



Environmental journalism in the Latin American digital press

Periodismo ambiental en la prensa digital
Latinoamericana

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to analyze how the Latin American digital press has addressed environmental issues during August, September and October 2019, it is a mixed research, of a descriptive type, with which it was possible to identify, measure and describe their work during the period already mentioned. For this it is necessary to approach and know the concept of environmental journalism, which is characterized by being specialized journalism, which provides information on the interaction of people with the environment. Environmental journalism requires greater journalistic preparation when it comes to addressing the subject, in addition, it has a particularity, and that is that it encourages, awareness and educates citizens for a common good.

Keywords: Theoretical guidelines, construction of pedagogical activities, intelligence of perception.

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Resumen

El presente trabajo tiene como fin analizar cómo la prensa digital latinoamericana ha abordado los temas ambientales durante agosto, septiembre y octubre de 2019, es una investigación mixta, de tipo descriptivo, con la cual se logró identificar, medir y describir el trabajo de los mismos durante el periodo ya mencionado. Para esto es necesario abordar y conocer el concepto del periodismo ambiental, el cual se caracteriza por ser un periodismo especializado, que

brinda información sobre la interacción de las personas con el entorno. El periodismo ambiental exige mayor preparación periodística a la hora de abordar la temática, además, tiene una particularidad, y es que incentiva, conciencia y forma ciudadanos para un bien común.

Palabras clave: Periodismo Ambiental, Periodismo Especializado, Medio Ambiente, Medios de Comunicación Digitales.

Introduction

Currently the digital media are the leading exponents of environmental issues, a situation that became a priority very recently and that has generated in humanity the need to know and change the lifestyle for a better environment; To name the environmental events that have been news in the world is trivial and endless, since each time these cases are increasing, in addition, every time something happens in this regard is given the required value for a few days, then it ceases to be news; what has not been taken into account is that it is a fundamental issue for the life of any living being and that although it ceases to be a news topic is still a fundamental issue for society.

A clear example of the aforementioned is Colombia, due to the fact that it is the country where more social leaders are murdered for defending their lands, beliefs and ancestral customs that is linked to the environment, this is stated by Global Witness (2019), which since 2018 has been conducting a study entitled 'the enemies of the State'; in other words, Colombia ranks second with 24 environmental leaders murdered per year, it is joined by Latin American countries such as Brazil with 20, Guatemala with 16, Mexico with 14, Honduras with 4, Venezuela with 3 and Chile with 2 (Global Witness, 2019).

Margaret Mead (2020, p.1), American anthropologist said that "we will not have a society if we destroy the environment" and she is right; Latin America has been privileged to be the continent with the greatest diversity on the planet, in addition, the Inter-American Development Bank (2020, p.1) states that the continent "is home to some of the most primitive and diverse ecosystems in the world". Argentina, Bolivia,

Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela are the countries that make up the Latin American continent, each of them has varied climates, unique habitats, wonderful species, tropical rainforests and savannas, among others, allowing Latin America to be that tourist attraction par excellence, however, it also brings disadvantages and problems that make the ecological attraction becomes a challenge in each country.

Taking into account the environmental crisis that has been evidenced in the digital press, about the latest episodes that took place in Latin American countries such as Brazil where 2.5 million hectares were lost (Semana, 2019) or Mexico, for example, which is the second country in the world where forest fire alerts are registered (El informador, 2019) or Chile, a country that is distinguished for being the most polluted in South America (CNN, 2019). In the rest of the world we could mention what happened at the end of 2019 in Australia and Florida, USA among others.

That is why this article seeks to analyze whether the work of Latin American digital media is framed to the main objective of environmental journalism, with which they want to transmit that environmental citizenship that humanity is missing or not. It is understood that environmental journalism seeks to "tell stories that help people to better understand how we humans relate to the natural world around us" (Fraser, 2016, p. 7).

The different environmental events that have triggered social interest and the environmental problems that have been most evident are many, which has led to different natural phenomena that have brought heavy losses and thus concern about the work of mankind in terms of the use of natural resources. Using journalism as a constructive tool in society has allowed to give value and meaning to the environment, that is why environmental journalism has been more present than ever. This arose in the 1970s, however, previously the subject had not been heard or treated as it is now. Thus, to talk about environmental journalism is to talk about environmental and ecological issues, it is to talk about fauna, flora and everything related to nature in general, that is why it is a project with social projection in which we sought to identify and analyze the journalistic process on these issues and how they influence the behavior and actions of society.

As far as the theoretical approach is concerned, the informative treatment given in the media on environmental issues, allows the receiver to learn in one way or another about facts that are unknown about the environmental issue; it is already known that environmental journalism is a specialized journalism, however, it should not be satisfied with just reporting a relevant fact and let it pass. Environmental journalism should propose alternatives, solutions, strategies or conclusions about the environmental issue or fact that is being reported. Fernández & Mancinas (2013) state

that "it is necessary to avoid both catastrophism and the omission of information. Whenever possible, the alarm should be complemented with the presentation of intervention possibilities and solution alternatives" (p. 23).

The audience has always been accustomed to the fact that all the media say is true, and, many times this ends up being a utopia; the reality of some of the situations is that journalism is used to mention what is convenient for a few, omitting information; in the environmental case, what Fernández & Mancinas (2013) propose, is to avoid the fact of reducing or increasing the information and more with a topic of social relevance. Information catastrophism is, according to Amores (2007), "a discourse that speaks of a catastrophe that the discourse itself prevents from occurring. It prevents it because it stimulates cautious behavior" (p.1). In this sense, environmental catastrophism has often been developed because of the need to create a social alarm, because of a true fact, however, many times this catastrophism is necessary to show and inform what is really happening.

On the other hand, in addition to catastrophism and omission of information, Noam Chomsky (2012) called the 10 strategies of media manipulation; it is important to highlight this issue, because in one way or another the digital media are immersed in making use of these strategies. Some of the 10 strategies of media manipulation and perhaps the most common when talking about environmental journalism according to Chomsky, could be the following: Digital media allow information to be more truthful, however, truthfulness sometimes plays a role against themselves, given this generates distraction and at the same time disinformation. The strategy of manipulation number 1 is entitled, strategy of distraction, "The strategy of distraction is equally indispensable to prevent the public from being interested in essential knowledge, in the area of science, economics, psychology, neurobiology and cybernetics" (Chomsky, 2012, p. 1); based on this the author explains how through distraction can be generated disinformation and disinterest in a topic, in this case the environmental.

As stated above, environmental journalism suffers from a lack of economic support and sponsorship, thus preventing a general interest not only from the audience but also from the media; when the opportunity arises to report on issues related to the environment, this is not given the same value as a political note, from there it has already created a strategy of distraction generating misinformation. Another distraction strategy, which undoubtedly is a fundamental part of environmental journalism is number 2, creating problems and then offering solutions, also known as problem-reaction-solution; for this Chomsky (2012) expresses that "a problem is created, a 'situation' intended to cause a certain reaction in the public" (p. 1); based on this, environmental journalism should propose solutions, facing the environmental news that informs, that is why environmental journalism goes beyond just informing.

In summary, catastrophism and the omission of information are always present in journalism in general, in environmental journalism, almost always the news or journalistic works are about events that bring with them a catastrophism and therefore generates sensationalism, that is why it is important to make journalism not only inform, but also create solutions and possible changes to what is being reported.

Digital media have become the favorite tool of human beings, this is because they allow easy access to any information they want to know. Digital media are the new era of traditional journalism. Television, radio and newspapers are still the most important means of communication, however, digital media have allowed people to be informed in a simple and practical way. The digital media allow a journalistic work that facilitates access to information and in that sense a more interactive and practical production of the same for the receiver; in the network can be updated every minute the information, it allows to be more truthful and at the same time allows to have a constant periodicity. Marcet, Murillo & Vizúete (2007), state that "it necessarily demands, if quality is to be provided, a permanent updating of the informative takes. Texts are updated and new informative twists complement or replace those provided in previous takes" (p.320). Taking into account the above, doing journalism using digital media requires that the journalistic work does not stand still, but, on the contrary, renews and refreshes the information already presented.

Infographics, surveys, videos, cartoons, podcasts, among others, are indispensable tools in the journalistic work done in digital media, these tools can be given a different use in traditional media, "print media began as a replica with many limitations of the paper product and today much of its contents are still the translation to a digital environment of the news and services offered by the newspaper" (Santamaría, 2015, p.93). In Colombia, for example, print media such as *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador* and *Revista Semana*, have seen the need and duty to adapt to the Web 2.0 boom. They have seen the need and duty to adapt to it; this is how, currently, through the web, they allow their users to be aware of the facts that are news.

Seeing digital media as a constructive tool for the environment has allowed social leaders, activists, environmentalists and journalists to show the environmental reality of the planet. In this regard, it can be said that, although digital media are a vital tool for the promotion of journalism in general, there are factors that still need to be evaluated. One of them, and the one that has been mentioned the most in the present work is the lack of promotion and support that environmental journalism receives. Using the media as a tool to disseminate environmental issues should evoke not only in the journalist but also in the media managers, that interest in going beyond the fact that it is news, however, it has been noted how the journalist approaches the situation. The media do not hire journalists with environmental training because they understand that the expense is not justified, but then, in fact, it is demonstrated that their

professionals do not even have the "basic general environmental culture" that is expected to be part of the community's heritage (Fernández & Mancinas, 2013, p.144). To conclude, digital media are indeed a necessary tool to make environmental issues visible, but in general, there is a lack of commitment by the media, journalists and recipients. It ends by quoting Javier Darío Restrepo (2004) stating that "in effect, information - be it cultural, sports, economic, political or of any other nature - is not the property of the journalist or of the media, but of society. It is 'a social good'.

Materials and methods

The present research study uses a mixed methodology, which allows working in a deeper way, since it allows performing "a collection, analysis and interpretation of qualitative and quantitative data that the researcher has considered necessary for his study" (Otero, 2018, p. 19); taking this into account, the research was conducted. Understanding this, it was important to carry out a mixed research, with which it was possible to make a qualitative analysis when analyzing how is the journalistic work of the Latin American digital press in the framework of the environmental events that took place in August, September and October 2019, in order to delineate the journalistic work of the same, as well as it was also finally possible to describe the work that was managed to analyze; indeed the quantitative method was involved in the present research since "it is based on data collection methods without numerical measurement, such as descriptions and observations" (Sampieri, Collado & Baptista, 2004, p. 10).

Now, under the quantitative method it was possible to measure the frequency with which each media outlet publishes an environmental news item during August, September and October 2019; about this method Sampieri, Collado & Baptista, (2004) "uses data collection and analysis to answer research questions and test hypotheses ... relies on numerical measurement, counting and often the use of statistics to accurately establish patterns of behavior" (p. 10).

The project is of descriptive type because it will be described, details and particularities that identify the subject to be treated will be taken into account, this in order to be able to reach a conclusion and a final result where further research on the subject can be carried out. For Cauas (2015) the descriptive type of research:

It is fundamentally aimed at the description of social or educational phenomena in a given temporal and special circumstance... in exploratory research, questions that lead to precise problems are not posed, but rather problem areas are explored; at this level, the questions are guided by descriptive schemes and taxonomies; their questions are focused on the variables of the subjects or the situation (p. 6).

The descriptive type of research is characterized because "it consists fundamentally in characterizing a phenomenon or concrete situation indicating its most peculiar or differentiating features" (Cauas, 2015, p. 6). From the above, the descriptive type, with which the present research was approached, allowed that in a deeper way each established achievement could be completed; since it was possible to investigate how is the journalistic treatment that the digital media in Bolivia, Peru Mexico, Colombia and Argentina, which allowed in one way or another to know the panorama of the situation, not only in environmental issues, but also in the sense of relevance of the individual by the environment.

Having this clear and that the number of digital media in the countries is very high, it was necessary to perform a purposive sample which is characterized because "it requires a certain knowledge of the universe, its technique consists in that it is the researcher who intentionally chooses his study units" Gamboa Romero, M. A., Barros Morales, R. L., & Barros Bastidas, C. (2016), (Tapia, 2000, p. 9); given this, the digital media of five countries that were previously selected through Google Trends were chosen. Through a technological tracking with the Google Trends tool, it was possible to find which were the Latin American countries with more environmental news searches in Google News, during August, September and October 2019, these were: Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, Colombia, Argentina; having this clear, the intentional sample was made, which was already addressed above.

Thanks to these results, the research was carried out since the five countries represented there are the ones with which the research was developed, for this two variables were used, what is marked in blue is the 'Environment' variable and what is in red is the 'Climate Change' variable, it was decided to make the analysis using these two concepts, since they are the most used by people when talking about the subject (see table 1).

Table 1:

Countries and digital media with which the survey was carried out research

Country	Name of media	Type of media	Seniority	Presence in Google News
Bolivia	Los Tiempos	Newspaper	1943	About 5,100,000 results
Peru	El Comercio	Diary	1839	About 227,000 results

Mexico	El Universal	Newspaper	1916	About 349,000 results
Colombia	Week	Magazine	1946	About 8,990,000 results
Argentina	La Nación	Diary	1870	About 312,000 results

As previously mentioned, the present research is mixed and descriptive; that is why the techniques implemented are part of the qualitative and quantitative method. The use of research techniques makes it possible to trace and fulfill the objectives proposed for the development of the research, which is why each specific objective responds to a particular technique. The techniques in a research "constitute the set of mechanisms, means or resources aimed at collecting, preserving, analyzing and transmitting data on the phenomena being investigated" (April. 2008, p. 3); considering this, the techniques used are: information tracking, bibliographic review (bibliographic review) and triangulation.

Results

The results found after applying each technique were the support and basis for finally answering and addressing the problem question of this research. Initially, the technique was the information search, with which a search of Latin American digital media was carried out, in which through a purposive sample, one media per country was chosen. Taking into account the literature search and the purposive sample, these were the digital media for each country:

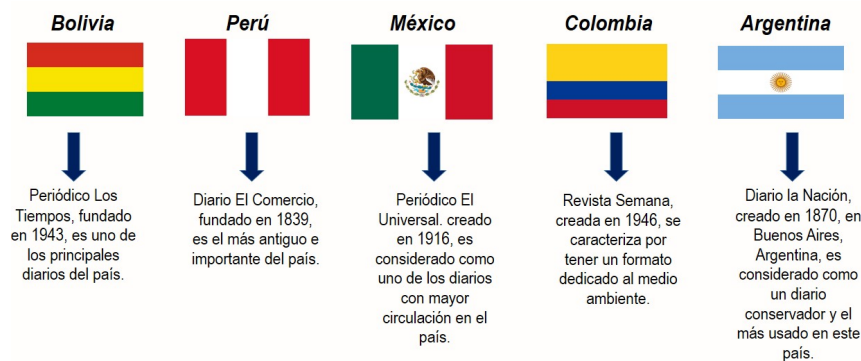


Figure 1: Digital media by each country

The next step was the publication of a total of 538 news items in the five selected

media outlets during the three months.

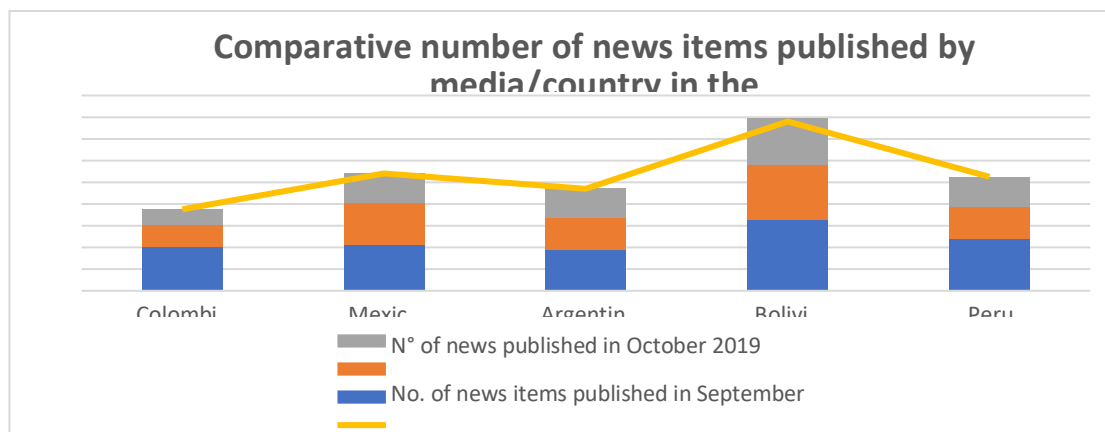


Figure 2: Comparative number of news items published by each medium

In August 235 news were published, in September 168 and in October 141, evidently in August 2019 more environmental news were published since the fire in the Amazon was experienced, an environmental event that made world news. On the other hand, Bolivia was the country with the most publications on environmental news, this is because during that same time the country faced a forest fire in the south of the country, an environmental event in which 5.3 million hectares were lost in the Bolivian Amazon, known as Charagua.

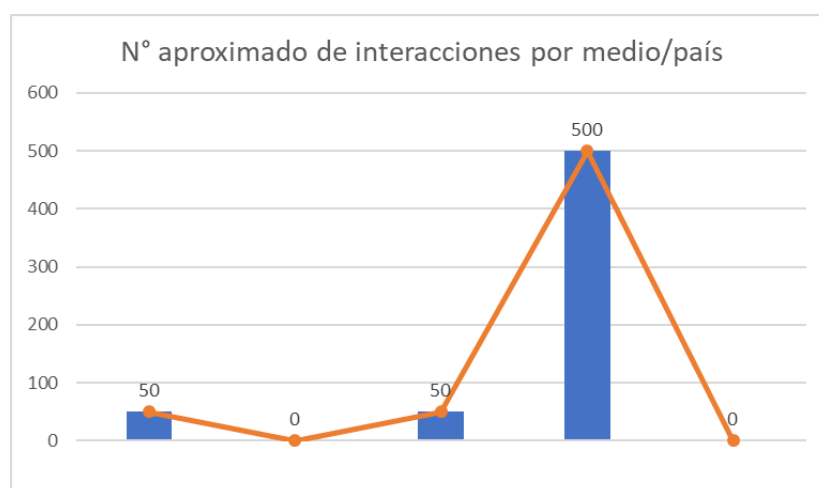


Figure 3: Approximate number of interactions

In this figure (3) it can be observed an approximate of the interactions obtained for each news item, not all media have the option to leave comments, if not reactions, this is the case of El Universal, El Comercio and Los Tiempos, while La Nación has the option to send internal messages and finally Revista Semana, allows leaving comments. The following is a list of topics that should be addressed in environmental journalism, and the topics that the digital media dealt with the most, according to Fernandez (2003), these are the topics that should normally be addressed when reporting environmental news, however, it can be noted that there are topics such as: Soil, Waste and energy are not addressed in the news published.

Table 2

comparative environmental issues

Environmental issues that should be published in the press according to Fernandez (2003)	Issues being published in the Latin American press
Agriculture	Water
Water	Atmosphere
Atmosphere	Forests
Forests	Costs
Costs	Sustainable Development
Sustainable Development	Social Impact Studies
Energy	Seas
Social Impact Studies	New Technologies
Seas	Environmental organizations
New Technologies	Urban Problems
Ecological Organizations	Nature protection and conservation
Urban Problems	Transportation
Protection and conservation of the nature	
Waste	
Soils	

Finally, the journalistic genres most used by the digital media are news and long articles; as mentioned above, environmental journalism is characterized by the treatment of information since it is known when there are articles, chronicles, reports,

interviews, etc.; that is why the media in one way or another want to achieve the same, however, their articles are mostly opinion articles.

With the triangulation, a content analysis was performed on the news published during the months in which the research was conducted in order to describe the work of the digital media in each country. To begin with, a brief description of the general characteristics of the 5 media was made, this is done in order to make a general analysis of how is the work of these with the news published.

Table 3:

theoretical propositions

Theoretical propositions					
	Los Tiempos	El Comercio	El Universal	Week	La Nación
Subject	It is a privately-owned newspaper that circulates nationwide and has been circulating on the Internet since 1996.	It is a private newspaper and considered the oldest in the Spanish language.	It is a traditional newspaper that is in great demand on the Internet.	It is a private magazine that circulates weekly.	It is the only newsprint mill in the country.
What each newspaper talks about	The main topics to be discussed are related to	It is a commercial, political	General national and international information.	The main issues are	The main topics to be discussed are

the country, social and political issues, among others.	and literary journal.		political, economic and environmental.	related to the country, social and political issues, among others.
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Source: own elaboration, 2020.

In this second part of the signing, it was possible to make an opinion according to the analysis that was already done initially, in which it is made known what has been perceived in each media according to the work they did.

Table 4:

list of interpretations

List of interpretations				
Los Tiempos	El Comercio	El Universal	Week	La Nación
It is a good follow-up, it informs about the facts that are news and that in one way or another must be shared in society.	It is a digital media that does not have preeminence for news related to the environment, however, they report on it.	As one of the newspapers with the largest circulation, it is known for reporting on all topics, including environmental issues.	The magazine has a space dedicated to the environment, <i>Semana Sostenible</i> , a clear example of environmental journalism.	It is a complex newspaper, when looking for environmental news, since it is constantly making updates.

In the subpoint of the determination of empirical relationships, aspects or characteristics that the digital media have in common were compared; analyzing in a general way, how is the work of these, what technological tools they use, how long are the news; at this stage of the file the content analysis turns out to be deeper, since it is analyzed how is the work they do with each news item. It is necessary to remember, as mentioned above, that the content analysis was very basic, because the total flow of news is too high to analyze one by one.

Table 5:

determination of empirical relationships

Determination of empirical relationships				
Los Tiempos	El Comercio	El Universal	Week	La Nación
They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.
They do not have a section dedicated to the environm ent.	They do not have a section dedicated to the environment.	They do not have a section dedicated to the environment.		They do not have a section dedicated to the environm ent.
They are constantly updated.	They are constantly updated.	They are constantly updated.	They are constantly updated.	They are constantly updated.
They use ICT resources	They use ICT resources.	They use ICT resources.	They use ICT resources.	They use ICT resources
Its content is informativ e.	Its content is informative.	Its content is informative.	Its content is informative.	Its content is informativ e.

The style of the digital page is saturated with advertising.

The style of the digital page is saturated with advertising.

The style of the digital page is saturated with advertising.

The following table shows the differences that were found in each medium, which are presented in general terms.

Table 6:

contrast of propositions

Contrast of propositions				
Los Tiempos	El Comercio	El Universal	Week	La Nación
The notes are short.	It is a complete medium, however, the information is environmental is disorderly.	The media is saturated with advertising, which interferes with the reading of the article.	The information is organized by environmental themes.	It constantly makes use of videos, maps, graphs, audios, etc.
Uses official foreign sources such as EFE, BBC, among others.	There is no space for people to interact afterwards. to read the note.	In between paragraphs you will find more notes related to the subject.	It presents the reader with recommendations or curious facts about the subject.	It presents long articles.

In the search engine of the site there is no filter to organize the news from according to the subject.	There are some notes that exceed 30 paragraphs.	Highlight valuable information within the text.	His notes almost always recount experiences, therefore, there are interviews.	The paragraphs are not long.
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The last table (7) presents the most relevant according to the analysis, and it is that all media have more things in common than the opposite, initially it could be determined that this is because they are digital media that simply seek to inform and already, it can be seen how in their notes there is journalistic monotony, that is, they publish topics for the sake of publishing them, the format is always the same, they use official sources, etc.

Table 7:

selection of the best interpretations

Selection of the best interpretations

Los Tiempos	El Comercio	El Universal	Week	La Nación
They do publish news related to the topics environmental.	They do publish news related to the topics environmental.	They do publish news related to the topics environmental.	They do publish news related to the topics environmental.	They do publish news related to the topics environmental
It makes use of ICT tools, which allows the news to be told and understood in a different way.	It makes use of ICT tools, this allows the news to be told and understood in a different way.	It makes use of ICT tools, which allows the news to be told in a way that is and understood in a different way.	It makes use of ICT tools, this allows the news to be told and understood in a different way.	It makes use of ICT tools, which allows the news to be told in a way that is and understood in a different way.
It deals with local and international	It deals with local and international	It deals with local and international	It deals with local and international	It deals with local and international

issues.	issues.	issues.	issues.	issues.
They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.	They use official sources.
There is no great flow of interaction with this type of news.	There is no great flow of interaction with this type of news.	There is no great flow of interaction with this type of news.	There is no great flow of interaction with this type of news.	There is no great flow of interaction with this type of news.

The digital media in Bolivia, Peru, Mexico and Argentina do not have a section dedicated to the environment. Most of the digital media also resort to the use of foreign official sources, which, in the words of Fernandez (2003), allows a normative denomination of what can be defined as environmental journalism that has had consensus among communication professionals and designates each of the training presented on topics ranging from ecological, environmental and green.

Within the countries that were taken as the object of study, Bolivia stands out as the country that published the most news during August, September and October 2019, regarding environmental issues, and in contrast, the country that published the least news was Colombia. This is due to the particular interest of each of the analyzed media, since on many occasions environmental information is part of the sections of a newspaper or magazine within the "special" topic or when there is an event that predominantly marks the agenda of the media. Hence, of the digital media analyzed, the Colombian media is the closest to what is specialized journalism, because, although it does not produce constant information, when it does, it goes deeper into the issues to be exposed.

It is important to mention that, at present, most of the analyzed media, not only because of interest, but also because modernity demands it, use information and communication technologies, since it is part of the informative vanguard. On the other hand, during the analyzed temporality, it could be evidenced that the media, regardless of the informative cut, took as important news the spread of the fire in the Brazilian Amazon in August 2019, however, although Bolivia also fought a forest fire, this did not have the same popularity in the media as it did with Brazil.

In the world there are approximately more than two billion digital media, however, the audience always focuses on the traditional media in each country and even more so when the information focuses on news about environmental issues.

Conclusions

This study was established in order to analyze how the digital media in Latin America approached and covered the fire in the Brazilian Amazon in August 2019. It became evident the little treatment that the media gave on the subject in general, which, allows concluding that, the work of the digital press of the media Los Tiempos, from Bolivia, El Comercio, from Peru, El Universal, from Mexico, Revista Semana, from Colombia and Diario La Nación, from Argentina, are digital media that inform their audience about the environmental issues that are news, however, they do not respond to the most important characteristic of specialized journalism and that is to go beyond.

Environmental journalism seeks to go beyond just informing, but even knowing this, the media comply with informing, without delving deeper into the subject; the environment is a fundamental area in society, where economic, political and ideological interests are perceived, which in one way or another allow the manipulation of information related to the environment. With this clear, the work carried out by the analyzed media allows us to see how the flow of information is high, and how information is not managed and transmitted in the best way, each of the five countries has environmental problems that perhaps the citizens themselves are unaware of, but they do focus on informing about the environmental problems of others.

This is where specialized journalism makes the difference, beyond informing, it seeks to raise awareness and educate about an environmental problem. To learn more about what we wanted to achieve, three specific objectives were outlined, the first was to identify which is the most used digital media in the five Latin American countries according to their presence and frequency on the Internet, from this it can be concluded that there are many digital media in Latin America, most of them are traditional media that have seen the web as the perfect tool to make a practical, fast and truthful journalism, however, this infers that the work done is done in depth.

During the month of August, it became evident how the flow of information increased not only in the Latin American media, but also worldwide, this was due to the Amazon fire, for the media at that time the attention was focused on the reaction of the president and the economic groups that were harmed and not the hectares that were being lost day by day. Finally, it can be concluded that the media need sponsorship and specialized journalists who are passionate about helping to solve the environmental problems that arise in each country, the task does not end with just publishing the news, the task of the specialized journalist ends when he sees in the audience an attitude and position that adds to the one that has been presented. It is concluded by saying that environmental journalism is the tool with which you can transform, rescue and organize the environment, while digital media are the fast and truthful way by which this can be possible; the content that each media publishes is the vitamin and

encouragement that each reader needs to make their lifestyle contribute to the environment.

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