

‘It is true, I received on WhatsApp’:

**The Effects of WhatsApp on Misinformation Beliefs and
Polarization**

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CSMaP Lab Meeting

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WhatsApp 101

WhatsApp 101

WhatsApp

Usage in Brazil

WhatsApp is a worldwide popular end-to-end encrypted messaging app allowing both direct and ingroup communications with close to 2 billion around the world

WhatsApp 101

WhatsApp

Usage in Brazil

- 66% of the Brazilian eligible voters has a social media account, and 65% have an WhatsApp account (Datafolha 2018) – 150 million people in 2022.
- Most used app for all purposes: talk to family & friends, do business & pay bills, consume news, talk politics, among others (Reuters Institute, 2021).
- Used by 48% of population to read news, despite having no “news feed” (Reuters Institute, 2021)
- Across the world, Brazilians are the most concerned about misinformation.
- And WhatsApp is the main social media application where users report to see more misinformation.

Motivation

Disinformation Spreads on WhatsApp Ahead of Brazilian Election

 Give this article  



Fake News Is Poisoning Brazilian Politics. WhatsApp Can Stop It.

Oct. 17, 2018



Field Experiment: An WhatsApp Media-Constrained Deactivation

Intervention

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➡ **Experiment:** Offer respondents a monetary incentive to

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- Do not purposefully click and watch any media on WhatsApp

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➡ **Treatment Period:** Three weeks:

- **Start:** Two week before presidential elections in Brazil
- **End:** One week after the voting day

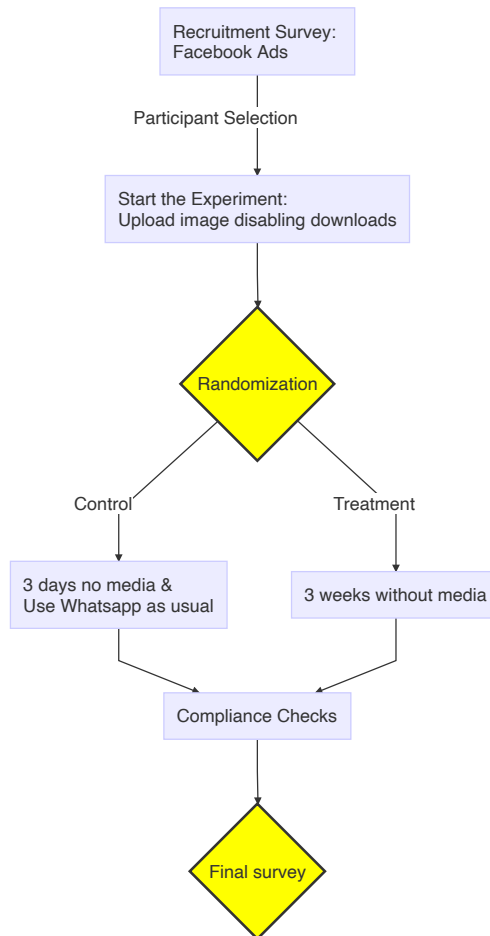
Overview of the Experiment

Design

Filtering
Questions

Timeline

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- Time spent on WhatsApp > 10 minutes every day
- Should not use desktop WhatsApp
- Accept to join the study
- **?** Received images about politics on WhatsApp

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- **Start Recruitment:** Between September 2th - 5th
- **Start the Experiment** September 15th
- **Activation of the Control + First Compliance:**
September 18th
- **Treatment duration:** From September 15th to October 6th
- **Presidential Election:** October 2

Overview of the Experiment

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➔ Treatment

- 3 weeks with automatic download disabled
- 3 weeks without consuming media
- Weekly screenshots of storage of media consumption on WhatsApp

➔ Control

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- 3 days without consuming media
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Ways to Measure Compliance

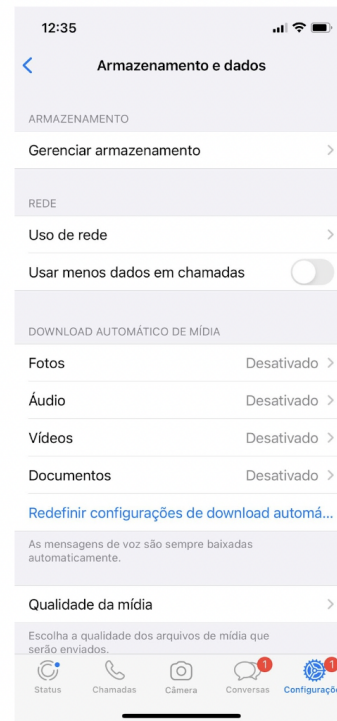
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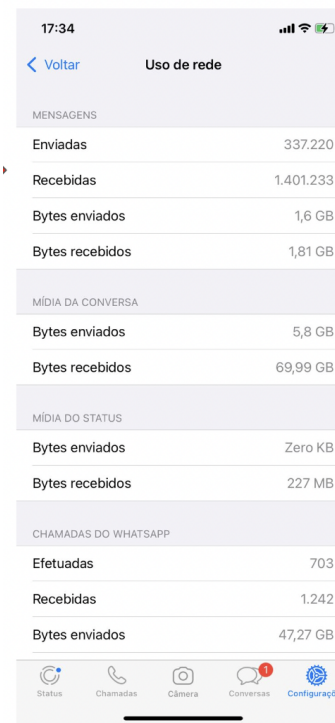


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The screenshot shows the 'Uso de rede' (Network Usage) screen in WhatsApp. It displays data usage for messages and media. The top status bar shows the time 17:34 and signal strength. The screen has a back arrow labeled 'Voltar' and the title 'Uso de rede'. The data is organized into sections: 'MENSAGENS', 'MÍDIA DA CONVERSA', 'MÍDIA DO STATUS', and 'CHAMADAS DO WHATSAPP'. Each section lists 'Enviadas' (Sent) and 'Recebidas' (Received) counts, as well as 'Bytes enviados' (Sent) and 'Bytes recebidos' (Received) in GB or MB. The bottom navigation bar shows icons for Status, Chamadas, Câmera, Conversas, and Configurações.

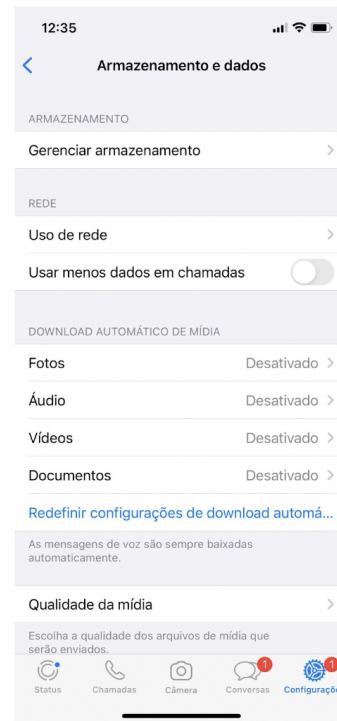
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Recebidas	1.401.233
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MÍDIA DA CONVERSA	
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Bytes recebidos	69,99 GB
MÍDIA DO STATUS	
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CHAMADAS DO WHATSAPP	
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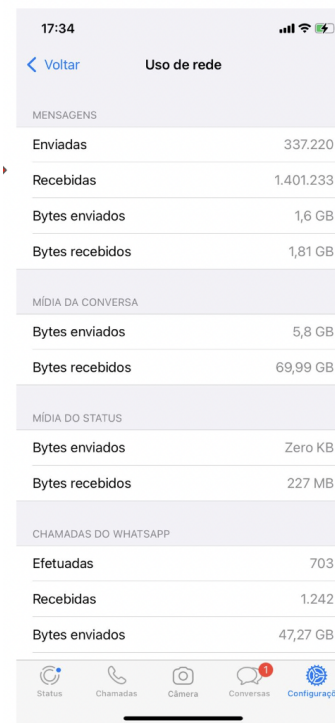


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Subjective Well-being

- How did you feel last week? (Happy, Anxious, etc...)