Assessing Quality in Online Journalism

Final Report
2016-2017

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Preface

This report is a compilation of the findings and conclusions of the final paper produced by the students of the Analyzing Digital Journalism, an online course held at the Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona) during the first term (October-December) of the academic year 2016-2017. The students were proposed, individually or in couples, to analyze one or several online media, applying the several concepts studied during the course and referring to the quality of online information flow, accordingly to several aspects that will we later on explained in the introduction of this volume. The students were asked to choose the media to analyze, so overwhelmingly the Catalan ones are represented in this study, since most of the students were, precisely, Catalan. However, many other online media all over the world are also represented in this study.

The findings have been ordered, typologised and summarised according to the categories described in the first part of this volume, which follow, on their turn, the explanations contained in the lessons explained during the first part of the course. Concepts are taken from the bibliography referred at the end of the first part. The information provided by the students, applying - sometimes adapting - the methods and templates provided by the consultor and compilator of this volume has been treated using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). Sources and authors of the individual papers from whom the different passages are taken and put in relation with others corresponding to the same categories and concepts are mentioned. Passages in Catalan and Spanish languages have been translated into English.

The volume is intended to be the final result, to be shared amongst all the participants, of the course. Opinions remain with individual authors and are not necessarily considered assumed collectively by the group.
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I

Concepts:
An Introduction
ONLINE JOURNALISM, as we know it, started in the decade of 1990, when Time Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web (WWW), a hypertext global system implemented upon the pre-existent Internet network as one of its protocols. Quickly enough, media, including newspaper, started positioning themselves on the WWW.

Distinctive features of news media, as perceived at the beginning of the WWW era, were, according to Mark Poster (1999), an Internet incorporating radio, film and television and distributing multimedia content through ‘push’ technologies. Poster considered that the new medium enabled:

1) Many to many conversations.
2) Simultaneous reception, alteration and redistributions of cultural products.
3) Dislocation of the offer from territorialized spatial relations to a globalized world.
4) Instantaneous global contact.
5) A networked society.

Some years later, Denis McQuail (2010) revised to some extent those distinctive features of news media:

1) Digitization and convergence as characteristics of many media.
2) Increasing interactivity and network connectivity.
3) Mobility and delocalization of sending and receiving processes.
4) Adaptation of publication and audience roles.
5) Appearance of diverse new forms of media gateways.
6) Fragmentation and blurring of media institutions.
1.1. The Old and the New: Specificities of Online Media

Those changes and evolution signals in media ecology are equally perceived by users, as stated by McQuail (2010), as differences between old and new media, including interactivity (especially those amongst people more than that conducted with the machine through interface), and increase of sociability; media richness and a greater variety of news offer; personalization; autonomy given to the user; playfulness, since entertainment is offer alongside with information; and privacy.

These characteristics are perceived as improvements, and also as benefits for democracy. Interactivity should mean a way to surpass one-way news flow, and a tool to participate in the information flow, so it could also mean an increasing authorial role on the user’s side, so the apparition of users-generated contents. As a consequence, vertical and horizontal communication co-exist in some way.

Media ownership and entrepreneurship no longer needs a great money investment, since online publishing platform provide reasonable tools to everyone to publish our own media. Media creation can be done at a low-cost basis for both senders and receivers. Immediacy on both sides is another advantage perceived by users, and a sense boundaries absence is another extended perception (McQuail, 2010).

1.2. Normative principles

At the same time, there are some normative principles shared by both old and new media, which should help to fulfill a quality goal for media. These are, as identified by Denis McQuail:

1. Principle of Media Freedom
2. Principle of Media Equality
3. Principle of Media Diversity
4. Principle of Truth
5. Principle of Objectivity
6. Principle of Social Order and Solidarity
7. Principle of Cultural Order

The principle of media freedom, meaning that companies are not(or should not be) dependent of other institutions (economic, financial, politic institutions), so media would be platforms which could fulfill an adequate watchdog function, performing an scrutiny of the power and be a reliable source of information. This, according to McQuail, could stimulate a good informed democratic system, since a pluralistic media system could provide its users with a platform to express and
share news, ideas and point of views. Thus, it is important to determine which the
ownership of media companies and their relations with some other social institu-
tions, first.

The **principle of media equality** means that the different interests and position
in society should have an equal and proportioned access to media, so their messag-
es could be accessed and discussed with equal opportunities by social agents. To
which extent media provide a voice for everyone is another issue to be studied.

This is related to the **principle of media diversity**, so society needs different
media so news and opinions are not concentrated in very few hands and sources, so
media should be able to reflect social diversity and to inform about majorities and
minorities as well.

Media should be able to provide channels of intercommunication amongst peo-
ple, contribute to social integration and support, at the same time, the legal basis of
society, which is called the **principle of social order and security**.

The **principle of truth** should warn about risks and provide the basis for demo-
cratic discussion. The **principle of objectivity** is related to truth, so media should
provide sufficient background to society so people could form their own well-
grounded opinions.

 Regarding to language, media should inform about the trends of contemporary
culture so to enhance creativity and originality, using contemporary language
trends, which is called the **principle of cultural order**.

Do those normative values, as the ones enumerated in Kovach and Rosenstiel’s
*The Elements of Journalism*, remain fully in force for online journalism as well?

### 1.3. Accountability and Convergence

**Transparency** is the usual name to describe the relation of media and practitioners
with sources of information. This is a concept to be fulfilled at different levels to
increase quality and preserve or recover media’s reputation as a democratic and
ethical tool. Transparency: How to unveil online sources that are not supposed to
be secret and which are of critical relevance in the construction of news. Bill Ko-
vach (2005) defined transparency in these terms: Tell the readers what you know
and what you don’t know. Tell them who your sources are and if you can’t name
the sources tell them how the sources are in a position to know and what biases, if
any, they may have. In other words, provide your information so that people see
how it was developed and can make up their own minds what to think.

**Accountability** refers to the general belief that mass media have to be accounta-
ble to the public’s interest, so media and journalist (and now, active audiences) are
expected to behave in certain ways to the public good. Accountability is a part of
social responsibility of media (Domingo and Heikkilä, 2012), and it can help restore the prestige and reliability of media organizations, and it is defined by Denis McQuail as 'the processes by which the media answer directly or indirectly to their society for the quality and/or consequences of publication' (McQuail, 2005).

At the same time, convergence is another crucial aspect to be considered when analyzing the changes operated in media organizations and, thus, what is to be defined as quality of journalism practices in online media. Media convergence, accordingly to Infotendencias group, takes into account some relevant issues:

- **Product:** Related to digitization and multimedia.
- **System:** Confluence of technologies.
- **Process:** And effects of convergence. It refers most especially to the organization of information flow.
- **Integrated model:** A model based on
  - Multiplatform
  - Business concentration
  - Professional convergence or polyvalence
  - Incorporating the characteristic of digital language: multimedia, interactivity, hypertextuality, memory...

### 1.4. Characteristics of Digital Language

What is new in online journalism? First of all, there are some characteristics of the digital language that makes a difference, potentially at least, when compared with some other forms of periodical journalism, being it newspaper and magazines (printed media), or broadcast media (radio and television). Most researchers agree share the common assumption that the main characteristics are related to these ones:

1. Hypertext
2. Interactivity
3. Multimediality
4. Participation
5. Others: temporality, memory

This can lead to a celebratory approach, accordingly to which the application of network technologies in itself can address clear differences in news as a public good, and is capable to rational debate in the public sphere. This approach includes claims for improvement or reform of journalism practices through the Internet, for instance interactivity (and participation), multimedia (and immersive practices) and access to unlimited news items (archives).
These are characteristics that traditional media cannot develop as much as online media, and should be studied. Instead, immediacy is the main value observable in online news organizations. So the frequency of updating is another characteristic to be studied. According to O’Sullivan, at least in the UK, media companies have produced less news online, and most of them take the same angle and even identical outputs. So, is there a decline of analytic journalism? To this point, O’Sullivan believes that 'news, even as it is seen as freed from the confines of mainstream, professional newsrooms, nevertheless coagulates around established media" (O’Sullivan, 2012).

So, to make a long story short, it is necessary to define what is quality in journalism, and when coming to online journalism, a double point of view should be considered: the normative one, which shows very few differences, if any, with traditional journalism (so to say), and the characteristics of digital language, which open new ways to achieve some of those normative principles, singularly participation and transparency/accountability, potentially at least.

Reality could show a different face, anyway, so it is necessary to do some research on this aspects to depict a complete and deepen portrait of what is online journalism, avoiding on the one hand to deal exclusively with the classic values attached to good journalism practices, sometimes ideally presented - and in this point ownership of media companies should be carefully considered -, and on the other to explain in a celebratory way the advent of a new language, without evaluating the quality of the contents. It is important, for instance, to measure the use of hyperlinks to sources mentioned in news items, a practice that mainstream media have neglected during long time, since it is related to transparency. Interactivity can widen participation, but it is important to check to which extent this participation is of some quality or not, so it is important to define it as well. To this respect, content analysis is a good method to do some research on how online media deal with sensitive topics and approaches (e.g. Llorca Abad (2014) and (2014) and Odriozola Chéné, Javier (2014).
2

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Our proposal to achieve a complete evaluation of quality in online journalism is to be applied in three different levels:

1. Corporate or Company level: e.g., business models, newsroom organization, professional routines.
2. Content level: e.g., topics covered, linked information, use of multimedia resources, design issues.
3. Participation and interaction level: e.g., user-generated contents, participation through comments, use of social networks...

2.1.

Corporate and Newsroom Level

The corporate level, defined as the includes at least three aspects to be considered:

1) Business model
2) Ownership model
3) Ideology and corporate culture

The business model explains us where the incomes that feed the company come from. On the Internet, incomes come mainly from two sources:

1. Revenue sources
   1. Online advertising
   2. Offline paying
   3. Added value
   4. Pay for news
   5. Private donors
   6. Public subsidies
   7. E-Commerce

2. Financial sources
   1. Profit reinvestment
   2. Raising equity (stocks)
   3. Borrowing (banking debt)

Let us examine them one by one.

Online advertising: Advertisements have been the primary source of revenue for news providers from at the beginning of journalism, and in the online journalism model it has suffered a great change. Many online news providers offer news for free to audiences and subsequently sell 'eye-balls' to advertisers, but online advertisement allows personalization - the advertiser could know how many clicks do the ads got for them - so competition is stronger than in the printed world,
since we are in the economy of attention: providers fight for getting attention, so revenues have decreased. As a result, it is difficult for media organizations to cover the cost of news reporting exclusively through advertising revenues. On the other hand, advertising has always been considered one of the barriers for journalists to report freely, as negative issues affecting key advertisers are usually hidden.

**Offline paying:** At the beginning of the World Wide Web, traditional publishers, e.g. newspaper publishers considered the online editions as a complement of the printed ones. They were shovelware editions. But the Internet can surpass periodicity, so the digital-first strategy is gaining points and, for organizations such as *The Guardian* or *El País*, it is the dominant model today: news are first published on the Internet, and then some of them packaged again to be published tomorrow printed on paper. So, whilst some years ago offline editions generated most of the advertising revenues, this is no longer so, and online editions have proven not to be able to generate as many revenues to cover the losses of the traditional editions.

**Added value:** As a result, some media companies have searched for adding some products to complement their traditional editions. Archives, at least in the case of the older organizations (e.g. *The Guardian, La Vanguardia, ABC*). Cross-media strategies (see Infotendencias, 2014) is another added value: media conglomerates can offer contents provided by different media of the same group to increase traffic, for instance. Some of those values are offered for free, some others on a paying basis. Anyway, companies are, generally speaking, looking for a more qualified audience rather than for a significant increase of their money revenues. However, other constraints can emerge. For instance: can niche products that serve the needs of small but prosperous elites guarantee the journalistic independence?

**Paying for news:** When, at the beginning of the WWW, many media organizations, except for some few which decided to charge for their contents (e.g., *The Wall Street Journal*), decided to offer their (shovelwaved) contents for free, they made it difficult in the future to put a prize on their online editions. Different strategies have been tried: paying walls, micropayments, subscription - even combined subscription to the printed and the online editions -, with different success. Since news production is expensive, it is reasonable to think about charging for contents, but the habits generated in the first decades of the WWW make it difficult, whilst there is no other way, to this point, to compensate companies for costs and losses.

**Donors and public aid:** Public aid is a way tried mostly in the Mediterranean area, e.g. in Catalonia. Trusts, a figure mainly used in the Anglo-Saxon world, is a another way, tried by i.e. *The Guardian*, but it has revealed to be unable to stop the losses. Crowdfunding is another way considered to produce news interesting for the public, who is the one who proposes the topics and pays in advance for a good public report. Since the public institutions, e.g. the governments, subsidize
media, it is questionable to which extent this does not constraint independence of journalists and organizations.

**E-commerce** is another way used by media organizations to monetize content. Online media are platforms to sale (intangible or tangible) goods. It is questionable to which extent could this practice constraint ideological independence of journalism. So many media organizations are searching for **financial sources**, banking loans mainly, but this has substantial consequences on the degree of journalistic independence. New young native-only newspapers are trying to avoid this source of funding to protect their independence and avoid banking debt. When revenues and profits are not enough, a loan is used instead. This practice was carried out massively by the whole industry in the Western countries for many years and is at the roots of the 2007-2015 crises.

The corporate level analysis needs to consider the **ownership model** as well. Here we can find:

1. **Private ownership** (families or media moguls have control of the company’s stock, very rarely also financial entities are in control).
2. **Public ownership** (the company is listed in the stock exchange markets and there is no family or media mogul in control, but a myriad of small or financial shareholders).
3. **Mixed ownership** (the company is listed in the stock exchange markets but there is still a family or a media mogul in control).

Finally, we have to consider the **ideological dimension of the corporate level.**

The political stance of a media corporation is defined by:

1. **The Editorial Board:** The group of people that oversee the activities of the company. The board may include the owners, it may include just minority shareholders or it may include just high executives hired because they have very good linkages and relationships in the field. In a family-owned corporation, the board is elected by the owners, who may or may not be members of the board. In a listed corporation, the board is elected by the shareholders. Sometimes the members of the board are chosen by the board itself.

   However, in all cases, the board is the highest authority in the management of a corporation. And although their task is just at the management level, they may have political or business interests outside the company. Or they may simply have personal political standpoints.

2. **The traditional alignment** of the company: Usually, it builds engagement (loyalty) with readers. it is defined by the outlet’s history and may be determined by issues that can go beyond the owners and the board of directors’ ideologies. For instance, if there is a market niche for progressive press, a conservative owner may want to take advantage of it to make money – even though he and the board of directors are not aligned with progressive ideas, they may invest in a progressive newspaper.
The newsroom level is characterized by transparency and responsiveness. Digitization is promoting a radical change in the business model and can help improve the transparency and responsibility of media corporations as well, since it is very easy for companies to make their data available. Any online outlet aiming to improve its quality must be accountable on their website for ownership, finance and political stance. That is, it should be public and easy to find on its website who the owner is, how the company is doing financially and what the political alignment of the newspaper is.

In this respect, journalists need to be transparent about who they are (actors transparency), so media organizations should provide its users with a complete full list of its staff, journalists’ profiles (i.e., using hyperlinks from the signature of the news items to that information), as well as providing information on ethical rules, terms of use for readers, etc. It is important to note whether there is an editorial committee composed by journalists (workers) and company members to preserve independence.

At the same time, media organizations need to explain their newsroom decisions (production transparency), linking to original sources, providing original documents, accepting regularly outside contributions, providing personal blogs to journalists and readers, etc.

Finally, media organizations should care about quality of reacting to concerns after acquiring feedback (responsiveness), providing participation spaces for users (comments, user-generated contents), allowing users to suggest potential topics to be covered, and not just doing so, but giving adequate answers to those concerns.

2.2. Content Level

The content level is important to define the differences between the online and offline media, and to which extent online websites offer a substantial different agenda. In general terms, we suggest to focus on both formal and content items.

First of all, we propose to focus on the quality of the website, in terms of content and information access; visibility and macronavigation; and usability, to explain to which extent the analyzed media are adapted to these new times, so a number of indicators about the use of the new tools and services are considered as well. Interactivity is considered of kind importance, as hyperlinks. Multimediality and the use of archives (memory), and temporality (how are news items refreshed?) are indicators of singularities in online journalism.

On the other hand, it is important to describe the topics covered preferentially by online media, and this is related to thematization. To do so, it is necessary to
perform a content analysis like the one we propose, based on topics covered; hierarchization of information; sources and social agents mentioned; and geographical adaptation, since online media are no longer just local, but potentially global.

2.3. Participation and Interaction Level

Participation is another dimension to be explained. Technology has substantially altered communication, opening up possibilities that the media swiftly incorporate. One of these possibilities is to integrate User Generated Contents (UGC) into the daily flow of the content of online newspapers. The essential question is not participation, but rather the criteria by which it is orientated. One of these possibilities is that the user can make comments on the news stories, establish a conversation with other users and even with the journalist or the medium that publishes the information. This is an attempt to achieve, through the norms, a balance between freedom of expression and respect for the other. The online newspapers analysed only protect freedom of expression which is respectful of the other and of democratic principles. The responsibility of the user begins with the obligation to register.

A new moral subject. Until now, the Ethics of Communication protected the receiver because the latter was in an asymmetrical relationship with the institutional emitters had to be protected from determinate content. Ethics must now protect the users of the content of other users. A new moralsubject has been born. While the former receiver had rights above all else, the new prosomer has duties above all else. This is the meaning of the norms of the online newspapers. And the first duty consists in being responsible for the content she or he generates. The responsibility of the medium is that of ensuring that the user assumes his/her responsibility because, if she or he does not do so, she or he will be expelled from the dialogue. This is the important function of the moderation teams, responsible for ensuring that the user’s content fits the norms. So, in this respect, it is important to both analyze the norms posed by media organizations, and the quality of discussion through comments. Thus, speakers must recognise each other as valid interlocutors through respectful treatment and consideration of the arguments of the others, demandable through three broad sections:

1) Logic and coherence: The speakers should centre their intervention on the subject under debate, and show the intention of discussing it.

2) Cooperative search for the truth: It is of interest to determine whether the readers recognise and respect each other in the dialogue, whether they carry out exchanges of viewpoint, whether they show interest in the arguments of the others. In this respect, it is important to verify whether there is a presence of insults and
defamations amongst readers, or of readers towards the protagonists of the news story or the agents present in it.

3) An agreement based on the best argument: It is of interest to know whether or not the people who intervene in the debate incorporate the argument of the others into their discourse, and whether they use other sources to support their own arguments. Another important aspect is the exclusion of speakers; that is, how many speakers have been able to take part in the conversation and how many comments have been eliminated and why. It is understood that the comments eliminated did not respect the norms.

3
CONCLUSION:
IS TRUST MORE DIFFICULT IN ONLINE JOURNALISM?

So, at the end, are journalist values more difficult, or easier accomplished in online media? According to Katherine M. Grosser, the trust mechanism is more complex and, moreover, the antecedents of trustworthiness are by and large negatively impacted by seven online developments. Consequently, trust in online journalism is more difficult to create than trust in offline journalism.

This is related to many of the aspect mentioned supra:

• Transparency: Product transparency and process transparency.
• Reputation transfer: Related to brands from offline to online.
• User-generated content.
• Rating cues connected to social networks which offer numeric indicators on news coverage.
• Multimedia.
• New understanding of what it means to be current: Related to periodicity and immediacy.
• Interactivity (Grosser, 2016: 1043-1044).
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II
Findings
1

THE CORPORATE LEVEL

1.1. The Business Model

One of the first conclusions adopted by the authors of this report is that, as Adrià Puértolas underlined, ‘we can draw with the data gathered from our analysis is that the business model is not the main fact that influences the content generated by the selected media, at least as far as the most important pieces of news of the day are concerned. There are other elements that shape the news published by the media and, as far as the study performed gets, that would be evidently the type of media in general terms (if we are talking about a newspaper, a magazine, etc.).’ Moreover, Puértolas states that ‘media with a classical business model (based on advertising and with a private, concentrated ownership) tend to have limited transparency practices on all topics. This is a practice that needs to be challenged, as it seems clear that the limitations on the information provided come from the private companies’ culture that states that 'the less information revealed the better.’ Puértolas found those practices in both media he studied, El Español (a digital-born media created by the former director of El Mundo, one of the most important printed newspapers in Spain) and La Vanguardia, one of the oldest newspapers published in Barcelona. The same author explains that 'we should understand that the obstacle on these cases is not being a native digital media but that the 'classical' political economy creates a restrictive and closed culture about media internal information that difficult significant transparency practices.’

Many different media business models and cases have been compared this course. Some are huge media corporations, such as The Times in Great Britain. Jordan Campbell explains its situation this way: ‘The Times has performed well in recent years in creating a sustainable business model while building their readership through investment – an anomaly in what has become an austerity industry - but have managed to retain normative foundations rather than fully embracing the characteristics of the digital lexicon.’ There are many reasons for that, ‘whether that is a result of its renowned reputation as a UK institution or not was difficult to know,’ so Campbell 'was intrigued to further research how they have managed to grow when, viscerally, it its aesthetics do not appear to be as progressive or modern as the likes of the metropolitan Guardian or the New York Times,'
for example’. As a result, ‘the financial state of the company is very healthy. They have two overdrafts of £20m available at their disposal courtesy of parent company, News Corp.’

The situation is quite wealthy for those media corporations. According to Jordan Campbell’s paper, ‘the company was still able to generate a turnover of £344,932,000 and an operating profit of £20,992,000, which was £11,118,000 after tax, a significant improvement on the £857,000 loss made the previous financial year. The reason behind this increase can partly be attributed to overall paid for sales rising, but the number of digital subscribers reduced from 156,000 in 2014 to 147,000 in 2015, a margin of 6%. Although there was lower advertising revenue, market share increased by 0.7% to 24.4%.’

Further explanations were provided by one of the editors of the newspaper: ‘In terms of comparing the Times to its competitors, editor Withrow makes an interesting claim about the BBC. He said: “The BBC was set up as a broadcaster, and obviously radio migrated into TV. It was not set up as a publisher. And it’s become de facto, with nobody agreeing to it, a publisher spending more money on, essentially, the printed digital word than we spend by a long way.”

Native online media have been studied as well by the students of the course. One of them is ViceNews, chosen by Gonçalo Caseiro and Albert Serratacó: ‘ICE News was founded in 2013 and is VICE Media’s specialized news outlet. It promotes itself on covering stories that are “under-reported”. Before VICE News, VICE, the main outlet of the group, founded by Shane Smith, Suroosh Alvi and Gavin McInes, already did news reports. However, with the foundation of a division exclusively for news, their coverage became much wider. This also prompted the creation of versions in different languages.

Advertisement is the main financial source in many media. For the smallest ones, this is always a hard way. For instance, in a recent interview with Vicent Partal, owner of Vilaweb, one of the most studied media during the course, he said that they wanted ‘to arrive to a situation in which the 50% of the incomes are from advertising, and the other 50% from subscriptions,’ accordingly to Ingrid Gustems. Comparing different native media from Catalonia (Vilaweb) and France (Rue89), Gustems finds some significant differences: ‘his trust determination is a very relevant thing about Vilaweb that we don’t reach in Rue89, which is that it has implemented a trust model based on the quality content guarantee by the USA’s movement non-profit-media.’

How to make users pay is another issue that has arose in these studies. One of the first ones which tried to implement a paywall was The Times. Jordan Campbell explains that ‘The Times were pioneers of the paywall system in the UK, becoming the first newspaper to introduce a flat paywall for its content in 2010 (Bunz, 2010).
Visits to the websites decreased by 87% after it was introduced, going from 21 million unique users per month to just 2.7 million. However, with over 105,000 people paying to read online news it meant that they were making more money than they were before as a free-access site (BBC, 2010). Since then, *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* have also merged their websites and become edition-based sites rather than rolling news. Times Digital Editor Alan Hunter said the decision was “...based on intensive customer research” (Ponsford, 2016). “The deadlines of 9am, midday and 5pm were established around natural peaks in online activity... because they accord with times that are important to people in their day” (Mayhew, 2016).

*The New York Times* implemented a partial paywall as well. The different levels are explained by Lara Roose and Liam Ross: “There are three different types of paid subscription the reader can sign up to:


2. All access: basic digital access features + *Times* insider access; access to exclusive, behind-the-scenes stories, photos and videos from *NY Times* journalists inside the newsroom, etc..

3. All access plus: basic digital access features + times insider access + crossword; the reader receives daily crossword puzzles, edited by Will Shortz of *The New York Times*.

An original model is *The Guardian*, a company studied by Gonçalo Caseiro and Albert Serratacó. ‘*The Guardian* started dwelling into online journalism in 1994 and 1995, but only launched its network of websites, *Guardian Unlimited*, in January 1999. In 2005, they started publishing newspapers in the Berliner format, with a new design and in full-colour, the first in the UK to ever do so. In 2008 they changed to their current headquarters, in King’s Cross. Three years later, in 2011, they became a digital-first organisation. Since then, they have been spreading through a multitude of platforms: Kindle, IOS, Android, Facebook, among others. In his farewell article, published in the 29th of May of 2015, Alan Rusbridger, who was leaving the post of editor-in-chief, stated that *The Guardian* was “still the eighth-biggest newspaper in the UK” and was competing with the New York Times “for the mantle of largest serious English-language newspaper website in the world”.

There are significant movements in revenues, even for the established traditional media. Jordan Campbell reminds how ‘In 2014, sales now accounted for 51% of *The Times*’ sales, while advertising was down to 44% (O’Reily, 2014).’ Campbell referred back to the interview he held with with Chris Roper, in which ‘he painted a clear picture of the collapse of the traditional advertising-based model: “I don’t think advertising is the way at all. I think that the battle has been
lost to the scum of Facebook and Google, and Twitter to a lesser extent. Advertising is never going to be the way to sustain media going forward.’

1.2. Ownership

Even when comparing native digital media, differences are evident in ownership models. This is the case of Vilaweb, a pioneer Catalan online medium, one of the first ones in Spain, and Rue89 in France. This is explained by Ingrid Gustems: ‘The first thing we see when we compare the legal and economic aspects of Vilaweb and Rue89 is that their ownership model is different: while Vilaweb behaves in a private ownership by the company that created the medium twenty-one years ago, Partal, Maresma & Associats (limited association), Rue89 has used both a private and a mixed model because it had participations not only of the founders, but also of public subsidies and stock exchange sources until 2011, when Claude Perdriel purchased the 100% of the medium and incorporated it to its group Nouvel Observateur.’ In Gustem’s opinion, ‘this tells us one important thing: on the paper, Vilaweb should have more independence than Rue89 because it has, and has always had, private ownership, which means that it doesn’t receive as pressure as the French medium. But this is a double-edged weapon because a mixed ownership allows more people in the decision chain and in a private one those decisions are in a few hands and they can be also corrupted if we don’t analyse any other variables. Now that Rue89 has a private ownership too, its interests are also compromised.’

Ingrid Gustem advance her explanation this way: ‘When the president of Nouvel Observateur purchased Rue89, he said that its independence and ideological alignment would never change, but [...] since then, the medium has left behind its “social democratic” ideas and “cultural liberalism” desires to be an Internet content giver.’

‘I will not make you pay for information and you will have access to the same contents as others, but if you want a medium like this to exist, you should think about paying a bit. The key word in this case is agreement’. This idea makes us think that the question wondered about the few hands that control information in private models is mere speculation in the case of Vilaweb.’ Moreover, ‘the donors and private aid we see in Vilaweb is not active in Rue89, which once preferred to play with stock exchange and public subsidies to survive and now it is part of a bigger group, so it doesn’t receive all the profits it generates. In its web, they describe their economic model as “building and retaining an audience that allows us to develop advertising revenues” and also “designing websites, reselling contents
and form conferences to web journalism”. This last thing is what we call added value.

This means marks a difference with huge corporations, owned by one individual, like The Times: “The company was owned by the Thompson Corporation until Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch bought the title and its sister paper, the Sunday Times, through his News International company in 1981. Rupert Murdoch is the Executive Chairman, but sons James Murdoch and Lachlan Murdoch are the Chief Executive Officer and co-chairman, respectively”, as explained by Jordan Campbell.¹ Or a family, which is the case of the New York Times, as explained by Liam Ross and Lara Roose: ‘It is a daily print and online newspaper, founded on September 18, 1815, over 200 years ago. The founders were journalist and politician Henry Jarvis Raymond and former banker George Jones. The publication is currently owned by The New York Times Company. Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., the Publisher and has been the Chairman of the Board since 1997, is a member of the Ochs-Sulzberger family that has controlled the paper since 1896. The Ochs-Sulzberger family trust controls around 88 percent of the company’s class B shares. Any modification to the dual-class structure must be approved by six of eight directors who sit on the board of the Ochs-Sulzberger family trust (King, 2016). The Trust board members are Daniel H. Cohen, James M. Cohen, Lynn G. Dolnick, Susan W. Dryfoos, Michael Golden, Eric M. A. Lax, Arthur O. Sulzberger, Jr. and Cathy J. Sulzberger.’

Things changed with the economic crisis: ‘In 2009, The New York Times reported that its parent company, The New York Times Company, had struck a deal with wealthy Mexican businessman Carlos Slim reached an agreement to borrow $250 million from the world’s second richest person, “to help the newspaper company finance its businesses” (Laya & Smith, 2015). As of March 7, 2016, Slim owned 17.4% of the company. Nowadays Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, Jr., is the Publisher and the Chairman of the Board, Michael Golden is vice chairman and Mark Thompson is the president and CEO.’

The Guardian, owned by a trust with a great budget, is a very interesting case, also studied by Ross and Roose: ‘Primarily, theguardian.com (https://www.theguardian.com) is the online version of the notorious British left

¹ In his paper, Jordan Campbell reminds the case of the illegal hearing: ‘After the phone-hacking scandal involving the News of the World, the reputation of Murdoch and his companies was damaged. The first board appointment to be made after it was Stephen Grabiner as a director of Times Newspapers ltd. (Halliday, 2012). Controversially, Rebekah Brooks was also appointed as News Corp chief exec despite her role in the unethical practices, as revealed in Leveson. Companies House show that, after 29 changes in the boardroom, there are now six active directors of Times Newspapers Ltd: Brooks (CEO), David Dinsmore (Chief Operating Officer), Michael Gill (Accountant), Martin Ivens (Acting Editor, the Sunday Times), Christopher Longcroft (Chief Financial Officer) and John Withrow (Editor of the Sunday Times).’
of centre newspaper *The Guardian*. The online medium has three editions; an Australian edition, an US edition and a UK edition with the main office of all of them based in Kings Place, London. Undoubtedly, *The Guardian* has benefitted enormously since its adventure to the online world as it has an array of benefits. Ross and Roose follow Arne H. Krumsvik, as quoted: ‘(Online editions) allow the publishers to claim a stake in the online news environment and experiment with online services and possible revenue streams” (Krumsvik, 2009).’ Liam Ross and Lara Roose remind how ‘the Guardian Media Group (GMG) owns *The Observer* and a variety of other media related businesses. GMG however are wholly owned by the Scott Trust limited who since 1936 mainly exist to “secure the financial and editorial independence of *The Guardian* in perpetuity: as a quality national newspaper without party affiliation; remaining faithful to its liberal tradition; as a profit-seeking enterprise managed in an efficient and cost-effective manner” (Ellis, 2014).’

*The Guardian*’s situation is not, however, as promising and healthy as it may seem. ‘There has recently been criticism of the way Scott Trust limited is run, especially since it changed from a trust to a profit making private limited company in 2008. Even though *The Guardian* alongside the BBC has been regarded worldwide as being “unique for being owned by a trust rather than a media mogul” (Jones, 2015), this is actually inaccurate as due to its new form of ownership *The Guardian* “functions under the same sort of corporate structure as any other major media company” (Jones, 2015).’ In Ross and Roose’s opinion, 'this becomes increasingly worrying due the fact that the Chairperson of Scott Trust Limited (Dame Liz Forgon) and several members on the board seem to have strong connections to the financial sector, especially with the bank HSBC.’ This is an extremely interesting question, since, as both authors underline, ‘undoubtedly, the ties between Scott Trust Ltd and HSBC have to bring *The Guardian*’s once notorious editorial independence into disrepute. In addition, it shows how vital private donations (sponsorships) and online advertising is to *The Guardian* where a newspaper which previously did not let their advertisers dictate them, have been lured away from the cherished editorial principals. To develop this point, former editor in chief Alan Rusbridger has consigned to the fact that online advertisers are taking over and explains exactly why they are, as quoted: “We all know that digital forces are threatening to weaken, or even destroy, the traditional basis, role and funding of the press. And we know that digital enables everyone to disrupt everyone else’s business. Text publishers can get into moving pictures and the broadcasters can get into text. It was only a matter of time before it would seem overwhelmingly obvious – and economically irresistible – for people to converge consolidate and integrate” (Rusbridger, 2010).

There some other strategies that can work, as Lara Roose and Liam ERoss have underlined: ‘Asides from online advertising, *The Guardian* also raises funds
through public appeals to become a supporter from £5 a month to £60 a month with a different array of benefits for the more you pay. Likewise to *The New York Times*, this service was available on a variety of devices including desktop, mobile phones and tablets. Despite year on year loses (including £173 million for the GMG group this year) the newspaper has seen an increase on the numbers of membership with more than 50,000 new members signing up. The scheme is currently generating £30 million of revenue and the Guardian group hopes to more than double this figure to £68 million within the next three years.’ Accordingly to Ross and Roose, ‘this proves that with the right strategy (i.e. focus on quality journalism) then a private donor scheme can work.’

*The Guardian’s* strategy has changed from former editor-in-chief Alan Rusbridger’s times. The current editor in chief of *The Guardian* is Katherine Viner. ‘She launched the Australian edition of the Guardian in 2013 after launching the improved American version alongside Janine Gibson in 2011 (*The Guardian, 2011)*.’ On his turn, ‘Alan Rusbridger followed a long standing Guardian tradition by retaining his editor role for 20 years. During his tenure, there was a huge mix of positives and negatives. He established the newspaper from being midsized print brand to being a digital phenomenon. To develop this point, Rusbridger launching *The Guardian Unlimited* (now known as theguardian.com) in 1999 was detrimental to his legacy as being one of the most modern thinking journalists of his time. The benefits of starting *Guardian Unlimited* were truly reflected during the 9/11 bombings as many viewers turned to the *Guardian* for intelligent, in-depth coverage. To add to this, the fact that along with the BBC they were already established online platforms proved pivotal in the success of their live reporting. Going into the 21st century, things only went from strength to strength for Rusbridger and *The Guardian* in terms of their investigative journalism as they broke a number of high profile stories including WikiLeaks, the Phone – Hacking Scandal and the Edward Snowdon NSA revelations,’. Rusbridger, advocate of the digital-first strategy, ‘also has a few detractors. Even though his confidence in pursuing digital media has given *The Guardian* the title as one of the finest online news mediums in the word, this came at a high cost to the company. During the year he left The Guardian, it has been reported that he left behind yearly losses totalling £45 million which was more than any other newspaper in 2015 (*Wolff, 2016*). Consequently, this has led to the new editor Viner having to make serious cutbacks in order to cover the costs off Rusbriger’s expensive venture.’ So that the company made some changes, and even though ‘Rusbridger was expected to take up the chairman role at the Scott Trust once he left his position as editor in chief, however he surprisingly turned this down after rumours of an internal power struggle were behind his reasoning of turning down the job as chairman.’
Many media have tried to find some other revenue sources, for instance e-commerce. When comparing Vilaweb and Rue89, Ingrid Gustems states that ‘the last thing in common in the revenue sources models of both media is the commerce. Both one and the other support their businesses with a store where you can find merchandising or self-ideas products. In Rue89’s case, they sell a few things and the shop is online, so we are talking about e-commerce, but the store we find in Vilaweb is physical (also online available) and pretty big and structured, so we are talking about a bigger deal and a much thought strategy: ‘We want the reader to come to the newsroom without any explanation obligation. It is not important if they come, it is that they know that they can come’, Partal says.

In some other Catalan, native online media, cooperative ownership is underlined, for instance in the case of El Crític and SomNació. This is explained by Andrea Llovera. In the first case, three partners share 60% of the ownership, and more than sixty people owns the other 40%. The medium was born through a campaign in Verkami. Many Catalan media are subsidised by the catalan government (Generalitat).

The ownership is private in most of the analyzed media. The smallest, more niche-oriented ones, show significant characteristics. This is the case of some small media analyzed by Clara Ardèvol, the Catalan-based Núvol and The Arts Desks, both of them belonging to the journalists. The first one is associated to Vilaweb, so at the same time it can be considered to be part of Partal, Maresma & Associats. Some other cultura media, like the Spanish JotDown, created by and belonging to Wabi Sabi Investments, and it has an agreement with the major Spanish media group Prisa, which, amongst other products, publishes the leader newspaper in both printed and digital versions in the country, El País.
TRANSPARENCY IS ONE OF THE KEY CONCEPTS we all dealt with during the course. It is not always a constant characteristic of online media, and even the greatest ones shows some room to improve their practices. In Kaspar Kornbek’s opinion, even The New York Times lacks a complete actor transparency: ‘It was through the findings found that the news organization lacked a sufficient profile of their journalists, their expertise and their background. This stood, as mentioned previously, in contrast to how Domingo & Heikkilä (2012) stated how online news media are continually including more detailed profiles of journalists and, especially, their ‘star journalists’, where these profiles would specify their professional background and expertise.’ This is an aspect underlined by Liam Ross and Lara Roose as well: ‘They also have profiles of particular journalists that may have more authority than others. The newspaper has a comprehensive style guide which all their journalists must abide by as not only should their writing be concise and intellectual, they have to take care when reporting on issues on crime and death’. Regardless of those minor problems, the company shows some other indicators of a high transparency level: ‘It provides’. Kaspar Kornbek reminds, ‘mission statement, code of ethics and, remarkably, have published a "handbook of values and practices for the news and editorial departments", indicating that the newspaper sets the standards of modern journalism.’

Kaspar Kornbek tries to go deeper on the explanation of some decision made by The New York Times: ‘As far as the NYT’s mission statement and its in-house code of ethics and standards, the website of the newspaper itself is not conveniently set up just to click on an ‘About us’-section and then investigate the owner structure, mission statement, etc. This practice for actor transparency is created on a whole other website than the one where the news articles are located. The main reason for the information pages of the organization not figuring on the main webpage has to do with the sheer scale and size of the newspaper, since it has been deemed necessary to create a standalone website, which, on the other hand, is dedicated to the practice of establishing actor transparency. The user acquires not only knowledge about how the ownership is structured within the organization, but the user can access different content, such as The New York Times’ mission statement, code of ethics, the organization outlining the sole pur-
pose of the media and a "handbook of values and practices for the news and editorial departments". Although they do not include a complete profile of the journalists, these pages do not only establish actor transparency, but also portray the media as a flagship of journalism.

Some other international media show similar problems regarding to transparency. El País shows similar practices, as stated by Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla. It is possible to have some information on the journalists, but not a complete list of the staff. This is also the case of the British Daily Mail, the most popular medium in terms of audience. As Carla Notter explains, ‘we have come to the outcome that despite its big audience it has gaps in its transparency system. The actor’s transparency is cut in to a positive and negative discovery. The actor’s transparency based on the journalists of the Daily Mail UK is very patchy, as one cannot find any additional information to the journalists except the name and its articles written for the online newspaper.’ But, in a similar way as stated for The New York times, ‘in the actor’s transparency based on the media house Daily Mail is very good made, for all readers there can be found all rules and house. Rules are formulated very well so you get informed about which rules the readers must follow and which rules the journalists follow’. Moreover, ‘if questions should appear you can also be linked to the site of complaints’. But, on the other hand, ‘the production transparency at the Daily Mail UK is bad’, as we will explain in the following section.

Probably the best of all the media analyzed in this course, regarding to transparency practices, is The Guardian. The situation is explained with great detail by Lara Roose and Liam Ross in their paper: ‘Even though it is not a legal requirement, newspapers generally follow an unwritten rule and publish a list of the staff that work/write for the publication. This is applicable to all editions of The Guardian in the UK, US and Australia as they a full list of contributors and full editorial board for their two foreign additions.’ Ross and Roose find remarkable the use of Twitter accounts to enhance actors transparency: ‘This method is being used by several organisations as a modern staff directory whereby readers can contact journalists through their Twitter accounts. In addition, with every news story published by The Guardian, the author’s name is a hyperlink which, if you follow, takes the user onto a webpage with all the articles they have done for the newspaper.’

The Guardian is one of the few media studied which provides profiles of their journalists: ‘Depending on how well known the journalist is or how long they have been in the industry, this will affect the length of their ‘personal profile’ on The Guardian’s webpage. To give an example of this, the football correspondent for The Observer - Paul Wilson- has a very detailed biography at the top of his dedicated webpage specifying various details from where he used to work the football team he supports. On the other hand, Melanie Wilkinson, who is a Fash-
ion writer for theguardian.com does not have a biography on her webpage whatsoever (The Guardian, 2014).’ As a conclusion, ‘it is evident that The Guardian/Observer on their online media have a considerable amount of actor transparency’

Similar problems as those previously explained in several media, apart from The New York Times and The Guardian, arise when analyzing the Spanish and Catalan media. For instance, Adrià Puértolas, who compared some digital-born media explains how ‘a brief exploration of the different media website allows us to see that in the case of el diario.es and Crític we can find a list of the full staff working on the media, including occasional collaborations and the territorial delegations (in eldiario.es)’, whilst, on the other hand, La Vanguardia and El Español, only provide a list of the professionals who have a directive post (Editor in Chief, the heads of the section, the president of the newspaper, etc.) but not the full list of the journalists working on it so it’s impossible to know, for example, how many professionals has the different sections of the media’. Nevertheless, it is possible to find some information on journalists’ profiles, both eldiario.es and La Vanguardia offer a brief description of the journalists’ career that includes generally the studies, the media where he or she has worked, how many years they’ve been working on this media and specialization topics. We cannot find this information in El Español and in the case of Crític it’s more complex; the two journalists working regularly on the media, Sergi Picazo and Roger Palà, display vast information about themselves on the website. However, as Crític publishes material from a variety of different collaborators, who sometimes are not even journalists, it doesn’t provide information about their profile (although normally it does offer a way of contacting the collaborator in question).’

The situation is similar in other Catalan newspapers. This is the case of El Periódico. According to Laura Moreno Rodríguez, ‘the newspaper has a section to explain who they are (Quiénes somos), which clearly defines who runs each role in the company. From the web of each news piece, one can click on the link on the author. However, when one access to the new screen, one can only see other news written by this person and a link to his Social Media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Google+,’ but still ‘we are not provided information about their careers or their education, just their category as “journalist”’. Silvia castellanos insists in this aspect: ‘If we pay attention to the information on the journalists’ profile, the transparency has got more weaknesses. LaVanguardia.com only offers the name of its journalists: any link to other page or photograph is not included. In the case of El Periódico, the aspect improves a little, because some of the journalists have a picture and their profession in a kind of description in the articles, but, in general, as in La Vanguardia, news just provides the name of the worker, without a link. Nevertheless, both media make public the information on company ownership.’
As the other media studied, ‘El Periódico’ has a stylebook which unifies the professional guidelines that all the journalists working in the newspaper have to follow and ensures a proper use of the freedom of expression.

It is sometimes difficult to find out mentions on the ethic codes of practice, even in digital-born media. This is an issue explained with some extension by Adrià Puértolas: ‘In the case of the native media, eldiario.es, Crític and El Español, we haven’t been able to find information on their website on some of the issues. Topics such as whether the media is adhered to an ethics code developed by an external institution, such as the Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya or whether there is a status of journalistic and editorial independence are not on display in these media. The same happens in the case of La Vanguardia, but we can consult the ethics code that has always applied to the print version, so unlike the other media, we can make sure that there are positive journalists rules.’ The oldest Spanish native-digital medium, Estrella Digital, follows a similar tendency, as explained by Natalia Cuenca: ‘If we take into account the transparency of Estrella Digital’s actors, we find that in the “Who We Are” section of their website, we can see the entire list of journalists who are part of the staff. However, it’s not included any type of link in which we can see more information about them apart from their email addresses. In addition, it is not specified anywhere what ethical rules follow journalists. As for transparency in production, they tend to name and include links to their main sources, but they don’t solicit the contribution of users in any kind of information or news’. In Puértolas’ opinion, ‘the fact that none of the native digital media and the website edition of La Vanguardia omit this issue on their sites is significant of how Internet changes the accountability practices. But still it’s interesting to outline how the digital environment changes the way that newspapers generate trust and, in this matter, an interesting hypothesis would be that it’s no longer a matter of institutional proximity (meaning that the media subscribe the ethics code elaborated by an external, maybe public, institution) or subscribing some formal rules but a matter of being capable to generate a narrative around quality and journalistic values (specially independence) supported by practices mainly about production and economic transparency.’

In Catalonia some digital-born and double-edition (print and digital) media have been created in the last decade. Two of them are Ara.cat and Nació Digital, studied by Laia Puig and Mar Romero: ‘Both present similar levels of actor transparency although Nació Digital goes further. Diari Ara provides a list of its main staff, like directors and heads of sections. Nació Digital, instead, presents somewhere easy to find a more detailed list of its staff’. There is one way to have complete list of journalists: ‘The only way to see the complete list of authors is to specifically look for one, and at the bottom Nació Digital provides a disordered list of every author., but without including their profiles. ‘Still, Nació Digital helps
the user by providing the twitter accounts of its staff, which indirectly might help
the same purpose. *Diari Ara* doesn’t facilitate them.’

‘Last but not least’, add Puig and romero, ‘another aspect to take into account
in actor transparency is whether media organisations have a public set of journal-
istic rules that indicate their way of working to the users. Neither *Diari Ara* nor
*Nació Digital* provide that although *Diari Ara* has a public manifesto where they
mention a few aspects about the way the see journalism’. Vilaweb, another Cata-
lan digital-born medium, follows a similar practice, as explained by Alba Juanola:
they provide a list of journalist, with no profile of them –instead, email and Twit-
ter accounts are provided --, and a pdf version of its stylebook.

A final remark on actor transparency is welcome, and this is the one provided
by Kaspar Kornbek. In general terms, it is possible to click on the name of the
authors of the articles, ‘but when you actually can, the link will only direct the
user onwards to a page where you can see the journalist’s previous work of arti-
cles and not a profile section, which describes the journalist's career or back-
ground. The recipients have, however, the opportunity to follow the journalist’s
Twitter account if one finds the journalist’s work interesting.’ In Kornbek’s opin-
ion, ‘this contrasts with how Domingo & Heikkilä (2012) states how online news
media are continually including more detailed profiles of journalists specifying
their professional background and expertise, since it is only possible to track re-
lated articles to the different journalists or authors of the distinctive articles.’

### 2.1.2. Production Transparency

Improvements have been done in online media regarding to production transparen-
cy as well, though difference are to be found in the differente media analyzed.
Carla Notter, when analyzing one of the most popular online newspapers in the
United Kingdom, *Daily Mail*, considers that ‘as the production transparency re-
ferring to the journalist and his work has many gaps, one cannot find any links to
original sources nor links to personal blogs. That is the case with all authors. You
just have the story and the name of the author, but it’s not possible to get a view
over the production of the article’, which contrast with, in Notter’s opinion, the

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2 ‘ARA vol ser una resposta a un moment difícil per al periodismo, que afecta especialment la
premsa escrita. És per això que ARA assumeix amb els seus lectors el compromís de recuperar
els valors que ha donat al llar- de la història el periodisme del nostre paísM la màxima qualitat i
rigor ètic com a garant dels valors de la nostra societat. I per tot això també es compromet a fer
un periodisme a favor del que ens fa grans, en contra del que ens empetiteix, amb l’autoexigència
màxima i la recerca de l’excel·lència, valors indispensables que ens donaran l’autoritat moral per
ser exigents amb els altres’.
high level of responsiveness, since ‘The Daily Mail encourages its readers in different ways and the response is big’.

In Spain the best media are the native-digital ones, as explained by Adrià Puértolas: ‘On the production transparency topic we find that eldiario.es is the medium with better practices, with a punctuation of 4, followed by Crític and La Vanguardia and El Español.’ Eldiario.es, created by Ignacio Escolar, is the one highlighted by Puértolas: ‘On its pieces of news we can find links to the original sources, documents for example, accounts explaining professional judgments, links to blogs for productions issues, specially the one called “escolar.net” and written by the Editor in Chief of the newspaper, Ignacio Escolar, where he discusses daily the main news published by eldiario.es and also links to journalists’ personal blogs.’ The author underlines ‘the way the newspaper has of giving accounts explaining professional judgements, which he does using videoblogs when there is a particular investigation or an important topic, for example in the case of the plagiarism committed by the rector of the Rey Juan Carlos University (for further information: http://bit.ly/2h80hP0). Also the Editor in Chief of the Newspaper, Ignacio Escolar, answers, weekly, questions summated by the subscribers, which are allowed to ask about the newspaper practices, warn them about mistakes, how they are financed, etc.’ Ignacio Escolar’s online-only newspaper is the best one of the Spanish media studied in this course, ‘in which we can find a really interesting variety of tools and practices that aim to create a strong link between users and the media. The journalists’ blogs were they explained the background of some of the most important pieces of news that they published, the journalists personal blogs (or accounts on the social media), and the videoblogs of the editorial department were supplementary accounts about news are given prove that the will of creating a trust link with users is strong.’

This contrast with the erratic way –using Laura Moreno’s words– in which some Spanish and Catalan media act: ‘Regarding to the transparency through links to the original sources of a journalistic piece, El Periódico does not have a unified manner to act. In some pieces, there are links to other pages, the majority of them to the newspaper itself, and in others there are no references to this information. Even among those who include links, there are articles in which there is just one link or the ones in which there is a screenshot of a certain tweet.’ ‘Finally,’ reminds Silvia Castellanos, ‘neither La Vanguardia nor El Periódico give accounts, like a newsroom blog or a special section, explaining professional judgments informing the process of publication or explaining how decisions are made.

Another important practice is to make accounts public: ‘On this issue’, explains Adrià Puértolas, ‘it is also important to say that both eldiario.es and Crític make public the financial state of the media, the revenue sources with percentages
as an accountability practice to create trust among their subscribers and the audience.’ Puértolas concludes stating that ‘we consider this as a key practice to create distance with the picture, spread especially in the last decade, that the media are property of big financial groups with mainly economic interests that do not care about journalistic values. It’s easy to find, in the description offered in their own website the percentages of the media’s ownership, the names of all the owners and the percentage of income coming from subscribers’ fees, advertising, subsidies, etc.’

On the other hand, those media which come from print editions or created by journalists whose career has been done in printed newspapers, which is the case of Perdo J. Ramírez, former editor in chief of Diario16 and El Mundo, which he contributed to create, and later on the impulso of a digital-born newspaper called El Español. This is how Adrià Puértolas explains those more conservative practices. ‘The transparency practices of La Vanguardia and El Español are limited to basic issues. Few information about the newspapers’ actors and almost non-existent information about the production process (no journalists’ blogs to give accounts, no personal blogs, etc.). This significant differences suggest, a prior, that there is an evident link between transparency practices and business model that responds to the following model: newspapers with business models based on the revenues provided by subscribers and where the advertising revenues have less importance have better transparency practices. These better practices don’t only apply to the information about the actors or the media functioning but also to the production processes and strengthen the link between the media and the users.’

Moreover, ‘media with a classical business model (based on advertising and with a private, concentrated ownership) tend to have limited transparency practices on all topics. This is a practice that needs to be challenged, as it seems clear that the limitations on the information provided come from the private companies’ culture that states that ‘the less information revealed the better’ Thus, from the perspective of this paper, we should understand that the obstacle on these cases is not being a native digital media but that the classical political economy creates a restrictive and closed culture about media internal information that difficult significant transparency practices.’ Some other students have found such obstacle to full transparency, for instance in the Spanish leader newspaper El País. Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla says that ‘in general terms, we could conclude that the newspaper tries to be as transparent as possible regarding to the published content, nevertheless there is not a journalistic cultura about accountabiliy, so that there is no blog, for instance, to discuss the practice or the routines in the newsroom.’This is changing, however, says raffia, when coming down to new digital-born products, such as verne or El Comidista.

This kind of practices are also found in other digital-born media, like Rue89 in France. This is how Natalia Cuenca explains its practices. ‘They constantly add
the link to the source of all the information they share. In fact, in each news we can see how many hyperlinks appear that lead to the main source of its information. In addition, many of the news are based on information, graphics and images from other websites or blogs, which are cited in the articles. On the other hand, the web has a "subweb" inside it where you can see all the articles, comments on Twitter and comments in social network and others of all the people who have written in the newspaper. The list is endless, since one of the defining characteristics of Rue89 is that the news is written by journalists, but also by bloggers and by normal users, who decide to do articles on topics that they consider to be of public interest and the newspaper often accepts them and publishes them. This is a great point to consider as a characteristic of "new digital journalism". The contribution of the user and this type of relationship are very beneficial for a digital newspaper these days.’

Some major media have adopted those transparency practices. Kaspar Kornbek and Jonas VangMagnussen explain how The New York Times is doing: ‘By providing such links to original sources, the media enables, as Domingo & Heikkilä (2012) puts it, their users to access initial sources of information. Collaborative news production - or user-generated content (UGC) - is another way for online news media organizations to establish production transparency (Domingo & Heikkilä, 2012). Such content does not only work as a way to improve the means for holding news media accountable, but are described by many commentators and practitioners as part of a larger set of trends revolutionizing journalism by disrupting the traditional relationships between journalists and their audiences (Domingo & Heikkilä, 2012: 279, as referred to e.g. Deuze, Bruns, and Neuberger, 2007). Non-affiliated writers are encouraged to submit their so-called "Op-Ed article", which are opinion articles no longer than 1.200 words (NY-Times, 2016). These are articles written by `contributors’, i.e. collaborative news production, or, user-generated content, which are primarily used for covering topics, such as ISIS.’

This also the case of The Guardian, one the first media which adopted the digital first strategy. Liam Ross and Lara Roose explains how ‘when necessary, articles on The Guardian’s website will often contain references in the form of hyperlinks to either their own or other publications work. To illustrate this at the beginning of December 2016 columnist Owen Jones published an article regarding the British National Health Service (NHS) and the Labour party. Within it he used statistics from YouGov (an opinion poll website run by the UK government) and profiles of MP’s taken from the British parliament (Jones, 2016). Another example is an article written by Anne Perkins concerning Syrian refugees sleeping rough on British streets. The article includes hyperlinks to a story she read in prospect magazine and also a couple of government publications relating to laws passed on the issue of homelessness (Perkins, 2016). Both these examples
show how The Guardian encourages extensive reading during research so that it produces high quality intellectual journalism from its staff. In addition, within their webpage they have a section entitled ‘blogposts’ which includes a variety of feature length articles from contributors and also whenever The Guardian reports a story live as it is happening it is posted here as well as on their homepage.’

As in the case of The Guardian, The New York Times ‘made a remarkable effort in terms of collaborative news production, also known as user-generated content, where a section of opinion articles fills half of the screen when entering the website. This content written by freelance journalists creates not only content that may not have been published, but provides another way of establishing production transparency, improving the means for holding The New York Times media accountable.’, in Jonas Vang Magnussen and Kaspar Kornbek’s words.

This, in Puértolas’ opinion, who follows by José Luís González-Esteban in the paper ‘La transformación del ecosistema mediático español: el caso de eldiario.es’, links those very different practices to the ideological adscription as well. ‘The idea that the ultimate influence on both the business model and the transparency practices is set by the ideology of the media fits in our analysis as the right oriented media, La Vanguardia and El Español have clearly worse transparency practices. It is particularly significant the case of the newspaper founded by Pedro J. Ramírez. In terms of adaptation to online language and interactivity, El Español has really good registers (proving that it is capable of taking advantage of the possibilities offered by the digital environment) but it doesn’t happen the same with the possibilities on transparency.’ Silvia Castellano insists in those aspects, as stating that ‘we observed that the fact of belonging to a private sector has influence to the content and the information that these media provide. This aspect can explain the weaknesses we find in their transparency.’

### 2.2. Responsiveness

‘The capacity of media organizations to properly answer to the necessity of active audiences, providing them with tools and resources for participation, enhancing a dialogue with audiences.’ This is how we define responsiveness. In general terms, most of the media analyzed show some concern about giving some voice, to some extent, to audiences. As Kaspar Kornbek and Jonas Vang Magnussen underline, ‘memosPractices after the act of publication aim at responsiveness by acquiring feedback from the users and recipients of the news articles and reacting to any of their concerns (Domingo & Heikkilä, 2012). This covers online news comments, which is often made convenient for users since many online news sites of today have a comment section beneath their articles, correction buttons and responding to users through social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. (Domingo & Heik-
kilä, 2012). These kinds of responsiveness refers to how news organizations engage in two-way communication with those commenting on either websites, Facebook or simply addressing errors or mistakes to the editorial departments.

Laura Moreno, after stating that one of the most important newspapers in Catalonia, El Periódico, describes the most widespread use of online tools to enhance users’ participation: ‘They allow people to comment all the content they share and they take these comments into account to improve the quality of the content they publish.’ There some slight difference sin the practices of the Catalan online newspaper which come from an older printed one, such as El Periódico and La Vanguardia. Silvia Castellanos, who have analyzed both, explains that ‘the participation understood as the right of the reader to interact with the media is similar on both, having more opportunities El Periódico. By his side, La Vanguardia uses that section also to offer the entertainment tools.’ And she adds: ‘Either one and other include journalists’ blogs, where people also can leave their comments. ElPeriodico.com also gives an email of the journalists, so the reader can communicate directly with them. Focusing on the participation on the news developing, both media are able to include information given by audience. Most of the material are images and videos, but readers also can write some articles, as we can see in the participation sections that they have. Journalists can include information given by citizens if they consider it, as audiovisual content that someone could record from a social event, for example a manifestation.’

Which is interesting is to see how journalists in charge of those participation section talk about the role of active audiences. Interviewed by Laura Moreno, Xurxo Martínez, of El Periódico, says that ‘all journalists are usually very jealous to see what the audience is talking about. There is an external company that reviews all the comments. Not only when they see insults but also when some reader exposes any error in the news and it seems minimally serious, they send them to us, we review them and we send them to each of the editors just in case they have not seen them. There is much focus on seeing what users are telling us.’

Some other digital-born media in Catalonia, of much more recent creation, present, quite surprisingly, a low responsiveness level. According to Laia Puig and Mar Romero, two of those media, Nació Digital and Ara.cat this one, also and primarily a printed newspaper) do not have neither an ombudsman nor respond to comments. ‘While the Internet offers a much wider range of possibilities to canalize responsiveness than traditional media, Nació Digital and Ara.cat both lack of resources like an ombudsman. It could be interesting to assess in further research the reason behind the fact that traditional media seem to consider responsiveness more relevant than digital media’. It happens the same with the oldest Spanish online-only newspaper, Estrella Digital, which, as Natalia Cuenca explains, ‘fails a little in this section. It does not offer much user-daily contact, since the only way that a user has to communicate with the newspaper is through
comments in the news (which are practically non-existent) and by the old letters to the editor. There is no possibility for the user to produce content that is published or any mechanism of expression that allows the newspaper to listen to their opinions. In this aspect, Estrella Digital is little adapted to the new times’.

The situation improves in other online-only media, such as Rue89 in France. According to Natalia Cuenca, ‘although it doesn’t have a Letter to the Editor section or a direct mechanism of complaints or suggestions, it encourages a lot the user participation, who can send articles that can be published, as well as comments in the news has great affluence: each news always has an extensive number of comments, all of them focusing on the topic of the article and generating intense debates among its users. In addition, the newspaper itself highlights some of the comments, which are those that appear before the others, as a sample that the newspaper worries about what their users think and have an active debate on the issues that are discussed.’

The lack of a comments section is present in some Spanish and Catalan media, such as Vilaweb. This is a conscious decision in many cases. Once again, Estrella Digital ‘is in a really bad position’, as Natalia Cuenca explains. ‘Practically none of its news have comments. While it’s true that users share some of the news on the networks, in most the news haven’t comments, so no debate is generated. However, looking at the list of most read news of the week, of which they are almost always about gossip issues, I have found that they have some comments and.’

The situation, as in many other aspects considered in this course, is much better in the case of The New York Times and The Guardian. Liam Ross and Lara Roose have analyzed both of them. In the first case, ‘the newspaper notifies errors. The reader can email a letter to the public editor Liz Spayd who has the responsibility of ensuring that journalistic integrity is maintained at all times. The newspaper does not normally respond to users’ comments, however you do have the ability to leave a comment on an article. The newspaper provides opportunities to communicate directly with journalists. Most reporters can be reached directly by clicking the byline of any article by that reporter. This will take you to the reporter’s Times Topics page, where you can click to the individual journalist who wrote that particular article. There is also a link to access a contact form.’ Jonas Vang Magnussen and Kaspar Kornbek deepen in this aspect: ‘The New York Times have made the comment section more desirable for users to interact with. Instead of just launching a comment section made in a random order, or just adding the opportunity for the user to order the comments after most upvotes or downvotes, The New York Times have nuanced and even selected their own picks out of all the comments. Users can look through the comment section ordered in one of three ways: ‘All’, ‘Reader’s picks’ or ‘NYT picks’, which shows how engaged The New York Times is in its relationship with its audience and how it is
being held accountable.’ Magnussen and Kornbek criticize, however, the use of social digital networks: ‘We will, however, go much more in depth with how *The New York Times* interacts with its users and recipients later in this paper. Scrolling through *The New York Times*’ Facebook feed and official Twitter account, however, it becomes evident that their social media activity here is mainly for promotional purposes and serve as just another platform to brand the newspaper and distribute news to audiences subscribing to *The New York Times* and its Facebook page and Twitter account.’ As a general conclusion, ‘as Domingo and Heikkilä (2012) states that the objective in terms of responsiveness may be pursued simply by enabling users to have their say and exchange their views about news publicly, it suddenly becomes evident that *The New York Times* simply pursues the objective of responsiveness in the way it in this case was described by Domingo and Heikkilä, thus, just to encourage their users to interact with the media and express themselves.’

*The Guardian* is also a model for responsiveness in the online world. ‘*The Guardian/Observer* has been very well known over the years to interact with its audience whether this be through comments on articles, complaints or corrections that have been picked up by readers. First of all, a comments box is attached to every article that appears on their website which attracts huge numbers of comments on a daily basis with major headline news stories regularly attracting over 1000 responses from readers a day. The dynamics of a successful drop down comment box are outlined by Annika Bergstrom where she states that, as quoted: “Yes/no news polls and unanswered reader comments, often overwhelming in number, do not constitute true interactivity. At a more fundamental level, the commonly unspoken assumption of the desire of the audience to participate is undermined by empirical evidence showing that most users prefer to adopt a passive role” (Bergstrom, 2008). This depicts how readers may become engaged with the text that they are reading, the amount of response will not always be very detailed or extensive. Nevertheless, it is needed to help journalism as without audience participation the industry would be worthless. Readers have the opportunity to contact journalists directly through their work email accounts or via Twitter. Although *The Guardian* doesn’t specify everyone’s email on their webpage, they provide readers with the email address format of ‘firstname.lastname@theguardian.com’ which they can use to contact any contributors at the newspaper. Furthermore, the organisation also has a section dedicated to complaints or issues about the content featured in either *The Guardian* or *The Observer*. Readers are encouraged to contact the newspaper’s independent global ombudsman Paul Chadwick if they have any issues, or if they have a problem with something written in the *Observer* readers are directed towards Stephen Pritchard who is the reader’s editor for the sister newspaper. Despite the fact that audience reaction is a positive attribute, this needs to be regulated heavily in an
organisation like The Guardian where if comments are uploaded that includes inappropriate content then this could have a damaging effect on the publication as a whole. This point was outlined to us by Pauline Burnett who was the interviewee of the last assignment for this course. She gave us an insight into the problem by reflecting on her own experiences of dealing with this and how public comments had to go through a separate department before being uploaded to the website she worked for, as quoted: “(Member of public) uploaded (content) to the news desk not straight onto the website because it was too difficult for us to police and we could have got into trouble. You have to make sure that it’s not too easy for people not to upload the wrong type of content”.

2.2. Convergence

The third aspect to be studied was the convergence level, following the definition of Infotendencias group. One of the media which reached the highest levels was El Periódico, analyzed by Laura Moreno: ‘There is a unique editorial newsroom, both for paper and for digital. The director, the deputy director and the heads of area are the same ones for both versions. There are some people who are just digital and there is no one who is just paper, so there are more people in the digital part than in paper. This means that the product is the same for both versions.’ But the digital version has, as the people in charge explained to Moreno, ‘different lives’. It is described this way: ‘When an event occurs, they start by writing for the digital part and then they continue to expand until the final chronicle is written, which will go to paper and to the web. If anything new happens, this is not going to enter the chronicle of the paper, but it is still updated on the web. Everything that is going to be published in the printed edition is first published in the online version. Even the exclusive ones are always given first on the web. There is an effort for the web first: the contents are published as soon as they make sense to publish them. In order to better achieve this convergence level through valuable articles, there was a significant change in November 2015. Before, there was a small team working only on online and a large one that worked only on print. Sometimes, some of the topics that were being prepared for the paper were put on the web. The director, Enric Hernández, decided that there would be a paradigm shift and that the contents were to be published first on the web. This meant reorganizing even work shifts to accommodate us more to the way we produce for consumption on the web and not just once a day for paper.’ In Catalonia, younger print and digital newspapers are multiplatform since the very beginning, for instance Ara.cat. Its former editor in chief, Carles Capdevila, explained it to Laia Puig and Mar Romeo, ‘as a perfect example of “conver-ence”, a term that is not only referred to «inte-ration of edi-
torial teams», as it is usually used, but a «core concept for understanding the processes of journalism in our time»’. In more detail, ‘the digital component is a fundamental base of this newspaper, says Capdevila, as its central efforts have always been focused on the Internet, and most of the services offered by Diari Ara are digital’.

Some other media in Spain have decided, in the last decade, to start a newsroom convergence process. Prisa, the company which publishes El País, integrated in 2011 both newsrooms, the print and the digital to enhance journalists’ coordination. The brand is more important than the medium (Raffio and López Padilla).

Internationally, once again The Guardian, pioneer in embracing a digital-first strategy, is a good example on how convergence has been adopted. Lara Roose and Liam Ross explains how: ‘Due to the fact that The Guardian is a global news brand, already has a collaboration with the Observer, the competitiveness between British news brands and its superior left wing stance compared to other news brands it is difficult to discover the partnerships The Guardian may have with other media groups outside of GMG. Despite this over the last four years two of the most well-known cooperation’s the newspaper has had links with are the Washington Post and Vice.’ In 2016, the digital-born Spanish newspaper eldiario.es made an arrangement to publish a selection of news taken from The Guardian translated into Spanish. Following with what Roose and Ross explain, beyond convergence there are some ways of transnational collaboration, since ‘although The Guardian and The Washington Post did not have a formal working agreement, they did brake the infamous Edward Snowden story to the world. Obviously in relation to discovery of PRISM in America (the software that was used by the National Security Agency to hack into companies such as Yahoo and Facebook to obtain personal data) The Washington Post released a catalogue of articles relating to documents leaked by Edward Snowden (Gellman & Poitras, 2013). The same was done by The Guardian with regards to the Government Communications Headquarters secret intelligence agency in the UK. The story was a monumental in post millennium investigative journalism and has been regarded as one of the best scoops ever (Greenwald, 2013). This led to the Guardian and the Washington Post jointly being awarded a Pulitzer prize in 2014. However, it could be argued that ties between the two have become tethered as The Washington Post was awarded the prize this year for their reporting on the US police shootings, a story which The Guardian did a lot of the investigative work (Calderone, 2016). The Post has declined to comment on this subject.’

There is another case which provides a deeper knowledge ‘for the way forward in multi-platform exploitation of content. And when that content is the foremost investigative news in the business it becomes even more imperative. Real, fact-based, trusted news has never been more important and this partnership, I am
very excited to say, will provide just that’ (SweneyH 2016). Liam Ross and Lara Roose focus in this case: ‘Katherine Viner also expressed her delight at the new partnership, as quoted: “Guardian journalism has never been more relevant or in demand.” This partnership recognizes The Guardian and Vice as pioneers in digital news and underscores our commitment to using video to open up our journalism in new and interesting ways” (Sweneys 2016), and, in Ross and Roose’s opinion, ‘shows how The Guardian wants to try a develop its digital platform even further and target its slightly younger readership. Evidently, online video and audio content is where media is turning towards which is something The Guardian wants to be part of. By contrast, Vice media has gained a reputation of being an edgy and controversial media group, often publishing content relating to drugs abuse and other adult themes they seem to be very close to crossing the fine line of the ethics of the industry, for The Guardian as their reputation as a high quality intellectual news brand may be brought into to disrupt. The relationship (still very much in the early stages), will involve The Guardian and Vice working together on reports which will be aired on Vice’s US and newly founded UK channel, Viceland. Both Editor in Chiefs of the respective organisations have come out publically stating their aspirations for the collaboration. CEO of Vice Media Shane Smith has stated.’

This contrasts with the situation in The New York Times, at least apparently, as analyzed by Kornbek and Magnussen: ‘As far as media convergence is concerned within the boundaries of The New York Times, it becomes evident when looking through different articles on the website that there is not a pattern of professional convergence and, more specifically, polyvalence going on. As mentioned in the method section, polyvalence occurs when a journalist basically is multitasking (Infotendencias, 2012). Of all of the examples, which can be seen in our appendices, one can see that the main writer of a story does not supply photos nor does the journalist create a graphic by oneself but instead in collaboration with other journalists or employees of the newspaper. There is definitely a pattern in terms of how the journalists produce their news and it seems as though the style of the production of the online news content is rather conservative at The New York Times. A journalist either writes an entire article by himself with maybe a photo picked up from another source, or the journalist writes an article by himself but later in the article refers to a graphic that has been made produced by other journalists or employees.’ As a conclusion, they advance that ‘it can therefore be said that The New York Times does not make that much use of functional polyvalence, since the media is seemingly not demanding too much multitasking from its journalists’, or, at least, ‘it was found that The New York Times seemed a bit conservative in terms of how much polyvalence was present on the website.’

Some other media are even more conservative in their convergence strategies. This is the case of The Times in the United Kingdom, which has been analyzed by
Jordan Campbell, who describes the situation this way: ‘It is the sister paper to the *Sunday Times* but they do not share editorial staff, so there is no claim of convergence on this part but there is an overlap in some of the content used in the Sunday edition borrowed from midweek. Neither could there be a link established between News Corp’s American and Australian titles. There was a crossover with Sky Sports’ coverage, as a three-year deal was announced with *The Times* which allows their online website to show Champions League, Premier League and Europa League highlights.’
3. THE CONTENT LEVEL

ONE OF THE FIRST CONCLUSIONS underlined by the students is that, at least in Spain, ‘there are not significant differences between the media with distinct Business Models, backgrounds and practices’, as explained by Adrià Puértolas, who analyzed several online newspaper in Spain: three native digital, ElDiario.es, El Español and Crític (the latest is a Catalan medium), and one of the oldest printed newspapers in Spain, La Vanguardia and its online edition. ‘On the one hand,’ followed Puértolas, ‘this could be foreseeable, as there are coincidences on key topics depicted in the Corporate Newsroom Analysis: we have three generalist newspapers and one daily magazine, all of them based on the publication of hard news. Taking into account the coincidences on these topics, it’s natural that the analysis reveals a high level of coincidence.’

Moreover, and according to Adrià Puértolas again, ‘the model piece of news that appears highlighted on their websites would be one produced by a journalist of the media, about national politics that includes a photo, links that enable the users to explore further about the issue and the possibility of making comments on it. These clear similarities, coming from media with really different business model, suggest, therefore, that business model it’s not the key element that shapes the most important news published by them.’

There is, however, one exception, since, once again following Adrà Puértolas research, ‘the business model has a strong influence on one extended practice among digital media: clickbaiting; that is, pieces of news or web content only aimed at generating online advertising and with little informative value. In the media which its main revenue source it’s online advertising we find a stronger presence of sensationalist pieces of news that has no real journalistic value and that, however, they become the most read news of the day.’ Even though if ‘the study of the clickbaiting practice was not the main aim of this paper, but this quick look at it enables us to get a wider insight on the influence of the business model in the generated content. It’s been clear that we do not find significant differences in the content published as the important/highlighted news, but there is another kind of news, that doesn’t appear in the top of the newspapers websites, that, nonetheless, gets many views and that is a direct consequence of a determinate business model of newspapers in the digital environment.’

It is equally true that, as Laia Puig and Mar Romero underline, ‘when comparing the content offered by different media we have to take into account that there are many factors that influence the sort of published material and its quality’, at least in the two online media they studied. Ara.cat, the newest newspaper in Catalonia, created in November 2010 simultaneously for the printed and the online
versions, and *Nació Digital*, a purely digital-born medium. Puig and Romero are of the opinion that ‘as we consider that they offer the reader the possibility to deepen in the topics treated and that they balance immediacy with permanence - something not possible in paper’.

Let us focus, however, in the issues identified as indicators of quality and adaptation to the digital environment, so to explain which are the characteristics of the use of the different possibilities of digital language applied to the production and dissemination of news on the Internet.

3.1. Formal Quality

3.1.1. Archive and Memory

This was not one of the characteristics more profoundly researched in the series of papers we take as a basis or this report. However, there are some indicators of the use of digital (and digitized) archives which are meaningful enough.

This is a resource used, with different results, by those online media whose origin is a printed newspaper. There are some, for instance *The Guardian* or *La Vanguardia*, which have more than a century of history -and archive. More recent newspapers, like *El Periódico* in Barcelona or *El País* in Madrid, or much more recent creation (both date back to the last quarter of the 20th century) which offer a digital searchable archive. The first one (Laura Moreno explains) ‘has an archive of all the previous publications since its creation and it is completely free. One can choose depending on the exact date or looking for a keyword. When using it though the second method, the order of appearance is from the oldest date to the most recent.’ This is quite an extended model. Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla and Marta López Padilla think that ‘one of the best things of *El País* online edition is the creation of a news archive which makes it possible to access all the edition of the newspaper from the beginning, from May 4, 1976, in pdf format, until both editions, the printed one and the online one, are unified’. In their opinion, the search engine is ‘solid’ since it allows to access ‘a great information volume in a clear and ordered way, including the coincidence percentage’. Alba Juanola, on its hand, has compared the archive of a traditional, long-lived medium such as *La Vanguardia* and a digital-born, much more recent one, *Nació Digital*, and concluded that the use of the digital archive is much more powerful in the first case.

This is the same in the case of *The Guardian*, studied by Albert Serratacó and Gonçalo Caseiro, when compared with *Vice News*: ‘We elieve this is due to *The Guardian* being a bigger and older news outlet, so they preserve their pieces via
online archive, which allows access to documents as old as 1791. These are from The Observer, The Guardian’s sister newspaper, which was born before it.’ On the other hand, ‘Vice News, being a recent and online news outlet, does not have an online archive probably because it doesn’t make sense to have one, as everything can be found via a Google search.’ It is remarkable how the archive could be an economic source as well, since ‘to have full access to The Guardian’s archive you need to have a valid subscription.’

Another interesting case is The New York Times, studied by Liam Ross and Lara Roose. ‘It is divided in different types; article, blogpost, multimedia, topic, column. You can sort it by; newest, oldest or relevant. You can select a specific author or all authors. You can also select the period of time; all since 1815, past 24 hours, 7 days, 30 days, 12 months or specific dates. There is also a section like arts, U.S. opinion, world, arts; books. And if you are not convinced you can send feedback.’, which is, more or less, the system used by many print and online newspapers. However, ‘in addition, The TimesMachine it is a web-based archive of scanned issues of The New York Times from 1851 through 2002. Different from the New York Times online archive, the Times Machine presents scanned images of the actual newspaper. All non-advertising content can be displayed on a per-story basis in a separate PDF display page and saved for future reference.’ As in the case of The Guardian, ‘the archive is available to New York Times subscribers, home delivery and/or digital. It may also be available at various libraries.’

3.1.2. Navigation

Navigation consistency is a formal characteristic underlined by some authors. Laura Moreno refers to it when studying the case of El Periòdico: ‘It has global navigation with sections and they are consistent through the whole website. It is possible to follow the contents of the site in a sequential way and it allows the user to access any section of the website without passing through all the precedent ones. At the end, having a user-friendly and clear layout is one of the key aspects for the audience to continue entering or not a certain website.’ This is the same for El País, as explained by Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla and Marta López Padilla, but instead they criticize that, even though if a thematic division is useful for navigation, ‘there is no element to guide navigation which serves as an orientation to the reader, as in an Ariadne’s thread’. They underline the use of links and tags.

Internationally, the navigation systems of digital-born media make no difference. Gonçalo Casiero and Albert Serratacò have compared the navigation systems of The Guardian and Vice News: ‘The navigation of both websites is easy
and clear. The access to the sections, in the beginning of the homepage, is really intuitive due to its simple but effective organization. Global Navigation is consistent throughout both websites, and its presentation is determined by the way both present the news. There are some significative difference, even two different models: ‘Due to giving news more on a storytelling perspective, Vice News presents their content in a vertical manner, to which you scroll to, so the reader goes from story to story. On opposition, The Guardian’s presentation focuses more on highlighting current, pure news. So, the presentation is both vertical and horizontal, with the bigger boxes being the articles that are more important and, of course, the smaller ones the least.’

3.1.3. Positioning the product in social networks

Increasingly, media are ‘concerned with the highly importance that digital presence has,’ so they tend to be ‘present in the most important platforms.’ A medium like for instance El Periódico, analyzed by Laura Moreno, ‘has 902 videos on his YouTube channel, classified by topics. ‘Nevertheless,’ explains Moreno, ‘the number of views of each video is not so high’. Laura Moreno asked the people in charge of positioning this medium on the digital social networks about how to decide where to place their products: ‘Sharing the news and articles they see how the same topic goes very well on Twitter but not on Facebook. In Facebook, for example, hard news do not work so much. On the contrary, human stories work much better, with a point of sympathy and curiosity, those issues with powerful phrases, statements or interviews. It is necessary to understand the need that each covers: Twitter is more informative and last minute while Facebook is more emotional and does not care about the time when stories happen: they could have occurred the previous week but they can still be broadly read.’

A presence in YouTube seems to be important for other media too. Caseiro and Serratacō analyzed the Spanish version of Vice News and The Guardian, and they found some differences: ‘To better comprehend the strength of the presence of Vice News’ channel on YouTube, it is the sixth news channel with most subscribers. The Guardian comes in 85th, with more than 260,000 subscribers. However, in comparison with VICE News en español, The Guardian wins the battle, as it has its own channel. In it, they post an average of a video per day.’

Some other media, for instance El País, have decided to add their own digital social network to the usual ones. This is the case, analyzed by Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla and Marta López Padilla, of El País.
3.2.
Digital Language

3.2.1. Hyperlinks

The use of hyperlink is very different depending on the type of media analyzed. One particular case, treated by Clara Ardèvol, are cultural magazines (she focused on Núvol, a recent online Catalan web magazine, on The Arts Desk and on Jot Down, a Spanish publication with both printed and online editions, which has developed a model of slow journalism, based on long texts). In her opinion, the use of hyperlinks is scarce, even more external hyperlinks, traditionally thought (O’Sullivan, 2012: 52), to be useful to send the reader to the original news sources. This practice is considered even dangerous by some media, as underlined by Andrea Llovera in the case of two Catalan online-only media, Nació Digital i El Crític. People in charge in both media think that using external hyperlinks could send reader to other pages with no return. Even though, both media place hyperlinks in their news items, a practice which Laia Puig and Mar Romero define as ‘moderate’. One of the oldest digital-born media in Spain, Estrella Digital, denounced, as stated by Natalia Cuenca, who gathered Joaquín Vidal’s words - that ‘the problem is that the tyranny of the click and the need for massive audiences to profitably advertise produce undesirable effects. That’s one of the bad things that these new ways of doing journalism have brought us.’

In general terms, media prefer, for the reasons explained supra, ‘more internal links than external links’, at least this is the case for The Guardian and Vice News (Caseiro and Serratacò). Media are cautious when using hypertext, as explained by Kaspar Kornbek in The New York Times’ case: ‘They used no less than four hyperlinks in four pieces of text. The hyperlinks lead the user to pages concerning the links. So for instance in the text, the name ‘Vladimir Putin’ is turned into a hyperlink, and when the user presses the link, he is taken to an overview page on The New York Times, where other articles related to Vladimir Putin is put on display. It is hard to decide whether or not The New York Times are making use of too many hyperlinks, but they are certainly not cautious with them, as O’Sullivan (2012) is claiming different media are.’

The following lines by Adrià Puértolas could serve as a general conclusion to the use of some characteristics of the digital language, those ones that could hardly be used by more traditional media: ‘Now, in the case of the Adaptation to Online Language and Interactivity the two last topics of the content analysis, we’ll find categories that don’t appeal directly to the content produced but how it is presented or how the media adapts it to the digital environment. So, although the analysis will be still interesting will reveal some issues these will be
more relevant not to the link between business model and content but to the second link that we intent to study on this paper, that is, the relation between the content produced and native and non-native digital media, the differences are not as wide as we could have suspected.

3.2.2. Interactivity

Interactivity is the second, and probably most important, of the characteristics of digital language applied to everyday journalism. In this respect, following Adrià Puértolas ‘we find that most of the newspaper selected conduct the same practice [making possible to contact through a link], excluding the website of La Vanguardia, that doesn’t include a way of contacting with the author of the pieces of news.’ Many media allow the users to make comments on the news, most of them with previous registration, the possibility of recommending or sharing them through the most common social networks (Twitter, Facebook, Google +, etc.) and that on their own they share the news through the media accounts of these platforms. In many media, for instance the ones analyzed by Puértolas, ‘it is Twitter again what the different media used for offering a way of contacting with it journalists. By clicking on their names we can have access to a list of the last news published by them and to their Twitter accounts’.

However, it is much more strange to find news items in which user-generated content is included. Adrià Puértolas found one: ‘It was, however, a tweet by Donald Trump assuring that the US presidential election had been manipulated in order to harm his candidature that a piece of news of the digital edition of La Vanguardia reproduced.’ So, as a conclusion, ‘although it’s true that there was content generated by the users it’s clear that it didn’t come from a special mechanism that would prove a significant convergence.’

Regarding comments, it is relevant to consider what Laura Moreno says: ‘Before starting, it is necessary to say that the number of comments per article ranges from 0 to thousands, always depending on the controversy of the topic itself.’

In general terms, as Cheyenne Louhapessy underlined, ‘interactivity is being underdeveloped’.

3.2.3. Multimedia

It is a general practice to include pictures to accompany texts. In the case of newspaper with a great use of long texts, using photographs is especially useful (as Clara Ardevol stated for the case of the cultural media she analyzed). Instead, those media use no infographic or videos.
Laia Puig and Mar Romero remark the importance of photojournalism in some media, for instance Ara.cat, and not the simple practice of pairing texts and photographs. ‘Pictures acquire a special relevance in the section Mirades which is an added value of Ara compared to the Nació Digital’s photogalleries’. The use of videos and of a YouTube channel is also important, as stated in a previous section of this report.

In the case of some digital-born media, like Rue89 (Natalia Cuenca), the use of multimedia seems to be more developed. ‘News are loaded with multimedia elements. In each news, we can find multiple links to other websites, blogs, and many references to other websites, since much of the information they transmit is based on studies of other digital newspapers, which cite properly as a source.’ Natalia Cuenca underlines the importance of using multimedia properly: ‘A visual element that gives it value is that it main news have a long whole-page banner with a striking image that helps to take the attention of the user. In the same way, news includes many audio-visual elements such as graphics, infographics, videos, images..., which give lively information.’

The Guardian is, amongst the media analyzed in this course, the one which makes a more intensive use of infographics, as stated by Caseiro and Serratacó: ‘Infographics are usually a much shared tool in social networks. In the case of The Guardian they do create very complete infographies to complement their articles. As we saw in the first part of the course, these multimedia resources are usually very positive for this type of journalism.’

Another important international medium whose use of multimedia is remarkable is The New York Times, studied by Kaspar Kornbek. ‘Convergence of contents as in multimedia is heavily present on The New York Times’ website. As Infotendencias states, the contents of a network combine different communicative codes, principally text, image -which may be static or moving- and sound (Infotendencias, 2012: 34). This becomes evident by how The New York Times provides its recipients and users with stories and news content that feature both classic articles, such as an article with a static photo, but in the meantime also adapts to the multimodal setting by having created a section called Timesvideo, which are solely stories told through a video with a narrating voice in the background’.
3.3. Content Analysis

3.3.1. Sources

Adrià Puértolas found some difference in the use of sources, predominantly political ones in the case of some media. ‘This, again, is not a consequence of a particular business model but the consequence of the type of media,’ explains Puértolas.

Online media whose origin is a newspaper with some tradition show more commitment on the use of first-hand sources. Laura Moreno explains it practically with one example taken from El Periódico: ‘At this point, we can also see very diverse examples. In many of them, journalists contact the expert team that can provide them the best objective data, like the case of “La compraventa de viviendas moderó su crecimiento al 6,5% en octubre”. This article, which is full of numerical data, names the source: a recognized organization collecting data of this type (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). In other cases, they have first-hand information, like in “El matrimonio del Clot juzgado por resistirse a un desahucio denuncia brutalidad policial”. In this case, the people involved in the piece of news can express and give their personal experience. Apart from that, journalists in El Periódico usually provide the background necessary to put the reader in situation; the previous article about the eviction is a really good example of that.’

Whilst some digital-born media, like Vice News, rely on other media’s information, according to the information provided by Caseiro and Serratacó, ‘on the other hand, in the case of The Guardian, the percentages are much more distributed without having a dominant source. We believe that The Guardian, having much stronger and more powerful means, has it easier to get more sources to contrast its information.’ News reporting is expensive.

3.3.2. Type of News

The type of media makes a difference in the distribution of soft news, hard news and opinion articles. For instance, as stated by Caseiro and Serratacó, ‘in the case of Vice News en español, articles predominate in front of soft news and hard news, which have an almost insignificant role. As its editor David Meseguer told us, the aim of the medium is not to compete against the big newspapers to see who publishes news faster because they do not have the sufficient means. Its goal is to do the opposite: content related to the present, but treated with greater depth. We also see that soft News have a very important role and that the hard news are the less used, since they are usually associated with the big media.’
Media with more budget, instead, prefer to concentrate on hard news: ‘In the case of The Guardian, 60% of the news we have considered most relevant are hard news.’ This is the same in the Spanish online newspaper, irrelevantly if the are digital-born or come from a printed newspaper. Adrià Puértolas checked how ‘during the two-week period that the analysis lasts, the majority of pieces of news published by the media are hard news’.

### 3.3.3. Authorship

In general terms, and despite the diversity of authorship of news items found in the very different type of online media analyzed by the students, we could try to find out a general conclusion. This is the one contained in this paragraph by Adrià Puértolas: ‘On the Authorship topic, we’ll find the same similarities than in the ‘News item type’ category. Most of the pieces of news are produced by the newspaper and have a named journalist. It is important to keep in mind that we are analysing the most important news presented on the media website, so it makes senses that the media choses pieces of news worked by one of it professionals and not reproduced from the agency wires.’

There are, however, some few important remarks to be done. We follow, in this respect, the analysis provided by Silvia Castellanos Busquets when analyzing the online editions of the main Catalan newspapers, La Vanguardia and El Periódico. ‘Internet brings the possibility to spread the news among the webpage, what means that people can access to the news easily and quickly and they can comment and share it openly.’ She follows, in this respect, the article by Peña et al., ‘European Newspapers’ Digital Transition: New Products and New Audiences’, because it shows how ‘their growing influence explains the increase in the media’s interest to create virtual communities around their news outlets, and also affects strengthening the news unit as the core of data consumption in digital formats.’ Castellano Busquets considers that ‘distributed content let new organizations a range of challenges and opportunities,’ and this is important, once again according to what Peña et al. say, ‘to reach a wider public in particular younger people and other audiences who do not normally come direct to their sites or apps, but also imply a number of challenges related to editorial control, brand recognition, audience data, audience loyalty, and monetisation.’ Silvia Castellanos concludes that these two media, as probably many other, ‘are trying to take a good position in order to follow the public demand, however, they have to improve, on the one hand, their position by paying more attention to them, and on the other hand, they have to use more social networks that nowadays are being used for most of people, especially young population.’
Many online media provide participation tools to their users, especially the possibility of commenting the news. In international perspective, native digital media, which is the case of Rue89, studied by Natalia Cuenca, offer a good balance in this question: ‘It can be considered that the great majority of comments talks about the subject of the news, and in turn use arguments that defend their position. At this point, it can be said that the comments, in general, do have logic and coherence.’ This kind of new media pursue readers’ participation: ‘In Rue89, users are highly participatory. In almost all the news there are a lot of comments from readers. In addition, users talk each other and establish a dialogue. To comment in news, readers must be registered in the web with a username and a password. In addition, users can add images, videos and other multimedia elements in the comments that enrich comments and discussion. In each news, we can find as there are some “special comments”, which are those that have received more votes from other users. However, I think there is no a control mechanism from the web that removes or moderates comments,’ which seems to be, precisely, one of the quids of the question: how moderation enhance true dialogues. Where it happens, as in the case of the French Rue89, it happens to a great extent, and, in Cuenca’s opinion, ‘there is a great dialogue, and most of the comments and interventions have answers which generates a very enriching debate. Since you can vote those comments with which you agree, there are always several outstanding comments that are understood as the majority opinion.’

It contrast with the usage of comments by more conservative and traditional media, like The Times, analyzed by Jordan Campbell, in which it seems that the company prefers quantity to quality and uses a low-level moderation system: ‘The first 30 comments of every news article was indeed a good gauge. On December 6, the biggest story on the homepage of the website was ‘Brexit case is a question of law. We’re above politics, insists top judge’. Within 12 hours there were 197 comments, not an unusual number if the article is a hot topic or one which induces passionate exchanges due to polar opposite views. This is one area where the level if transparency is very high. There is a clear notice stating ‘Comments are subject to our community guidelines’ with a link to them. People can recommend comments and the most popular go to the top, while they can toggle the view if they prefer to view these directly. Commentators don’t have user pro-
files which allow you to look at their previous posts yet, but they are working on it. One flaw in the accountability of the comments is that users can change their screen name, although they are advised to maintain their real identity to improve dialogue and trust. ‘Editor’s pick’ is a good feature: it is a ‘comment which demonstrates subject knowledge and authority on a topic or one which draws on personal experience to add something to the discussion’, and are chosen by the community team. The team use a pre-moderation system where the community team vet all comments to decide whether they are suitable. Comments are disabled on some stories depending on whether they pose a risk of libel, to give one example.

As for the Catalan media, Laia Puig and Mar Rome describe the situation in a couple of recent media, one completely only, Nació Digital, and a print/online, newspaper, Ara.cat. ‘It is interesting though, to analyse the dynamics of the comments, their purpose and their impact on the contents, based on the criteria described by Díaz Noci and Carlos Ruiz we concluded that comments both in Ara and Nació Digital usually keep a good level of logic and coherence the comments are about the topic described in the content and show opinions and arguments by the users which lack cooperative research of the truth and don’t usually work to reach an agreement. Comments are generally a burst of the user’s strong opinions, sometimes lacking respect for the main characters of the information or other users, that don’t seek interaction with other comments and don’t try to have an impact on the content. There are very few users who provide other sources of information, or who express a constructive disagreement on the way the newspaper treated the information. It is important to realize that Nació Digital presents lower levels of cooperative research of truth and agreement on the best argument which might be related to the fact that most of the comments they receive are anonymous. Instead, Diari Ara has a bit more interaction between users, and at the same time has more comments that can be associated with a user profiles’.

Other media, for example the Spanish El País, try to enhance users’ participation through specific sections, in this case ‘Tribuna’. As stated by Valentina Raffio and Marta López Padilla, this intends to attract users’ collaboration, which is even ruled by a style guide in which a clear, concise style is asked. An editorial board has the final right of accepting or rejecting collaborations and to publish those contents when they come to the editorial line of the company. The company was one the first media in Spain to provide the figure of an ombudsman (or woman)
in 1985. However, the ombudsomwan has shown her concern about the low quality of comments in *El País*.

### 4.2. Logic and Coherence

Regarding to comments, in many cases (for instance, this is Cheyenne Loupehassy’s opinion), ‘The speakers do not intervene their subject under debate and are not showing the intention of discussing it. I I find this sad and a missed opportunity especially because WEKA is responsible for Business to Business information daily.’ Even in those media which enhance participatiuon through comments, like *Rue89*, are deficient in constructing a purely coheren discussion, as stated by Natalia Cuenca: ‘Clearly, the comments of most news, although they defend each user’s position, contain verbal abuse and aggression towards other users or towards the subjects involved in the news, which impoverishes the debate. Although it is also true that a dialogue takes place between the different users, who respond among themselves and don’t limit themselves to comment the news without further ado. In the same way, users generally try to reach a consensus on the ideals they defend, although is generally not achieved in the different news analysed.

### 4.3. Cooperative search of the truth

Despite the few amount of final papers which deal with this questions, and the fact that the sample is scarce, we can conclude that the media analyzed have some problems in creating a community in which, through dialogue, a so-called cooperative search of the truth can be achieved. Even online native media, or hybrid online/print media, like *Nació Digital* and *Ara.cat*, have these kind of problems: ‘In terms of participation,’ explain Laia Puig and Mar Romero, ‘we have established that it is extremely low in both cases. Moreover, we consider them being not really relevant, as they tend to be not productive and have no impact in the media.’

Even more interesting is how some media are failing in conceiving a good image of what is to be considered a community: ‘Related to this, we have found a significant difference between them focusing on the concept of community,’ continue Romero and Puig. ‘*Diari Ara* has been undertaking a strategy based on subscrip-

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http://www.elpais.com/articulo/opinion/incumple/propia/norma/elpepiopi/20100704elpepiopi_5/Tes
tions, which has promoted access to restricted content and some other advantages, not the construction of a virtual community of readers. For its part, Nació Digital is currently launching the project SócNació through which it expects to enhance participation of community readers.

Does it create a real users’ community? This is a question treated by Laia Puig and Mar Romero: ‘The final aspect we want to analyse is the community that Ara and Nació Digital create with their users. Robinson writes “The editors began to describe their web sites as a platform for community building”. This community is based on knowing who the users of the digital media are, making them participate in the journalistic project and sometimes relying on them for financial purposes in exchange of some advantages.’ Nació Digital’s director, Karma Peiró, explained in an interview with the authors that ‘the name of the journal came from the idea that the few people on the web when Nació Digital was created could create a “nation” a community. Still, she reflected that this idea of community doesn’t make the same sense nowadays than it did then because “back then, we were very few people, and now is everyone”. The fact that everyone is on the web makes it “more complicated”, especially because “people have the ability to create their own communities through Whatsapp or Facebook”. Precisely, Nació Digital is right now in a very interesting process. Nació Digital used to create no community, not even through subscribers. Peiró assured that, consequently, they “didn’t know their audience”. That is why recently they started a new project, SócNació, with the “intention of create community and get to know our followers”, a subscription project where users pay a fee and have different advantages, “the possibility of getting involved in the day-to-day routine of the newspapers”. Nació Digital offers spaces of participation to subscribers such as meetings with the staff, attending council meetings or working with a journalist for a whole day.’

‘In general,’ concludes Natalia Cuenca, ‘users don’t use arguments from others or external arguments when they intervene with their comments. The comment system of Estrella Digital’, as of many of online media, ‘doesn’t contain any element that emphasized some comments or others, although it’s true that you can give “like” to any comment, and there are some of them that have a lot of support from other users, which could be considered to be the majority opinion’s comments.’
**COMPLEMENTARY REFERENCES**


