

The value of podcasts to journalism: analysis of digital native media brands' offerings, production and publishing in Spain

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Abstract

The growing popularity of podcasting is an opportunity for the news industry to identify new ways of delivering journalism and to find solutions to the challenges of digital transformation. Podcasts are tools that help the media adapt to the digital sphere by giving prominence to audio to extend their journalistic influence in the sonosphere. Given its disruptive nature, and since it breaks with the traditional content choices available, the analysis of this article focuses on what is offered in the form of podcasts by digital native media brands in Spain. It looks at the extent to which they are committed to this audio content and the type of journalism-based productions they promote and publish. To do this, a qualitative and quantitative content analysis methodology was used. This included an interpretation of data recorded in the *Digital media map 2021 (Mapa de medios digitales 2021)*, updated as part of the *Diginativemedia* project (2019-2021). An in-depth study of a corpus –or sample– of 29 titles or series of podcasts published by 7 native news brands is also provided. These brands were selected because they publish podcasts and because, according to the *Digital news report Spain 2021*, they have the largest weekly reach among Spanish internet users. The results of the research show that only 1 in 4 digital media brands that offer podcasts (925) are native (232), and that it is the specialist native media outlets that are most committed to podcasting (140). Native media brands view podcasts as part of their journalism-based products and services, whose presence is beginning to grow as an exploration of their informative and expressive potential. In addition, it is podcasts that tackle current affairs using conversational formats –both audio and video– through serialised, original productions for the media outlet's website and to provide a range of platforms.

Keywords

Digital audio; Audio communication; Digital journalism; Digital media; Cybermedia; Digital-native media; Digital-born news media; Narratives; Storytelling; Podcasts; Podcasting.

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1. Introduction

After 25 years of development, digital news media is entering the fourth stage of its evolution. The first phase of repeating the content was followed by periods of enriching, renewing and, finally, innovating (Salaverría, 2019; 2021). Digital news media, and in particular those that started out online –referred to in this paper as *native media brands*– have been able to attract new audiences, offer interactive themes and narratives, and promote participation and innovative culture in the newsrooms, as well as rethink business models (Negredo *et al.*, 2020). Although they use various approaches across brands and countries (Rodríguez-Hidalgo; Rivera-Rogel; Romero-Rodríguez, 2020), native media brands have an average weekly reach of 61% among internet users surveyed in the *Digital news report 2021*'s 46 countries (Negredo; Kaufmann-Argueta, 2021, p. 128). They also share a common denominator: change.

In the context of the digital transformation of journalism, it is interesting to note whether media that started out online assume the disruption of podcasting (Berry, 2018; Newman; Gallo, 2019) in the form of a journalism-based innovation of its product or service (García-Avilés *et al.*, 2018) as part of offering original productions that break with the traditional offer of text and images, and extend their information service and editorial influence among audiences on different digital platforms. Podcast consumption is building across all markets, particularly in Spain (Amoedo-Casais; Moreno-Moreno, 2021; *Prodigioso Volcán*, 2022). Podcasting is a success in today's sound and information ecosystem, where voice and audio are presented as the main interface for relationships across devices and enable screen independence (IAB Spain, 2022).

Taking the current map of digital news media in Spain as a framework for analysis, this research asks the following question:

How do native media brands view and relate to podcasts?

In answering this question, the main objective of this article is to identify and analyse native media brands' podcast offerings in Spain. Three specific objectives were also set:

- a) to determine whether native media brands particularly promote podcasts over other digital media brands;
- b) to check which types of native media (specialist or generalist) are more committed to original production podcasts for the internet; and
- c) to characterise the type of topics, serial or special productions, and publications of native media brands' podcasts.

To do this, a qualitative and quantitative content analysis methodology was used. This includes an interpretation of data recorded in the *Digital media map 2021 (Mapa de medios digitales 2021)*, updated as part of the *Diginativemedia* project (2019-2021) (Salaverría; Martínez-Costa, 2021). It also includes an in-depth study of a corpus –or sample– of 29 titles or series of podcasts from 7 native journalism-related brands, selected because they offer podcasts and have the greatest weekly reach among Spanish internet users according to the *Digital news report Spain 2021* (Amoedo-Casais *et al.*, 2021).

This article makes two main contributions to the literature. Firstly, from a theoretical perspective, we determine how native news media view and relate to podcasting. Secondly, taking an empirical approach, we identify and characterise the choices available, as well as the production and publication of podcasts by the native news brands that have the largest following among Spain's internet users. These are issues that have not been addressed by previous studies.

2. Current situation**2.1. The rise of podcasting in journalism**

The progressive rise of podcasting has meant a revolution for the newspaper industry (Berry, 2018; Martínez-Costa; Lus-Gárate, 2019; Newman; Gallo, 2019; Spinelli; Dann, 2019). Over the last decade and a half, news media brands' podcast offerings have promoted different specialist topics (Reis, 2018; Rojas-Torrijos, 2018), personal storytelling and cross-media narratives (Dowling; Miller, 2019; García-Marín; Aparici, 2018; Lindgren, 2016), and the accessibility of journalist and media outlet bylines and authorship (Barbeito-Veloso; Perona-Páez, 2019; Martínez-Costa *et al.*, 2021). In this context, a podcast is defined as a digital audio product created for multi-platform, on-demand, subscription-based distribution using RSS (really simple syndication) content syndication technology.

Along with video, the podcast is already a significant tool in national, regional and local multimedia news coverage (Ali *et al.*, 2019; Radcliffe; Ali; Donald, 2017). However, the internet's highly visual publications and journalistic designs favour video storytelling, and live video on networks (*Facebook Live*, *Periscope*, *Instagram*, *TikTok* and *Twitch*), over podcasts' storytelling (Ali *et al.*, 2019). Nevertheless, podcasting is a positively rated option for storytelling in newsrooms and

as a way of renewing journalistic approaches, deepening regional and local stories (Jenkins; Nielsen, 2020), and attracting audience attention and understanding (Perreault; Ferrucci, 2020). Podcasts also introduce distinctive journalistic styles as well as other presentation formats such as virtual and augmented reality, data visualisation, infographics, push notifications and conversational interfaces (Gutsche; Hess, 2020). The maturation of podcasting in this process of digital remediation means that audiences perceive news as more personalised and interactive than ever before (Zelizer, 2019).

“ The progressive rise of podcasting has meant a revolution for the newspaper industry. It is able to attract new audiences, offer interactive themes and narratives, and promote participation and innovative culture in the newsrooms, as well as rethink business models ”

It is the highly regarded newspaper and radio brands (legacy media) that make successful original podcasts (*Podtrac*, 2021), aware that they are part of the media repertoires of young and young adult audiences (Berthelsen; Hameleers, 2021; Peters *et al.*, 2021). In Spain and other countries, podcasts are mainly of interest to audiences under the age of 35, with high education and income levels (Amoedo-Casais; Moreno-Moreno, 2021; Newman *et al.*, 2021). As motivations for listening, internet users highlight the control they have over content, auditory immersion that is compatible with multitasking, and engagement with presenters and other users (Chan-Olmsted; Wang, 2020; Perks; Turner; Tollison, 2019).

These journalistic qualities of podcasts help news brands increase their credibility, trust and visibility among audiences across a number of digital platforms. In addition is their potential for media interaction (García-Marín, 2020). These issues are particularly applicable to media that started on the internet (Rojas-Torrijos; Caro-González; González-Alba, 2020). Native media brands have to defend their disruptive power in order to operate in markets that have deeper change, speed and heterogeneity (Küng, 2017, pp. 204-205).

2.2. The disruptive nature of native media brands

Considered as emerging models in journalism, native media brands are positioned against non-native or declining models (López-García; Vizoso, 2021; Scolari, 2012). The former are publications created on the internet, regardless of whether they subsequently or simultaneously began as some form of print edition or television or radio broadcast. The latter, on the other hand, derive from pre-internet news brands. Their founding origin is a traditional parent –press, radio or television– even if they later interrupted this by continuing their activity on the internet only or migrating their professional structures and routines to the digital ecosystem. Both types of media brand have contributed to the fact that journalism today is “a digital profession” (Salaverría, 2021).

Due to their disruptive and digital nature (García-Avilés *et al.*, 2018; Nelson, 2020; Salles, 2019), the functioning of native news media brands has created its own traits that non-native news brands have subsequently incorporated:

- adopt technological changes at speed (López-García; Vizoso, 2021; Nee, 2013);
- introduce flexible production processes and break with traditional editorial roles (Caminero-Fernández; Sánchez-García, 2018; López-García; Rodríguez-Vázquez; Pereira-Fariña, 2017);
- experiment with multimedia narratives and new formats (García-Avilés *et al.*, 2018; Pérez-Seijo, 2021; Scolari, 2009; Shin; Biocca, 2018);
- connect more with their audience and create community (Malmelin; Villi, 2015; Sixto-García; López-García; Toural-Bran, 2020; Sparviero, 2019; Vara-Miguel, 2020);
- diversify funding channels (Arrese-Reta; Kaufmann-Argueta, 2016; Picard, 2011; Tejedor; Pla-Pablos, 2020; Vara-Miguel; Breiner, 2021); and
- be creative and resilient in crisis situations (Negredo *et al.*, 2020).

Some native media brands also promote journalistic quality (Nicholls; Shabbir; Nielsen, 2016), home-grown news values (Kilgo *et al.*, 2018) and distinctive coverage (Thomas; Cushion, 2019). However, there are significant variations from one newspaper brand to another, although the personality of these titles makes it easy for them to adapt swiftly to extremely volatile markets (Küng, 2017, p. 8).

In Spain, native media brands are strong and diversified (Negredo; Martínez-Costa, 2021, p. 35). These titles grew exponentially during 2012 and 2013 in response to the Great Recession (2008-14), new technologies and digital consumption (Martínez-Costa; Salaverría; Breiner, 2019, p. 225). They also relied on knowledge transfer to establish an innovative culture (Valero-Pastor; Carvajal, 2019). However, there are two main challenges. Firstly, Spanish native media brands are able to grow in loyalty and credibility as traditional press and audiovisual brands on the internet gain greater support in society (Negredo; Kaufmann, 2021, p. 140). Although 54% of Spanish internet users read native titles on a weekly basis (Negredo; Kaufmann, 2021, p. 138), legacy media brands are more authoritative sources compared to native media brands. Young people however confer a significant intermediary power on the latter (Majó-Vázquez *et al.*, 2020, p. 107). Secondly, there is a need to build new financing models that are profitable in the medium and long term. Whilst some media outlets have implemented membership or subscription-based payment strategies, the adoption of new funding

channels is neither varied nor widespread (Vara-Miguel; Breiner, 2021). Finding flexible funding formulas is all the more pressing at a time when the full effects of the crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic have not yet been seen.

The journalistic value of podcasts presents itself as an opportunity for native media brands to address both issues: to inform using narrative modes and styles different from those of legacy media; and to explore other financing formulas that render the talent and creativity of their journalism-based productions profitable.

3. Hypotheses and methodology

3.1. Hypothesis

As native media brands adopt technological changes quickly (López-García; Vizoso, 2021; Nee, 2013) and experiment with new narrative formats (García-Avilés *et al.*, 2018; Pérez-Seijo, 2021; Scolari, 2009; Shin; Biocca, 2018) to create community, it is assumed that the native journalism-based brands that are most referenced among Spanish internet users (Amoedo-Casais *et al.*, 2021) should have a podcast offering as part of their product or service. However, the disruptive power of native media brands shows different levels of consolidation and quality depending on the brand and country (Rodríguez-Hidalgo; Rivera-Rogel; Romero-Rodríguez, 2020).

The hypotheses for this work are formulated as follows for Spain:

- H1. Native media brands promote podcasts as their own news product or service.
- H2. The main purpose of native media brands producing podcasts is to give greater visibility to the media title’s informative content and journalistic investigations. Only secondarily do they explore new ways of telling audio-based stories.
- H3. Native media brands publish their productions on the most powerful podcast distribution and playback platforms in order to expand dissemination of their content.

3.2. Methodology

The design of the methodology was based on quantitative and qualitative content analysis. This double methodological approach is suitable for studying complex social realities or multifaceted phenomena in the digital environment (Díaz-Noci, 2020). It is therefore useful to observe how Spanish native media brands view and use podcasts in the current information ecosystem. The quantitative study systematically collected data on native media brands that offer some type of podcast (native and non-native). The qualitative study meanwhile delved into the significant aspects of the native journalism-based brands’ behaviour with the greatest weekly reach among Spanish internet users regarding the content, production and publication of podcasts.

3.2.1. Quantitative survey

The quantitative content analysis identified and characterised native media brands operating in Spain that included a podcast offering between January and April 2021. This record taking was done as part of the *Diginativemedia 2019-2021* research project and previous studies (Negredo *et al.*, 2020; Salaverría; Martínez-Costa, 2021; Salaverría; Martínez-Costa; Breiner, 2018), one of the main objectives of which is to periodically update the *Map of Online Media in Spain (Mapa de medios digitales en España)* and identify trends, by means of an analysis matrix with a corresponding coding guide, as befits this type of research (Krippendorff, 1990; Neuendorf, 2002). The map updates its records using search strategies based on various documentary sources (media directories, sector reports, monitoring of specialist media, analysis of the supply of media groups, and so on). This map totals 3,949 active cybermedia, 1,361 of which are digital natives. The media outlet is considered active when it has published new content at least three months prior to the status review –in this case, between January and April 2021. Identifying details were completed for each outlet, referring to 11 variables: current status, whether native or non-native, distribution platforms used, thematic scope, reach, geographical distribution, use of languages, financing channels, publisher’s company name, presence on social media and whether they do not offer podcasts. For this article, we worked specifically with five variables directly related to the main objective, which is to identify and analyse the choices of native media brands’ podcasts available (Table 1).

In particular, in order to register whether podcasts are offered or not, we searched for and identified the generic option “podcast” on the front page and menu of each digital media, as well as whether the media featured on the main audio hosting platforms (*YouTube, iVoox, Spotify* and *Google Podcasts*). Occasional publications by private individuals or parties other than the media itself were excluded. Inter-coder verification tests were conducted to adjust the search, identification and

Table 1. Variables selected for quantitative content analysis

Current status of digital media	Active Inactive
Nature of digital media	Native Non-native
Distribution platforms used	Website Print Radio Television Website and/or mobile app
Thematic area	Generalist Specialist
Podcast offered	Yes or no Native or non-native

Table 2. Description of the corpus or sample of podcasts

Digital native brand	Weekly brand reach (% of internet users consuming news according to <i>Digital news report España 2021</i>)	Podcast title
elDiario.es	14%	<i>Conectados (Connected)</i>
		<i>Máster (Master)</i>
		<i>El campamento más largo (The longest camp)</i>
		<i>Las entrevistas de elDiario.es (elDiario.es's interviews)</i>
		<i>Eventos de elDiario.es (elDiario.es's events)</i>
		<i>Un tema al día (One topic a day)</i>
El Confidencial	12%	<i>Descifrando el virus (Decoding the virus)</i>
		<i>Diez años 15 M (Ten years 15M)</i>
		<i>Observatorio 4M (4M Observatory)</i>
		<i>Florentino, en bruto (Florentino - raw)</i>
		<i>Brexit, año cero (Brexit, year zero)</i>
		<i>Dentro del Paddock (Inside the paddock)</i>
		<i>Las nuevas guerras políticas (The new political wars)</i>
		<i>A sangre fría (In cold blood)</i>
		<i>La declaración de José Luis Moreno (Statement by José Luis Moreno)</i>
Okdiario	11%	<i>Las noticias de Okdiario (The news from Okdiario)</i>
		<i>Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas (Wakeup OK with Javier Cárdenas)</i>
HuffPost	8%	<i>No es para tanto (It's not that big a deal)</i>
El Español	8%	<i>En tiempos de pandemia (In times of pandemic)</i>
		<i>Juntas hasta el podio (Together until the podium)</i>
		<i>Mientras dure el encierro (For the duration of the lockdown)</i>
		<i>Las entrevistas de El Español (El Español interviews)</i>
		<i>La actualidad según Pedro J (Current affairs with Pedro J)</i>
Libertad Digital	6%	<i>Dentro del vestuario (In the changing room)</i>
		<i>Desmemoria histórica (Historical amnesia)</i>
		<i>Economía para quedarte sin amigos (Economics to end up with no friends)</i>
		<i>Par-Impar (Odds-Evens)</i>
Vozpópuli	3%	<i>Barra libre (Open bar)</i>
		<i>El sermón de Giménez (Giménez's sermon)</i>

recording criteria on a statistically significant sample of 350 active media out of the total, with a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$ and a confidence level of 95%. After double-blind coding, Cohen's kappa coefficient was calculated for inter-coder agreement, which was slightly less than 0.8 (good agreement, near-optimal). Thus, it was agreed among coders to register the presence of podcasts when regular, periodic and up-to-date or time non-limited podcasts were offered under the brand name of the outlet or group. A distinction was also made between "native podcasts" and "non-native podcasts". All original productions for internet platforms that did not match the name of a traditional radio programme were treated as native podcasts; and any radio productions redistributed as on-demand or on-demand radio were treated as non-native podcasts.

3.2.2. Qualitative survey

The qualitative content analysis focused on the podcast offering of the seven native digital newspapers that have the highest weekly reach among Spanish internet users, according to the report *Digital news report Spain 2021* (Amoedo-Casais et al., 2021). The report survey looked at 12 native media brands, taking into account their reach and ensuring ideological representation and territorial variety. From this list, native brands that offered podcasts were selected. The native news brands analysed were: *elDiario.es*, *El Confidencial*, *Okdiario*, *HuffPost*, *El Español*, *Libertad Digital* and *Vozpópuli*. These are generalist native media brands. By looking at these 7 brands, a corpus or sample of 29 podcasts was formed (Table 2). All of them are native productions published by the above-mentioned news brands during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 seasons, and found on the media websites and/or podcast platforms.

A qualitative content analysis matrix was designed to be applied to each of the listed podcasts and which delves into the following aspects (Table 3).

Table 3. Variables selected for qualitative content analysis

Digital native media details	Brand and media URL
Podcast details	Product title and URL
Features of the podcast content	Topics, as classified in <i>Digital news report España 2021</i> (1. News: politics, international events; 2. Specialist: science, technology, business, media, health; 3. Lifestyle: food, fashion, art, literature, travel, leisure; 4. Social matters and events: crimes, human stories; 5. Sports; 6. Other) Journalism genres (news, interviews, round tables, talk shows, reports, documentaries)
Features of the podcast production	Type (native or non-native) Original format (audio, video) Source (own, external or mixed) Series status (open, closed, discontinued, one off) Number of episodes prior to sample collection Average duration (up to 5 min, up to 15 min, up to 30 min, up to 60 min, more than 60 min, not defined)
Podcast publishing features	Frequency of publication (daily, Monday-Friday, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, unspecified, specific or specified period) Date of the first and last episode Publication: the media outlets website and platforms (<i>iVoox, Spotify, Apple Podcast, Google Podcast, YouTube, SoundCloud, others</i>)
Funding sources for the podcast	Advertising Sponsorship Subscription Branded content Other

Also in the qualitative study, following verification and variable definition tests, two coders completed the content analysis matrix over three weeks between 15 September and 8 October 2021. These two coders identified the final sample of 29 products and, given that the web presence for each media outlet’s podcast content is heterogeneous, they agreed on the records for which there was no initial agreement by conducting supplementary searches until a 100% match was achieved.

4. Findings

The results enable us to identify and characterise the current choice, production and publication of native media brands’ podcasts. Emerging trends can also be identified, along with some challenges posed from integrating podcasting into emerging media titles’ news reporting strategy. In other words, to make progress in terms of defining the informational value of podcasts.

4.1. Native media brands do not lead the way in the choice of available podcasts

The quantitative study showed that 47.36% (1,361) of all active digital media brands in Spain are native, compared to 52.64% that are non-native (1,513). Native brands represent almost half of all digital media in Spain (2,874). This is an important part of Spain’s newspaper market. Native media brands do not, however, lead the way in the choice of available podcasts. Out of all the digital media brands that publish podcasts (n=925), three out of four are non-native, compared to one that is native (Table 4).

Likewise, active digital media brands that publish podcasts make a wide use of radio, print, TV, app and web platforms. In particular, native brands with radio platforms that offer podcasts are a minority (67) compared to the majority of non-native brands with radio platforms (582) that do indeed offer podcasts. This may be due to the development of on-demand radio and podcasts from internet broadcasters. There are 173 digital media brands that have some kind of print edition (paper platform) and podcasts: of these, 136 are non-native and 37 are native. Thus, traditional print titles produce more podcasts compared to native titles.

When the theme of active digital media brands is related to publishing podcasts, it can be seen that generalist titles (67.24%) have twice as many podcasts as specialist ones (32.76%). However, when assessing the proportion by type of media outlet, we found that six out of ten specialist native outlets offer podcasts compared to four out of ten generalist outlets (Table 5).

The difference in proportion between non-native digital media brands with podcasts (693) is reversed: almost eight out of ten are generalist (76.48%) and two out of ten are specialist (23.52%).

Table 4. Active digital media brands that offer podcasts (n=925)

Native media brands	232	25.08%
Non-native media brands	693	74.92%
Total	925	100.00%

Table 5. Focus of active native media brands with podcasts (n=232)

Generalist	92	39.66%
Specialist	140	60.34%
Total	232	100.00%

4.2. Native media brands drive native podcasting

Taking account of the fact that there are some digital media brands that offer both types of podcasts (native and non-native), 685 titles with non-native podcasts have been identified and 483 with native podcasts. Native media brands are the driving force behind native podcasts, as almost seven in ten of podcasts (68.53%) by this type of title are original productions made for the internet (Table 6).

By contrast, non-native digital media brands with podcasts (693) opt more for non-native podcasts (598), and these are almost twice as popular as those produced for the internet (324). In other words, eight out of ten podcasts (85.42%) are rebroadcasts offered on other platforms. In part, this may be due to the fragmentation of radio programming (by time slots, sections or whole programmes) offered on demand on the websites for digital media brands. However, 182 cases were also identified of native and non-native radio stations that do not offer on-demand content or original podcasts. Many of these broadcasters are local and use the internet only as a medium for broadcasting their live programmes online, accompanied by supplementary texts or videos.

4.3. Current affairs and conversational genres define the range of available podcasts

The qualitative analysis shows that Spain’s native media brands are committed to having current affairs as the main content for podcasts, as they see it as a tool for deploying their own news production –in particular national political current affairs and conversational genres.

The nature of general current affairs is seen more clearly among podcasts by *elDiario.es*, *El Español*, *Okdiario*, *Vozpópuli* and *El Confidencial*. Specialist information topics meanwhile are found more frequently with productions by *Libertad Digital* and *HuffPost*. However, the diversity of content is evident among the 29 productions that make up the sample, in which news-themed podcasts predominate (14) compared to other categories such as specialist topics (4), lifestyle (2), social affairs and events (2), sports (3) and others (4). Being a form of multi-faceted content, the pandemic appears both under current affairs and specialist productions.

With regard to news podcasts, which are the most numerous (14), national politics makes up the content of 7 podcasts, while general daily news from Monday to Friday accounts for 4 productions. Finally, 3 podcasts deal with other topics, related to international news, court reports and the effects of the pandemic in Spain during the 2020 lockdown.

With regard to the use of journalistic genres –and bearing in mind that some productions use several genres– we note that the interview format is most used, and found in 12 podcasts: 5 of which are news, 2 are sports, 2 specialist, 1 lifestyle and 2 other. The next most common format is the talk show, which is used in 11 podcasts. Its use is divided between news (4), sports (3), specialist topics (2), lifestyle (1) and other (1). News as a journalistic genre appears under news (6) and sports (1) productions. Journalism-based commentary is found in 5 news productions and 5 others use reportage: 2 of which are news, 2 are social affairs and events, and 1 is on other subjects. The least used formats are round tables, found in 2 specialist podcasts; and, lastly, 1 news and 1 social affairs and events podcast include sections in which events are reconstructed through fiction.

“ In Spain and other countries, podcasts are mainly of interest to audiences under the age of 35, with high education and income levels ”

Table 7 shows the elements that characterise the content of the offer, by media outlet.

Table 7. Content of native media brands’ podcasts

Title	Topic	Content	Genres used	First and last date of publication
ElDiario.es				
<i>Máster (Master)</i>	News	Political news: the Cifuentes case	Reportage Documentary	05/06/2019 - 04/07/2019
<i>Las entrevistas de elDiario.es (elDiario.es’s interviews)</i>	News	Political news	Interview	18/09/2019 - open
<i>Eventos de elDiario.es (elDiario.es’s events)</i>	Specialist topics	Journalism, society, culture, economy	Round table	17/10/2019 - 15/12/2020
<i>Conectados (Connected)</i>	Other	Culture, science, economy, politics	Interview	08/04/2020 - 05/07/2021
<i>El campamento más largo (The longest camp)</i>	Social affairs and events	Human stories, Spanish Civil War	Reportage Documentary	15/07/2021
<i>Un tema al día (One topic a day)</i>	News	General current affairs	News Comment	20/09/2021 - open

Table 6. Native media brands - podcast production types (n=232)*

Native podcasts	159	68.53%
Non-native podcasts	87	37.50%

*Some digital-native media have both types of podcast

Title	Topic	Content	Genres used	First and last date of publication
El Confidencial				
<i>Dentro del paddock (Inside the paddock)</i>	Sport	Formula 1 News	Talk show	24/02/2020 - 09/03/2020
<i>Las nuevas guerras políticas (The new political wars)</i>	News	Political news	Talk show Interview	28/02/2020 - 13/03/2020
<i>Descifrando el virus (Decoding the virus)</i>	Specialist topics	Coronavirus research	Round table Interview	11/09/2020 - 05/06/2021
<i>Brexit, año cero (Brexit, year zero)</i>	News	Brexit	Talk show Interview News	10/12/2020 - 04/02/2021
<i>Observatorio 4M (4M Observatory)</i>	News	Political news: Community of Madrid elections	Talk show	06/04/2021 - 30/04/2021
<i>Diez años 15M (Ten years since 15M)</i>	News	Political news: 10 th anniversary of 15M	Talk show	14/05/2021
<i>Florentino, en bruto (Florentino - raw)</i>	Other	Journalism-based investigation: statements by Real Madrid president	Reportage	16/07/2021 - 17/07/2021
<i>La declaración de José Luis Moreno (Statement by José Luis Moreno)</i>	News	Courts: statement by José Luis Moreno	News	06/09/2021
<i>A sangre fría (In cold blood)</i>	Social affairs and events	Crimes	Reportage	15/09/2021
Okdiario				
<i>Las noticias de Okdiario (The news from Okdiario)</i>	News	National current affairs	News	02/12/2020 - 24/03/2021
<i>Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas (Wake up OK with Javier Cárdenas)</i>	News	National current affairs	News Comment Interview	06/09/2021 - open
HuffPost				
<i>No es para tanto (It's not that big a deal)</i>	Other	Humour	Talk show	26/09/2019 - 26/10/2020
El Español				
<i>Las entrevistas de El Español (El Español interviews)</i>	Other	Miscellaneous	Interview	31/01/2020, 16/04/2021 and 19/04/2021
<i>En tiempos de pandemia (In times of pandemic)</i>	News	The pandemic in Spain	News Reportage	26/03/2020 - 04/05/2020
<i>Mientras dure el encierro (For the duration of the lockdown)</i>	Lifestyle	Human interest interviews	Interview	03/04/2020 - 06/05/2020
<i>La actualidad según Pedro J (Current affairs with Pedro J)</i>	News	Political news	Comment	06/04/2021 - open
<i>Juntas hasta el podio (Together until the podium)</i>	Sport	Spanish sportswomen at the Tokyo Games	News Interview Talk show	27/07/2021 - 09/08/2021
Libertad Digital				
<i>Par-Impar (Odds-Evens)</i>	Lifestyle	Culture: cinema, films and series	Talk show	31/10/2019 - open
<i>Economía para quedarte sin amigos (Economics to end up with no friends)</i>	Specialist topics	Economic current affairs	Talk show	31/10/2019 - open
<i>Desmemoria histórica (Historical amnesia)</i>	Specialist topics	History of Spain	Interview Talk show	08/11/2019 - open
<i>Dentro del vestuario (In the changing room)</i>	Sport	Football coaches	Interview	15/03/2021 - open

Title	Topic	Content	Genres used	First and last date of publication
Vozpópuli				
<i>El sermón de Giménez (Giménez's sermon)</i>	News	Political news	Comment	03/12/2020 - 01/02/2021
<i>Barra libre (Open bar)</i>	News	Political, social and economic current affairs	News Interview Talk show Comment	01/02/2021 - open

4.4. Podcasts are produced in-house as series

The serialised nature of podcasts is evident in the sample analysed, consisting of 27 series and 2 single-episode productions. In terms of the production status of the 27 series during the period under analysis, 10 are open, 9 are closed and 8 appear to be discontinued.

To a greater or lesser extent, current affairs is the subject of the open productions in the sample - both in terms of the news and specialist themed programmes. Among the news programmes, daily broadcasts appear as an emerging product for native media brands in Spain, as 3 podcasts (*Un tema al día*, *Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas*, *Barra libre*) were launched in 2021, during the period of analysis of this study. By way of background information, *Okdiario* published 97 episodes of *Las noticias de Okdiario* between December 2020 and March 2021.

On the other hand, 8 of the 9 closed series in the sample consist of 2 to 11 episodes published over two months. The exception is *El Confidencial's Descifrando el virus*, which produced 20 episodes.

Furthermore, discontinuation of the production of almost a third of the podcasts (8) indicates the experimental nature of *El sermón de Giménez*, *Eventos de elDiario.es* (both of which continued in video format), *No es para tanto*, *Las Noticias de Okdiario's*, and *El Español's Las entrevistas*. Meanwhile, two *El Confidencial* podcasts (*Dentro del paddock* and *Las nuevas guerras políticas*) ceased publication as soon as they started, following the suspension of non-essential activities due to the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020. On the contrary, the pandemic was an opportunity to start *elDiario.es's* series *Confinados* which continued under the name of *Conectados* until it reached 70 episodes in 15 months, and then production was discontinued.

The journalistic and editorial identity of the native media is reflected in the production of podcast: journalists and contributors are actively involved in 26 of the 29 titles. In addition, members of the management team, editors and staff are directly involved in the production of 14 current affairs and opinion podcasts linked to the editorial line of the media titles: daily broadcasts (*Un tema al día* and *Barra libre*); interviews (*elDiario.es's Entrevistas* and *Conectados*); reports and research (*Máster* and *En tiempos de pandemia*); political current affairs analysis talk shows (*Las nuevas guerras políticas*, *Observatorio 4M*, *10 años 15M*, *Brexit, año cero*); round tables on specialist topics (*Descifrando el virus*); opinion commentary (*La actualidad según Pedro J*, *El sermón de Giménez*); and, finally, promotion of the medium and engagement with the audience (*elDiario.es's Eventos*).

As an alternative to its own production, the production of two podcasts is handled by professionals from outside the media outlet (Toni Garrido for *Máster* and Javier Cárdenas for *Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas*). They also involve professionals from the media titles in question. Finally, there is only one case of external production in the sample: *Juntas hasta el podio*, on *El Español's* website.

In terms of format, most native media brands' podcasts are originally audio productions. However, in 8 cases, the podcast results from the editing of a video product. 2 derive from the multimedia production of a journalistic coverage or promotional event (*elDiario.es's Entrevistas* and *Eventos*); 3 originate from a specific video for the internet (*La actualidad de Pedro J* -in *El videoblog del director*-; *El sermón de Giménez* -from the video of the same name-; and *Barra libre* -from the videopodcast of the same name. Three others are edited from the recording of a computer videoconference meeting (*Conectados*, *Descifrando el virus*, and *Brexit, año cero*).

In terms of episode length, only 2 podcasts have episodes of under 5 minutes and 7 have episodes of up to 15 minutes. These podcasts lasting less than 15 minutes are serialised opinion monologues (*La actualidad según Pedro J*; *El sermón de Giménez*) and news summaries (*Las noticias de Okdiario*, *Un tema al día*). In addition, single episodes and short series (*La declaración de José Luis Moreno*; *Florentino, en bruto*), crime reporting (*A sangre fría*) and reports (*En tiempos de Pandemia*; *El campamento más largo*).

Four podcasts are up to 30 minutes long, 11 are between 30 and 60 minutes long and 3 podcast chapters run for more than an hour. In terms of formats, interviews, talk shows and round tables are accommodated in these longer formats, as are podcasts that are edited from videos

Native brands represent almost half of all digital media in Spain, however they do not lead the way in the choice of available podcasts

(*elDiario.es's Entrevistas and Conectados*, and *El Confidencial's Descifrando el virus and Brexit, año cero*).

Native media brands in Spain view and relate to podcasts as a way of exploring its journalistic possibilities

The commercialisation of podcasts appears to be a challenge, as few forms of funding for native media brands'

podcasts are recognised. There is no subscription option in the sample and hardly any advertising was recorded. Only 6 podcasts contain advertising and 2 are sponsored by a commercial brand, while one production is a branding podcast.

The sponsorship appears in the first episodes of the daily shows *Un tema al día* and *Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas*. In addition, *Las noticias de Okdiario*, *Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas* and *Libertad Digital's* podcasts *Par-Impar*, *Economía para quedarte sin amigos*, *Desmemoria histórica* and *Dentro del vestuario* include advertising spots.

However, advertisements have been found when playing video podcasts on the media outlets' websites. For example, *El Confidencial's Brexit, año cero* and *El Español's El videoblog del director*. Also, found in those published on YouTube –such as, *Conectados*, *El campamento más largo*, *Las entrevistas de elDiario.es*, *Un tema al día* and *Descifrando el virus*.

4.5. Publication of podcasts goes beyond the media website and is multimedia

Native media brands have added podcasts to the multimedia publication of texts, photographs and videos as supplementary elements integrated into the media title's website. Thus, 24 podcasts are housed on their respective websites, and are shown under different guises. Sometimes, podcasts sit alongside text and videos (*Las entrevistas de elDiario.es*). Other times, it appears as the main product among other graphics and text on the same page (*10 años 15M*). Then again, on other occasions, it is found as an autonomous product compared to other content published on the media outlet's website (*Las nuevas guerras políticas*).

However, 5 podcasts are hosted only on the platforms. Four of these are published in their original video format on the media outlet's website: *Eventos de elDiario.es*, *El videoblog del director*, *El sermón de Giménez* and *Barra libre*. The fifth is the podcast *Las entrevistas de El Español*, which is not published on the website.

In addition, 28 of the 29 titles are published on media channels on the 6 most used platforms in Spain for looking for and playing podcasts: 27 are published on *iVoox*, 25 on *Spotify*, 26 on *Google Podcasts*, 21 on *Apple Podcasts*, 10 on *YouTube* and 2 on *Soundcloud*. The exception is the series *Juntas hasta el podio*, which is found on the website of *El Español* and on *Iberdrola's Spotify* channel, the company that produces this podcast.

As for the frequency of publication, it is not always regular. The dynamics of the podcasts are in line with the planning and journalistic production of the native media outlet. Thus, out of the 27 series, half (13) of the episodes are not published to a specific frequency, while the others are published weekly (5), from Monday to Friday (4), daily (1), fortnightly (1) or based on a specific publication period (3), generally linked to a specific anniversary or research.

The episodes of *Las entrevistas de elDiario.es* and *Conectados de elDiario.es*; *El Confidencial's Las nuevas guerras políticas* and *El Español's Mientras dure el encierro* and *La actualidad según Pedro J* are all published to no specific frequency. These are examples of discretionary current affairs productions, whose publication is not subject to strict regular news patterns. On the other hand, the regular publication of podcasts has resulted in daily current affairs podcasts being promoted, as discussed in the previous section.

As for the 5 weekly productions, only *Libertad Digital's Dentro del vestuario* is active and started its second season in September 2021. The remaining 4 are short series, of up to two months. On the other hand, only one fortnightly series has been recorded (*El Confidencial's Descifrando el virus*) and is one of the most regular in the sample. It has been published for a full nine months, between September 2020 and June 2021.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

Transformative leadership is an increasingly necessary requirement to achieve full digital change within the newspaper industry (Kueng, 2020, p. 1). Hence, it is understandable that a third (925) of the active digital media brands in Spain (non-native and native) use podcasts, which is considered to be a media and journalistic tool that enriches their content offering (Berry, 2018; García-Avilés et al., 2018; Newman; Gallo, 2019). Many of them (3 out of 4) are linked to traditional media brands (legacy media). Only 1 out of 4 are native media brands.

Although native media brands do not lead the way in the podcasts they offer when considered from a quantitative analysis perspective, native newspapers that offer podcasts (232) drive original journalism-based production online (almost 7 out of 10). The results from this research therefore prove Hypothesis 1, as native media brands in Spain promote native podcasts as their own news product or service. When considering the disruptive nature of podcasting, it is again found that native media brands adopt technological changes quickly (López-García; Vizoso, 2021; Nee, 2013) and experiment with new formats (García-Avilés et al., 2018; Pérez-Seijo, 2021; Scolari, 2009; Shin; Biocca, 2018) to create community, especially around specialist topics.

Similarly, Hypothesis 2 is validated as the main purpose of the production of podcasts among Spain's digital native media brands is to provide greater visibility to the outlet's news content and journalistic investigations, and only secondarily is

its role to explore new narratives that transcend the limits of the known genres. Based on the qualitative analysis, it is significant that most of the brands analysed use conversational formats to provide journalistic and editorial identity to the current affairs issues addressed. Native podcasting values voices, bylines and journalistic authorship. It is also important to note that the podcasts studied meet the news criteria of serialised in-house production, to greater or lesser regularity depending on the case. As in other countries, podcasting is a valued tool in the newsrooms of Spain's native media brands for regular and special news coverage (Ali *et al.*, 2019; Radcliffe; Ali; Donald, 2017). This work is promoted by the publisher's editorial management and is done by multi-skilled professionals and specialist collaborators. Sometimes these are in-house journalists; other times they are researchers or experts in the subject areas on which the public is informed.

However, for now, native media brands in Spain view and relate to podcasts as a way of exploring its journalistic possibilities. The 29 cases that were studied in depth exhibit a range of approaches in terms of content, production, publication and advertising. In terms of incorporating podcasts, in Spain we also note that native media brands achieve different degrees of development and quality depending on the news brand (Rodríguez-Hidalgo; Rivera-Rogel; Romero-Rodríguez, 2020). However, some significant features can be described.

The content focuses on current affairs (14) as opposed to other topics. In particular, the pandemic is a recurrent issue and is addressed across 3 series. It is also a topic among the news podcasts during the period of the study. This means that, in Spain, native media brands' podcasts are not perceived to drive specialisation the way they do in Portugal and Latin America (Reis, 2018; Rojas-Torrijos, 2018). The cases studied are developed using conversational genres (25) and occasionally explore alternative forms of storytelling, such as the reconstruction of scenes and documentary events (2) and reportage (5). The dailies have not yet taken root strongly among Spain's native media brands, with only 3 cases having been identified - although one of them adopts the narrative style of a radio magazine show (*Levántate OK con Javier Cárdenas*) and another follows a similar presentation rhythm to that of morning shows on TV (*Barra libre*). Native media brands can therefore try out new themes and narratives to confirm audio in the journalism-related languages of the internet (Rojas-Torrijos; Caro-González; González-Alba, 2020; Salaverría; García-Avilés, 2008). For the time being, these titles are committed to the audio format for podcasts, but they also use video productions to publish audio content—as recorded in 8 cases. In these cases, there is no general finding of specific journalism-based editions and designs that emphasise video narrative over podcast storytelling, as noted in other studies (Ali *et al.*, 2019).

The serial nature of podcasts is also evident, regardless of the number of episodes, frequency and publication period covered, where there are significant variations. *Okdiario*, *Huffpost*, *Libertad Digital* and *Vozpópuli* mostly publish long series; *elDiario.es* and *El Español* offer single episodes, short and long-run productions; while *El Confidencial* publishes short podcasts, although the most regular series in the whole sample (*Descifrando el virus*) is a notable exception. Albeit in an exploratory way, podcasts are beginning to appear on a regular basis among native media brands' journalism-based productions.

Native media brands also publish on Spain's 6 most used platforms for finding and playing podcasts (*iVoox*, *Spotify*, *Google Podcasts*, *Apple Podcasts*, *YouTube* and *Soundcloud*), as well as on their own websites. Hypothesis 3 is therefore proven. Publishing on the most powerful podcast distribution and playback platforms amplifies the presence of native news brands within the sonosphere. This reinforces the process of reintermediation of content between audiences who adopt new forms of consumption (Sparviero, 2019; Vara-Miguel, 2020).

Marketing of new-based podcasts is still limited and relies only on advertising formats (6) and sponsorship (2), and there is still a lot of ground to be explored with regard to other funding channels and the field of podcast branding (1).

In summary, native digital news media in Spain implement podcasting as a disruptive and differentiating option within their offer (Berry, 2018; García-Avilés *et al.*, 2018; Newman; Gallo, 2019). The 7 native news brands that we evaluated view podcasts as a product or service innovation in their own right, one that helps to reach markets more deeply and with greater speed and heterogeneity (Küng, 2017, pp. 204-205). Firmly integrating podcasting into the strategy of native news brands can help them enrich the quality and focus of their news coverage (Jenkins; Nielsen, 2020). It is also about enhancing its editorial identity among online audiences by offering journalism that makes it easier to understand what is happening every day (Perreault; Ferrucci, 2020). In short, podcasts contribute to a journalism that is more personalised and interactive, without losing the sense of community.

Future diachronic studies could enable changes to be identified or build on this research's findings and trends in regard to the use and characterisation of podcasts. They could also delve into the question of how native podcasters in Spain innovate with internet-based languages and apply specialist tactics to help them sustain profitable business models, as happens in Latin America (Rojas-Torrijos; Caro-González; González-Alba, 2020). It could also be of interest to analyse the way in which the *platformisation* of podcasts mediates this process (Sullivan, 2019), given

Native media brands are committed to having current affairs as the main content for podcasts, as they see it as a tool for deploying their own news production—in particular national political current affairs and conversational genres

the use of platforms to increase reach. With this in mind, incorporating in-depth interviews with the heads of the media outlets analysed could be useful in answering certain questions.

Finally, it should be noted that this research has certain limitations. While significant, the qualitative findings presented here cannot be generally applied. The conclusions from the qualitative analysis are therefore provisional and will need to be confirmed in future projects.

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