Transparency via podcasting: a journalistic strategy in search of authority

Transparencia vía podcasting: estrategia periodística en busca de autoridad

Transparência via podcasting: uma estratégia jornalística em busca de autoridade

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ABSTRACT | Covering an emergency such as the war in Ukraine is a challenge for the media and for the journalistic profession in general. The threats of disinformation and propaganda inherent to this type of war coverage are on top of a difficult economic environment for the journalistic enterprise as well as a crisis of credibility and identity of the professional journalist. At a time of changing habits in the consumption of information by audiences, this research analyzes the podcasting strategies of the two main Spanish newspapers (*El País* and *El Mundo*), when applied to information on Ukraine, and asks up to what extent the exercise of transparency proposed in the podcasts *Hoy en El País* and *El Mundo al día* can bring about a restoration in the credibility of journalism.

KEY WORDS: podcasting; journalism; transparency; credibility; war in Ukraine.

RESUMEN| *La cobertura informativa de una emergencia como la guerra de Ucrania supone un reto para los medios y para la profesión periodística. Las amenazas de la desinformación y la propaganda propias de este tipo de coberturas bélicas se añaden a un entorno económico difícil para la empresa periodística y de crisis de credibilidad e identidad del periodista profesional. En un momento de cambio de hábitos en el consumo de información de las audiencias, esta investigación analiza las estrategias de podcasting inauguradas por las dos principales cabeceras de prensa españolas (El País y El Mundo), aplicadas a la información sobre Ucrania, y se pregunta hasta qué punto el ejercicio de transparencia que proponen en los pódcast Hoy en El País y El Mundo al día puede cooperar en la restauración de la credibilidad del periodismo.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *podcasting; periodismo; transparencia; credibilidad; guerra de Ucrania.*

RESUMO| A cobertura informativa de uma emergência como a guerra na Ucrânia é um desafio para a mídia e para a profissão de jornalista. As ameaças de desinformação e propaganda próprias deste tipo de cobertura de guerra são adicionadas a um ambiente económico difícil para a empresa jornalística e a uma crise de credibilidade e identidade do jornalista profissional. Em um momento de mudança de hábitos no consumo de informação por parte do público, esta pesquisa analisa as estratégias de podcasting inauguradas pelos dois principais jornais espanhóis (*El País* e *El Mundo)*, aplicadas à informação sobre a Ucrânia, e questiona até que ponto o exercício de transparência proposto nos podcasts *Hoy en El País* e *El Mundo al día* pode colaborar para a restauração da credibilidade do jornalismo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: podcasting; jornalismo; transparência; credibilidade; guerra ucraniana.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 19th century, thanks to technological progress and the development of transportation and literacy, the press joined the elite club of mass consumption. World War multiplied interest in news: citizens needed to be informed about the situation on the war front, threatened localities, casualties, diplomatic negotiations, etc. The newspaper business became a profitable industry and journalism a valued profession and a fundamental factor in international politics (Barrera, 2004).

A century later, the scenario looks very different. When the war in Ukraine broke out on the European continent, the consumption of newsprint declined (Ramonet, 2011; Díaz Nosty, 2011; Del Barrio, 2018) and the journalistic profession experienced a worrying loss of credibility (Maciá-Barber, 2007; Burgueño, 2010; Gómez Mompart et al., 2015). Faced with the threat of a new global conflict, citizens still feel the need to stay informed and try to satisfy this need away from the newspaper, namely through online audiovisual media, social networks, etc. (Newman et al. (Newman et al. 2021). Journalists are also present there, but with a thinned-out prestige in a market that is bombarded with an infinite amount of spontaneously generated information. Journalists no longer have a monopoly on the use of information and must regain their dominance if they want to play a role in the public sphere again (Sánchez de la Nieta & Fuente Cobo, 2020; Campos-Freire, 2016).

In Ukraine, as in any other war, the propaganda of the actors involved in the conflict targets the traditional mass media in order to steer public opinion towards their interests. They achieve this through the use of new technological manipulation techniques and with the usual false interests, forcing journalists and editors to increase their verification effort if they want to fulfill their inescapable duty to provide a public service. Traditional media outlets are also tackling their strategies for on-the-ground coverage of the new conflict in the midst of a double crisis— - the pressure on their business model that has existed for years and the global economic crisis that has shaken all businesses in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First-hand information —and not from secondary sources— is a guarantee of trustworthiness. The media are trying to send their journalists to the war front, even if it comes at a human and economic cost. The professionalism of these special correspondents becomes the media's main added value in this toxic environment of disinformation (Sádaba & Salaverría, 2023; García Marín & Salvat-Martinrrey, 2023). By showing what they do and inform, while being transparent about their professional commitment to the search for truth, they undoubtedly increase the credibility of the media. Thus, some traditional media

are finding support in new content platforms —podcasts— to ensure truthfulness in journalistic work (Perdomo & Rodrigues Rouleau, 2021), as in this case of the special envoys in Ukraine.

In this article, we will focus on two Spanish media outlets that have recently adopted this strategy of creating news content modeled on the internationally renowned *Daily News Podcasts* (Martínez Otón et al., 2022; Carvajal et al., 2022; Whittle, 2023). These newspapers are *El País* and *El Mundo.* Both have recently started to publish daily podcasts that can be accessed through the newspapers' website and through the main podcast platforms in Spain (Apple Podcast, iVoox, Spotify, etc.): *El Mundo al día* by *El Mundo* and *Hoy en El País* by *El País*. The aim is to provide a qualitative analysis of the podcast episodes produced in collaboration with the special correspondents on the ground, namely Quico Alsedo, Xavier Colás, Javier Espinosa, Lluis Miquel Hurtado and Alberto Rojas from *El Mundo* and Antonio Pita, María Sahuquillo, Cristian Segura and Luis de Vega from *El País*, on the war in Ukraine.

RATIONALE
The war in Ukraine

The invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, but it can be traced far back to Russia's forcible seizure of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine in 2014 and the so-called Donbas war in 2014, when Russia annexed the Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Many analysts believe that the current war is nothing more than a continuation of this war.

The most recent precedent of the invasion was Russian President Vladimir Putin's refusal to reject a hypothetical accession of Ukraine to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which would have meant that Russia would have hundreds of kilometers of border with the Atlantic Alliance. At the end of 2021, Western intelligence agencies began to notice large Russian troop movements towards the Ukrainian border. These days, Putin is demanding a written commitment from NATO that neither Ukraine nor any of the republics of the former Soviet Union will be allowed to join the alliance, to which the United States responds with outright rejection.

Amid a flurry of declarations, Putin recognizes the independence of the self-proclaimed separatist republics of Donetsk and Luhansk on February, 21 2022. On February 24, the Russian president announces the invasion of Ukraine as a special military operation that he believes is intended to protect the population from genocide by the Ukrainian government.

In the first month of the war — the period of the podcasts selected for this study — a major resistance by the Ukrainian army is expected, forcing Russian troops to retreat in some areas —for example in the capital Kiev — and a slow advance in the east of the country. Thirty days into the war, the action focuses on the siege of Kiev and the Russian advance into the cities of Luhansk and Mariupol. The atrocities committed by the Russian invaders against the Ukrainian civilian population become known. In these first weeks of the war, the first special envoys from the world's leading media arrived in the conflict zone.

The mass media in the Ukrainian war

In order to understand the media coverage of the war in Ukraine, it is important to consider a few oddities from a communication perspective.

The journalist, as in any other type of war, fulfills the important role of witnessing and surveillance. However, the current scenario of information dissemination means that every citizen is able to document and communicate the reality of the Russian invasion of Ukraine through social networks. The journalist, having lost the exclusive privilege of informing a potential mass audience, is asked to adhere to principles that do not bind other citizen reporters in the same way: ethical rigor, commitment to the facts and contrasted information in the midst of a propaganda battle through a sophisticated discipline of verification. Traditional media are required to provide an institutional guarantee that the slice of reality published makes sense and corresponds to actual truths.

A number of Western media outlets, many of them in financial difficulties, are making extraordinary efforts to disseminate information by sending special envoys to the main conflict zones. There are many journalists reporting from the invaded Ukraine, risking their safety in the process. In addition to rivalry with social media and disinformation emanating from the warring parties (García Marín & Salvat Martinrey, 2023), journalists working on the ground in Ukraine must cope with high levels of job insecurity and lack of security in order to do their jobs (Etura & Martín Sánchez, n.d.). Obstacles to reporting on events in Russia are also clearly noticeable due to the strict censorship imposed by the Putin government.

An important role is played by freelance journalists who also work on the ground to provide content to the conventional media via social networks or with their own resources.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Wars, media and journalists are changing, but so is the way we absorb information. Citizens are looking for more digital formats that are compatible

with the speed of the prevailing lifestyle (Vara et al., 2022). Audiences are shifting from traditional media to social networks and digital native media, and the way of accessing these media is changing as mobile devices allow the masses to absorb content ubiquitously and asynchronously (Gil Ramírez & Gómez de Travesedo Rojas, 2018).

In this context, the growing popularity of podcasts (Amoedo-Casais et al., 2022) is one of the consequences of this changing way of consuming information and explains why newspaper companies are strategically venturing into this format (Lindeberg, 2019; Newman & Gallo, n.d.; Martínez-Costa & Lus Garate, 2019; Verdier, 2018). Martinez-Costa and colleagues (2022) explain that "the podcast is defined as a digital audio product created for multiplatform distribution, on-demand consumption and subscription thanks to RSS (really simple syndication) content syndication technology". Recent studies (Perdomo & Rodrigues-Rouleau, 2021) have discovered several virtual characteristics of the podcast that can help minimize one of the biggest crises of the journalistic profession: the loss of credibility (Vara et al., 2022).

Some authors (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2003) suggested some time ago that one of the ways for journalism to regain its authority in the eyes of citizens is through transparency: If the journalist makes crystal clear the way in which he or she obtained the information, this increases his or her authority in the eyes of those same readers. "The unique practical way to tell the public how much we know is to show our methods and sources as far as possible. How do we know what we know? Who are our sources?" (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2003, p. 113). Recently, other researchers have also ventured down this path of transparency to make up for the loss of credibility (Karlsson & Clerwall, 2018). Others even speak of the possibility that this transparency could practically empower the audience by giving them the opportunity to monitor, review, criticize and even intervene in the journalistic process (Deuze, 2005).

It is therefore understandable that some authors refer to the podcast as a valuable tool to restore the journalist's reputation through this transparency (Amoedo-Casais et al., 2022). Thanks to this format, which accompanies and complements what is published in traditional media, professionals can showcase their editorial work and culture to the outside world through the transparency of disclosure (Karlsson, 2010) and personal transparency (Hedman, 2016). The aim is for the audience's understanding of the journalist's working methods to translate into greater respect for their work. Similarly, through the podcast of these media —in this case, the newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo*— the journalist projects his or her journalistic work into the newsroom through the episode's host

or anchorperson—, an interesting act of self-reflection that reinforces the media's own journalistic culture.

Other authors (Carlson, 2016) prove that the transparency sought in podcasts is a meta-journalistic act: a kind of journalism about journalism (Ogbebor, 2020), which is performative as it acts on the perception of journalistic authority. This is the case insofar as journalists use these podcasts to reinforce certain norms, values and professional methods of journalism.

OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The way in which war is reported and informed about in the 21st century is fundamentally different from a century ago. Media and journalists work in very different ways to reach an audience that is also informed in different ways. The former seek to regain credibility and the latter to obtain reliable information. The podcast format can be a virtual form of adherence (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2020), demonstrating both yearnings in the path of transparency: the openness of journalists to reveal their methods, processes, limitations, and resources that allow any reader or listener to critique, review, and monitor the work of these professionals, leading to greater accountability and commitment to the truth.

The aim of this investigation is to verify whether the media and journalists through the podcasts *El Mundo al día* and *Hoy en El País* are actually committed to this transparency in their coverage of the war in Ukraine.

In the analysis that Perdomo and Rodrigues-Rouleau (2021) carry out on the New York Times' podcast *Caliphate of the New York Times,* they identify three elements through which the authors can make their work transparent to the media podcast clients: 1) they can reveal the journalistic process that leads them to create a story; 2) they can show the personality of the reporter and 3) this resource allows them to affirm journalistic culture and values. We will attempt to accomplish our goal by asking the following research questions:

a. Are there narrative elements in the analyzed podcasts that reveal the journalistic process that leads to the publication of the newspaper information?

b. Are there narrative elements that show the personality of the reporter?

c. Are there narrative elements that reinforce journalistic culture and values?

METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

For this study, we have selected the podcasts produced by the two Spanish newspapers with the largest audiences: *Hoy en El País* and *El Mundo al día*. We have selected the episodes about the war in Ukraine that were broadcast during the first month of the conflict, between February 24 and March 30, 2022. The podcast *El Mundo al día* published a total of 26 episodes between these dates, 16 of which were dedicated to the war in Ukraine. *Hoy en El País* published 33 episodes, of which only six dealt with the war in Ukraine.

Hoy en El País is published every day of the week and aims to analyze a current news topic in depth. The newspaper has been published since March 2, 2022 and aims to provide its readers and subscribers with high-quality, in-depth content by the newspaper's editors in a slow, explanatory and familiar tone. The moderation and episode management is carried out alternately by two voices: one male (Íñigo Domínguez) and one female (Ana Fuentes). The topics chosen do not always depend on the articles or reports published in the newspaper that day; on occasion, it retrieves previous editions or opts for their own approaches. The average length of each episode is more than 20 minutes.

The podcast *El Mundo al día* is only published from Monday to Friday and deals with one of the aspects of current affairs published in the newspaper that day. It was first broadcast on July 15, 2021 and is the first daily news podcast produced by a leading Spanish newspaper in this form of in-depth analysis (Martínez-Otón et al., 2022). It is hosted by Javier Attard, a journalist from the daily newspaper with previous radio experience. The podcast usually consists of Attard's interview with the editors or correspondents who made the report in the print media. The average length of each episode is about 15 minutes.

The methodology used in this research is content analysis (Abela, 2000). The analysis of each of the 22 podcasts is carried out by two researchers on the basis of an analysis sheet that we have prepared, with which we identify evidence of fragments of transparency among the three categories that constitute our research questions, namely:

   a. Disclosure of the journalistic process.

   b. Construction of the reporter's personality.

   c. Reaffirmation of the journalistic culture.

In the two podcasts analyzed, the production is similar and is based on a conversation between the episode host and the newspaper editors, edited pieces are formed and complemented with a variety of sound sources in which careful

post-production is evident. Editing plays a crucial role: starting from the recorded conversation and reducing it to the essentials, supplementary sounds such as voices, ambient sounds, street recordings, sound files and even film dialog or audio clips from television programs are inserted. All of these resources serve to illustrate and build the news context and are intended to capture the listener's attention. The role of the editors in these podcasts is to mediate — they are the ones who find the appropriate sources and provide the host — and therefore the listener — with the interpretation needed to understand a news item.

OUTCOMES

After analyzing the 22 selected episodes, we found the following fragments in which instances of transparency are shown according to the given categories. To locate them, we indicate in the references the scientific repository where the links to each of these fragments were published.

Disclosure of the journalistic process

In a fair number of the analyzed episodes, the hosts ask the journalists to describe in detail how they arrived at the truth they are reporting. Every journalistic process begins with a journey to the scene of the event. In the analysis of the podcasts, the journey the journalists take to the center of the news is explained in great detail and vividly, including the preparations before these trips. In the episode *Putin se Lanza contra Ucrania* (Putin goes against Ukraine), published by *El Mundo al día, El Mundo*'s special envoy to the Polish border crossings, Javier Attard, tells how to journalist Alberto Rojas he prepares for the trip. Attard comments that:

> One of the goals of this podcast is none other than to tell the news from the inside, to bring our readers, listeners and users closer to what is behind the news we tell them. So I want us to take some time to explain how a journalist prepares to be on the ground, at a post in close proximity to war. (Trelles, 2023, 1)

Then, Alberto Rojas explains:

> Well, you see, I can tell you that I had already packed my suitcase. I thought I would have to leave sooner or later. I take a very light suitcase with me: a few changes of clothes, a thick sweater, thick socks too — it's cold there — a wooly hat, a camera — I take my own photos, I don't travel with a photographer — and a notebook in which I write everything down, as well as a laptop. And I don't want any more weight — with that and a laundromat nearby, I hope to last as long as the newspaper deems necessary, with a rental car to get wherever I need to go. I don't really need much (Trelles, 2023, 1).

A few days later, in the episode *Ucrania, así es como la guerra cambia un país* (Ukraine: this is how war changes a country) (Trelles, 2023, 7), Rojas recounts his journey from the border to Lviv in an "outdated, rusty, Soviet train" traveling at around 30 km/h, as well as the difficulties encountered in this city: for example, finding a bottle of milk.

The podcast *Hoy en El País* also deals with journalists' journeys to the war front. In the episode *Ucrania, ¿cómo hemos llegado hasta aqui?* (Ukraine: how did we get here?) (Trelles, 2023, 17), the newspaper's special correspondent for Ukraine, María Sahuquillo, tells host Ana Fuentes how she usually organizes her trips to the front: she usually takes a small suitcase with her and then organizes herself to find laundromats and cafés where she can write.

Another example is the episode *Viaje a bordo del tren de la guerra* (Journey aboard the war train) in *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 11). Host Javier Attard asks the reporter Lluis Miquel Hurtado to describe his train journey from Krakow (Poland) to Lviv. On the train, he interviewed other passengers who had traveled to the country at war: The audio of these accounts can be heard in the podcast. In the background you can hear a crowded train and station announcements, which adds a certain realism to the story. When he arrives, he narrates his impressions and complements this story with ambient sounds, which he says include the melody of a cello being played by a young woman on the street.

In all reports, difficulties arise for journalists after arriving in conflict areas. The podcasts also explain in detail the adversities and dangers of accessing the places at the center of the news, which are difficult to access in a war scenario. In the episode *Las garras de Putin apuntan a Odesa* (Putin's claws aim at Odesa) in *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 5), Javier Attard talks to Javier Espinosa, the special envoy for Odesa, who— explains to him not only the strategic role of this city (Black Sea port), but also the atmosphere there and how it has changed recently due to the imminent arrival of Russian troops. He confirms that there is a lot of mistrust and that a civilian had threatened to arrest him the day before because he thought he was a collaborator.

The episode *Ucrania desde dentro* (Ukraine from the inside) — published by *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 15) — is another example of an account of these difficulties faced by the journalist: a live conversation between the journalist Alberto Rojas and a checkpoint in Lviv is briefly heard, followed by an anti-aircraft alarm. Rojas explains the increasing difficulties he encounters during conversations at the checkpoint, as the guards are concerned about the access of Russian collaborators.

In the episode *¿Quiénes siguen trabajando mientras caen las bombas?* (Who is still working while the bombs are falling?) in *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 20), it is impressive to hear the anti-aircraft alarm as a background in the soundtrack sent by journalist Cristian Segura when he arrives in Lviv by car to report on what everyday life is like there.

Another example can be heard in the episode *¿Qué perdemos si cae Odesa?* (What will we lose if Odesa falls?) from *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 19). María Sahuquillo recounts her struggles to overcome several of these checkpoints in the city of Odesa when it was threatened by the Russian invasion. In fact, Sahuquillo has to interrupt her speech several times at the request of the guards.

The search for sources is another necessary step in journalistic reporting. It is interesting to see in the selected podcasts how much effort the journalists put into finding important sources that could shed light on the individual events surrounding the war. In *Ucrania: los que se van* (Ukraine: those who flee) by *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 21), Ana Fuentes talks to journalist Antonio Pita — special correspondent at the Ukrainian border posts with Poland — who reports on the issues he has been talking about these days with the people on the run and the volunteers who are looking after them.

Mariupol was one of the cities most severely damaged by the Russian invasion in the first month of the war. Residents spent days underground to escape the bombardment. Javier Espinosa, El Mundo's special envoy, was on the ground. In the episode *Muerte, destrucción y resistencia* (Death, destruction and resistance) from *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 8), he recounts how he managed to speak to a particularly revealing source: a woman who witnessed the drama of this city because her husband and daughter were besieged in a bunker without food, water or electricity.

It is common for these analyzed podcasts to also explain how they get these interesting sources. One example is the episode of *El Mundo al día* entitled Yerson*: la unica gran ciudad bajo las botas de Putin* (Kherson: the only big Ukrainian city under Putin's boots) (Trelles, 2023, 16). In this episode, Jose Maria Robles, the journalist for *El Mundo*'s newspaper supplement, recounts in an earlier report how he met Julio Suarez, who is now in Spain but had a grocery store in Kherson. From there, they made contact with his son Vitaly — a member of the resistance — who, in an audio recording from Kherson, describes the reality of the situation in this Ukrainian city, occupied by the Russians since the beginning of March, and the help he is providing to the affected families by delivering food and essential goods.

In the episode *Ucrania: los que se quedan* (Ukraine: those who stay) from *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 21), journalist Luis de Vega from Vynnyky, near Lviv, tells how he met Cristina, a 65-year-old Ukrainian woman who lived in Spain but returned to her country in 2020. This woman explains what everyday life is like for her family: between different jobs to make ends meet and with the sound of anti-aircraft sirens.

Also in *El Mundo al día*, the episode *La vida se abre paso en Ucrania entre misiles* (Life emerges in Ukraine under missiles) (Trelles, 2023, 9), Quico Alsedo tells us that on the train that was to take him to the city he met Vanesa and Sergio, a couple from Vélez Rubio, Almería. What were they doing there? They had just had a daughter through surrogacy in Ukraine. On February 26, Maria was born and they decided to go to Ukraine to get her.

In war reports, the figure of the fixer is of great importance: the guide or native interpreter who helps the journalist to translate into the local language, make contacts in a region and find his way around. In the episode *Ucrania desde dentro* (Ukraine from the inside), published by *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 15), Alberto Rojas explains this in a conversation with Bogdan, a college professor who plays the role of a war fixer while traveling in a car to the front line. Another example of the relationship between the special correspondents with their fixer is the episode *¿Quiénes síguen trabajando mientras caen las bombas?* (Who is still working while the bombs are falling?) in *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 20), in which the journalist Cristian Segura, with the help of the translation of Eugene, his driver and interpreter, talks to the people he meets at a neighborhood market: a butcher, a horseman, a cook, a bookseller or a pharmacist.

Logically, journalistic routines also include writing texts. The interruptions in the podcasts explain the moments when journalists work through the night to write their chronicles. Rojas talks about this in the last minutes of the podcast mentioned above (Trelles, 2023, 15), when he explains that after a day's work he stays overnight in an apartment he has rented "because the hotels are full". From there, he says, he writes the chronicle and prepares the topics for the next day.

In this context, María Sahuquillo's description of how she writes her chronicle in a café in Kiev on the day before the invasion is also significant. She recounts this very vividly in the episode *Ucrania, ¿cómo hemos llegado hasta aqui?* (Ukraine: how did we get here?) (Trelles, 2023, 17).

The journalists' narratives also show the measures they take to refute fake news by using the fact that they are on the ground. In the episode *Del éxodo al botón nuclear: consecuencias de la invasión* (From the exodus to the nuclear button:

consequences of the invasion) published by *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 2), Alberto Rojas says that there are many volunteers at the Polish border who take care of the refugees. He also denies a pro-Russian false report that only white refugees were allowed to enter: he says that on the same morning he saw Nigerian and Cameroonian refugees being well received in Poland.

Building the reporter's personality

Another element that can help journalism regain its authority and credibility through podcasts is the effort to bring the reporter's personality closer to the audience. By narrating their experiences, by revealing personal details of their work, their fears in dangerous situations, their feelings for the victims and the pain of others in the midst of a war scenario, journalists become more human and can better empathize with their customers, who can identify with them.

We have already hinted at some examples of this disclosure of personal details by referring to how special envoys Alberto Rojas and María Sahuquillo prepared materially for their trips to the war front, but beyond that — in the first episode of the podcast series *El Mundo al día* entitled *Putin se Lanza contra Ucrania* (Putin goes against Ukraine) (Trelles, 2023, 1) — the account of Xavier Colás, the special envoy in Kiev, who recounts how he experienced the beginning of the invasion at 5.30 in the morning is fascinating. As it is an original recording of this exact moment — you can even tell from his voice that he was awake all night— - it makes the story seem human and truthful.

In Ucrania, *¿cómo hemos llegado hasta aquí?* (Ukraine: how did we get here?) from *Hoy en El País* (Trelles, 2023, 17), two aspects stand out in this area. Firstly, the tone of the audios sent by María Sahuquillo in the days before the invasion reflects her — concern about the increasing possibility of war breaking out in Europe. Sahuquillo also vividly describes her impressions and some of the images that burned themselves into her memory and sometimes kept her awake at night. When she talks about the soldiers she met, she says that she was impressed to see that "they are people like you and me". In the same episode, host Ana Fuentes contacts correspondent Pilar Bonet, an experienced journalist who knows the history of Russia and whose tone cannot hide her surprise and fear at the reality of the new war in Europe.

It is also a habit of journalists to express their feelings and impressions when confronted with the drama of war. Although many of these journalists have experience of conflict, these new life stories do not pass them by without a trace. In the episode *Tierra quemada: la estrategia rusa para render a Ucrania* (Scorched Earth: Russia's strategy to subjugate Ukraine) from *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 12), Lluis Miquel Hurtado talks about his last night in Kiev and the impression the explosions made on him. He also talks about the suffering he saw in the besieged

city of Mariupol. He does this with reference to other conflicts that he has also experienced first-hand. In this case, it is the reporter's personal experiences that bring the drama of war closer to the reader.

Javier Espinosa, *El Mundo*'s special envoy to Mariupol and Zaporizhia, was in Mariupol a few days earlier. In the episode *Muerte, destruccion y resistencia* (Death, destruction and resistance) from *El Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 8), he describes some images that touched him deeply. Espinosa explains that they can only be compared to some of the scenes he saw in Sarajevo during the war in the former Yugoslavia.

In another example that shows the journalist's feelings in the midst of war, Quico Alsedo tells in *La vida se abre paso en Ucrania entre misiles* (Life emerges in Ukraine under missiles) how he — like the other inhabitants of the town — experiences the anti-aircraft alarm: at first he goes into the bunker with fear and later with a certain indifference. There are times when he even stops at dawn. "You also must rest", he says (Trelles, 2023, 9).

Reaffirming journalistic culture

A final meta-journalistic act of transparency is the affirmation of journalistic culture. It refers to specific moments in which journalists mention principles, values or common norms of journalistic culture. This may include expressing their thoughts about the purpose of reporting, justifying their decisions in the face of problems, recognizing ethical dilemmas or reaffirming basic norms. These expressions of transparency can be seen as an outward projection of journalistic culture that is strategically visible to the audience. the social value of journalistic work.

In the episode *Viaje a bordo del tren de la guerra* (Journey aboard the war train) in *El Mundo al día*, Javier Attard asks the reporter Lluis Miquel Hurtado what kind of people he has met on this unnatural journey: the return journey of refugees fleeing from the Polish border to war zones. He asks him if he has seen other journalists: "Yes, there are journalists, this war needs people to report what is happening in the midst of propaganda and disinformation campaigns"(Trelles, 2023, 11).

In another episode of *El Mundo al día* entitled *Las garras de Putin apuntan a Odesa* (Putin's claws aim at Odesa) (Trelles, 2023, 5), Javier Attard asks Javier Espinosa to tell him about the role of a journalist and whether anything has changed in the wars he has experienced. Espinosa explains that something has indeed changed, because he sees the loss of affection in the eyes of the Ukrainian population: they think that journalists are no longer necessary because they get their information directly from social networks, and that they themselves are partly to blame for

what happens to them. Espinosa says this is very disheartening, because they are there to give the victims a voice.

In the other podcast analyzed, *Hoy en El País*, Cristian Segura explains in an episode entitled *¿Quienes siguen trabajando mientras caen las bombas?* (Who is still working while the bombs are falling?) (Trelles, 2023, 20), Cristian Segura explains to the host of the episode how important foreign journalists are for Ukrainians. They take special care of them so that they can report on what is happening there.

The episode *Tierra quemada: la estrategia rusa para render a Ucrania* (Scorched Earth: Russia's strategy to subjugate Ukraine) from El *Mundo al día* (Trelles, 2023, 12) is also a representation of how — as Lluis Miquel Hurtado explains — when journalists like him had to leave Mariupol, it could mean bad news: when the spotlights go out, when the journalists avert their eyes, any kind of horror can happen. Hurtado says that an inside source compares what is happening there to massacres like those in Grozny, Guernica or Leningrad.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Complex news coverage of a war is a challenge for the media and their experts. They must provide a high-quality service to an audience that demands reliable information and context. As in other emergency situations, traditional media need to adapt their strategies to add value to a quality public service over other existing sources of information from social networks and citizen journalism.

This study shows how a specific strategy — the introduction of podcasts in the coverage of the Ukraine war by the online newspapers *El País* and *El Mundo* — has become an added value as it conveys authority and increases the credibility of the newspapers through transparency.

The content analysis carried out confirms that both *El País* and *El Mundo* are venturing into podcasting and see it as a valuable tool for the newspapers' coverage of the war. In the case of *El Mundo*, the war in Ukraine is the focus of most of *El Mundo*'s daily episodes in the period studied: 61.5 % of the episodes deal with the war in Ukraine. *El País*, on the other hand, relies less on this strategy in its coverage: only 18.2% of the episodes published in the first month of the war in Ukraine and the existence of the podcast *Hoy en El País* dealt with this topic.

Regarding the research questions of this paper, the thematic content analysis confirms that, in both podcasts, there are narrative elements mainly aimed at revealing the reporters' journalistic process. For both *Hoy en El País* and *El Mundo al día*, this is the main objective of the podcasting work that also marks the design and script of the episodes.

The instances of transparency shown in the podcasts that reveal the journalistic process are consistent with the hope that the presumed hard work, first-hand experience, overcome adversity in accessing sources, risks, and methodological rigor of the journalistic process will serve the audience to distinguish legitimate content producers from illegitimate ones (Van der Wurff & Schönbach, 2011) and ultimately translate into the audience's recognition of their journalistic authority.

To a lesser extent, and although there are also narrative elements in this line, the podcasts analyzed seek to show the reporters' personality and affirm the journalistic culture and its values, even if these objectives are less present in the scripts of the episodes.

As for the fragments of transparency that testify to the reporters' personality, we believe that the familiarity, closeness and admiration shown by the host in his conversation with the reporter lends credibility and authority. In a way, the host conveys the concerns of the audience, who want to know the perspective and feelings of the person who is experiencing the facts first-hand. In his attempt to increase the credibility and authority of the journalist, the role of the host seems to us to be crucial in revealing the human side of the reporter and softening a journalistic authority that would otherwise appear rather distant. Also, the continuity of the statements of the same special envoys— - especially in *El Mundo al día*, where the protagonists recur more frequently — increases the knowledge about them and the audience's empathy for them.

Regarding the third research question, messages aimed at strengthening journalistic culture are few and far between. In this sense, it seems to us that journalistic communication in emergency contexts such as war makes it possible to introduce these kinds of narrative elements, as it is true that journalism fulfills an important social function of relevance in such contexts.

These elements can be very valuable in demonstrating the values of good journalism to the audience: Protection of sources, verification of information, restraint in the face of pain, being the voice of victims, etc. In a context where disinformative or propagandistic sources coexist, this kind of meta-journalistic act of transparency can also help "sharpen the limit between the inside and the outside of the profession" (Ryfe, 2012, p.93-94). It is a recommendation to podcast producers to rely more on these actions.

Among the limitations or future lines of research, it would be desirable to consider the impact of these meta-journalistic acts of transparency on audience credibility: undoubtedly, this type of research on audience impact would be the one that would confirm the value of the podcasting strategy.

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