
Governing the Media: Web Analytics in Spanish Newsrooms

Governant els mitjans: l'analítica web a las redacciones españolas

Santiago Justel Vázquez

Universitat Internacional de Catalunya (Spain)

Universitat Ramon Llull (Spain)

Josep Lluís Micó Sanz

Universitat Ramon Llull (Spain)

Enric Ordeix Rigo

Universitat Ramon Llull (Spain)

The arrival of the Internet forced the media to transform its traditional business model and has revolutionized journalism with an “explosion” of new techniques, tools, assumptions and expectations (Anderson et al., 2014).

Among these is endless web analytics data (Kaushik, 2010), the statistics and charts obtained from the interaction of the readership with news websites. Web analytics have vastly increased the availability of information about what each newspaper's audience is like, and in some cases this has resulted in journalism that is less focused on hard news (Tandoc, 2014; Justel et al., 2016) and more concerned with increasing the number of visitors to the publication's website.

The current study is based on eleven in-depth interviews carried out with journalists holding a range of different

L'arribada d'internet va obligar els mitjans a transformar el seu model de negoci i va revolucionar el periodisme amb una “explosió” de noves tècniques, eines i expectatives (Anderson et al., 2014).

Entre aquestes s'inclouen les dades d'analítica web (Kaushik, 2010), les estadístiques i gràfics obtinguts de la interacció dels lectors amb les webs dels mitjans. L'analítica web ha augmentat de gran manera la disponibilitat d'informació sobre com és l'audiència de cada diari, la qual cosa ha resultat, en alguns casos, en un periodisme que està menys enfocat a les notícies dures (Tandoc, 2014; Justel et al., 2016) i més preocupat per augmentar el seu nombre de visitants.

La investigació actual es basa en onze entrevistes en profunditat a periodistes que cobreixen diferents posicions (des

positions (from editors to writers to web analysts) within the newsrooms of Catalonia's main newspapers.

The conversations held with these professionals confirm that web analytics data occupy a central place in newsrooms and that they are mainly employed from a quantitative and not a qualitative perspective. For the newspapers analyzed, metrics such as the number of visitors each news item obtains or the number of unique users are still more influential than other parameters, such as the duration of time spent reading a webpage.

Key words: web analytics, journalism, audience, business models.

de director fins a redactor o analista web) dins de les redaccions dels principals diaris de Catalunya.

Les converses mantingudes amb aquests professionals confirmen que les dades d'anàlisi web ocupen un lloc central a les sales de redacció i que s'utilitzen sobretot des d'una perspectiva quantitativa i no qualitativa. El nombre de visitants que obté cada notícia, o el nombre d'usuaris únics, per als diaris analitzats, segueixen sent mètriques més influents que altres paràmetres, com la durada de la lectura d'una pàgina web.

Paraules clau: analítica web, periodisme, audiència, models de negoci.

We live in a data rich environment, an environment where numbers, data, math and analysis should be the foundation of our decisions (Kaushik, 2010). Also in journalism?

Audience data has reached news organisations and is here to stay. Following the flood of changes that were introduced at the beginning of the millennium, the internet still retains some surprises. Web analytics has become a central activity in newsrooms. It consists of all those software tools whose purpose is the collection, storage and presentation of audience data sourced by a specific organisation from the interaction between audiences, clients or users and the World Wide Web (Maldonado, 2009: 27).

Professionals themselves recognise that weight has been given to this relevant and determining data, one that has been consolidated since the start of the decade, and that, although secondary to the selection of news items, is a weight that affects their position in the hierarchy and their organisation on the front page.

Public interest or what the public is interested in? The present research explores that questions through different interviews talking about the way in which web analytics has modified the work of journalists.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK – CONTEXT

For years newspapers have attempted to transform their business model, failing to date, to find a solution to the problem of how to increase revenue.

“The effects of the information era on the production and consumption of news have been very profound”, despite potential benefits, such as greater transparency and accessibility, “the internet has curbed the business model of journalism based on advertising” (Nordenson, 2009: 80).

The traditional business model of the media was based on two pillars: advertising and, in the case of Pay TV and print newspapers, charging the audience. It is the business model of a bygone age. The book, film and music industries have traditionally principally rested on direct sales to the consumer, while the newspaper, magazine and broadcast industries have entrusted their most significant revenue to advertisers (Bettig and Hall, 2003: 5).

If the value of journalism in the market is the sum of the value of the content and the value of the advertising, the two pillars have suffered a blow in the digital age, where a vast increase of information available on the internet, the number of providers and greater ease of access has lowered the value of content (Picard, 2009).

The value of advertising has also fallen. With statistics on clicks, conversion rates and other metrics, companies became aware of how much of their money was being wasted and as a result advertising budgets were cut proportionally (Pariser, 2011: 48).

After years of declining investment in the press, without advertising offsetting the reduction, 2016 brought more positive figures (Infoadex, 2017); 1,407 million Euros spent on advertising on the internet (web and mobile) compared to 617 million Euros invested in print newspapers. The figures for 2008 (Infoadex, 2014) give a different picture: internet advertising represented an estimated real investment of 610 million Euros and the print press 1,507 million. Thus, over the years, there has been a progressive reversal in investment.

Newspapers have found new ways of disseminating content. Audiences are now more global and, for example, a significant proportion of the readers of a Catalan newspaper may live in other parts of Spain or in Latin America. Recognizing potential new business opportunities in this trend, various newspapers have opted to create international editions.

Social networks have also increased the possibilities for disseminating content, extending their reach by means of user recommendations. However, this “further undermines the established business models based on providing advertisers with large and aggregate audiences” (Hermida *et al.*, 2012: 821). Hence the “anguish” felt by the sector as advertising revenues migrate to Google and other Internet giants (Ward, 2014: 46), although initiatives such as Facebook Instant Articles have opened the door to joint administration of advertising revenue.

Fariás and Gómez (2011: 5) point out that the media might cease to be advertising’s main support and might also be “forced to compete with formulas with higher audience figures, greater personalization and segmentation options (social networks, search engines...) at a lower cost”. A much more fragmented reality.

The urgency of finding a profitable business model has pushed the media in some markets, such as Spain, to participate in a fight for the audience. Editors conceive of the audience as economic capital, although for the moment, digital media revenues are marginal (Tandoc, 2014: 570).

In that context, web analytics —“software tools whose purpose is the collection, storage and presentation of data extracted from audiences interaction, customers and users of the World Wide Web managed by a specific organization” (Maldonado, 2009: 27)— entered on the newsrooms.

Having the option of knowing the audience more in depth than ever, opened the doors to make a product oriented to grow and grow in audience. “The possibilities offered by digital technology push the mass media in the direction of interesting rather than that of important” (Sintes and Olivella, 2010: 191).

Sensationalist or anecdotal content that go viral became an important source of visits and, therefore, a temptation for a media organisation in need of profitability. The division that was supposed to be maintained between the commercial and the editorial sectors of the media was already becoming increasingly thin and diffuse at the beginning of the 20th century (Sparrow, 1999: 74).

Stories that are easier to understand, such as celebrity news and funny items, tend to achieve a large number of clicks. A journalist who is aware of what journalism should be will make use of access to information about audience preferences to construct versions of important realities that the public are able to appreciate (Tandoc and Thomas, 2012: 11).

Can technology and the data offered by web analytics help create better journalism, one that combines the interesting and the important without upsetting the balance in favour of the interesting?

According to Gomis (2002: 24), the challenge is to “find the way to make the significant interesting”. “The journalist’s responsibility is not limited to offering information, but to offering it in such a way that people want to pay attention to it” (Kovach and Rosentiel, 2012: 204).

With regard to television Kovach and Rosentiel (2012: 211) point out that the evidence suggests that attracting viewers solely by means of entertainment fails as a long-term business strategy and results in getting people accustomed to the banal, destroying their appetite for and expectations of other kinds of programming. Converting the news into entertainment requires the renunciation of one’s strengths in order to enter a field dominated by others. A “threat to society’s information health” (Farias and Gómez, 2011: 7) undermining the prestige of the media and its authority to broadcast serious news.

Five years ago the outlook was not good for the media. While advertising revenues have declined, “hoped for sources of direct income; paywalls, micro-payments, mobile applications, digital subscriptions, have failed or offer lower incomes” (Anderson *et al.*, 2014: 11). Today the scenario is more hopeful. For example, the latest economic figures for *The New York Times* show an increasing number of digital subscribers.

However, the attempts to consolidate a sustainable business model for journalism —which guarantees its future and its service as a public good— continue in the present moment and the debate is still open.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews, often referred to as open or intensive interviews by some authors (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011; Berger, 2000). The interview questions were developed from questionnaires that included some specific questions related to responses given and also took into account further issues that arose from the answers obtained. The interview questions concern the criteria of newsworthiness, the changes in work routines introduced as a result of the internet, the perception of and interaction with the audience, business models in the digital environment, and the current role of the press.

Interviews were conducted with the directors of the newspapers (*Lavanguardia.com* and *Elperiodico.com*) that form the focus of this study; middle management (section heads and copy editors); editors; trainee editors; and other specific job profiles, such as the head of web analytics, in an attempt to cover practically all the profiles present in a newsroom.

The first interviews were conducted in 2012, with the majority following in 2014. These were updated in 2018 in order to be able to register the evolution of the phenomena studied.

In addition to the main corpus of 11 interviews, the study and the discussion have benefitted from interviews held with Maxwell McCombs, the most senior American professor in the field of agenda setting, and with chief editors and editors of the digital edition of the newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* during Postdoctoral research at the LMU München.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE WEIGHT OF THE QUANTITATIVE

Web Analytics have been established as a central activity in newsrooms. “I think that even those who are not involved in analytical issues or journalists, pay attention to web analytics such as the rankings produced by the media itself. People notice and are surprised by the most read news item and comment on it”, reflects Joel Albarrán, chief editor of *Lavanguardia.com*.

The appearance of web analytics, about a decade ago, represents another indication of the growing influence of the quantitative. In a highly digested format, the data is now accessible to everyone through the “Most read”, “Most shared” and “Most valued” lists, or “Readers are viewing” and “Popular on the web” lists present in online newspapers, albeit more discreetly in some media.

That audience figures carry weight went unquestioned by all of those interviewed for this research. The Internet revolutionized the press, put an end to the traditional business model, introduced the possibility of a new multimedia language, altered the selection process of sources and also gave new power to the audience. The audience were given a voice and the relationship between readers

and newspapers became much more bi-directional, increasing the influence of the audience, albeit unintentionally.

The influence of Web analytics in digital newsrooms starts with the selection of the topics for news items. The feedback that reaches newsrooms conditions the newspapers agenda, which in turn determines the public agenda. Agenda Setting theory establishes the way in which the media agenda becomes society's agenda (McCombs, 2004). In an interview held in 2013 with Maxwell McCombs, the most senior American professor in this field, the academic re-affirmed the idea that for the vast majority of issues the flow of influence was from the media to the public and added that the evidence obtained about the new media indicated that this same trend has been maintained in the new scenario.

This remains the case to the extent that the media continues to be the source of most of the content circulating in the new information ecosystem. But there has been a change in the direction of influence. Public influence, much less significant in the past, now conditions the media agenda. What was a minor element in the news machine, marked by other professional routines and by its relationship with business, social and institutional players, has increased as a result of detailed data about audience behaviour, partially closing the circle.

The newspapers that influence the public are in turn influenced by the feedback that they receive about their audience in the form of quantitative information. With regard to lists of most popular content, which are in turn an important source of traffic because readers look at them, this becomes a case of the public influencing itself.

"In the selection of topics, yes, the choice of topics is strongly influenced by the thought that the topic will have greater reach, more clicks, than others...", admits Enric Sierra, deputy director of *Lavanguardia.com* and assistant director of *La Vanguardia*. One of the qualities that is expected of journalists who work for an online newspaper and one of the instructions they receive is to have vision when selecting topics for news items in order to attract a greater audience.

The significance of relevant and determining data has been consolidated since the beginning of the decade and after the selection of topics also affects their hierarchy and organization on the homepage. "In the same way that journalists have access to information about traffic and are required to rank and present their pieces on the homepage accordingly, they have an awareness of this data that they did not have two or three years ago", says Saül Gordillo, director of digital content at *El Periódico*.

This influence is also recognized at the editorial level. "A great deal, the quantitative carries a great deal of weight. But in addition to "so many pages visited" or "so many unique users" attention is now also paid to the qualitative", states Cristina Buesa, editor at *El Periódico*, "the duration of visits, where they come from, the elements that most attract them..."

It might be evidence that points to a progressive change towards a model of strong commitment to quality that is applied by prestigious media companies around the world.

The newspaper layout designers and chiefs of digital content at *El Periódico* and *La Vanguardia's* website talk about the continuous monitoring of traffic flow for the home page and on the web. Ferriol Egea, head of web analytics at the Godó Group newspaper, explains how quantitative monitoring has taken on even greater significance in recent years, becoming just one more aspect of work in newsrooms: "I started work here in 2011 and back then we did not have meetings in which the web analyst could speak directly with those who organize the weekly agenda of the website; the newspaper layout designer or the chief news editor. And then we started working with data. I taught them, pointing out: well look, these things work better... and if we organize them in this way or distribute them through this channel we can achieve a larger audience... And they began to see how effective the use of data could be and they started incorporating it into their working methodology". This became a closer and more regular collaboration, sharing information that the newspaper layout designer and chief editors consider "know how" and transmitting it to the rest of the newsroom.

This bridge between the editorial team and those responsible for analytics has become more professional over the years. At *El Periódico*, the editors of the different sections continuously monitor web traffic statistics. Information that a few years ago was reserved for the few is now accessible to the entire editorial staff. This greater accessibility has generated "an incentive effect", with journalists also wanting to appear in the rankings as the writers of pieces with greater traffic.

On the *La Vanguardia* website the newspaper layout designer and the chief editors act as a bridge between the analytics team and journalists. Those in charge of data management share this information with the newspaper layout designer and the chief news editors who are in turn responsible for communicating that which they consider appropriate to the newsroom. Although sometimes the editors ask the SEO experts in audience behaviour directly about these issues and are offered specific guidelines and advice, there is a reason for this organizational structure. Within the analysis section there are different parts: the SEO people, people who analyze social networks, who monitor the web... "If each one 'attacked' a journalist on their own account, it might result in chaos and in the end the journalists also need order and criterion", points out Egea.

It is not always necessary for the editorial team to share the suggestions made by an SEO, which in many cases require validation. The newspaper layout designer and the news editors act as a filter that protects the journalists' professional criterion.

"I try to keep them apart from the rest of the newsroom a bit. The chief editors should, and do, have access to them, but the others do not. Although it is important for them to know what works well and what does not when selecting news items, but they should not be focused on it (...) because that can corrupt the principle of public interest and the editorial principle", explains Enric Sierra.

To some extent all journalists are participants in this dynamic, regardless of the model implemented by each newsroom. All those interviewed agree when they say that they pay attention to the success achieved by their articles at a quantitative level.

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF THE FIGURES

There is a tendency to relate the influence of the data on visits with the proliferation and the greater protagonism of sensational or anecdotal content; content that does not stand out for its quality and much less for its news interest. Such topics receive many views and their success favours the emergence of similar themes. This trend (Justel *et al.*, 2016) is linked to an impoverishment of the agenda that reaches society and as such a deterioration in the public debate.

How is this manifested? To the extent that the prominence given to the anecdotal displaces the interest given to other issues.

When an anecdotal topic arrives in the newsroom, despite being an item that would not traditionally have a place in a print newspaper, the traffic it is likely to produce is tempting and the subject is prepared for publishing without too much thought being spent on it. Anecdotal news stories are known to attract visitors and will probably be published by other media outlets. The internet is not constrained to such an extent by the criterion of quality journalism.

Anecdotal news stories are selected, edited and published. They pass into the hands of newspaper layout designers, who apply their criteria, in the same way as the journalist or the corresponding section editor. The potential success of such a story is an important factor to consider. It is not an overriding factor, but it is one that sometimes carries more weight than the journalists themselves believe it should. As Joel Albarrán journalist and newspaper layout designer at Lavanguardia.com explains.

“You try to limit the importance you place on it. But of course, if it is a slow news day and you are aware that you are not achieving the audience numbers of the previous day. And that if you include this slightly more banal topic towards the top, you can improve the statistics, increase audience numbers a little, it is likely that you will do it. To say that the audience does not have an influence on you at all is not true. Yes, you are pressured by having the data there all the time”.

It is recognized in the newsroom that sometimes interesting topics are not covered due to lack of time and the prioritizing of less relevant topics that are expected to generate more traffic. It is also pointed out that sometimes journalistic criterion is eroded and it is necessary to say: “for me this does not count as news and I will not include it regardless of the number visits that it might receive”. When entering into this dynamic, many stories are included due to considerations about their potential reach rather than their contribution or relevance. And in the end, such content ends up adding to the “overabundance of information” that exists on the internet, criticizes Albert García a journalist specializing in video games, who writes for the Technology section of Lavanguardia.com.

All agree that there is no place in the print edition of their newspapers for the proliferation of this type of anecdotal content. Such articles are designed to obtain traffic; they contain information of a viral nature that functions according to the number of visits received, a process helped by being shared widely on social networks.

When asked the question what effect does such content have on the news agenda as a whole? Is there a risk of ending up neglecting the public interest? Sierra reflects; “Well, that’s a great question and ... let’s be honest, it’s a risk, but it always has been. The economic crisis in Spain, that has been particularly acute in the newspaper sector, means that there is a greater risk that people will submit to these influences and that commercial interests will be prioritized over public interest. The risk exists, it has always existed and nowadays it is greater. So, I appeal to the profession and I appeal to the editors”. Greater relevance, greater influence and a healthier economic system for the media all require greater independence.

Those interviewed do not deny that the greater influence given to audience figures can lead to negative outcomes, some of which have already occurred, despite efforts to avoid them. But the majority consider the scope of such influence to be limited and as such do not consider it to be a dangerous trend.

Cristina Buesa considers it is a risk, but states that “while there are still journalists involved in the management of newspapers, it should not happen”. She goes on to explain: “There is a journalist in charge of my newspaper, not a person who simply looks at the numbers and unique users in relation to the news. And, when there is a good topic, he does not care whether it ends up on the web or in the print version”.

In each of the interviews carried out for this research allusions were made to professional judgment. From within the media, professional judgment is not considered to be under threat by the transformation brought about by the internet or by commercial pressure. Such pressure is not new; journalists have always had to face it, although now it may be greater.

The general vision is optimistic. Knowing how useful the data is, the possibilities offered by the new environment and taking into account the risks, more faith is being put in taking advantage of the first than in falling into the second. Gordillo points out another key aspect of the debate: “I think that journalists should neither be scared nor take it lightly, because in our hands these tools will be used in a more responsible way than they would be if treated like cold data by someone who managed the media as if it were a shop window display”.

A professional path consists of continuing to follow journalistic criteria, while paying attention to audience related data and incorporating all the feedback constructively into the exercise of journalism.

A THREAT OR AN OPPORTUNITY?

As addressed in previous sections, the influence of audience figures is frequently associated with a decrease in standards; as an invasion of the commercial over the journalistic, but does it also have a positive side?

Back in 2012, in the week that daily emails to the editors containing information about analytics were implemented, and which were later replaced with more regular access to the data, Cristina Buesa enthused: “I think it is a fantastic tool. It helps me to know where I’m going. I am really interested in what my readers think...”.

It can be said that the media has always been aware of their audience's reaction, but now there is much greater access to information about audience behaviour. Journalists have always been interested in their audience and have always tried to deepen their understanding of what interests the public. In order to avoid this resulting in a failure to address topics of public interest, it is necessary to adhere to the maxim: "the journalist's task is to find the way to make the significant interesting" (Gomis, 2002: 24).

The feedback received depends on the media; the internet provides data about exactly what content people click on or the duration of views, their click path, what site they visit afterwards, if they are sporadic visitors or if they are frequent users of the newspaper.

"Without the audience being everything, what interests the public should be taken into account when setting the agenda", says journalist Joel Albarrán, a newspaper layout designer at *Lavanguardia.com*.

The data has a useful dimension from the journalistic point of view and not merely from the commercial point of view; it encourages self-criticism, reflection on work done and invites improvement.

Picture the arrival of an important news story in the newsroom: the riots in the US town of Ferguson in the state of Missouri, resulting from the acquittal of the police officer who shot and killed a young African-American man in August 2014. The international section takes charge of the subject, which meets many of the criteria of newsworthiness, and once published reaches the hands of the web newspaper layout designer who decides that it is a headlining item. Despite its prominent position on the webpage, the news item does not work especially well at the level of traffic. The journalist does not change his criteria but reflects on the piece. "The topic is interesting, I have highlighted it, and people are not reading it". In such circumstances Albarrán believes that reflection is required following a process of self-criticism "asking oneself, why if something is important, is it not working? Is the headline wrong? Am I giving it an appropriate focus?"

The photo is changed and the headline is modified. Different strategies are tested with the objective of making the topic more attractive in an attempt to get people to click on the item. Finally this is achieved, albeit partially, and the traffic to the news item improves. Professional criterion is maintained, but there is an incentive to improve.

In the example outlined above, an important issue of public interest that was not being widely read was partially reformulated in an attempt to improve its statistics. This was done in both the interests of profit and good journalism. More visits represent a better informed public.

Another potential way for web analytics to influence the media manifests itself in an unexpected way. Anecdotal, sensationalist content is known to generate traffic; people will read such content and recommend it on social networks. However, instead of promoting content which does not stand out for its quality and much less for its informative interest, an important issue that at first might not given special prominence due to being considered a complex issue might be highlighted and become, against expectations, a good source of traffic.

The story arrives in the newsroom; it is written up, published and posted. It is given moderate visibility because from the journalistic point of view it is not considered very important. In addition, the newspaper layout designer considers that the subject matter will not arouse the interest of the readers and needs to consider the traffic generated by the piece. Contrary to what is expected, it can be seen from the data obtained in real time that the news item is generating traffic and its importance is reconsidered. "You say: Ah, well I'm going to give it more space. Maybe you had considered it a boring hard news item, but you see that readers are interested. It can happen both ways round, you are under pressure to highlight banal issues, but also to give more prominence to topics of interest that you consider of less importance. So if you get it wrong, access to the data helps you correct your decision", explains Albarrán.

From this perspective, web analytics does not have a negative impact on professional criterion, but is a tool for better, more critical journalism. This links with one of the ideas presented by several of the authors included in the bibliography: the end of the media's monopoly on the control of information (Anderson, Bell and Shirky, 2012). Albert Sáez returns to this idea when he addresses the move from a media monopoly to what can be considered an audience monopoly during an interview carried out during this research: "We know that we are not the only ones who can say which news items get broadcast and which do not and that, in any case, if we think that a news item is newsworthy, this decision needs to be transparent and to be justified. We will have to make much more effort than we have done up to now to explain the complexity of the issues".

QUALITY OVER QUANTITY?

It has been pointed out in newsrooms, during interviews carried out as part of this research that the debate about payment models and ideal formulas to raise revenue appears cyclically.

Last years, emphasis has been placed on a progressive shift from page views to other indicators of reader attention. In countries such as Germany, the quality press has made greater advances in this shift.

During the interviews with executives and editors from the German media, reference was made to the firm commitment to the production of quality information in order to consolidate a position from which it is easier to monetize content. A commitment to the generation of a valuable product that the audience would be willing to pay for, which has also become the model for other media at a national and international level: the creation of a community of loyal readers willing to support the media economically.

"And a strategy focused on traffic doesn't work on the business side, because yes, they make profits out of it, but the relation between reach and profit is worse than here, because we can see it when we introduced paid content. We charge people 30 EUR a month, nobody would pay that if he wouldn't have a sense of quality he gets for that", explains the deputy editor in chief at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Lutz Knappmann.

Resisting the dynamics of viral news may seem complex, but their bet is clear. They do not renounce the traffic generated by soft content, but not everything goes. “If you are fast in discovering a story with a viral potential and then think about how to make the story suitable for our brand”, adds Knappmann.

In Spain the situation is more complex. To the extent that the audience in the Spanish advertising market is currently fundamentally valued for its size, focusing primarily on a model of quality would result in some of the advertising revenues that are a key source of financing for digital media being renounced in the short term.

In that context, the commitment to publish only quality content requires, in the words of the chief editors interviewed, a willingness to commence a “journey through the desert” going against the grain of many competitors in the market.

CONCLUSIONS

The increasingly active role of the audience (Jenkins, 2006; Livingstone, 1999), changed many of the dynamics within newsrooms, but perhaps one of the most determining phenomena is the consolidation of the weight given to the numbers of readers for each news item in the daily routine of newsrooms, which can turn journalists into “slaves” of the quantitative. For example, there are journalists who are happy when they appear as authors on the lists of most viewed news items, regardless of the quality of such pieces.

Of course, the quantitative dimension is no longer the only element taken into account in the media, neither in public nor in private. That is, the media and those who work in it emphasize that the quality of visits is highly significant, due to the service provided, the image derived from it, and that advertisers have begun to take this into account. However, data related to visitors seeking quality has not yet been incorporated skilfully into newsrooms. The volume of visits continues to carry much more weight.

Statistics and metrics continue to place aspects such as unique users, pages visited, etc. first. This is not merely a hangover from the past or a simple coincidence. It reflects the genuine significance of each of these factors. Of course, visit duration, the click path followed by website users, etc. carry weight in editorial and business decisions. In another countries the situation seems to be different, since we have indicated that the German press of reference would have walked more—and with more determination—on that path of prioritizing quality.

However, both at the start of this research and in its successive updates, the wide range of journalists interviewed have all stated that such data is still secondary with respect to that related to general traffic.

In the best of scenarios, rather than being “slaves” of the audience, newsrooms in fact take advantage of the data on a professional level. Treating the information more qualitatively and less quantitatively, thus eliminating any conflict that might arise in terms of journalistic criteria or within the editorial hierarchy.

This work is part of the Project “Influencers en la comunicación política en España. Análisis de las relaciones entre líderes de opinión 2.0, medios de comunicación, partidos, instituciones y audiencias en el entorno digital” (Proyecto de I+D+i financiado por el Ministerio de Economía, Industria y Competitividad. CSO2017-88620-P).

Santiago Justel Vázquez (sjustel@uic.es). Professor and Head of the Journalism Department at the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya. Member of STREAM Research Group at Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) - URL.

He received his PhD in communication from the Universitat Ramon Llull with a dissertation on media agenda and public interest. As a journalist he has been editor of the technology channel at *Lavanguardia.com*, where he works currently as a collaborator.

Josep-Lluís Micó Sanz (joseplluisms@blanquerna.url.edu). Professor, Chair of Journalism at the Universitat Ramon Llull, He is the academic vice dean of the Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) - URL, where he directed the Degree in Journalism, the Master

in Advanced Journalism Blanquerna-Grupo Godó, the Master in Fashion Communication Blanquerna-080 Barcelona Fashion and the Master in Sport Communication Blanquerna - FC Barcelona. He works as a technology analyst in media such as *LaVanguardia*, *Lavanguardia.com* and Radio Nacional de España-Ràdio 4.

Enric Ordeix Rigo (enricor@blanquerna.url.edu) is a full time Associate Professor of the Communication Department of Facultat de Comunicació i Relacions Internacionals Blanquerna (Universitat Ramon Llull) - URL, where he leads The Global Communication Management Degree and the MA-Strategic Management in Global Communication. He is the codirector of the Blanquerna-Emerson

Center for Global Communication (Boston-Blanquerna) and the Master in Protocol, Public Affairs and Strategic Events Management. Professor Ordeix is President of the Global Communication Institute (Berlin), and board member and track chair of the International Academy of Business Disciplines and International Public Relations Association.

References

Anderson, C. W.; Bell, E., and Shirky, C. (2014). *Post-industrial Journalism: Adapting to the Present: A Report*. Columbia Journalism School.

Berger, A. (2000). *Media and Communication Research Methods: An Introduction to Qualitative*

and Quantitative Approaches. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

Bettig, R. V. and Hall, J. L. (2003). *Big Media, Big Money: Cultural Texts and Political Economics*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

- Farias Batlle, P. and Gómez Aguilar, M. (2011). "El estado de la profesión periodística y la crisis de los medios en España". *Razón y Palabra*, no. 77, [online] <http://www.razonypalabra.org.mx/varia/77%205a%20parte/68_FariasGomez_V77.pdf> Accessed on 1st February, 2015.
- Gomis, L. (2002). "¿Nos interesa lo importante?". *La Vanguardia*, 25 November.
- Hermida, A.; Fletcher, F.; Korell, D. and Logan, D. (2012). "Share, Like, Recommend". *Journalism Studies*. Vol. 13, 5-6, pp. 815-824.
- Infoadex (2014). "Estudio Infoadex de la inversión publicitaria en España 2017". Available at: <<http://infoadex.factoriadigitalpremium.es/infoadex3/documentacion/RESUMEN2014.pdf>>.
- . (2017). "Estudio Infoadex de la inversión publicitaria en España 2017". Available at: <<http://infoadex.factoriadigitalpremium.es/infoadex3/documentacion/ESTUDIO-COMPLETO-2017.pdf>>.
- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. NYU Press.
- Justel, S.; Micó, J. L., and Sánchez Marín, G. (2016). "Media and Public Interest in the Era of Web Analytics: A Case Study of Two Spanish Leading Newspapers". *El Profesional de la Información* (EPI), 25(6), pp. 859-868.
- Kaushik, A. (2010). *Analítica Web 2.0: El arte de analizar resultados y la ciencia de centrarse en el cliente*. Barcelona: Gestión 2000.
- Kovach, B. and Rosentiel, T. (2012). *Los elementos del periodismo*. Madrid: Santillana.
- Livingstone, S. (1999). "New Media, New Audiences". LSE Research Online [online] <<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/archive/00000391>>. Accessed on 1st February, 2018.
- Maldonado, S. (2009). *Analítica web: medir para triunfar*. [s.i.]: mvconsultoría.
- Marwick, A. E. and Boyd, D. (2011). "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience". *New Media and Society*, no. 13, pp. 114.
- McCombs, M. (2004). *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nordenson, B. (2009). "¡Sobrecarga! La batalla por la importancia del periodismo en la época del exceso de información". In: Espada, A. and Hernández-Busto, E. (eds.). *El fin de los periódicos. Crisis y retos del periodismo actual*. Barcelona: Duomo ediciones, pp. 79-99.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. London: Penguin.
- Picard, R. G. (2009). "Why Journalists Deserve Low Pay". Presentation by Robert G. Picard to the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, RISJ Seminar Series, University of Oxford. Available at: <<http://www.robertpicard.net/PDFFiles/whyjournalistsdeservealowpay.pdf>>.
- Sintes Olivella, M. (2010). *Periodistes contra polítics? Els mèdia contemporanis com a adversaris de la política: història i causes d'un conflicte entre poders. Cinc casos a Catalunya (2003-2006)*. Tesis doctoral. Barcelona: Facultat de Comunicació Blanquerna, Universitat Ramon Llull.
- Sparrow, B. H. (1999). *Uncertain Guardians: The News Media As a Political Institution*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.
- Tandoc, E. (2014). "Journalism Is Twerking? How Web Analytics Is Changing the Process of Gatekeeping". *New Media and Society*, 4 (16), pp. 559-575.
- Tandoc, E. and Thomas, R. (2014). "The Ethics of Web Analytics: Implications of Using Audience Metrics in News Construction". *Digital Journalism* [online] <<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/21670811.2014.909122>>. Accessed on 1st January, 2015.
- Ward, S. J. A. (2014). "Radical Media Ethics: Responding to a Revolution". *Nordicom Review*, no. 35, Special Issue, pp. 25-52.
- Wimmer R. D. and Dominick J, R. (2011). *Mass Media Research: An Introduction*. Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage- Wadsworth.