the viewer is a person at least as intelligent as we are" (José Antonio Lavado, Todo es mentira).

"I appeal to the critical intelligence of my viewers. When I use a sarcastic tone or when I make a joke about something, it's like spoken 'sublanguage', and it's like when you're talking to your friend, isn't it? [...] The TV tone is totally different. The codes used in social networks, the memes, the ability to edit your own videos, for example, to make a joke at a given moment; television does not allow you to do that because you are in a foreign medium" (Rocío Vidal, La Gata de Schrödinger).



Figure 4. Jordi Wild interviewing Rocío Vidal on his YouTube channel The Wild Project (17/06/2020) (left) and Rocío Vidal speaking on La sexta noche (13/02/2021) (right).

Sources: Youtube.com and Lasexta.com.

As more and more content creators, analysts, and even journalists are positioning themselves on social networks or creating their own YouTube or Twitch channels, regardless of whether they are involved in traditional media, it is often this fame that gives them the opportunity to once again be claimed by television to participate in different spaces; meanwhile, some youtubers and streamers have news talk shows or carry out interviews without necessarily being journalists. The professionals and audience focus groups discussed whether content creators were invading the sphere of press or television professionals to the point of becoming confused or overlapping with journalists, with the participants consulted recognizing that this issue creates a generational division of positions and of understanding in their environments:

"There are a lot of well-known youtuber-type journalists. Carles Tamayo is a journalist, but this guy that I see more often because of my children, Jordi Wild, for many younger people are journalists. In other words, my son identifies these youtubers as journalists. Maybe for my mother it is Vicente Vallés or the people who appear on TV, but for my son, it is Jordi Wild or Tamayo. I have witnessed real pitched battles at home between my mother and my son, because for my mother Carlos Herrera is God. Then my mother explained to him what a journalist is, and my son said 'no, Tamayo has been involved in I don't know what, and he's been caught with I don't know who', and my mother said 'he is the greatest thing in journalism', and the two of them discussed who is a journalist and who is not" (woman, 48 years old, mixed group).

As a specific research question, professionals and participants were asked whether streamers such as Ibai Llanos were direct competition for television professionals. The former said they did not see them as their rivals, as they believed deeply in the freedom for anyone to offer content and proposals through any channel, while the latter felt that professionals, in any case, had to deal with it, because times change, they said, and those who do not adapt end up being cast aside in favor of more attractive alternatives:

"What Ibai does is take advantage of the opportunity he has to interview people who are in the news, who would also be of interest to journalists. You can be a great communicator without having to answer or comply with all the requirements demanded of a journalist" (Cristina Pardo, Más vale tarde and El hormiguero).

"I have a lot of respect for the work of any content generator, and of course the streamers have a very notable success with the public, and I think that is very praiseworthy. I think they do a specific job for a certain type of viewer or listener, and they enjoy unquestionable success" (Vicente Vallés, Noticias2).

"If many people follow them, it must be because they are interesting, and maybe that's what conventional TV should have done; I don't know, they've been introduced on the side and are making a niche for themselves; I think it's good. I think the point is more for people to consume and understand that Jordi Wild, for example, is a youtuber who does entertainment interviews, with his opinion and so on, which is not the NO-DO [A Spanish newsreel from the past]" (Antonio Castelo, Todo es mentira).

Thus, in the various conversations in the audience focus groups, audiovisual proposals emerged that were much more attractive to them than traditional television, which is why they said that some programs have been using social networks or platforms as a method of engagement for some time, such as *Todo es mentira* or *La resistencia*:

"If I put something on to watch on TV, on some channel, it's I don't know, something like El intermedio or Jordi Évole's interviews, which I like a lot, or Ana Pastor's interviews. But it's not the norm, it's rather unusual, and I don't know, if I'm eating alone, or I have some free time and I start, it's more like I'm going for a fixed shot, maybe 'well, on YouTube I'm interested in such and such, I like this podcast that I know they comment on more current affairs', and I go and listen to it" (woman, 23 years old, young group).

"I started watching La resistencia on YouTube, and for the last year I've been with Movistar+, and on there I watch the whole program every day. Not when it is broadcast, but when I have breakfast, or when I take advantage of meals, es-

The professionals interviewed considered that the same barriers between programs, and even between media and channels, are disappearing

pecially when I eat, that is when I watch it. And more than the interview itself, to see him [David Broncano], to see the comedians in general" (man, 56 years old, mature group).

Audiences felt that professionals, in any case, had to deal with streamers, because times change, and those who do not adapt end up being cast aside

In the specific case of younger audiences, when they con-

sider watching audiovisual content, whether it was television or not, they agreed that they were more likely to look for specific videos on YouTube, in the case of women, and on Twitch, in the case of men, even though the participants in question were not regular consumers of these platforms. No one disputed that some of the well-known personalities appearing on these audiovisual channels have a following that exceeds the expectations and predictions of many television networks:

"I consume YouTube, for example, such as microprograms, a channel that talks about certain topics, uploaded in a fifteen-minute format, always about a topic I like, weekly, which is a less rigid format that maybe TV could not afford. And Twitch is a little bit the same; first, it is a medium where listening is active, plus they bring something, an Ibai, an amazing thing where people write, it goes so fast that you will not even read yourself, nor will you read anything, nor will they read what you write, you know perfectly well. But it's a kind of active listening. You're kind of actively out there doing things" (male, 32, mixed group).

"Are influencers killing TV stars? No. It's just a new approach to the origin of the star system. Before, the star system was monopolized by the cinema, only movie stars were recognized by the whole world, then television began, and to this was added the star system of radio stars, so little by little the origin of what stars are was diversified, and what has happened is simply that a new star-creating agent has appeared, audiovisual in this case, and they have escaped from the powers of the big media. So, are they competitors? No, I believe that in the end it is a situation of coexistence. It can even be said that the selection of who is a star has been democratized, although under the same criteria as television" (Jorge Gallardo Camacho, Espejo público).

In fact, another interesting question that arose regarding this supposed alternative star system or media figures who can jump from television to platforms and the Internet indiscriminately was that the viewers consulted did not distinguish between interviews and talks on YouTube or Twitch channels and those done via podcasts, insofar as the latter are consumed in the same audiovisual way, or because they are simply presented as such:

"My wife usually watches these programs, half entertainment, that help her to clear her head, to disconnect a little from work, and I usually use the tablet or my phone, mostly, also the Internet and YouTube, and podcasts. Also, podcasts are very convenient because you can listen to them anywhere, you don't have to be watching a screen" (male, 57 years old, mature group).

"Many times, I may see that a certain interview of a certain person is a trending topic, but I'm too lazy to look for it, turn on the TV, and search for the channel. I'll wait for the video and when the video is available I'll watch it, because I'm sure someone will post it, even if it's just a summary on my cell phone. But bits of television, short videos, from La resistencia or an interview with Jordi Évole" (man, 34 years old, young group).

The audience focus groups consulted thus did not differentiate channel or platform as much as they claimed, because the format and type of exposure seemed similar to them. The only feature they highlighted to justify their impression of consuming a different product, either to categorize it as more conventional television or more typical of YouTube and Twitch, regardless of whether it was offered by a journalist or another type of communicator, was the time: the feeling that the interview or the talk show is long and has the possibility for the guest to elaborate, something that did not happen, nor did they think it could happen, on television. Likewise, the participants equated this to freedom of demand, i.e., freedom of choice: the ability to choose when, where, and to whom, since on television, no matter how many options there are, there would never be as many as on the Internet, in their opinion. This is shown in the following discussion that took place in the mixed group, among participants of different ages:

"Yeah, but if what Ibai does on Twitch, for example, I don't know many others, but if he says 'I'm going to connect on Twitch at nine o'clock', and instead of going on Twitch he goes on TV, people are going to put on the TV instead of logging onto Twitch" (female, 21, mixed group).

"Whoever logs on to Twitch doesn't turn on the TV. No way" (female, 48 years old, mixed group).

"If the people who like Ibai, well, I think, if they like that character, they're going to follow him if he goes on the TV instead of Twitch" (female, 21, mixed group).

"No. Because on Twitch you can write to him in the chat, and it gives you the possibility to then download I don't

know what or I don't know how many. On Twitch, it is live" (female, 48 years old, mixed group).

"But on TV you can do that kind of thing, too" (female, 59, mixed group).

"No way, no way! It's completely different. I say that because my son lives on Twitch every flipping day" (woman, 48, mixed group).

Some of the well-known personalities appearing on these audiovisual channels have a following that exceeds the expectations and predictions of many television networks



### 4. Discussion and conclusions

After analyzing the results obtained in the interviews with the professionals and in the audience focus groups, it was confirmed that the use of social networks by programs as an online tool was becoming obsolete for viewers, in the opinion of both young and mature participants, because for them, channels such as YouTube and Twitch better met their interaction needs. If they used the networks, they did so mostly "to obtain addiAny professional can move through different hybrid programs and play roles assigned to any genre or media proposal as long as they have the capacity to perform such work, thus constituting a sort of "hipermedia star system"

tional content or learn more about the collaborators, and not so much with the intention of interacting with them" (Aguilera-García, 2021, p. 724), in line with similar studies that show that paid humor formats prefer to offer "small doses from transmedia narratives, through Instagram, as an engagement strategy that allows for reaching the general public" (Gascón-Vera, 2020, pp. 191-192).

On the contrary, some of the professionals of programs consulted, such as Espejo público and Todo es mentira, did state that they continue to use social networks, especially Twitter, to involve their audiences in the program, or to promote debates, although none of the participants in the focus groups acknowledged having used this system, although they had used, or knew people who had used, YouTube or Twitch. Thus, when it comes to interpreting which figures are the most valued by the viewers consulted, those belonging to the YouTube, Twitch, or podcast sphere enjoyed a higher regard than those linked to traditional media, reflections in line with previous works that declare Ibai Llanos as the unbeatable leader of Spanish-speaking audiovisual content (Roig-Telo, 2021; Gutiérrez-Lozano; Cuartero, 2022). This was the case even for older audiences, because many of them acknowledged following media figures who came from television or the traditional press only because they had moved to online broadcasting, with greater freedom to express themselves and present their content in their own way, confirming that the "pain threshold of comedy," that is, of the concessions or license allowed to the figures and the spaces, depend on the type of format, scheduling -in this case nonexistent – and the degree of broadcasting (Aguilera-García, 2023, p. 155).

In this sense, the main hypothesis, viz. that viewers value those figures who are more adaptable to the topics dealt with and the context in which they are addressed, regardless of whether these communicators belong to journalism or comedy, is confirmed, because what concerned them above all else was that they worked consistently and that the content offered was interesting, with more merit if they were glued for several hours to a screen, something they would not do with television, because its rhythms and restrictions were more rigid. As a complementary hypothesis, regarding the viewers' perspective, the audience focus groups appreciated the professionals who are unpredictable as long as they did not violate the rigor of their original profession, i.e., a journalist could make jokes within certain limits, or a comedian could stay within the limits of their supposed analysis of news information. In this way, personalities such as Ibai Llanos or Jordi Wild were respected, because in the opinion of the participants, they always reflected on topics from their position as mere generators of entertainment, and for this reason they received greater esteem from the focus groups insofar as the latter recognized that some established journalists of the Spanish television scene did go beyond their competencies, often in a subversive and unclear manner. However, the third hypothesis, which held that television professionals would feel uneasy toward online content creators and would see them as competitors and invaders, was refuted, since the interviewees did not feel threatened by figures such as Ibai Llanos, and considered his interviews to be very different from the journalistic style of the one they practiced.

It was therefore seen that any professional can move through different hybrid programs and play roles assigned to any genre or media proposal as long as they have the capacity to perform such work, thus constituting a sort of "hypermedia star system" that, in imitation of the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema in the early twentieth century, puts forward presenters associated with specific personalities, behaviors, and even political ideologies in an attempt to transmit their essence to the programs and establish their success, since "they bet on a recurrent artistic casting that provokes on-screen chemistry with co-presenters that converge in the figure of the presenter" (Gascón-Vera; Marta-Lazo, 2023, pp. 14-15). This also demonstrates that audiences are increasingly aware of the adaptation of traditional media to the Internet, to the extent that they have clearly identified news figures in entertainment programs and comedians in news programs, many of whom are willing to make the leap to YouTube and Twitch. However, it is still too early to assess the consequences of these perceptions on the public's understanding, issues on which professionals do not tend to dwell, as Twitch is becoming a para-Ilel television, unpredictable in its evolution in a society that still "does not know exactly what a platform of such magnitude means" (Barrea, 2023, p. 17).

Studies such as this one are just a first step toward delving deeper into these emerging Internet figures, often very close to infotainment in both form and content, but who lay the foundations for a new way of understanding audiovisual consumption, and which will require more research as to the reception and audiences, who are connected to the concept of transmedia consumption at all times.

Viewers value those figures who are more adaptable to the topics dealt with and the context in which they are addressed, regardless of whether these communicators belong to journalism or comedy



#### 5. Note

1. The informants of the discussion groups with audiences are indicated with, in parentheses, their sex, age and the group in which they participated, with a "young group" being that composed of people between 18 and 35 years old; "mature group", that of people over 35 years of age; and "mixed group", those made up of people aged 18 and over.

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