

Narrativas para la alfabetización mediática: estrategias para involucrar al público con contenido verificado

Sección: Artículo
Recibido: 30/11/2025
Aceptado: 1/12/2025

Storytelling for Media Literacy: Strategies to Engage Audiences with Verified Content

Adrián Pino

Universidad de Concepción del Uruguay (UCU)

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8679-6208>

Correo: pinocomunicacion@gmail.com

Soledad Arréguez Manozzo

Universidad Católica Argentina (UCA)

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8107-6669>

Correo: s.arreguez@gmail.com

Resumen. En un contexto de narrativas de desinformación y una creciente desconfianza en los medios (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andi y Nielsen, 2020; Newman, 2021; Newman, 2024), las técnicas narrativas para la distribución de contenido verificado constituyen una estrategia esencial de desmitificación (Shelby y Ernst, 2013; Krishna y Amazeen, 2022; Wang y Huang, 2023; McDowell, 2024) para que los medios impacten a sus audiencias y promuevan una ciudadanía alfabetizada. En este contexto, la narración de hechos (Wright, 2024) y las narrativas convincentes se consideran una herramienta prometedora para explicar los hechos y el contenido verificado en la era posfactual. Las técnicas de desmitificación buscan contrarrestar la información errónea y la desinformación en los medios digitales. Los mensajes narrativos constituyen una estructura poderosa para comunicar hechos a la ciudadanía y promover la alfabetización mediática e informacional (AMI) en las comunidades. Según las Naciones Unidas (2020), la alfabetización mediática e informacional (AMI) se vuelve vital para que la ciudadanía acceda, evalúe y analice los mensajes de los medios. Este trabajo analiza “Repartiendo verdades. #NoAlOdio”, un proyecto de verificación de datos a través de WhatsApp para promover la paz y frenar

Abstract: In a context of disinformation narratives and a growing distrust in the media (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andi & Nielsen, 2020; Newman, 2021; Newman, 2024), storytelling techniques for distribution of verified content is an essential debunking strategy (Shelby & Ernst, 2013; Krishna & Amazeen, 2022; Wang & Huang, 2023; McDowell, 2024) for media to impact their audiences and promote literate citizenship. In this context, fact telling (Wright, 2024) and compelling narratives are considered a promising tool to explain facts and verification content in the post factual era. Debunking techniques seek to counter mis and disinformation in digital media. Narrative messages are a powerful structure to deliver facts to citizens and elevate media and information literacy (MIL) in the communities. According to the United Nations (2020), MIL becomes vital for citizens to access, evaluate, and analyze media messages. This work analyses “Repartiendo verdades. #NoAlOdio”, a fact-checking project via WhatsApp to promote peace and curb hate speech in Bolivia during the campaign election in 2023. This qualitative study characterizes the narrative structures and design of the pieces used to distribute verified content in the platform. This work also provides insights into communication strategies for the 2024 Mexican elections,

el discurso de odio en Bolivia durante la campaña electoral de 2023. Este estudio cualitativo caracteriza las estructuras narrativas y el diseño de las piezas utilizadas para distribuir contenido verificado en la plataforma. Este trabajo también proporciona información sobre las estrategias de comunicación para las elecciones mexicanas de 2024, respaldando el trabajo del equipo del Observatorio de Medios Digitales del Tecnológico de Monterrey y marcando un paso importante en el desarrollo de nuevas formas de narrativas basadas en hechos para los medios. Este estudio exploratorio ofrece información sobre el desarrollo de nuevas propuestas para campañas de contenido verificado que reduzcan el impacto de los desórdenes informativos. El objetivo es proporcionar elementos clave para un enfoque narrativo para la desinformación.

Palabras clave: narrativa, desinformación, verificación de datos, alfabetización mediática.

supporting the work of the Tecnológico de Monterrey's Digital Media Observatory team and marking an important step in developing new ways of fact-based narratives for the media. This exploratory study provides some insights into the development of new proposals for verified content campaigns that reduce the impact of information disorders. The intention is to provide key elements for a storytelling approach to debunking.

Keywords: Storytelling, debunking, disinformation, fact checking, media literacy.

Introduction

The growing concern over disinformation campaigns and the mounting difficulty of distinguishing true from false content in digital environments (Newman, Arguedas, Robertson, Nielsen, & Fletcher, 2025; Nielsen, 2025) has driven the need to rethink how the media industry confronts this challenge. To the ease of production and speed of distribution afforded by hypermedia (Scolari, 2008) we must now add generative artificial intelligence tools that can create synthetic content, whether text, images, audio, or video, that increasingly mimics reality with sophisticated fidelity. Disinformation amplified by these technologies poses risks to the integrity of information (UNESCO, 2024), deepens social polarization, and erodes public trust.

This scenario compels journalists and communicators to revisit, innovate, and strengthen their strategies against disinformation. In this context, “fact telling” (Wright, 2024) and compelling narrative techniques are considered promising tools for conveying factual and verified content in the post-factual era.

Debunking techniques aim to counter both misinformation and disinformation in digital media, while compelling narratives provide a powerful framework for delivering facts to citizens and enhancing media and information literacy (MIL) within communities. As part of these efforts, journalistic enterprises and civil-society organizations have launched a variety of initiatives to foster a healthy and democratic ecosystem (López Linares, 2023; López Linares, 2024).

Social resilience against online threats, including those that undermine information integrity, depends on citizens possessing a basic level of digital skills. Full exercise of citizenship in the twenty-first century requires individuals to navigate an increasingly complex media environment, whether to seek out information, verify it, or participate in public debate. MIL encompasses the essential skills needed to cultivate critical thinking in the contemporary digital landscape.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) states that “equipping individuals with the ability to access information, analyze it, and engage with it critically is essential for navigating the complexities of the digital age and fostering media- and information-literate societies” (UNESCO, 2024b).

Proyecto Desconfío, an Argentine organization combating disinformation, has been studying changes in the digital environment for several years and experimenting with different responses to mitigate the effects of disinformation on society (Pino &

Arreguez Manozzo, 2025). Among its various initiatives, the one that yielded the greatest impact was the design of storytelling strategies to disseminate verified content through non-traditional formats and narratives.

In this article, we outline the general guidelines of two Latin American projects that Proyecto Desconfío developed in collaboration with researchers and fact-checkers to improve the distribution of verified content in disinformation contexts. Firstly, the “Repartiendo verdades. #NoAlOdio” project—led by Fundación para el Periodismo de Bolivia with support from the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN)—aimed to curb the circulation and spread of hate speech on social media in Bolivia by sending verified content via WhatsApp messaging.

Launched at the end of 2022, this initiative involved transforming fact-checking articles from the Bolivia Verifica website into graphic pieces, which were then distributed through a dedicated WhatsApp channel to refute hate speech that had gone viral on social media. The strategy emphasized visual communication that conveys verified data concisely, using a platform familiar to social-media users.

Similarly, the Digital Media Observatory (OMD) at the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico employed new narrative forms to combat electoral disinformation during the 2024 elections. This project applied storytelling techniques with the goal of reducing disinformation campaigns and fostering greater user engagement with verified content.

In both cases, Proyecto Desconfío developed content proposals, visual designs, and distribution strategies to counter circulating disinformation and contribute to a healthier communications ecosystem. These two projects brought verified information to news consumers through non-traditional channels, using a visual, concise, and fast-consumption narrative.

The aim of this article is to characterize the narrative structures and design of the pieces used to distribute verified content in the projects mentioned. Our hypothesis is that storytelling and design are key elements in verification content because they have potential to increase audience interest and engagement. Also offer insights into how news media can inform online audiences—whose habits and consumption patterns are evolving—with innovative storytelling techniques in verification processes. Ultimately, these experiences demonstrate that enhancing storytelling methods in fact-checking can strength citizens’ media literacy abilities.

Threats to the media ecosystem and democracy

The contemporary media ecosystem is undermined by high levels of media distrust, polarization, disinformation campaigns and by the proliferation of hate speech and conspiratorial narratives (Newman, Fletcher, Schulz, Andi & Nielsen, 2020; Newman, 2021; Newman, 2024).

Media legacy is losing audience each year meanwhile social media; video platforms and feed readers are gaining users. 62% of people do not turn to news media as their primary source of information (Newman et al., 2025). Instead, influencers and online personalities—perceived alongside national politicians as the world's greatest misinformation threat—have gained prominence (Newman et al., 2025).

Approximately 55% of Internet users consult influencers' and content creators' accounts for information, while only one third turn to traditional media (Newman, 2024). This figure poses a problem, given that a UNESCO study of content creators found a low prevalence of fact-checking in their practices, underscoring their vulnerability to misinformation and disinformation. Of those surveyed, 36.9% admitted they do not verify content before publication, and 58.1% base their content on personal experiences (UNESCO, 2024a).

The Reuters Institute for Journalism also reports that 29% of people use social media as their primary media for accessing online news, followed by search engines (Newman, 2024). According to the 2025 Digital News Report from the University of Oxford, one third of people use Facebook (36%) and YouTube (30%) to access news each week, followed by Instagram and WhatsApp (19%), TikTok (16%) and X (12%). At the same time, Facebook and TikTok are identified as the platforms posing the highest risk for false and misleading content (Newman et al., 2025).

Information integrity is a critical concern for the European Union: the 2025 State of the Digital Decade report published by the European Commission indicates that 88% of Europeans worry about fake news and online manipulation (European Commission, 2025). These findings align with those of the University of Oxford, which reported that 58% of respondents are concerned about their ability to distinguish true from false content in online news—a figure that has remained steady for the third consecutive year (Newman, 2025).

Storytelling for combating disinformation

Storytelling can be defined as the art of telling stories (Vargas de la Cruz, 2025) It involves the construction of structured narratives that appeal to emotion, identification, and collective memory, thereby facilitating the comprehension and retention of complex information. In the field of management, these techniques have

been employed to mobilize audiences' emotions through narrative. Indeed, since antiquity humanity has constructed stories to offer worldviews, explain natural phenomena, change behaviors, and generate consensus to certain beliefs.

Steve Denning—widely recognized as one of the leading experts in agile leadership, innovation, and organizational storytelling—noted that “...across history, storytelling has been an important tool for changing people’s mindsets and initiating great movements of change. Major religions have been built, and wars have been begun, using a story as the primary communication tool” (2008, p. 2).

Companies and organizations have adopted storytelling techniques to forge emotional bonds with consumers that transcend the engagement generated by the qualities of a product or service. Audience engagement resides in shared narratives.

Helen Love, an expert in internal communication and an agent involved in the introduction of storytelling at major firms such as Microsoft, explains that “...the story can become a viral communication, being passed from mouth to mouth, up, down, around and external to the organization. It can grow with the telling, it can become a modern myth, it can cement a company’s position and ultimately it can make the difference between success and failure” (2008, p. 25).

In the context of disinformation, storytelling is used to present verified facts in an attractive and simple way, with the aim of counterbalancing the emotional component of false news (Witness, 2021). Within this framework, storytelling techniques have emerged as key tools to discredit false narratives and strengthen public trust in verified information.

Just as storytelling has been employed by brands, and organizations, journalism and fact-checking can enhance the dissemination of verified content through these techniques.

Several studies have shown that traditional fact-checking methods, as their true/false labels fail to achieve the visibility and impact necessary to curb the spread of original misinformation (Graves & Cherubini, 2016). Effective storytelling is a critical component of any debunking strategy. Media outlets seek to impact their audiences through verified pieces in the form of interactive texts, audio, chatbots, animations, and videos, among other formats.

According to the State of Fact-Checker Report (Poynter, 2024), short-form video leads audience engagement, with TikTok and YouTube Shorts playing a key role in reaching new audiences based on engagement metrics. Infographics and visual explainers followed at 39.3%, while brief fact-checks ranked third at 35%.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, storytelling was employed to combat vaccine-related disinformation. Studies such as Islam et al. (2021) demonstrate that verified narratives, accompanied by testimonials from public figures and clear explanations, helped to discredit rumors and promote vaccination—especially among vulnerable communities. In Indonesia, the strategy included the public vaccination of the president and the dissemination of personal stories via traditional and digital media, reinforcing trust through narratives that humanized the process and addressed the population's specific fears (Arifin, 2021).

The use of direct testimonials from individuals affected by or involved in events is a powerful technique for countering disinformation. Such accounts enable emotional connection with the audience and discredit alternative versions through empathy and identification (Islam et al., 2021).

The studies reviewed agree that storytelling increases the effectiveness of distributing verified content, especially when combined with media education and community engagement strategies (Tang et al., 2021).

Media literacy for civic life

Contemporary societies are exposed to a vast array of informational, educational, and entertainment content across diverse formats and channels. Citizens access this information to participate actively in public affairs. For this reason, it is imperative that individuals know how to access reliable information sources, analyze data, and evaluate them, so that they can take informed action within their own communities.

According to the United Nations (2021), media and information literacy—which integrates the fields of information literacy, media literacy, and digital literacy—encompasses competencies that enhance citizens' capacity to engage with information both critically and meaningfully. Media literacy can also be defined as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and act using all forms of communication” (NAMLE, n.d.).

The relationship between the media and civic participation is crucial. UNESCO's Grunwald Declaration on Media Education promoted the integration of media education into formal schooling systems. In that document, experts emphasized that:

The role of communication and media in the process of development should not be underestimated, nor the function of media as instruments for the citizen's active participation in society. Political and educational systems need to recognize their obligations to promote in their citizens a critical understanding of the phenomena of communication. (UNESCO, 1982)

Digital citizenship, that is, the ability to use the Internet reflectively and creatively, both for critical analysis and for participation, is a fundamental right for building citizenship in this millennium. In the twenty-first century, limited access to and appropriation of technology hinder the exercise of full citizenship and serve as a factor of exclusion (UNESCO, 2021, p. 2).

To participate in digital citizenship, people must strengthen their media and information literacy (MIL) capacities to use communication technologies reflectively and creatively. Digital citizenship, as Morduchowicz (2021) explains, is a right for citizenship-building in the twenty-first century. This is not solely the responsibility of the formal education system; civil society organizations and the media can also contribute to fostering a more informed citizenry.

In recent decades, many initiatives have been undertaken by media outlets to facilitate news access for groups traditionally excluded from or underrepresented in public debates—such as women and rural communities (López Linares, 2023; López Linares, 2024).

Fact-checking sites and other information-providing organizations have experimented with non-traditional formats for distributing verified content, seeking to spark audience interest through pieces that explain the verification process or teach news users how to check information and sources themselves.

Methodology

This article presents a case-study analysis to understand the use of visual narratives for verified-fact storytelling, as well as non-traditional channels such as social media and messaging services. Sabino explains case studies as “(...) profound and exhaustive

study of one or very few research objects, which makes it possible to obtain broad and detailed knowledge of them” (1992, p. 66).

This is qualitative exploratory research that characterizes the narrative structures and design of the pieces used to distribute verified content in the Bolivian project “Repartiendo verdades. #NoAlOdio” and the work of the Tecnológico de Monterrey’s Digital Media Observatory in Mexico during the 2024 elections. So, this study is centered on the characteristics of the verified content, editorial decisions and actions taken by the leader projects.

The corpus was selected according to relevance as the pieces explicitly were designed to communicate verified information; its format -visual or audiovisual narratives adaptable to social media; and context, because they were produced in electoral or high-risk information environments where verification is critical.

Based on these criteria, the sample includes more than 50 visual pieces produced by the Bolivian project “Repartiendo verdades. #NoAlOdio” and the work of the Tecnológico de Monterrey’s Digital Media Observatory in Mexico during the 2024 elections.

The analysis combines three complementary techniques. First, visual design analysis, used to examine how the pieces evolved from text-heavy fact-checking articles into highly visual assets designed for WhatsApp, focusing on color palettes, typography, and the layout strategies that improved clarity and shareability. Second, verification-design cues analysis, aimed at identifying credibility markers, specific terms, and contextual elements incorporated into the pieces, as well as the visual mechanisms used to explain verification outcomes and engage audiences in fast-paced digital environments. Third, editorial decision analysis, applied to reconstruct the logic behind the selection of the content, and the adaptation of long-form reports into concise visual micro-narratives.

Together, these techniques enable a systematic characterization of the verified content, the editorial decisions, and the visual-storytelling strategies adopted by the two projects analyzed.

Storytelling for debunking

“Repartiendo verdades. #NoalOdio”: Personal stories and shareable visual content

In the context of increasing discursive violence and discrimination against minority or vulnerable groups in Bolivia, the Bolivia Verifica fact-checking team implemented a dedicated monitoring program for these narratives. The team received specialized training to accurately identify the argumentative mechanisms characteristic of such actions.

The use of testimonies from people affected by or involved in the problematic situation was the main element in the project's storytelling: the pieces depicted specific situations, as well as the effects and harm caused by discrimination and hate speech on social media in Bolivia. Thus, upon identifying misleading narratives or those promoting hate speech, the fact-checkers intervened by producing a written report (see Figure 1) that highlighted the biases in the content under analysis and the specific elements of hate speech present in those social-media posts.

Figure 1.

Article published by Bolivia Verifica. Credit: Bolivia Verifica, 2023



Traditional fact-checking labels faced an added challenge here: hate speech does not always stem from false information but is often linked to the concept of

malinformation—that is, information that may be true yet is used to harm the reputation of a person or organization (Wardle & Derakshan, 2017).

Proyecto Desconfío developed a differentiated strategy for distributing verified content. To this end, our misinformation and hate-narrative experts collaborated with the design team to create a series of graphic assets with minimal text and high visual impact, specifically intended to disseminate the verified information.

As several recent studies have shown, infographics and visual campaigns are particularly effective in the digital age, where information consumption is overwhelmingly visual. These narratives leverage graphic elements and video testimonies to explain verification processes and dismantle complex misinformation (Arifin, 2021).

That approach was adopted at Proyecto Desconfío to help stem hate speech in Bolivia, where discrimination and symbolic violence even served as a breeding ground for physical violence. To achieve a comprehensive strategy that could be sustained over time, the process was carried out in several stages:

- A) Workshops: Proyecto Desconfío trained for 2 months Bolivia Verifica's fact checkers and journalists in Disinformation and Hate Speech, to carry out media monitoring, identification, and analysis of hate narratives.
- B) Social media publications: Hate speech verifications were specially adapted to design pieces to be disseminated on X and Facebook. In total, the publications reached 179,278 people. They also had 14,981 direct interactions (comments, replies and likes) and were shared 138 times.

By training journalists already familiar with fact-checking routines, we added specific skills and criteria for them to dismantle pieces that promoted hate speech.

This required a four-week training program, which included researchers specialized in hate narratives who laid the groundwork for distinguishing misinformation from hate speech. As the European Commission's expert group notes: "Misinformation, as defined in this Report, includes all forms of false, inaccurate, or misleading information that is knowingly composed, presented, and promoted to cause public harm or for profit" (2018, p. 5).

This definition clarifies that: "It does not cover issues arising from the creation and dissemination online of illegal content (in particular defamation, hate speech, and

incitement to violence), which are subject to regulatory remedies under national or EU law” (2018, p. 6).

This distinction was crucial for the Bolivia Verifica team’s journalists, since their task was not always to detect misleading content but—above all—to identify prejudices, biases, and denigrations that were not necessarily accompanied by false information.

From the beginning, the main goal of this project implemented by Proyecto Desconfío (Argentina) and Bolivia Verifica (Bolivia) was to mitigate the effects of the hate speech that circulates through social networks and, in this way, contribute to limit the polarization that today divides Bolivian society.

The activities carried out contributed to achieving the objectives set, in relation to three aspects: installation of new skills in the editorial staff of Bolivia Verifica, incorporation of visual formats to distribute content, and the contribution to public debate in Bolivia.

In this context, the incorporation of the hate speech issue into its daily work through the alliance with Proyecto Desconfío, allowed it to expand the scope of analysis in the verification process. Proyecto Desconfío’s experts trained journalists to understand the phenomenon of hate speech and thus incorporate it into their work methodology.

The main achievement of the project in this aspect is that the Bolivia Verifica editorial team has been able to incorporate a more comprehensive approach to content verification and thus enrich the project’s publications.

The role of a new format for storytelling

The incorporation of a new visual format for the distribution of verified content in social media has had a greater impact on the target audience. To achieve this result, Bolivia Verifica elaborated articles with hate speech verification and in-depth analysis with the intervention of professionals specialized in human rights.

Then the design team of Proyecto Desconfío adapted these contents to publish them on social networks, with special emphasis on WhatsApp. As a result of the coordinated work between both teams, new capacities were introduced in Bolivia Verifica’s editorial staff, which is a new achievement within the framework of the project.

- Distribution via WhatsApp: The design pieces were specially adapted, and different groups were created to disseminate the contents. The first group is made up of media directors and journalism editors (51 members). The second dissemination group is made up of NGOs and representatives of entities working for HRDs (12 members). Finally, the "Verifying Journalists" group is made up of 570 journalists from different regions of the country and continues to grow day by day.
- Hate speech monitoring and verification: Between February and May 2023, 26 hate speech verifications were produced. The articles were published with in-depth analysis on the Bolivia Verifica website and on the official project website www.noalodio.org.

Design and distribution, the key to success

One of the most significant lessons that this project has taught us is the centrality of the design of the content so that they are easily understandable and shareable. The main purpose of any journalistic project must be to get the message across to the audience. Without this, the work is unfinished or incomplete.

But for those who work in verification, the challenge is even greater. It is not only a matter of reaching as many people as possible. The goal is to ensure that those who receive the message understand what it is about and reflect on the importance of detecting hate speeches that circulate and that in many cases are completely naturalized in the communities.

With this goal in mind, Proyecto Desconfío generated a series of test visual content that circulated on WhatsApp. These images summarize the most notable content of the verification, with this structure:

- What happened
- Why it happened
- No to hate (the discrediting of the discriminatory post)
- A hashtag # to join the #NoAlOdio campaign and
- The project's WhatsApp contact number to schedule and report or receive updates.

Figure 2.

Model A. Visual fact check image sent by WhatsApp. Credit: #Noalodio, 2023



This first version -model A- circulated for several weeks, with various cases of hate speech reported under this format. However, user interactions and some case analyses with real users testing showed that the text component was still too excessive for the format and size of the graphic pieces.

With this insight, the process of iteration and improvement resulted in a new version of pieces for WhatsApp with a greater emphasis on images and less text. Thus, a new format -model B- was developed with this structure:

- an illustrative image that described the case,
- specific terms used to discriminate,
- a link to view detailed information attached to the image.

Figure 3. Model B. Visual fact check image sent by WhatsApp. Credit: #Noalodio, 2023



Sometimes, a second visual content was sent specifically designed to highlight the campaign's # and how to report violence and hate speech on social media so the case could be analyzed by the verification team.

Figure 4.

Campaign model. Credit: #Noalodio, 2023



The publication and distribution of hate speech verifications in different formats and platforms, have contributed significantly to disseminating this problem in the community and to measuring the extent to which it is necessary to counteract the discourses that discriminate against minorities in Bolivia. Other actions were also taken to boost the distribution of content, such as:

- Newsletter: Although it was not initially part of the initiative, Proyecto Desconfío proposed the addition of a weekly newsletter to achieve a greater reach of the contents produced, the newsletter was sent every Friday to 2000

people and institutions. It contains information on the verifications carried out and a direct link to joining the WhatsApp group, which enables the community to continue growing.

- Media interviews: the project aroused the interest of colleagues and media, who came to learn more about the project. During the months of March, April and May, the Bolivia Verifica team was interviewed by Página Siete, FM La Paz 96.7, Erbol Radio, La Doble and TVU of La Paz. Also, Radio Nacional de Argentina interviewed Adrián Pino (Proyecto Desconfío) about the article "Bolita", the xenophobic term used to denigrate the Bolivian community in Argentina, published within the framework of the project.

Interest in the initiative transcended borders and attracted the attention of internationally recognized media on journalism such as Laboratorio de Periodismo¹ (Spain) and Latam Journalism Review² which highlighted the initiative.

OMD in Mexico: countering electoral disinformation

For Mexico's presidential election in 2024, the Digital Media Observatory (OMD, in Spanish) of the Tecnológico de Monterrey in Mexico launched a powerful electoral disinformation monitoring program that allowed them to identify false narratives and disinformation campaigns aimed at deceiving voters.

The Observatory's work was methodologically rigorous and yielded valuable results. Still, part of the challenge was achieving the visibility and impact necessary for this monitoring to reach Mexican voters.

Within this framework, Proyecto Desconfío intervention focused on implementing the design of a strategy for the distribution of verified content, which included:

- New narrative formats
- Engagement strategies for verified content
- Selection of distribution channels and formats
- Campaign visual identity

¹ Article available on <https://laboratoriodeperiodismo.org/bolivia-repartiendo-verdades-a-traves-de-whatsapp-para-combatir-la-desinformacion-y-los-discursos-de-odio-virales/>

² Article available on <https://latamjournalismreview.org/articles/repartiendo-verdades-spreading-truth-an-initiative-to-combat-hate-speech-and-polarization-in-bolivia-through-fact-checking/>

The challenge was to enhance the project's overall communication to highlight the electoral disinformation monitoring they identified. Desconfío Project developed a series of internal workflows aimed at unifying the visual aspects of the channels used by the OMD.

The first effort consisted of documenting the channels used, visually unifying all these avenues, and developing the design of specific pieces tailored to each communication channel. Desconfío Project team created a color palette to ensure the OMD was quickly recognizable on any of its digital channels. Additionally, a Brand Manual was created to ensure continuity of communication in future initiatives.

Regarding the distribution of specifically verified content, the challenge arose from the need to enhance the reach of the electoral disinformation monitoring carried out by the OMD team during the pre-election period in Mexico. Desconfío implemented the following actions:

- Creation of a newsletter to reach recipients already connected to the project with daily information highlighting circulating misinformation and the corresponding fact-checks. The clean design and strong visual identity with the project's own colors enabled the project to have a rapid impact, as it began receiving inquiries from journalists and requests for interviews with media outlets to showcase the results of electoral misinformation monitoring.

Figure 5.
OMD newsletter template by Proyecto Desconfío.



Source: OMD 2024.

The launch of a new professional website for the Observatory was done. They had a free, self-managed site that had some limitations in terms of user interaction and opportunities for improvement in the site's overall structure. At Proyecto Desconfío, we learned that the reference website for any initiative working on issues related to disinformation requires clear signs of trust, such as an initiative-specific URL, dedicated servers, a clear visual identity for the project, and an SSL certificate. Beyond the efforts of the OMD to advance these aspects, Proyecto Desconfío designed a mockup of the site to ensure visual impact and identification with the rest of the communication channels.

Another relevant action consisted of providing the OMD team with design templates for generating content for social media. There, Proyecto Desconfío's work focused on strengthening the initiative's visual identity and ensuring an easy-to-read format for the fragmented consumption typical of social media environments. This new design also sought to adopt many of the lessons learned from Bolivia's #NoAlOidio, prioritizing highly visual content over text.

Figure 6 & 7.

Template design for social media posts created by Proyecto Desconfío to OMD



Source: OMD, 2024.

Impact and documented results

#NoAlOidio project demonstrated how a new way of thinking and generating verified content in easy-to-read and understanding formats with a high visual component can be key to educating audiences about hate narratives or electoral processes and their consequences.

The campaign not only discouraged the creation of such content but also led political representatives to publicly apologize for the use of discriminatory terms or expressions. Additionally, the issue became a topic of public debate and many actors, including journalists, began to modify common expressions of discrimination that had become normalized in everyday language and on social media.

In the case of the OMD's electoral disinformation monitoring program in Mexico, the intervention and design of a specific storytelling strategy allowed the project to take center stage in the media spotlight, generating interest from national and international media outlets thanks to the implementation of the newsletter as a distribution channel for verified content. In turn, the unification of visual criteria and professionalization of design aspects also ensured rapid identification of reliable content on social media and other channels such as WhatsApp.

Important lessons from the field

The implementation of "Repartiendo verdades #NoAlOdio" and Monitoring of electoral disinformation in México was intense and challenging, and the projects left many lessons to be shared. To open the experience for colleagues and specialized media to replicate it, and to add our contribution to the fight against disinformation and hate narratives, we share the main lessons.

- A) Verification process as a basis. To identify hate speech and electoral disinformation it is essential to have knowledge of fact-checking tools and be familiar with content verification. The tools and procedures usually used in fact-checking are elementary when identifying hate speech or electoral disinformation, because they are usually linked to misinformation on a particular topic.
- B) Denaturalizing labels and cultural patterns. For those who work in monitoring and verifying hate speech, it is essential, first, to set aside prejudices and denaturalize labels and cultural patterns that have been present in society for a long time. This is one of the greatest challenges to clearly identify when hate speech is involved. It is also essential to be able to identify the historical basis that supports such narratives.

In the case of electoral disinformation, it is important to create a way to deliver verified information that is easy to understand and remember. This requires avoiding technicalities and regulatory aspects to focus on the effects that electoral disinformation seeks to instill among voters. Designing pieces with

strong visual components is essential to achieving impact in these types of contexts.

- C) Create a strong visual identity for projects that ensure clear visibility. In the complexity of digital environments, it is crucial that initiatives that distribute verified content adopt and develop a strong and clear visual identity that ensures quick identification on social media and other digital spaces contaminated with diverse content.

In both projects, the storytelling adopted was essential to ensuring impact and delivering verified information to audiences. One of the key elements of this process was ensuring iteration, trial and error processes, that are adjusted as feedback is received from final users.

Discussions and conclusions

Both projects have tried different storytelling techniques to empower distributing verified content and debunking disinformation and succeed in compelling conversation with the audience. Verified narratives not only debunk disinformation, but also strengthen communities' informational resilience, promoting critical thinking and trust in legitimate sources. Evidence indicates that well-designed storytelling contributes significantly to building more informed and resilient societies in the face of disinformation.

Innovation in the distribution of verified content has become a cornerstone of fact-checking, since merely publishing a debunk on a website isn't enough: it's vital to bring verification results to the media environments where audiences consume content. The most effective approaches combine authenticity, personal testimonies, interactive tools, and audiovisual resources, adapting to the dynamics of contemporary news consumption.

Journalists must develop the skills to distribute content in digital platforms by adapting formats, syntax, languages and the dynamics of each network. This implies experimenting with visual narratives and reels on Instagram, threads on X (formerly Twitter), short videos on TikTok, or stickers on WhatsApp.

It is important to note that these same narrative techniques are often used by disinformers. Therefore, while we understand storytelling as a strategy that helps bring verified content closer to audiences, it must be accompanied by additional approaches that strengthen media-literacy competencies. Only then can citizens develop the skills

needed to avoid becoming victims of disinformation, manipulation and polarized narratives.

This study remarks the relevance of alliances of fact-checking initiatives with external organizations like Proyecto Desconfío, making a great combination of verified content and storytelling to counter disinformation. The distance and perspective of external allies specialized on disinformation, but focused on how to create, show and distribute verified content is a good practice to scale.

This study presents two successful cases of storytelling applied to the distribution of verified content in specific Latin American contexts. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of these findings, which should be tested through additional experiences and across more diverse communities.

The initiatives analyzed show that engaging storytelling enhances media literacy because it transforms verified information into accessible narratives that are easier to understand and apply. By doing so, it helps news users identify credible sources, interpret evidence, and participate more confidently in civic life.

In the cases studied, we identified that when verified content is presented through powerful formats—such as visual narratives, testimonial videos, or emotionally resonant stories— audiences can observe how evidence is gathered, how sources are evaluated, and how arguments are constructed or manipulated.

These non-traditional formats strengthen key media-literacy skills by fostering critical-thinking skills, enabling citizens to recognize harmful narratives (including hate speech, violent discourse, or discriminatory messages), and making them more capable of independently evaluating the information they encounter.

Ultimately, engaging storytelling not only encourages the consumption of verified content but also supports the transfer of verification criteria into everyday media practices—an essential component of media and information literacy.

References

- Arifin, S. (2021). Indonesian officials and media fight vaccine hesitancy, misinformation. *Asian Politics & Policy*, 13(4), 1-5. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/aspp.12608>.
- Denning, S. (2008). Cómo los líderes pueden usar narrativas poderosas como catalizadores del cambio. *Estrategia y Liderazgo*, 36(2), 11-15.
- European Commission. (2018). A multi-dimensional approach to disinformation: Report of the independent High-Level Group on fake news and online disinformation. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/6ef4df8b-4cea-11e8-be1d-01aa75ed71a1>.
- European Commission. (2025, June 16th). *State of the Digital Decade 2025 report*. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/library/state-digital-decade-2025-report>.
- Graves, L., y Cherubini, F. (2016). *The rise of fact-checking sites in Europe (Reuters Institute Digital News Report)*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- Islam, M. S., Sarkar, T., Khan, S. H., Mostofa Kamal, A. H., Hasan, S. M. M., Kabir, A., y Seale, H. (2021). Spread of COVID-19 Vaccine Misinformation in the Ninth Inning: Retrospective Observational Infodemic Study. *JMIR Infodemiology*, 2(1), e33587. <https://doi.org/10.2196/33587>.
- López Linares, C. (2023, May 22). Repartiendo verdades, una iniciativa para combatir el discurso de odio y la polarización en Bolivia desde el fact-checking. *LatAm Journalism Review*. <https://latamjournalismreview.org/es/articles/repartiendoverdades-una-iniciativa-para-combatir-el-discurso-de-odio-y-la-polarizacion-en-bolivia-desde-el-fact-checking/>.
- López Linares, C. (2023, December 7). *10 proyectos periodísticos innovadores que causaron impacto en América Latina en 2023*. *LatAm Journalism Review*. <https://latamjournalismreview.org/es/articles/10-proyectos-periodisticos-innovadores-que-causaron-impacto-en-america-latina-en-2023/>.
- López Linares, C. (2024, December 12). *10 proyectos periodísticos innovadores que causaron impacto en América Latina en 2024*. *LatAm Journalism Review*. <https://latamjournalismreview.org/es/articles/10-proyectos-periodisticos-innovadores-que-causaron-impacto-en-america-latina-en-2024/>.
- Love, H. (s.f.). SCM storytelling [PDF]. <http://www.nickihayes.com/wp-content/portfolio/scm-storytelling.pdf>.
- Morduchowicz, R. (2021). *Competencias y habilidades digitales*. UNESCO.

- McDowell, K. (2024). *Storytelling and/as Misinformation: Storytelling dynamics and narrative structures for three cases of COVID-19 viral misinformation*. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/items/126223>.
- NAMLE (n.d). *Media literacy defined*. NAMLE. <https://namle.org/resources/media-literacy-defined/>
- Newman, N. (2021, june 23th). *Executive summary and key findings: Digital News Report 2021*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/dnr-executive-summary>.
- Newman, N. (2024, june 17th). *Overview and key findings of the 2024 Digital News Report*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2024/dnr-executive-summary>.
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R. K. (2020). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2020*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford. <https://doi.org/10.60625/risj-048n-ap07>
- Newman, N., Ross Arguedas, A., Robertson, CT, Nielsen, RK y Fletcher, R. (2025). *Informe de noticias digitales 2025*. Instituto Reuters para el Estudio del Periodismo.
- Nielsen, R.K. (2025, junio). *How the public checks information it thinks might be wrong*. Digital News Report 2025. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/how-public-checks-information-it-thinks-might-be-wrong>.
- Pino, A., & Arréguez Manozzo, S. (2025). *The Trust Editor: Una herramienta de IA del Proyecto Desconfío para recuperar la confianza en las noticias*. En H. M. Sánchez Gonzales (ed.), *Entrepreneurship and artificial intelligence in journalism* (pp. 95-112). McGraw-Hill.
- Poynter Institute. (2025, March). *State of the fact-checkers report 2024* [PDF]. Poynter Institute.
- Radosińska, J., & Ján V. (2021). *Fake News Is Bad News: Hoaxes, Half-Truths and the Nature of Today's Journalism*. IntechOpen.
- Sabino, C. (1992). *El proceso de la investigación*. Editorial Panapo.
- Scolari, C. (2008). *Hipermediaciones: Elementos para una teoría de la comunicación digital interactiva*. Gedisa.
- Shelby, A., & Ernst, K. (2013). *Story and science: how providers and parents can utilize storytelling to combat anti-vaccine misinformation*. *Human vaccines & immunotherapeutics*, 9(8), 1795–1801. <https://doi.org/10.4161/hv.24828>.

- Tang, Y., Chen, Q., & Jin, S. (2021). A Review of Misinformation Across Disciplines: *Implication for Online Education*. Preprints, 2021080511. <https://www.preprints.org/manuscript/202108.0511/v2>.
- UNESCO (1982). Declaración de Grünwald sobre la Educación en Medios.
- UNESCO (2021). Media and information literate citizens: Think critically, click wisely! <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf000037706>.
- UNESCO. (2024a). *Behind the screens: Insights from digital content creators*. UNESCO. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>.
- UNESCO (2024b, April 17). Herramientas innovadoras de la UNESCO para la alfabetización mediática e informacional. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/es/articles/herramientas-innovadoras-de-la-unesco-para-la-alfabetizacion-mediatica-e-informacional>.
- Vargas de la Cruz, V. T. (2025). *Narración. El arte de contar historias* (1ª ed).
- Wang, W., & Huang, Y. (2023). Correcting anti-vaccine misinformation with storytelling: The effects of narratives and correction placement. En *Narratives in public communication* (pp. 10–30). Routledge.
- Wardle, C. & Derakshan, H. (2017) Information Disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making, Council of Europe.
- Witness (2021). Deepfakes, misinformation and disinformation and authenticity infrastructure responses: Impacts on frontline witnessing, distant witnessing, and civic journalism. *Journalism*, 22(10), 1-14. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14648849211060644>.
- Wright, J. (2024, March 1st). How to go from storytelling to fact telling and still sell products, ideas and hope. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 12(4), 355-363. <https://doi.org/10.69554/KPRL8731>.