

Analysing Digital Journalism

Vol. 1, n. 2

Media analysis

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Javier Díaz-Noci (ed.)



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Faculty of Communication | Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona)

Roc Boronat, 138, desp. 53.814

08018 Barcelona

www.upf.edu/decom/

+34 93 5421220

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The relationship between
the corporate and the newsroom level
in slow journalism

Olma Giró
Pol Solernou
Maria Ripoll

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between content and interactivity in slow journalism wants to analyze the relationship between content and the interactivity of three digital media. All of them are online newspapers, have a similar progressive ideology and play an important role under the umbrella of *slow journalism*. In order to extrapolate the analysis, we have chosen media of three different sociopolitical contexts: *La Directa*, of Spain, *Tortoise Media*, of the United Kingdom and *The Grayzone* of the United States of America.

The aspects that will be analyzed in this final paper are those related to *Newsroom and Corporate level*. Which are transparency, interactivity, convergence, responsiveness and also the geographical site of them. These aspects are exposed in order to have a broad overview of the way they work and be able to describe the relationship between content and the interactivity of them. We have to highlight the importance of media ethics that work with slow journalism. An ethics that is characterized by "better contextualized news with a more plural vision that favors a better understanding of reality" (Fabregat Bernal, 2013-14).

In order to understand in which system these media interact, we need to keep in mind the global society we live in. A globalization characterized by

extreme ease in exchanging information. In that sense, it is also important to be aware of the importance of what Javier Díaz Noci says in *Shaping the news online; a comparative research on international quality media*, referring to the fact that "the information economy in the last two decades [...] has established the value of intangible goods -news and entertainment, basically- as one of the pillars of modern societies". A perfectly good example is how the USA imposed their entertainment and culture through the cinema and TV (Hollywood) and how it has affected and even modified our culture.

To understand the sociopolitical context of the United States of America, we must turn to the 19th century, when the media battle between Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph took place. A battle that eventually laid the foundations of journalism that we know today, and yet the birth of the yellow press. In addition, it was Pulitzer himself who created the prestigious worldwide recognition of Pulitzer Prizes awarded to journalists. It should therefore be noted that the United States is recognized for having a press written with prestige, and above all with a long history. Many American newspapers belong to the world's oldest newspaper group.

The United States' media is notable for the variety of press and strong competition between them. Periodic

magazines such as *The Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*, such as Time and television channels such as ABC are among the most well-known, ancient and famous media on the planet. Despite this variety, most of the American press is part of the country's large media conglomerates such as News Corporation, Comcast and others.

In this regard, we must understand that, as Holli A. Semetko and Margaret Scammell set out in *The Sage Handbook of Political Communication*, "While the opportunity for audience members to access and create specialized content has increased, many media are controlled by a small number of professional conglomerates that disseminate largely redundant messages. Most audience members get their political information from a small number of dominant sources even as the number of options has grown markedly". So, this is kind of a radio fragment of the media system in the United States of America.

The case of Spain is indeed far from the case of the United States of America. In this final paper, we analyzed a Catalan online medium framed within the concept of slow journalism. Therefore, it is important to differentiate the Catalan online media from the Spanish for a fundamental reason: in Catalonia we find more national than regional press; while in the case of Spain, there is more regional than

national press. The hypotheses explaining this situation may be varied: either because the Catalan press seeks to accommodate all the issues that Catalonia understanding it as a nation may question, or that Spain has more geographic and regional variety that the press needs to accommodate. In this work, we will not analyze these hypotheses, but it is indispensable to kill this difference to understand the context of each media.

Apart from more national than regional press, Catalonia is also a unique case, as the Catalan media receive grants from the autonomous government for the language, which implies more ties to it, and more maneuverability as it is based on a fixed annual income.

Beyond that, a study by Medialand Scapes (European Journalism Center) publishes *Media landscapes*, an analysis of media state experts in European countries. The work *Spain - Media Landscape*, which has authors Ramón Salaverría and Beatriz Gómez Baceiredo, notes that "Spain hosts the second most spoken language in the world, with 427 million native speakers from 20 countries, only surpassed by Mandarin Chinese. In this global scenario - they write - many Spanish media design their products anticipating their potential extension beyond the country's borders.

However, the main Spanish media market remains the national one. In it,

the media plays a key role in structuring the cultural market not only of Spanish speakers, but also of speakers of the main co-official languages: Catalan (spoken by more than 11 million people), Galician (about two million) and Basque (more than one million), mainly. All these languages, as well as some other minority and/or unofficial languages (Asturian, Aragonese...). It is important to bear the linguistic context in mind if we want to analyze Catalan or Spanish media.

Unlike what we have just seen in the case of Spain, there is a clear predominance in the United Kingdom of the national press over regional press. It is notable that more than 19 national media are published every day. In addition, most of these have large printing plants strategically distributed throughout the United Kingdom, and with this distribution they reach over 80% of the population, as José Ignacio Armentia Vizuite (Eibar, Gipuzkoa, 1961) in his notes of *Journalism Introduction*.

2. GOALS

The hypothesis of *The relationship between content and interactivity in slow journalism* is that slow journalism is directly linked to taking more ethical care. It aims to take greater care of the members working in the media, of comments on the social networks, of subscribers, as well as the neutrality, transparency and responsiveness of

the media for the content they publish and their independence from power.

3. METHODS

The methods we've used to perform the final paper we distinguish between qualitative and quantitative. On the qualitative side, we have done a study of the media system of Spain, United Kingdom and United States of America based on several academic articles published and quoted in the references found in the annexes. All these articles have allowed us to approach the sociopolitical context of each medium to understand how it operates, how its readers are and what it reports.

In addition, we have also conducted two telematics interviews. Eloi Latorre, Journalist of *La Directa*, and Wyatt Reed, former worker of *The Grayzone*, who have allowed us to understand the internal booth of using two media and to provide us with information that appeared neither on the Internet nor on the website of the various media.

On the other hand, we have used various quantitative and qualitative tables attached to annexes which analyze both Newsroom level and Corporate level. The tables used are the base tables, although in the Newsroom level section we had to modify some paragraphs. For example, in the Newsroom level section, we had modified the table because *La Directa* is a

medium with an assembly structure, and it was not possible to limit who, or which owners there were. These analyses have enabled us to understand what the transparency of each medium is, its neutrality, the interaction they have with readers, how they are funded, who makes the decisions, to what extent they are independent in power and whether they have red lines to accept depending on what advertising. Analysis has brought us closer to corroborating our hypotheses: slow journalism is synonymous with having more ethics, bearing in mind that each medium works with its own dynamics.

4. RESULTS

In order to discuss and compare the three media chosen (La Directa, The Grayzone and Tortoise Media) we have gone deeper into their corporate levels. In order to do so, we have filled three tables that will help us determine the morphological characteristics of our subject of study. Besides, we will also use our conversations with both Eloi Latorre (La Directa) and Wyatt Reed (The Grayzone), to complete our corporate level analysis of the chosen media.

First off, La Directa is a Catalan daily-updated online newspaper that is printed biweekly. It was born as an ambitious project, strongly related to civic and social movements (Fabregat,

2014), who wanted to create an alternative form of journalism according to their ideological beliefs: left-wing politics, feminism and anti-racism. In short, their goal is to bring to light the political, cultural and social projects and situations that break with the existing system as well as the “invisible” collectives that are involved with them.

That is why La Directa was reinvented in 2016 as a cooperative. In María Ángeles Cabrera’s opinion in her text “La audiencia como promotora de la innovación periodística a través del crowdfunding” that is the right formula for the media to perfectly match with their and their user’s philosophy. They are able to give more decision power to their members, partners and collaborators, with whom they are helpful for their economic support during this project. In other words, this media is not owned by a single person, but by the group of people who invest in it. Thanks to that, La Directa was able to raise a self-managed economic model. These would not be possible without the subscriptions, which represent the 76% of the magazine’s incomes. In Eloi Latorre’s words, that is “the basis and economic solvency of the project”.

Actually, being La Directa’s subscriber has its own benefits: being able to choose the topics that will be researched later on would be one of them, for example. This is something

that also happens in other Spanish media such as El Salto, Alternativas Económicas and La Marea, as researchers Alejandro Barranquero Carretero and María Sánchez Moncada stated in their text “Cooperativas de medios en España. Un periodismo emprendedor y ciudadano en tiempos de crisis”. “Despite that – authors say it is the drawing board who has the last word to decide either the proposition goes on or not”. In fact, they admitted to this text’s authors that they take into account the popularity of the contents published in order to establish their agenda, even though they always publish every new that is relevant for them (Barranquero – Sánchez, 2018).

Aside from the supplements, which represent an 11% of La Directa’s budget, another topic of discussion is the advertisement. This represented a 5% of the earnings of the magazine last year. As stated by the statutes of this media, the advertisement income can never surpass the 10% of the annual gains. And what is more, not only they are strict with the how but also with the who: “We do not accept advertisements of companies involved in the exploitation of workers or that are in the Ibex 35”. According to what La Directa pointed out in their webpage, the rest of this year’s budget has been completed with the subventions, which have been 21.941,63€ (5%), sells of their printed magazine

(1%), donations (1%) and other collaborations (1%).

While La Directa’s 2020 incomes were 297.415€, on the report of their website, the expenses reached the total of 297.746€. Mainly, this money was allocated to their journalists’ salary and social security (61%). The remaining money has been spent on professional services (11%), distribution (9%), printing (8%), rental and supplies (4%), agency (1%), distribution (1%), and others such as office material, legal support or travelling costs (5%). As we could check out, La Directa has a very strict transparency policy. As they want to keep their partners and investors aware of what their money is spent on, La Directa dedicates a full section on their webpage to explain that.

If we talk about the people in charge and the staff of La Directa, we must keep in mind that they are a cooperative. As we said before, this media has not got any owner by itself, but it is owned by the group of people who finance it. As Eloi Latorre told, La Directa is formed by twelve people. They do not have bosses, directors nor editors in chief. They believe in collective decision-making with the debate as their tool. Militant participation in decision-making and debate spaces have been at the heart of the project since its inception.

Having said that Latorre pointed out that four people work in the digital

edition, one in the photography coordination, one in the edition of the paper magazine, one in correction, one is in charge of internal and external broadcast, one administrates subscribers, and the final one is working from Valencia, where they also cover information. The journalist also wanted to emphasize the role of the media's collaborators: "La Directa was born as an absolutely militant project". Nowadays more than a thousand people collaborate for free with this media, most of them supervised by someone of the fixed staff. "La Directa is funded mostly by the subscribers, but the people who believe in the media and put their efforts to make it work are extremely important for the magazine".

The Grayzone started back in December 2015 as a news website and blog. Its creator and nowadays order is the American journalist, Max Blumenthal. The webpage was first named "The Grayzone Project" and few months later they affiliated with the left-leaning online news outlet AlterNet. As a result, what later would be known as The Grayzone has always been since its inception a native online medium.

This news website describes itself as "Independent news and investigative journalism on empire". It has been reported that they have a left-wing to far-left ideological alignment tendency, as they focus themselves in the

coverage of international conflicts from Latin America (Venezuela, Bolivia or Cuba) and Asia (China or North Korea) as well as some topical themes of United States.

Even though this news website is indeed located in America, most of their journalists live abroad, according to what Wyatt Reed, former worker of The Grayzone, told. Having to cover international news, most of them have to be correspondents from other countries. To give an instance, Reed himself worked for The Grayzone in Bolivia for years, where he wrote until the beginning of this 2021.

The webpage is updated regularly. The refreshing rate can be either daily or weekly depending on the news and their journalists' capability to cover them or not. It is surprising to note that The Grayzone's news are published either in English or Spanish (every author writes in the language they are most comfortable with).

The owner of the media is Max Blumenthal, who is also its editor in chief. The editorial board is comprised of three more members, and each one of them have been in The Grayzone for years. Ben Norton, who is the assistant editor as well as a reporter, and Anya Parampil and Aron Maté, both reporters.

As they state in their webpage, The Grayzone's income comes from the donations from the readers. "We do

not take money from any government or government-backed group or individual". That's why they encourage their audience to support them via PayPal or Patreon in order to sustain their journalism. Even though *The Grayzone's* web doesn't clear up their economy's management, but as Wyatt Reed points out, "most of the budget goes to both pay their workers as well as their trips and accommodation abroad".

Tortoise is a British media that was co-created back in 2019 from the hand of the former BBC News director and *The Times* editor James Harding. Their slogan is "slow down, wise up", as they are a media focused on slow journalism and they try to avoid sensationalism and what they call the "daily noise", the overwhelming information to which we are exposed to every day. The company is located in London, England, even though it is a native online medium and they only publish in their website.

The news refreshing rate in Tortoise Media is mainly daily. As they point out in their webpage, they do not cover breaking news or press conferences, but what is actually driving them: "We do not cover every story, but reveal a few". That's why even they don't cover every story, they take their time, even if that means one or two more days in order to write a new, to see the fuller picture. As Victoria Newmark pointed out in "With

the Fourth Estate in collision with the Fifth Estate of citizens on social media, how can we teach truthful reporting?" inconvenient information is uncomfortable to process, clickbait is quick. We have to encourage the students to read long and slow – and not to give up because something is difficult. Signs like Tortoise's creation show us that some media is moving in this direction. The Tortoise Media editorial board is led by the already mentioned James Harding, who is co-founder and editor of the media. The other co-founders are Katie Vanneck-Smith, who is also the publisher, Matthew Barzun, who is also the chairman and Ceci Kurzman, also independent director. There are around 40 people in this media's team including social and community editors, photographers, reporters or people in charge of partnerships.

When talking about Tortoise Media's funding we must point out that they have a very strong policy against advertisements. As they state publicly, they don't take ads nor sell their customer's data. What they actually do, instead, is work with a group of partners who support them financially. There are more than 50 brands and associations in total who maintain this media such as Huawei, Bank of America or the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

On the other hand, though, they also have a paywall which prevents those

who are not members of Tortoise Media to have access to their content. They do offer the possibility of following the media's newsletter and, as a result, be able to read three of their stories. However, in order to enjoy their full content, including podcasts, daily newsletters, stories and investigations you must join one of Tortoise's membership plans, which go from 100€ up to 450€ per year. "It should be noted that Tortoise Media avoids the use of the term "subscribers" and, instead, prefers the concept "membership", as it means that the readers belong to or participate in a particular community (Pérez-Seijo et al., 2020) "That's why it's not simply about driving readership or just selling subscriptions. It's about membership—being part of it is more important than just paying for it" (Tortoise Media, 2020b).

As well as La Directa, this media tries to have always in mind their readers, that, at the end of the day, are on of their main financial supporters: Tortoise emphasizes the role of the members as the main reason for its actual existence, and thus, the medium gives them—or gratifies them with—power and responsibility, since users are not only mere registered readers but also major contributors to the cause: a slow journalism and, presumably, editorial independent project (Pérez-Seijo et al., 2020).

To sum up, we wanted to compare each of this media according to different aspects of the corporate level. They all share some similarities: the fact that the three are more inclined to the slow journalism rather than covering last minute news is an example. While La Directa is the closest to cover daily relevant news such as politics, law approvals or demonstrations. On the other hand, Tortoise Media would be the further from that having in mind that slow journalism and avoiding fast news is one of their distinctive features.

Another corporate level point where this media match is in the refreshing rate. All three of them, as we just remembered, try to avoid last news as a policy so their periodicity is lower than other online media. La Directa, Tortoise Media and The Grayzone usually update daily or weekly, being this last the one who has been least refreshed during this investigation process. In fact, there have been two or three days where the webpage did not show any updated news.

A point where there is a clear distinction between these three media is the editorial board. On the one hand while we can find a hierarchical team in both The Grayzone and Tortoise Media, with a defined editor in chief (Max Blumenthal and James Harding respectively), La Directa is organized as a horizontal assembly without leaders or bosses. On the

other hand, we can also see a difference between Tortoise Media and La Directa / The Grayzone when we talk about the staff members. While Tortoise has over 50 employees, the other too barely have a dozen and they always have to count on their partner network.

As we could see, the three platforms are now independent and they manage themselves economically. Even though The Grayzone was collaborating with AlterNet from its creation to 2018, they finally started to self-manage themselves, as La Directa and Tortoise Media have been doing from its beginnings. All of them receive support from their readers: an economic help that represents a significant proportion of their annual budget. They are an example of what Kenneth Gibson pointed out in “Addressing Deficits: How Crowdfunded Journalists Find Success in a Restructuring Media Industry”, even though crowdfunding in journalism began with campaigns to fund a single story or semi-regular beat reporting, it is becoming increasingly common to see attempts to crowdfund the ongoing operations budget for a media outlet.

One of the aspects where each and one of the media selected has a different procedure is, indeed, the economics. While the Grayzone is funded by the readers only via donations (no ads nor government related incomes), La

Directa and Tortoise have a more similar approach. Even though they both accept donations from the readers as well, they have other sources of revenue. First off, to enjoy the content of Tortoise Media you must have a subscriber plan that can cost from 100 to 450 years annually, something that La Directa does not enforce. Tortoise also has an extensive list of partners who help investing in the project. Furthermore, La Directa allows advertisements while Tortoise does not. We must say, though, that the ads shown in this media are carefully chosen according to La Directa’s ideological beliefs, as it was told before. Meanwhile, despite the fact that they will not advertise them explicitly, Tortoise Media welcomes brands and enterprises of every type to fund their journalism.

Talking about the media’s expenses, it points out the transparency policy from La Directa, who keeps updated they yearly budget in their webpage, clarifying where did their subscribers’ and partners’ money was invested in. Neither in Tortoise Media nor The Grayzone do we get access to their expenses. We could know from Wyatt Reed’s interview, though, that most of The Grayzone’s incomes are funded directly to their journalists’ travels and accommodation abroad while covering international conflicts.

Finally, it is worth to point out that while La Directa and Grayzone share

some similarities in their ideology (being pro-left and antiracist, for example), Tortoise Media tries to be more centrist and focused on the journalistic research itself rather than have an alignment with any part of the political sphere.

To analyze how the different media we chose work internally, we must deepen into the newsroom level, which is everything that happens inside the chosen media. To do that, we will take a look at the transparency and responsiveness that each media has, because we believe it's important to deepen into these concepts especially when it comes to digital media and media that claim to be working under the concept of slow journalism, where readers have a more significant amount of trust on the journalists' work and professionalism. Slow journalism was, in some way, a response to the amount of clickbait media that came up with the digitalization of journalism, where it was more important to attract the readers than actually informing them or giving them accurate facts. As Katherine M. Grosser says in *Trust in Online Journalism; A conceptual model of risk-based trust in the online context* that «Trust is relevant in the relationship between two parties: the trustor and the trustee. The trustor's willingness to be vulnerable, i.e. his willingness to trust, can also be described as the willingness to take a risk», and there are

many risks when it comes to digital media. To begin with, the utmost important aspect of journalism is to inform accurately and professionally, that means that the purpose of the journalist is not to make a profit, but rather having their audience properly informed. This is why transparency and responsiveness are important, but not just that, there's an important concept that needs to be taken into consideration, and that is the independence of the media.

Independent media don't owe anything to any big company or institution because they own themselves. This makes the difference between a newspaper that is sponsored by big companies like for example banks that might have a say on whether the news says one thing or another to their benefit, and a media that doesn't need to manipulate their articles and make sure that what they publish is not compromised by a third party with a particular interest. All of the media that we decided to analyze are currently independent, which is a big step when it comes to transparency. Besides that, responsiveness is also very relevant at the newsroom level and needs to be carefully looked at, because it also plays a big part in the trust of the audience and their loyalty to the media. People want to be listened to, which is a fact, this is why

media that give a voice to their readers have a better response and bigger loyalty from them.

When taking a good look at the three media that we chose, La Directa, The Tortoise and The Grayzone, we can see that all of them have different approaches to their transparency and in what way they decide to be responsible according to the influence they have on their readers. When it comes to transparency, first we need to take into account the actors' transparency, which means the transparency that each member of the media's staff have, and how the media present the journalists to the public.

From the three media, The Tortoise is the news site that had the biggest transparency when it comes to their staff; they provide a full list, with a small biography and their social media, they also have a full list of their founders, contributors and this is the most interesting one all of their supporters, which are all of those persons who have ever made a contribution of any sort to the media, that being by a donation, subscription or written for them, they have a list of about 2500 names, plus a mention of "207 other generous backers who wished to remain anonymous". Besides from this complete list, they also let the public know about the rules that their staff follow, which, in their case, are in-house rules of policies their statutes of

journalistic and editorial independence, adherence to codes of ethics developed by IPSO Editors' code of Practice and the statement that all of their partnerships have the non-negotiable condition of maintaining their independence. Therefore, the news site is committed to give their audience the information that they have the right to know about the people who are informing them, they know the names, the faces and the universities of every author of each article they read, and they know if there's a company behind them who's telling them what to write. Nevertheless, The Tortoise has a list of each of their partners, and even though it's relevant proof that they have the will to be completely transparent, they have partnered with many big companies and multinationals such as Santander Bank, Visa, Facebook, Google, McDonalds, The Church of England or Bill & Melinda Gates foundation. Without giving any value judgment based on personal conceptions of each brand, The Tortoise's public is the one to choose whether they trust that the big corporations they are partnered with won't interfere in the decision making process of the newsroom or not. For example, it could be understandable that they would decide not to publish something negative about fast food because they are partnered with McDonalds, but at the same time they have written articles about this issue

like *Eat your shitamins* and *We are what we eat*, but they should be carefully read and see if they are actually impartial on this matter. This would be an aspect that would endanger the trust of the news site's readers, specially when it comes to a conflict of interest that might compromise the media's honesty, this is why the importance of a system of verification and an ombudsman is very important for this particular media, because, as John O'Sullivan says in *Challenging Values: The "Good" Journalist Online*, «in the context of national and local affairs, in the absence of a reinforced ethic of source transparency, implemented through active external hyperlinking, citizens remain at the mercy of machine politics and corporate communication», but we will get onto that eventually.

On the contrary, La Directa does keep their beliefs and principles in mind when it comes to who they partner with or the brand or institution they decide to advertise. Even though they do not provide a full list of staff, the readers can access the photo and social media of an author when they click on their name in an article they've written. They also provide a very clear list of in-house rules of news policies set by the newsroom, their statutes of journalistic and editorial independence and they carefully explain all the committees and parts of the newsroom, including one that is

committed to keeping the journalistic and editorial independence. As Martin Eide explains in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Journalism Studies*, «These days, transparency seems to replace objectivity not only as a symbolic resource but also as a strategic resource. When the implementation of objective journalism has been labeled as 'strategic ritual' (Tuchman, 1972), we could easily use the same phrase in relation to transparency». This is a way of understanding how important it is to let your audience know who you are working with, this is the reason why La Directa might have an advantage over the other media analyzed: they are loyal to their own beliefs and ideology. As they say in their own website "The most important income percentage of La Directa, at 68%, are the subscriptions, followed by the special editions, which mean a 9%; publicity, around 5% and donations, at 5%". This means that their main income does not come from any private institution, but from the people that are loyal to them, so this could be interpreted as: *The Directa* proves that they don't work under the influence of any big corporation and therefore their readers don't have any problem in being their main source of capital. Eloi Latorre, La Directa's Digital Edition Coordinator and Culture Section Coordinator, explained to us in a interview that «We also have a list of delimitations within

the advertising, for example, we do not accept advertisements of companies involved in the exploitation of workers or that are in the Ibex 35. What we do publish is advertising that is usually owned by the town hall or campaigns of initiatives that contribute to social transformation. I must say that we have an adjusted budget». Furthermore, they specify in their statutes that the advertising cannot surpass the 10% of the annual budget, and as they explain in the 2020 economic account statement, the advertising accounted for only 5% of the revenue.

Going back to the authors' transparency, The Grayzone would be the analyzed media with the most transparency issues, not because the information they provide could be conflictive, but because they choose not to publish many facts about their structure or guidelines. The full list of "staff" and it's written in quotation marks because it's the people in the list are mainly freelance journalists that aren't employed by the digital newspaper is extremely difficult to find, you need to go to the search bar, look for "Grayzone", and in the third page of search results there's an entry called "Contributors", which is not available in any other way. In their About section they only mention their founder, Max Blumenthal, the current editor-in-chief of the digital

newspaper, and also a small four person list of their Masthead. Nevertheless, this is as far as La Directa goes too, they have the same information about their staff, The Grayzone even has the same feature where they give a small bio with the journalist's background if you click on their name in an article they've written, and they give you their social media when they have one or they give permission to the media to publish it. The difference between the two media is that the american news site doesn't have any section anywhere visible about what guidelines their journalists are following nor their statutes, which makes it very difficult for their readers to truly understand how the media works and how they do their decision making. Nevertheless, they do say that they are fully independent since January 2018, when they stopped being sponsored by AlterNet.org, which might bring a little peace of mind to the readers when it comes to objectivity. The problem is what John O'Sullivan explains in *Challenging Values: The "Good" Journalist Online*: «As with online editions' special productions, however, initiatives such as open editorial meetings or editor's blogs do not fit easily with working newsroom life. Further, they may be a case of protesting too much. [...] Instead, he suggests, this quality should be studied at the news content item level, since it is here that objectivity and truth-telling

claims repeatedly are made». Therefore even if the newspaper is making everything “right”, if they don’t let out in the open how they do it, the perception of their professionalism and objectivity from the public might be skeptical.

Further on, there needs to be an analysis of the production transparency, which is the way to evaluate how open each newsroom is about their decision making process. The media that links original sources, provides original documents, accepts regularly outside contributions and provides personal blogs to journalists the most is sort of contradictory to what we previously concluded in the authors’ transparency; The Grayzone. They usually always link their sources, like in the article *Corrupting science: In Syria probe, OPCW erased experts’ inconvenient findings*, but most importantly, for what we’ve read, we want to point out their will to be open to their readers about how they make their articles through the articles themselves, much more than the other media analyzed. They transmit a very strong will of telling the truth through their stories, and might even find articles like *‘This charge is 100% false’: Grayzone editor Max Blumenthal arrested months after reporting on Venezuelan opposition violence* or *The Grayzone testifies at the UN – ‘Humanitarian crisis in Venezuela: Propaganda vs. reality’*. This is probably the

reason why they might not believe they need to explain everything, since a loyal reader might not need that information, plus they encourage the website visitors to send them their pitch for an article, which is a revealing sign of how open to readers they might be.

The Directa is also very well placed when it comes to production transparency, because they also provide the links to the original sources, they have the Directa Community, which explains everything within the editorial the professional judgements informing the process of publication, mistakes or how they make the decisions. Also they solicit outside contributions from readers to be used in news, they link the journalists’ Twitter accounts in case they do and these are usually accounts discussing journalistic issues. The Tortoise, is also in a very similar level to the previous media, except for the fact that they don’t publish the social media of their staff and they don’t have a specific section about the decision making of the newsroom, but they explain in their “About us” section they have a strong will of opening up journalism, which includes letting everybody become a member of the newsroom and being transparent about their work.

When media say this things and express their will to communicate, they need to take accountability into consideration, and that means to do what

they claim. To analyze that we collected the information that each media had available and organized it according to transparency, autoregulation and participation of the audience. The two first aspects have been previously explained, this is why we will focus on the participation of the audience, which is in general one of the strongest assets of two of the analyzed media, even though none of them have a section of letters to the editor, or at least it's not very visible. To understand the level of participation with the audience of La Directa we first need to understand that this magazine is managed by a Cooperative called *Cooperativa Directa* which mission is only to manage the magazine. This means that when a reader makes a partnership with the Cooperative, this means that now this person is a co-owner of the magazine itself, which is a very big deal and entails many different responsibilities and possibilities that are carefully explained in the magazine's site. The co-owners of the magazine get the "Directa Card", and with it they explain that you get to participate in the decision making of the group. Therefore, all partners can propose sources, news and topics, but anyone can comment and interact with them on their social media because they are all open to the public. Plus, they also have a few committees with the mission of protecting and helping the readers, such as the

Committee of "Cures", which would mean that they "heal" or "take care" of the possible conflicts involved in an article. The Tortoise has also a system called the Tortoise Community Network, which is a channel, or a method, through which they give access to the media to everyone who wants it, they say "We open up our newsroom so that our members have a say in what we do. They come to our meetings, tell us what they think and what they know and improve the stories we cover.", therefore they give the same opportunities to the readers as La Directa does, including the interactivity in social media.

On the other hand, The Grayzone hasn't really provided much information regarding their participation with the audience, only the fact that they have social media and we've checked that they interact with them and they also encourage the readers with the message that they accept pitches in the contact page. Although, there is no information about chats or meetings with the readers, about channels devoted to users' participation, and there are no readers' blogs nor comments.

Closely following the participation with the audience, we have taken a closer look to responsiveness, which is providing participation spaces for users and allowing them to pitch or suggest topics. One of the most interesting features we've discovered with this

aspect of the newsroom analysis is a system that The Tortoise developed to truly encourage participation through a very dynamic and motivating space, which is what they call ThinkIn. This tool can be many things, it can be focused on civilized disagreement with the readers or it can also be understood as a live meeting to discuss certain topics like "Open News Meeting" or "Is the NHS overrated?", where they can talk about the topic and the members of the media can participate and give their opinion. I believe that this is a very good example of innovation in the digital era, because it really uses the tools that the internet has given us and exploits them into making something profitable that boosts the transparency and responsiveness of a newsroom.

We had the intention to make a careful analysis about the convergence because we believe that is an important aspect to have into consideration if we want to truly understand how the newsroom works or thinks. Nevertheless, we weren't able to find any collaborations or any sort of relationship between the media we analyzed and other media from any place or group. This is why we came to the conclusion that this might be triggered by a feeling of asepticism, with this we mean that the media we analyzed are careful when it comes to keeping their independence and their principles, and the only way they can

make sure that they won't be mixed up with a newspaper or any other media that doesn't truly fight for the same things, is simply not making any collaborations.

5. CONCLUSIONS (LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH)

After analyzing the three online media, La Directa, of Spain, The Grayzone of the United States of America, and Tortoise Media of United Kingdom, we can confirm that online media working under the umbrella of slow journalism follow a similar pattern, and take more account of ethically related aspects such as transparency, accountability, neutrality, responsiveness, separation with power and funding, as well as the way the media deals with its own workers. However, the media that are forced to follow fast journalism dynamics and that have to cover information constantly can be turned away from certain aspects relating to the ethics of a medium and its operation.

This is what we have come to after analyzing the results of the graphs found in annexes, referring to the Corporate level and Newsroom level, as well as through academic research with references to articles in the annexes, and the two interviews conducted with representatives of La Directa and The Grayzone.

In large measure, we have observed that La Directa is a very transparent

medium, with abundant information in its 'About' web paragraph. Tortoise Media is a very interactive medium with constant public exchange. These two media would share more aspects. On the other hand, The Grayzone gives little information on the website, and they have no method of receiving feedback from readers beyond the 'speeches'. This dynamics of The Grayzone could be explained by the importance they give to the content they publish. Finally, the innovation of Tortoise Media created a meeting and exchange space between journalists and readers.

We need to set out the limitations we have had in the final role. Most have been related to the lack of information that appeared neither on the Internet or on the websites of each medium. A lack of information that we have been able to fill with thanks to interviews with Eloi Latorre and Wyatt Reed. However, the lack of time and organization has conditioned the speed of this final role. Answering the question whether we need more means or a longer study to perform the final paper, the answer is no. However, it is true that without the interviews, we would have had a lot of information missing, and we think that it would have been interesting to contact a journalist representing Tortoise Media in order to have a more plural version of the analysis.

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Corporate and newsroom level in
La Vanguardia, Le Monde, Público
and *La Repubblica*

Laia Piñar
Francesc Vidal
Berta García
Gemma Masó

1. INTRODUCTION

This project aims to study four different newspapers from the democratic Mediterranean area to expose the differences and similarities between them. *La Vanguardia*, *Le Monde*, *La Repubblica* and *Público* are the chosen ones, as they are the most popular in their regions. This article analyses their Corporate and Newsroom levels to expose how big media deal with their news. These newspapers are based on the urban population and are sources used every day. Each one of them is presented in the next paragraphs.

La Vanguardia is a newspaper in Catalan and Spanish published in Barcelona, founded by “Grup Godó”, a private company that represents diverse areas of communication, *La Vanguardia* is one of the most important newspapers in Catalonia, as it is the most sold newspaper in Catalan language in Spain. Initially, it was only published in Spanish, however, in 2011 the Catalan version was introduced, both in printed form and digital form. The digital version of the newspaper has gathered a huge importance throughout the recent years, with the incorporation of the APP (Mobile application), and the newspaper’s website.

La Repubblica is an Italian newspaper founded in Rome in 1976 by

Gruppo Editoriale L'Espresso, which nowadays is called GEDI Gruppo Editoriale. The main people who directed its creation were Eugenio Scalfari, an Italian journalist, Carolo Caracciolo, the 9th Prince of Castagneto and Arnoldo Mondadori Edizione, the biggest publishing company in Italy. At the beginning, it was defined as a radical leftist newspaper, but as time has passed, it has moderated its position to a center-left position. At the present time, this newspaper has a generalist line and in 1997 the online version was launched as *Repubblica.it*. It is the leading Italian news website with 2.9 million users every day, meaning a lead of 24% on the second biggest news website (analysed with Audiweb from January to December 2019).¹

Público is a Portuguese daily national newspaper. It was founded 31 years ago, so its first publication was on 5 March 1990. Five years later, in 1995, *Público* became one of the first Portuguese mainstream newspapers to have an online edition. At the beginning, this online edition was free and included almost all the articles from the printed edition. The only exception were the pictures that were exclusive for the newspaper. In 2005 *Público* changed from offering free content to a subscription model, in other

¹ Consolidated Non-Financial Statement, GEDI Gruppo Editoriale Società per azioni. Decem-

ber 14, 2021: http://www.gedispa.it/fileadmin//user_upload/GEDI_DNF_2019_eng_def.pdf

words, *Público* established a full paywall. However, one year later, *Público* changed to a hybrid paywall, the model that lasts to this day and consists of offering some content for free and some other by paying. In 2014, the online edition of this Portuguese newspaper was named as Europe's online-medium of the year.

Le Monde is a French evening newspaper based in Paris since 1944. Its editorial line is center-left, and its readership is politically mixed, with a higher percentage leaning to the left of the political spectrum. Since 2010, the Le Monde group has owned the newspaper, as well as other publications such as the magazines *Télérama*, *La Vie*, *Courrier International* or *L'Obs*. The newspaper is marked by the personality of its founder, Hubert Beuve-Méry, who was concerned with maintaining the economic and the editorial independence of the paper. *Le Monde* has been both criticised and praised for giving more priority to opinion and analysis than to the immediacy of the news published.

2. GOALS

In this project, we aspire to analyze the online media situated in the Mediterranean area. In order to do so, we will focus on the most important newspapers in Spain, Italy, Portugal and France: *La Vanguardia*, *La Repubblica*, *Público* and *Le Monde*, respectively. We want to compare these four

online media from one similar region but each of them have a different context and a different press tradition that can influence the news and their quality, the transparency of the media, and its responsiveness, among other factors. For these reasons we are going to analyze two different levels from each media: the Corporate level and the Newsroom level. Both levels allow us to evaluate the topics mentioned above.

As we said, our main goal for this investigation will be to analyze the four online media in their respective corporate and newsroom levels. However, by doing this analysis, we hope to be able to compare the four media and tell if there's one of them that has the best transparency, responsiveness, accountability and convergence levels. Also, we think that with this analysis we will be able to establish if there is a tendency on the online press of the democratic Mediterranean area.

3. METHODS

We conducted the analysis in two phases. In the initial phase, we assessed the corporate level in order to describe each online media we will be studying. With this, first, we focus on preliminary and general data for then concentrate on the ownership (Picard and Van Weezel, 2008) and the business model. Two aspects that can have

consequences for news production and content (Dunaway, 2013)

In the second phase of our study we assessed the newsroom level. This phase includes subsections to evaluate transparency, accountability, responsiveness and convergence. In the attempt to analyse transparency and accountability in each media, first we will elaborate a preliminary simple test to know the actors and the work dynamics that may interfere in transparency and accountability of the media and its content. To study responsiveness we will evaluate the capacity of each media to report and correct errors and respond to readers comments and encourage them.

The third aspect of this second phase will be studying the convergence level. In order to evaluate the convergence level of each media we will take the index created by Gago, López, Pereira, Portilla, Toural, Limia and de la Hera (2009). This tool is based on a punctuation form divided by the four variables (type of collaboration, media polyvalence, delivery and relationship among newsrooms). Once each aspect of the media has a score, we apply the following formula:

$$\text{Index} = \left(\frac{A+B+C}{30} \cdot 30 + \frac{(D+E+F+G) \cdot 0.25 + (H+I+J+K) \cdot 0.5 + (L+M+N+O) \cdot 0.75 + (P+Q+R)}{4 \cdot (\% \text{ OF MEDIA OF GROUP} + \% \text{ OF MEDIA NO GROUP WITH RELATIONSHIP})} \cdot 70 \right)$$

With this tool we can cluster in one single index all the variables related to the convergence and set a comparative mechanism between the convergence degree of two or more media

(Gago, López, Pereira, Portilla, Toural, Limia and de la Hera, 2009).

4. RESULTS

La Vanguardia

Founded in 1881, La Vanguardia is a newspaper established in Barcelona, that publishes both printed and digital news daily. Founded and directed by a private group “Grup Godó” (Javier Godó, Conde de Godó), auto-defined as neutral, central, constitutionalist and moderate. This Newspaper counts with a broad employee workforce, with Jordi Juan being the Editor in Chief.

La Vanguardia main revenues come mainly from re-investment by financial leverage, also, it's main incomes depend on annual and monthly readers subscriptions, online advertising, and direct newspaper sales.

After analysing La Vanguardia's Transparency and accountability rates, we can clearly see that they don't provide many sources of information regarding these aspects, as for instance, we can see a lack of transparency when it comes to the guidelines, ethics and independence that their workforce is submitted to.

When it comes to production transparency, La Vanguardia provides sources to all the information that is given, however, there is a lack of transparency of the processes of publication and the personal information of its workforce.

La Repubblica

La Repubblica is an Italian newspaper founded in Rome in 1976 and it is owned by GEDI Gruppo Editoriale. When it was created, its ideology was radical left, but now it is defined as a generalist position. After 31 years of producing news, the online version launched as *Repubblica.it*.

web from the page for a short period of time, it will ask you to refresh to have the latest content.

The company ownership of this newspaper is a private model, because it is a *società per azioni*, meaning a division of the ownership through actions inside this company. Exor, a holding company to build companies, is the owner of GEDI Gruppo Editoriale S.p.A. Last year, Exor bought 21.65 million shares of GEDI and as a consequence, it is the total owner of this company.² The revenue sources that are used in this company are the next ones. The newspaper has online advertising, while you are reading the content. Moreover, it happens from the principal page to the ones with an article. It also has offline paying, because the news are first presented through the web and then chosen to be in the printed edition. Added value is another trait to complement their traditional service, as they have added documents and archives. Also, you have to pay for news, if you want to have access to all the content through

subscription. Another way they use to increase their purchase is with private donors and public subsidies. E-commerce is another characteristic from this newspaper, as it offers different services and material linked to their brand. The financial sources are based on profit reinvestment and raising equity, because they do not borrow from banks as their monetary contributions come from their shareholders. The online web page of the newspaper has a wide variety of sections. It has the typical ones and others completely different, such as *Serie Tv* or *Robinson*. Moreover, it has services which are not commonly used in other newspapers, for example: *Trovacinema* or *Dizionari*. This is an accurate decision, because it offers diversity and users can be attracted to it as it can help them in different aspects of their lives. Moreover, the newspaper also has a section to read the latest news as it is written in *Ultim'ora*. The center of production is in Rome, where they have their department established. Furthermore, this media has editions from different countries in Italy, but everything is written down in the capital of Italy. The newspaper printed edition is produced daily, but the online edition has a continuous actualisation every few minutes.

NEWSROOM LEVEL

Transparency and accountability

In this case, La Repubblica does not have the information about their rules or statutes, the source of all the content is the owner company of the newspaper: Gruppo Editoriale GEDI G.p.A. In their *Consolidated Non-Financial Statement*, all the aspects concerning their media are specified in this document. Even though there are parts which are missing, because in the case of news there is not presented any explanation or rules specified to write every article the correct way. This file exposes the Code of Ethics they follow and have to take into account, but nothing else. As for the staff working in the newspaper, there is only a page dedicated to all the principal writers and the directors of each department. Furthermore, the writers from the *Comments* section are only presented when you are reading that part of the newspaper. If you click on the name of any journalist, there is no presentation of them, only their writings. Sometimes, they have only participated once. As for the usual writers from other sections, if you search their social networks, you can find their accounts discussing journalistic issues. This newspaper does not search outside contributions from other companies, because Gruppo Editoriale GEDI G.p.A. owns different media and they have the possibility to combine their publications in paper or

radio. Even though, as an exception, it participates with the company National Geographic Partners. If you want to have access to all the content, you have to pay. The prices are in the next image, you have the possibility to choose between months or years. As a user, you also are able to eliminate all the publicity, but you have to make a higher contribution.

The aspects that will be analyzed in this final paper are those related to *Newsroom and Corporate level*. Which are transparency, interactivity, convergence, responsiveness and also the geographical site of them. These aspects are exposed in order to have a broad overview of the way they work and be able to describe the relationship between content and the interactivity of them. We have to highlight the importance of media ethics that work with slow journalism. An ethics that is characterized by "better contextualized news with a more plural vision that favors a better understanding of reality" (Fabregat Bernal, 2013–14).



Convergence

La Repubblica has a wide variety of local editions: Bari, Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan, Napoli, Palermo, Parma, Rome and Torino, but all these are

written in the same space in Rome. In the case of their contributions, they collaborate with media from their same company, because they have an intersectional team: different newspapers and magazines, including radios. As for other companies, they collaborate with National Geographic Travelers and National Geographic Italy, which are media that belong to National Geographic partners. This is the only exception of collaborating with a company that does not belong to theirs.

Público

CORPORATE LEVEL

Público appeared in 1990 as a daily national pro-europeism printed newspaper. Only five years later this Portuguese newspaper published online too. *Público* has its headquarters in Lisbon and Porto and it's part of the company PÚBLICO, Comunicação Social, S.A.. However, *Público* has mixed ownership. The company is listed in the stock exchange markets but there's still a media mogul in control: Sonaecom - SGPS, S.A., an entity indirectly controlled by Efanor Investimentos SGPS, S.A. In fact, *Público*'s main financial flows come from three companies: Sonaecom - SGPS, S.A., Sontel BV and Sonae-SGPS, S.A.. Even though the owner of *Público* is Sonaecom, the president of this newspaper is Ângelo Ribeirinho dos Santos Paupério, director of the same company.

Related to *Público*'s business model, and as we focus on the online edition, the incomes come mainly from two sources: revenue and financial. It's worth mentioning that one of the main points of *Público*'s editorial status is being economically independent. *Público*'s revenue sources are online advertising, there are adds, especially when you enter to read the news; offline paying, while it's true *Público* is originally a printed newspaper, nowadays they opted for the digital-first strategy; added value, in recent years *Público* has started to expand its activity by the publication of books, DVDs and CDs; pay for news, *Público*'s strategy is a hybrid paywall so some content is closed if you are not a subscriber and for the rest you have a number of free content per month; and e-commerce, *Público* has an online shop, *LojaPúblico*, where you can find goods and services made available by *Público* and its partners. It's important to mention that *Público* also offers sponsored content. Referring to *Público*'s financial sources the company doesn't have banking loans because the incomes come from profit reinvestment and raising equity. In fact this last quarter *Público* billed 25\$ million. *Público*'s first editor-in-chief was Vicente Jorge Silva, formerly sub-director-in-chief at *tExpresso*. José Manuel Fernandes also served as the editor-in-chief. For nine years, Bárbara

Reis held this position. Since 2018, Manuel Carvalho has been serving as the editor-in-chief of *Público*.

NEWSROOM LEVEL

Transparency and accountability

Público doesn't have published the information about their rules or statutes. There is only '*Estatuto Editorial*' that establishes aspects and guidelines for the editorial line of this newspaper, editorial independence and news policies, but does not publish what rules its journalists follow. As for *Público*'s journalists, there is only a page dedicated to all the writers and the directors of each department and newspaper's section: '*Ficha Técnica*'. It's worth mentioning that in the 'Online' section all the staff that appears on it aren't responsible for sections like politics or economics but for breaking news, video and audio, social networks or data. All the journalists have their own profile inside *Público.pt* where you can find information about their careers and what they have published. However, *Público* does not link to journalists' personal blogs or social networks. It must be said that only a few *Público*'s journalists have personal blogs or social media accounts discussing journalistic issues. Most of them use their accounts for personal stuff or to promote their own content.

As we already commented, if you want to access all *Público*'s content, you have to pay. The prices vary depending on the months of your subscription: 20€ for three months, 66€ for twelve months or 99,9€ for 24 months. Among that, you can pay for a subscription that includes both printed and digital editions. *Público* also offers other subscription plans for students or companies. While it is true that *Público* has a comments section under each news article, explicitly the media doesn't encourage readers to comment or to start a debate with other readers and journalists. However, in the journalists' profiles, *Público* provides their company email, so you, as a reader, can contact them. Also, in the end of each news there is an email address to suggest corrections. In this way, this newspaper neither publishes which errors can be in its reporting, so doesn't notify fails or misinformation. The Portuguese newspaper has a section called *Crónicas do Provedor*. In this section readers can write and José Manuel Barta-Feyo acts in defense of the rights of the reader.

Convergence

Público has content from both headquarters in Lisbon and Porto in the printed but also in the digital edition. However, in the online version this media includes content that is exclusive for the internet among the printed content.

Le Monde

CORPORATE LEVEL

Le Monde is a French evening newspaper published in Paris since 1944 which has its own website since 1995. It is usually the only French newspaper easily obtainable in non-French speaking countries and it is considered one of the main newspapers in France, along with *Libération* and *Le Figaro*. The newspaper has a collegial form of organisation, in which most of the journalists are also financial stakeholders in the company and participate in the elections of top management and senior executives. In 2010, the Le Monde group, which is the owner of the newspaper, had to look for new investors to keep the company out of bankruptcy as its profitability was not sufficient, so in June 2010, investors Matthieu Pigasse, Pierre Bergé and Xavier Niel acquired a controlling stake in the newspaper. The newspaper's editorial line is center-left, although its readership is politically mixed, with a higher percentage leaning towards the left of the political spectrum. Since 2010, the newspaper has belonged to the Le Monde group, which also owns other major French publications such as the magazines *Télérama*, *La Vie*, *Courrier International*, *L'Obs* and *Le Monde diplomatique*, a critical French monthly magazine of analysis, geopolitics and international information. The newspaper is marked by the personality of

its founder, Hubert Beuve-Méry, who was a leading French journalist and publisher. Hubert Beuve-Méry founded the newspaper at the request of Charles de Gaulle and was always concerned to maintain the economic and editorial independence of the paper. *Le Monde* has been both criticised and praised for giving more priority to opinion and analysis than to the immediacy of the news published. One of the main characteristics of *Le Monde* is to give special prominence to graphic humour, placing a topical cartoon on the front page. The newspaper's best-known cartoonist is Plantu, who has been publishing cartoons since 1985.

Le Monde is a newspaper that is transparent and committed to its users, in which authors and editors of a news item or article are always published. In general, readers always have the option of contacting the newspaper or journalists via social media or other digital means such as email or the letters to the editor section. In addition, *Le Monde* also has opinion forums for users to share ideas and thoughts, with each other and with the newspaper. Original sources are also made public to readers and can be accessed through links provided in the news stories themselves.

The Le Monde group is a large media company based in Paris and founded in 1944. The group owns numerous

newspapers and magazines, including the daily *Le Monde* and magazines such as *Le Monde diplomatique* and *Telérama*. All these media are characterised by their interactive nature and their commitment to their audience. The newspaper *Le Monde* has a digital version, which is independent of the paper version, and has a large number of users who follow its news on their screens. The newspaper has opinion forums, audiovisual material in its news, access to all the social networks of the newspaper and its employees by users, channels for complaints and suggestions, etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

On the whole, when regarding *La Vanguardia*'s both actors and production transparency levels, we affirm that over all they don't provide much information regarding the topics, as for instance, even though information such as workers rules, ethics and editorial independence are provided, informations such as production processes or journalists' opinions on productions are not given. When it comes to Responsiveness, *La Vanguardia* ensures user interaction by providing comment sections and the ability to send media in order for them to use it in the news, while also providing opportunities for users to participate in news production and a section for Letters to the editor. Finally, regarding a *Vanguardia*'s Convergence levels, we

can see that this newspaper doesn't collaborate with other outside digital or printed media, however, they count with up to 10 other information media in their group, that interact with one another in great levels.

In *La Repubblica*, transparency and accountability are only based on the rules and the code of ethics that are presented by the owner company. As a consequence, there are a lot of missing documents or information that could show how they work. Journalists are not presented, but if you search them online, the results will show you their social networks where journalist topics are discussed. Responsiveness is taken into account in the comments section and in the page where they present the email to inform about errors. Finally, convergence is used through the media from the same company, because they have the possibility to share information. As an exception, they participate with then *National Geographic Partners* company. In the case of *La Repubblica* newspaper, there is only one space in Rome for all the staff.

If we talk about transparency and accountability, *Público* presents all of its journalists and staff, giving them personal profiles inside the same page with information about their careers, the content they published and ways to contact them. However, the Portuguese media doesn't have a public and

complete statute where the rules journalists have to follow are established. '*Estatuto editorial*' is more a statement of intentions. So, there isn't a lot of information about how *Público* works when doing content. About responsiveness, as we said, *Público* have the email addresses of their journalists on their *Público*'s profile and in the end of each content. With this readers can contact the journalist to suggest or comment on mistakes and errors in their reporting. Besides, *Público* has an open comment section at the end of the news and a section regulated by a defender of the reader's rights. Finally convergence, *Público* is the only media of the company, PÚBLICO, Comunicação Social, S.A., so there isn't relationship or collaboration with other media of the same group. Neither with the media of different groups. However, the printed edition and the digital edition share the same spaces and collaborate with each other.

As for the transparency and accountability of *Le Monde*, we can say that it is a transparent newspaper with a long history. *Le Monde* makes public all information about its employees, its actions and any public aid or subsidies received. In terms of its relationship with other media, *Le Monde* belongs to a major media group that includes many of the country's leading newspapers and magazines. Each of these media, including the digital media, has independent

headquarters and newsrooms, where different decisions are made and actions are carried out. Nevertheless, there is a certain relationship between the media and they all follow similar patterns and ways of working. The *Le Monde* group also has subsidiaries in countries other than France, which also follow similar guidelines.

The convergence results of the analysis organise the newspapers in the following order:

- 1) *Público*
- 2) *La Vanguardia*
- 3) *Le Monde*
- 4) *La Repubblica*.

This conclusion is explained during the article, because *Público* belongs to a small company in which different media collaborate with each other. *La Vanguardia*, although not being very open about sharing productivity information, and not providing much journalist ethics and rules guidelines, thanks to being such a big company, it counts with 10 other media in their media group, accomplishing a high level of interaction with other digital media that specialize in other kinds of news. *Le Monde* belongs to the media company *Le Monde Group*, which is very influential in France and owns various media outlets such as newspapers and magazines. Although all these media operate independently, there is a certain collaboration and relationship between them, especially between the newspaper *Le Monde*

and the monthly magazine of criticism and analysis, *Le Monde diplomatique*. *La Repubblica* is the last one as it is owned by the biggest editorial company from Italy. In GEDI Gruppo Editoriale there are 16 distinct media, newspapers and radio. In this case, they collaborate with each other. Even though the editorial company collaborates with the National Geographic Partners company, it is an exception. *La Repubblica* has its production center in Rome for all its local editions.

For a future project, we would like to expand this analysis by doing content research. As they are from different regions, the content published is affected by their context and studying their news could help users to understand why some news have preference from others.

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Comparison	La Vanguardia	La Repubblica	Público	Le Monde
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Workforce List - Journalist Info - Rules for Journalists - Editorial independence - Original Sources - Outside contributions - Personal Journalists Blogs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rules of the journalists - Codes of ethics - Statutes of journalistic independence - Personal social networks from journalists 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Editorial independence - Journalists information - Workforce list - News policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Knowledge of the authors of the articles/news. -Option to contact the authors/editors via social media. -Access to original sources - Knowledge of the public subsidies received.
Reputation transfer	Most read Digital Newspaper in Catalan, and one of the most important in Spain.	- The reputation transferred from the printed edition to the web, as it is the second biggest news website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Europe's online-medium of the year in 2014. - One of the most read newspapers in Portugal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Most prestigious French newspaper. -Best-selling French newspaper outside France. -More than 75 years of history without problems or scandals.
User-generated content	-Media contributions by users via social media	- Videos produced by the users	- Doesn't publish texts, images and videos created by users	-Possibility of the readers to communicate their doubts, complaints or opinions through social networks; also through letters to the editor.
Rating cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram: 596 thousand followers - Facebook: 5.38 million users - Twitter: 1.2 million 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram: 1.6 million followers - Facebook: 4 million users - Twitter: 3.2 million followers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instagram: 455.000 followers - Facebook: 1.185.222 followers - Twitter: 801,9 mil 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Instagram: 1,5 million followers. -Facebook: 4,6 million users. -Twitter: 9,5 million followers.

	followers - Youtube: 1.02 million subscribers	- Youtube: 648 mil subscribers	followers - Youtube: 19m followers	-Youtube: 1,15 million followers.
Multimedia	- All news	- All news include images or videos	- All news include images	-Most of the news contain images or videos.
New understanding of what it means to be current	-Permanent 24/7 web page updating - Daily printed newspaper	- Periodicity: 1) Web: continuous actualisation 2) Printed edition: daily - Immediacy: 1) <i>Ultim'ora</i> section to inform about the latest events 2) All the news related to the present are published as fast as possible	- Periodicity: 1) Online edition: continuous actualization 2) Printed edition: daily	Periodicity: -Digital edition: constantly updated. - Printed edition: daily. However, the newspaper has always been characterised by its focus on analysis and opinion rather than the immediacy of the news.
Interactivity	-Comment section -User media contributions -Letter to the editor section	- Comments section - Email to inform about mistakes - Media produced by the users	- Comments section - Email to suggest corrections	-Comments section -Email for complaints or suggestions. -Letter to the editor section. -Access to social networks.

Content and Participation
in online media:
Media analysis on what COVID-19
content raises the most participation
by the audience on their Instagram
channels

Joana Hoffmann
Elisabeth Michalek
Maria Pratdesaba

1. INTRODUCTION

The consumption of media has changed over the past centuries a lot. Whereas thirty years ago people got their daily news from the daily newspaper, television, or radio - the classic mass media - things are very different today thanks to digitalization. Of course, the media that have been already mentioned are still used, but not to the same extent as before. Nowadays, social media also plays a major role in reporting. Many newspapers or media channels now also have professional social media accounts on which they keep the audience up to date. So, people not only consume entertainment via social media, but also a lot of news. In our analysis we aim to find out what covid Instagram posts raise the most participation by the audience.

We focused especially on covid-19 related posts, so we could narrow down the topic. Covid-19, the virus responsible for the current global pandemic, is a worldwide topic in the news, so we thought it would be interesting to see which posts especially trigger the participation of the social media users. So, we decided to analyze 6 different Instagram accounts of newspapers all around the world. We chose to pick especially two of each media system; the North Atlantic Liberal, the Mediterranean Polarized Pluralist System and two of the Northern

European Democratic Corporatist Systems. The newspapers we took for the analysis of the Instagram accounts were "Frankfurter Allgemeine" and "Der Standard" for the Northern European Democratic Corporatist system, "The independent" and "Newsday" for the North Atlantic Liberal system and "La Vanguardia" and "Corriere della Sierra" for the Mediterranean Polarized Pluralist System. We want to search for differences in the media reporting and participation by the user.

2. GOALS

Our goals for the paper are held simple. Of course on the main purpose we want to dive deeper in the topics of content participation, but it is also interesting to have a closer look at professional Instagram accounts, and at what point they differentiate from each other. To summarize our goals we can say we want to answer our research question "Content and Participation in Online media: Media analysis on what content raises the most participation by the audience on their Instagram channels" and argument the differences between the different media systems and the participation.

3. MEDIA ANALYSIS

In the following chapter the media analysis will be shortly explained as well as the different newspapers and their Instagram accounts we used for research.

3.1. THE CASE

As the different media we will analyze have to be homogenous and comparable, we decided to choose two newspapers from the mediterranean media system, two newspapers from german speaking countries and two newspapers from the liberal system. In the following, all six newspapers will be shortly introduced as this also explains why we chose those newspapers.

Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany)

With its huge circulation abroad, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* is one of the most well known German newspaper ("Frankfurter Allgemeine", n.d.). It was founded in 1949 as a liberal-conservative newspaper and is now, according to their editors, delivered to 148 countries. It even maintains the largest number of foreign correspondents of any European newspaper.

Der Standard (Austria)

Der Standard is a well-known Austrian daily newspaper and published its first edition in 1988 ("Der Standard", n.d.). *Der Standard* is one of Austria's best selling quality newspapers and celebrated its 5000th edition already in 2005. Although it is intended to be a national paper, it has a strong tendency to focus on Vienna and Austria.

The Independent (UK)

The Independent was founded in 1986 as a national morning printed paper ("The Independent", n.d.). It began as a broadsheet, but later on changed to being a tabloid, which is similar to boulevard press. In 2016 it stopped being published as a printed newspaper, and from then on the content, that was usually published printed and online, was only published virtually.

Newsday (USA)

Newsday is a daily newspaper from the USA, that especially focuses on the counties Nassau and Suffolk on Long Island ("Newsday", n.d.). The format of it is also a tabloid and it has an official online website as well, where they publish articles. Even though it is seen as a tabloid, it has not the typical sensationalistic writing style.

La Vanguardia (Spain)

La Vanguardia is a daily newspaper published in Barcelona since 1881. Despite being mostly distributed in Catalonia, this media has Spain's fourth-highest circulation among general-interest newspapers. Apart from the printed publication, the medium also consists of a digital version and developed social networks for dissemination.

Corriere della Sera (Italy)

Corriere della Sera is one of Italy's oldest newspapers and is Italy's most read newspaper. Published in Milan, this

daily newspaper has an average daily circulation of 410,242 copies. The daily also has a digital version, which is one of the most visited Italian-language websites, attracting over 2,4 million readers every day.

To answer the research question “Media analysis on what covid Instagram posts raise the most participation by the audience” the Instagram Profiles of these six newspapers will be reflected over a time period of 4 weeks. This time frame was chosen to recognize strategic approaches and patterns. The focus in this analysis will be on a content and participation level.

3.2. METHODS

The current state of research results in the following criteria that help to evaluate the activity and popularity of an Instagram account: Number of followers, number of following, number of posts within a defined time period, number of likes within this time period, type of posts and analysis of caption (Vrana, Vasiliki G./Dimitrios A. Kydros/Evangelos C. Kehris/Anastasios-Ioannis T. Theodoridis/George I. Kavavasilis, 2019). To get a deeper understanding on the participation level of the newspapers, the following criteria for the analysis are added: Number of likes per post, number of comments, type of comments. By observing the number of comments on each post, the activity

and engagement of the followers can be analyzed.

4. ANALYSIS

The following section will dive deeper into the analysis of the different Instagram accounts.

Newsday (US)

The daily newspaper Newsday has an Instagram account with 60.000 followers. Their profile is held simple, with a profile picture of their logo and a bio only with a short caption “covering news on Long Island and beyond” and a link to their Instagram page. Over the time period of 4 weeks, from the 1st to the 31st of October, in total there were 71 posts, of which 10 of them were about covid-19. The average amount of comments was 81, taking into consideration only covid-19 related posts. The average amount of likes per covid post was 345 likes. The covid post with the highest amount of likes (692) and comments (227) was on October 5th, where Newsday informed about the fact that Northwell health, one of the biggest healthcare providers of the US, quit over 1,400 health care workers because of their refusal to get vaccinated. Out of the 227 comments, 214 were negative or filled with hate. Comments that were seen as negative in the analysis were for example statements like “*disgusting for firing their employees shame on them*” or “*This is disgraceful*”. Only one

was considered as neutral and eleven were analysed as positive and agreeing to the dismissal. Examples for positive commentaries would be *“Good decision”* or *“So basically, Northwell got rid of the unqualified employees. Good!”*. Like in many countries a vaccine obligation is a highly discussed topic, therefore the participation from the users is as well very high.

The post with the least likes by the users, but with the second least comment interaction was about the death of Colin Powell, published on October 18th. Powell served many years different US presidents as a consultant. He died at an age of 84 years due to covid-19 complications. Out of the 27 comments seven were seen as positive, five as neutral (use of emojis or the RIP) and 15 were seen as negative, because they were saying the vaccine is not working anyway, or accusing someone as liars. An example for a positive comment would be *“So sad”*, for a neutral one an emoji or just Rest in Peace and for a negative one *“Report all of the facts Newsday fake losers”*. The least commentary interaction was the post about a new covid-test method, published on the 6th of October. Out of 18 commentaries, one was positive, four were considered as neutral and the other 12 as negative, because the content was mainly about how useless such a test is. Also here are given examples for every type of comments; a positive example would

be *“Congratulations to Northwell health”*, a negative *“Northwell should shove its head up its a**”* and a neutral one *“This looks like a meme”*.

The Independent (UK)

The other newspaper that was investigated during the process was “The independent” from the United Kingdom. On Instagram the independent has over 616,000 followers and in their biography they describe themselves as “the worlds most free-thinking newspaper”. In 2016 it has a sold circulation of 58,000 daily. During October they published 87 posts out of which only three of them were about covid. The profile picture of the instagram account is kept simple with the logo of the newspaper. Their average amount of likes per covid-19 post was 526.

The death of Colin Powell got lots of attention also by the UK readers. There it was published on October 19th, probably also because of the time difference between the US and the UK. The post with the death message got 862 likes and 73 comments. None of the comments was seen as positive, eleven were rated as neutral, due to an appropriate use of emojis or the use of “RIP”, and the other 62 were classified as negative. An example for a negative comment would be *“May rest in hell...War criminal”* or *“And a great genocidal killer”*. The other two posts in the mentioned time period were about the covid situation in Great

Britain. The one with the least interaction, like- and comment-wise was published on October 20th. 409 people liked the post and out of the 59 comments, 7 were positive, three neutral and the remaining 49 were considered negative towards the opinion of having covid restrictions again. Examples for a positive commentary are “If it helps reduce covid numbers, we should do so”, a neutral one “No more lockdowns, people should get use to this new norm. We should get used to living with covid”, and a negative one “Just like Bolsonaro and Trump. These wannabe dictators have blood on their hands”. With 80 comments the third post on the 24th of October had the most participation in the comment section. This post was also about the deterioration of the corona situation in Great Britain and about Johnson saying that the vaccine is the weapon to get through the winter season. Out of 80 comments, six were considered as positive, ten as neutral and 64 as negative. Examples for positive comments are “Most of the adults will no longer be protected by the end of the year. Lets get vaccinated”, neutral one “what about funding more to the NHS workers” and negative one “He’s a bloody criminal”.

Conclusion (US & UK)

Even though *The Independent* has ten times more followers on Instagram, the participation by the users is not

more than that from *Newsday*. If you look at both accounts in general, it's surprising how little interaction takes place. Especially on the account of *The Independent*, which has over 600,000 followers, it is interesting to see that fewer users comment than on *Newsday*. Generally speaking, by reading and analyzing the comments, one can say that the focus of the comments at *Newsday* is mainly on how wrong the vaccination is and what lies are spread through the media. In the comment section of *The Independent* the tendencies are rather looking at the government actions of Boris Johnson. Although most of the comments there were also negative, they are by far not as out of the blue as those under the posts of *Newsday*. Interesting is the comparison of the death news of Colin Powell. On both Instagram pages of the newspaper, the same information was published. Nevertheless, the reactions to it were very different. While Americans focused mainly on the fact that he died of covid, the comments from the *The Independent* were about how much damage he did as an advisor and even being called a war criminal. These differing views of the same person could also be due to Americans' strong patriotism in not calling a fellow countryman a war criminal and reducing the death news solely to the fact that he died of Covid 19. Another interesting thing about the comments under the posts is that they are both

not moderated by the owners of the accounts. Even though the account itself is often tagged by some users when accusing them of publishing wrong information, the owners do not justify themselves or clarify the situation.

Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany)

The Instagram account of *Frankfurter Allgemeine* has about 502,000 followers and follows 14.600 people. In its profile description it already mentions its connections to other Instagram accounts like @fazmagazin, @fazquarterly, @fazpodcast, @fazbuecher. This shows that they have a huge presence on this channel and are very aware of the importance of the use of social media channels as a national newspaper. Their profile picture is held simple with the traditional logo of the newspaper. Over the analyzed 4-week time period, there were made 38 Instagram posts concerned with covid-19 and the pandemic. In general, there was an average of about 9,5 posts per week about the pandemic. 1,5 posts per day about this topic were uploaded.

The post with the highest number of likes was made on the 26th of October, being about the German parliament as they could meet for the first time in person again. It shows two political important persons, Hubertus Heil and Claudia Roth, having a meaningful and emotional hug in the parliament. The title of this picture is "*Wiedersehen macht Freude: Hubertus Heil und*

Claudia Roth". This content-post is a positive connoted post in which it is focused on the emotional challenge and social distancing that 'even' hits politicians. With an number of likes of 11.743 it is almost 3 times above the average liked (as the average amount of likes is 4.375,5 average likes of posts with the topic corona). The post with the least likes was made on the 7th of October being about the recommendations of stiko, that is the opinion that older people above 70 should get a refresher covid-vaccination. With the amount of 1.069 likes it is below the average amount of likes.

The post with the highest amount of comments (participation) was on the 20th of October being about the new regulations of government in Hamburg that people should be allowed again to go out for shopping and so on without wearing a mask. It is about current new regulations for covid restriction that allowed body-related services such as going to the hairdresser again for people who are either vaccinated or recovered without any need of using a mask. With the number of 647 comments, it is almost 6 times above the average amount of comments (that is 185,5 average comments per corona post). The reactions were almost only negative with a distribution of 90:10 (positive comments: 65; neutral comments: 0; negative comments: 5823). Most people reacted

angrily to the fact that that re-vaccinated and vaccinated one are given more advantages. Such reactions like *"I find it impossible that unvaccinated people should be denied access. Everyone should be able to decide for themselves whether they want to be vaccinated or not. In the end, the vaccination is there to protect themselves, but not the opposite. Because you can still have and transmit the coronavirus as a vaccinated person. A two-class society is created and the unvaccinated are isolated from normal life."* (translated from German into English). The post with the least amount of comments was on the 18th of October. It was about a former minister of the US dying because of covid. This caused zero reactions nor comments.

Der Standard (Austria)

The other paper that was analyzed from the two-German speaking countries is Der Standard, with an Instagram page that has about 327,000 followers and follows 7.166. It is held very simple and colorful, by having a frame of the logo coloured in pink and white as a profile picture and a short introduction that only says *"news in real-time. Dedicated to the attitude."* According to Wikipedia, the newspaper has a circulation of about 86.000 newspapers daily. Over the analyzed time-period, 37 posts in total were made about the topic corona. In average the newspaper posted 9,25 posts

per week about corona with an daily average of 1,32 corona posts per day.

The most liked post was made on the 12th of October, covering the topic scientific research about corona: New neutralizing antibodies against the coronavirus were found. With an amount of 17.965 likes it is beyond the average of 4.045,81 likes per corona post. In comparison to the other covid-posts, this one was may more difficult to read with a lot of additional scientific data added. The least liked post was on the 15th of October, about a coronavirus daily overview with a lot of data set about how corona is spreading in Austria. With 1.071 likes it is way beneath the average amount of likes and has, as additional information zero comments as well (that could may be interpreted as a consequence). Because the average of comments on a corona post is 63,64, zero comments is really low and unusual.

An outstanding participation has a covid post on the 1st of October, about the fact that 80% of the students in Austria are already vaccinated in comparison to the other age groups. It was highlighted that they are forerunners in getting vaccinated which caused a lot of positive reactions among the users. In total, 80 positive comments were made, while 7 were neutral reactions and 200 were more negatively connoted. One example of a positive reaction was *"you can really rely on the young"* (translated

from German into English) for example and one negative was *"But instead of us students patting each other on the back about how awesome we aren't, maybe we should think about using our educational privilege more."*(translated from German into English).

Conclusion (Germany & Austria)

The analysis showed that both the German and Austrian newspaper did almost the exact amount of covid posts during the settled time period of 4 weeks (38 posts Germany; 37 posts Austria). So the thematic corona had an equal importance to talk about it and spread information about it in the two newspapers. As well as the interest participation rate (likes per posts) was almost the same with an overall average of 4.000 likes per corona post. Very interesting to analyze was the most liked post: whereas the German newspaper liked to see emotions, where politicians hug each other, the most liked post in Austria was grounded scientific research, the rather opposite to emotions. There is a clear difference between those two newspapers in the average amount of comments that were made: The German newspaper has a way higher participation rate with about 185,5 comments per corona post whereas the Austrian newspaper has a rather low participation rate with 63,64 average comments per post. To put it into more context, it has to be said that Germany has almost 5 times more followers

than the Austrian newspaper and is therefore expected to have a higher participation rate.

La Vanguardia (Spain)

The first media that has been analysed from the Mediterranean system is *La Vanguardia*, which is based in Spain. As it's said before, this newspaper has multiple social networks that have become essential for their growth. Focusing on its Instagram account, their profile has 596,000 followers, they follow 155 users and the accumulation of posts since the creation of the profile is 9,625 publications. The profile is well worked: they use their logo as a main picture and the caption *"Plurality, rigor and quality since 1881: La Vanguardia is the place where we all meet"* (translated from Spanish to English) as a bio caption. In this bio it can also be seen the location (Barcelona, Spain) and a link to their website. Over the same time period - from the 1st to the 31st of October -, *La Vanguardia* has published 145 posts, 11 of which related to covid-19. By and large, there was an average of about 2,7 posts per week about the pandemic and 0'3 posts per day about this topic. A post regarding to covid restrictions for smokers accumulated the most number of likes (18,532) and comments (1,337). Specifically, it is almost four times above the average liked (the average number of likes is 5,423) and almost seven times above the average of comments, which is 235. The

article, which was published on October 1st, points out a modification of the anti-smoking law to expand smoke-free spaces. The legal amendment, proposed by the Department of Health, is intended to be implemented due to the medical risks for passive smokers, now increased by the risk of covid transmission. Out of the 1,337 comments, 1,258 were positive, 27 neutral and 48 negative. This post has the highest positive interactions of the analysed period and indicates a clear favorable position to the application of the law. One example of a positive reaction was: *"Bravo! The non-smokers have no need to breathe other people's smoke"* (translated from Catalan to English). On the other hand, as a negative comment it can be mentioned this one: *"I don't smoke but maybe it's also annoying for the smokers to share the space with alcoholics. Why is smoke prohibited and alcohol allowed?"* (translated from Spanish to English)

Conversely, the post which reached the highest amount of negative comments recounts the princess's speech at an award to the scientists who worked on the covid-19 vaccine development (537 negative comments from 554). This was published on DIA. Some of the comments are: *"Their position and power is not fair. Hypocrisy!"* as negative) and *"She is going to be an amazing queen. Proud of having her!"* as positive (also translated from Spanish to English).

However, the post with the least interaction in likes (1914, three times below the average of likes), but the second one in comments (22, eight times below the average of comments), was about emotional treatments for covid-patients. In particular, the article, published on October 30th, talked about a project of dog therapy in Barcelona which was first designed by elderly patients, but then extended to covid patients who recover after having gone through the ICU. Out of 22 comments, all of them were positive. Likewise, the post which had the least comments (21) was *"The Hull Fair is back, one of the largest traveling fairs in Europe"* an article about the recovery of a face-to-face European festival which was published on October 17th.

Corriere della Sera (Italy)

Corriere della Sera has been chosen as the second media analysed from the Mediterranean system. This newspaper has an Instagram account with 1,1m of followers, 130 following and an amount of 20,220 posts published. Their profile it's also held simple. They use their logo as a profile picture and their bio is composed of three words (news, video, images) and some emoticons. It can also be seen a hashtag (#corrieredellasera) by which the reader is encouraged to interact by posting their own pictures. Unlike the previous newspaper, *Il Corriere* has

also a bunch of stories highlights¹ organized in 36 different folders. “Donne Forti”, “Elezioni in Germany” or “Dante Italia” are some of the examples. This option is effective for the users who want to recover old news. From the 1st to the 31st of October, Il Corriere della Sera have posted 414 publications, 21 of which related to covid-19. In general. By and large, there was an average of about 5,25 posts per week about the pandemic and 0’67 posts per day about this topic. The most number of likes (37,477) was reached by the article “*Crema changes the name of a square to thank the Cuban doctors and nurses who helped them during the covid emergency*” (translated from Italian to English) posted on the 31st of October. In fact, this article it’s more than three times above the average of likes, which is 11,780. Thus, in this case the highest number of likes does not match the highest number of comments, which was achieved by an article about the increase of covid cases in Italy, posted on the 28th of October (803 comments, twice times higher than the average of comments, which is 378). Of all these comments, 188 were positive, 125 neutral and 490 negative. Some of the examples of negative comments are: “*The politics of terror*” by @antoniomorra55, or “*This is not our fault, we are vaccinated. The*

fault relies on the experimental vaccine, which is not efficient!”. In reference to the positives, it can be seen: “Thanks a million, Cuba!” by @lailamorandi, or “*Finally a little bit of recognition*” (the two translated from Italian to English).

The post with the least amount of likes was published on the 20th of October and informs about the vaccination of Orazio Bonafede, the oldest man of the country. This post had only 5,278 likes (half than the average of likes by post), but it's the fourth in the ranking of less comments. Thus, the first position is for a post published on the 11st of October (92 comments, three times less than the average) which talked about how the pandemic favored family relationships.

Conclusions (Spain & Italy)

The publication tracking showed that the average of posts published by Il Corriere della Sera is much higher than La Vanguardia. Within the same period, Il Corriere posted three times more posts than La Vanguardia (414 items against 145). Notwithstanding, it has to be said that the Italian newspaper posts sometimes are famous phrases or pictures sent by their readers, so the content is not always related to journalist articles. However,

¹ Stories highlights is an option to group old stories together in a new section that sits below the Instagram bio.

the exact amount of covid posts during the settled time was 11 by La Vanguardia and 21 by Il Corriere della Sera, which means that the importance of the corona topic was also higher for the Italian newspaper. The participation rate (likes per posts) follows the same tendency and was higher for Il Corriere: 11,780 against 5,423.

In relation to the most liked posts, while the Italian newspaper liked to honour health professionals for the sacrifices they make to help Italian citizens, Spanish readers liked more the information about restrictions and measures to prevent the covid-19 transmission. The post which gathered more likes was, in fact, not only related to corona measures, but also impinged on non-smokers rights, which is a controversial and discussed topic in the country.

5. RESULTS

The table below should give an overview on the results of our analysis. According to our analysis you can see that in correlation to the amount of followers of every Instagram account we were able to measure the percentage of users that really actively give a like or a comment for a post and therefore show interest in content and anticipation and participation interest through comments.

With 1,24% Austria has the highest user interest. Their followers are more

willing to show interest in content through giving a like. In further research it would be interesting to find out why it is like this and if it is an incident that the participation is so high, or if it is an Northern European Democratic Corporatist System phenomenon. However, the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" in comparison has a way lower participation, even though their amount of followers is more than 180,000 users higher. The United States has the highest anticipation and participation interest with 0,14%. Their followers are more willing to comment on posts and share their interest and opinion about it. Lots of the comments though are very negative, spread fake news or are destructive. Even though Italy has the most followers of all six analysed ones, their community is less likely to like and/or participate in sharing opinions. The most liked post could give us hints about what content gets the most attention: whereas in Germany an emotional gesture was the most liked one, people from Austria are more into facts, especially daily facts or the ones that concern covid. The US citizens are more interested in economic inequality. In the United Kingdom the death of a star seems to be a topic of high interest and participation. In Spain especially corona restrictions, and in Italy the most triggered post was about an act in which an homage was paid to the Cuban

nurses and doctors who helped during the toughest months of the pandemic.

The results were very interesting to us, because it showed us how different news reporting in every country is, how diverse the participation by the users is and how different their point of view in the comments are. Whereas for example the death of Colin Powel is the most liked post in the UK in the analysed time frame, it is the least liked post in the US. The least commented one in Germany is also the death of an important political person.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the analysis - as it was said in the introduction- was to see which posts related to covid-19 especially triggered the participation of social media users. After selecting the media (according to Hallin and Mancini model systems), the time period of the analysis was chosen. We agreed on the whole month of October 2021, since it was enough time to get an overview of the presence of the topic in the newspapers and at the same time it was feasible taking into account the work time we had. Doing an analysis from the beginning of the pandemic would have been more accurate and would have allowed us to better understand the impact of this topic, but it was not possible. However, we considered that choosing two countries for each system (six in total)

would provide us strong evidence of readers participation and interaction in relation to covid-19.

The first thing we focused on was the choice of which social network was the most appropriate. As we wanted to analyze user interaction, we chose Instagram. This platform allowed us to see the participation through two indicators: likes and comments. However, it also allowed us to recover old publications. We were aware that not all users who usually visit the newspaper's websites do so through Instagram. Even so, we believed that among the different networks, Instagram is by far the most significant.

On the table of data we created, we've tried to synthesize the number of covid posts, their likes, comments and the kind of comments. This had helped us to not only to count the number of publications, but also to see what kind of reactions the readers had. Having to count how many positive, negative and neutral comments there were in each publication has been one of the most difficult tasks, since it was very precise and could only be done manually. Nevertheless, something that we missed is knowing the nature of those comments: the age, sex and origin of the users who interact with each post. This would have allowed us to divide the analysis according to user profiles and, consequently, collect more accurate information about participation.

For further research one could also try to analyze and compare which topics trigger the audience the most and therefore also their participation. One could compare posts about the climate crisis to the covid posts for example. This would be also an interesting point to see what catches more attention and more interaction in the Instagram comments.

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Countries	Germany	Austria	US	UK	Spain	Italy
number of followers	502,000	327,000	60,000	600,000	596,000	1,100.000
average amount of likes per post	4,375 0,87%	4,045 1,24% → highest user interest	345 0,58%	650 0,11%	5,423 0,91%	11,780 1,07%
average amount of comments per post	185 0,037%	63 0,02%	81 0,14% → highest user anticipation and participation	71 0,01%	235 0,04%	378 0,034%
most liked post	26 th of October It is shown 2 political important persons, having a meaningful and emotional hug in the parliament	12 th of October scientific research about corona: New neutralizing antibodies against the coronavirus were found	October 5th information on the dismissal of 1,400 employees of northwell health	October 19th Death of Colin Powell	October 1st. Information about restrictions for smokers.	October 31st. Crema paid tribute to Cuban nurses and doctors for their help during covid emergence.
least liked post	7 th October recommendations of stiko, that is the	15 th October coronavirus daily overview with a lot of	October 18th Death of Colin Powell	October 20th No new lockdown for UK even	October 30th Emotional treatments for covid	20th of October Vaccination of Orazio Bonafede, one of the

A study of the digital journalism,
media systems and business models in
Belgium, Italy, Germany
and United States

Sofia Garcia
Marion Rits
Jana Uhl
Ilaria Wollek

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays that digital journalism is a constant in our lives we have the ability to study and understand the expansion of media and journalism all thanks to the internet. Karlsson and Holt (2016) explain that “digital journalism is marked by the concepts of interactivity, immediacy, hypertextuality and multimodality produced for, distributed by and consumed in a graphical web browser”. Given that we can easily access many media around the world, interact with it and with the audience itself, we are able not only to read or get informed, we are able to analyze and understand how it works and the systems and the systems in which they are entwined. An aspect that falls to draw attention is the fact that nowadays people are willing to pay to read news and to subscribe to more and more digital media (Diaz-Noci, 2021). It is from this current influence on the digital communication media that the proposal of the present academic work arises; It is necessary, as observed, to make an analysis of digital media, its systems and how they follow proposed models that facilitate the reader in their informative experience. This paper will be carried out focused on four countries and it is thanks to the deep analysis of these that we will have a greater knowledge of their operation in order to fully understand these,

their relationships and their journalistic attributes.

The methods and tools to be used in this document are related to the quality of online journalism. In this case it was chosen to apply some of the methods to four different international media: Belgium, Italy, United States and Germany; This decision was made on the grounds of having a greater range when it comes to analyzing digital journalism, the different systems and the business level. Being that four media could help to understand the similarities and differences in these aspects in different parts of the world. In order to present the analyzes, the use of visual tests will be necessary to increase the validity of the arguments presented. As a way and in order to complement and enrich this document, the use of references and bibliography on the subject will be used to strengthen the ideas.

The four media are going to be analyzed with the newsroom level and they will be worked with a special focus on the transparency, responsiveness, and convergence levels. On the other hand, there will be an emphasis in the business model, being that the newspapers to be analyzed tend to fall into similarities in this aspect and it is, for us, the most important. Transparency and responsiveness are mainly topics to be aware of and promote because online media is in constant change.

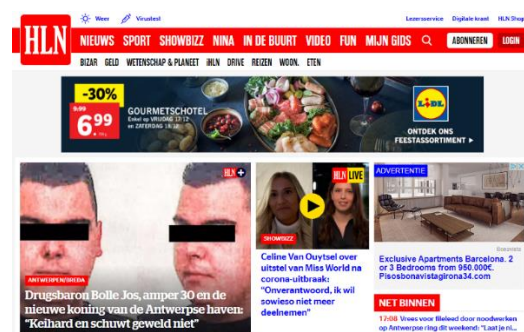
We are going to base this paper on the Hallin and Mancini (2004) models that are explained in their book: Mediterranean or polarized pluralistic models, Democratic corporatist and Liberal model; these are divided in the dimensions of press market, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism and role of states. The idea was based since the countries chosen fit perfectly on those models and the analysis can be more organized and clear; also in order to show how the different models are being applied to different countries. The models chosen and the methodologies were chosen because of the necessity to make a deep analysis of digital journalism and its models in different countries.

2. NORTHERN EUROPEAN CORPORATIST MODEL

For this part, the chosen country to analyse is Belgium and its media: 'Het Laatste Nieuws', a Flemish newspaper. It was the largest Dutch-language daily newspaper in Flanders in 2020^[1]. This was based on a 29% market share based on paid circulation. Even between 2017 and 2019^[2] it was at the top of newspapers with the most average readership per issue of daily newspapers in Belgium (Flanders and Wallonia). In March 2021^[3] they even announced themselves that they are also the biggest digital newspaper of Flanders, so not only printed versions.

Business model

Here it's going to be explained where the incomes that feed HLN come from. We have different **revenue sources** to discuss, starting with *online advertising*. When one goes to the HLN website, the first thing that pops up is a tab informing you about their cookies. When you pass that you can see their home page and are immediately exposed to several advertisements. After scrolling down, many more follow. So HLN is obviously offering a lot of advertising space and is benefiting the opportunity to generate income this way. The ads are personalized, as one can see on the image: "Exclusive Apartments Barcelona".



They started with a traditional newspaper, so *offline paying* is also something they implement. You can get the printed version of HLN via a subscription or you can get it in the shop. You can find more information about this in the section *pay for news*. It was not possible to find any information online about the correct current retail price of a printed version.

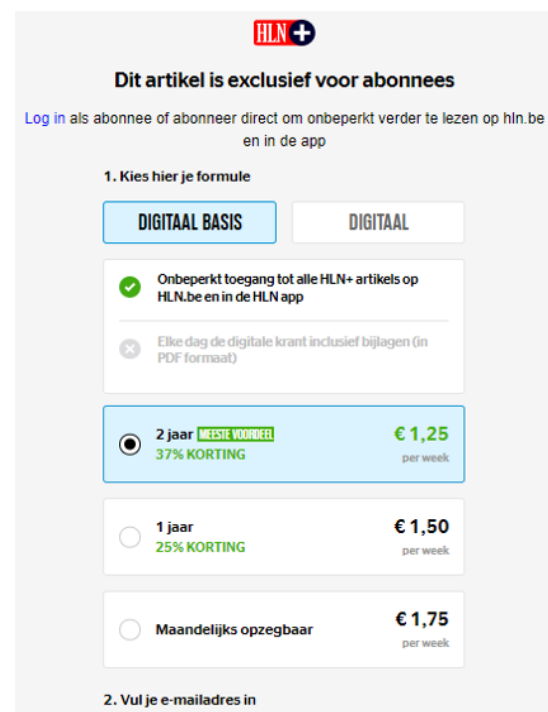
'Het laatste Nieuws' has a webshop^[4] that provides them with *added value*. It has many different products that

are divided in different categories: Christmas, home furnishings, sleeping, leisure activities, books and top offers. All products are offered at a great discount, which makes it very interesting for people to buy products from their webshop. As a user, one does not have to be subscribed to the newspaper to buy these products with a discount. It is an excellent idea to generate extra income and to attract new subscribers. One can also subscribe to the webshop's newsletter so that you get all the offers in your mailbox, regardless of the newspaper's news. The fact that delivery is only possible in Belgium (unless explicitly stated) gives the buyer a feeling of exclusivity.

They also offer a reader service. Here, for example, the user can enter your delivery preferences and let them know when one is on holiday. In the delivery preferences, one can choose between a 'postal subscription' and a 'shopping subscription'. With a postal subscription your newspaper will be delivered to your home within the prescribed hours, and with a shop subscription it will be delivered to a newspaper dealer and you can inform there about when you can come and collect your newspaper. When you go on holiday HLN has various possibilities for you to read your newspaper so that you don't have to miss anything of interest during your stay. When you are abroad you have the oppor-

tunity to temporarily suspend the delivery of your paper and continue reading it digitally. If you are on holiday in Belgium you can give your holiday address and your newspaper will be delivered there or to a newsagent close to your holiday address. It is also possible to go forward on the newspaper to family or friends and your subscription will continue as well as your digital access. Even if one moves house, HLN is ready to deliver your newspaper to the right address.


Of course, they make people *pay for the news* they publish, as do many others. We speak of 'Freemium', at HLN: some specific contents are free, some others are not. When they are not free, this will show up at your screen:



The screenshot shows the HLN+ subscription interface. At the top, it says "Dit artikel is exclusief voor abonnees" (This article is exclusive for subscribers). Below this, there is a link to log in or subscribe. The main section is titled "1. Kies hier je formule" (Choose your formula here). There are two main options: "DIGITAAL BASIS" (highlighted) and "DIGITAAL". Under "DIGITAAL BASIS", there is a green checkmark indicating "Onbeperkt toegang tot alle HLN+ artikels op HLN.be en in de HLN app" (Unlimited access to all HLN+ articles on HLN.be and in the HLN app). Below this, it says "Elke dag de digitale krant inclusief bijlagen (in PDF formaat)" (Every day the digital newspaper including attachments (in PDF format)). There are three pricing options: "2 jaar" (2 years) for €1,25 per week (highlighted with a green border and "MEESTE VOORDEEL" (Biggest advantage) and "37% KORTING" (37% discount)), "1 jaar" (1 year) for €1,50 per week (with "25% KORTING" (25% discount)), and "Maandelijks opzegbaar" (Monthly cancellable) for €1,75 per week. At the bottom, it says "2. Vul je e-mailadres in" (Fill in your email address).

HLN+ is for all the subscribers of 'Het Laatste Nieuws' and offers them 4 formulas to choose from:

Kies hier je formule op maat

Met alle formules kan je onbeperkt  artikels lezen.

DIGITAAL + PAPIER	MEEST GEROKEZD	DIGITAAL	DIGITAAL BASIS
Compleet Met alle en de papieren krant Met alle en de digitale krant 5,00 per week <input type="button" value="ZIE KORTING"/>	Weekend + Digitaal Zaterdag en zondag krant Met alle en de digitale krant 3,00 per week <input type="button" value="ZIE KORTING"/>	Digitaal Met alle en de digitale krant Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ 2,00 per week <input type="button" value="ZIE KORTING"/>	Digitaal Basis Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ 1,00 per week <input type="button" value="ZIE KORTING"/>
<input type="button" value="Bestel nu"/>	<input type="button" value="Bestel nu"/>	<input type="button" value="Bestel nu"/>	<input type="button" value="Bestel nu"/>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elke dag de digitale krant met bijlagen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extra digitale versie van de krant op zaterdag <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Documenten van de papieren krant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elke dag de digitale krant met bijlagen <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Extra digitale versie van de krant op zaterdag <input type="checkbox"/> Documenten van de papieren krant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elke dag de digitale krant met bijlagen <input type="checkbox"/> Extra digitale versie van de krant op zaterdag <input type="checkbox"/> Documenten van de papieren krant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Onbeperkt toegang tot HLN+ <input type="checkbox"/> Elke dag de digitale krant met bijlagen <input type="checkbox"/> Extra digitale versie van de krant op zaterdag <input type="checkbox"/> Documenten van de papieren krant

It also wasn't possible to find any news concerning *private donors* of HLN, although I did find this link^[5] for information on which website 'De Persgroep' owns all of them, which you may find interesting.

Also finding information about *public subsidies* was hard. Although it was possible to find an article^[6] about DPG Media who received a subsidy from the Flemish government for further digitisation. This is interesting information, knowing that HLN belongs to the brand umbrella of DPG Media, but whether and how much money they gave to HLN cannot be found.

As I mentioned earlier, HLN does indeed engage in *e-commerce* with their 'HLN shop'. It is also clearly stated here that this shop is owned by DPG Media^[7] since DPG Media is a member of BeCommerce^[8].

Ownership model

With 'Het Laatste Nieuws', we can talk about a *private ownership*. As mentioned earlier, HLN belongs to DPG Media^[9], which is the leading media group in Flanders and the largest

media house in the Netherlands. It belongs to the DPG Media Group that is active in both Belgium and the Netherlands, but also in Denmark. Together with Het Laatste Nieuws, DPG Media has many more brands^[10] under its belt, including: VTM, Qmusic, Dag Allemaal, De Morgen... these are newspapers, radio stations, television stations as well as online services, which are a new growing branch within the organisation.

Ideology and corporate culture

If the reader wants to find information about the ideology or corporate culture of Het Laatste Nieuws, one is immediately referred to the website of DPG Media. Since we know that DPG Media has a lot of brands under its umbrella, this makes it clear once more that the media landscape in Flanders is highly concentrated. The media in Flanders is in the hands of 5 large media groups: DPG Media, VRT, Mediahuis, Roularta and Telenet. This means that the media concentration in Belgium is extremely high, which results in one-sided reporting within the same groups.

This also means that smaller news media find it very difficult to keep their heads above water. They therefore try to distinguish themselves from those big media groups by applying a completely different approach to reporting and can mostly only be

found online. Some examples are: Tagmag, Newsmonkey, StampMedia, and more.

Editorial board

This section aboards especially about DPG Media Group, because as it was said before, when one tries to find information about HLN the user is referred to the DPG website. Of course we did find who the head editor of HLN^[11], which is Brecht Decaestecker since January 2020. He has already worked for brands of DPG Media including De Morgen. He is responsible for strengthening HLN's paying offer, both in the printed version and online.

For DPG Media, the editorial board consists of Erik Roddenhof, who took over from Christian Van Thillo in 2020, and is now the CEO of both DPG Media Group and DPG Media Netherlands. The other CEOs are Kris Vervaet, CEO of DPG Media Belgium, and Anders Krab-Johansen, CEO Berlingske Media. Of course, there are many other people who belong to it. These people are found in the Executive Committee and the BENE board.

In order to provide you with the correct information, I have taken the following sentences directly from the DPG Media Group website^[12].

Responsibilities of the Executive Committee

"The Executive Committee (ExCo) was established in 2020 and consists of

four members who ensure one central management for Belgium and the Netherlands. The ExCo members are a contact point in the daily management for different content areas. Kris Vervaet (CEO of DPG Media Belgium) assumes the position of CDO and operates on the cutting edge of editorial, marketing, sales, online services and IT. Bert Willemsen fulfils the function of CMO and is responsible for readers' revenues. Piet Vroman (CFO) is responsible for finance, legal & operations and Erik Roddenhof (CEO of DPG Media Netherlands) as CEO of the ExCo focuses on B2B, online services, staff and editorial/content NL."

Responsibilities of the BeNe Executive Board

"The BENE Executive Board was set up to better shape cooperation between Belgium and the Netherlands. It consists of the Belgian and Dutch directors, meets monthly to discuss progress and cooperation between the two countries.

Naturally, the Belgian and Dutch markets each have specific characteristics and there will always be cultural differences. The local and independent editorial products of DPG Media will always form the basis of the portfolio in both countries. But the 'BENE direction' does lead to more entrepreneurship and an accelerated digital development. In both countries, we have a broad portfolio of news media, radio, magazines and online services,

which makes it easier to share best practices and knowledge.”

The newsroom: transparency and responsiveness

The editors of Het Laatste Nieuws try to bring the news to the readers in a very fast way. A new article appears on the site about every four minutes^[13]. Because we have a fragmented media landscape and customers are increasingly online, they try to stay Top-Of-Mind with their app. This is what we call digitization, which can improve HLN's transparency. As mentioned in the part above, we could easily find information about the board of DPG Media, but not really about HLN itself. Although we also couldn't find what their political beliefs are. Because it's that big of a company with a lot of brands working for them, they have to be very careful with spreading their political beliefs. Especially in Belgium and the Netherlands, where we have extremely left- and right-wing politicians.

The financial status we can find in the CIM^[14]: 'centrum voor informatie over de media' which means centre for media information. Here you can find statistics about every media outlet in Belgium. How many readers they have, what their income is... Also their ethical and privacy rules^[15] can be easily found on the website of DPG Media.

3. THE MEDITERRANEAN OR POLARIZED PLURALIST MODEL

The Italian media system belongs to the Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist model, as well as France, Greece, Portugal, and Spain. This model is defined by a high political parallelism, a weak professionalization, a low reach of the daily press and a strong state intervention. This doesn't necessarily mean that the state is actually serving the public interest. Clientelistic relationships and particularistic interests can lead as well to a failed state intervention. Moreover, some of the polarized pluralistic countries have shown attempts at "savage" deregulation in the broadcasting sector (Hallin & Mancini, 2017). With the rising use of the internet, newspapers all over the world tried to improve their ability to produce news online and adapt their production methods to the character of the internet. At the same time, they had to maintain the work of the old printed newspaper. The Internet challenges the news providers to make news even more current by having the possibility to be updated all the time (Raviola & Norbäck, 2013).

Convergence level and business model

In the Italian journalistic culture, political journalism plays a crucial role and the news coverage focuses a lot on politics, and especially on politicians

and political parties. Moreover, a comparative content analysis shows that the Italian news media system has about 7 out of 10 news stories where just one source is used. Furthermore, regarding official sources in the news, government sources are over-represented and the majority of all sources (Splendore, 2020).

The four main national newspapers in Italy are named *Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa* and *Il Giornale*. All of them decided to launch a website that provides news online for their audience (Filistrucchi, 2005). *La Repubblica* published their official news website *repubblica.it* in 1997 and shortly after that, it became one of the most important and visited information websites in Italy. *La Repubblica* is controlled by the public company GEDI S.p.a, which is listed in the MTA market. GEDI owns most of the Italian newspapers such as *L'Espresso*, *National Geographic Italy*, *La Stampa* and more. It is one of the most important editorial groups in Italy and works in every sector of communication. Since the digitalisation has affected the companies in the information market a lot, GEDI has implemented its strategy model developing different projects (Giuliano, 2019).

Besides their launch of the news website *repubblica.it*, they also integrated the digital space named "Cubo", which provides both, the video area

and the paid real time website. Furthermore, they invested in technological projects and funding by entering deals with main technological companies such as Google, Youtube and some press associations. In addition, GEDI also innovated their payment methods for their online news content. The new system named "SWG" (Subscribe With Google) was implemented to allow more simplified payments of premium content by adding also to the already existing Facebook method. Besides that, they started the "Data Lake project" with the advertising agency Manzoni. The aim is to facilitate the management of data for editorial and analytical purposes. In 2018, according to the results of the digital division, *Repubblica.it* confirmed itself to be the first information website with 2,94 millions unique visitors per day. Additionally they expanded their already existing formats and entertaining products with Webseries, investigative reportages and insights about current events and society, and live streaming studio productions (Giuliano, 2019).

Newsroom level changes at *Il Sole* and *il sole 24 Ore*:

Another important newspaper that decided to launch a news website is *Il sole 24 ore*. The newspaper is based in Milan and one of Italy's biggest daily business newspapers. In 1997 *Il Sole 24 Ore* launched a website that was

named *ilsole24ore.com*. Until an explicit online-offline integration strategy was formulated in 2007, the online section and its journalists had been operating separately from the print section (Raviola & Norbäck, 2013). A new challenge for the online journalists at *ilsole24ore.com* was to find out what sort of news they have to cover, how they should prioritize news and how to define what is not news (Raviola & Norbäck, 2013).

Summary

Hallin and Mancini (2017) define the Italian media system as weak in professionalization with a high state intervention. The analysis on the convergence level and the business model with *La Repubblica* shows that a lot of the Italian print and online newspapers are directed by one big company. This raises the question, how the production and content of the newspapers are being influenced by the companies' financial interests. Further research should concentrate on the state intervention of the Italian government and the payments that the newspapers receive. Additionally, it is important to examine the research question, how modern technologies and the internet are influencing the work of journalists on the newsroom level. Besides that, further research should be done to determine how new payment methods are affecting the in-

formation procurement of the population and the diversity of opinions in Italy.

4. THE NORTH ATLANTIC OF LIBERAL MODEL

In order to analyze the liberal model there is no better example than the United States media system. In the *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* Hallin and Mancini explained that this model is characterized by the early development of commercial mass press; in the United States it began "with the penny press of the 1930s" (Hallin & Mancini, 2017, p. 202) and the newspaper circulations came at the end of the 20s. In contrast with the Democratic Corporatist system as explained before, the North Atlantic model does not have the diversity of various kinds of newspapers.

The link between political parties, referring to the USA, is the most impartial and neutral compared to other media in this model and this is linked as well to the limited role of the state in the sector (although evidently it cannot be completely ignored), which allow newspapers to have liberal ideologies (Hallin & Mancini, 2017, p. 229). Is also important to comprehend that this model is characterized as well for a strongly developed journalistic professionalism; however, in the north american country, this professionalization was linked to neutral politics

(an aspect that limit the use of press as a political instrument) and the seek of objectivity that its writers had (limiting their opinions to editorials or criticisms).

The New York Times is a daily newspaper, one of the most popular and important in the United States, and it was founded in 1851. This newspaper started publishing daily on the World Wide Web in 1996 and nowadays it has more than 8 million subscriptions across the world, meaning the diversification of its content and audience. As itself describes, is “dedicated to help people understand the world through on-the-ground, expert and deeply reported independent journalism” (New York Times, s. f.).

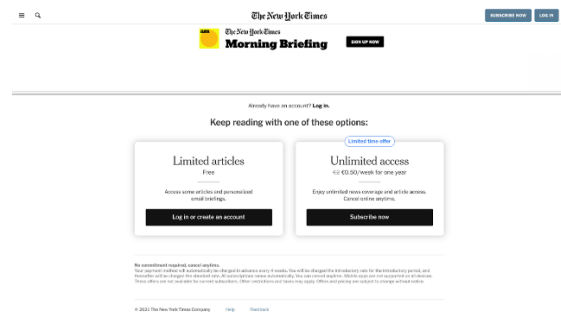
Business model

The incomes that feed The New York Times come from different revenue sources such as online advertising and the membership program. To begin, we will address the aspect of online advertising. “Even though newspapers had traditionally counted on the income from subscriptions and newsstand purchases, it became increasingly evident that advertising was a newspaper’s primary source of profit” (Britanica, s. f.). Like many online news providers, The NYT has adapted to the context and nonetheless this newspaper is not loaded with publicties or ads, when the website is opened the superior part of the screen shows

an advertisement. In any case, the advertisements do not occupy a very large space nor do they monopolize the reader's view, an aspect that makes the experience between advertisements and news more bearable:



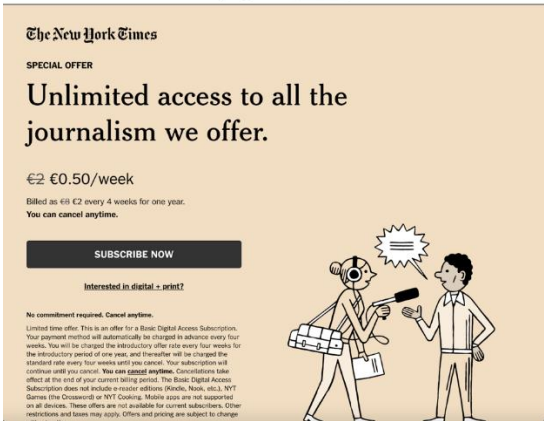
On the other hand, The New York Times as many others have the paying for news system. This means, as seen and explained before in other media, the media decides to charge for their contents and in the specific case, it has the chance to show the first 10 news for free before paying but with the necessity to subscribe to the newspaper. When the new user access to the main page of news and decides to click or to read one the first thing that appears is the subscription alert with the two plans that they offer, limited articles or unlimited access that will change depending if the reader is willing to pay the monthly subscription:



The webpage is offering constant sales or offers in order to attract the reader to subscribe into the NYT newspaper. As the context demands, even though

they started with the subscription system relatively earlier than many other media around the world, the last years with the Covid pandemic the number of subscribers incremented exponentially from the 550 thousand in 2005 to more than 8 million of them; however is important to notice that “the decision of making readers pay for at least some contents, the most value-added ones, has caused a decline of single users” (Diaz-Noci, 2021, p.18). The system used in this case is the subscription or paywalls, and it is a hybrid method: this means that in order to see all content you need to be subscribed to the medium, but with that first free subscription the user have access to a free ten readings and after reaching the number you need to pay.

Looking for nytimes.com? [Continue here.](#)



The New York Times

SPECIAL OFFER

Unlimited access to all the journalism we offer.

€2.50/week

Billed as €12 every 4 weeks for one year. You can cancel anytime.

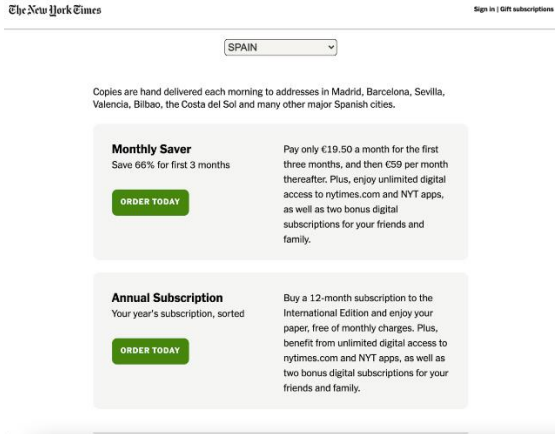
SUBSCRIBE NOW

Interested in digital + print?

No commitment required. Cancel anytime.

Limited time offer. This is an offer for a Basic Digital Access Subscription. Your payment method will automatically be charged in advance every four weeks. You will be charged the introductory offer rate every four weeks for the introductory period of one year, and thereafter will be charged the standard rate every four weeks until you cancel. Your subscription will continue until you cancel. You can cancel anytime. Cancellations take effect at the end of your current billing period. The Basic Digital Access Subscription does not include e-reader editions (Kindle, Nook, etc.), NYT Games (the Crossword or NYT Cooking). Mobile apps are not supported on all devices. These offers are not available for current subscribers. Other restrictions and terms may apply. Offers and pricing are subject to change.

A very interesting aspect of the New York Times business model is that it gives you the opportunity to subscribe for the digital and printed version, nonetheless the cost of it is more expensive:



The New York Times

Sign in | Gift subscriptions

SPAIN

Copies are hand delivered each morning to addresses in Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, Valencia, Bilbao, the Costa del Sol and many other major Spanish cities.

Monthly Saver
Save 66% for first 3 months

ORDER TODAY

Pay only €19.50 a month for the first three months, and then €59 per month thereafter. Plus, enjoy unlimited digital access to nytimes.com and NYT apps, as well as two bonus digital subscriptions for your friends and family.

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ORDER TODAY

Buy a 12-month subscription to the International Edition and enjoy your paper, free of monthly charges. Plus, benefit from unlimited digital access to nytimes.com and NYT apps, as well as two bonus digital subscriptions for your friends and family.

Newsroom level

As the liberal model would expect, The New York Times editorial papers are mainly liberal in their position; it can be seen in many of them they do a job of representing many points of views in order for the reader to analyze and open their perspective; during the last years “only two of them were qualified as conservative” (Okrent, 2004).

Nowadays that transparency has kind of replaced objectivity as a strategic tool, is one of the main aspects to analyze in any media newspaper. The mission of the newspaper is to “seek truth and help people understand the world” (New York Times, s. f.) and can show off about producing award winning journalism. This media provides a full list of the main staff that boards from editorials to columns to marketing members and stands out among other digital newspapers for its ease in reading and locating the different aspects and sections that the medium has to offer to its readers. At the same time, it is important to note that the

editorial members are both national and international, an aspect that opens its borders and perspectives on events, making The New York Times a globally minded newspaper (Okrent, 2004).

Analyzing the production transparency, as it is promised it is easy for the reader to find the links to original sources in case they use one, nonetheless it is important to notice that this media tries to create its own journalistic pieces but it gives the reader the possibility to access the link of the writers. It is important to see that most of the members of the staff backgrounds are related to their work and it is easy to access their profiles. Since it is such a big media it has a lot of room for the audience's participation; this means that it is very accessible to write letters to the editor, communicate with the staff, journalists and chat or interact in the news sections. Finally, The New York Times has several social media networks such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook that makes easier and accessible the information that they provide.

5. ONLINE NEWSPAPERS IN GERMANY: NORTHERN EUROPEAN CORPORATIST MODEL

As a central type, the German media system belongs to the Northern European Democratic Corporatist model, as well as for instance the United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland and, as

analyzed before, Belgium. This model is defined by a high political parallelism, a high journalistic professionalization, a high reach of the daily press as well as a weaker state intervention in comparison to the Northern systems of the model (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). The German media landscape is extraordinarily diverse and decentrally organised and is significantly characterised by plurality. According to Hallin and Mancini, the journalistic style of German media "includes both news and opinion, but separates them, and is less negativistic than the Italian" for example. (2017, p. 159). The media, so the intention, should act alongside the legislature, executive and judiciary as a kind of fourth power in the state and control the government, its organs and authorities. Another factor contributing to the quality of the media is that the owners of important German press products are usually independent publishing houses - for example Springer, WAZ, Burda or Gruner & Jahr. The German media system is essentially shaped by a large number of print media. Unlike in other countries, there is no strong capital city press as the leading medium, but a large number of local and regional daily newspapers as well as some national daily newspapers. These partly fulfil the function of leading media, at least in politics, economics and feature pages, but not to the extent that is the case

with the national dailies in other countries.

Convergence level and business model

Digitalisation has created a format that makes it possible to record and transmit communication content on very different carrier media and thus to decouple it from the specific carrier medium with associated end devices or modes of use. Newspaper messages can no longer be delivered and read only in the printed newspaper but can also be accessed via the internet and read on the screen (Hasebrink et al., 2013). This has also been helped by the fact that an increasing number of media users are using the internet as a source of information. They inform themselves equally on the online presences of established media, in pure online media and on blogs, which are mostly run by journalistic laymen. Social networks such as Facebook are also playing an increasingly important role for journalists. These networks are used not only to disseminate information, but also to gather information and to enter into a direct dialogue with media users (Hasebrink et al., 2013). Under the growing competitive pressure of alternative media such as television and the internet, the German newspaper landscape has fallen into crisis. Circulation has declined sharply and the number of subscribers has fallen from twenty to sixteen million in the last two decades.

The peak of daily newspaper reach was in 1980 with 76 per cent. In 2005, the figure was only 51 per cent, while the reach of the internet increased from 10 to 28 per cent in the same period (Beck, 2018). Online journalism lags behind traditional sources of information but is becoming increasingly important. In 2019, 68% of Germans used the internet as a source of political information. The most visited news sites are *Spiegel online*, *t-online*, *Focus online*, *Bild.de* and *Web.de*. These are the online versions of traditional newspapers. Despite often having separate editorial departments, the online versions are still heavily dependent on print journalism in terms of content and finances (Beck, 2018).

Newsroom level changes

However, there are sites like *Huffington Post* or *Vice* that mainly produce online content and are quite successful with it. Axel Springer, for example, has converted its newspaper "Die Welt" into a pay-to-read website that only publishes a print version downstream. In November 2006, the Welt/Morgenpost-group in Berlin opened a joint newsroom for three daily papers (*Die Welt*, *Welt Kompakt* and *Berliner Morgenpost*), a Sunday paper (*Welt am Sonntag*) and the associated online versions - combining print and web operations. This convergence led to "savings and job cuts among the editorial staff . . . although it was accompanied by an online expansion.

Die Welt had never been profitable since its establishment in 1946 but was cross-financed for image reasons. After the merger, the implementation of newsroom convergence and the job cuts, the Welt/Morgenpost-group recorded a profit for the first time in 2007" (García Avilés et al., 2007, p. 8).

6. CONCLUSIONS

The media previously studied in the four countries: Belgium, Italy, the United States and Germany were approached from the newsroom level and with an emphasis on the business model. The analyzed media are thus complementary to and coincide with the models proposed by Mancini and Hallin in their text *Media systems: three models of media and politics*. Digital journalism was born, as we know it, in 1990 and only recently in recent years has taken on more relevance and importance since the context asked for and needed it that way.

Among the limitations that were had to carry out this academic work were especially issues related to the concrete collection of data to carry out an analysis and in-depth dialogue. It should be noted that the work was proposed in an atmosphere of dialogue and with the idea of calibrating the ideas to be presented, because among all the media that were analyzed there are certain similarities as well as differences.

Among the similarities found, it is possible to speak of the specific case in the business model. This aspect is of vital importance to analyze because, as previously observed in the analysis, the four means are strongly based on the subscription or paywall method; In the certain case of offering free online content, you have a news limit until you pay or you have to accept the membership. Another aspect to highlight is the fact that advertising as a fundamental basis at this level is similar in all cases since the four countries present it. Although some in a stronger and more abundant way than others, it is a constant today, as it was in the principles of digital journalism.

Another aspect that came to light as a result of the previous analyzes was the fact that the models proposed by Mancini and Hallin are exemplifiable and can be clearly demonstrated, as previously analyzed. In the sense that in certain models, the political arm has more force in the publications and administration of digital media than in others, where neutralism is the key and that professionalism is a constant with more intention in certain countries than in others; however, it should be noted that the aspect of transparency is fundamental for all.

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Notes

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Media analysis:
La Vanguardia,
Corriere della Sera
and *Le Figaro*

Irene Poza
Joan Gual
Blanca Menéndez

1. INTRODUCTION

We have decided to choose three media: La Vanguardia from Spain, Le Figaro from France and Corriere della Sera from Italy. The three of them are newspapers that have the option to be read in digital version and in the printed version.

We have chosen these three newspapers since they are of quite similar ideologies (right-center) and all three belong to countries of the Mediterranean, so they fall into the category of the Polarized Pluralist model proposed by Hallin and Mancini. For this reason, we have thought that it is curious to analyze them to see what differences are given in the business model, in the organisation and the structure of those newspapers.

In the case of France, we find newspapers that have a digital version, in addition to the printed version, some of them are Le Figaro, Le Monde, L'Humanité, L'Équipe, La Croix or, Libération. We also find newspapers that only have digital versions such as Mediapart, La Tribune, Slate, Atlantico, or Contrepoints. In Italy the most important digital newspapers are: La Repubblica, Corriere della Sera, Il Fatto Quotidiano, la Stampa and ANSIAit. In Spain, in the last few years, there has been an increase in newspapers only with digital version

-digital native media- such as eldiario.es, La marea, okdiario, El Confidencial, or Publico. The vast majority of

printed newspapers also have a digital version.

The three selected media have a great impact on each country. However, before proceeding with the results, it should be noted that the information found about Spanish media is not the same as the information found about an Italian or a French newspaper. We wanted to find as much information as possible to make an accurate analysis, but as we said, we did not get the same information from every media outlet.

2. GOALS, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

Once the introduction has been delimited, we will establish the following section. The aim is to establish all the objectives for a complete analysis and to reach clear and concise conclusions, together with a hypothesis that determines the path and approach of this work.

First, we can look at the goals we set for the analysis.

Goals
<i>Relationship between media</i> 1. Analyze the three media and see what the similarities are between them.
<i>Media model</i> 2. Observe if there are differences and which ones according to the ideology of the medium.

3. Observe if there are **differences and which** according to the **ownership** of the medium.

4. Observe if there are **differences and which** ones according to the **geographical location** of the medium.

Business model

5. Conclude whether the three media follow a similar business model or at least have similar characteristics.

Then we can see what the hypothesis is and what will determine whether the conclusions are in line with what we expected at first.

Hypothesis

It is based on the idea that we are analyzing three **European** media from three different countries, which are **privately owned**. In terms of their **ideology**, all three are considered **moderate center-right**. The established hypothesis is related to knowing whether, being similar media, they share the same **business models** or not; also if within the medium the same characteristics follow.

3. METHODS

The analysis of these digital media has been carried out using the following tables. We have made two major divisions: corporate level and newsroom level. In the case of the corporate level, we have focused on general data about the media and, more importantly, economic aspects such as the business model, and the management team and its ideological alignment. At the newsroom level, we have focused on media transparency - divided into actors' transparency and production transparency- and responsiveness.

The approach adopted by the analysis consists of an examination of each digital newspaper, *La Vanguardia*, *Le Figaro*, and *Corriere della Sera*, and then a comparison of every aspect between the three of them.

4. RESULTS

To begin to present the results, a comparison will be made of the three means analyzed through the different sections established above.

As for the year of creation, all three are in the same period, before the 20th century. The earliest is *Le Figaro*, which began in 1826; then *Corriere della Sera*, in 1876. Finally, the latest was *La Vanguardia*, created in 1881. The three media outlets are located in some of the most important cities in

each country, Paris, Milan and Barcelona, respectively, and have adopted different names throughout history depending on the circumstances in which they found themselves (whether dictatorships or other revolutionary political movements). In terms of audience, all three are the most resonant media in the country and have a circulation that others do not have. As for *Le Figaro*, it distributes more than 300,000 copies daily and has broken unique user records on the website. *Corriere della Sera*, despite not having the exact details of the hearing, is considered to have the most repercussions in Italy. *La Vanguardia* is currently the most read online newspaper in Spain,¹ with more than 22 million unique users and its importance is obvious.

4.1 THE CORPORATE LEVEL

Business model

Regarding the business model of the three chosen media, we will highlight which are the most relevant aspects to be able to establish a clear and truthful comparison. As for the owners of the three media outlets, *Le Figaro* belongs to Figaro Group, although it is owned by the Dassault Group. It is a private media company and the group

is diversified between media and services. Following this line, *Corriere della Sera* also belongs to an organization, in this case, with the name of RCS MediaGroup² and which also groups different media; the medium is privately owned. As for *La Vanguardia*, it belongs to Grup Godó, a communication holding company that also brings together other media. As you can see, the three media belong to different and large groups that aim to have the maximum media, and therefore to have power within the world of communication.

Continuing now with the business model, we will first talk about advertising in all three media. First from *La Vanguardia*, then from *Le Figaro* and finally from *Corriere della Sera*. *La Vanguardia* is the second Spanish newspaper that receives the biggest income through advertising³; the print ones, as has been pointed out, have been decreasing -according to Infoadex, the press' advertising revenue fell by 30% in 2020- and it has been possible to "partially compensate them" with the increase of the digital ones. With this aim, in 2003 *La Vanguardia* incorporated two different subscription methods -on which we will expand later and, one of the benefits of the free subscription was the

¹ *La Vanguardia*. (2021). '*La Vanguardia*', líder absoluto de la prensa digital y tercer diario impreso de España. *La Vanguardia*.

² *Corriere della Sera*. (2021). Corporate web.

³ Dircomfidencial. (2021). *La Vanguardia* perdió un 19% de sus ingresos el año pasado - Dircomfidencial. Dircomfidencial.

possibility to have a database of users and use it for commercial and advertising purposes.⁴ It also incorporated some payment contents -revenue for added value- amongst which there were, for instance, access to the digitized version of the print copy of the day, an online library that compiles archives from the newspaper's creation, or a personalized interaction and *mailnews*.⁵ Thus, as we have said, 2003 was a turning point for the business model of *LaVanguardia.com*. With regards to online advertising, as Díaz-Noci points out, it is crucial to bear in mind the difficulties that this model involves to digital media: "Since there is no space limitation on the Internet, the content, as well as the advertising space have a cost close to zero, so a destructive spiral is entered".⁶ In order to face these drawbacks and challenges, it is also important to highlight the initiative taken by Godó, Prisa, and Vócento, that created, in 2018, "a joint platform to manage online advertising", similarly to other international media. It is called WEMASS Media Audience Safe Solution, a *marketplace* aimed to increase the "efficiency ratios" of advertising campaigns.

⁴ Iglesias García, M., & López García, G. (2004). *Servicios digitales y modelos de negocio: condiciones de uso en El País Digital, La Vanguardia y Vilaweb*.

As for the media *Le Figaro*, their sources of income come from online advertising, mainly offline paying, pay for news (freemium) and private donors. On April 13, 2015, *Figaro Premium* was launched, a paid offer (9.90 per month initially, 15 euros eventually; accessible free of charge to newspaper subscribers). This subscription gives access to all *Le Figaro* articles and their derivative magazines in a more comfortable and less publicized version, starting at 10 o'clock the night before the printed publication. At this stage, digital activities account for 25% of the group's turnover and 22% of advertising revenue.

In addition to the subscriptions of different readers, for *Corriere della Sera* advertising is also a vital financial resource for the Italian media. This advertising is distributed all over the web and allows *Corriere della Sera* to have a clear survival and to be able to receive a cheaper charge.

Returning to *La Vanguardia*, its payment model was reinforced and consolidated in October 2020, due to the impossibility of covering the loss of profits from print journalism, aggravated by the pandemic, with digital income. Thus, for just over a year, *La*

⁵ Gomes de Oliveira, R., & Rau de Almeida Callou, M. (2006). *La comunicación y el periodismo digital estudio de caso del diario "La Vanguardia.es"*.

⁶ Díaz-Noci, J. (2019). *Cómo los medios afrontan la crisis, retos, fracasos y oportunidades de la fractura digital*.

Vanguardia has had a digital subscription model -free for those who were already subscribers to the newspaper- with the aim of "improving [its] in-depth content and innovation in [its] web version". La Vanguardia offers two types of online subscription: the basic subscription, which, for 5.99 euros a month, allows access to all content, and the plus subscription, which, for 9.99 euros a month, also offers access to the digital version of the print edition and all its supplements. Both options include membership of Club Vanguardia, which offers "gifts and discounts on shows, restaurants, shops, and experiences". The possibility of accessing content despite not being a subscriber, that is to say, the use of a hybrid paywall, is due to the media's "social duty in democracy".⁷

For La Vanguardia, as for many other Catalan media, public subsidies are essential, as well as institutional advertising. In 2012, La Vanguardia incorporated a print version in Catalan, thus qualifying for subsidies from the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Diputació de Barcelona. It is important to note that the digital edition, as it does not have a Catalan edition, does not receive direct subsidies, but it does

receive income through institutional advertising. This meant an income of 547,407 euros for LaVanguardia.com last year.⁸ As for the print edition, it is worth noting that it is the newspaper that receives the most money in subsidies from the Generalitat: in December 2020, the Catalan government granted the newspaper an amount of 574,882 euros.⁹ Combining direct subsidies from the Generalitat and institutional advertising, between 2017 and 2020 La Vanguardia received 11,577,167 euros.¹⁰

Le Figaro also has a payment method. On April 13, 2015, Figaro Premium was launched, a paid offer (9.90 per month initially, 15 euros eventually; accessible free of charge to newspaper subscribers). This subscription gives access to all Le Figaro articles and their derivative magazines in a more comfortable and less publicized version, starting at 10 o'clock the night before the printed publication. At this stage, digital activities account for 25% of the group's turnover and 22% of advertising revenue.

As for Corriere della Sera, it has different payment methods, starting with the most basic rate, 1 euro per

⁷ La Vanguardia. (2021). 'La Vanguardia' lanza su modelo de suscripción digital. La Vanguardia.

⁸ El Triangle. (2021). *El govern de la Generalitat va donar 11,5 milions d'euros a 'La Vanguardia' entre el 2017 i el 2020*. El Triangle.

⁹ El Triangle. (2021). *La Generalitat ha donat 575.000 euros a 'La Vanguardia' i 565.441 euros al grup d'El Punt Avui' aquest desembre*. El Triangle.

¹⁰ El Triangle. (2021). *El govern de la Generalitat va donar 11,5 milions d'euros a 'La Vanguardia' entre el 2017 i el 2020*. El Triangle.

month (up to 6 months), 24 euros per year, or the most affordable offer, 45 euros for two years. These subscriptions allow the media to thrive in a time of global decline in the journalistic world, where the precariousness of journalists does not sometimes allow truthful journalism.

These are the methods of payment and profit that the media have analyzed and that serve them to be able to guarantee the survival of the media.

Ideological alignment

Once the business model has been analyzed, the next step in the study of the corporate level is to examine the ownership and ideological alignment of each digital newspaper. As previously mentioned, the three media under study have private ownership and are part of communication holdings. This will clearly have an influence on the ideological position of the newspaper. Furthermore, following Hallin and Mancini division, all the media we have chosen to focus on are part of the same model, the Polarized Pluralist, or Mediterranean one. For this reason, the framework in which these newspapers are embedded will increase the similarities between them. *La Vanguardia*, *Le Figaro*, and *Corriere della Sera* could all be categorized as conservative media, adopting a

sympathetic position towards bourgeois and center-right ideas. In order to examine this aspect more in-depth, we have analyzed each newspaper through this lens.

La Vanguardia, as previously mentioned, has belonged, since its creation, to the Godó family. The current president of the newspaper, and the media group, is Javier Godó Muntañola, who owns 98% of the shares. The remaining 2% belongs to his son, Carlos Godó Valls, who is also CEO of the holding company. Thus, the entire media group, and therefore *La Vanguardia*, belongs to the Godó family. This will undoubtedly influence its editorial line, as it is important to take into account the economic interests of the shareholders. Moreover, as the entire shareholding is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the interests of this person will be even more influential in the media and its ideological alignment.

La Vanguardia could be defined as a centrist, pro-monarchist newspaper. It was born in 1881 as the newspaper of the Liberal Party, but shortly after it began its development as "a business newspaper, with the aim of obtaining economic benefits".¹¹ On occasions, it has been criticised for being "the mouthpiece of the Catalan bourgeoisie" or "a monarchist forum in which

¹¹ Sanmartí Roset, J. (2016). *La Vanguardia, el liberalismo conservador y catalanista con la II República*. OpenEdition Journals.

not once has there been a critical voice [...] against the monarchy", in the words of Vicenç Navarro¹⁴. In an interview conducted by Pilar Rahola in 2011, Javier Godó, the current president of the group, defined himself - and therefore La Vanguardia - as "liberal in ideas, traditional in customs, transcendent in religion, Catalan and monarchist and loyal to the law".¹²

In relation to the independentist movement, La Vanguardia had a period in which it was seen as a pro-independence newspaper. This was the case under the editorship of José Antich for thirteen years, who adopted a more sympathetic position towards pro-independence ideas. As Nació digital reports, there came a time when "information appeared that claimed that in the Zarzuela there was irritation at the alignment of the newspaper of a *grande de España*". Antich's directorship ended in 2013, when Javier Godó decided to replace him with Màrius Carol, with the intention of improving relations with the State. Carol, who was editor until 2020, when he was replaced by the current editor, Jordi Juan, was a more moderate journalist, and his previous career included being the newspaper's correspondent for the Royal Household. Since then, we could say that La Vanguardia has adopted a "third way" in

the Catalan independence process. As Javier Godó stated in the aforementioned interview: "Our influence is to know how to connect with the country's centrality". Thus, the newspaper has tried to make room for the "balances within Catalan society", above all through the presence of opinion articles by people with different ideologies, such as Pilar Rahola and Quim Monzó, who are sympathetic to independentist ideas, writing alongside clearly pro-unionist authors. Nació digital points out the importance of La Vanguardia's moderation and capacity for adaptability: "Godó spoke out against the unilateral declaration of independence in 2017, but with enough astuteness to ensure that if it had succeeded, the front page of La Vanguardia the following day would have featured an Estelada flag [...] And nobody would have reproached him for it".¹³

Le Figaro, as noted above, belongs to the Dessault Group. The current editorial director is Alexis Brézet and in the case of lefigaro.fr is Florent Maillet. In relation to the editorial line of this newspaper, according to its director, it is a center-right newspaper. In addition, he adds that the newspaper is the point of union of several great currents of ideas inclined to the right and to the center-right. He is also often

¹² Macià, M., & Martí, P. (2020). *Els Godó i «La Vanguardia», una nissaga i un negoci irrepetibles*. Naciodigital.cat.

¹³ Macià, M., & Martí, P. (2020). *Els Godó i «La Vanguardia», una nissaga i un negoci irrepetibles*. Naciodigital.cat.

classified as the guardian of the cultural eclecticism of the French right because of his opposition to the Paris Commune, to communism, or because of his Gaullist sympathies, or even because of his attachment to the republican system. One of the slogans of his 2005 advertising campaign was "In the economy we are for free trade. Also in terms of ideas".

In February 2012, a text from the Société de Journalistes du Figaro denounced the editorial line of its newspaper, which is considered to be an important support for the different right-wing governments that have succeeded each other in the 2000s. *Le Figaro's* editorial team is very much committed to the principle of protecting journalists' sources of information. In March 2013, his editorial director, Alexis Brézet, defined the spirit of everyday life he leads: "liberal, but not dogmatic, conservative, but not retrograde, European, but not Eurobeat, committed to the defense of French culture but open to the world" while claiming to be "mind-independent".

As stated above, RCS MediaGroup is the owner of the entire **Corriere della Sera** digital media, no other company is co-owner. Its owner group is in charge of the edition, although Luciano Fontana is the head of this sector.

As for its ideology, it has maintained its initial essence since its inception. *Corriere della Sera* was created with the aim of being a medium for bourgeois families. Obviously, everyone can access the newspaper today, but it still maintains a moderate and conservative ideology.

4.2. THE NEWSROOM LEVEL

Actors' transparency

To start with the newsroom level, we must analyze the aspect of transparency, related both to actors and production. As stated by Sánchez de la Nieta, Monfort and Fuente, journalists have suffered a loss of credibility and reputation over the last few years, specifically in occidental democracies.¹⁴ The professional values of the journalistic practice seem to conflict with the economic and business interests of media directives. Moreover, with new technologies, this competitive climate has been notably increased. However, digitization offers many possibilities to improve and increase the degree of transparency. Digital media should therefore take advantage of these new tools to enhance their credibility. When it comes to actors' transparency, online newspapers should provide information about their staff and journalists.

¹⁴ Sánchez de la Nieta, M., Monfort, A., & Fuente, C. (2013). *El estatuto de redacción en la*

empresa periodística: criterio básico de Responsabilidad Social Corporativa para la recuperación de la credibilidad del Periodismo.

La Vanguardia, in its About us section, offers a list of the members of the management team, the editors-in-chief, etc. It also has an Authors section, which lists all the people who write for the newspaper. In this section, you can access each author's page -which can also be accessed by clicking on the author of a news piece- where the pieces written by that person appear. Some authors have a more or less extensive description, sometimes written by themselves, in which case can be more literary than informative.

Le Figaro does not offer a list, nor information, of the members of the management team, the editors-in-chief, etc. There is also no information on all journalists participating in publications, although it is true that in the publication appears the name of the journalist and clicking on the name we can know the date of their first publication in Le Figaro and the number of articles and publications that they have.

As well as Le Figaro, Corriere della Sera does not offer the public a complete list of people who actively participate in the newspaper. We can see a clear shortcoming in this section, as it is really difficult to know who the people in charge of the medium are

and who writes in each section. In addition, a technical fact sheet is not provided for journalists, they are simply mentioned and given credit in every news item, but we cannot see a description of who they are and in which sections they work.

Therefore, we could conclude that, with regard to the information provided about the members of the staff and its journalists, La Vanguardia is the one with a higher level of transparency.

Another aspect worth considering in analyzing transparency is the use - and the access to them- of codes and guidelines. The Council of Europe, as far back as 1993, already encouraged media to incorporate editorial statutes and the creation of professional committees.¹⁵ Digitization offers a powerful tool and opportunity to make these compromises visible and available to the public, thus increasing media reputation and citizens' trust in journalists.

With regard to the rules and codes followed by La Vanguardia, it is important to note that it has a style guide, updated in 2018, which brings together the newspaper's guidelines both at a linguistic level -it is worth mentioning the introduction of the Catalan edition in 2011- and at a deon-

¹⁵ Sánchez de la Nieta, M., Monfort, A., & Fuente, C. (2013). *El estatuto de redacción en la*

empresa periodística: criterio básico de Responsabilidad Social Corporativa para la recuperación de la credibilidad del Periodismo.

tological level. In this regard, the manual addresses aspects such as the presumption of innocence, the treatment of the identity of minors and victims, and the right to rectification or reply.

In the article *El estatuto de redacción en la empresa periodística: criterio básico de Responsabilidad Social Corporativa para la recuperación de la credibilidad del periodismo*, Sánchez de la Nieta, Monfort and Fuente analyse the editorial statutes of different Spanish media. These statutes are "tools [...] that make possible the synergy of the economic interests of the company and the ethical suitability of the journalist with the work they are doing".¹⁶ In the case of *La Vanguardia*, the newspaper was endowed with an editorial statute in 2001, as well as an editorial committee, in this case called the Professional Council. The article also analyses the possibility of accessing both the statute and the committee via the newspaper's website, its news or external sources. In the case of *La Vanguardia*, it is important to point out that it does not provide access or contact through its website; the editorial statute is available in its entirety, but through external sources, and contact with the Professional Council is not provided either. This, therefore, is an aspect that *La*

Vanguardia could improve in order to increase its transparency.

Le Figaro, however, does not provide information about the stylebook and the codes that are followed on their website. Taking into account that this newspaper does not provide information about its staff and journalists either, we could say that *Le Figaro* does not achieve an optimal level of transparency, since none of the important aspects, such as history, the source of income, directors, etc., appear on its website. On the other hand, we can indeed find this information on pages such as Wikipedia and other research works related to *Le Figaro*.

As for *Corriere della Sera*, from what has been seen, it does not have a section that sets out the rules that journalists must follow, although this is very common in many media, where they do not teach the rules that follow simply because sometimes, there is not even a very established or determined model. In this case, the Italian digital media does not show it and we can not know what procedure they follow.

In conclusion, all three media should improve this aspect of transparency: even if they follow style books and guidelines, it is sometimes hard to find them published; this is especially true in the case of *Le Figaro* and *Corriere*

¹⁶ Sánchez de la Nieta, M., Monfort, A., & Fuente, C. (2013). *El estatuto de redacción en la empresa*

periodística: criterio básico de Responsabilidad Social Corporativa para la recuperación de la credibilidad del Periodismo.

della Sera, since La Vanguardia follows a set of rules that are not impossible to find on the Internet, but are not explicitly published in their website.

Production transparency

In relation to the transparency of production, we must analyze the information provided by the newspaper on the process of obtaining and producing news, as well as on the journalists. Regarding the former, it is important to mention that La Vanguardia does not usually incorporate links to the original sources of the pieces. The use of hypertext is not abundant; when it is used, it is mainly to redirect the user to another piece in the same newspaper. However, it is sometimes used to link to the source of the data used, which is important for information transparency. There is also no section or space dedicated to providing an account explaining the professional judgments that inform the publication process. In the case of Le Figaro, links to the original sources are incorporated. As in La Vanguardia, there is no space dedicated to the judgments that are followed when deciding whether an article is published or not. The latter also occurs in Corriere della Sera since the news publication process is not explained to readers and this may affect the relationship readers have with the newspaper since they are not aware of how decisions

are made within the media. Regarding the elements of the news pieces, Corriere della Sera provides external sources and links them correctly to the news. In addition, they also add links to other news produced by the same media.

In relation to journalists, we can observe that the vast majority of them have social networks and blogs that they use professionally, some with more activity and interaction and others less, depending on the person, but in none of the three newspapers there are links to these networks and blogs in the newspaper.

Responsiveness

To assess the degree of receptivity of digital newspapers, in this case, aspects such as the rectification of errors, user comments, contact with the newspaper and its journalists and user-generated content must be taken into account.

La Vanguardia attaches great importance to the rectification of errors that may be made in the writing and preparation of the news. However, these errors are not always notified to users. For readers, it is possible to contact the newspaper for possible complaints or other queries; in the "Contact" section, the reader service telephone number is provided for this purpose, as well as the subscriber service number and the contact of the editorial office and the administration.

However, direct contact with journalists is not provided; for this, the reader must seek them out on his or her own or request it from the newspaper. As for comments, registered users can leave comments on news items. The Rules of Participation specify the requirements: they must be in line with the topic of discussion, participate in one of the languages used on the newspaper's website and avoid commercial messages or messages that include telephone numbers or personal addresses. Thus, "LaVanguardia.com reserves the right to delete inappropriate comments that violate the rules", and has a team that manually moderates comments, being able to censor those that insult or include spam. It can also close any discussion space on the web if it deems it appropriate. It is important to mention the existence of the figure of the Ombudsman, who was at that time Josep Rovira, and whose contact is next to that of Letters to the Editor. These are gathered in a Letters section, within the Participation area, which also includes sections such as Readers' Photos and Correspondent Readers. Therefore, we can say that La Vanguardia does include User-Generated Content, but it does so in a specific section.

In the case of *Le Figaro*, it does give its readers the opportunity to comment on the news and articles published, but the newspaper has decided

that as of December 15 only subscribers will be able to comment, as this way they can publish comments more quickly, by filtering less, and also improve the quality of the discussions. In addition, the newspaper justifies this decision by reserving the best for subscribers. Just as in *La Vanguardia* they also offer readers, subscribers and non-subscribers, the option to contact the newspaper if any of the published comments are not correct and also if they have any suggestions and doubts. It is interesting that they offer this option, but they do not offer the option to contact the journalists of the newspaper.

One thing to note about this newspaper is that it does not have a Letters to the Editor section, something very rare nowadays as it is found in the vast majority of newspapers. The newspaper also does not respond to comments made in the publications.

And finally, *Corriere della Sera* notifies its readers when a news item is incorrect or there has been a lack of veracity. By having social media, they can report that they have republished a news item. Like *Le Figaro* and *La Vanguardia* they have a complaints and suggestions box, but they do not use it to choose relevant topics, they simply respond according to the reader's request. In addition, there is a section where messages can be sent to specific sectors of the newspaper, such as the communications section or the

newsroom, to contact journalists. The media encourages readers to respond to the news, leaving a space for debate in each news item, so that each person can comment on what he or she needs to in each piece of information. Despite having this vital tool, Italian media do not usually respond to these comments, they leave them out and leave a space for debate for all interested parties.

In this media, there does not seem to be an editor-in-chief figure, or at least it is not easy to see such a character. Moreover, as for letters to the editor, as in *Le Figaro*, there is no specific section where their content is published, so readers are not given the opportunity to appear in the media using this tool. Finally, it should be noted that readers do not participate in the elaboration of the news, although, as is obvious, the media could publish some images of them and have sufficient quality, although this happens very rarely, since the photos are taken by agencies or by the media's own photographers hired by the media.

5. Conclusions

1. It should be noted that we are in a crisis of print journalism with the respective drop in sales. There is a great need to create new business models, and the three media analyzed have been able to make a place for themselves in the journalistic market.

2. In terms of transparency, the three media should improve this aspect: even if they follow style books and guidelines, it is sometimes hard to find them published; *La Vanguardia* follows a set of rules that are not impossible to find on the Internet, but are not explicitly published in their website. It is completely the other way around in the case of *Le Figaro* and *Corriere della Sera*,

3. Most of the journalists of those newspapers have social networks and blogs that they use professionally, but it's weird that none of the three newspapers have links to these networks and blogs.

4. There has been a need to monetize and optimize the benefits of the digital version through advertisements, payment models and public aid (as is the case of *La Vanguardia*, which has subsidies, criticized in some sectors for being a private medium). All three media outlets have these tools to ensure their survival.

5. The three media are private and share the same ideology (center-right and moderate), which began with the aim of being addressed by the bourgeoisie of today's society. Right now, all three have the will to embrace the maximum population to gain readers and potential benefits.

6. The digitalization of tools can help to have greater transparency but these are often not used. This can be

seen in the analysed media: *La Vanguardia* is the one that offers the most information regarding its staff, its business model, the decision process on publications, etc.

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Media Convergence:
How legacy media has adapted
to the era of digitisation

Ella Jayson
Rebecca Browne
Sonal Bhundia

1. INTRODUCTION

With the proliferation of the World Wide Web at the onset of the 21st Century, the nature of journalism, and particularly legacy media, has changed dramatically. From circulating thousands of copies of physical newspapers on a daily basis to retreating to exclusively online publications, legacy media outlets have had to adapt dramatically to meet consumer demands for digital journalism. This phenomenon, known as media convergence, describes “the process whereby new technologies are accommodated by existing media and communication industries and cultures” (Dwyer, 2010, p.2). This essay will explore how legacy media has undergone significant transformations in the age of the internet, from shifting business models to altering company culture to allow for a more modern, dynamic form of journalism to exist in their respective media organisations. We will explore and compare levels of media convergence at legacy media companies across three countries, the UK, US and Ireland, each with distinctive industries but equally similar as English-speaking countries. In addition to this, we will examine the different types of media convergence that are identified in academia and apply them to the context of our case studies. Finally, we will suggest what the future of legacy media is likely to embody, taking into account

how subscription-based models are gradually becoming overshadowed by free, open-access media.

2. WHAT IS LEGACY MEDIA?

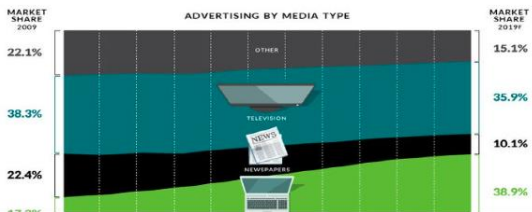
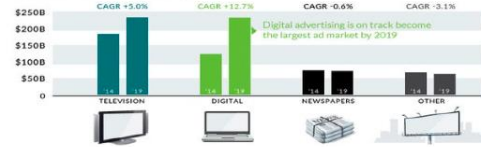
Legacy media, also commonly referred to as old media, is a term used to categorise traditional media outlets which predate the information age. According to the Oxford Dictionary of Journalism, legacy media is used “to describe extant forms of media with longer histories such as newspapers, magazines, and broadcast journalism” (Harcup, 2014). Coinciding with this definition, legacy media is typically considered to be historically rooted firmly with journalistic tradition and thus, less likely to embrace new forms of technology associated with media convergence. For this reason, many scholars have speculated about the death of legacy media in the era of digitisation. This is made even more poignant by the significant decline in newspaper circulation, growth of alternative forms of online media and changing consumer media preferences. As a result, legacy media has been forced to undergo high levels of media convergence to meet these rapidly changing circumstances. However, there are also some legacy media outlets that have faded into obsolescence, reflecting the need for the journalistic adaptation of traditional forms of media into a digital context

that is more palatable for the 21st Century.

THE SLOW DEATH OF TRADITIONAL MEDIA

It's desperation time as the old guard clings to diminishing market share

GLOBAL AD REVENUE 2014 vs 2019*



Source: <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-slow-death-of-legacy-media-2016-10>

This diagram highlights the slow decline of legacy media types, expressed through diminishing market shares in the media industry.

In terms of business models, legacy media is conventionally structured via subscription models, fostering a strong reader base and solid source of revenue for media organisations. Despite these advantages, this model also generates a high level of dependence between the newspaper and its audience which may leave the news outlet susceptible to collapse or potential bankruptcy if its subscription numbers begin to dwindle. For instance, McClatchy, the second largest US newspaper chain filed for bankruptcy after declaring net losses of \$364m in February 2020, citing heavy debt from a lack of subscription revenue as one of their reasons (Luscombe, 2020). Therefore, switching from an outdated subscription-based model to a

digital model is a necessary requirement for many legacy media outlets to survive in a highly competitive media industry.

Alongside a rigid business model, another core feature of legacy media is a deeply-entrenched journalistic culture which is considered to produce high-quality content. This differs from digital journalism, which is often criticised for its comparatively poorer journalistic quality which is more catered to the immediacy and participatory nature of the internet. In contrast, to maintain journalistic rigour, journalists at legacy media publications are reluctant to relinquish editorial control, and this possession is strongly embedded into workplace culture. Consequently, legacy media is characterized as much less collaborative and thus, less innovative when compared to the high levels of interactivity seen on the internet. "News media institutions have typically leaned towards their old practices of publishing rather than opening their gates to hybrid forms of collaboration" (Westlund, 2012, p. 791). Therefore, there is clearly a discord in cultural attitudes towards legacy and digital media, alluding to the challenges that traditional media outlets may encounter during media convergence.

3. CASES

3.1. CASE STUDY 1: THE TIMES (UK)

The UK has had a longstanding tradition of the free press and can generally be classified under the '*North Atlantic Liberal*' media system, stipulated by Hallin and Mancini (2004). This system features low levels of political parallelism, a limited role of the state and high standard of journalistic professionalism. In addition to this, "the first European newspaper to upload its content to the Internet was Britain's *The Daily Telegraph*" (Gascón, 2011), so the UK market could be regarded as a continental pioneer when it comes to digital journalism and media convergence.

UK journalism can be broadly categorised into two types: broadsheet and tabloid media. The former is the category *The Times* falls into. "Broadsheet papers rely on investigative approaches to news that emphasize in-depth coverage and a sober tone in articles and editorials, with smaller headlines, fewer pictures, and lengthier texts that are staples of the quality press" (Bastos, 2016). *The Times* is an archetypal example of legacy media in the UK. Founded in 1785 originally under the title '*The Daily Universal Register*', *The Times* is universally regarded as one of the UK's leading newspapers and is praised for its journalistic quality.

In keeping with the association with the finest journalistic quality, it operates using a paid content model, even in its digital form, where users must bypass a paywall to access any of *The Times*' content. In this sense, "*The Times* offered its online readers an almost exact replica of its daily hard-copy paper, so that each news item contained the same text in both versions, and all items in the newspaper were included on the website" (Nicholas et al., 2000, p.400). This business model differs from competing hybrid or open-access models that typically feature on the internet. The broadsheet model is often considered to have an elite audience, with *The Times* known "as the paper of the establishment, even, advertising itself as the top people's paper as it was read by the political and professional classes and those close to government" (Yu, 2016, p.49). Nevertheless, sticking to this mentality was unsustainable in the era of digitization which, coupled with the decline in broadsheet newspaper readership, generated a lack of demand for 'high-quality' journalism.

In order to accommodate for changing preferences in the news market and to avoid bankruptcy, *The Times* was compelled to incorporate new strategies of media convergence. This included "implementing an aggressive price-cutting strategy to make profit. *The Times*' own research by Brian MacArthur showed that nearly half

of compact (tabloid) readers are aged between 25 and 44 (Franklin, 2008).

For this reason, Murdoch decided to change The Times, to produce its compact version and place it on sale alongside the broadsheet version" (ibid). In line with the goal of increasing sales behind these changes, The Times experienced an increase in web and tablet sales, but at the same time a loss in print sales. Profits are driven by digital journalism, as opposed to typical sources of revenue in print media derived from physical sales. Furthermore, The Times adapted its paid content model by introducing different subscription packages and membership bundles at more affordable price rates. This measure helped erase the elitist image associated with its reader base and made it more price competitive.

Another method the newspaper implemented in its digital strategy was the integration of different formats of its website so that it is compatible across devices such as iPads and iPhones. This decision to seamlessly integrate its digital content across all platforms is another part of its marketing technique that seeks to promote the ease and convenience of being a reader of The Times. Therefore, The Times is a useful case study to refer to when studying levels of media convergence in UK legacy media. It is a unique example that illustrates how

the paid-content model can be revised to compliment digital journalism.

3.2. CASE STUDY 2: THE NEW YORK TIMES (US)

The USA legally protects freedom of the press. When newspapers in the USA initially started to put their content online, it was for free and it was assumed that the online advertising revenue would make up for the loss of in-person newspaper sales. However, this wasn't the case and when newspapers had to implement paywalls to cover costs, readers were unwilling to pay for it as they were used to getting it for free. Smaller news outlets struggle to make a profit as there has been increased industry consolidation. In 2018, one-in-five American adults said they often get news on social media. And Facebook continues to dominate as the most common social media site used for news by Americans (Pew Research Center, 2021).

The New York Times is a daily newspaper owned by The New York Times Company. It has had a strong presence on the web since 1995, and has been ranked one of the top web sites. It has six million digital subscribers but less than 850,000 print subscribers. They have a strategy of 'making journalism worth paying for'. It has new subscription services, such as NYT Cooking and NYT Games as well as live events, conferences, and international excursions. The newspaper acquired an in-

house advertising agency and began allowing advertisers to sponsor certain reporting lines. Journalists were urged to accompany advertisers to conferences and cooperate more closely with the business side, something that many old-school editors were averse to (Spectator, 2021).

The essence of journalism has altered as readers now hold the majority of the cards. Much of how it was run was influenced by its reliance on advertising. However, the more news organisations relied on reader funding, the more they needed to cater to them—or, as some critics put it, pander to them. The underlying assumption of the news economic model—the subsidy that advertising has long supplied to news content—is gone., it has a strong business-to-business focus, publishers to advertisers which is giving way to a growing business-to-consumer focus, publishers to consumers. Media theorists such as Walter Lippmann and Noam Chomsky analyzed the impact of advertising on journalism and outlined the consequences to newsrooms and society (Mir, A., 2021).

The authority of journalism relies on a commitment to values that include accuracy, objectivity, and the service of the public interest. With the rise of digital platforms, to survive, the news media industry must find new models for content, product and business. Yet, at the same time, it is expected to fulfil the foundational roles of journalism

that the ‘old’ practices and revenue streams supported.

The New York Times has three online subscription models, which allows consumers to get access to their newspaper on whichever platform they are comfortable with. The first option costs \$3.75 per week and includes unrestricted access to NYTimes.com from any device as well as unlimited access to the NYTimes app on smartphones. The second option is \$5.00 per week and includes unrestricted access to NYTimes.com from any device as well as unlimited access to the NYTimes app for tablets. The last one offers unlimited digital access to the New York Times across all devices, including smartphones, tablets, and laptops. This package can be shared by customers with their family members (New York Times Subscriptions, 2021).

3.2. CASE STUDY 3: THE IRISH TIMES (IRELAND)

The Irish Times despite being one of the most firmly established legacy media outlets in Ireland as it was first published in 1859, in 1994 was also one of the first thirty newspapers in the world and the first in Ireland to have a website. By 1999 they were publishing a full online edition, however it wasn’t until almost ten years later in 2008 that they integrated the online and print newsrooms to form a cohesive narrative between them (About

Us, The Irish Times). It is clear that the Irish times have accepted the need to embrace the changing media landscape and desire for accessibility, immediacy and interactivity. However, in these uncertain times where search engines claim a lot of ad revenue, the internet offers free alternative sources are readily available and physical sales are on the decline, it is crucial that legacy media such as The Irish Times demonstrate their unique selling points while meeting the price requirements and demands of the digitally inclined customer.

The Times is a Broadsheet newspaper and is one of Ireland's most widely read newspapers with a reach of around 534,000 daily readers (MPP, 2021). To make sure they are competitive however they have a segmented price plan to reach out and target multiple segments just as many other legacy companies have introduced. This includes reaching out to students and offering them a cheaper service, offering free access to other shops and services from other providers in areas such as gardening to attract the older reader and providing subscriptions tailored to specific devices, which is particularly useful as 14% of people do not have access to broadband with the majority of users accessing sources via their smartphone (RTE, 2017). Since 2015, the website has been offering access to a few articles per week for free before a paywall is introduced that

helps to entice people in with the quality of their content before requiring payment. Free trials and subscriptions that gradually increase in price are also as the Irish Times has attempted to gain more traction with customers in a time where people can be selective and reluctant to pay for news.

Since the initial convergence between print and digital the Irish times has undergone many different levels to expand its repertoire and built upon their original offering in order to reach out to the diverse readership and modern needs. The introduction of video technology and live reporting are two ways the company has branched out in order to meet the demands for regular updates and preferences of consumption. By also engaging with centrifugal diversification by using other platforms such as Social Media and Podcasts they are able to cover topics in easy to access ways that also target new markets and add value to the consumers. The Irish Times has also diversified its assets by buying out other outlets such as radio stations and magazines in order to generate further revenue and increase the potential for interactivity and scope of their offerings.

It is clear from the table below that there is a growing demand for digital news subscriptions despite wider access to a variety of news sources. This has also been seen in a rise of sales and profits for the Irish Times suggesting

that media convergence for them is working and that there is demand for a well established news source that is offered digitally.

4. WHAT IS DIGITIZATION? SOME OBSERVATION

The process of digitising historical newspapers from analogue to digital imagery is known as newspaper digitization. Newspapers keep a record of the past, and many organisations throughout the world have started to scan them and make the digital data publicly available since digital media was invented.

The news was delivered in mass media as part of a package as part of a product (newspaper, magazine, bulletin, or broadcast) in which the media served as an editorial context. "News" has taken on a life of its own in the digital ecosystem, decoupled from the media and re-contextualized in consumers' timelines. Digital transformation is a motto that media organisations, like those in many other industries, must adopt. They must rethink and reinvent their whole value chain in order to adapt to an inexorably digital environment, and they must do so while maintaining income from their "analogue" businesses.

Digitization has the potential to degrade quality. Layers of editing and production vanish when the journalistic process is sped up. As a result, rumours are more likely to reach the

general population. The idea of a news cycle has all but vanished, thanks to the Internet's ability to provide rapid, continuous coverage. The capacity of a single executive to oversee it has also deteriorated.

It is clear in looking at the convergence of media across these countries that there are large similarities in which they have adopted pay wall technologies and subscription services as well as the way they have opted to use video, comments, social media and other interactive sources. The way technology has influenced convergence is incredibly interesting but there are also elements beyond the technological that convergence has impacted particularly such as the social and cultural. As media converge in similar ways it could be argued that people are having access to similar resources as everybody is accessing these resources in the same way (via the internet) then media sources are having to differentiate and separate themselves from each other by offering more unique insights or different perspectives. This could mean that despite homogenization and integration occurring in the technological field it opens new channels for expression and niche market needs to be actualised and met due to the high levels of competition and user diversity. These similarities may also breach the national borders and connect people

from different countries through similar opinions and views. This is shown in the fact that all the legacy media we looked at in this text have subscribers living in different countries. Despite all belonging to the North Atlantic of Liberal model of media system as defined by Hallin and Mancini it is interesting to see that these criteria such as political parallelism can be eroded by the convergence of media into the digital sphere.

Digitisation will not likely reverse, only increase to a point where it is more than likely legacy print media will be redundant, especially as older generations disappear. As connection speed increases and people in rural or unconnected areas gain access to the internet and news streams it is important that these legacy outlets maintain their competitive edge and continue to attract people away from the less researched more extreme potential sources of media that people could be attracted to if they are free.

There are still people that legacy media sites that use subscription models and online platforms are excluding at the moment however and legacy media needs to find further ways to reach these people and offer different pricing strategies such as pay per article accessibility to allow people access to these resources when they may not afford them.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This report has looked at how legacy media has adapted to the digital age, which has driven conventional news providers to merge into digital mediums or risk being phased out. Case studies from the UK, US, and Ireland were presented and discussed and the many forms of media convergence that can be seen. An important benefit of media convergence is that it has broadened the limitations of traditional media by blending it with new media, thus providing instant and latest content on an international level. Many new media forms are born like news portals, podcasts, news feeds, blogging, websites and mobile applications. Suggestions about how legacy media could evolve in the future as well as the traditional paid content model were addressed.

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Media analysis of
Izvestia, Daily Mail
and *Le Figaro*

Ivan Topadze
Polina Stateva
Pierre Cléry-Melin

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the emergence and a fast dissemination of the Internet in the late 1990s, the impact of digital network technology on people's lives and their performance has been enormous. Almost every single field of human activity has been influenced by the World Wide Web, with many of them having gone through a drastic change. One of such areas that has been severely transformed as a result of vast implementation of digital practises was journalism. Newly formed area of digital journalism has shown itself to be innovated and rather different from the typical journalism when it came to such processes as forming newsrooms, receiving and distributing news, sharing an identity and values of a publishing house, as well as some notions and their coherence to a publisher, such as transparency, accountability, responsiveness, etc. that were always considered to be key pillars of journalism. The question of quality of journalism has turned out to be especially relevant in the context of modern digital landscape, since for many it has become clear that the original democratic urge of traditional journalism was replaced by commercial orientation that ultimately was implemented by mass press in order to develop higher financial performance and receive more profit (Scott, 2005: 90). With all of these processes

brought to the public's attention, several important questions have been raised. How did digitalisation alter standard journalist practises? What strategies do publishing houses use as a part of building their public media image? And through which indicators could their activities be evaluated in order to decide whether they present quality online journalism or not?

In this paper, with the intention of adding some clarification to the concept of contemporary digital journalism and its key characteristics, three major mass media from different countries are analysed in the context of their performance on a corporate and newsroom levels. All presented media derive from a similar background, since all three of them originated as legacy newspapers that later on developed their own online websites. Thereby, the elements of the analysis of this paper are: *Izvestia* (Russia), *Daily Mail Online* (United Kingdom), and *Le Figaro* (France). Besides the similar anchor point of their origination, these media share some more common features that help us conduct our analysis under the same conditions. For instance, all of them take leading positions in their countries and can be considered to be the most popular types of media in their field, as well as every medium is ideologically placed in the right wing of the political spectrum. On the other

hand, presented media contain several different characteristics, which means that they can be assigned to different media system models. This aspect of chosen publishers will be addressed in detail in the next paragraphs of the paper. Having provided basic information on the subject of our research, we can move on to the descriptive part of the paper, since it is important to give some brief characteristics of each of the media.

Izvestia (rus. «Известия») is one of the oldest Russian legacy newspapers that covers all important news in the field of politics, economics, and society on a daily basis. Printing its pieces five days a week, *Izvestia* also owns an online version of the newspaper (*Iz.ru*) that was introduced to the public at the end of XX century. The website is based on a continuous refreshment with all the breaking news appearing in it in real time.

According to the company *Medialogia* (rus. «Медиалогия») that conducts monitoring and analysis of Russian mass media, *Izvestia* stably holds the leading position as the most cited newspaper in Russia every month (e.g. statistics for November 2021), which speaks of its undeniable influence in Russian media landscape. Referring to

the media systems typologisation proposed by Hallin & Mancini (2004), *Izvestia* newspaper fits the Northern European Democratic Corporatist model that is characterised by high levels in each of the indicators: press market, political parallelism, journalistic professionalism, and role of the state. However, when it comes to Brüggeman's et al. revision of the original three models (2014) and the new system proposed as a result of the analysis, *Izvestia* can be evaluated from a rather mixed and intermediate position. On the one hand, some traits indicate that it can belong to the Central type, since such features as ownership regulation and political parallelism – one of the key indicators of the Central type (Brüggeman's et al., 2014: 1059) – are quite visible in Russia. On the other hand, levels of press subsidies (for the time period of 2021 - 2023 the amount of subsidies allocated by the state for the support of digital media was estimated to be more than 25\$ million according to the resolution¹ signed by the prime minister Mikhail Mishustin) and journalistic professionalism are high enough to be put in the Northern type. As a result of such flexibility, *Izvestia*'s media system affiliation is not evi-

¹ See the resolution on the official website of the president, URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/acts/bank/46212>. [Accessed December 20, 2021]

dent. Nonetheless, it does not interfere in the concept of the paper but more so makes it even more interesting to research in terms of comparison to other media whose media systems are established with certainty.

When it comes to *Daily Mail*, it is essential to note that it is the most read daily newspaper in the UK, according to many sources, the survey of Majid being one of them (2021). The organisation also has the biggest newspaper website that functions under the name of *MailOnline*, providing users with all the relevant content that goes through constant actualisation. This tabloid is the most popular one in the UK, and it does require our attention as students of a digital journalism course. According to Brüggeman et al. (2014), *Daily Mail Online* can be described as a Democratic Corporatist Central type media system. It is based on different factors, such as political parallelism, development of media markets and job of journalists, and also intervention of the state in the media process. Moreover, it specifies the fact that public broadcasting media does exist, and that there may be the ownership of media trusts, some subsidies and institutional ads.

The final media to be analysed in the paper is *Le Figaro*, a famous French newspaper that was founded almost 200 years ago, in 1826. Following the trends and trying to maximise on the

amount of readers, *Le Figaro* introduced a web version of the newspaper (*lefigaro.fr*) to the public in the late 1990s. In the same way as the other two media, the web page is constructed with the purpose to deliver the news to users in online format with the fast speed, which is why the content of the page is constantly refreshed. In one of the reports of the analytical web company *Médiamétrie*, it is stated that for the longest time *Figaro Group* has been the number one digital media group in France having more than 36 million unique visitors throughout the country" (*Médiamétrie* – total internet audience – June 2020). This information tells us that *Le Figaro* is in pole position concerning the ranking of the most read printed and digital media in France. This is why it was chosen to be compared with other influential media from different countries that are listed above. Set in France, *Le Figaro* is part of the Mediterranean model, according to Hallin and Mancini's typologisation (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Further research will indicate if it truly corresponds to all the characteristics typical for this kind of model and will demonstrate the extent to which this medium is different from the other two.

As it was mentioned earlier, the analysis of this paper is centred around two types of levels of chosen media: corporate and newsroom. The

examination of the corporate level allows us to look into the basic structure of journalistic organisations that operate in an online environment, which, in turn, adds clarification to the question of different ways of arranging digital journalism activity from an organisational point of view: business models, ownership variations, ideological standards. By analysing newsroom practises, we aim to investigate how modern publishers transmit their brand essence to their online audience. This kind of review lets us establish typical strategies and fixate important observations regarding the actions taken by chosen media in order to showcase their transparency and mutual communication with the readers. As a result of such a combination, some conclusions regarding the current state of online journalism and its quality based on the analysed media are presented.

To sum up, this paper examines the activity of three major media organisations of the same origins but different countries and media systems with the intention of determining the level of digital journalism that they present. Further explanations of main goals and methods, as well as the results of the research are presented in the next few sections of the analysis.

2. GOALS

The ultimate objective of the presented research paper is to assess the

quality of digital journalism based on the key indicators of three media outlets (*Izvestia*, *Daily Mail*, *Le Figaro*) whose organisational structure includes online versions of newspapers. As a result of such an examination, a detailed explanation of corporate and newsroom practises of the chosen media will be delivered, as well as some analytical expertise on the matter. The importance of learning the corporate structures of modern journalist outlets is evident: in order to foster good online journalism, it is essential to understand the basics of its establishment and maintenance. But when it comes to the relevance and necessity of studying newsroom elements of modern publishers (transparency, responsiveness, etc.), it is worth noting that in the digital era, openness of the medium can be considered to be one of the most crucial elements in terms of its journalistic path, since the open dialogue with an audience and an accountability of the publisher have seem to become central to the concept of web journalism in the latest years (Franklin & Eldridge II (Eds.), 2016: 255).

In order to make the structure of the research as transparent as possible, more particular goals and steps of the paper are specified. They go as follows:

- look up and examine web pages of selected media sources;
- gather information and structure the collected data according to two

main directions of the study – corporate level and newsroom level;

- describe the most prominent features of each of the medium while reflecting on its contribution to corporate and newsroom standards;
- conduct the comparison analysis of three online media outlets, summarising the state and quality of digital journalism that they present.

As a part of the analytical procedure, two main research questions were formulated:

- Does the open access to corporate details of the medium speak of its quality journalism?
- How does the amount of publicly displayed information regarding the newsroom of the organisation affect the overall status of the medium?

3. METHODS

The research has been conducted using several methods and tools, but was primarily based on the framework suggested in the educational document “Concepts, methods, and tools” that implied creating a set of tables, a short catalogue, on the subject of the paper that could later be used for further analysis. Some of the additional methods included news and keywords analysis, and the overall procedure on the paper required working with digital archives of web publishers. Most of the information has been gathered from public data, however,

some of the details were added by representatives of examined newspapers during interviews. Literature review was also used as a part of the evaluation processes.

4. RESULTS

In the following section the results of the conducted study are presented. Firstly, each of the media is described and analysed according to all the gathered information (all the primary data that was collected is located at the Annexes 1, 2, and 3 of this paper). After the descriptive analysis of each of the media, the overall comparison of three outlets with the most important findings corresponding to the subject of the paper is outlined.

Izvestia

Izvestia is one of the oldest Russian newspapers that still functions to this day. Introduced to the public in 1917, it quickly developed into an important tool of communication, since it was used by government officials and in Soviet period had a status of official means of communication of the state. After the USSR collapse in 1991, *Izvestia* gained independence and became an autonomous mass media. Being the official medium of the government, ideologically *Izvestia* was always drawn to the right side of the political spectrum and belonged to the right wing. After gaining independence, the political alignment stayed

the same, ranging from conservative to right wing.

Since 1991, the newspaper has been owned by several holders differing from state companies to private investors. Currently *Izvestia* is owned by a private Russian media holding called National Media Group led by Kirill Kovalev. After the purchase, *Izvestia* became a part of the Multimedia Information Centre that is called *Izvestia MIC* that combines several newspapers and TV channels.

It is worth noting that little information regarding the corporate structure of the medium is displayed on the Web: one can make some conclusions based on basic observation, however, they cannot be reinforced by official data. For instance, we can suggest that the newspaper is using online advertisement (can be detected on the website), offline paying, and paying for news (subscription to the newspaper) as its revenue sources, and raising equity as a means of financial sourcing, but there is no direct confirmation to it. The information that would disclose key figures of the company is also not publicly displayed, which is why it is difficult to determine the structure of the editorial board or the board of directors of *Izvestia*. The only public figures whose data is present in the official resources are: mass media editor-in-chief of multimedia information centre *Izvestia* Mikhail Frolov, editor-in-chief of the online version of

the newspaper Mikhail Pak, and editor-in-chief of the newspaper Sergei Koroteyev.

For the analysis of the newsroom level of the newspaper even less information is available. The newspaper does not provide any data on its staff, their profiles, the rules of the newspaper, ethic codes or anything that would speak of the way the newsroom is operating. Visiting the website of the newspaper, one can access all the articles written by the same journalist by clicking on their name, however, no information regarding the journalists themselves is accessible.

Production transparency of *Izvestia* can be characterised as both informative and covert. On the one hand, every single material published on the website that has any kind of borrowings from other sources always contains a hyperlink to that material. When it comes to public activity of journalists of the medium – a lot of them have their social media profiles where they can express their opinion on any sort of issue. It is important to note, though, that the accounts are personal and they are not directly linked to the newspaper, which means that journalists hold personal responsibility for their statements. On the other hand, at the same time the lack of clarity of how the production process is set can be noted, which means that it may be difficult for

readers to understand how and why the materials are produced.

Accountability of the newspaper *Izvestia* that is divided into three main elements (transparency, autoregulation, participation of the audience) can be characterised as a low one. In the context of transparency practises, *Izvestia*'s status is moderate due to the fact that some of the key features are available and clear while others are not. Thus, the newspaper is fairly transparent about its history and the overall company information that has to do with its relation to the parent organisation, as well as the commercial aspects of the materials (e.g. prices of subscription). *Izvestia*'s website *Iz.ru* is divided in sections and areas that demarcate the materials. That way the publisher is making sure that the distribution of the content is completed in the most transparent and structured way. However, no information can be found regarding the staff of the publishing house, as well as there is no newsroom blog or news room reporting, which means that the processes that happen within the newsroom are not thoroughly explained. When it comes to the other two elements of the dimension – autoregulation and participation – a complete lack of data is evident. Every aspect of autoregulation criterion – ombudsman, guidelines, professional training, etc. – is either negative (non-existent), or un-

known. The participation of the audience is only available on the official social media accounts of the newspaper, where users can leave their comments. Any other kind of other participation from the audience is impossible.

The responsiveness of the medium is expectedly low as well. The only positive trait that can be outlined has to do with the corrections of errors in reporting that may occur when the material is misleading in any way. In this case the newspaper does make an update stating that presented information was false / incomplete or corrects the mistake. Every other criteria that would speak of the newspaper's responsiveness, whether it is responding to users' comments and encouraging them to elaborate on the materials, or implementing audience's input in the news-making process, is missing. It is worth noting that there is a way for regular audiences to directly contact the newspaper and its editorial office through phone call or email that are indicated in the web version of the newspaper, however, no specifications on which kind of questions may be addressed via these contacts are provided.

All in all, the information provided by the newspaper regarding its corporate and newsroom practises is limited to say the least. This kind of lack of reporting can seem surprising considering the high status and position of this

medium in Russia. And while on profesional and academic levels it does raise some questions about the quality of digital journalism presented by this company, at the same time its popularity indicates that for a basic reader availability of information that has to do with corporate and newsroom logistics may not be as important.

Daily Mail Online

MailOnline is the online version of the most popular UK daily newspaper *Daily Mail* and also of *The Mail on Sunday*. It is owned by a company that is called *Daily Mail and General Trust plc*. As for the corporate level, firstly, it is worth mentioning the business model of this medium, because it is related to the income of the company. *Daily Mail Online* uses online advertisements for their revenue through which they have made 172.7 million GBP in 2021. They are mostly personalised, so it helps get more clicks from the readers. Also, they have subscriptions and recurring licences for the readers to get more exclusive information without ads, and it has brought them 324 million GBP in 2021. Also, the company operates through subsidiaries such as RMS, DMG Information, DMG Events, DMG Media, Euromoney Institutional Investor. When we are talking about the corporate level, the ownership model must be mentioned. As for *Daily Mail Online*, it has a mixed ownership because it is owned by one of

the largest and multinational media companies *Daily Mail* and *General Trust*. It is listed on the London stock exchange market, but they have announced that they plan to take *Daily Mail Online* off the stock market and have a private ownership, according to Quinn (2021).

The next thing that should be considered on the corporate level is the ideological dimension. As for the traditional alignment, this online newspaper belongs to a right wing and supports the UK Conservative Party. When we are talking about people in charge of *Daily Mail Online*, it should be said that Paul Dacre is the editor-in-chief of *Daily Mail* and Martin Clarke is the editor of *MailOnline*, but while working on this paper, we got the news that Martin Clarke has stepped down as an editor, according to Watterson and Taylor (2021). Continuing with the editorial board, the general management is the 4th Viscount Rothermere is the chairman, one of the main shareholders of the company.

As for editors in chief, Roland Agambar is a chief marketing officer, Tom Than is a chief financial officer. When it comes to the editorial board, it is almost impossible to find any information about it except for the fact that Danny Groom is the UK editor of *MailOnline*. The limitation here is that there is little information about the editorial board. It is extremely hard to

find the editors of *MailOnline*. The only information that is presented to the public is about Danny Groom. Also, there is almost no information about financial sources of *MailOnline*. From our point of view, the company should provide more information about editors of the medium. Also, it is advisable to show how many subsidiaries they get, because it was not possible to find this exact information on the Internet.

Analysing the newsroom level of the organisation, following traits are noted. The full list of the staff of the newspaper is not available anywhere. It lacks information about their editors and other staff. Only the top-management is presented. Interestingly, the newspaper only posts a link of a journalist to see their articles on the website, so it does not provide any information about journalists and their profiles. *Daily Mail Online* does not have any published rules that journalists follow on its website or elsewhere, except for the general political direction. On the website there are only terms that are related to a user of the website. Also, nothing related to rules of news policies is presented. But the newspaper follows the code of ethics, and it can be seen in the journalistic materials published on the website. As for statutes of journalistic and editorial independence, *Daily Mail Online* is a part of Independent Press Standards Organisation. It

should be mentioned that there is no information about a committee on journalistic and editorial independence, but we can presume that the staff is informed about it.

When we are analysing *Daily Mail Online* and the transparency of production, the newspaper gives hyperlinks to the original sources, but they do not publish any accounts where they discuss various judgements while they are making the news. It is worth mentioning that *Daily Mail Online* do not usually link any of the personal blogs or social media accounts of their journalists. It is only journalists who post their articles on their social media (for example, on Twitter). Very rarely the newspaper can mention the journalists' Twitter accounts like in the figure presented below (Figure 1).

By JAMES TAPSFIELD, POLITICAL EDITOR and DAVID WILCOCK, WHITEHALL CORRESPONDENT and JACK WRIGHT FOR MAILONLINE
PUBLISHED: 18:53 GMT, 14 December 2021 | UPDATED: 15:04 GMT, 15 December 2021

Figure 1. Identification of journalists' social media accounts under the *MailOnline* post

This online newspaper has a special option which is called "Story Tip-offs" where people can send the newspaper a story or the news they want to share. Also, people can send videos that can be a source for writing news. Also, journalists and correspondents freely show their opinion on different things, for example, on Twitter (as shown in Figure 2).



Figure 2. Twitter account of David Wilcock, *MailOnline* correspondent

Continuing talking about the transparency of *Daily Mail Online*, it can be said that there is no information about history and foundation on their website, only on Wikipedia, which is unprofessional from our point of view. The management staff is listed on the website of DMG media. There is absolutely no information about market studies, innovation, academic studies and they do not have a newsroom blog. As for journalists' blogs, journalists sometimes post some content in their Twitter accounts. As for prices for the subscription, it can be found on the website when a reader wants to pay for the subscription. As for observatories, no information is provided.

In regards to the autoregulation, we could not find any information about the ombudsman, stylebooks, or professional courses. Also, they do not mention if they apply any ethical guidelines, but we presume that they

do it professionally. They do not publish any material about their errors in the systems which would be appropriate because it may always happen. As for the participation of the audience, the readers do not have an opportunity to send a letter to the editor, they may only write an email where they can send their stories or some news, for example. Also, they can complain about something or send an email reporting any of the technical problems. *Daily Mail Online* has a good option which engages readers and it is a special section for comments. This section is in every article at the same place and to comment on the journalistic material people must create an account. The readers' comments are not answered by journalists. Journalists may answer on Twitter as it is widely used. As for readers' blogs, there is no information. In regards to the fact if the newspaper publishes their reports on some errors, it is not observed as well as tip-offs for potential topics for the news. *Daily Mail Online* does encourage their readers to comment on their articles and it does get a huge response, because some materials get hundreds or thousands of comments. Moreover, any reader can share the news via their own personal accounts on social media, and on the website of *MailOnline* the number of shares is shown. If a reader wishes to complain about something, they can do it because the information about

email address, postal address and social media accounts (for example, Instagram, Twitter) of this newspaper are provided on the website. Unfortunately, there is an opportunity to contact a journalist directly. Also, the newspaper does not mention if they have a readers' editor. As for the published texts, photos and videos that are created by users, we could find such exact information on the web because, for example, they cite the reader's story and mention if the photo was taken from the user or their social media account, such as Facebook, for instance. As for the section called 'Letters to the editor', there is no such option.

In conclusion, the research on the medium that is called *Daily Mail Online* is very limited because the newspaper does not provide any deep and exact information on the way the news is made. Also, they do not have much information about their corporate life and staff online, so it was really hard to find exact facts about their editorial board. The reader cannot contact the editor directly, which is also very limiting because otherwise, we would have used this option for this research. Also, *MailOnline* is not very analysed by other scholars, and we could not find any relevant materials, except for the website of the newspaper itself. We do believe that *Daily Mail Online* should be more

transparent as it is the most read English newspaper in the UK and has the biggest website. The newspaper should provide more information about their financial part, editors and establish a direct connection with the audience. It is obvious that many researchers and academics may be interested in analysing this medium and implementing the given results of the research in the development of digital journalism.

Le Figaro

Le Figaro is owned by Charles Edelstenne, general manager of *Dassault Group* that is selling weapons to dictatorships in Africa under the impulse of the French government (Sander, 2015). So, a relevant question is raised if paying a subscription to this online newspaper does not make readers contributors to wars. We can also see that this medium is very close to the government, from whom it also receives subsidies, as all the other media. The public broadcasting of this medium is quite important and it is owned by a media trust and more largely a company. In addition to that, regarding the press market, the political parallelism, and the journalistic profession, *Le Figaro* can plainly be assimilated to the Mediterranean model described by Hallin and Mancini (2004).

Lefigaro.fr, mostly known as *Le Figaro*, just like the paper version, is the digital general newspaper, and is

known to be right-wing, like the paper has always been. It is even followed by a small number of extreme right-wing people. The newspaper is the junction point of several great streams of ideas anchored to the right or to the centre right. It is mainly about classical liberalism or liberal eclecticism paired with social conservatism. Its editorial line is Gaullist, liberal and conservative right, according to the French political spectrum that is usually used for evaluation of this sort. It is mainly read by right-wing or centre-right supporters.

It was mentioned before that its subsidies by the French government, 16 Millions € in 2014 to be precise becoming the first French media in subsidies. But it is important to look deeper into the sources of income of this newspaper for the purpose of analysing the corporate level of the company. *Lefigaro.fr* benefits from a great income regarding its advertising (50% of the turnover in 2013). One of the reasons for this success is the personalization of the ads, using cookies, as on many other websites. But also, significant inroads in e-marketing with CCM Performance and BeMove, two database and digital marketing specialists (for example Ticketac, Les Maisons du Voyage, Marco Vasco). The news can be paid per unity, but also there are three subscriptions formulas that assure a regular income for the digital newspaper. They also offer

complementary products, editorial and service-based content, as well as newsletters.

As for their financial sources, they mostly do profit reinvestment, through their own company or with investments of *Dassault* holding.

Concerning the newsroom level, in order to know who is in charge of writing the news, one can access a list of the persons in charge of every section of the newspaper. We can also assume that some of them take part in the editorial board, the list of which is unavailable Alexis Brézet is editor in chief, and in charge of the general direction of the news. Then, the Deputy Editor of the economy section is Gaëtan de Capèle, the Deputy Editor of culture, *Figaroscope*, television is Bertrand de Saint Vincent, the Deputy Editor of debates and opinions, literary is Étienne de Montety, the Deputy Editor of Foreign is Philippe Gelie, the Deputy Editor of sports and special operations is Yves Thréard, the Deputy Editor of fashion, tourism, hobbies and automobile is Anne-Sophie Von Clear, the deputy Editor of executive management and photo is Anne Huet-Wuilleme, the deputy Editor of terrorism is Jean Chichizola and finally the Director of publication of *lefigaro.fr* is Laurence de Charette. The exactness of this information is compromised, because it is not derived from official newspaper sources, and there is almost no way of confirming it since Le

Figaro does not publicly display this kind of data.

As for the accountability of its corporate information, the company does not provide almost any of it. For the purpose of this research, we tried to contact journalists on their social media, but no one answered concerning this specific information. Interestingly, on the website when the newspaper cites the journalist that made an article, it only posts a link towards a page with the name of the journalist, listing every article he made, with a count on the right. These statistics also show when he started writing on the website, how many articles and reactions he made. Regarding the transparency criteria, this data can be quite useful, especially the one regarding his reaction to the articles. Moreover, we can see if he reacted to his own articles or others. Most of the time, journalists react to their own articles, which proves that they care about what they write and the public it was aimed at. They are concerned about the public's opinion. However, we don't have any information about them as human beings, except for this data. No short biography is presented either.

Le Figaro does not have any published rules that journalists follow on its website or elsewhere, except for the general political direction. On the website there are only terms that are related to the behaviour of the user of

the website. Also, nothing related to rules of news policies is presented. But the newspaper follows the code of ethics, and it can be seen in the journalistic materials published on the website. As for statutes of journalistic and editorial independence, it is highly compromised. Being traditionally right-wing, *Le Figaro* has always favoured the discourse of this party, even going so far as to boycott certain left-wing politicians. In 2004, remarks by Serge Dassault stipulate that left-wing ideas are "not healthy", his newspaper only publishing "healthy ideas". Following this event, the Society of Editors of the newspaper voted 93% on a motion reaffirming the editorial independence of the editorial staff. However, since then things have not improved and many scandals concerning the integrity of the newspaper, in connection with political figures like the former head of state Nicolas Sarkozy, are often questioned by independent newspapers like *Le Canard Enchaîné*. It should be mentioned that there is no information about a committee on journalistic and editorial independence, but we can presume that the staff is informed about it.

When we are analysing *Le Figaro* and the transparency of production, we can see that the newspaper does provide hyperlinks to the original materials. However, it is worth mentioning that in *Le Figaro's* website no place

is made for news proposed by people who are not journalists themselves. The webpage contains only one section to post ads, for weddings or funerals, for example, but nothing more. Reactions can be made on social media however, asking directly to the journalists that made the article, or by email, traditional post office, or even phone calls. Also, they can complain about something or send an email reporting any of the technical problems.

Le Figaro, as *Daily Mail*, has an engaging option which is the section for comments. This section can be found in every material always in the similar place. However, in order for users to leave a commentary on the journalistic material, they have to be registered in the system of the website, hence, have a personal account. Moreover, it is badly situated, because it is under the publicity, and when you don't have a subscription to the journal, it is difficult to see it, as it is also quite small. Adding to that, any reader can share the news from the newspaper's website in their own personal accounts on social media.

In conclusion, the research on *Le Figaro* and its online version is very restrictive, because the newspaper does not provide much exact information on the way the news are made, just as previously analysed media from Russia and the United Kingdom. In the case of *Le Figaro*, the use of

hypertexts is to be noticed. Concerning the media, it is generally well used, since the editors never hesitate to redirect users of the website to other journals. As Jean Chichizola, deputy editor of *Le Figaro* on terrorism, said in her recent interview, "I remember a few years ago a discussion with the former director of *Le Figaro*. The question was, if we refer back to the colleague's article, will there be a diversion of our audience? The manager said not at all, you are wrong, it is in our interest because it helps people see that we are citing our sources and therefore have more confidence in our site. In addition, it is a back-and-forth phenomenon, the person will go to our colleague's initial article and then return to the Figaro website" (Cléry-Melin & Díaz-Noci (ed.), 2021).

Comparing the results of the study on each of the analysed media, a few similar patterns can be detected. The most obvious one lies in the fact that every medium does not provide enough information on its corporate and newsroom structures. With slightest deviations from one newspaper to another, the overall picture is alike: every studied publisher can be characterised by the lack of data regarding its editorial board, newsroom policies and transparency before its readers. Websites of the media consist of similar structures, when it comes to the disposal of information about the

journalists: one can access all the materials written by the reporter but cannot analyse the profile of the writer, since no such information is available. Similar situation can be seen in terms of autoregulation and audience participation practises, since none of analysed organisations clarify how inner processes of newsroom are organised and demonstrate active thrust towards the communication with its audience. Production transparency can be outlined as the most developed area of each of the publishing houses as most of the media do share their practical procedures with users.

Differences between media are mostly seen on the corporate level, especially in terms of type of ownership and business models. While *Le Figaro* and *Izvestia*, representatives of Mediterranean and Northern European Democratic Corporatist models, have private ownership, *MailOnline*'s ownership is mixed. More to that, some distinctions are evident, when we talk about user interaction possibilities within the website: if *Le Figaro* and *MailOnline* provide readers with a feature of commenting the posts, *Izvestia* does not allow its readers to do so. Going back to the question raised in the beginning of the paper regarding the differences of media system models, *Izvestia*, that could potentially be related to both Northern and Central types of Democratic model, and

MailOnline that represents Democratic Corporatist Central type model, in the end, do not demonstrate great differences.

5. CONCLUSIONS

To conclude, this paper presents a study into the activity of three major digital journalistic outlets from different countries: *Izvestia* (Russia), *Daily Mail Online* (UK), and *Le Figaro* (France). An analysis of corporate and newsroom practises of these media is conducted with the aim of determining key performance features in every outlet that would allow us to speak of the current status of digital journalism.

Results collected in the study confirm that modern media outlets tend to concentrate more on the financial side of their activity leaving behind some of the key features that constitute quality journalism. Such a model contributes to the establishment of so-called market-driven journalism that transforms viewers and readers into customers, news into products, and "circulation or signal areas" into markets (Cohen, 2002: 533).

Nonetheless, research shows that lack of information about corporate and newsroom details of the newspaper does not prevent readers from using it, although from the professional point of view it does raise some concerns. As a result, the newspaper's openness about its corporate structure

and newsroom organisation goes into the background and does not play a key role in the news making and news receiving process anymore.

The paper in its current form is mostly limited by two factors: level of the analysis and the amount of analysed materials. Due to certain limitations in methodology and a rather small amount of available information, the research may present an incomplete picture of media's activity on the corporate and newsroom levels. Adding to that, concentration only on three media outlets does not allow us to transfer the conclusions of this paper to an overall global level that would speak of quality of web journalism today. In order to enhance the results of the study, following suggestions on the future research are proposed.

Further research on the matter can be conducted in two ways that would ensure the development of academic knowledge of the quality of online journalism across the world. The first possibility implies carrying a more profound analysis of the chosen media that would require communication with official representatives of these publishers. Gaining insights about the media and the way they function from within the organisation can foster better study and more precise data of the activities that organisations conduct on their corporate and newsroom level. As a result,

the quality of research may be elevated to a higher level. The second possibility is based on the expansion of the analysed material that would require adding other newspapers from the same countries to the analysis. In this case, an improvement of the paper is reached through a quantitative criteria.

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This is a volume which gathers the best papers done by the students of the course *Analysing Digital Journalism*, Journalism Degree, Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), during the academic year 2021-2022. The research paper was to be applied in comparative perspective to international online media, from any place of the world.

It was recommended that the media analysis contained one or more of the core topics of this course, e.g. quality in online journalism, accountability, interactivity and use of multimedia skills, relation with the (active) audiences, media ownership and corporate analysis, routines and practices in the newsroom (and adaptation to the online environment), or any other topic suggested by the students.

Topics the reader may find in these papers include:

The characteristics of the digital language and its use in that media organization (hypertext, interactivity, multimediality, immediacy, memory...),

Business models,

Newsroom convergence and organization,

Production routines and

strategies, transparency, trust, objectivity

and other journalistic values.

