



Democratic National Committee

PLAYBOOK

**A GUIDE FOR COORDINATED
CAMPAIGNS & STATE PARTIES**





**Noticias
Para
Inmigrantes**



WhatsApp Channels:

A Guide for
Progressive
Media &
Nonprofits



PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER 2025

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Attribution & Disclaimer

This guide was created in collaboration with the [Higher Ground Institute, as part of the Media Innovation Fellowship](#). Written and produced by Laura Liibbe, Director of Product, with experimentation and assistance on Noticias Para Inmigrantes WhatsApp channels from Rosella Valenzuela, Mitzi Lopez, Jessica DeJesus, Irene Velarde, Ha Na Park, and other members of plus más media.

It reflects not only the work of our team but also the insights generously shared by peers across the field. This work is meant to build on existing WhatsApp resources with Channels being a new, promising feature of WhatsApp (see Resources page). Input and feedback for this framework were provided by:

- Stephanie Valenzuela (Equis)
- Caitlin Jury (Equis)
- Roberta Braga (DDIA)
- Sylvia Salazar (Tono Latino)
- David Baum (DigiCanvas)

...and other organizers, researchers, and practitioners who contributed to the development of this playbook.

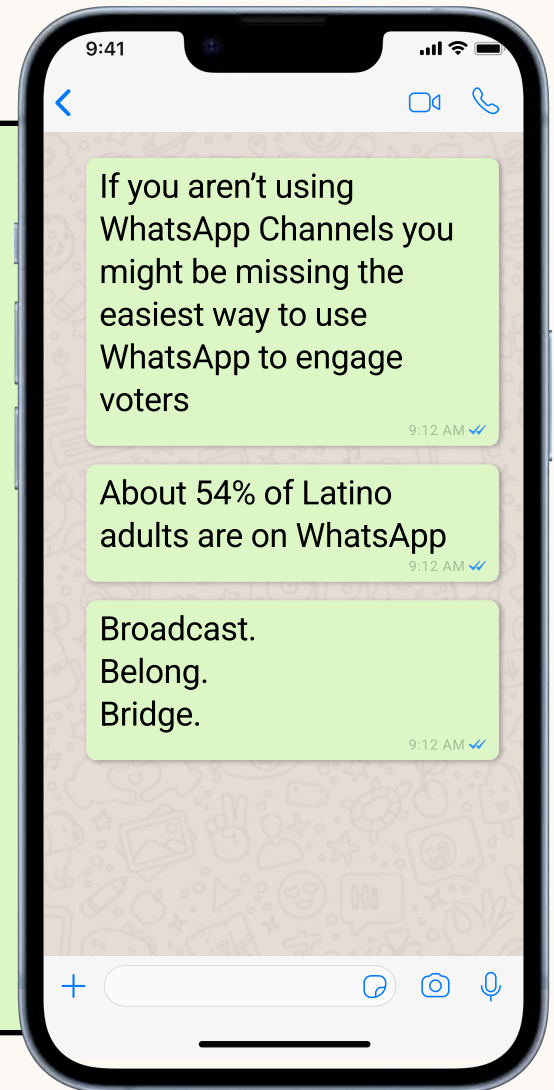
Disclaimer: WhatsApp is a constantly evolving platform, and features or functions may change at any time. For corrections or suggested edits to this guide, please contact editor@noticiasparainmigrantes.org.

If you would like to collaborate to utilize WhatsApp and reach Latinos in the U.S., please contact us at partnership@plusmasmedia.org.

This playbook is designed for **progressive organizations, campaigns, and media outlets** who want to reach Latino and immigrant communities where they already are: on WhatsApp.

It's a tested, strategic roadmap rooted in real experiments run by plus más media and partners, designed to help you:

- ✓ Deliver trusted, culturally grounded content in the language and formats people already use and love.
- ✓ Build an opt-in, high-engagement audience without relying on unstable algorithms or expensive ad spend.
- ✓ Shift from broadcast to relationship-driven communication: stay present in daily lives, activate your base when it matters, and move people into deeper engagement through groups or the WhatsApp API.
- ✓ Equip your organization with scalable tactics and frameworks that have been validated through early tests—showing what works, what fails, and what it costs.



By using this playbook, you'll gain the confidence to invest in WhatsApp strategies—especially for relational organizing—that move beyond SMS-style messaging, reduce costs per subscriber, and build lasting trust and impact.



Developed by plus más media with support from Accelerate Change, Inc. Special thanks to Rosella Valenzuela and Jessica DeJesus for their contributions in growing and testing the Noticias Para Inmigrantes WhatsApp channel.

Background & Introduction



WhatsApp Channels, launched globally in September 2023 after gradual testing earlier that summer, are a one-way, vertical communication tool designed for broad reach and efficient distribution. Located in the Updates tab—alongside statuses and stories but separate from personal chats, groups, and communities—channels give administrators a dedicated space to share information through text, polls, images, videos, documents, or voice files.

Unlike groups, where over-messaging risks user fatigue and often limits administrators to one summary message per day, channels allow for more frequent posting without overwhelming followers, since they live in a more discreet part of the app. A key technical distinction is privacy: channel followers' and administrators' phone numbers are never visible to one another, marking a major upgrade from groups and strengthening the trust and safety of this feature.

Key Distinctions:

- 1. Privacy for followers and administrators*
- 2. Frequent posting without user fatigue*



INTRODUCTION:



Why WhatsApp, Why Now?

- 100M+ U.S. users, half of Latinos use it daily.
- Unlike SMS, WhatsApp is free, multimedia, and trusted.
- Unlike social media, no algorithm hides your posts.
- Immigrant and multilingual communities already live here.

WhatsApp isn't SMS, it isn't social media, it's its own ecosystem. This playbook shows how to start with Channels, the easiest, most scalable entry point.

WHY START WITH CHANNELS?

- **Unlimited followers** (vs. groups capped at 1,024).
- **Free broadcast infrastructure**, costs nothing to scale.
- **Anonymous & safe**: followers are private, no spam fears.
- **Trust & visibility**: lives in the Updates tab.

Channels are the **simplest way for nonprofits to build presence** on WhatsApp, no extra tech, no barrier, no fees, just start broadcasting. WhatsApp can be confusing with its various features, here is a breakdown



HOW CHANNELS FIT INTO THE WHATSAPP ECOSYSTEM

- **Channels** = broadcast to thousands/millions.
- **Groups/Communities** = peer-to-peer trust, smaller spaces.
- **Individuals** = viral multiplier (forwards to family/friends).
- **Business API** = advanced automation, CRMs, costs attached.

Playbook principle: Start with a Channel → grow trust + reach → funnel into Groups or API if needed.

WhatsApp Channels Framework:

Broadcast. Belong. Bridge.



1. BROADCAST – DELIVER MESSAGES AT SCALE

- Channels are your always-on loudspeaker: once people opt-in, you can deliver messages at scale and at low cost—without fighting an algorithm.
- The key: choose a content niche that makes your channel worth following.
- Think easy, shareable content your audience wants to spread.

2. BELONG – NURTURE TRUST AND COMMUNITY

- Channels are present in your audience's daily feed, so you stay top-of-mind.
- You can use them to seed and grow groups, where real conversation and organizing happens.
- Channels = the heartbeat; groups = the circulation system.

3. BRIDGE – HACK YOUR WAY INTO DEEPER ENGAGEMENT

- Channels can drive people to message you first, lowering the cost of later API engagement.
- Instead of paying high per-conversation fees, you can use channels as the on-ramp to the API, only pulling people into flows when higher-touch interaction is needed.
- This makes channels a cost-effective bridge between mass reach and 1:1 engagement.



WhatsApp Channels aren't just a broadcast tool—they're your low-cost growth hack. With the right content niche, they let you scale messages, build groups, and funnel people into deeper engagement paths without burning budget.

Growth Strategies for Channels



WEBSITE POPUPS/BANNERS

Full-screen popups mentioning to click “FOLLOW” convert best.

Note: The UX causes a drop off in conversions, the same link that will take you directly from SMS to WhatsApp will direct users to a landing page (image below) which users must then click through to go to the Channel and then click to follow the channel. This is due to the popup being in a browser, there's no current workaround.



Best Practice:

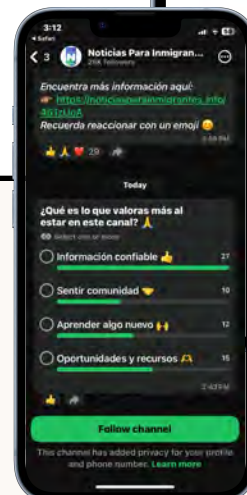
Add instructions to click follow on this landing page (it increases conversions!)



EMAIL & SMS CROSS-PROMOTION

SMS conversion ~4%, email lower. You could seed your Channel through your SMS list

Note: The UX ensures users must opt-in by clicking “Follow Channel”



COST EFFICIENCY

We achieved an average cost-per-click of **\$0.15** driving traffic to the channel.

CONVERSION PERFORMANCE

Approximately **35% of those clicks converted into follows.**

BEST PRACTICE

Highlight content that reflects your channel's unique value. For conversion tracking, use the **"website visit" objective** rather than the built-in WhatsApp conversion option (which is for the WhatsApp API)

CLICKABLE IMAGES

Don't remove visuals, they boost click rate.

PARTNERSHIPS

Seed audiences through trusted organizations.



You can also seed Channels through other platforms, Facebook Pages, and social media, but keep in mind that not every audience member might have or use WhatsApp when you evaluate the success of each platform.

Experiment:

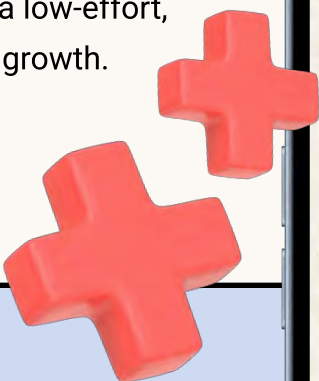


Adding “Haz click para seguir” During Ad Campaign

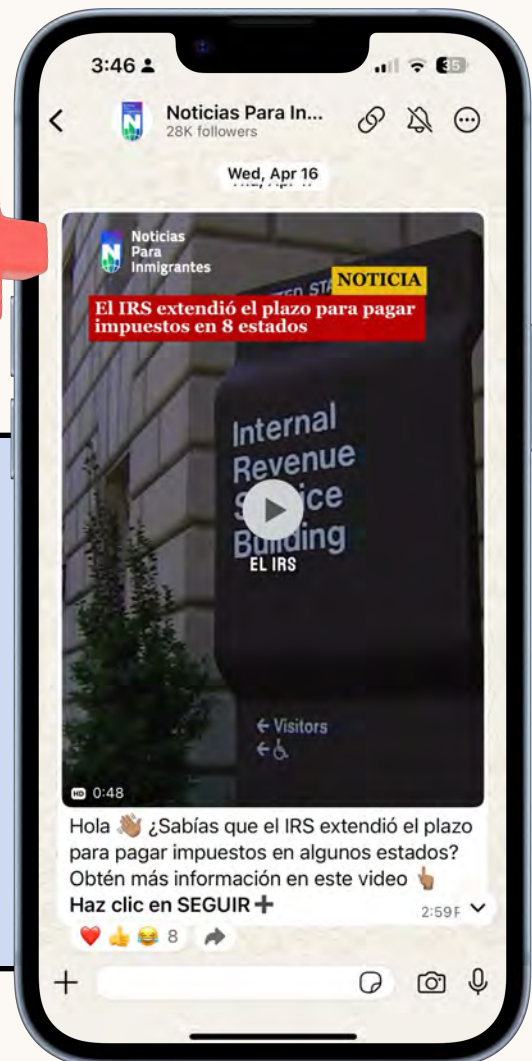
Over the course of one week, we ran a test to understand how a small change in messaging could influence channel growth. While running Instagram/Meta ads to drive new visitors, we added the phrase “**Haz click para seguir**” at the end of our most recent channel post. The goal was to make the next step obvious for people arriving on the channel for the first time.

We tracked **Reach** (the number of unique accounts exposed to our content) and **Followers** (the number of new people who subscribed after seeing the channel). During the test period, we observed a **21% uplift in the follow rate**, indicating that this simple call-to-action made it significantly more likely for visitors to convert into followers.

This experiment suggests that **clear, direct guidance in the channel’s latest message can increase follow-through from paid campaigns**, making it a low-effort, high-impact tactic for boosting audience growth.



21%
**UPLIFT IN THE
FOLLOW RATE**



Content That Works on Channels



POSTING CADENCE:

3-5x per week is the sweet spot; **weekdays** best.
Every audience is different so best to test this out
for your audience!

FORMATS:

Polls (5% engagement) & Audio messages

Note: Audio messages keep playing while navigating
away from your channel, this is great for UX!

ARTICLES OR EXTERNAL LINKS:

1-3% engagement, measure with a url shortner like
bit.ly; keep the attached clickable image- it
increases click rate!

TONE:

Friendly, personal, informal.

PRO TIP:

*When new users join they will see
what the most recent content you
posted is first, so keep showing
up and keep in mind how your
messages appear to a user and
that they fit nicely on the screen.*

Lots of images here!



Virality Experiment:



We explored whether content shared on our WhatsApp Channel could generate viral spread beyond our existing followers, and test if adding explicit calls-to-action would help us measure or amplify that effect.

INSIGHT

- We noticed early signs of virality when some links showed click-through rates above 100% of our follower base — a signal that people were likely sharing content outside the channel.
- This sparked interest in running dedicated experiments to understand if and how virality can be measured or influenced on WhatsApp.

EXPERIMENT SETUP

1. **Observation phase:** Monitored link performance and flagged instances where CTR exceeded follower count.
2. **Test approach:** Added a clear CTA in the latest posts asking followers to react with an emoji if they had shared the content.
3. **Tracking goal:** Use reactions as a proxy for share activity, since WhatsApp does not provide native analytics on shares. About 30% of those who take action react as well, use this as an estimate.

RESULTS

- Adding the CTA gave us some signal of sharing behavior, but the data was limited and not scalable.
- We did not find a reliable way to quantify virality within Channels.



TAKEAWAYS

- Virality is happening, but it's difficult to measure precisely due to platform constraints.
- Clear CTAs (e.g., "Haz click para seguir") are simple nudges that can increase visible engagement.
- Asking users to share drove fatigue (CTR drop from 5.3% → 1.7%, share rate 0.5%).
- Learning: Save share asks for high-value moments (e.g., partnerships).
- Practical approach: Rather than over-engineering measurement, assume that WhatsApp's design makes it a naturally viral environment — focus on creating content people want to share, even if exact share counts remain unknown.

Data & Measurement on WhatsApp Channels

Data is very **limited and tricky** on WhatsApp Channels. Unlike the **WhatsApp Business API**, where you can segment audiences, track user journeys, and measure detailed engagement and retention within 1:1 conversations or automated flows, Channels provide only high-level insights. **Note:** you cannot filter by dates so it is recommended to collect data daily at the same time and input into a spreadsheet to track growth, unfollows, etc.

Currently, **only channel admins** have access to analytics, and the available data is limited to:

Available In-App:

- **Reach** – how many unique accounts saw your channel
- **Growth** – how many unique accounts followed and unfollowed your channel
- **Followers** - total number of followers and increase percentage; shows the top regions of your channel followers



Data you can track on your own:

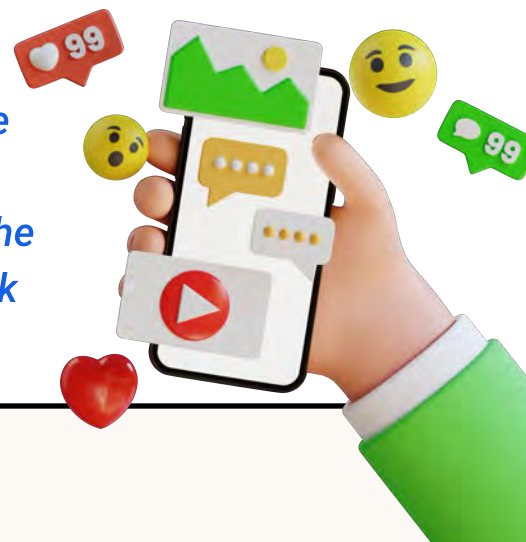
- **Click Rates** – how many people clicked your link (use bit.ly or other url shortener), divided by the number of followers
- **Reactions per post** – number of emoji reactions from followers

There's **no way to track who exactly shared content, how far it spread, or the full downstream impact.**

This means that measuring virality on Channels is inherently difficult, and strategies should focus on creating content that followers are motivated to share, trusting the platform's organic viral mechanics rather than relying on granular analytics.

BEST PRACTICE:

Quality > quantity: Channel reads happen when people choose to check, not just when they get a push, we notice an increase in clicks on one external link over the course of multiple days, showing that users scroll back and forth to find what piques their interest.



When to Add Groups or API

GROUPS:

good for onboarding & intimacy, but cap out at ~262K reach per account.

Total potential reach through groups (one account):

- 256 groups × 1,024 participants = **~262,000 people.**

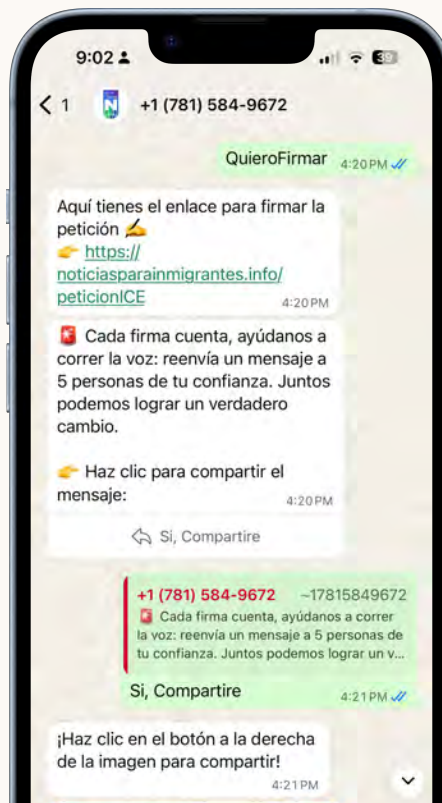
This is your maximum ceiling if you're only using one business account and groups.

API:

powerful for automation, but costs money and has political restrictions.

BEST PATH:

Start Channels → Layer Groups (for trust) → Add API (for automation) for specific engagements and call to actions



Action Taking on WhatsApp Channels

In a recent test, we added a **petition link** to a channel post to measure how effective Channels could be for driving downstream actions. The results showed a **1% click-through rate**, and notably, **70% of those who clicked went on to complete the petition**.

This early signal suggests that **Channels have real potential for action-oriented asks like voter registration**. While direct measurement of shares isn't available on Channels, the high conversion rate indicates that audiences are willing to take meaningful action once they click through.

We'll continue to **experiment with action-based calls-to-action (CTAs)** and run these tests in parallel with the **WhatsApp Business API** to refine messaging, improve tracking, and explore how to **leverage friend-to-friend sharing to scale impact**.

70%
**OF THOSE WHO
CLICKED WENT
ON TO COMPLETE
THE PETITION**



CONCLUSION:

Start Simple, Scale Smart

If nonprofits don't organize on WhatsApp, others will. Channels are the on-ramp: free, scalable, easy. Start here, learn, and then decide whether to layer in Groups or API.

YOUR NEXT STEP:

Create a Channel today. Post once. Share the link with your community. See what happens.

STAFFING:

What Does a Sustainable Workflow Look Like?

Practitioners often ask: "How much time and staff do we need to run this well?"

From our early experience:

- **Content creation:** 3–5 posts per week takes ~4–6 hours total, especially if you adapt existing content into WhatsApp-friendly formats (short text, images, polls, voice notes).
- **Community management:** Groups require more staff attention—expect at least 5–10 hours per week per active group to answer questions, moderate, and foster trust.
- **Data tracking & reporting:** Dedicate ~2–3 hours weekly to logging reach/follow/unfollow data and monitoring click-throughs.
- **Overall staffing:** A small org could start with 0.25–0.5 FTE (one person dedicating part of their role), then scale up as groups and API use grow.

The key is to **start lean**: one person can launch and maintain a Channel, then you can add capacity as engagement deepens.

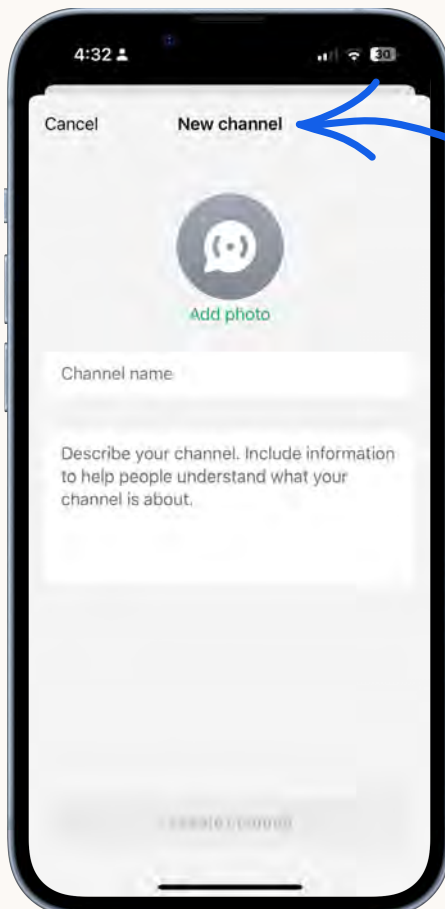
How to Get Started with WhatsApp Channels

Launching a WhatsApp Channel is simpler than you might think. Below is a step-by-step guide to get your organization up and running—plus tips to avoid common pitfalls.

STEP 1:

UPDATE YOUR WHATSAPP APP (YES, YOU WILL NEED THE APP!)

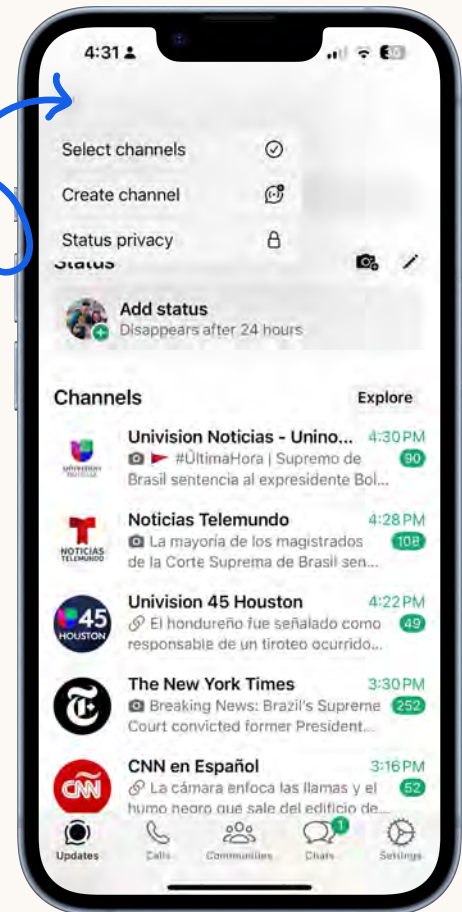
- Make sure you're using the latest version of WhatsApp (iOS or Android).
- Channels live in the "Updates" tab (next to "Chats"):



STEP 2:

CREATE YOUR CHANNEL

1. Go to Updates → "+" → New channel.
2. Choose your Channel name (keep it short and clear—think brand name or campaign).
3. Add a Channel description that explains what followers will get.
4. Upload a profile photo (use your logo or a recognizable image).



STEP 3:**START POSTING!****STEP 4:****SHARE YOUR CHANNEL LINK**

- After creating your Channel, you'll get a unique link in the top right.
- Share it via:
 - Website popups or banners
 - SMS & email lists
 - Social media posts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X)

TIP:

Always add "Click Follow" instructions, since people must tap the follow button inside WhatsApp after they open the link.

STEP 5:**ESTABLISH A SIMPLE CADENCE**

- Aim for 3–5 posts per week to stay top-of-mind.
- Mix formats: polls, images, short text, voice notes.
 - Example content calendar:
 - Monday post an article with an audio explainer so you can gauge clicks for an engagement metric,
 - Wednesday post a meme or an image,
 - Friday post a poll that creates community interest.
- Keep experimenting—track what gets the most reactions and clicks.

Want to Reach Audiences on WhatsApp?

If your organization is looking to connect with Latino audiences through **trusted messengers who are already building on WhatsApp**, we'd love to collaborate.

*Partner with **plus más media** to scale your reach and impact.*

CONNECT WITH US

Resources & Further Reading



[Equis Resource Library for WhatsApp](#)

Equis Full WhatsApp Guide for Organizing (no Channels):

[Guide for Organizing with WhatsApp_External.docx](#)

Blueprints for Change: WhatsApp Uses for Campaigns:

[WhatsApp uses for campaigning](#)

Continued Reading:

1. [WhatsApp: The Widespread Use of WhatsApp in Political Campaigning in the Global South](#)
2. [How 13 news publishers are using WhatsApp Channels](#)
3. [Independent digital media in Latin America explore WhatsApp channels despite problems obtaining verification from the app](#)
4. [NY Times: In India, Facebook's WhatsApp Plays Central Role in Elections](#)

