

Digital native news organisations in the Mexican media system

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Abstract

With the development of the Internet, the news media landscape has transformed significantly, opening spaces to new kinds of journalistic organisations. Online-born organisations – digital natives – have emerged across the world in a myriad of forms and shapes, challenging legacy news organisations. The literature is enthusiastic about digital natives; they are perceived as innovative in their use of technological resources, narratives, and opening spaces to new markets and audiences to produce ‘better journalism’; however, we have little understanding of what kind of content they produce. This thesis studies digital natives in Mexico – an under-researched context – to understand the capabilities of digital natives to overcome the problems journalism faces in the country, such as the clientelism of legacy news organisations and limited autonomy to report.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the potential of digital natives for producing news content that can contribute to fulfilling the main roles of journalism: providing information, monitoring those in power, and representing a plurality of voices. The thesis analyses the organisational resources, practices and content produced by two Mexican digital native news organisations, Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias, and two legacy newspapers’ online versions, Reforma and El Universal. This project uses a mixed method approach consisting of the content analysis of 1,400 news articles and 28 semi-structured in-depth interviews with the staff of the four organisations to answer the research question: **How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?**

The adaptability of digital natives to changes in the digital landscape and media systems allows them to set up their organisations to include new practices and cover niche markets. This study suggests that digital natives are embracing practices and distributing organisational resources that can fulfil the role of providing information to citizens differently than legacy news organisations because: 1) they are less focused on immediacy in their reporting and more concerned with providing context and explanation to the readers; 2) they distribute resources to cover issues about underserved groups in society, promoting a greater plurality of voices; and 3) staff routines are designed in such a way that they can dedicate time to more in-depth journalism such as investigative reporting and fact-checking, which allows them to hold power to account.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

I am not a digital native. I had access to the Internet at home when I was 16 years old; before then, I had to save money from my weekly allowance to use the Internet from a cybercafé. I grew up in Cuautla, a small city a few hours away from Mexico City with a limited cultural offering. There were no book or record shops; it had a couple of cinemas that only showed (mostly American) blockbusters. There were a handful of channels on TV for most of my childhood, and as noted above, no Internet. In 2003, I moved to Mexico City to study for a bachelor's degree in Social communication and with this, my opportunities to access all kinds of cultural expressions increased exponentially. The Internet became a space to navigate the new city and all its offerings; I searched for music to listen to, places to visit, and events to join. At this time, the Internet was changing towards the Internet as we know it nowadays. While I was studying for my BA, I saw the emergence of YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, blogs and podcasts. All these services and platforms emerged due to and because of a change in content production shift, user-focused platforms easy to edit and update. There was no need to have coding knowledge to have a website anymore.

Due to the speed and visibility of the changes in the media and communications field, in such formative time, I became interested in studying the affordances of the Internet to produce content outside of the legacy media and the big production companies. I followed this research topic while completing my master's degree, working as a research assistant, and teaching at the universities I have studied to media students. Two experiences led me to the topic of this thesis: the first, working in a media monitoring company in Mexico, where I have to closely read many kinds of news media and reports about the coverage of public and private actors; and the second, my participation in a study doing content analysis to compare the reporting of different kinds of news organisations about public policy, which included digital native news organisations (Guerrero et al., 2017). These experiences allowed me to keep a critical perspective on the media content produced in Mexico, particularly on news and digital media.

Defining digital native news organisations is not a simple task, as digital journalism keeps evolving at a fast pace, each time it is necessary identify new actors, practices, organisations. Digital natives (Stringer, 2019; Salaverría and Martínez-Costa, 2021), digital-born (Nicholls et al., 2016), entrepreneurial journalistic ventures, journalism or news online start-ups (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Carlson and Usher, 2016; Powers and Vera Zambrano, 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020), pure players (Küng, 2015), among other terms find in the literature. All these definitions have a key element in common: these news organisations have been created online only, in opposition to legacy media born online or migrated to the Internet. Some authors use the term digital natives to describe news organisations that come from a technological background in opposition to a journalistic background (i.e. BuzzFeed and Vice). However, this concept becomes problematic as some tech-based news organisations have hired high-profile journalists to fill top positions. Journalistic ventures or start-ups consist of organisations created by professional journalists backed by investors. However, there is no consistency in the literature in the use of these terms; authors often use more than one term interchangeably in the same publication, and therefore, it became more complicated to trace these subtleties of the conceptualisations.

This research uses digital native news organisations, an umbrella term for organisations conceived and created to produce news content to be distributed online, in contrast to ‘migrant’ organisations such as legacy news organisations that transitioned to an online platform. The distinction between migrant and native is a central part of the definition. The origin of the news organisations and the emergence of natives in an online environment allows them to start ‘from scratch’ and be more agile in adapting to changes and adversities. This concept can become problematic as digital native news organisations can be very different from each other. They have different business models and backgrounds as the concept considers their online origin but does not identify the background of the news producers (professionals versus amateurs or a combination of these) and how they collaborate with legacy news media. Some digital natives distribute content on different platforms (i.e., social media predominantly versus website-based), while others focus on producing content in a specific format or genre (such as infographics, VR).

Researchers and the industry consider digital natives innovators in the field (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017). It is necessary to acknowledge that digital natives are constantly evolving and adjusting at a rapid pace, and the next iteration of these organisations may outgrow this limiting term. Therefore, a concept that encompasses various types of news organisations with different backgrounds and outputs is required to understand the potential that digital news media can reach outside the legacy news organisations.

Regardless of the fuzziness of the concept, over the last decade, digital native news organisations have emerged around the world. The literature is optimistic about digital natives being able to “focus on the people driving the journalism forward” (Deuze and Witschge, 2020, p.xi) and researchers have analysed their successes and failures to provide insight into the potential of digital journalism. Digital natives do not need to ‘reinvent themselves’ online as legacy news organisations do. They start with *carte blanche* to construct their business models, objectives, practices, and styles, according to their resources; thus, there is a large diversity of digital natives.

Digital natives challenge legacy media and the news they produce by offering new perspectives, voices, and formats. This allows them to serve niche audiences, including demographics that have been underserved by legacy news organisations (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Studies of digital natives have shown that despite their different aims, they concur in wanting to create ‘better journalism’ or ‘journalism that matters’. In this thesis we explore the potential of digital natives in Mexico to produce a different kind of journalism to overcome the problems in the Mexican media system where press freedom has historically been limited by the government, commercial pressures, and violence. Digital natives are emerging in Mexico with the objective of creating journalism with more freedom than legacy news organisations (Higgins Joyce, 2018; Schmitz Weiss et al., 2018), as they can create new structures, business models and practices that allow them to produce a different kind of reporting.

Despite the attention that digital natives have received in academia, the content they produce has received much less attention, and there is a gap in knowledge relating to research that evaluates the quality of the content they produce and the way that their outputs are shaped by their practices, both worldwide in local contexts, including Mexico. Mexican digital natives

claim to carry out more independent and plural reporting, differentiating themselves from legacy news organisations. They also aim to do more in-depth reporting, whether investigative journalism, fact-checking or other modalities. This research focuses on two Mexican digital natives and two legacy newspapers' online editions to understand what kind of content they produce and how this can contribute to democracy.

1.1 Research questions and research design

The main research question that guides this study is:

- **How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?**

The following sub-questions help to answer this question:

- RQ 1. Which organisational structures are most prevalent among digital native news organisations and how are they reflected in journalistic practices?
- RQ 2. Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations and how do these shape the content they produce?

To answer these questions, this research uses a comparative case study approach. Two digital native news organisations (Animal Político and Aristegui Online) and two legacy newspapers (El Universal and Reforma) are analysed using content analysis of 1,400 news stories from two constructed weeks (one sampling a normal period and the second sampling the electoral campaign period in 2018) and 28 face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interviews. The research design employs a mixed methods approach, and the content analysis and the interviews aim to complement each other to make more robust inferences (Yin, 2016). The content analysis evaluates the content to understand the normative qualities of the news stories, while the interviews allow for an understanding of the practices and resources of the staff that shape the output. A mixed method will allow a comprehensive approach to the news organisations as there is not only limited knowledge available about Mexican digital

natives in particular, but also about the journalistic content produced by legacy media in the country.

The main findings of this research confirm that digital natives have structured their organisations to prioritise in-depth reporting practices and enrich the day-to-day information to provide context and explanation about the events reported. The smaller scale of the news organisation and not being attached to set deadlines as the printed press allows them to be more flexible, able to adapt to the resources they have available to not depend on official advertising than legacy newspapers, and therefore, this allows them to have more independence to report. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias produce more content that performs a watchdog role using formats such as investigative journalism, fact-checking, interviews, and *reportajes* (a Latin American in-depth reporting genre). Digital natives also produce more civic-oriented journalism that reports on social issues and gives voice to diverse sectors of society in a more prominent way than legacy newspapers. While they produce less volume of information than legacy newspapers, the information produced by digital natives contributes to a better performance of the informational role in providing information to citizens so they can make decisions and demand accountability from the government for wrongdoings and omissions.

This thesis is structured in two parts: the first discusses the theoretical and methodological approaches and the second discusses the findings from the empirical approach.

1.2 Thesis structure

Following this introductory Chapter 1, Chapter 2 puts the current research in context by analysing the Mexican media system and presents a literature review of digital native news organisations in Mexico. I want to highlight that I tried my best to provide the reader of this research with the context to situate the object of study to the readers who are not familiar with the Mexican case. Nevertheless, in some cases, the intricacies and subtleties of the media system and the cultural perceptions of media organisations and characters here referred to may not be fully captured in this thesis. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical

framework for assessing the findings regarding their contribution to democracy and a literature review with a global focus on digital native news organisations. Chapter 4 presents the research design and methods used in this study.

The second part of the thesis discusses the empirical evidence from the content analysis and interviews to answer the main research questions of the study. Chapter 5 has a more descriptive nature, as it is dedicated to understanding the characteristics of the four news organisations analysed in terms of objectives, funding and resources. The following two chapters are devoted to the analysis of content produced by all the news organisations. Chapter 6 analyses the routines of online editors and journalists in their day-to-day activities, mainly based on the interviews conducted for this research. The second part of the chapter discusses the analysis of the content.

Chapter 7 analyses in-depth reporting practices identified in the four news organisations: *reportaje*, interviews, fact-checking, and investigative journalism. Chapter 8 focuses on the analysis of sourcing practices to supplement the findings in Chapters 6 and 7. Finally, Chapter 9 discusses the main findings of this study and ends with some potential lines of study that could help to provide a further and deeper understanding of digital natives in Mexico and beyond.

Chapter 2. The Mexican media system and its transformation during the democratic transition

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to explore the characteristics of the Mexican media system. To understand its current configuration it first explores the development of journalism in Mexico from the beginning of the 20th century. This was when the commercial press started to develop in the country, and the media market started to develop based on the mutual exchange of benefits between the media owners and the state. Second, the chapter analyses the transition towards the democratisation of the country and the press to understand the context in which digital native news organisations were launched and operate, along with their limitations.

The Mexican media system is a compelling case study as it was developed with the influence of the US media model of the free market. However, it was constructed under an authoritarian rule at the same time. During the 20th century, most countries in Latin America were under the rule of authoritarian and military regimes, where press freedom was limited and promoted the development of highly concentrated media markets. Mexico did not develop either an open dictatorship or an authentic democratic system. Simulating democratic forms, this authoritarian regime installed control measures to secure the media's partisanship, which shaped the media system. Even though nowadays the country and its journalism are shifting to a more democratic system, the structures and practices of the old regime persist. This chapter explores these developments and the changes that took place during the democratisation process in the country.

2.2 The Mexican media system under authoritarian rule

The Mexican media system has primarily been shaped by the relationship between media owners and the state. The two factors that influenced their structure were: firstly, the government promoted the development of private media over public media; and secondly, it allowed a strong concentration of media markets. Television was the most concentrated media (consisting of a single media company, Televisa, for almost half a century). The second most concentrated was radio (with around 20 networks), followed by the press.

Compared with other media markets, the relationship between the media and the government has led to the Mexican media market developing in a unique way. In many European countries, strong public media has been fostered, while in Mexico, private media prevailed following the models of the US and Canada. For example, although private ownership and limited public media prevailed in the US and Canadian markets, the free market allowed a plurality of voices in the market to develop (Hallin, 2000b; Guerrero and Nesbitt-Larkin, 2011).

However, the media market in Mexico did not take the form of a free market with genuine competition. Instead, highly concentrated private media developed in a market controlled discretionally by the state in which only partisan media aligned to the government were favoured. This can be explained by the government limiting the emergence of competition by not developing their own public media and not opening the market up to new private competitors. In this way, media owners had to maintain loyalty to the government to keep their place in the market and increase the benefits they gained from this close relationship.

Mexico shares many similarities with other countries in Latin America, which also developed highly concentrated media systems due to lax regulations due to media and government partisanship. Many Latin American countries also share a past of authoritarian rule, which applied direct censorship and persecution of their critics, shaping how political issues were reported (Guerrero and Márquez Ramírez, 2014).

The Mexican media system started to take shape from the beginning of industrialised journalism in Mexico at the end of the 19th century. During the Porfirio Díaz dictatorship

(1876-1910), the country experienced economic prosperity and technological investment. These circumstances facilitated the emergence of a variety of newspapers. Since then, the relationship between the press and government has been based on mutual favours and political collusion (Carreño Carlón, 2000; Toussaint Alcaráz, 2011).

During the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), the press experienced a certain degree of freedom to report (Carreño Carlón, 2000). However, at the end of the conflict, the state became the main driving force for development in Mexico by reactivating the industry and reorganising the political and social spheres. The interventionist role of the state created a clientelist relationship with diverse social groups, including media enterprises (Guerrero, 2018), which promoted the creation of many newspapers. Most of them had a low number of readers, making them dependent on advertising and government subsidies (Trejo Delarbre, 2001).

By the 1950s, the regime had established and consolidated a set of control mechanisms to avoid criticism by the news media. This new regime developed a single-party system, where the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI, for its acronym in Spanish) ruled the country for 71 consecutive years (from 1929 to 2000). The party was able to maintain the appearance of a democratic system to secure its stay in power. The PRI established a set of strategies to secure the control of the media and the whole structure of the establishment (unions, cooperatives and other institutions of public life). The mechanisms of control established by the news media did not involve direct censorship but more subtle restrictions and economic incentives; these are explained in more detail in the following section.

The journalist Rodríguez Munguía (2010) documented this clientelist relationship between media owners and the government when the National General Archive of Mexico declassified the archives from the presidential office between 1920 to 1985. The author named the PRI regime 'the invisible tyranny' because the government was able to repress not using force but by controlling public opinion. Therefore, the relationship between the media and the state had a crucial role in maintaining power, and the media, the party and the president shared common interests. As the author explains, "in most cases, it was not necessary to recur to explicit pressure (...) as in lots of cases the media owners, and journalist themselves just embraced the decisions of those in power as their own" (Rodríguez Munguía, 2010, p.22).

In this context, all the characters involved were aware of their roles and how much they could push the limits, so explicit censorship became unnecessary. Concerning this, the journalist Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa argues that, “more than a governmental control over the press, the truth is that it is self-control, a kind of ‘environmental censorship’” (Granados Chapa, 1981, p.9).

The printed media has more plurality of ownership than broadcasting. However, with few readers, the press was not sustainable (Trejo Delarbre, 1991) and was dependent on informal ways of subsidising the media, such as public advertising, tax exemptions, and controlled paper prices. All these aspects are analysed later in the chapter. Nevertheless, broadcasting was more concentrated, specifically in terms of television. Although the Mexican media model was thought to be a mixed model with a balance between public and private media, private broadcasting prevailed.

Two kinds of broadcasting licences exist today in Mexico: for commercial use, and for official, cultural, and educational use. The non-commercial stations need a permit to operate, limiting their capacity to obtain income and not guaranteeing public funding. The development of public media was limited, and many of the official broadcasters served more as propaganda apparatus for the local governments. A few public radio stations in remote and indigenous regions became necessary for the communities. However, they worked in precarious conditions as they did not receive public funds, and regulations limited ways to obtain income through sponsorships. In many cases, the radio stations operated illegally as they could not obtain the necessary permits either because they did not meet the technical requirements for broadcasting – not just because the bureaucratic process impeded it, but mainly because they were harassed by the authorities (Calleja and Solís, 2005).¹

The lack of public media development in the country was mainly because the government simply did not consider it to be necessary. The government allowed the concentration of the

¹ Despite the obstacles to developing communitarian media in Mexico, historically, they have had an important public service by giving voice to minoritarian groups. Mostly in remote indigenous communities, this kind of media often constituted their only connection with the rest of the country. They also have a vital role in preserving the several languages and other aspects of its culture (See Calleja et al., 2005).

media markets, by limiting the introduction of competitors as part of the agreement with the media owners, including public media. Televisa thus grew as the main national network, along with only the public channel *Once TV* with its (almost) national coverage, and some local channels (Alva de la Selva, 2011). *Once TV* was founded in 1958 with an educative and cultural profile, and until 1993 it was the only national coverage public channel, when *Canal 22* was created. The second largest media conglomerate in Mexico, TV Azteca, was born in 1993 with the purchase of three television channels owned by the state, launching the age of the television duopoly. The new network competed with Televisa for ratings. However, this new actor did not promote plurality or better journalistic practices, as will be discussed later in the chapter (Trejo Delarbre, 2005).

In this context, television has been the primary news source for most people. For years, a single enterprise had a TV monopoly in Mexico, and the radio had limited competition. In addition, public media had limited independence from the state. Both radio and television have always been more oriented towards entertainment, but television newscasts have had an essential role in agenda-setting (Trejo Delarbre, 2005). For decades, Televisa newscast *24 Horas* was the main informative space (Alva de la Selva, 2011). Its news agenda was focused on promoting and maintaining a positive image of the government by avoiding issues that could be controversial for both the government and the enterprise (Guerrero, 2018).

The following section analyses the mechanisms used to regulate the relationship between the government and media owners and journalists.

2.2.1 Mechanisms for the exchange of favours

This section analyses the five most prominent mechanisms the government and media use to mediate their clientelist relationships, such as government advertising, bribes to journalists and news media, governmental institutions being created to monopolise resources, reporting practices carried out by the reporters, and the broadcasting regulation.

2.2.1.1 Government advertising

Investment in government advertising has been historically one of the most important sources of income for media enterprises, and it comes not only from the presidency but also

from diverse state secretaries, local government, state companies, and other public organisations. Some scholars have calculated that this income was three times higher than commercial advertising (Bohmann, 1994; Guerrero, 2010b), making it an unregulated subsidy for many media enterprises.

When a journalist or a news media outlet did not act as expected, the government withdrew their advertising. An example of how this mechanism works is the case of the magazine *Proceso*. In 1982 it was deprived of government advertising as a result of criticisms made against president José López Portillo (1976-1982), who said the famous phrase “I do not pay to be hit”² during his speech at a public event, ironically, to commemorate Press Freedom Day.

In addition to traditional advertising, the government purchased a sort of sponsored content called *gacetilla*, a propagandistic message paid for by the government. It is presented as a news story (it could be text-only, include photographs, or even be a photo report), with the intention that the reader believed that such text is a journalistic piece written by the newspaper, instead of paid content. Their cost varies according to the publication's size and location (Carreño Carlón, 2000; Rockwell, 2002). The *gacetillas* had a vital role in maintaining the public image of the government; as the scholar José Luis Benavides (2000) argues, a *gacetilla* is usually used to undertake some of the following functions: to submit positive messages about the institutions or politicians, to show the support of the newspaper to the regime, to deny rumours, and to discredit their adversaries.

During the 20th century, the *gacetilla* became one of the most important income sources for the newspapers. According to Benavides (2000), it was a well-kept secret until the end of the 1980s. In the 1990s, the newspaper *La Jornada* started to present these messages with subtle visual changes to differentiate them from their own journalistic work (Benavides, 2000), such as using a different font from the one they used for their editorial content and putting a

² This is how the speech was collectively remembered. The precise words were as follows: “A trading company organised as a professional business are entitled to the system give them advertising in order to be opposed systematically? This is, sirs, a perverse relationship, a morbid relationship, a sadomasochist relationship that gets close to a lot of perversions that I don’t mention here for respect for the audience: I pay you for be hit. Well, no sir!” (Rodríguez, 1993, p.218).

border around the content of the *gacetilla*. Nowadays, this practice continues mainly in smaller local newspapers with few readers, but it is not entirely excluded from newspapers with national circulation (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Maldonado Pérez, 2018).

2.2.1.2 Bribes

Government money also went directly into journalists' pockets. *Chayote*,³ *embute*⁴ and *sobre*⁵ are some of the names given to these bribes. Receiving money from the government was institutionalised to the extent that press offices were in charge of allocating and distributing these resources. Even some journalists were listed on the payrolls of public institutions (Guerrero, 2010b).

The amount of money, the periodicity, and how the payments were given to journalists varied according to the media they worked for (Riva Palacio, 1995-1996). The media owners kept low salaries for journalists, with the understanding that these payments from the government were regularly supplied as a complement to their salaries. In some cases the compensations were superior to their salaries (Riva Palacio, 1995-1996; Carreño Carlón, 2000). Journalists would also have to sell advertisements as part of their jobs, and they received a percentage of the amount collected (Riva Palacio, 1995-1996).

In other cases, the government offered different kinds of perks to journalists and editors, such as travel, cars, jewellery, houses, and more (Rockwell, 2002). The media enterprises also received financial support and contracts for services and got their debts and social security payments of the employees forgotten. However, the government withdrew these perks when the media did not play their part. Additionally, it would enforce the collection of any debts

³ The *chayote* is a local fruit, and the bribe was given this name after an event in 1966 where a public servant was announcing the government's investment in agriculture; when the bribe was being given to the journalists covering the event, he commented on the greenery of the *chayote*'s plants, referring to the money. Sometimes the *chayote* is also called by the short name *chayo*, or related names *Chayito*, *Rosario*, and other variations. A more extensive description of the anecdote can be consulted in Ajenjo (2013).

⁴ The literal translation is 'inlay'.

⁵ Meaning envelope, as the payment was made in cash and delivered in envelopes in some cases.

the news organisations had with them (such as taxes, loans, purchases of paper, as explained below) (Carreño Carlón, 2000).

2.2.1.3 Institutions

In the 1930s, the printed media faced a sharp increase in paper prices. To address this situation, in 1935 the Producer and Importer of Paper (PIPSA, by its name in Spanish) was created. This publicly owned enterprise monopolised the importation and distribution of paper across the whole country.

According to the behaviour each media displayed, debts and credits were managed discretionally by the state. Each successive government collected payments as a reward for 'good' behaviour or collected past debts as punishment. One of the most drastic measures against the news media that was excessively critical of the government was to refuse the distribution of the paper. Even though PIPSA was used as a control mechanism, in 1965 and 1969 the newspaper's owners requested the continuity of PIPSA to maintain the low costs of this resource when the enterprise's contract ended (Bohmann, 1994). In 1990, the paper business was released to the private sector (Arredondo Ramírez et al., 1991; Guerrero, 2010b).

Another institution used as a mechanism of control was the *Unión de Expendedores y Vendedores de los Periódicos de México*, a vendor's union that controlled distribution and owned the kiosks where printed media is still sold. Like many unions in Mexico, it was aligned with the PRI (Guerrero, 2010b). Handling the press distribution process allowed the government to have the last say over control of the publications. The union withheld the copies (partially or entirely) or denied their distribution services to the newspapers or magazines that dared to break the silence or presented the information in an unflattering way to the government (Bohmann, 1994; Rodríguez Munguía, 2010).

In November 1993, the liberal newspaper *Reforma* started to operate, looking to be an independent publication. The vendors' union held the copies of *Reforma* from sale and eventually refused to distribute the newspaper. In response, the newspaper sent its workers (including directors, columnists, and journalists) into the streets to sell the newspaper directly

to their readers. Since then, the El Norte/Reforma Group have kept their distribution independent from the union, which continues working, effectively monopolising the distribution of printed media (Aguilar and Terrazas, 1996).

2.2.1.4 Reporting practices

Their relationship with the state also influenced the practices of journalistic work. As noted above, part of the journalists' wages came from bribes to avoid criticism of the government or to talk favourably about them. This promoted the emergence of practices wherein investigative journalism, and the role of watchdogs, had no place. Instead, passive reporting prevailed in two ways, the reproduction of press releases and the *declaracionitis*.⁶ Press releases and press conferences organised by the news sources became not only a source of information about an event, but the content itself had to be reproduced by the news organisations (Trejo Delarbre, 2011).

The *declaracionitis* consisted of reporting only the quotes with minimal context or assessment of the comments made by the sources. Journalists justified this practice by claiming they were objective in the reporting because, in this way, they could reproduce controversial messages and claim that they were 'just reporting' what their sources said. When the media broke their 'pact of behaviour', the government could deny them access to information (Guerrero, 2010b), which is vital when the *soundbite* and *churnalism* practices prevail as the main way to build media content.

Márquez Ramírez (2012) explains that Mexican journalists perform the values of factuality and or objectivity as the reproduction of the discourses of politicians "which nearly always involve their detachment from the story and the verbatim reporting of statements and remarks" (p.177). These practices are not exclusive to Mexican journalism and have been broadly studied by scholars in different parts of the world. However, these practices were rooted in the journalists' routines because they allowed them to limit the risks of being perceived as talking about issues they should not be involved in or giving space to voices that

⁶ From the verb *to declare* and the suffix *-itis*, meaning 'inflammation', a rhetorical way to express that it is a 'disease'.

were uncomfortable for the regime. Following the script provided by the government became the safest position to take.

So far, this chapter has analysed the mechanisms that the government used to keep control of the news media in Mexico. Newspapers accepted these terms in order to collect benefits. However, even in this context, critical voices appeared. To some extent, they were tolerated by the state, but they were severely repressed in some cases. The government accepted general criticism as long it was within certain limits. Direct criticism of the regime, such as the president and its authority, the army, corruption, and electoral frauds were not tolerated (Lawson, 2002).

2.2.1.5 Lack of regulation of the media

In 1960 the Federal Law of Radio and Television was published, ten years after TV started to provide services and 40 years after radio. The regulation was compliant with the demands of the private industry. In this context, Televisa negotiated the possibility of expanding their business into television in exchange for opening up competition in radio (the consortium was already the largest owner of radio stations). This is why a larger plurality of radio owners exists and with a greater possibility of participation (Reyna Ruiz, 2012). The law was enacted as an agreement between the government and the media owners, and law enforcement was also subject to the relationship between media owners and the government (Trejo Delarbre, 1985; Reyna Ruiz, 2012).

Governmental advertising was not regulated until the recent constitutional reform of 2014, which mandated the creation of rules for government expenditure in advertising. However, the regulation did not make transparent the expenditures and did not regulate the mechanism that stops the discretionary distribution of resources among the news media (Guerrero, 2018). This is one of the changes that resulted from the country's democratisation process and its impact on the media, which is analysed in the following section.

2.3 The democratic transition

This section analyses the democratic transition in Mexico, which started in the 1980s and peaked in the 2000s, when the official party lost the presidency for the first time. However, as Voltmer (2013) points out, the transitions do not follow a linear process, so this section also analyses the press and state relationship until the present.

During the 1980s, the country suffered important changes in its structure that prepared the ground for the so-called democratic transition in 2000, when the period of the 'perfect dictatorship' ended with the election of Vicente Fox to the presidency. These changes were a result of the emergence of new printed media; the increase of newscasts on the radio (Guerrero, 2010a); the economic crisis during the 1980s; and discontent with the results of the presidential election in 1988⁷ (Lawson, 2002). The following analyses the changes in the media market that allowed a greater plurality in the media.

In the 1990s, neoliberalist policies opened up competition in diverse sectors in Mexico, including the media markets. In the 1990s, with TV Azteca increasing its audience and expanding its coverage, Televisa had to adjust its business strategies. When Emilio Azcárraga Jean became head of the company after the death of his father in 1997, the enterprise stopped its unconditional service to the PRI and opened up advertising spaces to maintain its competitiveness during the elections (Guerrero, 2010b). With increased competition in broadcasting, media companies started to make decisions based on their profits instead of their partisanship towards the ruling party, whose power was also declining. The leading media companies were robust enough to continue as market leaders. They had accumulated enough resources to give them a competitive advantage over new enterprises, such as access to broadcasting frequencies, established audiences, and experienced employees.

⁷ The results of the presidential election were controversial as it was claimed that fraud gave the victory to the PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. The protests were lead by the opposition, and a larger representation of the opposition in the chambers of deputies and in the Senate pressured for better conditions for future elections (Guerrero, 2010b).

In the 1990s, both media enterprises started an intense competition for the market and started to attend to their own corporate interest instead of exchanging favours with the government. The fierce competition between the parties to have more media presence during the 2000 election empowered the TV stations to negotiate in their favour. The same inertia that promoted the opening of the markets led media enterprises to have a more powerful position concerning the government. The modifications to the Federal Law of Radio and Television in 2002 and 2006 are an example of the extent of the media's power. In October 2002, a decree was approved that removed the electronic media's obligation to concede 12.5% of their advertising time as a tax payment (Guerrero, 2010b; Reyna Ruiz, 2012).

In December 2005, the pressure on the industry increased. The Chamber of Deputies approved a set of reforms to the Federal Law of Radio and Television and the Federal Law of Telecommunications. These reforms were popularly known as *Ley Televisa* (Televisa's Law), which conceded a series of direct benefits for that enterprise, including the following two: 1. The assignment of concessions for broadcasting, limiting the competition of the public media to access new spaces; and 2. Regulating the conditions of digital convergence favouring Televisa and TV Azteca⁸ (Esteinou Madrid, 2009).

This approval was not only surprising in relation to the bias of the content, but also in terms of the process – it was presented and approved in less than 10 minutes. Following the approval, diverse groups of the society strongly protested, and the Senate organised a series of discussions with scholars, experts, and public and private media representatives and NGOs. However, in March 2006, the set of laws was ratified without amendments despite the debate having strong arguments against it (Esteinou Madrid, 2009; Guerrero, 2010b). These are just some examples of how the influence of the media surpassed the power of the state and its

⁸ This is a short explanation of the main points of the law, but the list of advantages given to Televisa is lengthy. A broad discussion of the law and a complete chronology can be found in Esteinou Madrid and Alva de la Selva (2009).

institutions to advocate for their interests: “multimedia conglomerates had taken political action, not only boycott laws, but they create them” (Fernández, 2009).

Raul Trejo Delarbre claims that Mexico lives in a *Mediocracia*,⁹ which has been generated by media concentration (mainly in television and radio), the weakness of the state, and a political class leaning towards the media, “by the absence of more effective institutional frameworks and balances” (Trejo Delarbre, 2005). For this scholar, the hegemony of the media exceeds the state and the society itself by gaining more influence than political institutions to favour their corporative interests. This excess of media power undermined the state’s power and deeply damaged the development of a media system that works for the democratization of the country (Trejo Delarbre, 2005).

Following the approval of Ley Televisa, in May 2006, a group of citizens and politicians presented to the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation an action of unconstitutionality against 26 articles of this set of laws. In June 2007, the Supreme Court invalidated six articles (some just partially). During this period, Televisa and TV Azteca presented content in their newscasts intending to discredit the senators who headed the unconstitutionality claims (Esteinou Madrid, 2009; Guerrero, 2010b).

In the 2006 presidential election, television played a predominant role again during the campaigns;¹⁰ in response to the problems observed, a new electoral reform was approved in 2007. Concerning the news media, this reform emphasised the regulation of the parties, politicians, and organisations’ access to broadcasting. The electoral institution IFE (Federal Electoral Institute, by its name in Spanish; now called the National Electoral Institute) was set up to administrate the parties’ access to radio and television. Neither the parties nor any other person or institution could buy spots, to prevent clientelist practices. The airtime designated to the campaigns was to be deducted from the official times that the broadcasting

⁹ This could be translated as Mediocracy, an acronym of media and democracy.

¹⁰ There are many studies about the campaign and the protests that happened after the release of the results that can be consulted. Those focused on the media’s behaviour include Trejo Delarbre (2010) and Guerrero and Arellano (2012).

must assign to the state, representing an important loss of income during elections (Guerrero, 2010b).

During the 2012 presidential campaign, protests in favour of democratic media were loud. The day after Peña Nieto gained the Presidency, 2 December 2012, the *Pact for Mexico* was signed by the three main parties, approving a series of reforms that included the *Telecommunications Reform*.¹¹ Scholars, non-profit organisations, broadcasters and the telecommunications guild welcomed this reform as it provides better conditions to the public and communitarian media. The new legislation changes the conditions of advertising and sponsorship, allowing them to not depend solely on the government budget (Brambila, 2016). It also regulated the transition to digital radio and television and established the conditions for the auction of a new national broadcaster, opening up competition in the television market. It additionally provided new faculties to the IFT (Federal Telecommunications Institute, for its acronym in Spanish) to regulate the telecommunication sector to open up the market.¹²

2.3.1 The changing market structure

The Telecommunications Law of 2014 led to the creation of two new television networks. In October 2016 Imagen launched, and in February 2019, Multimedios Televisión started transmissions. These two new participants in Mexican television are not entirely new actors in the Mexican media system, as one network's owner is involved in the radio industry and the other is in the newspaper business.

However, we know little about how online media has transformed the media system. Diverse actors distribute content online, such as platforms that offer streaming of movies and television (Netflix is the main competitor of the national platforms). In news media, three

¹¹ The reforms included Education Reform, Energy Reform, Fiscal Reform, Social Security Reform, Political Reform, Security Reform, the creation of a National Anti-Corruption Commission, The Federal Institute for Access to Public Information and Data Protection.

¹² In Mexico, Televisa is one of the biggest media enterprises in Latin America, and Carlos Slim owns América Móvil, one of the largest telecommunication operators in the world. According to Forbes, this Mexican magnate is rated in the world's top ten of the most affluent men.

trends are observed. First, legacy newspapers are migrating to the Internet. Second, digital natives with local and national coverage are emerging (the issue under analysis in this research). Third, international digital native media installed national offices, including *Vice*, *Buzzfeed*, *The Huffington Post*, and *Politico*, from which have now closed their new divisions around the world (with the exception of *Politico*) due financial reasons.

2.3.2 The role of the state

The media in Mexico are still heavily dependent on government advertising and subsidies. As the media crisis in 2018 showed. The reason that lead to this was the over expenditure in official advertising by Enrique Peña Nieto's government, and the austerity plan of its successor, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Between 2013 and 2016, the outgoing government of Enrique Peña Nieto spent almost twice the budget assigned to official advertising; 55% of the budget was spent on only 20 media, and the remaining 45% was distributed across 3,108 media (WAN-INFRA, 2014; FUNDAR, 2017; Article 19, 2018).

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who took power on 1 December 2018, announced in July 2018 that, as part of his austerity plan, during his government official advertising would be reduced by 50%. In response to this declaration, some media fired journalists and columnists, arguing that they do not have the resources to retain their employees. Scholar Sosa Plata (2018) comments that the firings can be read as an editorial readjustment to reflect the changes in politics and is evidence of how much the media still relies on governmental advertising and subsidies. Article 19 and Fundar (2023) analysed the official advertising expenditure during López Obrador's ruling period. In 2019, the government spent 3,694 million pesos, which has decreased since then; in 2022, the spending was 2,432 million. This represented a drastic expenditure reduction compared with the previous government, which spent 7,849 million pesos in 2018 (Article 19, 2019). In Andrés Manuel López Obrador's ruling period, news organisations and journalists are frequently disqualified by the president, claiming that they spread 'fake news' about his persona or his government (Cortés, 2022; Newman et al., 2023).

2.3.3 Development and challenges in journalism as a profession today

One of the more critical limitations of journalists' autonomy is the violence they face as professionals, and any study of Mexican journalism cannot ignore their repercussions. Mexico has been ranked as one of the most dangerous countries to be a journalist for many years. Since 2006, when the president declared the 'War on Drugs', the violence in the country has increased exponentially. Journalists have been victims of violence from the state and drug cartels, limiting the independence and ability of journalists and news media to do their job. According to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, Mexico ranked number 128 of 180 countries, categorised as 'in a difficult situation' for the high concentration of media and crimes against journalists that cover news of organised crime and political corruption. Most such crimes remain unpunished, making Mexico one of the deadliest countries for practising journalism (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). The violence against journalists and the impunity of such crimes reduces the democratic contributions of the media to the citizenry and endangers the democracy of the country, Voltmer (2013) argues. The lack of rule-of-law leaves the victims without justice and debilitates democratic institutions.

Gonzalez de Bustamante and Relly (2017) found that news media are decreasing their coverage of 'hot topics' by interviewing journalists on both sides of the Mexico and US border. Instead, the journalists are limited to publishing vague information to alert the citizens or publishing content on social media using fake profiles to protect their identities. However, the violence against journalists is not only focused on the border, or against journalists who cover crime beats, and the violence is not only perpetrated by the drug cartels, but by government officials (See Brambila, 2018).

In response to the climate of violence, journalists, International institutions, and NGOs have also contributed to developing strategies for the protection of journalists (See Brambila, 2018). The context of violence urgently demands the professionalisation of journalists. The profession has implemented sourcing and publication practices to continue reporting correctly, as mistakes in reporting undermine the values of truth or factuality and can cost them their lives. However, the primary mechanism adopted by journalists is self-censorship (Lara Klahr, 2007; Hughes and Márquez Ramírez, 2017; González Macías, 2018).

According to the Worlds of Journalism study, virtually all Mexican journalists have university degrees: 79.5% have a BA, and 17% are postgraduates. The rest said they had not completed their university studies (Márquez Ramírez and Hughes, 2016a; Rodelo et al., 2023). According to research conducted by Márquez Ramírez (2012), more media workers with a degree in journalism or communications are changing the journalistic practices forged by the corruption of the regime. However, the change is slow because journalistic practices are part of each organisation's culture and are not just constructed individually.

In addition to the formation of universities, in the region there have emerged national and international organisations dedicated to developing the skills of journalists, e.g. The Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, *Fundación para el Nuevo Periodismo Iberoamericano*, International Center for Journalists, Freedom House, Article XIX, and *Programa Prensa y Democracia* (Press and Democracy Program). NGOs dedicated to journalists' training have also become more relevant, including *Periodistas de a Pie* and *Clases de Periodismo*.

The present research does not intend to study the context of violence in Mexico and its implications for journalism. However, it is essential to acknowledge this impact on journalistic practice and the news agenda, as it limits their independence. Digital natives are emerging in this context of limited autonomy, now not only by state but also by the violence. According to Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando (2014); and Higgins Joyce (2018) the digital natives have some independence from external factors, mainly financial independence, but it will be important to explore whether they are also less vulnerable to violence. These organisations aim to be journalistic ventures more focused on accomplishing a particular style of journalism than on economical success, even if that implies that the digital natives only exist for a short period (Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Higgins Joyce, 2018). Higgins Joyce (2018) conducted three focus groups with 17 journalists from eight digital native news organisations in Latin American countries. The participants in this study perceived that their media could achieve more independence due to their different financial and organisational structures. Some journalists saw independence as the reason for their media's existence, and others saw the independence of the digital natives as the opposite of what legacy media experiences. The Mexican journalists pointed out the importance of independence in covering issues relevant to society, such as "violence, corruption and accountability" (Higgins Joyce, 2018,

p.722). The following section analyses the previous models proposed for the study of the Mexican system.

2.4 The study of the Mexican media system

Thirty years after the democratisation process started in the country, the media system is still in transition. Diverse researchers have undertaken to understand how the country's democratic transition is shaping the media system. While all the perspectives generally have aspects in common, the differences between them show the transformations of the media system according to the time studied, the perspective analysed, and the variables observed. However, all the scholars analysed here agree that the main aspect to analyse is the close relationship between media owners and political power. That relationship allowed broadcasting to concentrate on a handful of owners, and in retribution, the owners will dedicate their loyalty to the government in turn. In that way, the journalists had independence to produce news limited by those agreements. In this section four perspectives are analysed: 1) the liberal and political economy perspective through which Hallin (2000b) analyses the Mexican case; 2) the analysis of clientelistic relationships by Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002), 3) the analysis focused on the changes towards a democratic transition by Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2006), and 4) the captured liberal model proposed by Guerrero (2014).

2.4.1 Liberalism and political economy perspectives

Hallin (2000b) makes a theoretical analysis of the Mexican media system from two perspectives: liberalism and political economy. The liberal model in the USA is based on private broadcasting and a competitive newspaper industry. However, in Mexico, the broadcasting industry was highly concentrated in a single enterprise, and the newspaper industry had many newspapers and few readers, having to rely on support from the government. Hallin (2000b) pointed out the limitation of the liberal perspective in analysing the Mexican media system, as media owners are 'part of the system of power', therefore the market dynamics promoted by neoliberalist policies did not act as promoters of plurality and

autonomy, as liberalism claims. Hallin (2000b) highlights the usefulness of instrumentalist political economy in understanding the relationships between media owners, investors, the government and other political and social groups. The analysis shows that direct censorship was unnecessary for the country, as the media owners and political elites had shared interests: the media's loyalty to the state was compensated with its benefits.

The liberal theory claims that freedom in the media markets can provide the media companies with autonomy and plurality. A limitation of the liberal model is that it does not explain the interference of the state in trying to make the media more democratic, as happened in Mexico with the reforms of the electoral legislation in the 1990s. Hallin (2000b) concluded that “neither the liberal nor the critical political economy perspective is fully adequate to the analysis of Mexico’s unusual system of power or the process of political change” (p.106).

Trejo Delarbre (2005) also used a political economy perspective to analyse the relationships between media owners, the government, and other social actors such as unions. His analysis is also framed in discussions about ideology and argues that highly concentrated media contributes to shaping a predominant culture and sense of taste among Mexican citizens, as the concentration limits the options of content available. The author's main argument is that the media, particularly in broadcasting, has accumulated so much symbolic power and is not performing the role of a Fourth Estate, acting as a watchdog and demanding accountability of those in power. Instead, the media is performing the function of the Fourth Estate in a negative way, where the hegemony of the media exceeds the state and society itself, particularly since 2000, allowing media owners to manipulate the state's regulatory capacity in relation to telecommunications.

2.4.2 Clientelistic relationships

Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) made a theoretical comparison of the Mexican media system with Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Colombia. The authors looked at parallelism between European countries identified as Polarized Pluralist media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and Latin American countries, focusing on the clientelist relationship between media and government. Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) defined

clientelism as “a pattern of social organisation in which access to social resources is controlled by patrons and delivered to clients in exchange for deference and various kinds of support” (pp.183-184).

Compared to the seven countries analysed, Mexico showed more clientelistic relations between the state and media. Mexico had a low circulation of newspapers, while broadcasting had a predominant role; weak regulation and laxity in its enforcement allowed the development of highly concentrated broadcasting. In this context, journalism did not develop autonomy, and its aim was more “making politics than making money” (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002, pp.183-184). The advocacy role became central in the press to keep hold of benefits from the state, as the markets did not develop enough for them to reach economic independence. Clientelism breaks down the autonomy of journalism in the prevalence of interests of elites over the public interest. In this way, the role of the press became instrumental, to the detriment of the government's opponents.

Researchers like Lawson (2002) and Hughes (2006) have documented the transitional process of the Mexican media towards the American or liberal model. During the 1990s, the country suffered important changes in structures that prepared the ground for the so-called democratic transition in 2000, when the period of ‘perfect dictatorships’ ended. The authoritarian regime shifted and adopted liberal values that made the media more independent from the state. It opened up intense competition for the market and the media started to favour their own corporative interest rather than exchanging favours with the government.

Both authors conducted a content analysis of different Mexican newspapers and interviewed journalists and media owners at different moments. Lawson (2002) analysis portrayed the content of national and local newspapers and television newscasts from 1996 to 1997. The author held an optimistic point of view concerning the independence of Mexican journalism and claimed that the influence of foreign models and the example of the few independent media in the country led to the adoption of new journalistic roles contrary to the old ones. The adoption of these new roles resulted in the addition of non-official actors as sources, investigations of ‘official misconduct’, and more balanced coverage during electoral

campaigns to respond to the demands of an active civil society. Lawson (2002) concluded that from those changes the Fourth Estate emerged.

Hughes (2006) was less convinced that the media system was transformed completely. The author studied four national newspapers conducting content analysis, interviews, and observations in newsrooms. She studied the campaign process in 2000 when the PRI lost the presidential election for the first time. She claimed that following the transition from the authoritarian model emerged a hybrid media model that integrated three models: authoritarian, market-driven, and civic. The authoritarian model corresponds to the media aligned with the old regime, characterised by a lack of autonomy. The market-driven model can be seen mainly in broadcasting, which, in the pursuit of more ratings, introduced greater plurality in political coverage, and in the civic model, which presents a kind of journalism that is more independent, assertive, and diverse.

2.4.3 Captured liberal model

The analysis by Guerrero (2014) uses the categories of analysis proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) for their media system models, and argues that Latin American countries can be represented together in a model called 'Captured Liberal'. A 'captured state' is characterised by limited policymaking, the application of regulations to benefit some actors, and restrictions on journalistic performance in a context dominated by private media.

With the opening of media markets and the limited ability of the state to regulate the media, their concentration turned instead to promoting pluralism (Guerrero, 2014). The expenditure of the Mexican government on advertising still constitutes the primary source of income for them, and the state also uses this financial clout to negotiate favourable coverage or omissions in reporting (Lawson, 2002; Guerrero, 2014). The journalistic performance is captured "by illegitimate and undue influence of corporate and political interests not only in terms of topics, tones, and frames, but also in the most basic issues regarding journalists' freedom of speech and personal security" (Guerrero, 2014, p.51).

According to Guerrero and Márquez Ramírez (2014), media autonomy in Mexico is limited by the media's internal factors, including the high instrumentalisation of the media, as the news

organisations have not developed the strength to deal with the pressures of the markets and politics. The external factors that have limited the autonomy of the media are polarised politics, financial crises, corruption, impunity or the selective administration of justices, organised crime, and violence.

As can be seen in the further analysis of the media system, researchers have paid more attention to analysing Mexico's broadcasting system than the press. Given the high media concentration, mainly in television, and their predominance in terms of penetration, it is understandable that most studies are focused on that sector. All these perspectives explain the media system transition, emphasising the political transition of the 2000s. Guerrero (2014) is the only author who has analysed the relatively recent media system changes. However, modifications to the property regulations started to introduce more competition in the market. The most significant gap in the analysis of the Mexican media system is the lack of analysis of the impact of the Internet on Mexican journalism.

The following section summarise some of the recent transformations in the media system. Using the structure of analysis made by Hallin and Mancini (2004), these transformations can be allocated to the categories: the markets' structure, professionalisation, and the state's role.

2.5 News content produced under authoritarian rule

A more substantial volume of research about the authoritarian regime and journalism in Mexico has been carried out by journalists writing about their own experiences, about why they decided not to report an event, how they were silenced, or the consequences of breaking the silence agreement. Some texts are written in a mix of chronicles, essays, and memoirs, where they provide testimony and analyse their experiences as journalists. An example of this kind of publication is *Tiempo de saber* (Time to know), in which Scherer García and Monsiváis (2003) review different moments of the press in Mexico and their relationship with the government since the early beginnings of Mexico as an independent country (early in the 19th century) to the early 2000s. In *Prensa vendida* (Sold press), Rodríguez Castañeda (1993)

revisits a series of cases that exemplify the relationship between press and government during eight presidential terms, from the 1950s to the 1990s. Another example is *La prensa de los jardines* (The press in the gardens) by Riva Palacio (2004), in which the author compiles a series of his articles and conferences about the press and government.

The history of journalism in Mexico has been the subject of historical novels, such as in *Los Periodistas* (The Journalists) by Leñero (1978), in which the coup at the newspaper *Excelsior* in 1976 is narrated using literary resources. Related to the theme of *Los Periodistas*, Serna (2019) published *El vendedor de silencios* (The merchant of silence). In this novel, the main character is journalist Carlos Denegri who worked for *Excelsior*. However, unlike the characters in Leñero's book, Denegri was an ally of the government and accepted the exchange of silence for gratification.

While these publications provide essential insight into the journalistic work in the complicated relationship of the press with the state, these books did not document that relationship. However, in a few cases, journalists have published documented studies. For example, Rodríguez Munguía (2010) reviewed the archives of presidential communication when they were open to public consultation in 2001. The author shows the strategies of the government and the complicity between media owners to control messages about the regime, based on letters and internal communications from the presidential offices (between 1960 and 1980) from the national archive. Most of the contributions from academia and journalists aim to reconstruct the field's history and expose events that were silenced during authoritarian rule. However, few studies supply empirical data about how those relationships between government and media owners affected the quality of the information produced, which are reviewed in the following sub-section.

2.6 News content produced during the transition period

Few studies about Mexican journalism analyse the content produced. The Academia (mostly foreign researchers) analysed the content produced by the end of the 20th century when Mexico and its news media were in a transition process, as analysed previously in the chapter.

The few examples of content analysis that illustrate the media's partisanship do not study the peak of the PRI's power, but concentrate on the transition period. For example, Lawson (2002) analysed the editorial content from the newspaper *La Jornada* and the fortnightly political magazine *Proceso*, considering the even years from 1948 to 1996. For *La Jornada*, the editorials published during the last 12 days of September were analysed. For *Proceso*, the editorial columns from the last issue of September in the same years were analysed. During this period, Lawson found that the civic framings increased overall. Lawson defined these civic framings as the representation of "Mexican society as a pluralistic collection of autonomous social groups or if they portrayed the political conflict in Mexico as a struggle by organised civic groups against the regime" (Lawson, 2002, p.127).

Hughes (2006) study intended to understand the changes in Mexican journalism from 1980 to 2000 when the country and the press were transitioning from authoritarian towards more democratic institutions. The content analysis conducted aimed to understand the changes in the president's representation and the opposition in the news during the period analysed. The newspapers studied were selected to represent different kinds of publications. Representing the authoritarian approach was *Excelsior*, while *El Universal* was a transitional case, and *Reforma* and *La Jornada* were civic-oriented. The results showed that *Excelsior* focused its coverage on the president and the ruling party. At the same time, the other three newspapers presented more diverse coverage, with *Reforma* standing out with more coverage of the opposition and civil society. However, *La Jornada* and *Reforma* emerged during the period analysed, replacing, in 1995, *Unomásuno* and *El Norte* respectively.

Hallin (2000a) conducted a content analysis of the flagship newscasts from Televisa and TV Azteca in 1994 and 1998-1999 (the second sample was constructed with content across the two years). The analysis showed that the political coverage halved in the national news from 1994 to 1998-1999 (from 70% to 35%), while crime coverage increased from less than 10% to 21%. Hallin concluded that the Mexican TV newscasts suffered a shift towards a tabloid-style because of market-driven journalism in opposition to the previous partisan journalism that favoured the PRI. Electoral campaigns received more attention than in other periods, and the earlier content analysis studies analysed the electoral period for the 1988 presidential election. Arredondo Ramírez and colleagues (1991) conducted a study analysing the

candidates' coverage on TV and in the printed press. For TV, the Televisa flagship newscast and the newscast *Día a Día* from the governmental television were analysed during 55 days of the campaign period. For the analysis of the printed press, six newspapers were selected: *Unomásuno*, *Excelsior*, *El Universal*, *La Jornada*, *El Nacional*, and *Novedades*. The authors found inequality in the coverage of the different parties, benefiting the PRI mainly in the TV coverage, as the press showed more diversity in its coverage. However, the PRI benefited with more volume and positive coverage again.

Hughes (2006) also studied coverage of the president and the opposition during the 2000 presidential campaign. *Reforma*, *La Jornada*, *El Universal* and *Excelsior* were the newspapers studied once again. This analysis showed that, overall, the volume of coverage of the president decreased from 60% to 20%. Similarly, the positive tone in the coverage of the president also decreased. Meanwhile, the opposition voices increased from 5% to 44%. This content analysis also showed that the newspaper that had fewest changes in the presidential coverage was the one identified as authoritarian, *Excelsior*.

These studies contribute to understanding the changes towards more civic journalism and new journalistic practices that used the increased editorial independence gained while also documenting their partnership with the government. During the last years, Mexican scholarship has increased the use of content analysis for journalistic messages, and there is more evidence about what kind of content is being produced. However, digital natives have only been included in a few studies so far, as reviewed below.

2.7 The study of digital natives in Mexico

Scholarship on journalism in Mexico has primarily had a political economy perspective, which aims to explain the power relationships between the state and the media. Most have focused on analysis of the PRI's rule. Another dominant perspective in the study of journalism aims to explain the changes that happened during the democratic transition, or as a consequence of it. However, most of the literature about Mexican journalism takes a historical approach. Journalists and scholars have focused on constructing the development of journalism based

on events constructed by the compilation of anecdotes and memoirs (Fuentes Navarro, 2003; Hernández, 2004; Hernández Ramírez and Schwarz, 2008; Mellado, 2009; Fuentes Navarro et al., 2011).

Given the importance of the democratic transition of the country and in Mexican journalism, another major transition has been poorly documented: the digitalisation of journalism. Since the mid-1990s, with the development of the Internet, Latin American newspapers started to create online versions in a context of poor technological developments and a lack of interest from the journalists and media owners – until 1995, a couple of years later than in most developed regions (Salaverría, 2016b). Additionally, penetration of the Internet has been slower in this region, and the digital divide is severe. The scarcity of journalism studies has resulted in a lack of documentation of this transition into the digital era in most Latin American countries.

The lack of consistency in studying the Mexican legacy media's migration to the Internet has also limited the theories and information available to understand this new context. Most of the literature where Mexican digital journalism is explained consists of magazines, newspaper articles, and unpublished undergraduate or Master's dissertations; and knowledge about Mexican online journalism is predominantly based on descriptions and assumptions rather than comprehensive and systematic studies of the phenomena (Crovì Druetta, 2016). Salaverría (2016b) highlights that the lack of research or published studies about digital journalism prevails in Mexico and most Ibero-American countries.

The online environment in Mexico has allowed the emergence of news sites, blogs, and video blogs that began to give spaces to portray different points of view, topics, places, and voices. This has created a more plural environment than the one that legacy media had created (Crovì Druetta, 2016). Along with digital natives, non-professional spaces and news organisations also emerged during the second part of the 2000s. *Reporte Índigo* launched in 2006, becoming the first digital native organisation focused on news content. It was followed by *Eje Central* in 2009; *Animal Político* in 2010; *La Silla Rota* in 2010; *Sin Embargo* in 2011; and *Aristegui Noticias* in 2012, among many others news sites with local and national reach.

Fourteen years after the emergence of the first digital native news organisation acknowledged in Mexico, there has been little research about these kinds of organisations. One of the most important works that has provided insights into the digital natives does not come from academia but think-tanks and NGOs that, in collaboration, have organised an annual Latin American Forum of Digital Media and Journalism¹³ since 2012. This forum reunites digital journalists, NGOs, enterprises, and scholars to discuss their experiences and challenges in digital journalism for legacy and digital native news organisations.

In 2016 the organisers of the forum published a report about all the national digital natives they identified as news organisations in Latin America (Meléndez Yúdico, 2016). The report sent a questionnaire to the news organisations to explore their aims, business models, technological affordances, and challenges. They also conducted interviews with directors and general editors to expand the information received from the surveys. While this report gives an overview of the digital natives presenting the characteristics of each media, it does not offer any analysis of the advantages and challenges these organisations face in Latin America.

Digital natives have been analysed together with migrant legacy news media without differentiating between the two types of news organisations. While the analysis contributed to understanding digital journalism development in Mexico, these studies do not explain the organisational differences in understanding being a digital native. For example, the book *Cyberjournalism in Ibero-América* (Salaverría, 2016a) discusses digital journalism development throughout Ibero-America. Each chapter was written by a scholar where the newspapers' transition to the digital environment and the emergence of new spaces is analysed in each country (Salaverría, 2016a). However, the Mexican case is reduced to a chronological revision of the legacy newspapers' migration to the Internet and commentary about digital natives (Covi Druetta, 2016). Other senior communication researchers in Mexico have discussed digital natives in Mexico, but without empirical data. For example, Toussaint Alcaráz (2018) defined the characteristics that distinguish migrant newspapers

¹³ *Foro Latinoamericano de Medios Digitales y Periodismo* (<http://forodemediosdigitales.com/>).

from digital natives and mixed models. Trejo Delarbre (2012) offered a critique of digital natives and their efforts to produce investigative journalism by observing several cases.

Most of the scholarly literature analyses Mexican digital natives compared to other Latin American countries. For example, in the study conducted by Barredo Ibáñez and Díaz Cerveró (2017), the authors analysed the interactive capabilities of the websites of digital news organisations from Colombia, Mexico, and Ecuador, by assessing the accessibility of the website, use of social media, and the possibilities for readers to publish content and leave comments. In general, they concluded that most of the sites made poor use of the tools that would allow the participation of audiences. The websites with more options for participation were found on legacy newspaper sites, according to the authors, this was because they had more resources than the digital natives (Barredo Ibáñez and Díaz Cerveró, 2017; Díaz Cerveró and Barredo Ibáñez, 2017).

Studies conducted by Higgins Joyce (2018) and Weiss and colleagues (2018) involved focus groups with journalists, directors and founders of digital natives from eight Latin American countries to analyse the motivations, independence, innovation and sustainability of their news organisations. These studies found that the digital natives new organisational and financial structures could foster more editorial independence to overcome the threats they face in their countries. Additionally, the researchers found that journalists from digital natives identified themselves with an interventionist role, engaging with the communities and setting their agendas.

Studies conducted by Harlow and Salaverría (2016) and Salaverría and colleagues (2019) analysed digital natives from 20 Latin American countries to understand whether the digital natives were using the affordances of the Internet as an alternative option. The researchers analysed the characteristics of the news organisations such as ownership, aims, funding, practices, and type of content published. From this analysis, the authors found that most digital natives were challenging the notions of traditional journalism by adopting non-traditional values such as independence, freedom of speech or press and transparency. Similarly, they found that most of these sites saw themselves as actors defending human rights, standing for small groups, and combating corruption. The authors defined this set of characteristics as being 'more alternative'. They found that the digital natives' inclination to

be more alternative was more substantial in those non-profit organisations or partially funded through NGOs. Tejedor and colleagues (2020) reported similar findings from their comparative study to analyse the business models of 14 Latin American digital natives, which includes Animal Politico. The digital natives analysed focus on niche audiences, producing specific types of journalism (such as fact-checking) and specialising in reporting inequality, corruption, politics and social issues. The digital natives' business models rely mainly on advertising to provide professional services (such as workshops, consultancy, design, and content production) and donations.

The study conducted by Gómez Montero (2017) analysed three Latin American digital natives: *La Silla Vacía* (Colombia), *Animal Político* (Mexico), and *Agência Pública* (Brazil), to determine whether these news sites' independence changed their journalistic practices. The researcher found that these three media showed a diversity of formats and ways to interact with audiences and promoted the participation of different actors from civil society. The author concluded that these organisations were not neutral reporters but political actors that influenced public opinion and were watchdogs of democracy. Palau-Sampio (2017) analyses six Latin American fact-checking projects, where Animal Político is included, by analysing the content they produce qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings show that most of the content analysed showed inaccuracies of the discourse to some extent. Therefore, it is essential to consider the methodologies and the scales used to classify the verdict (from true to false).

There are few studies that put the case of Mexico in a global context. Harlow and colleagues (2017) analyse how digital news organisations (migrants and natives) around the world covered the protests around the kidnapping and massacre of 43 students in Ayotzinapa, Mexico. The research found that the alternative media framed the protests as peaceful and focused coverage on the debate more than the mainstream outlets analysed. However, this study does not allow a comparison of the coverage of the Mexican media with other countries. Only one study has compared Mexican digital journalism in a global context. In 2017 Mexico was added to the countries analysed in the *Digital News Report* by the Reuters Institute, which studies the news consumption and trust of digital media in 46 countries representing all continents (Newman et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2023).

Many publications about Mexican digital natives are more descriptions of a particular practice or news organisations. An important contribution to case studies and follow-up of the consumption trends of digital natives in Mexico has been made by the legacy newspaper *El Economista*,¹⁴ which publishes a monthly follow up of digital natives dedicated to news and entertainment, analysing the volume of visits, and occasionally focusing on reviewing a particular site.

In the *Colloquium for Digital Journalism* organised by the Knight Center for Journalism in the Americas, examples of news sites or journalistic practices that offer new ways to report the news were discussed. This event analysed the case of the Mexican digital native *Pictoline*, which presents its content visually, usually just using a single image, illustration, or infographic to explain the news, scientific information, or a widespread phenomenon. This method of presenting information in a simple visual format has generated engagement with readers. Their audience sharing their content has been the main factor in the growth of *Pictoline* (López Linares, 2017).

These publications have examined the characteristics of distinctive digital natives in a regional context. However, they have not contributed to understanding what kinds of content are produced by Mexican digital natives. As mentioned above, some studies have included digital natives among the news media analysed. For example, the study of Frankenberg (2015) in which the comments of two newspapers (*El Universal* and *Reforma*) and a digital native (*Animal Político*) were analysed to determine if those sites were fostering a public sphere. The study's findings showed that readers' participation is limited to commenting on the news but not deliberating by fostering rational discussions with solid arguments.

A study by Guerrero and colleagues (2017) analysed the coverage of public issues in two situations: during the policymaking process of four policy proposals; and in three issues from investigative reports. The news media analysed were two TV newscasts, two radio newscasts, four national newspapers, one weekly magazine, and two digital natives. This study found that print and broadcast media reported either consistently supportive or critical views of the

¹⁴ <https://www.eleconomista.com.mx/Ranking-de-Medios-Nativos-Digitales>

policies and investigative cases according to their political leanings. The coverage in digital natives was more balanced when discussing the policy proposals and critical in the case of investigative reporting.

Diverse investigations analysed the fact-checking exercise led by Animal Político during the 2018 elections in collaboration with 80 other organisations. Galarza Molina (2020) interviewed 13 journalists who participated in Verificado 2018. The findings show the differences between daily reporting and Verificado 2018's practices, which require a more robust analysis and understanding of data to verify the information. The author also claimed that the fact-checking project incentive the discussion about the quality of Mexican journalism. Magallón Rosa (2019) analysed the tweets from Verificado 2018, finding that the presidential candidates' debates and Election Day were the events when the fake news increased, most of them attributing false declarations to the candidates. Martínez Carrillo and Tamul (2019) analysed Verificado 2018 self-promotion to position itself before the campaign period, applying textual analysis to fact-checking reports, tweets, and Facebook posts. Their results show that the platform presented using successfully the concepts of legitimacy, collaboration and the use of humour, which allowed them to engage with audiences.

The COVID-19 pandemic also inspired studies to analyse the role of fact-checking to understand the spreading of misinformation and fake news. Quintana Pujalte and Pannunzio (2022) surveyed 48 fact-checking in Spanish from the USA, Europe, and Latin America; the findings point out the lack of transparency about the selection and verification process of the news. Aguila Sánchez and Pereyra Zamora (2022) conducted a content analysis of the fact-checking reports produced by Animal Político and Verificado during 2020 and 2021 about COVID-19 hoaxes, which reported a high volume of anti-vaccine content circulating in Mexico.

2.8 Discussion

In discussions about the Mexican media system, it is agreed that the particular authoritarian regime shaped the ownership of the media. This created a highly concentrated private broadcasting system, with limited public media participation and many newspapers that

relied mainly on the government because they had not created a base of readers. Then the press was not focused on the citizen's needs but on the people in power and the elites (Avilés, 2007). The owner of Televisa, the leading broadcaster in Mexico, declared openly that it was at the service of the regime in the 1980s. Therefore, citizens who rely primarily on television to be informed did not have a plural space to see their interests represented.

It is also claimed that media have an essential role in a democracy, and in countries that are in the process of democratisation the media have a central role that can slow down or speed up the process (Voltmer, 2013). Despite the openings of the markets and the positive effect on the democratisation of the media, the legacy media keeps struggling with the old structures and practices, according to researchers such as Hughes (2006), and González Macías (2012); Márquez Ramírez (2012). It is agreed that the democratisation of the country in the 2000s and the opening up of the media changed the kind of journalism conducted in Mexico. The work of media with a civic orientation contributed to that transition, but it was not generalised in all the media, and not all the news practices were retained. This is explained by Mellado and Van Dalen (2017), who called this the honeymoon period in the democratic transition, a period when the civic role and watchdog role became more relevant. When the honeymoon ended, the practices of the authoritarian period merged with the new ones.

Márquez Ramírez (2012) found that journalistic culture and Mexican journalists' practices coexist in 'old and new' roles and values that on the theoretical spectrum can be identified as contrary, or at least not compatible. Trying to measure the existence of a model or how different models interact seems to contribute little to the analysis, as the Mexican media system's particularities lead journalists to forge their own practices to adapt themselves to the context. Instead, it will be more relevant to assess what kind of content is being produced after the democratic transition of the media and the changing practices resulting from the digitalisation of journalism.

The research about journalism focuses on explaining how the media system was formed and the many failures that the authoritarian regime contributed to, focusing less on how they changed over time and how those structures shape journalistic content and practices. In a diverse country such as Mexico, the media has failed to portray the society that it is supposed to serve. Moreover, there has also been little discussion in the scholarship about it. Young

scholars are starting to investigate those changes and question Mexican journalism. However, the gaps are extensive, and they are not being closed quickly, as the Internet drives new problematics and necessities, contesting journalism in general.

As was reviewed previously, the changes in the media system were the result of the reforms made in 2014 to the legislation of the media establishing a regulation to open the market and promote plurality; the mechanisms of self-regulation created by the media; and the increasing number of journalists with experience of higher education. It seems that the conditions for the existence of the normative roles of journalism are still in development. However, the country is still mainly ruled by patronage and a corrupt political culture in both the government and the media. The Internet can be a space that allows the emergence of new media enterprises where they can undertake journalism with more independence, which could lead to new practices.

The media markets gained new competitors with the emergence of digital natives. These new competitors have not been systematically studied in Mexico and it is assumed that because they are emerging without the co-dependent relationship between the news organisations and the government, they are less constrained by that relationship. However, there are no studies to date that have analysed whether these new actors have more freedom to do journalism in a different way, and in what way this is an alternative to the legacy media.

The literature shows that digital natives have emerged as spaces that prioritise the freedom to do the journalism they want to do, and in the Mexican case it seems that are not only spaces to escape the commercial pressures that limited the time to report or that put commercial objectives over journalistic ones. The digital natives also allow an escape from the pressures of the government, as they are cheaper to set up, and they do not depend on concessions administrated by the state.

The questions here are whether the digital natives analysed in this study produce 'good' journalism and how they differentiate from legacy media. The digital natives claim to do more independent and plural journalism, and they positioned to carry out a deeper kind of reporting, whether investigative journalism, fact-checking or other modalities as their primary contributions. This leads to my main research question:

- **How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?**

The discussion does not need to be focused on legitimating the work of the digital natives as journalism but on questioning what journalistic roles they are performing, how they are contributing to democracy in Mexico, and how they are using the affordances of the Internet to overcome the limitations imposed on the media system in which they operate. The following chapter analyses what journalism is doing and what it could do to contribute to democracy in Mexico.

Chapter 3. Democracy, journalism, and digital natives

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter analysed the transformation that the Mexican media system has experienced and continues to experience due to the effect of the country's democratisation processes. Findings from previous studies of journalistic practices were discussed, along with how news organisations are transitioning and evolving to incorporate new practices. This chapter focuses on discussing the normative values of journalism and how the pursuit of these values could contribute to transformations in Mexican journalism and its role in Mexican democracy.

This chapter is structured into two main sections. In the first, the main aspects about normative roles are discussed, focusing on three that have been highlighted as the most important by diverse authors: providing information, the watchdog role, and a plurality of voices. As most of this knowledge has been developed primarily in a Westernised context, it does not take into account the development of journalism in countries such as Mexico; these roles are thus analysed within the Mexican context. The second section analyses how digital natives could shape journalism's contributions to democracy. With the development of digital journalism, traditional normative journalistic roles and practices have been disrupted, but key discussions about them have tended to be developed only in relation to legacy news media.

3.2 Journalism and democracy

Defining what journalism is has become a complex issue. Journalism has been defined as a profession, an ideology, an industry, and a craft. These definitions propose a perspective on what journalism is, for whom it is made, what it is for, and why it is relevant (Zelizer, 2004; Zelizer, 2016). From all these perspectives, journalism is always defined by its relationship

with others and presenting information to others, “journalism cannot exist independent of community; it is a profession interacting with society in many — and not wholly unproblematic— ways, and should therefore be seen as influencing and operating under the influence of what happens in society” (Deuze, 2006, pp.26-27).

Discussion of the definition of journalism is linked with another question, about what journalism should do for democratic societies – many roles have been assigned to the media. The journalistic role that seems to have the most agreement is to provide information to citizens to allow them to make decisions that affect their lives (McQuail, 1992; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Schudson, 2008; Christians et al., 2009; Nielsen, 2017). Other important roles are: monitoring the elites by acting as a watchdog and demanding accountability from those in power; and incorporating a plurality of issues and voices from different sectors, which allows participation and fosters spaces for debate (McQuail, 1992; Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009; McChesney, 2012; Voltmer, 2013; Coleman et al., 2015; Parry and Moss, 2015; de Vreese et al., 2017). These three roles are defined more extensively in the following lines.

The role of providing information is identified not only as the more relevant but as the one that integrates the other two: acting as a watchdog and reflecting a plurality of voices. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) claim that the central role of journalism “is to provide citizens with the information they need to be free and self-governing” (p.12). Therefore the information that citizens receive should be of a quality to provide an understanding of how institutions and processes work, and for citizens to participate; “the quality of democratic decision-making is closely linked to the quality of information provided by the media” (Voltmer, 2006, p.4). The information should meet specific standards; it should be “relatively accurate, accessible, diverse, relevant, and timely independently produced information about public affairs” (Nielsen, 2017, p.1252).

The watchdog role of journalism consists of monitoring and making accountable those in power, which includes not just those in the government but all dominant institutions in society, to safeguard the interests of society and avoid abuses that violate the rights of citizens (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1995; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009; de Vreese et al., 2017). The watchdog role is the manifestation of the fourth estate, which counterbalances the power of the government in favour of the citizens’

interests (Norris, 2014). The watchdog role can be performed in two ways: by investigating wrongdoings; and by informing about public affairs that were hidden from public knowledge (Norris, 2014). The watchdog role is most obviously enacted through investigative journalism. Additionally, this role can be achieved in regular reporting by informing about investigations conducted by other agencies (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017).

A diversity of voices and plurality of content are necessary in the public sphere for different sectors of society and points of view to be heard, allowing participation and being a space for debate. Societies are in constant change, thus the inclusion of different social groups should be constantly revised to give voice to society's different actors and ensure that marginalised groups are represented (McQuail, 1992; Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009; McChesney, 2012; Voltmer, 2013).

Normative theorists have been criticised for not providing an accurate image of reality and their pretension of being generalists. However, normative roles reflect discussions about how journalism contributes to society through journalists and news organisations, what kind of journalism they must produce, and what standards must be met. The practices differ from the theory, but the normative perspective helps to set up "cognitive maps for media professionals" (Christians et al., 2009, p.viii).

Normative theories of the media have established how journalism can meet the necessities and aspirations of citizens to contribute to democracy (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017). However, these normative notions were conceived in Western democratic contexts. Even when they might be valid in other settings, the roles of journalism must be revisited in terms of the specific challenges in Mexico because "(n)ormative journalistic roles are socially negotiated and sensitive to context [...] they are in constant flux" (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017, p.125).

The media has an essential role in a democracy, and in countries that are moving towards democratisation, the media have a central role that can slow down or speed up the process (Voltmer, 2013). As analysed in the previous chapter, the media system in Mexico is in the process of democratisation, with the opening up of its media market and legislation. However, despite the opening up of media markets in Mexico and the positive effect on the

democratisation of the media, legacy media is struggling with old structures and practices, according to studies conducted by Hughes (2006), Guerrero (2014), González Macías (2012), and Márquez Ramírez (2012). This is explained by Mellado and Van Dalen (2017) as the honeymoon period in democratic transitions, a period when the civic and watchdog roles became more relevant (these concepts are discussed later in the chapter). However, when the honeymoon ends, the practices established during an authoritarian period merge with new ones.

The literature has not discussed broadly what journalistic values journalists have adopted as their ideals in the country; as analysed in Chapter 2. Here it is necessary to highlight that there is a gap between the normative roles that journalists recognise as relevant and their practice (role perception and role performance) (Mellado, 2021). Mexican journalists have adopted normative liberal values, even when in practice there is a mixture of liberal and authoritarian practices, as analysed in Chapter 2. Márquez Ramírez (2012) analysed the journalistic roles and practices of journalists in Mexico; the author interviewed 90 Mexican journalists from legacy news media and concluded that journalists “discursively attach to the traditional Anglo-Saxon normative values” (p.75), however, when analysing their practices there are a mixture of ‘old and new’ dynamics.

The global studies Worlds of Journalism and Journalistic Role Performance have shed light on the journalistic roles that prevail in Mexico with the advantage of being able to put the results in perspective by comparing them with other journalistic cultures. The data from the WJS survey of journalists across the world shows that Mexican journalists value the most journalistic roles associated with classic Western and democratic ideals and civic roles. From a list of 15 journalistic roles, Mexican journalists identified as the most important *to report things as they are*; the second, *promoting tolerance and cultural diversity*; the third, *advocating for social change*; the fourth, *let people express their views*; and the fifth *monitoring and scrutinizing political leaders*. While roles generally found in authoritarian systems and emergent democracies had less agreement (Márquez Ramírez and Hughes, 2016b). The JRP study analysed content from newspapers in 18 countries with different political regimes and journalistic cultures. In the analysis of role performance, Mexico showed

a strong presence of the civic role and a moderate presence of the watchdog and service roles (Mellado et al., 2021).

This research proposes to analyse what practices prevail among digital natives, the content they are producing, and whether they are doing a better job, in normative terms, than the legacy media. This research will discuss what normative roles are attributed to the kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy to understand what better journalism is, or what kind of content citizens need.

The roles of providing information, being a watchdog, and reflecting a plurality of voices are discussed sequentially in the following sections. Discussion is provided in a global context, followed by an analysis of the challenges that journalism in Mexico faces in enacting these roles. These three roles are not disconnected from each other. As mentioned before, the information role is nurtured by the watchdog role and the plurality of voices, as they improve the quality of the information that citizens can access. Therefore, the present study aims to contribute to the de-westernisation of journalism studies, not only by introducing the case study of Mexico, which is not often a country of concern, particularly to Western scholars (Curran and Park, 2000; Waisbord and Mellado, 2014), but also by mixing the research traditions and knowledge of Mexican and Western academic cultures to work in collaboration to provide a richer set of results.

3.2.1 The informational role and public interest

Normative expectations about what information journalism should provide are many. They dictate the specific characteristics the information should have and the role it should perform. At a time when the Internet circulates so much information produced by different actors, what kind of information should the media produce, and how should the informative role of journalism be performed?

If the main objective is a contribution to democracy, journalism should aim to provide citizens with the information they need to participate. However, there is an issue in balancing social interest, market drive, and partisanship. The role of providing information needs further discussion about what kind of information is needed. Scholars have discussed what is in the

public interest and what is collectively beneficent (and harmful) for democracy and the public sphere, without being tied to the demands of the state or the market (McQuail, 1992; Coleman, 2017).

Nielsen (2017) has critiqued the normative theory of journalism through the frame of considering what society needs most from journalism. The scholar claims that from the extensive list of normative roles that the press is supposed to achieve, most are not based on what journalists intend to do or can do with their limited resources. Additionally, he says that other social institutions can fulfil some functions better. What journalists can do that is particular to their profession is provide information.

Scholars and journalists have proposed ways to address how the problems of achieving normative roles can be addressed, and two kinds are discussed here: civic and advocacy journalism. Some authors have used the concept of civic journalism as a kind of journalism that looks to take a distance from the market and state pressures while also distancing itself from a kind of journalism that only presents facts (objectivity). This civic role thus avoids only presenting facts. It also puts them in context, giving background information, educating citizens about their rights and duties, and explaining complex topics as simple objective reporting is not always enough to enable citizens to make decisions (Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017). Blumler and Gurevitch (1995) defined civic communications as “all forms of public communication that are supposed to serve people in their roles as citizens of a democratic society” (p.222). According to Rosen (1999), civic or public journalism was born from the desire of journalists to do things differently to contribute to a better democracy. Thus, citizens can have representation and participate in public debates. Civic journalism has also been called public journalism and community-oriented journalism. All these concepts have in common that citizens can have representation and participate in public debates. Rosen (1999) claims that all aim “to restyle the work of the press so that it supporter a healthier public climate” (p.4).

The role of journalists should not only be to present news but also to explain why it matters to citizens (Rosen, 1999). Citizens need to be provided with information and need to be engaged with the news and discuss them, which implies a change from the transmission of

information role to a conversational role in the media, where the main objective should be fostering public participation and debate (Glasser and Craft, 1998; Rosen, 1999; Haas, 2007).

There are many critics against civic or public journalism, starting from the lack of precision in their conceptualization, and whether the concept represents a philosophy, normative values, or a practice (Glasser and Craft, 1998; Rosen, 1999; Voakes, 1999; Haas, 2007). Rosen (1999) claims that the goal is all of the above to some degree. Concerning the commercialisation of civic journalism, they claim that journalists must negotiate their practices with commercial interests. The central claim from critics and defenders of civic journalism is whether this has advantages and faults of its own, or whether those are the same as in journalism broadly (Voakes, 1999; Massey and Haas, 2002; Haas, 2007).

Advocacy journalism is another proposed way to enact the informational role. This kind of journalism proposes reporting from a particular point of view, which is backed up with factual information. Advocacy journalism has been strongly criticised for not sticking to the principle of objectivity; instead, it embraces the transparency of the personal bias of the journalist. These critiques change significantly between journalistic cultures (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Waisbord, 2009; Ezekiel et al., 2013; Anderson et al., 2016).

While European countries have a long tradition of advocacy journalism, it has been given more importance to the notion of objectivity in the US. In the Global South, advocacy journalism is gaining more relevance, and in the case of countries with transitional democracies, journalists and NGOs cooperate to push social issues onto the media agenda (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Waisbord, 2009; Ezekiel et al., 2013; Anderson et al., 2016). This kind of journalism is more frequently practised outside of legacy news organisations by NGOs and independent news media, which look to create awareness of social inequalities, non-compliance with human rights and to promote policy changes. Usually, journalists look to represent groups that are marginalised to make visible problematic issues, offering new representations for them (Waisbord, 2009; Ezekiel et al., 2013).

Civic and advocacy journalism are not entirely different from each other. Both try to solve the issue of how journalism could provide citizens with the information they need. They go further than simply providing information to consider what kind of information is needed,

how to include different voices, and how to promote social change. These values are also related to the watchdog role and diversity of voices, which will be analysed in more detail later in this chapter.

3.2.1.1 Journalism a la mexicana

Hughes (2006) proposed an interpretation of civic journalism in the Mexican context: ‘civic journalism *a la mexicana*’ is journalism that cares about representing the citizens' interests, fostering the participation of citizens, and the government's accountability to society. After the authoritarian regime that limited the informative role of the media in the Mexican case, civic journalism has the function of awakening and nurturing civic society. Various social movements also demanded journalism, not only the coverage of problems but also solutions. The coverage of topics related to human rights, justice, equality and the environment provided citizens with the information they needed to participate in the democratic transition.

The notion of fostering spaces for their participation in public life is a central role in the Mexican public sphere, as, for years, the authoritarian regime promoted the opposite. In this context “autonomous, assertive, and politically diverse” (Hughes, 2006, p.5) civic media can make a contribution. As Hughes (2006) and other researchers have found, some organisations have been engaged in journalism that is more civically-oriented. However, these studies reflect the transition period and have been critiqued for not reflecting how the organisations have maintained practices from the authoritarian period (González Macías, 2012; Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Reyna García, 2016).

The previous chapter discussed the mechanisms of control that limited the journalistic autonomy in Mexico during authoritarian rule. However, there is a lack of empirical knowledge about the quality of the content produced. Less discussed is what kind of journalism Mexico needs to overcome its authoritarian past and how it can be achieved. The following section analyses the different interpretations of the watchdog role and their relevance in the Mexican context.

3.2.2 Watchdog role

As discussed earlier, the watchdog role involves holding elites into account, and the most visible way to enact this is through investigative journalism. However, there are other ways in which this role can be enacted. Ordinary reporting could also perform the watchdog role, such as in cases where the findings of investigations conducted by other organisations are reported; with coverage of trials and processes; denouncing wrongdoings; or when content questions or critiques those in power (Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017). A relatively new practice drawing attention from both news organisations and scholarship is fact-checking, whose main purpose is to hold politicians accountable for their statements. Below, discussions about investigative journalism and fact-checking are reviewed.

3.2.2.1 *Investigative journalism*

The definition of investigative journalism has been approached from different perspectives. The most traditional definitions are focused on the methods used to obtain information, limiting the term investigative journalism to the reporting of their own investigations. However, this definition is challenged by the argument that all reporting needs investigation and that it does not acknowledge the importance of leaked information to report wrongdoings (See Protess et al., 1991; Waisbord, 2013). Anderson and Benjaminson (1976) define investigative journalism as “simply the reporting of concealed information” (p.5). De Burgh (2008) makes a similar definition centred on the pursuit of discovering the truth. According to him, the factuality of the reporting is what makes investigative journalism different from dissenting from authority. Investigative journalism is seen as the obligation of journalists to provide information to citizens to make decisions and take action (See Usher, 2012).

Ettema and Glasser (1998) point out that investigative reporting transcends the specific cases reported, because they call attention to the failure of social institutions. These failures should appeal to the moral sense of officials, institutions and audiences, and demand a response from them. Protess and colleagues (1991) introduced the term ‘journalism of outrage’ to report wrongdoings that cause the outrage of informed citizens, who in turn demand action from their representatives. These perspectives have also been contested as the reaction of

the audiences does not depend solely on the information given, but a series of extra-journalistic factors can also limit the outrage of audiences, the action of the apparatus for policy, or the decision making (See Waisbord, 2000; and Usher, 2012).

Norris (2014) claims that despite the demanding conditions to report, watchdog reporting should be pursued as in the long-term it can "help to raise standards in public life" (p.15) by being vigilant about the proper use of public resources, discouraging officials and politicians from wrongdoing, and promoting transparency. De Burgh (2008) claims that investigative journalism is an essential resource for accountability by pointing out how the "rich, the powerful, and the corrupt" (p.3) have taken advantage of the failures of regulatory systems. Ettema and Glasser (1998) see investigative reporters as "custodians of public conscience" (p.3). They believe that investigative journalists' role is to report when institutions fail to accomplish their job and harm people with their wrongdoings. The impact of investigative journalism cannot be assessed by its capacity to influence the policymaking process but by contributing to the public sphere, calling for accountability by demanding the wrongdoers' response, and promoting solidarity with the less fortunate (Ettema and Glasser, 1998).

Waisbord (2000) proposed a definition to integrate the diverse definitions across journalistic cultures. He used watchdog journalism to define the journalism that 'digs out' information that can show power abuses, making public the information someone is trying to hide. Here, the central issue of the definition is the impulse to make information that is not readily available visible to readers – it is not focused on how the reporter obtained it, and does not assess the impact of the report based on the readers' reaction.

3.2.2.2 Fact-checking

Other forms of searching to expose the truth include initiatives like fact-checking. This practice involves the systematic analysis of the accuracy of the facts presented by public figures. Fact-checking is a relatively new practice, linked to the 2004 US presidential elections. It occurs within a context of polarization, fake news, and post-truth, where the facts presented are misleading, inaccurate, or even false (Graves, 2016b; Graves, 2016a; Singer, 2018). Fact-checking does not attempt to be partisan, but to tell readers which information is valid and which is misleading so they can draw their own conclusions. Fact-checkers "try to

balance the daily realities of highly partisan, often vicious political discourse online with their formal commitment to inform a reasoning democratic public. They promise to solve factual debates objectively but also say that, in politics, the truth is not black and white" (Graves, 2016b, p.10).

Fact-checking challenges how the objectivity value is operationalised. For example, when a direct quotation is reproduced without taking a position, the media confirms that X actor said X; however, it does not confirm whether the facts support the statements – this practice is known as ‘he said, she said’. Fact-checking, instead, verifies the statements' veracity, which has been criticised for being interpretative or biased (Singer, 2017; Singer, 2018; Birks, 2019). However, Singer (2018) argues that fact-checkers sustain their work on the principles of independence to report from political and market pressures and transparency in the methods and sources used.

3.2.2.3 Watchdog role without accountability

In transitional democracies, the watchdog role is also relevant to understanding and assigning responsibilities for the crimes committed under authoritarian rule (Waisbord, 2000; Voltmer, 2013), which in Mexico is much needed, with recent waves of violence in the country, and is demanded by the society. Waisbord (2000) argues that in the specific case of Latin American countries, wrongdoings and corruption are not news as the politics and government officials are both perceived as corrupt. Thus, society's reaction to the exposing of wrongdoings is not a useful way to define investigative journalism in that context. As discussed previously, normative values are always in negotiation; they change according to the context and evolve with time. The importance given to the watchdog role varies from one journalistic culture to another.

The Worlds of Journalism (WOJ) study made a significant contribution to understanding what journalistic roles prevail in Mexico (Márquez Ramírez and Hughes, 2016a). The research measured the perceptions of journalists about the roles and values they follow across 67 countries. ‘Monitor and scrutinize political leaders’ was considered very important by 87% of journalists who answered the survey, despite the lack of independence that journalists have in order to do this type of reporting.

During the democratisation period of Latin America, since the 1990s, investigative journalism has increased. However, investigative journalism is also being undertaken in Latin America even under the rule of the most authoritarian regimes; alternative media have had a significant role in denouncing wrongdoings such as human rights abuses, social issues, and mismanagement of public funds (Waisbord, 2000). The interest in watchdog reporting continues even in extremely adverse conditions where there has been closure of news media critical of the regime and persecution of adversarial journalists.

The performance of the watchdog role needs a high level of independence of the media to have access to official documents and provide protection for the journalists and their sources (Voltmer, 2013). In addition, the exercise of watchdog journalism can be limited by the lack of freedom of expression to criticise the governments and economic pressures from owners of the media (Voltmer, 2013; Norris, 2014; Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017). However, the political and media systems foster the conditions to permit investigative reporters access to official documents through transparency regulations, and the opening of media markets that create less dependence on governmental income (Waisbord, 2000).

In Mexico, investigative journalism is not just carried out by news media. Diverse NGOs have emerged intending to produce either investigative journalism as their primary objective or as one of the results of their investigations.¹⁵ NGOs and non-profit media dedicated to investigative journalism see the Internet as an alternative model for disseminating their reports. Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando (2014) report that despite the region's digital divide, journalists can have more substantial penetration by publishing their content online. Because it is the only platform available for such journalists or because they can gain more visibility if, as well as publishing in other media, they also publish it on the Internet. The authors conclude that even when they are not financially sustainable, the projects of non-

¹⁵ As an example of the first case, quintoelab.org is an NGO aiming to fund and support investigative reporting. An example of the second mexicoleaks.mx/ is a platform that teams news organisations and NGOs. People can upload information anonymously to the site, which could provide leads to Mexicoleaks, check its authenticity, and act accordingly to each case. Some of these leaks have been a starting point for investigative reports and taking legal action.

profit investigative journalism make public and private organisations accountable, a task that the mainstream media cannot always do.

However, in Latin American countries there seems to prevail a ‘pervasive cynicism’ from politicians involved in wrongdoings (Waisbord, 2000). Reports of corruption and mismanaging instead of accountability have led to cynicism; instead of debate and pluralism in the coverage of political actors, media and society have become polarised (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Guerrero, 2014). Watchdog reporting itself has a critical function in bringing attention to wrongdoings and social inequalities, creating awareness about them and forcing wrongdoers to respond about their acts. However, an engaged and active civil society that demands such watchdogs is necessary.

Bradshaw (2011) argues that investigative journalism is an ‘endangered species’ due to a decline in resources assigned to this kind of reporting before the Internet. However, in this context, NGOs are increasingly funding and producing investigations. As with so many aspects of journalism, the situation is different in Mexico – the added problem of violence constrains watchdog journalism. Even when investigative reporting has conquered more spaces in the media, in the last decade, violence against journalists has become the main threat to journalism in general, particularly watchdog journalism (Reyna García, 2018). Saldaña and Mourão (2018) conducted a study that surveyed journalists across the region to determine the circumstances that limit the watchdog role in Latin America. The main challenge that the Mexican participants pointed out was the region's violence and the subordination of the media to their political and economic interests.

The following section analyses the importance of having media that reflects the plurality of the society in which it operates.

3.2.3 Plurality

In a democracy, diverse points of view are necessary to promote tolerance and the acceptance of others in order to accommodate diverse interests and needs, and to avoid political and social divisions, “media diversity and democracy need and reinforce each other” (Vltmer, 2013, p.49). The diversity of the media can be achieved internally or externally.

Internal diversity refers to how one media that can include multiple viewpoints; external refers to media with diverse ownership and partisanship (McQuail, 1992; Voltmer, 2013).

To achieve media plurality, the media must have certain independence that allows it to reflect the diverse actors in society that represent diverse points of view and social, economic, and cultural backgrounds in a proportional way (McQuail, 1992). However, McQuail (1992) claims that minorities need fair coverage to make them visible. Kovach and Rosenstiel (2007) argue that journalism “creates maps for citizens to navigate society” (p.208). Therefore, the media should represent the society as a whole, keeping the proportions of the reality in its reports. Media's diversity can also help attract people instead of pushing them away because they do not see themselves in the news (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

The lack of representation in the media of certain groups makes the media irrelevant for those citizens, as they do not see their problems reflected in them and therefore do not engage with the content or consult that media (Newkirk, 2011). Actors excluded from the mainstream media prefer to look for alternatives where they can see themselves included, such as local or ethnic media. Newkirk (2011) observed that online media had given more options to diverse groups in the US, increasing Internet use among Latinos and African American populations. The interest of citizens in seeing themselves represented is something that digital natives use in their favour to overcome the digital divide that Mexico has.

Diversity of the news starts with diversity in the newsrooms; staff with diverse backgrounds can represent different communities with sensitivity and without omission, stereotypes, prejudice, or intolerance. The inclusion of journalists with different ethnic and social backgrounds is related to the representation of diverse groups in their news, as they are familiar with specific problems that each group have to deal with, and they have access to informants (Tuchman, 1978; Aldrich, 1999; Gans, 2004; Newkirk, 2011).

Internal and external diversity is essential for contributing to democracy. However, Voltmer (2013) explains that in a country transitioning to a democracy, a large offer of news organisations can destabilise the precarious situation post-transition. Too much choice tends to create echo chambers, where citizens consume media that reinforces their opinions and does not promote tolerance and sympathy.

Van Aelst and colleagues (2017) noted that the repercussions of high-choice environments are even more relevant to the expansion of news ecosystems. While the proliferation of digital news media has increased the choice of news outlets, competition reduces the quality of the content by incentivising the fast production of content and the increase of soft news. This environment has incentivised the emergence of niche outlets tailored to readers' demands, creating 'selective exposure' or echo chambers.

The previous chapter discussed how the media market in Mexico was heavily concentrated in the past century. Since the 2000s, it has been open to new competitors, and with the development of the Internet, more news organisations have appeared. It is relevant to understand how the Mexican media ecosystem has changed with the incorporation of digital natives into the market. This research is interested in comparing what kind of content is being produced by digital natives and legacy newspapers in Mexico. An assessment can then be made about whether the appearance of these news competitors is contributing to enriching the content available for readers. The following section is focused on the aspects that should be considered in the content produced in Mexico to reflect a plurality of voices.

3.2.3.1 Marginalised communities in Mexico

It was argued that a diverse media should include reporting that includes gender, multiculturalism, disability, diverse ages, lifestyles, sexualities, class backgrounds, ideologies, religions and more. Every society has different configurations and therefore who should be represented in the news and in what proportion should be discussed based on the characteristics of a place at a specific moment.

In order to start to map the vulnerable groups in Mexico, this research uses as a reference point the list of groups that are vulnerable to being discriminated against created by the National Council to Prevent Discrimination in Mexico (CONAPRED, 2018). This organisation considers vulnerable groups to include women, afro-descendants, indigenous peoples, children, HIV carriers, LGBT+, migrants, religious groups, and older people.

Some other vulnerable groups have been historically ignored. Afro-descendants in Mexico have been ignored in historical narratives and public policies – they were not included in the

census until 2015 (1% of the population). New groups have emerged from recent events, as crime has escalated in the country in recent decades, victims and their families have also become a vulnerable sector that needs representation. While Western theory discusses the victimisation of the minorities, it is relevant to reflect on how the victims in Mexico can be represented in the media, preserving their dignity while giving voices to their demands for truth and justice. Furthermore, some other groups have a long history of their fight to be heard. The following sections review the problem of representation in the news of women, people in poverty, and indigenous peoples.

3.2.3.2 Gender

The representation of women in the press has been discussed broadly around the world, and the underrepresentation of women in the news is a constant (Shor et al., 2014). Tuchman (1979) diagnosed that this underrepresentation in the media or the archetypical representation of women will lead to their “symbolic annihilation” (p.533). Underrepresentation of women in the news is the result of a structural problem in newsrooms, according to Tuchman (1979). However, since then things have changed little. Shoe and colleagues (2014) conducted a longitudinal study about women's representation in 13 American news outlets from 1880 to 2008. The findings show that in more than a century, the representation of women grew from 15% to just 27%, while in other areas the gap is closing, as access to education and participation in the labour force has not have increased at the same pace.

The dominance of men in the newsroom leads to more news about men and from their perspective and this is an ongoing problem around the world. The last report of the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF, 2011) showed that women who work as reporters represent 36%. However, the gap is more significant in management positions, where only 23% of women occupy these jobs. Allan (2004) reported that female journalists also tend to earn less money than men of the same age, as it is perceived that having children is a limitation to the development of women's careers. Women in the news media are relegated to covering topics valued as less important, such as entertainment and lifestyle. At the same time, men are dominant in the coverage of the economy, sports, and investigative journalism (Krijnen and Bauwel, 2015).

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP, 2020) showed that men are excessively more represented than women in the news, and women's appearance in the news is based more on stereotypes. It is more likely that women are represented as celebrities or ordinary people than men are represented as a figure of authority. Women also tend to be portrayed as victims more often than men. Women are also related to fewer professions than men, even when they are conquering various spaces of social life, but they still do not have the same coverage as men in the same field – this often happens in sports and politics (Krijnen and Bauwel, 2015).

In a study conducted by Ross and Carter (2011), they analysed the presence of women as sources in newspapers,¹⁶ and found that only 30% of sources with an identifiable gender were women, “despite women’s greater presence in newsrooms, the landscape of news has changed very little over the past decade” (Ross and Carter, 2011, p.1161). Similarly, in the (GMMP, 2020) study in Mexico, only 28% of sources with an identifiable gender were women in newspapers and 31% on digital media.

Even though women constitute a little over 50% of the population globally, their representation in the media is scarce. They tend to be represented in stereotypical roles, most often as victims or as sexual objects. According to Meyers (1997), news reports about crimes against women prevail in a narrative that blames the victims and reinforces stereotypes. This kind of reporting reinforces the cultural values that deny male violence against women and contribute to perpetuating it. In a country like Mexico where violence against women is escalating, how should the media cover such stories in the news?

3.2.3.3 Poverty

Globally, the media does not provide much coverage of poverty; when it does, it focuses on reporting the effects of poverty more than explaining the inequalities that cause it (Lugo-Ocando, 2014). The social distance of reporters from poverty is one of the main causes of the lack of reporting about the subject; Lugo-Ocando (2014) notes that most journalists report

¹⁶ The study revises the results of the 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), which analysed the state of women’s representation in 108 countries, including Mexico.

from privileged positions since "few media professionals have direct knowledge of poverty" (p.34).

In Latin America, the coverage of poverty is not much better – it is not sufficiently represented in the media. It is not seen as newsworthy in a region where poverty is vast, except when a severe crisis strikes. Kitzberger and Pérez (2008) reported the results of a study commissioned by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 21 newspapers from six Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brasil, Chile, Mexico, Perú, and Venezuela. According to this study, the media do not give much coverage to poverty; less than 1% of the content discusses poverty, and when it does, it is usually part of situations like natural catastrophes, violence, public policies, publication of indicators, and political speeches. Even on these rare occasions, people in poverty can rarely get the media's attention themselves, and politicians, officials and international organisations are the main actors who talk about them in the news.

Poverty is not a recurrent topic in the media. When it does appear, the poor are represented as victims of natural catastrophes, either victims or perpetrators of violence, or as part of political and governmental speeches or statistics. In Mexico, 44% of the population lives in poverty (CONEVAL, 2016), but even such a significant proportion does not find a voice in the media. These regional findings were consistent with findings from a content analysis of the local press in Mexico conducted by Echeverría Victoria (2010). This study reported that coverage of poverty prevails when discussing governmental policies with a limited presence of people in poverty. The poor are represented as vulnerable people, beneficiaries of governmental programmes, passive characters, victims of their own circumstances, and dependent on public benefits.

3.2.3.4 Indigenous communities

Representation of diverse indigenous groups in the media is even more complicated. Mexico's society is multicultural and the hybridisation of culture is constantly actualising the relationships between indigenous roots, European influences from colonisation, and other foreign influences that are the product of globalisation. In this society, where cultural values and identities are continually updating and confronting what is considered authentic,

popular, massive, and enlightened, the struggle between modernisation and the conservation of culture emerges (García Canclini, 1990).

The idea of *mestizaje* (mixed blood) is a central part of the Mexican identity. However, it is a mechanism of exclusion, according to Peña (2006), because it promotes a cultural homogenization by excluding different identities (Yoshioka, 2010). In the 1990s, diverse indigenous movements grew up in the country demanding rights like their autonomy and recognition of their governance models, social organisation, territories, language and culture, but most importantly, to have their own identities recognised (Larson, 2018). To construct a multicultural nation where differences are acknowledged is necessary so that the diverse actors can find representation (not just political) to foster their rights.

The lack of cultural diversity in broadcasting content produced in Mexico has been documented. Mexican broadcasting enterprises produce content aiming to reach the largest audiences possible, ignoring groups that could represent less commercial potential. The content mainly reflects Mexico City, ignoring other country regions (Lozano, 2006). The Telecommunications Law approved in 2014 established that private broadcasting should use ‘the national language’, Spanish, to the detriment of the many other languages spoken in Mexico.¹⁷ This did not change until 2016, when the Supreme Court of Justice ruled to recognise the many indigenous languages spoken in the country (Mioli and Higuera, 2016).

In Mexico, communitarian media historically has a vital role in giving voice to minorities, primarily based in remote indigenous communities. For them, communitarian media constitutes their connection with the rest of the country and also accomplishes a vital role in preserving the languages and other aspects of their culture (Calleja and Solís, 2005; Carballo, 2011). Discussion of the representation of communitarian media is prolific. Diverse society actors have been fighting for their rights for communities to obtain licences to operate mainly radio stations, not only in indigenous communities but also in remote areas of the country that are not covered by private broadcasting.

¹⁷ Besides Spanish, 68 indigenous languages are spoken in Mexico INALI (2008).

Carballo (2013), an indigenous journalist and activist, has highlighted the necessity of recognising Mexico as multi-ethnic, suggesting that journalism should contribute to this goal by naming the different languages and ethnicities of the indigenous people portrayed in the news to recognise the diversity in the daily news. The communitarian media has played an essential role in providing information and preserving the culture of indigenous communities. However, not all people who claim pertinence to an indigenous culture live in homogeneous communities. The inclusion of topics and voices in national media helps diverse people to feel represented as part of a larger community and the rest of the population to understand and acknowledge the others.

Discussions about the normative roles of journalism have been developed by analysing legacy news media, in many cases focusing on discussion about the printed press. Therefore, these discussions are not considering the new possibilities that the affordances of the Internet are opening up for journalism. The role of journalism in a democracy is changing, with new possibilities being presented by various digital disruptions. The scholarship is starting to document the changing relationship between democracy and journalism. However, the field has neglected to consider the development of journalism and democracy in non-Western contexts (Curran, 2011; Waisbord and Mellado, 2014). The following section analyses how digital journalism can contribute to democracy, focusing on a global understanding of the situation, and the literature review about Mexican digital natives in the previous chapter will help to identify the gaps in knowledge that the present study will investigate.

3.3 Digital natives and their contribution to democracy

With the penetration of the Internet and the changes that it has brought, the decline of newspapers, books, radio, television and other media technologies has been predicted (Deuze, 2002; McChesney and Nichols, 2010; Peters and Broersma, 2013). While news consumption on legacy media has diminished during the last decade, their online versions are rising rapidly (Mitchell et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2023). Therefore, journalism is a long way from disappearing. It is adapting to the new environment in terms of formats, news cycles,

professional practices and routines, job positions, journalists' interactions with their audiences, and business models (O'Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008; Peters and Broersma, 2013).

One of the most researched topics in the field of journalism in the digital environment is in describing how newspapers migrated to the Internet and what they had to change to adapt themselves (Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Fenton, 2010; Domingo and Paterson, 2011; Peters and Broersma, 2013; Usher, 2014; Peters and Broersma, 2017). However, in this environment, there is also news media that was born online – these spaces have been called digital natives, net-natives, online only media, entrepreneurial journalistic ventures, or journalism startups (Salaverría, 2016a; Witschge et al., 2016; Wu, 2016). Research to date shows that journalistic digital natives have emerged with different aims, in different circumstances, with varied resources, and different funding.

Some of these spaces have been praised for being innovative in their use of technology to improve journalism quality (Carlson and Usher, 2016), for their 'good digital practices' that include accessibility, social media practices, and transmedia narratives (Jurkowitz, 2016; Meléndez Yúdico, 2016; Salaverría, 2016b; Salaverría and De Lima Santos, 2021). However, digital natives are also facing challenges; one of the most analysed is their sustainability, even in the case of non-profits, the news organisations need to secure enough resources to operate (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Another challenge linked with the business model is its limitations in competing with established legacy news organisations that have a reputation built on and offline, attracting a large number of readers. Furthermore, digital natives' resources (human resources and others) are limited and they cannot produce the same volume of content than their legacy competitors (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016).

Researchers such as Bruno and Nielsen (2012) and Deuze and Witschge (2020) have emphasised the relevance of understanding digital natives. They have seen these spaces as innovators who look to challenge what legacy news organisations are doing, pushing the boundaries of what is considered journalism and being a journalist. In the words of Bruno and Nielsen (2012) "if we want to understand the transformations that journalism is going through, we need to look not only at changes in the legacy media industries – important as

they are – but also at new journalistic ventures seeking to supplement and supplant them” (p.4).

Digital natives have different backgrounds, from which can be identified three main types. First, some have been set up by people from non-journalistic backgrounds and technology-based companies, some of which have a worldwide presence, such as BuzzFeed and Vice¹⁸ (Mitchell et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2017). Most of the studies that have analysed these digital natives focus on understanding how they compare with traditional definitions of news and journalistic values and questioning their belonging to the journalistic field (Wu, 2016; Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Stringer, 2018). Second, news organisations have been set up by professional journalists who have left legacy media, and they mostly aim to differentiate themselves from the journalism produced by legacy news organisations (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Third, non-profit or NGOs dedicated to doing journalism have created news organisations, which according to Nee (2014) could be covering needs that for-profit organisations are ignoring.

This section reviews different investigations into these different kinds of digital natives to understand how they can challenge traditional journalistic values and how they can inform changing journalistic practices that can contribute to democracy to a greater extent than the legacy news organisations. Although digital natives are attracting the attention of researchers, most of the studies are focused on the analysis of news organisations from Western Europe and the US. All these discussions give some understanding of how digital natives change a country's journalistic environment and the contributions they make. However, it lacks greater knowledge about how this kind of news organisation could improve journalism in countries transitioning towards democratic societies, such as Mexico, whose editorial autonomy is being limited by its relationship with the government.

¹⁸ BuzzFeed News division closed its international offices in 2019 and closed all operations in 2023. Vice also closed its international divisions, and its news operations were reduced drastically in the central division; in 2023, Vice filed bankruptcy, although it still is operating (Fernández and Acevedo, 2020; Sullivan, 2023; Carson and Muller, 2024).

The discussions about different digital natives around the world provide some understanding of what shapes the work they do. Here these characteristics are analysed in three sections: objectives, news production practices, and the specialisation of the news organisations.

3.3.1 Objectives

An organisation is structured by “the ownership of the organisation, policies, goals, actions, rules, membership, interactions with other organisations, bureaucratic structure, economic viability, and its stability” (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p.130). All these variables influence the content they produce and influence each other. Starting with an analysis of the news organisation's objectives allows for an understanding of their practices and the resources assigned to content production. This section focuses on understanding the aims of digital natives around the world.

In research conducted by Carlson and Usher (2016), they analysed how digital natives present themselves. They analysed the statements of ten startups, eight based in the USA, one in the UK and the other in the Netherlands. The findings of this study show how the different approaches of the news organisations use the affordances of the Internet to differentiate themselves from the legacy media. These news organisations keep relying on traditional normative roles to gain legitimacy, using technology to innovate and improve their organisations and their products, however, the study does not explain how this happens. Usher (2017b) also points out that all the news organisations started their companies either to help to overcome the overabundance of news content or to provide ‘better’ journalism, although what was defined as ‘better’ differed in every case. These impulses to create digital natives reside in the central normative role of journalism to provide information to citizens (more specifically, useful information or quality news).

Nicholls and colleagues (2016) researched 12 digital natives from France, Germany, Spain, and the UK. The research focused on analysing their funding models, distribution strategies, and editorial objectives, for which they interviewed founders, directors, and editors of the news organisations analysed. The report explained that digital natives pursue journalistic aims that are less focused on economic profits. They were created to engage in ‘authentic journalism’ or better journalism, criticising how the dynamics of the legacy news

organisations are limiting good journalistic practices. A common aim of the digital natives is generating social impact.

In the research project *Beyond Journalism*, Deuze and Witschge (2020) arrived at a similar conclusion.¹⁹ The project aims to understand the transformations of the journalistic field by analysing journalistic startups around the world. The ongoing project has studied so far 22 cases in 11 countries. The collaborators of this project conducted interviews with the news workers of news startups, visited newsrooms, analysed internal and external documents of the startups, surveyed the products and services produced by the startups, and in some cases, carried out a content analysis. This research found that economics are not the primary motivation of journalists who decide to set up their own news organisation, but to produce 'true' or 'real' journalism, which is defined as the opposite of 'churnalism' produced by legacy media.

Most of the organisations analysed by Deuze and Witschge (2020) do not have enough revenue to cover the expenses of running a news organisation, including journalists' salaries, which leads to precariousness. However, they have also pushed for new content based on blurring or eliminating the division between the marketing and content areas found in news organisations, such as native advertising and sponsored content (these practices are analysed in the following section).

This research also found that the goal of these news organisations is to have a social impact with their reporting (particularly with their coverage of niche issues and in-depth reporting or investigative journalism). Earlier, it was discussed that some digital natives are not only trying to pursue normative journalistic roles or create better content than legacy media. They also want to have an impact, make a difference, and pursue social change, contrary to traditional journalistic values such as impartiality and detached objectivity (Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020).

¹⁹ The findings of this research project are discussed in diverse publications (see Wagemans et al., 2016; Deuze, 2017; Deuze et al., 2018; Wagemans et al., 2018). This section only references the book *Beyond journalism* that summarises the main findings of the project: (Deuze and Witschge, 2020).

According to Deuze and Witschge (2020), “traditional and pioneering practices and values are not necessarily mutually exclusive” (p.126). These news organisations are trying to fulfil new functions beyond traditional normative values. The chapter earlier discussed how new forms of doing journalism, such as advocacy journalism, which propose having an active role instead of pursuing values such as objectivity and detachment.

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) claim that most news organisations have the aim to make a profit, and that normative journalistic objectives are subordinated to economics. The research projects analysed here have observed that some digital natives aim to be journalistic ventures that are more focused on carrying out a particular style of journalism rather than being economically successful. These digital natives criticise legacy news organisations for favouring fast-paced journalism production, to the detriment of its quality. However, the limitation of these projects lies in the lack of understanding of resources and practices digital natives have put in place to meet their objectives. Finally, the content they produce reflects the aims of the organisations, limiting understanding of the impact of these new organisations in their news ecosystems.

The literature suggests that digital natives are emerging to cover the failures of legacy news organisations in their countries. There is little knowledge about the Mexican case to understand if whether the digital natives are following this line or responding to different market gaps. The following section is focused on discussion of the practices that are particular to digital journalism.

3.3.2 News production practices

Digital natives have been praised for their innovation in presenting the news and, in some cases, challenging what news is (Carlson and Usher, 2016; Jurkowitz, 2016; Meléndez Yúdice, 2016; Salaverría, 2016b). However, few studies have focused on analysing the content produced by digital natives, and even fewer have compared what digital natives are doing against legacy news organisations.

Two digital natives who have been the object of study in many research projects are BuzzFeed and Vice. Tandoc (2017) compared the content published for two months by BuzzFeed and

The New York Times. He concluded that BuzzFeed followed the rules of the journalistic field because most of its coverage followed traditional journalistic values such as objectivity in reporting, timeliness (focus on recent events) and proximity (events that happened in the US or were relevant to them). Additionally, both organisations focused more on their coverage of government and political issues. Their primary sources were government officials and politicians, and the stories were written following the inverted pyramid format. However, Tandoc (2017) also found three things that made BuzzFeed different from *The New York Times*. The first is that BuzzFeed covered social issues more (analysed below). Second, BuzzFeed used more quotes from ordinary citizens. Third, BuzzFeed had fewer articles focused on the negative aspects of an event. The focus of these investigations was to understand to what extent BuzzFeed followed the journalistic doxa, or the rules of the field. However, a limitation of this research was the lack of analysis of whether and how such differences contributed to 'better' journalism.

Stringer (2019) studied BuzzFeed and Vice, conducting interviews with staff from both organisations and conducting content analysis that compared them with two legacy news organisations (*The Guardian* and BBC). His findings showed that these news organisations followed traditional journalistic values and innovated in some respects. BuzzFeed and Vice covered niche issues relevant to their readers, and they also moved away from objectivity toward more emotional storytelling of the news. However, they were oriented to practices that are highly respected in the journalistic field, such as investigative journalism and in-depth reporting. Despite the diversification of issues they covered, most of their coverage was focused on political issues in a similar volume to the legacy news organisations Stringer analysed.

Wu (2016) analysed how the content produced by BuzzFeed changed after creating their news division (from 2007 to 2015). Wu arrived at a similar conclusions to Tandoc (2017) and Stringer (2019). BuzzFeed was found to be attached to journalistic values, which increased after their coverage of hard news grew, increasing their reliance on official sources while reporting the news in a more relaxed format.

Bødker (2017) analysed Vice's coverage of a particular series of events.²⁰ The findings of this study showed that Vice did not focus on breaking news, instead it focused on providing commentary and updates on the events, mostly relying on long-form videos. According to the author, the content produced around the event analysed was a mix of commentary and academic analysis, departing from the traditional value of objectivity.

These studies contribute to understanding how digital natives are innovating news narratives and distancing themselves from objectivity. However, these news organisations are also following established journalistic values and practices similar to legacy news organisations, such as relying on official sources and using traditional journalist genres and formats to report the news. These investigations were focused on the analysis of two of the most prominent digital native organisations worldwide, which leaves a gap in understanding about what is happening in other kinds of organisations that are smaller and with fewer resources than BuzzFeed and Vice.

Nee (2013) analysed what these kinds of organisations are doing. She analysed the objectives and practices of editors or founders of digital native members of the Investigative News Network in the US through interviews. This study found that the journalists interviewed had previously worked in legacy news organisations. They felt that digital natives had more freedom to experiment with how to narrate the news. They also identified the need to choose and focus on niche issues instead of trying to cover everything, which gave them the advantage of becoming news organisations that added to the news ecosystem instead of competing against legacy news media.

Mellado and colleagues (2018) compared the content published by two Chilean legacy newspapers and two digital natives to measure the extent to which their content reflected different journalistic roles. This research showed that the digital natives produced more content where the disseminator and watchdog roles prevailed than the legacy newspapers; in the legacy newspapers, the loyal-facilitator role prevailed. The authors explained that

²⁰ In August 2014, a series of protests and riots in the US followed the shooting of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri.

digital natives adopted the classical roles of a watchdog and detached reporting and argued that digital natives reproduced practices and organisational structures from the legacy news organisations. However, their study did not explore these elements further, leaving a substantial gap to fill, which this study tries to address.

The following subsections are focused on two aspects that have been found in the literature that affects the quality of the content produced by digital news organisations: the balance in the news organisations between curated content and original content; and the analysis of audiences to produce content designed to meet preferences.

3.3.2.1 Curation versus original content

The resources of news organisations include a broad range of assets that allow them to function. This includes money, facilities, equipment, staff members (and their skills and time available to do their tasks), and their access to information (having more staff to cover a larger number of sources) (Firmstone, 2007). The number of resources and how they are distributed within the news organisation influence the content produced.

As noted earlier, digital natives struggle to be sustainable. Beyond an analysis of the finances of news organisations, it is essential to understand how these limited economic resources impact on their operations. The number of staff and their resources will shape the volume and kind of content that is produced. In contrast, legacy news organisations usually have hundreds of staff, and most digital natives operate with a small team (with tens of workers) (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Anderson, 2013a). As discussed above, digital native news organisations emerge with different objectives, and as a result, they set up different journalistic practices. Some digital natives base their business model on the curation of content as their primary practice; others try to go against this trend and produce only original content, while others try to balance the two aims (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012).

In general, the digitalisation of journalism has imposed a new news rhythm, demanding immediacy in reporting. This demand for a constant updating of the news has increased the reliance on reproducing content from news agencies, press releases, and information reported by other news sites to keep a constant flux of information on their news sites and

social media. This practice is known as shovelware or cannibalisation of news, and it has imposed a passive routine for many journalists, who do their job from their desks (Paterson, 2008; Phillips, 2010b).

This is not a phenomenon that is exclusive to digital natives or even digital journalism. Gans (2004) observed the use of peer sources in his study. However, as discussed earlier, some digital natives' main objective is to present to their readers a selection of content produced by other news organisations. This practice is called aggregation (Anderson, 2013b) or curation (Bakker, 2014), and there is disagreement among scholars about how this kind of content contributes to the news ecosystem. While Anderson (2013b) has said that readers of aggregators could have a general idea of what relevant news is by consulting a single site, Bakker (2014) argues that curation of content impoverishes the information available for the readers as they are not creating anything original.

Digital natives have developed strategies to create original content with their limited resources. One way to do this is by sharing resources with other organisations. In his ethnographic study of digital newsrooms in Philadelphia, Anderson (2013a) observed that collaborating with organisations is the most efficient way to maximise resources for the production of journalism. Most cooperation is found in investigative reporting. News organisations, NGOs, universities, and other organisations work together, merging resources and knowledge to produce content that they might not be able to achieve by themselves (Anderson, 2013a; Anderson et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Cooperation is not only external with other organisations; Deuze and Witschge (2020) found that digital natives have stabilised interdisciplinary teams where professionals (such as journalists, data analysts, and designers) work together to tell stories differently, through data journalism, infographics, and interactive resources.

3.3.2.2 Audiences and tailored content

The business models of online journalism are mainly based on the traffic they can attract to their sites to sell advertising or tailor products to their audiences. Therefore, understanding audiences has become an essential task for news organisations. The use of analytics to understand audiences allows the news sites to know what information they are looking for,

what formats are more likely to be consumed, or at what times of the day users are more active. Such data allows the news organisations to tailor content for their audiences and, in this way, increase their traffic (through advertising or pay per click) (Tandoc, 2014). Using analytics to shape content for its audiences is a controversial issue. While some argue that it is essential to meet the audience's needs (Usher, 2010), others worry that reacting to data could limit editorial freedom and allow market interests to prevail (Anderson, 2011; Tandoc, 2014; Tandoc and Thomas, 2015).

Deuze and Witschge (2020) also warn that the separation between the newsroom and the business area is less strict in the search for business models than in legacy newspapers. News workers are more involved in the process of obtaining revenue in different ways, such as searching and applying for grants or funding; promoting micropayments, memberships, and crowdfunding; producing products to sell (content, raw information, courses), native advertising or sponsored content; or even investing their own capital in the news organisations.

Native advertising or sponsored content has become an essential source of income for digital natives and legacy media alike. However, some scholars argue that readers' trust in the news organisations can be weakened when they perceive this kind of advertising (Einstein, 2016; Wojdyski and Golan, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019). Sponsored content became more prominent when the users increased their use of ad-blockers, minimising revenues through programmatic ads. Thus, according to Einstein (2016) and Stringer (2019), sponsored content seems to be less intrusive if it is well done.

The revenue from this kind of advertising is higher than from programmatic ads, and well-done sponsored content should blend with the editorial content of the news organisation, increasing the possibilities of being read and shared by readers (Einstein, 2016; Wojdyski and Golan, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019). BuzzFeed has relied mainly on this type of advertising precisely because its content is designed to engage and be shared. They follow this same strategy with their native advertising, reaching a large number of readers (Einstein, 2016; Stringer, 2019).

Scott and colleagues (2019) noted that grants require that news organisations invest resources to carry out administrative tasks derived from the funding. These include preparing applications, managing resources, and reporting to the foundations on their progress and impact. In the long term, these tasks end up becoming part of the job description of the editorial staff and, in larger organisations, the addition of positions dedicated to fundraising and administering the resources from grants.

These studies suggest that digital natives are reproducing some traditional values and practices while simultaneously innovating others. Digital natives are incorporating new practices, new values, and even new definitions of who a journalist is and what it means to be one, as professionals from other fields are contributing to news making. However, only a few studies have analysed how organisational elements (such as resources and practices) shape the content they produce.

3.3.3 Specialisation

This chapter has so far discussed how digital natives are challenging the identity of journalism and its practices. However, various studies have shown that such innovation is mostly a response to the challenges of digital journalism in general, and the way to face up to those challenges is not too different from those that legacy newspapers have faced online (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Although previous studies have rarely compared digital natives with legacy news organisations, scholars have argued that the differences between legacy and digital natives reside in the topics they cover or their emphasis on a specific type of reporting, such as slow journalism, in-depth reporting or investigative journalism. This section explores the three aspects in which digital natives specialise.

3.3.3.1 *Niche issues*

Nicholls and colleagues (2016) found that the digital natives they studied did not try to replicate legacy news media; even those that tried to cover a broad range of topics put less emphasis on some of them. The researchers argued that the editorial priorities of digital natives are tied to their business models, which depend on advertising to reach a broader

audience. At the same time, organisations with subscriptions or donations need to produce content that differentiates them from freely distributed content. For example, Benson (2018) explained that non-profit news organisations in the USA supply in-depth reporting targeted to elite audiences because audiences with a high level of education (cultural capital) are looking for 'quality' news.

A way in which digital natives try to differentiate themselves from their competitors is by focusing on specific topics that have had little coverage from legacy news organisations (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Cook and Sirkkunen, 2013; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). The coverage of niche topics gives digital natives a market advantage by giving readers the stories they want to read. For example, Stringer (2019) explained how BuzzFeed and Vice assigned editorial resources to the coverage of particular topics such as civil rights, LGBT+ issues, mental health, or drugs, because such issues attracts younger audiences. Tandoc (2017) found that BuzzFeed dedicates more coverage to social issues than *The New York Times*, as they consider these issues as independent beats with their own resources. However, the coverage of specific issues is not only a market strategy – in many cases they are covered because journalists are personally involved with them. In other cases, the focus on covering a specific topic comes from the organisation's aims (Nicholls et al., 2016; Stringer, 2019).

3.3.3.2 Types of reporting

Slow journalism responds to the speed of news in the digital era, in which newness is the central value. In this context, the events reported are often fragmented and decontextualized. Slow journalism focuses on relevant events over more extended temporalities, such as a week or a month. The reporting provides contextualisation, more investigation, and requires more time and space to tell stories. Slow journalism does not follow a particular format or genre and is a response to the speed of mainstream journalism (Le Masurier, 2015; Barranquero Carretero and Jaurrieta Bariain, 2016; Neveu, 2016).

Dowling (2016) analysed the business models of four digital natives that produced slow journalism in the UK, Netherlands, and the US. He did not find a unique business model; these organisations exercised creativity in generating revenues. The advantage of these news

organisations is that they attract more educated and affluent audiences willing to pay for 'quality journalism' over *churned-out* content.

Barranquero Carretero and Rosique Cedillo (2015) analysed the business models of slow journalism digital natives from Spain, Argentina, and Colombia. Their findings showed that such journalism has an audience that demands 'quality content', and having specialised readers allows the news organisation to gain their loyalty. Barranquero Carretero and Jaurrieta Barriain (2016) conducted a deeper analysis of *Jot Down Cultural Magazine*, a Spanish digital native specialising in narrative reporting and in-depth reporting. The authors interviewed *Jot Down* staff, and conducted non-participant observation of the organisation. This research arrived at a similar conclusion: that the news organisation is not looking to attract large and heterogeneous audiences but to readers looking for an alternative to the fast-paced journalism that prevails in the news ecosystem.

Harbers (2016) studied the case of *De Correspondent*, a crowdfunded digital native focused on the production of slow journalism. Harbers focused on analysing news stories from the organisation and found that they covered the characteristics of slow journalism. However, *De Correspondent* moved away from objectivity as a journalistic value. Instead, the organisation was transparent about its reporting practices and reflective of the subjectivity of its reporters, which allowed this news organisation to engage with younger audiences.

These studies mainly focused on analysing the business models of digital natives doing slow journalism, but they did not analyse the content that was produced. The researchers acknowledged that this kind of reporting will contribute to a better understanding of the news, supplying context, analysis, and more data. Nevertheless, without a focus on the content produced, there is no understanding of to what extent digital natives are differentiating from legacy news organisations. A similar situation was found when reviewing studies that analysed investigative journalism in digital native news organisations.

The study conducted by Mellado and colleagues (2018) quoted above found that digital natives produced more content that fulfilled the disseminator and watchdog roles. The authors explained that they engaged in more detached reporting (disseminators) because they have limited staff and therefore rely more on newswires than legacy newspapers do.

However, they also produced more content that covered scandals and scrutinised the authorities because they had more independence than the legacy newspapers, which had close ties with the government.

Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando (2014) analysed the sustainability of eight non-profit organisations dedicated to investigative journalism in Latin America (not including Mexico). By analysing documents from the news organisations and conducting interviews, the research found that these organisations relied on a few funding sources, which did not give them financial stability. However, the authors affirmed that these organisations had more independence to report than the legacy news media in these countries. According to the authors, the work of these spaces contributed to the accountability of governments and corporations, a task that legacy news organisations in these countries were not undertaking. They also found that audiences of the news organisations belonged to a privileged group with higher purchasing power and influence than the average population in these countries.

Singer (2018) analysed fact-checking as a form of watchdog journalism. The research was based on interviews with fact-checkers from ten countries around the world (including Mexico), from both legacy media and digital natives. The study focused on exploring the funding sources of these projects, but it also explored their audiences and aims. The research found that these initiatives relied on a diversity of funding sources, which often varied the number of resources the journalists have available. In both kinds of organisations, the teams dedicated to fact-checking were composed of three or fewer full-time members.

Three central values that fact-checkers pursue have been identified: 1) civic empowerment by helping the organisations understand the issues affecting citizens, making politicians accountable for their statements; 2) the independence of the team to make their own decisions; and 3) transparency, explaining what methods and data were used. A common perception of the interviewees, regardless of country and kind of organisation, is that their job was filling a gap that other news organisations had left open: "fact-checkers were needed in part because other media players are failing the public they ostensibly serve" (Singer, 2018, p.1076). While the fact-checkers aimed to reach a broader audience to have more impact, their primary audiences were 'social influencers', such as politicians, policymakers, and journalists – the last have an essential role, as they expand the reach of the reporting.

These authors found in their studies that some news organisations set objectives to produce in-depth reporting or investigative journalism. However, these studies focus little on understanding how digital natives conduct this kind of reporting. It is difficult to distinguish what responses about specialisation are distinctive to digital natives from how legacy news organisations respond to specialisation because most studies do not compare digital media and legacy newspapers. These investigations identify how news organisations focus on a specific way of reporting the news and prioritising their news values over economic goals. Thus, they focus on attracting smaller audiences, but with higher income and influence, who are also loyal to the news organisations and willing to contribute to supporting them either directly (by paid memberships or making donations) or indirectly (returning to consume content).

3.3.3.3 Geographic focus

Some digital natives limit their scope to the news coverage of a city or region. These hyperlocals have expanded quickly in many countries despite the crisis of journalistic enterprises. The main objective of the hyperlocals' that studies have focused on relate to locally produced news. Therefore, most of the literature discusses their findings without distinguishing between the different kinds of news organisations (including local offices from legacy news organisations, independent broadcasting or newspapers, digital natives, blogs, and social media). Therefore, there are few referents to understand how different organisational structures influence the content they produce.

Harte and colleagues (2019) conducted extensive research on hyperlocals in the UK. They found these spaces were responding to a gap to provide news about a specific locality contributing to the representation of a place. They explored the different organisations' structures and practices, which showed the diversity of spaces from which hyperlocals produce content. One of the most important findings of this research is the contribution of hyperlocals to the public sphere. These organisations contribute to understanding issues that directly affect the residents of the area. They also contributed to providing plurality by incorporating diverse voices or points of view, with the engagement of the community in their content production.

While these spaces show the essential journalistic roles that digital natives can perform, many of them are possible because hyperlocals cover a small geographical area with communities who are engaged with local issues. Such conditions that are not replicable in organisations with a national scope. The status of hyperlocals is not reviewed in more depth here because the present research considers digital natives that position themselves alongside national legacy news media as competitors in the same market.

3.4 Discussion

As discussed previously, normative theories were developed in relation to legacy news organisations in conditions that have been transformed through the development of digital journalism. The digital environment brings new advantages and challenges to journalism, and the normative roles need to be rethought to address this shift.

This chapter discussed how digital natives think of themselves as spaces where they can do 'quality' journalism, understanding this as the opposite of 'churned out' journalism and serving values such as public service and watchdog roles. The value of objectivity is challenged continuously and replaced by other values such as transparency, appealing to emotions, or advocating for a cause. Digital natives contribute to the informative role by proposing new narratives focused on analysis, providing context, considering new temporalities (slow journalism), and using multimedia to explain complex information.

The watchdog role is one of the main objectives of digital natives. However, there is a lack of understanding about how much investigative journalism is actually produced, the characteristics of their investigations, and their social impact. Another way to fulfil the watchdog role is through fact-checking; this has become a widespread practice to make people in power accountable for their statements. The literature also shows that digital natives actively look to include new issues and voices, contributing to plurality. This is not only in the case of niche organisations but also generalists.

One of the main challenges that digital news organisations face is how to finance their projects. Some new content production practices have emerged as a response, such as native advertising and tailored content. In a high-choice environment, news organisations are trying to attract readers, and this could lead to channelling efforts to produce greater volumes of information instead of aiming for quality.

Most of the research about digital natives has been focused on their business models and considering whether they can be sustainable or profitable. Scholars have considered what they are doing differently but have not researched whether what they are proposing is different from the legacy news organisations (comparing content, analysing and comparing

practices). Scholars praise the different ways in which digital natives propose to do 'quality' journalism, but often whether their aims are put into practice or to what extent they meet their aims remains unexplored.

Existing studies also provide an insight into how digital natives want to differentiate themselves from legacy news media. However, they fall short of analysing what kind of content they have produced and its impact. Additionally, few studies have compared legacy newspapers versus digital natives, thus it is hard to assess whether what they are doing is different and how. This is a gap that the present research intends to fill.

Finally, it is essential to underline that most of these existing discussions have primarily focused on democratic societies, with a strong focus on the USA and Europe. This study aims to contribute to knowledge that can explain the local context and practices of journalism in Mexico while keeping "entry points for a more global, comparative perspective" (Votmer, 2013, p.7) between the roles of the media in the process of democratisation. Therefore, this study can contribute to the de-westernization of journalism studies (Curran and Park, 2000), specifically in understanding digital native news organisations by introducing the case study of Mexico, which is not a country of concern to Western scholars. However, as it reviewed in the previous chapter, Mexico has also been under-researched by local academics.

Mexican digital native news organisations have the potential to develop new practices to achieve the roles of journalism reviewed above, but they also have constraints that can limit their achievement. The main questions that guide the present study are the following:

How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?

- RQ 1. Which organisational structures are most prevalent among digital native news organisations and how are they reflected in journalistic practices?
- RQ 2. Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations and how do these shape the content they produce?

To answer these questions, the content produced by two of Mexico's largest digital native news producers was analysed and compared to that produced by the two most important

legacy newspapers in their online versions. In addition to the content analysis, 28 face-to-face interviews were conducted with staff from the four news organisations. The following chapter is dedicated to discussing the research design and the methods used for this study.

Chapter 4. Research design and methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research design used in the present study, the methods chosen, and how they were employed. As argued in Chapter 3, most of the literature about digital natives analyses the organisations based on interviews with their contributors. However, this means there is a gap in understanding about what kind of content is being produced by digital natives around the globe, particularly in the Mexican context. Secondly, there is little understanding of the quality of content made by legacy news organisations in Mexico. To comprehensively understand the digital native news organisations and the content they produce, the present research adopted a comparative approach to compare and contrast the output and practices of digital native and legacy newspapers. The present research chose to use a mixed methods approach.

The main research question that guides the present study is: **How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?**

The following sub-questions allow me to explore different aspects of the main question – these are addressed in the empirical chapters:

- RQ 1. Which organisational structures are most prevalent among digital native news organisations and how are they reflected in journalistic practices?
- RQ 2. Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations and how do these shape the content they produce?

The following sections discuss the rationale behind the research design and the methods used to collect the data – quantitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews – and reflect on the limitations of the study.

4.2 A comparative case study approach

A comparative case study between digital natives and the websites of legacy media was designed to determine how Mexican digital natives use the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico. Having more than one case study allows for an understanding of a phenomenon through its similarities and differences (Warwick and Osherson, 1973, p.218). Although most comparative studies are designed to analyse a phenomenon in more than one nation, the comparisons can be made across world regions, national regions, cultures (Esser et al., 2012) and in this case, comparing media types.

Cross-media comparison intends to understand what factors shape the organisations and their practices when they exist in a common media system. Matassi and Boczkowski (2023) point out that ‘new’ media emerged based in pre-existent practices and technologies for new purposes, thus a cross-media analysis allows to have a less technological deterministic point of view, aiding to avoid an over positive analysis of the findings and “to discern significant similarities and differences that otherwise would have been less visible” (Matassi and Boczkowski, 2023, p.61). Cornia and colleagues analysed that (2018) news organisations look how their peers operate and respond similarly to changes despite the differences in national markets “news organizations do not respond to structural changes each in their own, unique way [...] Instead, we see clear evidence of cross-organizationally shared logics of appropriateness” (p.703).

While these two points of view seem opposite, existing cross-media studies comparing digital natives against legacy news organisations seem to find a point in common between these perspectives. Researchers have analysed whether digital natives emerging from technology-based companies, such as BuzzFeed and Vice, follow the norms and values of the journalistic field (Wu, 2016; Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Stringer, 2018). The literature shows that digital natives do indeed operate under the same field values while create different content than legacy media. As analysed in Chapters 2 and 3, the literature also found that, around the world, digital natives aim to differentiate themselves from the legacy news media, while embracing normative values of journalism (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Carlson and Usher, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2016; Usher, 2017b; Deuze and Witschge, 2020).

This pre-existing knowledge about digital natives, and the scarce up-to-date literature that has analysed the content produced by Mexican legacy news organisations, suggested the need to compare the content produced by digital natives and the online versions of legacy newspapers to identify which practices are inherent to Mexican news organisations due the context in which they operate and which are particular to digital natives. A comprehensive approach to the four news organisations selected for this research can help with understanding the multiple levels that constitute the case study.

4.2.1 Case study selection

For the selection of case studies, it is necessary to not look for ‘typical cases’ but to select them strategically (opposed to random or statistically). The selection of cases involves having knowledge about the case study before starting the research to ensure the case will meet the requirements to answer the research questions (De Vaus, 2001; Yin, 2009).

The steps followed in selecting the case studies are presented here. First, those digital natives that are focused on producing news content in Mexico were identified. As discussed in Chapter 3, digital native news organisations are those that were born online. However, their particular characteristics – including aims, values and organisational structures – vary drastically. As a starting point to identify as many digital natives as possible, publications about digital natives were consulted, such as digital media directories like <https://nuevosmedios.es/> and <https://www.sembramedia.org/>, and diverse articles of the newspaper *El Economista*, which publishes articles about the performance of digital natives in Mexico (El Economista, n.d.). The *First study of digital media and journalism in Latin America* (Meléndez Yúdico, 2016) was consulted to explore the particularities of Mexican digital natives, such as primary objectives, funding models and formats.

Once digital native news organisations in Mexico had been identified, their distinctive characteristics, such as formats, topics, forms of journalism, geographic area, and structure, were observed. At this stage sites that only covered soft news topics such as lifestyle, sports, entertainment or celebrities were excluded, leaving sites that focused on the production of hard news (covering topics like politics, international news, education, business or

economics) as such news provides information that promotes the civic engagement of citizens to participate in a democratic society (McChesney, 2012).

A whole category of digital natives was excluded: international digital natives with a presence in Mexico, such as BuzzFeed, Vice, and the Huffington Post, because there are various studies about the leading organisations and their distinctive language and coverage of niche topics, even when they do not specifically address the Mexican case (Mitchell et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2017; Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Stringer, 2019). This is based on the assumption that these country-specific news organisations operations will be strongly influenced to replicate structures and practices set by the parent organisation

The digital natives selected were two national reach news organisations because they allow a comparison in more parallel circumstances, as regional research in Mexico has shown that journalists face different challenges according to the region they operate (González Macías, 2016; Brambila, 2018). This leads to thinking that national news organisations based in the country's capital have relatively more independence to report than local news organisations. In addition, it was observed that national digital natives produce more original content, different types of journalism (such as investigative journalism, fact-checking and live stream content) and more in-depth reporting. Aiming for a larger audience allows them to have more income. Thus this research will be looking at news organisations operating in some of the 'best' circumstances that Mexico can offer in the timeframe analysed.

The websites of legacy media studied were selected by considering the sites within the most visited. Websites of radio or television newscasts were excluded because they do not distribute news content online. Both newspapers analysed can be classified as broadsheets, so besides their specific characteristics listed above, they will be expected to do "quality journalism" in opposition to tabloids (Chandler and Munday, 2020). The four cases of study were then chosen for their specific characteristics: Animal Político is the only news organisation in the country that does fact-checking, and it is known for its investigative journalism that has multiple national and international awards.

Aristegui Noticias differentiate for their live stream newscast, but also because this site is perceived as a way in which its director Carmen Aristegui was able to avoid the censorship after 3 different incidents of limitation to their freedom of speech during her career. Aristegui Noticias emerged as a space where Carmen Aristegui and her collaborators could do journalism free from external pressures after different incidents of firing her from the newscast she leads on two different radio stations. In 2008, Aristegui announced she was leaving W Radio due to 'editorial incompatibilities' (Nájar, 2015). In 2009, she led the newscast on MVS Radio; in 2011, her newscast was suspended for 'violating the code of ethic' of the radio station after questioning if President Felipe Calderón had an alcoholism problem. After two weeks, she was back to her news space. In March 2015, two reporters, Daniel Lizárraga and Irving Huerta, were fired for linking the radio station's name to the new whistleblowing platform Méxicoleak. Both were part of Carmen Aristegui's team. Aristegui gave an ultimatum and threatened to leave the network if they were not reinstated. She and her team were illegally fired (as was ruled by a Federal Court) from MVS four days later (Malkin, 2015; Nájar, 2015; Sandoval, 2015).

The legacy newspaper Reforma is the only newspaper in the country with a paywall to access its content. The newspaper emerged in 1993, during the democratisation process in the country, and as discussed in Chapter 3, established measures to limit the influence of the government by not using the vendor's union that controlled the distribution of newspapers, rejecting bribes and handouts, to limit the intervention of the government (Aguilar and Terrazas, 1996; Guerrero, 2010a). Sallie Hughes (2006) argues that Reforma have the characteristics of a civic media that she defines as media autonomous and diverse, assertive in the way in which gathered the news and provides a two-way communication system between their reader and the government.

El Universal is the oldest legacy national newspaper in the country that still operates, and it has been the most-read news organisation in Mexico almost since it migrated to the Internet. El Universal was classified by Sallie Hughes (2006) as mixed between authoritarian and civic. But the media have occupied different positions against the government, from being a lapdog to a watchdog.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to an in-depth analysis of each organisation, and Appendix 1 provides a list of key information about the four news organisations.

4.3 Research design

As explained above, a case study approach typically uses more than one method to cover different angles and triangulate the data obtained by the different methods due to the complexity of the phenomena (Hartley, 2004; Yin, 2016). Due to the comprehensive approach to understanding the case studies, it was decided to use a mixed methods design, where qualitative and quantitative methods are used together to collect and analyse the data in a complementary way to explain a complex topic (Creswell, 2014), “thereby producing more comprehensive, if not insightful, findings than either a qualitative or quantitative study might do alone” (Yin, 2016, p.310). The methods selected for the present research are content analysis and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The data collection was conducted in two stages. First, the content analysis was conducted to obtain data that would help construct the questions used in the second stage of semi-structured interviews. In total, 1,400 news stories were selected and analysed from 2018, and 28 face-to-face interviews with staff from the four news organisations were conducted. Throughout the research, documents relating to these news organisations were consulted. These methods complement each other, compensating for their disadvantages and being complementary in their strengths to make more robust inferences (Yin, 2016). The content analysis allows for an assessment of the news stories’ characteristics, while the interviews explain the conditions in which the content is produced, such as resources and journalists’ routines. The empirical chapters interweave the findings drawn from both methods. The following sections explain how each method provides evidence to answer the research questions guiding this study.

4.3.1 Content analysis

Content analysis involves “the systematic, objective, quantitative analysis of message characteristics” (Neuendorf, 2017, p.1) and it helps to analyse media content by “identify[ing]

and count[ing] the occurrence of specified characteristics or dimensions of texts” (Hansen, 1998, p.92). Due to its quantitative nature, content analysis is suitable for analysing higher volumes of content than other methods, such as discourse or semiotic analysis. It allows the researcher to identify trends and patterns and to infer absences (Krippendorff, 2013; Neuendorf, 2017).

Data derived from the Internet can vary in terms of the types of elements it can contain – it can be just text-based, but it can also include static elements such as photographs and images. However, they can also include multimedia and interactive elements, which is important to consider when designing methods (Neuendorf, 2017). While content analysis was initially thought of as a technique to analyse text-based content (Hansen, 1998), it can also be applied to different kinds of communication (Neuendorf, 2017).

These considerations require a theoretical framework to select the categories to analyse, enrich the findings, and put them into context to understand the content. The content analysis aims to assess what kind of content is produced in these spaces and whether they accomplish the main normative functions of the media as discussed in Chapter 2: providing reliable information, acting as a watchdog, and demanding accountability and expressing a plurality of issues and voices (Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009; McChesney, 2012; Voltmer, 2013; Coleman et al., 2015; Parry and Moss, 2015). The research aims to determine what kind of information these organisations produce and how they present the news.

4.3.1.1 Categories of analysis and coding scheme

To design the coding variables, it was necessary to assess what kind of variables had been used in previous studies, as discussed in the literature review, and what questions the present research intended to answer. The main categories used for the content analysis are discussed here (Table 1). Each category of analysis does not represent the coding scheme, but the topics that were considered for exploration through content analysis; the categories in the following table were translated into operative variables in the subsequent coding scheme. The complete codebook with a description of all the variables can be found in Appendix 2.

The first category includes diverse variables used **to identify and catalogue the news stories**. This includes media, date published, date collected, URL, and title. General descriptive information was coded, such as title, section in which it was published, author, and author's gender.

The second category, **coverage of topics**, aims to understand the media agenda of the news organisations analysed. The literature analysed in the previous chapter found that digital natives in other countries intend to differentiate themselves from the journalism produced by legacy news organisations by covering niche issues (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Cook and Sirkkunen, 2013; Nicholls et al., 2016; Wu, 2016; Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Stringer, 2019; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). The niche issues give visibility to issues of civil rights, LGBT+ issues, mental health, or drugs not only as a market strategy but because the organisations and/or the reporters are personally involved with certain movements (Nicholls et al., 2016; Tandoc, 2017; Stringer, 2019).

The third category, analysis of **sources**, allows for an understanding about kinds of sources and how they are used to inform the content produced. Identifying and classifying the sources used in the news stories can help to assess the inclusion of non-elite actors in the news, such as civil society, NGOs and experts, and to assess the plurality of voices in the public debate (Manning, 2001; Kleemans et al., 2015; McPherson, 2016; Tandoc, 2017).

The analysis of sources can also provide information about the practices of journalists' passive and active reporting, and the influence on agendas of PR offices, through the reliance of the news organisations on press releases and press conferences (Hallin, 2000b; Lewis et al., 2008; Guerrero, 2010b; Trejo Delarbre, 2011; Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Jackson and Moloney, 2016). Another element to assess is the originality of content and how much of the news organisations' content has been obtained from original reporting by other media (Franklin, 2005; Paterson, 2008; Phillips, 2010b; Anderson, 2013b).

The fourth category, **journalistic roles**, was based on the content analysis of Mellado and colleagues (2018), who compared the content published by two Chilean legacy newspapers and two digital natives to measure the extent to which content reflects different journalistic roles, such as watchdog, service and civic roles.

The fifth and sixth categories, **narrative** and **audio-visual elements** are important to understand whether the digital natives are adopting new practices to deliver the news. Nee (2013) found that digital natives experiment with how to narrate the news, creating new journalistic genres, adopting a more informal language and tone (Wu, 2016; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Stringer, 2019), but also by using inserts of social media, videos, infographics and interactive elements. The fact that the content analysis included an analysis of not only textual content but also other formats was considered in the design of the categories to analyse textual, visual and audio-visual content (Pink, 2012; Rose, 2016; Neuendorf, 2017).

The seventh category, **hyperlinks**, was used with other categories to understand transparency and trust. According to Vos and Craft (2017), including links to the sources in a new story is a way in which the journalist can be seen to be transparent and accountable for their work, which can lead to readers finding the work credible (Karlsson et al., 2014).

An eighth category includes diverse variables that allow identifying better content particularities to allow a cross-analysis of variables.

Table 1. Categories of analysis for constructing the coding scheme

Categories	Objective	Description
1. ID Variables	Allows the researcher to track the main details of each news story analysed.	Variables such as consecutive number, publisher, URL, date of publication, collection date, and section.
2. Coverage of topics	Provide information. Plurality of issues.	Variables such as topics, categories to describe the subjects portrayed in the news stories, diversity and geographic focus.
3. Sources	Plurality of sources. This category also allows exploration of production practices such as curation vs. original content. Who are the sources? What kind of sources do they use? What sectors are represented?	Several variables to understand the sourcing practices such as source count, type of sources, how where obtained, gender.
4. Journalistic roles	The categories have been constructed considering existing work (Mellado et al., 2018)	Watchdog role, investigative journalism, fact-checking, background or context.
5. Narrative	Operationalise the role of providing information (accessible formats, easy to understand content). What genre does the content produced belong to? Do digital natives use new formats?	Temporality, journalistic genre, extension.
6. Audio-visual elements	Operationalise the role of providing information (accessible formats, easy to understand content). Production practices.	The use of photographs, videos, audio, illustrations, infographics, maps, interactive elements, inserts of social media content (including tweets, Instagram photos, YouTube videos). Who produces those materials? What is its role in the piece of content?
7. Hyperlinks	In combination with other variables, to operationalise the concept of transparency proposed by Karlsson (2010) and Karlsson and colleagues (2014).	Hyperlinks count and where they direct to the reader.

8. Other features	Specific features found during the pilot.	Additional categories that allow identification of specific kinds of content such as sponsored content, Verificado 2018, content from Aristegui Noticias live newscast, World Cup coverage.
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From these general categories, 40 variables were developed to analyse the content. The complete coding scheme can be found in Appendix 2. The content collection process is explained in the following section.

4.3.1.2 Content Collection

The data collection criteria were designed to create the most comparable sample between the digital natives and the newspapers selected. Therefore, it was chosen to collect the content published on the sites' homepages. In this way, the sample would include a more extensive diversity of topics as the four sites analysed publish their content on their homepages by hierarchising the content that they consider most relevant.

The corpus of the content analysis was composed by considering all the content produced by the four news organisations during the two constructed weeks in 2018. A pilot test was used to assess and refine the coding scheme as suggested by the literature (Krippendorff, 2013), collecting content from the four news organisations. This pilot collected 211 news stories on two different days. Due to the lack of comparability between the content collected during the pilot and the two constructed weeks, the content from the pilot was used to inform the methodological decisions but excluded from the analysis in the following chapters. However, it was useful to test whether the variables were operational. During the coding process, the confusing or inadequate variables were amended, and the variables were tested in terms of how they could relate to each other to allow a better understanding of the content (Hansen, 1998). It also gave important insight into the daily volume of information in both kinds of organisations. While the digital natives produce around 30 entries daily, the legacy newspapers produce hundreds.

Another lesson from the pilot was the lifespan of news items on the organisation's homepages. The two legacy newspapers analysed constantly update their content during the

day. They have few stories on their homepages from previous days, while the digital natives keep more news stories from previous days, mainly more in depth reporting or special coverage stories.

With this knowledge, it was decided to create constructed weeks instead of consecutive days for two reasons. First, to minimise the possibility of distortion produced by a significant event, it is advised to collect content every third day (Neuendorf, 2017). Secondly, due to the observations from the pilot, the homepages kept content published on previous days. A consecutive day sample would not allow these characteristics to be shown.

To choose the collection days in the constructed weeks, it first was necessary to identify the dates for each day of the week contained in a specific period, and then select dates that represented each day in a week (Hester and Dougall, 2007). This method of constructing a sample provides a more accurate representation of the content produced than choosing consecutive days (Riffe et al., 1993; Hester and Dougall, 2007).

The months chosen to construct the sample were in March and June 2018. The reasons for choosing dates so far about are, first, to have a sample of news content produced in an ordinary period (first sample week), and second, to have a sample of the last month of an electoral campaign period (started on 30 March to 27 June 2018). On 1st July 2018 Mexico elected its president, 128 members of the Senate and 500 members of the Chamber of Deputies, Mexico City's Mayor, eight governors of the states, and other local authorities in the states. In total were elected more than 3,400 positions in all levels of government (INE, 2018). The election also took place in a context where fake news were on the rise and in "a post-truth political culture" (Martinez Carrillo and Tamul, 2019). This election was also characterised for having the largest proportion of younger persons eligible to vote young voters, one in three were between 18 and 30 years old (Galarza Molina, 2020), and larger than ever access to the Internet, in the elections of 2012 40% of the population in Mexico had access to the Internet, while in 2018 rose to 68% (Martinez Carrillo and Tamul, 2019), therefore it was expected that many of the voters will be exposed to the information circulating on the Internet. Both weeks selected allowed an assessment of the content produced by the four media during one of the most important processes in a democratic country, in a context of rising disinformation and misinformation.

Table 2 Week One. Dates of data collection are highlighted.

March 2018						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Table 3 Week Two. Electoral campaign periods. Dates of data collection are highlighted.

June 2018						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24

The data collection criteria were expected to create the most comparable sample between the digital natives and the newspapers selected. Therefore, it was chosen to collect the content from the sites' homepages. In this way, the sample would encompass a more extensive range of topics, and indicate the content that the four sites consider most relevant as they hierarchize the content on their homepages. Following the hierarchy on the printed newspapers' first page, the homepages reflect what the editors consider to be most relevant (Benson et al., 2012).

The unit of analysis is the news story. The data collection was not limited to selecting a specific format or excluding certain kinds of news stories. The sample was integrated for hard and soft news communicated in different formats such as text-based news stories, videos, multimedia content, social media, and a mix of any of these formats. Collecting and analysing online news content presents difficulties compared with analogue content as "newscasts can take place at any time of the day, in any channel; news texts can be rearranged, edited or deleted, and users can add content or context" (Karlsson and Sjøvaag, 2016, p.180). To try and capture the content for further analysis, the collection stage was designed to archive most of the static content of each news story as advised by the literature (Karlsson and Sjøvaag, 2016; Zamith, 2018). Unfortunately, building an archive of video or interactive

elements included in the news stories that are part of the corpus was not impossible due to the time-consuming and technical requirements.

In total, 1,400 news stories were retrieved, 350 per media. The content was collected starting at 5 PM, Mexican time, CST (11 PM-12 AM in UK time zone, GMT), giving space to collect content produced during the day by the media. The newspapers upload a large part of their content in the morning, consisting primarily of the digitalised version of their printed newspapers. Therefore in the evening, the newspaper's website has a mix of news from the printed version and content published online across the day.

The content was collected following this process:

1. Providing that the content could change or become unavailable at any given time, a screenshot of the homepage was taken to capture the content published by each news organisation at the time of the sample. The screenshot tools NCapture and FireShot were used, which allow the capture of a full homepage in a single document, no matter the length of the website.
2. The news stories were selected starting from top to bottom, left to right, selecting the higher hierarchy posts first (prioritising larger headers and images).
3. Automated listings were excluded such as 'most read', 'last news'.
4. Hyperlinks that did not take the user directly to one news item were not considered (e.g. if the hyperlink took the user to the homepage of supplements, magazines, mini-sites).
5. Once the 25 news items were selected from each news organisation (as per the criteria described above), the researcher made an Excel list to compare the URLs to exclude repetition; any news items sampled before were excluded, and a new post was chosen from the homepage following the same criteria until the number of items per day, and per news organisation were reached.
6. The news stories were captured in PDF using NCapture and FireShot to be able to capture an image of the content available and to preserve the static elements of each entry (text, images, photos and social media inserts), as suggested in the literature (Neuendorf, 2017).

The content was later coded using Excel and SPSS, relying on the coding scheme designed for the present research (see Appendix 2).

4.3.1.3 Results

The content was coded directly in a digital coding form created in Excel, where each row corresponded to one news story. Once finished coding, the Excel file was exported to SPSS for analysis. In the first instance, all the variables were processed to obtain an array of basic descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mode. After this first data analysis, some variables were analysed in relation to others (using the cross-table function) to better understand the content. The specific variables used in the cross-analysis are explained in the empirical chapters.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

The present study was designed to use findings from the content analysis to design an interview questionnaire that would give participants the opportunity to elaborate self-descriptions of the processes, motivations, and limits of their practices. Quantitative methods allow patterns to emerge, while qualitative approaches offer an interpretation of the subjective experience.

Interviews facilitate information that cannot be obtained in other ways by exploring “people’s ideas, thoughts, opinions, **attitudes** and what motivates them” (Berger, 2020, p.218) (emphasis in original). In-depth semi-structured interviews were chosen because these allow the researcher to start with a common set of questions for all informants but leave the possibility open for the interviewer to dig into the topics or change the order to avoid interrupting the narrative (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). A risk in conducting interviews is that informants are not always accurate, sometimes because they want to represent themselves in a better light, so they misremember, or they say what they think the researcher wants to hear (Berger, 2020).

Twenty-eight face-to-face interviews were conducted in this study with staff from across the four news organisations. The interview questions were designed based on the preliminary results from the content analysis and the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The

interview guide was designed in English and translated into Spanish by the researcher. The complete interview questionnaires can be found in Appendix 3.

The interviews have a central role in the project and provide an understanding of the internal and external influences shaping the content of the media analysed. Drawing on the Hierarchy of Influences Model designed by Shoemaker and Reese (2014), the interviews explored the internal levels of influence of the media (such as organisation, routines and individuals).

The aims pursued by the news organisations were explored. The interviews with the journalists and editors provide the opportunity to elaborate a self-description of their practices' processes, motivations, and limitations. In addition, they explore whether journalists think they are doing things differently (and how) and whether they find limitations on their work (internal or external to the news organisations). At the individual level, it was particularly relevant to interview the directors of the digital native news organisations and to assess their aims as founders of the media. As elite informants, the value of their opinions and experiences resides in their position in the journalistic field.

4.3.2.1 Recruiting and interviewing process

The recruitment process started by identifying the key roles in each organisation. First, the aim was to interview the directors of the four news organisations, general editors, and journalists. However, after many attempts to contact them to coordinate an interview, only the director and general editor of Animal Político agreed to be interviewed. Secondly, the authors in the corpus of the content analysed were identified and contacted. The first listing of journalists found from the content analysis was helpful as a starting point. A snowball approach was used to recruit sufficient interviewees from each news organisation, following the suggestions and contacts provided by the participants.

Twenty-eight face-to-face interviews were conducted with staff from the four news organisations during March and April 2019 (see the list of participants in Appendix 5). The interviews were conducted in Mexico City, the most convenient location for the participants, which resulted in a mix of newsrooms, cafes, and restaurants as interview sites. One was even

conducted in the foyer of the Senate of the Republic of Mexico, where the participant was assigned.

4.3.2.2 Analysis of the interviews

The interviews were audio recorded, with the participant's informed consent (see Appendix 4), collecting a total of 33.5 hours. Notes about observations and emerging themes were taken during and after the interviews. All the interviews were conducted, transcribed and analysed in Spanish. The researcher translated the verbatim speech from the interviews used as quotes in this thesis a posteriori.

A thematic analysis was done to identify common and contrasting patterns and narratives across the responses. The analysis was done in different stages, including inductive and deductive approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In the first stage it was used a deductive approach, looking for the themes used to construct the interview questionnaire, which was constructed based on the research questions that guides this thesis, these themes are:

- Aims of the organisation
- Organisation's economics and resources
- Routines in everyday news
- Investigative journalism, fact-checking, original reporting
- Journalists' role perceptions

In the first stage of the analysis, the researcher read all the transcripts to identify themes and sub-themes from the interview questionnaire. For instance, the subthemes under the 'routines in everyday news' theme included deskbound routines, coverage of prescheduled events such as press conferences or activity in the Senate, and 'street reporting'. Thematic analysis “the researcher is required not only to produce a list of themes but also to organise those themes in a way that reflects how they are conceptualised to relate to each other” (King et al., 2019, p.201) for this, the responses were then compared, contrasted, and relationships were established.

The second stage used an inductive approach to diminish the bias in the analysis when looking for pre-set themes. This analysis involved looking again at the whole set of interviews and

doing a close reading of the transcripts to identify additional themes that can contribute to answering the research questions and better understanding the subthemes previously identified.

All the responses were compared against the two different kinds of news organisations (digital natives and legacy newspapers), across the four organisations analysed in this thesis, and the different job roles of the interviewees aiming to have a “right balance between *within-case and cross-case* analysis” (King et al., 2019, p.201). This allowed the researcher to have a better understanding of the themes and how they are connected with others and, therefore have a more robust understanding of the data.

4.3.3 Document analysis

Throughout the research, they searched and analysed documents that informed about the news organisations produced internally (such as manuals, codes of practice, or financial reports) or externally (public records about the traffic of the websites). The documents do not have a primary role in the research design of the present study; they were consulted to supplement and corroborate the information obtained with the content analysis and interviews, taking "full advantage of any available source that might supplement, back up or challenge the materials produced by [the] major methods of investigation" (Deacon et al., 2021, p.19).

An example of documents obtained in this research includes:

- ‘About us’ or corresponding sections from the websites of the news organisations
- Organigrams
- Media kits
- Press conferences/releases
- Manuals or codes of practice
- Informs
- Awards lists
- Websites’ traffic
- Published interviews, conferences and similar public discussions

All the documents retrieved and analysed are publicly available online and referenced in this document where relevant. In Chapter 5, documents such as 'About us' sections on their websites, published interviews, manuals and codes of practice were used to understand the

objectives of the news organisations. To triangulate information about the funding and resources of the four news organisations analysed, media kits, organigrams, and other ad hoc documents were consulted (i.e. the websites of foundations providing grants). Chapter 7 expands the information about collaborations and networks. The documents' analysis allowed the researcher to supplement and verify the information about the news organisations obtained with the interviews or observed from the content analysis “to seek convergence and corroboration through the use of different data sources and methods” (Bowen, 2009, p.28).

Document analysis contribute to complement the information about the news organisations due their restricted access for researchers (Deacon et al., 2021). This research did not have access to internally circulated documents such as memos, internal reports, or financial records. Another limitation of the use of documents produced by news organisations is the bias of the information, as they are aimed at readers (i.e. 'About us' texts), consist of PR material to reach potential clients (media kits) or to disseminate news (press releases or press conferences) (Yin, 2016).

4.4 Ethical considerations

In accordance to the guidelines of the University of Leeds, every research involving human participants requires ethical approval. To conduct the interviews, consideration were taken to protect the participants and protect their personal data. This research project was assessed and granted the approval of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee (reference PVAR 17-088).

Due to the research design, it is important to identify the organisations and their roles. However they were offered anonymity to participate, while explaining that full anonymity for all participants was not always possible, such as when the participants have a unique position in the media, like director or general editor. Private information provided was agreed not be divulged or shared with any other person. The participants were informed that they were not obligated to be part of the research and could withdraw their participation within a set

timeframe. Generally, the individuals and organisations analysed are not considered vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, it was provided that any situation that could be sensitive and put the informants at risk was excluded.

The participants were provided with an information sheet. Once read and discussed, they were provided with a consent form to sign granting their approval to participate in this research, and record the interview. All were offered the chance to protect their identity before and after the interviews; only two chose to remain anonymous, yet I took measures to anonymise the participants. Off-the-record statements were not mentioned in any form in this research. Once they knew, understood, and completely agreed to the terms of their participation, they were required to sign a form giving their consent to participate in the project (Appendix 4 includes the information sheet and the consent form in English; both documents were translated by the author into Spanish for the interviewees).

Private and public information was saved using the virtual file-hosting service the University of Leeds provides to secure data. In this way, the data is protected by the measures taken by the University of Leeds while remaining accessible to the researcher.

4.5 Reflections on study limitations

The research design presented here resulted from many discussions and adjustments to make up for the limitations of the project in answering the main research question within the time available in the PhD programme. However, in addition to the time frame to conduct the research, external limitations are discussed in this section before moving on to the empirical chapters to discuss the findings.

The chosen case studies do not represent the whole media ecology of digital news organisations or legacy newspapers in Mexico. However, the case study choice did not intend to represent the whole array of Mexican digital natives due to time and resource constraints. However, the cases were carefully chosen, as described previously in this chapter.

As explained previously, the daily volume of content produced by the legacy newspapers and digital natives is drastically uneven. To create a comparative sample, 25 stories that were higher in the news hierarchy per day were collected from each homepage. While this allowed for critical insight into the content each news organisation prioritised on their websites, there is a question about what the overall content produced looks like.

The categories were carefully designed and assessed, and a pilot study was conducted to test that the coding categories were constructed adequately and that all the categories are exhaustive and mutually exclusive (Neuendorf, 2017). While the literature about content analysis said that the analyst should not be the coder of the content unless there is at least another person coding (Krippendorff, 2019), due to constrictions of time and language barriers, the coding of the content was done entirely by me, and no other coders were recruited to establish the reliability. However, a pilot test was conducted to test the categories and to adjust the coding scheme to resolve issues found; it is also helpful as practice to ensure consistency in the coding process.

Initially, participant observation in all the news organisations was considered to understand how their resources shape their structure and practices. Due to time and resource limitations, participant observation was discarded before planning the interview stage. As discussed in the previous chapter, digital journalism has not only brought changes in practices but has also opened spaces for new job positions to fulfil the necessities of an online environment (O'Sullivan and Heinonen, 2008; Peters and Broersma, 2013).

Interviewing workers in these novel positions was considered. However, the main limitation found during the interviewing process was access to the subjects. The contributors from *Animal Político* were the most accessible as I could interview people in different positions, including the Director and the General Editor. It was helpful that their website has a directory with all contributors listed with multiple ways to contact them (such as email and one or more social media profiles). They allowed me to visit their newsroom office, the General Editor introduced me to the contributors who were in the office at the time, and they let me borrow an office to conduct some of the interviews.

I could not contact the directors and general editors in the other three news organisations. I sent them my request for an interview through diverse channels; however, I did not receive replies. Aristegui Online does not have a contact list of contributors on their website. To contact the workers of the news organisation, I sent emails to the general inbox and called the office. I could only contact them by searching for their names and using their publicly available information, such as social media profiles.

The newspaper Reforma has a policy of not giving interviews. The policy details varied according to who I spoke to (I could not access their official policies). Some claimed that the policy does not allow them to speak about the newspapers at all, while others claimed that the policy allows them to give interviews, as long it is for academic purposes, and others claimed they are not allowed to speak about specific topics like subscriptions, publicity, and other figures about the income of newspapers.

Contributors from El Universal online were receptive to meeting. They allowed me to visit the open office of the online edition and use the facilities to conduct some of the interviews. They introduced me to their colleagues and suggested people to approach. However, in other areas, this approach did not lead to replies to my attempts to interview the Director and General Editors.

Despite the lack of representations of directors and general editors, the interviews reached saturation in terms of insights about the day-to-day news making process in each of the news organisations. Chapters 5 to 8 are dedicated to presenting and analysing the content analysis and interview findings, and the main concepts that guide the present research are discussed in more depth.

Chapter 5. The organisations: objectives, funding, and resources

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines, one by one, the four news organisations, analysing how they are funded, their aims, how they are structured, and how all these aspects impact the content they produce. The first of the three elements analysed in this chapter is the objectives of the news organisations. It analyses how the four news organisations define themselves and how they are defined by their members of staff interviewed for this research. This will help with understanding the aims and values that motivate the work of the four news organisations studied. The aims of the organisations were drawn from online statements published by the four news organisations and the staff member interviews conducted in this study to answer the following research question: Do digital natives have different aims, motivations, and normative ideals than legacy newspapers? To answer these research question, this analysis draws on the 28 interviews conducted in this study with staff from the four news organisations and the statements of the news organisations on their websites.

Secondly, this research analyses the different sources of income of the four news organisations, the resources available to each news organisation, which has implications for their independence to report. The research question explored here is: is their financial model likely to facilitate independent reporting? In order to understand the funding models of the news organisations, prior to the interviews, an extensive search was done for documents that could shed light on this issue. Information about their business model was first searched on the websites of the four news organisations and analysed from pages such as 'about us' and media kits; in a second instance, reports about government expenditure in advertising and digital media were consulted. This informed the interview schedule, and the interviewees were asked about their funding sources. Additional documents were searched ad hoc to cross-check information from the interviews, such as pages of foundations and grants.

Thirdly, the organisation's resources (such as money, facilities, equipment, staff members) are analysed to reveal differences in between digital natives and legacy newspapers. As will be explored further in subsequent chapters, the different characteristics of organisations have implications for the practices of their staff and the content they produce. The size of the news organisation, its resources, their collaborations with other organisations, and the policies that guide its organisation are analysed to answer the following question: Which resources are designated for producing ordinary content, and which are used to produce investigative journalism and fact-checking? This analysis is informed by the information collected from the website about their organigram, details about the number of employees, fixed sections and verticals, and supplements in the case of newspapers. This information was used to construct ad hoc questions in the interview questionnaires. Ad hoc documents were searched to cross-check and expand the information, i.e. information about the foundations and ONGs that have networks with the news organisations analysed.

As discussed in Chapter 3, an organisation is structured by "the ownership of the organisation, policies, goals, actions, rules, membership, interactions with other organisations, bureaucratic structure, economic viability, and its stability" (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014, p.130) and all these variables influence the content they produce. This study focuses on analysing three main aspects of the news organisations: their objectives, funding sources, and resources. Before analysing the news organisations, the following lines summarise the main discussions found in existing scholarship about objectives, funding sources, and resources.

5.1.1 Objectives

Shoemaker and Reese (2014) claim that most commercial news organisations aim to make a profit, and normative journalistic objectives are, therefore, subordinated to economics. However, scholars have noted that some digital natives support journalistic ventures focused on carrying out a particular style of journalism rather than seeking to be economically successful; even if that implies that the digital natives only exist for a short period (Naldi and Picard, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze, 2017; Usher, 2017b). For example, most Latin-American digital native news organisations do not have sustainable business models, and some of these new spaces have even been set up without an economic strategy (Trejo

Delarbre, 2012; Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando, 2014; Meléndez Yúdico, 2016; Higgins Joyce, 2018).

Existing research about digital natives suggests that this kind of news organisation intends to produce journalism that reflects the values of its founders. For example, Usher (2017b) interviewed journalists from 18 digital natives in the USA. She found that all the news organisations studied started to provide 'better' journalism, although what is defined as 'better' differed in every case. These impulses to create digital natives reflect a belief in the central normative role of journalism as providing information to citizens (more specifically, useful information or quality news). A broader discussion of these roles can be found in Chapter 3.

Similarly, Nicholls and colleagues (2016) found that digital natives focus less on making economic profits and more on pursuing journalistic objectives. A study by Deuze (2017) reports that journalists who set up their own news organisations prioritise making 'true' or 'real' journalism above making a profit. What 'true' or 'real' journalism means changes from case to case, however, Deuze (2017) concludes that it usually means making an impact and reporting the 'truth'. In some cases, this means being a watchdog, but mostly it means working in ways that are the opposite of the rushed content production of the legacy media. In another study, Naldi and Picard (2012) claimed that the main reasons for setting up a news media start-up were dissatisfaction with existing journalism, the decline of newspapers, and the layoffs of journalists.

The literature suggests that the digital natives are not being established for the purposes of making a profit, but rather are pursuing forms of values-driven journalism. While these studies are focused on Western contexts, little is known about the Mexican context. This study aims to better understand the motives for setting up digital natives in Mexico. It aims to analyse the motivations of the news organisations, to better understand the Mexican context, as such motivations might be similar. However, Mexican news organisations are performing in a context that restricts their independence to report, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

5.1.2 Funding

Even when a news organisation is not primarily motivated by making a profit, its financial models still play an essential role in securing its subsistence and the resources needed to keep producing content. It is also essential to understand their funding sources because they also can limit or shape the reporting. Bruno and Nielsen (2012) analysed nine digital native news organisations in Germany, France, and Italy and found that all the organisations were unprofitable. They barely covered their expenses in the best of cases: "survival is success" (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012, p.5). They also highlighted two main challenges that digital natives face: a media market dominated by legacy media and an online advertising market dominated by big Internet companies such as Google and Facebook.

By diversifying sources of income, news organisations could have more chances to survive. In addition to advertising and income from subscriptions, news organisations have incorporated other sources of revenue such as crowdfunding or fundraising, consulting, syndication of content, grants, and sale of products (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Naldi and Picard, 2012; Nielsen, 2012; Carson, 2015; Anderson et al., 2016; Wagemans et al., 2016; Singer, 2017).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the possibility of obtaining revenues from website traffic with programmatic advertising has contributed to the subsistence of news organisations (McGuigan, 2019; Mills et al., 2019; Palos-Sanchez et al., 2019). Advertising sales are intermediated by organisations such as Google and Facebook, giving the news organisations independence from advertiser pressures. However, online advertising is sold cheaper, and a proportion of the sales are retained by the intermediaries (Einstein, 2016). Programmatic advertising has increased the use of analytics in newsrooms to understand traffic data and to tailor content according to readers' interests, with a decline in the quality of content in some cases (Blom and Hansen, 2015; Alves, 2016).

Native advertising or sponsored content has become a relevant source of income for digital natives and legacy media. However, some scholars have found that native advertising can risk the trust of readers in the news organisations (Einstein, 2016; Wojdyski and Golan, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019). As discussed in Chapter 2, in Mexico the newspapers contain propagandistic messages paid for by the government that are presented as news, without

disclaimers (some newspapers only change the format of the text slightly), called *gacetilla*. According to Benavides (2000), the *gacetillas* represented the primary source of income for many newspapers in the 1980s, and it is a practice that continues today (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Maldonado Pérez et al., 2015). With the dependence of Mexican news organisations on governmental advertising, editorial autonomy to report political information is limited.²¹

Some news organisations rely on readers' contributions, such as subscriptions and crowdfunding. When most of online news content is free, news organisations with paywalls have to offer a unique selling point in their content to maintain and attract subscribers (Nielsen, 2012; Anderson et al., 2016; Picard, 2017). However, a paywall also has the advantage of constructing detailed profiles of their readers (Nalvarte, 2017), and with this information, organisations can charge higher rates to their advertisers (Rondon, 2013; Anderson et al., 2016; Nalvarte, 2017; Picard, 2017).

Crowdfunding also relies on the loyalty of readers to the news organisation. They want to contribute to the news organisation and its journalistic project because they believe in it, and they think that by supporting such organisations, they will be contributing to society (Aitamurto, 2011; Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Carvajal et al., 2012; Nielsen, 2012; Jian and Shin, 2015; Porlezza and Splendore, 2016a). Similarly, the social capital of the news organisations can generate value through associated activity such as offering consultations and workshops to their peers and to the public.

Grants to produce content have been little discussed in the literature. Scott and colleagues (2017; 2019) argued that foundations usually support organisations with public service goals to fund their reporting. Their findings showed that this funding does not influence editorial decisions on the projects they support, but it does increase the administrative tasks around the funding, such as preparing applications, administrating the funds, and reporting back to the foundations.

²¹ See the discussion in Chapter 2 about the Mexican media system.

The literature review acknowledges that all funding models have a certain influence on journalistic processes, and that not relying on a single income source increases the chances of the news organisations' survival. Therefore, by diversifying their income sources, they can potentially limit their influence on the journalistic processes. This chapter analyses how the different funding models could impact digital natives' journalistic practices in the Mexican context.

5.1.3 Resources

The resources of a news organisation include a broad range of assets that allows them to function. This includes money, facilities, equipment, staff members (and their skills and time available to do their tasks), and their access to information (i.e. having more staff to cover a more significant number of sources) (Firmstone, 2007). The amount and nature of resources and how they are distributed within the news organisation both influence the content produced.

Most of the digital natives around the world work with a small staff (with tens of workers), while legacy newsrooms operate with hundreds (Anderson, 2013a). This is true of the cases analysed in the present research. As discussed in a previous chapter, some scholars have studied how the social and symbolic capitals of the founders of digital native news organisations contribute to their success (Naldi and Picard, 2012; Powers and Vera Zambrano, 2016; Wagemans et al., 2016). Experienced journalists participating in digital native news organisations bring social capital that allows the organisation to hire 'high-quality workers' and connect with sources, business communities, and community organisations. Symbolic capital can put the news organisation in a position of recognition and prestige as an extension of the reputation of its founders. These capitals play into the success (or not) of a digital native by enabling or limiting the attraction of experienced staff, creating partnerships, and attracting funding, expanding the resources the news organisations have available.

Digital natives generally operate with limited resources, which have led them to implement strategies to expand their activity. Anderson (2013a) observed that reporting collaboratively is the most efficient way to maximise resources for journalism production. However, even when collaborating, most news organisations see other news organisations as competitors

for audiences and still aim to be the 'first' in breaking news. However, there is more cooperation in some kinds of reporting, such as investigative reporting. It is becoming more frequent for news organisations, NGOs, universities and other organisations to cooperate and share resources and knowledge to produce content that they might not be able to produce by themselves (Anderson, 2013a; Anderson et al., 2016). Therefore, it is essential to analyse the impact of collaborations between digital natives and other organisations, in combining their resources to produce content and reach a larger audience than they could by themselves. In the following sections, the four news organisations are analysed individually, focusing on the analysis of their objectives, how they are funded, what resources they have available for content production, and how they are administrated.

5.2 Animal Político

5.2.1 Objectives

In its website, Animal Político presents itself on its 'About us' page as a news organisation that covers issues which affect citizens, that makes its own news agenda by distancing itself from what politicians have said (as discussed in Chapter 2, *churnalism* is a common practice in Mexico to avoid conflicts with sources), that denounces violations of human rights, and that demands accountability. Other relevant concepts in their self-presentation includes giving context to news and 'memory', an image Animal Político uses to say they follow up events and investigate them (Animal Político, n.d.-d).

These points were also made by all their staff interviewed for this thesis, who agreed that what they offer is a different kind of coverage, a deeper reporting based on investigation, or at least they put the issues in context for the audience. The interviewees referred to doing things differently – they provide context to the news, explaining the impact of events, denouncing corruption and human rights violations and investigating them. The analysis of practices in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 will provide an understanding of the extent to which they fulfil these objectives.

The main motivation is to generate our own content; the main motivation is our own revelations. If we said what our daily commitment is, it is to reveal, explain and tell, which are the basics of journalism (Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Político).

The interviewees from Animal Político criticised legacy media for the homogenisation of content in the Mexican media ecology as a consequence of the passive reporting of the legacy media. They agreed that they are focused on the coverage of issues that are ignored by the agendas of other organisations, which mainly consist of reporting that denounces corruption and inequalities and supports human rights. The following quotes exemplify these aspects:

[What makes Animal Político different from other news organisations is] firstly, the topics we cover, and secondly, how we cover them [...]. We have always defined that our news agenda basically consists of three very simple points, which are: inequality, corruption, and violence [...] I am convinced that these are three issues that are not necessarily so present in the traditional media. [...] We are only a space where we do journalism at the service of the reader (Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Político).

We focus more on issues of transparency, corruption, human rights, violence. This way, we try to give the world an explanation of what is happening. We also grant a space to society [...] We have our own agenda [...] if someone wants to consult what is happening with the environment, human rights and everything, it can go to Animal Político (Interviewee 4, Editor for Audiences, Animal Político).

The conceptualisation of Animal Político's target audiences is important for understanding the aims of the organisation and the topics they consider most important. Animal Político reports for a niche audience. They do not aim to reach the general public but to engage critical readers. All the interviewees agreed that the readers of Animal Político are looking for deeper content that they cannot find from other news organisations, elites engaged with political and social issues. Benson (2018) explains that non-profit news organisations in the USA supply in-depth reporting targeted elite audiences because audiences with a high level of education (cultural capital) are looking for 'quality' news.

Animal Político's website also claims that transparency is one of its central values. They present as proof the constitutive act of the organisation and explain who its owners are and the proportion of their income coming from the different financing sources (Animal Político, n.d.-d), as discussed in the following section. However, transparency is limited since it is unclear what much of the data actually means (this document does not provide dates of the period reported, figures of the income obtained in each category instead of percentages, who are their main advertisers). So although the news organisation claims to be transparent, they do not, in practice, publish enough data to make them accountable. Despite this limited information, it was the only news organisation of the four analysed to offer this kind of data. An example of transparency in a digital native is provided by Mediapart, a French digital native that has been praised as a model for digital natives and journalism in general (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Wagemans et al., 2016). Mediapart makes public their annual reports with information on numbers of subscribers, revenue figures and their sources, changes in management, partnerships, and more (i.e. see 2019 report: Mediapart, 2019). The following section analyses how Animal Político uses its resources to pursue its objectives.

5.2.2 Funding

Animal Político has diverse income sources, including advertising, grants, crowdfunding, subscriptions, and consultancy and training. According to the information provided by the news organisation on the 'About us' page on its website retrieved in September 2019, almost half of its income comes from advertising, and a quarter is obtained through grants (see Table 4).

Table 4 Animal Político's sources of income

Source of income	Percentage
Training for other organisations and NGOs	15%
Consulting	10%
Advertising	45%
Donations	5%
Grants	25%

Source (Animal Político, n.d.-d)

5.2.2.1 Advertising

According to the information collected from the interviews and Animal Político's media kits from 2016 to 2023 (Animal Político, n.d.-a), this organisation has three kinds of advertising: advertising sold directly to the client (Animal Político offers banners on its website and space in its newsletters); programmatic advertising; and sponsored content. As mentioned previously, the governmental advertising in Animal Político is marginal. Therefore, its advertising revenues come primarily from private organisations.

Sponsored content is becoming an important revenue source for digital natives, as the use of ad-blockers is increasingly blocking programmatic advertising which readers perceive to be intrusive (Einstein, 2016; Stringer, 2019). Revenues from this kind of advertising are higher than from programmatic ads, and well-crafted sponsored content should blend with the editorial content of the news organisation, increasing the chance that it will be read and shared by readers (Einstein, 2016; Wojdyski and Golan, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019).

BuzzFeed has relied mainly on this kind of advertising precisely because its content is designed to engage and be shared. Animal Político follows this same strategy with its native advertising, reaching a large number of readers (Einstein, 2016; Stringer, 2019). However, it is worth noting that, according to the Editor for Audiences, most of this type of content is published in the verticals of Animal Politico (Animal Gourmet and Animal.mx), not on the news site. During the interviews, various staff members acknowledged the importance of creating sponsored content tailored to different distribution platforms. Daniel Moreno explained that they sell their clients the 'know-how' to design exciting content for the Internet. Animal Político has disclaimers in place for the news story, video, image, or any other format used for sponsored content to clarify the nature of the publication to the reader.

In the case of Animal Político, the condition, moreover, the obligation that we have as a media is to indicate to people they are reading or watching a sponsored content. It is the only media in Mexico that does this with absolutely all its sponsored content (Interviewee 4, Editor for Audiences, Animal Político).

Daniel Moreno emphasised in the interview that if potential clients request not to show the disclaimer in sponsored content, the negotiation is cancelled, as transparency to their readers is most important.

We have had customers who have told us, “hey, I pay them a little more but do not identify it as advertising” and we have not accepted it because it is ultimately a guideline that we have had since day one (Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Político).

In Mexico, there is no regulation of sponsored content. Therefore, disclaimers for identifying this kind of advertising are left to the criteria of each news organisation. Chapter 2 discussed how the practice of selling *gacetillas* still exists in Mexico, which is publishing sponsored content paid for by the government without a disclaimer. Carlson (2015) explains that native advertising could weaken the credibility of the news organisations, as the readers expect the news organisations to follow normative values such as objectivity and autonomy. The trust of Mexicans in the news media is already poor. According to the *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*, less than 40% of Mexicans trust the news (Newman et al., 2019). In this context, having clear disclaimers for sponsored content could reassure readers that the news organisation is being transparent with the reader.

5.2.2.2 Grants

The second most important source of income is grants awarded to the news organisations, which have allowed them to fund their most extensive investigative reports (see Table 4). The grants come predominantly from foundations financing journalistic projects, mostly investigative reporting, as well as organisations (NGOs) dedicated to advocating for specific issues. Grants typically finance particular projects, rather than a news organisation's general operations.

From the interviews, observations during the content analysis and a search in Animal Político's website for funding acknowledgements, this study found two kinds of projects using grant funds. The first is investigative journalism projects. Animal Político has had grants to fund investigative journalism or deep reporting, consisting of a series of articles, infographics,

and video. This series of content is published in the 'Specials' section of their website, and each project has a list of collaborator credits and/or grants that contributed to each report. The information about collaborations is further analysed in Chapter 7. "NarcoData", for example, was funded by the NGOs Hackslabs, Hivos, Avina and ICFJ. "Killing in Mexico: Guaranteed Impunity", another investigative project, was financed by the Open Society Foundations. The second kind of project is coverage of a beat, with funding provided to boost a particular area of reporting. A grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to "raise awareness about the negative effects of racial and structural inequality through investigative journalism reporting and other original content production to be published in a special section ['Unequal Mexico'] dedicated to the subject of inequality" (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2017) between October 2017 and December 2018, according to the foundation's database of grants. Here, we see the alignment between Animal Político's focus on inequality and the agenda of the NGO, which one of their interest areas is 'Equitable communities'.

Animal Político claims that grants give them editorial independence to investigate and report, as they present their project when applying for a grant. Once awarded, the organisations are not involved in the investigation process or how the content should be framed and delivered.

I have never had a foundation that reviews my content before publishing them; I have never had a foundation that cancels funding because they do not like our editorial line; this topic is super important for us. I would tell you that they have not even tried [...] if we are interested in a subject, we look for the foundation that can finance it, and that is it (Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Político).

The 'alignment' of values between news organisations and foundations diminishes concerns about limiting the autonomy of news organisations. However, this process has the potential to shape the news agenda according to the priorities of the grant givers. According to the information provided by the General Editor, in applying for a grant, Animal Político's team discusses what leads for investigative reporting they have which also fit the requirements of funding schemes (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político). In their study of non-profit news organisations based in Africa, Scott and colleagues (2019) found that most of the time, news organisations and funders have values in common. Therefore the foundations have no

interest in influencing the editorial decisions of the news organisations by dictating what and how the news should be reported, "news organisations have not been encouraged by foundations to do something they would not otherwise have done" (Scott et al., 2019, p.2041).

Foundations that are less familiar with and committed to journalistic norms are less aware of the "protection of the autonomy" of the news organisations (Scott et al., 2019, p.2049). The autonomy of non-profit news organisations which, in the long-term, depends almost entirely on funders could be more strongly influenced. News organisations that receives funding can be tempted to expand their audiences through producing more with less, by increasing their number of articles, formats and use of social media by the news organisations, sacrificing the depth and length of stories (Scott et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2019). This reinforces the idea of diversifying the sources of revenue, not only to increase the possibilities of income for the subsistence of the media (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012), but also to limit the possible influence of the revenue sources on the editorial autonomy of the news organisation.

However, it is reported that funders can exert pressure to increase the number of readers, or other metrics such as the 'impact' that the content has on readers. This adds to the journalists' workload, as they need to keep track of and report the impact of their reporting (Konieczna and Powers, 2017; Benson, 2018).

5.2.2.3 Crowdfunding and subscriptions

Animal Político asked for contributions from their readers to support the news organisation through crowdfunding (Animal Político, 2016; Animal Político, 2017). The content published by Animal Político using the #ElijoAnimal on Facebook and Twitter was observed to understand the crowdfunding campaign; Animal Político asked their readers to contribute to "keep doing independent journalism", giving examples of the investigative reporting they had done. Their readers could donate any amount to Animal Político using the crowdfunding platforms Fondeadora and Donadora through the campaign #ElijoAnimal. In 2018 Animal Político implemented the subscription system, "Amigos de Animal", instead of using crowdfunding campaigns. According to the information on their website in 'Subscribe yourself' and from the interviews, we found that Animal Político is not implementing a

paywall; this monthly subscription gives subscribers added features as the site continues to have free access. The added value consists of access to their content without programmatic advertising, exclusive newsletters, access to comment on the content, and earlier access to special reports. The subscription costs 200 Mexican pesos, approximately equivalent to £8, and the prices have remained the same since then (Animal Político, 2023).

As mentioned previously, direct funding from readers is possible when they recognise the media and its value and are willing to pay. This is not perceived exclusively as a commercial transaction but as support of the news organisation and its editorial project (Aitamurto, 2011; Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Jian and Shin, 2015; Porlezza and Splendore, 2016b).

5.2.2.4 Consultancy and training

Other relevant sources of income include the training and consultancy offered by the staff of Animal Político to other journalists, NGOs, and beyond. News organisations can capitalise on the social and symbolic capital of the media in this way. According to the Director of the organisation, the staff sells their know-how based on their work for Animal Político. For example, they provide training about conducting investigative reporting and data journalism, “we do consulting in content creation, and training for media or training for organisations in communication strategies” (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

5.2.3 Resources

Investigative journalism is at the centre of resource distribution at Animal Político. Their reporters are dedicated exclusively to this task, and more economic resources are designated to this area to pay wages, travel expenses, fees for requesting documents, and more.

Animal Político's website was observed to understand how the content they publish is structured. The website has six sections: Mexico Desigual, which covers stories about inequality; El Plumaje, which hosts opinion columns; El Sabueso, for fact-checking and fake news; Especiales, with special reports and investigative pieces; Video, where special reports and news in video format can be found; and Hablemos de..., which is sponsored content. The news organisation also has two verticals: Animal Gourmet, which specialises in gastronomy and Animal.mx, a new vertical focused on a younger public that covers entertainment, mental

health, and sexuality. However, the verticals have their own staff to produce their content. In this research, only the content on the main site animalpolitico.com is analysed.

Animal Político is an organisation integrated by 28 employees: five directors and general editors, ten online editors, seven reporters, and six multimedia team members, according to the organigram published on their website (Animal Político, n.d.-b)²². From the interview answers about the news routines, we can identify that the organisation's staff is divided into executing three main tasks: the production of everyday content, which consists of reporting the most important events of the day; original content, which includes investigative reporting, fact-checking, and exposing fake news; and multimedia content, which consist in design content from everyday content and the original reporting in different formats to be distributed on different platforms. These routines are analysed in the Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Animal Político has a more flexible assignment of beats for its reporters and online editors than the legacy media, because they are not covering specific institutions or officials they can build their own agenda. Even when online editors and reporters regularly cover the same issues, these routines are established according to their interests and specialisation in particular topics or sources. They allow collaboration with other staff members to contribute to reporting issues different to those they have assigned. To keep the site continuously updated, the online editors produce content based on the day's most important events. They are responsible for producing everyday content, working from their desks monitoring sources (news agencies, other news organisations and government press conferences and press releases) to inform the day-to-day news. In total, they publish between 20 to 25 news stories per day according to the data obtained from the pilot conducted by this research and from the interviews.

The reporters are dedicated to producing original content for the organisation. Even when most of the news produced is not based on original reporting, there is a commitment to more

²² The figures for all organisations were compiled and calculated using data obtained in October 2019, including the information provided by the news organisations on their websites, the interviews, and additional literature when specified.

in-depth reporting. Similarly, while not all the original content is investigative reporting, Animal Político aims to cover events in depth, with a focus on bringing new stories and angles to Animal Político. They do not work with daily deadlines, however, the team of reporters intends to have at least a couple of original stories each day, releasing the pressure of time to complete their reporting.

The section 'El Sabueso' is dedicated to hosting fact-checking content and exposing fake news. They had a part-time contributor dedicated to fact-checking exclusively, who left in the summer of 2019. Since, different staff members have been doing these exercises according to the bylines of the content. However, according to the interviewees, all staff members participate in these activities, depending on their expertise on the topic and their capacity to analyse data, their access to sources, among other concerns. All these routines are analysed in more depth in the following chapters.

This means that Animal Político assigns more resources to the production of original content than to breaking news. This is not unusual for digital-native news organisations. Benson (2018) observed, for example, that the non-profit digital native *Voice of San Diego* similarly assigned a higher number of reporters to investigative reporting than the legacy newspaper *San Diego Union-Tribune*, even though the digital native had significantly less staff than the legacy newspaper (20 versus 200, respectively).

The multimedia team is seen as an important part of content production. According to the interviewees, Animal Político considers information design essential for communicating their content in a simple way, especially when they are reporting stories with a large amount of data. Multimedia resources are also seen as a crucial element of reporting to reach a broader audience, as the content is 'more shareable' on social media. Within the digital team, they have an Audiences Editor, who oversees the online content and analyses the readers' interactions and consumption patterns to implement strategies to attract new audiences and increase the time they spend in the site, with the aim of increasing the income from programmatic advertising.

Daniel Moreno, Animal Político's Director and the General Editor claimed that prioritises the media's resources for investigative journalism. The organisation has a team of seven reporters

dedicated exclusively to investigating, a General Editor who looks for other ad hoc resources (i.e., additional funding, collaborations from experts on topics), a multimedia team who works throughout the process to shape the output of the reporting (not only in the final design of the content), and online editors when additional support is necessary. In economic terms, this implies hiring staff and paying expenses related to the investigative process. Interviewee 1 was asked what resources are invested in investigative journalism:

I could tell you, first all of them. We have a work dynamic where research is the priority, so, for example, my work as special projects, is always looking for ways, ways for Animal Político can do investigative journalism [...]. I mean, our fixed journalism costs--, what we do day by day, hour by hour. Those fixed costs, let's say they are covered by what we can earn as a result of what we can do with the investigation and not vice versa (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

Scott and colleagues (2019) discuss how grants require that news organisations invest resources in carrying out administrative tasks derived from the funding. These include preparing the applications, managing the resources, and reporting to the foundations on their progress and impact. In the long term, these tasks end up becoming part of the job description of the editorial staff and, in larger organisations, the addition of positions dedicated to fundraising and administrating the resources from grants. In the case of Animal Político, the General Editor, in addition to editorial leadership, oversees the grants and collaborations with other organisations. The General Editor position has also expanded to include tasks related to grant funding such as searching for grants, discussing with the team the projects they can present in their applications, apply for funding and present reports, according to the information provided during the interview.

The analysis of audience metrics has become an essential part of everyday operations, with new roles dedicated exclusively to collecting and analysing this kind of data. Animal Político has an Editor for Audiences, who works with the general editors and the multimedia team to plan content strategies for different formats and platforms that take into account audience preferences. The interviewees said that they use analytics at Animal Político to assess the readability of their content and what specific parts of a story interested readers. They aim to understand the audience's content consumption patterns and to identify how they can reach

readers on different platforms. El Universal has a quantitative approach to analysing its audiences using data is used to assess whether the newspaper is reaching the target number of visits set by the news organisation at different times of day (as analysed later in this chapter).

Besides the resources that Animal Político invests in producing original content, collaboration with other organisations has been fundamental. Some alliances have involved sharing resources and work produced. For example, the broad/comprehensive investigative report "The Master Scam" was created with the NGO *Mexicanos contra la corrupción y la impunidad* (Mexicans against corruption and impunity). This organisation is focused on the fight against corruption and impunity in the country by producing investigative cases that involve the work of journalists, scholars, and a legal team to not only document them but also take legal action (Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad, n.d.).

The most exceptional case of collaboration is the project *Verificado*, a fact-checking exercise they led during the presidential campaign in 2018. Animal Político, together with AJ+ and Pop-Up Newsroom, led a team of journalists, scholars and NGO members to verify the information disseminated during the campaigns. In total, around 180 organisations participated (Verificado 2018, 2018).

Collaborations to produce journalistic projects are becoming more frequent (Anderson, 2013a; Anderson et al., 2016). This is partly due to journalists' new challenges in reporting the news. For example, the Panama Papers' reporting called for a multinational team of reporters who not only explained the impact of the offshore entities in global terms, but also analysed the data in their national context to contribute to a broader understanding of the information.

5.3 Aristegui Noticias

5.3.1 Objectives

The site's self-description is more focused on the independence of Aristegui Noticias in producing journalism free from external pressures. In the statement published in the

welcome message on their website, Carmen Aristegui also emphasized the context which moved her to create the organisation:

In societies like ours, where the design of the social communication system is characterised by the control of a few hands of mass media concessions, old cultural inertia that restricts free expression, debate and accountability continue marking the public life of our country. Hence our conviction that journalists and freelancers should take on the task of developing new projects, considering new spaces and creating alternatives. Our purpose for this digital era is to exercise free journalism from here as in other spaces (Aristegui, 2012, no pagination).

Even when the self-description does not define what they mean by free journalism, the trajectory of Carmen Aristegui infers that it means freedom from external pressures. In the first instance, from the government, which pressured the owners of the radio stations where she worked to stop adverse reporting of the government. In the second instance, independence from the radio stations which did not support the work of Aristegui's team.

This digital native emerged as an initiative to avoid the censorship that Aristegui and her team experienced, as described in Chapter 4. Aristegui Noticias is structured as a news organisation and not as a personal website, even though the whole organisation is structured around its director and her values. All the interviewees from this news organisation pointed to the interviews conducted by its director and its investigative reporting as the most distinctive things Aristegui Noticias offers.

I think that a distinctive part of us is the programme as a product, as content; I would say that they are the investigations, or Carmen's interviews, right? that Carmen is the central icon of the project (Interviewee 11, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

A large part of their readership is the former audience that the director had in her radio newscast who followed her to the Internet. The interviewees define the users of the digital native as very loyal to the work of Carmen Aristegui and very interested in the topics that define her site. In general, the topics mentioned in the interviews as the most relevant to

cover were corruption, human rights, and violence, as stated in the welcome message in Aristegui Noticias site.

People very, very, very interested in public life, I think they are our natural readers, especially security, corruption, politics, economic issues. I think they are our hard core [readers], those who are very interested (Interviewee 11, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias reported interest in similar topics for their news organisations, such as corruption, human rights violations, and violence. However, Animal Político has designed a business model that allows them to finance investigative journalism, making this task part of the routine of the news organisation. Meanwhile, Aristegui has concentrated its resources in newscast production, focusing on the figure of Aristegui and the interviews she conducts as the main products of the organisation according to the interviewees. The differences between these news organisations resides in how the objectives are pursued and how the news organisations are using their available resources to produce original content. In the following lines, the resources of Aristegui Noticias are analysed.

5.3.2 Funding

The website of Aristegui Noticias launched on 16 April 2012. It was created to have a space to communicate the content that Carmen Aristegui and her team produced, as they thought their radio newscast was at risk of being cancelled. Aristegui Noticias became the main project of Carmen Aristegui after she and her team left the radio station in 2015.

According to their ex-coordinator of web and social media, Aristegui Noticias was not created to be an entrepreneurial venture, it was born without a defined business model. The main concern of Aristegui was to continue distributing their content. From those early days until 2018, the news organisation depended mainly on programmatic advertising, as the news organisation did not have a sales area, and conflicts with the previous government limited the official advertising in the news organisation, which is non-existent.

In January 2017, Aristegui Noticias began transmitting a streaming newscast, which became the website's main product. In October 2018, the newscast found space again on the national radio through an alliance between Grupo Radio Centro and Aristegui Noticias. The digital native produces the newscasts entirely, and the role of the radio group involves reproducing the online newscast in their broadcast network with a national reach, as Carmen Aristegui announced at a press conference to present the alliance (Aristegui, 2018). The economic agreement with Grupo Radio Centro to syndicate the newscast was not made public, but this became a new source of income, according to the collaborators interviewed. It is uncertain whether this was the aim of Aristegui when they started to produce the live stream newscast. The decision to syndicate their content instead of being direct employees of a radio station or in another kind of new media was taken to maintain editorial autonomy (Interviewee 7, Investigative Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

At Aristegui Noticias, the symbolic capital of Carmen Aristegui has played for and against her. The website attracts a large volume of traffic, generating revenues through programmatic advertising, which is the news organisation's primary income source. The interviewees accounted that Carmen Aristegui has a loyal audience that has followed her from one radio station to the next, and finally to the Internet, supporting her journalistic projects:

“all those people who stayed with [Carmen Aristegui] are people who [...] learned to use the technology and who had to adapt” (Interviewee 8, Online Editor, Aristegui Noticias).

However, her reputation also limited the advertising that the news organisation was able to attract to the website, with sporadic advertising sales as the government advertising virtually does not contribute financially to the site (Interviewees 7, Ex-coordinator of web and social media, Aristegui Noticias), "it has practically no official advertising. I say practically because sometimes the UNAM [the National Autonomous University of Mexico], sometimes the Court, were the only ones who dared to pay for advertising" (Interviewee 13, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

5.3.3 Resources

Aristegui Noticias is similar in size to Animal Político, with an estimated 25 to 30 members of staff, according to the interviewees. Currently, the news organisation is organised around three major tasks: the preparation of material for live newscasts; updating their website with everyday content; and original reporting.

Aristegui Noticias has a live newscast, which stands out as the central product of the organisation. Additionally, the website has nine sections organised into more traditional beats than Animal Político, covering the following: Mexico, which contains news of national relevance covering mainly politics and security; Economía, which covers economics issues; Deportes, which reports on sport; Multimedia, which hosts photo galleries and videos on diverse topics; Libros, which provides book reviews; Más destacado, which hosts the most relevant news of the day; Kiosko, which reports arts and cultural issues; Viajes, with news about lifestyle and issues concerning travel (ecologic impact, weather, accidents); and Mundo, which reports international issues. Although Aristegui Noticias has a political focus, they also cover entertainment and lifestyle news, which may allow them to attract a broader audience.

The interviews provided information about the staff routines. The shift to producing the live stream required a change in the distribution of resources available, and content production centres around the live newscast. Only two reporters are dedicated to creating original content for the site, along with Carmen Aristegui. The rest of the staff are online editors who, they have a deskbound job, and they are organised by beats to update the website with the most important news of the day, creating live newscast content, and breaking down the newscast into smaller pieces of content for the website. Outside the newsroom, Aristegui Noticias also has freelance employees that report from the rest of the country and abroad. Their contributions are irregular; they contribute with content when they have a special report or if there is an extraordinary event in the area they cover.

When the newscast started being live-streamed, resources were invested in its production, as the audio-visual transmission required more information and time to produce. This mainly affected the investigative reporters, who had more responsibilities in the daily production of

content for the newscast, limiting the time available to do more in-depth reporting. However, it also increased the workload of the online editors, who must prepare content for both the live cast and the website.

Interviewee 9, an ex-online editor from Aristegui Noticias and now a correspondent for the organisation, explained in the interview that he has more freedom to do original reporting as a correspondent, as he does not have a quota of content to produce daily. Reporters and online editors must contribute to the production of the three hours of content for the newscasts from Monday to Friday and additionally produce around 100 posts for the website every day, including clips from the newscast, aggregated content, and special reporting. However, most interviewees claimed that supporting the production of the newscast had impacted more negatively on investigative journalism because of the limited resources available to produce it.

We are a small team that has focused on the programme, on the content of the day, rather than thinking about stories or products that are more involved (Interviewee 9, Online Editor, Aristegui Noticias).

The analysis of resources shows that Aristegui Noticias uses most of theirs in the production and reporting of live newscasts. Additionally, the online editors must produce more aggregated content than the online editors at Animal Político. Given that both organisations have a similar number of staff, it would be expected that both news organisations might produce a similar amount of content. However, Aristegui Noticias produces three times more posts and the daily newscast (according to the data obtained from the content analysis pilot and the interviews), while the aim of Animal Político to produce investigative journalism leads to them producing less content, but more in-depth reporting. The content analysis will explore these differences in greater depth. Collaborations are also essential for Aristegui Noticias, according to the staff interviewed. The organisation has alliances with NGOs and other news organisations with two different objectives: the first is working collaboratively to do original reporting. For example, Aristegui Noticias has an Alliance with *Mexicanos contra la corrupción* and other NGOs to produce investigative reporting (Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad, n.d.); the relationship involves sharing resources to produce more in-depth reporting. The second objective involves giving space to disseminate investigative

work produced by other organisations with smaller audiences and to help them reach a broader audience. For example, the NGO *El Quinto Elemento* provides funds to journalists for investigative reporting, to be published by news organisations they work for and/or by other news organisations that want to publish the content (Quinto Elemento Lab, n.d.). Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias both provide space on their sites to publish their investigations, and their journalists work in collaboration with the teams from the digital natives to create multimedia content based on their reporting.

5.4 Reforma

5.4.1 Objectives

The difference between how the newspapers analysed here present themselves and how the digital natives do it lies in how they legitimate themselves among readers. Both newspapers introduce themselves through their trajectory as news organisations, emphasising the most important moments of the recent Mexican history they have covered.

Reforma's 'About us' presentation on its website leaves little room to present its objectives and values. This news organisation presents itself as "the most credible and prestigious information institution in the country", and an agenda-setter in the Mexican media ecology: "Through its newspapers, websites and information services, Grupo Reforma sets the informative agenda for Mexican society" (Reforma, 2019a, no pagination). The interviewees emphasise that the newspaper has been a critical voice of the government since it was founded (in 1994), fighting to maintain its autonomy, and at the core of its reporting is to fight against corruption and to demand accountability, "I think [Reforma] has saved us as taxpayers by having so much attention paid to how public money is spent" (Interviewee 25, Journalist, Reforma). "Transparency and corruption have been the flagship topics of the newspaper" (Interviewee 27, Journalist, Reforma)

The staff interviewed from Reforma agree that the journalism that they consider necessary for the country needs to be independent of external pressures to be able to be more assertive, "daring to cover things of the day, to present their own agenda" (Interviewee 27, Journalist,

Reforma). Three of the journalists interviewed value deep reporting because, according to the interviewees, “we need [the Mexican society] journalism that goes beyond ‘he said, pointed out, affirmed, rejected’” (Interviewee 26, Journalist, Reforma).

The interviewees also point out that Reforma is keen to give voice to civil society and give voice to their readers to “promote the citizen agenda rather than the government or party agenda” (Interviewee 25, Journalist, Reforma), giving voice to activists and NGOs. Reforma considers it more relevant to report on politics, economy, and civil society. Reforma wants to impact the news agenda in Mexico, not by being the first to report an event, but by providing information that other media do not cover, for example, providing space to additional sources, looking at events from a different angle, or providing context to the news.

Reforma is classified as a “quality broadsheet newspaper” (Márquez Ramírez, 2012), with an elitist target audience: middle class people with purchasing power and higher levels of educational attainment than other legacy newspapers (Nalvarte, 2017). Hughes (2006) described Reforma as a civic newspaper characterised by its “assertiveness, autonomy and diversity” (p.134), which was part of the news organisations that led the change in Mexico towards more civic journalism.

5.4.2 Funding

The newspaper was founded in 1993 as part of Grupo Reforma and it migrated online in 2000. Reforma started out with an open platform and later moved to a paywall system in 2003. Reforma is the only newspaper in Mexico with a paywall on its website. Therefore, their content is targeted at people who are already subscribers, therefore they need to provide to their reader with original content. According to this study's observations during the content analysis, limited content is available to non-subscribers, such as video content (mostly native advertising) and specific news stories (however, the interviewees did not identify a fixed pattern of what kind of news has open access).

Reforma offers different subscription plans that include the printed newspaper and access to the site or only online access to content. For comparison purposes, the price to access digital content only from one device in an annual contract is \$1,800 Mexican pesos (\$150 per month)

(Reforma, 2019b). Reforma relies on the loyalty of their readers, and they suggest that they make more original content than other news organisations to be worth readers spending their money on their site. Reforma intends to offer its subscribers content that cannot be found on other sites or it supplies them with extra information about an event.

We have a closed platform because we consider that the value of the information of the Reforma Group has a cost [...]. Here you have to pay for the information that we are giving you with the commitment [of Reforma] to give [information] that it is truthful, that it is useful and, additionally that it has added value (Interviewee 23, Editorial Coordinator, Reforma).

This added value refers to a report that gives context, explains events, and presents news that other news organisations are not reporting or reporting from a different perspective.

Subscription fees are not the primary income source of Reforma, as the newspaper and website both carry advertising. The paywall allows Reforma to accurately profile the audience for its webpage to attract readers with more purchasing power and a higher education level, which also attracts advertising from luxury brands (Carson, 2015; Nalvarte, 2017).

Reforma has revenues from governmental advertising, although they are not one of the main advertisers. According to a FUNDAR (2017) report, based on the analysis of the governmental expenditure on publicity, between 2013 and 2016, Reforma received 4% of official (i.e. government) advertising for printed media (by comparison, El Universal was the newspaper with most governmental advertising, at 12%). With the announcement by the Mexican president of a reduction in official advertising, Reforma laid off columnists with the argument that they were not profitable for the newspaper. Reforma also laid off other staff members, but the number effected and their positions are both unknown. However, the layoffs were interpreted as a sign of the reliance on official advertising as a primary source of income (Sosa Plata, 2018; Gutiérrez Rentería, 2019).

5.4.3 Resources

According to the information provided on its 'About us' page (Reforma, 2019a) Reforma has a team of around 700 reporters and photographers distributed in the printed and online areas

of the newspaper. El Universal has a similar number of reporters (Gomez and Sosa Plata, 2011; Sosa Plata, 2018). Compared with the digital natives who have, on average, a staff of 30, the legacy newspapers have an extensive number of resources to draw on. The staff is organised into traditional beats, and the reporters are assigned specific sources to cover. Reforma has 18 main sections, and some subsections within these. The newspaper sections are replicated on their website and have other sections exclusive to online, mainly to incorporate multimedia content, their archive, and live content. According to the staff interviewed, Reforma has set up policies and practices in their newsrooms to promote the production of exclusive content for two reasons. The first is because all the Reforma Group reporters contribute to the content sold by the news agency owned by that media group. The second responds to their business model, as Reforma has a paywall, so they need to provide original content to their subscribers to keep them paying their subscriptions.

The number of posts staff create daily is in constant negotiation with the editor, depending on the daily agenda. Interviewee 26 explained that this negotiation relies on a sense of urgency to report. For some events, she will need to post several small posts to keep the site updated, while on other days, she will publish longer pieces for the print newspaper. Besides, they must generate a weekly special report, which mostly requires following up on an event, interviewing a key informant, or more in-depth reporting of the event and contextualising it. Even when the reporters are required to do more in-depth reporting, they do not have staff dedicated exclusively to conduct investigations in the newspaper. There is a weekly supplement, *Revista R*, where in-depth reporting, investigative reporting and data journalism is published. According with the interviewees, Reforma does not have staff fully dedicated to do investigative journalism. These aspects are analysed in Chapters 6 and 7.

Reforma has an editorial board for each section and supplement of the newspaper, according to their 'About us' page and interviews conducted for this study. Each of the 18 boards are formed by a general editor, a group of readers, and experts in the issues covered. Usually, the editorial boards are a space for decisions about the position of the media on the issues, and this space is limited to the directives of the news organisation. Reforma sees the newspaper editorial boards as a space to discuss their content, assess the coverage done in the section and decide on the agenda (Reforma, 2019a).

Citizens who read Reforma give their opinion every fortnight on how they see the newspaper, what they like, what they do not like, and what we should talk about. [...] Having this citizen focus group helps us not lose sight of things we already take for granted (Interviewee 23, Editorial Coordinator, Reforma).

Until 2018 Reforma did not collaborate with other organisations, according to the interviewees. They based this decision on their policy of only publishing content generated by the news organisation to maintain their independence and move their agenda away from the influence of third-party content. This policy goes further than avoiding the practice of using content published by other news media. They also avoid taking part in joint projects to produce content, looking for funding for special reports, and even seeking or receiving awards for their work (either with monetary rewards or only symbolic recognition). Even when the reporters feel proud of their work and the push their organisation gives them for looking at original stories, they also feel limited and unrecognised for their work.

In 2018 with the designation of a new director, the newspaper started to build alliances with NGOs that produce investigative journalism. At the same time, the investment of the newspaper in resources for producing investigative reporting was reduced, according to the Editorial Coordinator of Reforma and Interviewee 25.

5.5 El Universal

5.5.1 Objectives

El Universal highlights on its website the history and tradition of the newspaper as its main distinctive feature. It was founded in 1916 and is one of the oldest newspapers with national coverage that is still publishing today. The newspaper had an early migration to the Internet in 1996 when it reproduced its printed edition on the Web. In 2001 the newspaper started producing content exclusively for the website and started *Minuto x Minuto* (El Universal, n.d.), a section featuring the last news. On its history webpage, El Universal emphasises its online presence, as since the 2000s, it has been one of the most visited news websites in

Mexico. While the website of El Universal does not give insight about their objectives, the interviews with their staff informed about the objectives of the newspaper.

In contrast with the other three organisations, which try to reach specific audiences, El Universal's aim is to maintain its position as one of the most visited news websites. Therefore, they look to meet the needs of different kinds of public. One of their strategies for maintaining their volume is by keeping a continuous update of information on the website and tracking online search trends:

The responsibility [of El Universal] is to offer them clear, truthful, quick information for whoever wants to find out something. I do not know if they look for it on Google, maybe, and that they find us (Interviewee 15, Web Editor, El Universal).

Social responsibility was recurrent among the interviewees; they feel responsible for presenting "truthful, timely, reliable information so that people can make their own decisions. El Universal informs as a journalistic company but is also a reference point" (Interviewee 19, Reporter, El Universal).

Most interviewees agreed that the politics is most important issue for the newspaper. While this has been the most important issue for all the news organisations, the interviewees from El Universal also mentioned the relevance of covering the activities of different political actors, in contrast with Animal Político, which underlines that they do not cover politicians and political institutions.

El Universal has a dedicated section for investigative journalism and another for data journalism, both of which have received recognition through various awards (See Appendix 1). While all interviewees acknowledge the importance of this type of journalism, the website does not highlight this section, lacking a subdomain where readers can specifically access this type of reporting. Additionally, the Online Coordinator points out that this kind reporting "it is an important bet [for the website], but at the same time it is and it is an important guideline to have up-to-the-minute information at all times" (Interviewee 14, Online Coordinator, El Universal). Despite the potential conflict between in-depth reporting and the fast pace of the

website, interviewees consider in-depth journalism essential for holding the government accountable for corruption “but also to denounce issues such as lack of security, injustice, inequality” (Interviewee 19, Reporter, El Universal).

El Universal is a “quality broadsheet newspaper” (Márquez Ramírez, 2012). Hughes (2006) categorised El Universal as a transitional newspaper, exhibiting a moderated civic behaviour who adopted civic normative values but their content reflected a mixture of passive and civic roles.

5.5.2 Funding

El Universal has two sources of income: advertising and revenues from the direct sales of the printed newspaper. Their primary source of income is advertising, which comes from the direct sale of advertising (of which advertising sold to the government represents an essential source), sponsored content, and programmatic advertising. As all the staff interviewed pointed out, their aim is to be the first to publish breaking news and to reach a broad audience by being the first news media where readers can read the information first. Thus, programmatic advertising is vital; El Universal has been positioned as one of the most visited news websites in Mexico since it launched online, and they have used its high volumes of traffic to generate income through programmatic advertising.

Nevertheless, different studies have pointed to El Universal as the legacy newspaper that receives most money from official advertising (Ahmed, 2017). According to data presented by FUNDAR (2017), who analysed the government expenditure in advertising, El Universal received 12% of government expenditure on advertising for printed media, and 16% for online advertising, being the primary recipient in this category. It is not publicly available what proportion of their income represents government expenditure. However, with the change of government and presumably with a change in the distribution of resources dedicated to official advertising, El Universal laid off around 100 workers in 2018 (Sosa Plata, 2018; Gutiérrez Rentería, 2019).

El Universal also produces sponsored content. The interviewees were unable to provide additional information about sponsored content, as sales and content production is

responsible for the commercial area. The content analysis identified stories that could be sponsored content, but they did not have any kind of disclaimer to confirm this. This is an important issue about native advertising: readers do not always know how to differentiate 'real' news from sponsored content. Some authors claim that readers do not identify these messages, and if they were aware of the commercial nature, they would not engage with those messages (Carlson, 2015; Wojdyski and Evans, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019). Carlson (2015) explains that native advertising could weaken the credibility of the news organisations, as readers expect the news organisations to follow normative values such as objectivity and autonomy.

5.5.3 Resources

It is estimated that El Universal has around 800 reporters distributed across print and online, similar to Reforma. However, the newspaper does not offer official numbers – this figure was estimated by information published by Gomez and Sosa Plata (2011) and in Sosa Plata (2018).

According to the observation of the website, El Universal's website also replicates the sections of the printed version and has other sections exclusive to the online version. This news organisation has more sections and verticals than the legacy newspaper Reforma, with 16 sections, 12 verticals, and other links to newspaper services, such as weather, jobs ads, and horoscopes.

The structure of the newspaper is organised in the same way as Reforma. The information from the interviews allowed the understanding how the newspaper distribute its human resources to produce content. They have reporters who cover specific beats and sources. The reporters produce content for printed and online versions, while the online editors are only responsible for producing content for the website. On average, each reporter produce around 15 news items daily, sometimes in collaboration with the online editors. The online editors work from the newsroom, monitoring their sources and the day's trends on social media and Google. Additionally, to generate aggregated content, they are also in contact with reporters to assist them in publishing the content they send to the newsroom. The newspaper has two areas dedicated to reporting news off-agenda: data journalism and investigative journalism. According to the interviewees, these areas have around ten journalists working on this kind

of reporting, and some other staff members can participate in their projects as long as they keep reaching their targets. Between these two areas, in total numbers, they have more reporters than the digital natives; however, for the size of the organisation, El Universal dedicates a small fraction of its staff (1.2%) to more in-depth coverage of news, while Animal Político dedicates a third, and Aristegui Noticias 7%.

Regarding collaborations, El Universal is part of the American Newspapers Group (*Grupo de Diarios América*, GDA in Spanish). This group formed of 11 Latin American newspapers, which work together to make more in-depth coverage of topics that their countries have in common, combining their resources and reach to have more impact (GDA, 2022).

5.6 Discussion

This chapter has discussed the three central elements that structure the four news organisations analysed in this study: their objectives, their business models, and the resources they have available. The discussion of the findings is divided into the same three topics that structure this chapter. Using the statements of the news organisations and the interviews conducted for the present study with the staff of the four news organisations analysed, it was observed that the digital natives define themselves in contrast with the legacy media in Mexico. More specifically, they critiqued two aspects of the legacy media: passive reporting, and lack of independence.

Animal Político tries to define what they are doing by saying that they do not cover official sources, meaning that they do not follow the agenda of the governmental institutions. Instead, they look for their own topics that could be relevant for the readers. Both digital natives mentioned the importance of the freedom to report, acknowledging the interventionist role of the Mexican state.

The digital natives also define more specific agendas than the legacy media. Aristegui Noticias and Animal Político specify corruption, human rights, and violence as their core topics. Reforma claimed to be interested in corruption issues, while El Universal claimed to be focused on Politics. Their definition of their audiences reflects this: Animal Político, Aristegui

Noticias, and Reforma look for elite audiences with more education and engagement with the news. Reforma also wishes to reach audiences with more economic resources; in opposition, El Universal is the only organisation (of the four analysed here) that aims to reach for a general audience, while both digital natives and Reforma target to 'elite audiences'. This difference in objectives shows that both digital natives are pursuing a kind of advocacy or civic journalism (the characteristics of this kind of journalism were analysed in Chapter 3). Both digital natives emerged in different circumstances. On one side, Animal Político emerged as an entrepreneurial venture with a mixed business model that looked to not depend solely on advertising revenues. On the other side, Aristegui Noticias was set up as a space to get around censorship on the radio, and as they aimed to have a platform for expression, the news organisation did not design a revenue strategy.

The four news organisations analysed here depend mainly on income from advertising (which includes the traditional purchase of advertising by private advertisers, programmatic advertising, and sponsored content); subscriptions (and sales of printed newspapers); and governmental subsidies (in the form of advertising and other incentives). Animal Político has diversified its sources of income; in addition to these sources, the organisation attracts other less common revenue sources such as crowdfunding, grants, and consultancy. Aristegui Noticias relies primarily on programmatic advertising and syndication of their content. Reforma relies on advertising (sales to privates and from the government, programmatic and sponsored content), newspaper sales and subscriptions. El Universal relies on newspaper sales and advertising and was the organisation that received the most official advertising among the four analysed here. According to Hughes (2006), this newspaper has been partisan to the government, which explains how it has benefited from such substantial income through this source.

The two digital natives analysed in the present study have used their symbolic capital to secure revenues. Animal Político uses its reputation to ensure subscriptions and to give consultations and workshops. At the same time, Aristegui Noticias has constructed a loyal audience that yields programmatic advertising and the syndication of their content. Animal Político also receives funding from grants, and these additional resources allow it to do more extensive investigative reporting.

Both legacy newspapers have as their main income advertising revenues, although Reforma relies mainly on private advertising, while El Universal has a significant dependence on governmental advertising. Their strategies, specifically for their online versions, also differ. Reforma is the only newspaper in the country with a paywall, which allows them to have a defined target audience for its website, which the organisation identifies as high income, giving them the chance to attract expensive brands to advertise. To maintain their paying readers, they claim to provide unique content. The legacy newspaper El Universal is more interested in breaking news, in getting a broad audience by being the place readers can read the news first, to obtain resources through programmatic advertising. In terms of market, they reach a larger public, but it is a less well-defined readership.

The control of the government through their advertising expenditure has been documented by many scholars (Hallin, 2000b; Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002; Guerrero, 2014). International organisations, such as Article XIX and Reporters without Borders, have pointed this out as an instrument of pressure to limit press freedom (Article 19, 2018; Reporters Without Borders, 2023). A recurrent issue brought up by journalists from all the media organisations during the interviews conducted in this study is the press's dependence on governmental advertising as a primary income source (not necessarily talking about their media, but when describing the situation of Mexican journalism). Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias had virtually no income of this kind, as their media is seen as critical of the government. In contrast, El Universal receives the most significant proportion of governmental advertising of any newspaper in Mexico, while Reforma receives a third of what El Universal receives (FUNDAR, 2017). This is an example of how governmental advertising in Mexico is distributed discretionally to support partisan publications and punish critical ones.

5.6.1 Impact of objectives and funding on the resources of the news organisations

Finally, the third question explored in this chapter was: What resources are designated for producing ordinary content, and which are used to produce investigative journalism and fact-checking? The organisational resources of digital natives are not comparable to those from legacy newspapers. The digital natives each have fewer than 30 members of the staff in charge of all the areas of content production, including online editors, journalists, and multimedia editors. The legacy newspaper Reforma is said to have 700 reporters,

correspondents and photographers, and a similar number is estimated for El Universal, although there is no up-to-date information to confirm these numbers.

As a result of the difference in the number of staff, quantitatively, the amount of content produced by the legacy newspapers is not comparable with the digital natives. While the legacy media produce nearly 1,000 daily entries on their websites, Aristegui Noticias produces around 100, and Animal Político just around 30.

In the case of Animal Político, the everyday tasks of the staff are aligned with their objectives to provide information with more depth than other media. Their reporters do not have a typical day covering specific sources or beats, but following their own stories. The digital native Animal Político relies more on having a more profound/lengthy reporting of news as their most important task, considering 'everyday news' as secondary, for the purpose of keeping readers visiting the site. The staff of Animal Político, in particular, have less time pressure to produce aggregated and original content. The exclusive content of the digital native Aristegui Noticias relies mainly on interviews conducted by Carmen Aristegui. Even when they claim that the investigative work is essential to the media, they are not given the conditions to conduct in-depth investigations. Besides the interviews, the site relies more on content from agencies – the following three chapters are focused on content production practices.

The reporters and online editors of legacy newspapers are required to produce a larger volume of news per day than digital natives. They have less time to investigate and write each piece compared to the more flexible schedules of the digital natives. To be able to produce in-depth reporting, they have to negotiate time off their regular tasks, or work in this kind of projects on their time off.

Collaboration with other organisations is perceived as a necessity, except at Reforma, which is only just starting to connect with other organisations. For the digital natives, establishing partnerships with other news organisations and NGOs is seen as a way to add resources, produce content, and have more reach. As discussed above, Animal Político is continuously looking for support from foundations as an important way to fund their projects. They participate in a public contest to obtain grants or directly negotiate with other organisations.

The size and capabilities of news organisations lead them to design specific routines for their content production. The digital natives cannot spend their scarce resources covering the same sources as the legacy media. Therefore, they focus their resources on looking for new sources and giving voices to citizens that cannot access the legacy media to express their problems. This enriches the news agenda of the digital natives, being one of their strengths; therefore, trying to homogenise their agendas with the legacy media takes away from their selling point to their (potential) audiences.

The chapter reviewed how the objectives and funding of the news organisations impact the resources they have available for content production. The following three chapters analyse the organisations' news production practices using the results of the content analysis and the interviews.

Chapter 6. Content production

6.1 Introduction

The organisational characteristics of digital natives and legacy newspapers were analysed in the previous chapter. The analysis showed that there is a big gap between the resources these two kinds of organisations have available to produce content. This chapter is dedicated to understanding how those resources and organisational structures influence the routines in the four news organisations analysed to produce their content and its characteristics to answer the sub-question 'Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations and how does this shape the content that they produce?'

The interviews showed that digital natives prioritise a slower pace of reporting than the legacy newspapers analysed. Instead, they aim to provide a more complete reporting not only by providing more details about the event but also by providing readers with context and explanations. The data illustrates that digital natives are producing a different type of news to legacy papers. More flexibility in their practices is observed in the content in providing more coverage of niche issues such as human rights, corruption, LGBTQ+, and violence against women. In comparison, newspapers cover these topics when the events are more visible on the national agenda. Their storytelling approach was also different. Digital natives used more in-depth journalistic genres and multimedia elements to substantiate and contextualise the news. However, the legacy newspaper *Reforma* made more use of new formats such as listicles and infographics.

The findings of this chapter support the idea that digital natives are fulfilling the informational role with characteristics of civic and advocacy journalism, as they are not engaged in the breaking news dynamic that prevails in legacy newspapers. Both digital natives analysed in this research prioritise giving their readers a deeper understanding of the news and regular coverage of topics related to citizens' rights and social issues (Mellado, 2015; Mellado and

Van Dalen, 2017). Additionally, digital natives reported more news about disadvantaged groups, giving them more representation.

As digital natives adopt more civic and advocacy roles, objectivity as a core value in the news making process has become less relevant, “if objectivity is losing its dominance as a journalistic norm, journalists’ will likely have to make their epistemological claims, and base their professionalism and legitimacy, on some other basis” (Vos and Craft, 2017, p.1507). Despite being questioned, transparency seems to be a value to lean on instead; openness about processes and bias allowing for the accountability of news organisations and journalists (Deuze, 2005; Vos and Craft, 2017).

The analysis of mechanisms of transparency analysed in the present research shows that digital natives' content displayed more transparency because they produce less content that does not reference the sources used, including links to their sources, and Animal Político's sponsored content clearly signalled as such. While both newspapers admitted to producing sponsored content, this research did not find any news story labelled as such in a dedicated search of their websites.

This chapter is structured into two main sections. The first part explains what journalists and online editors say they do in their ordinary coverage, informed mainly by the interviews conducted for this research. The second part is predominantly based on the results of the content analysis to understand the characteristics of the content produced. With this objective, the chapter analyses the issues that garner most coverage, what niche issues are covered, and who they represent. The second section also analyses how the content is presented, analysing the journalistic genres used and the multimedia elements incorporated. Later, the mechanisms of transparency that can be observed in the content are analysed.

6.2 News routines

As discussed in the previous chapter, digital natives set the objective of differentiating the content they produce from the content produced by Mexican legacy news media. This means producing content independent from the Mexican government's interventionism and setting

their own agendas. This is an aim shared by other digital natives. Diverse studies have found that digital natives constantly try to differentiate themselves from their peers, but mostly from legacy news organisations (Carlson and Usher, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2016; Usher, 2017b; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). News organisations' structures and resources shape and constrain their aims, as seen in Chapter 5, as digital natives have significantly fewer resources than the legacy newspapers analysed here. These limitations are common in most digital native news organisations, as discussed in Chapter 3 and they have the challenge overcoming limited resources. Some are innovating in the narratives presented in the news, some focus on the coverage of niche issues, and others on in-depth reporting such as investigative journalism or fact-checking journalism.

However, few studies have focused on understanding how their objectives shape the practices of the digital natives. This section analyses the practices that prevail in each news organisation to produce their day-to-day content, informed mainly by the interviews conducted for the present research, to understand the differences and similarities in the news making process and how this contributes (or not) to achieving the aims of each organisation.

Two roles are analysed to understand the practices of the four news organisations: online editors and journalists. This work division defines their daily routines, the kind of content they produce, the temporality of content creation, and their specialisation in beats. Therefore, in this section, analysis of news making practices reveals a distinction between the routines of online editors and journalists in digital natives and legacy newspapers. Additionally, it highlights the temporality of the news and the use of metrics to understand how it impacts online editors' and journalists' news making routines and the lifespan of the news.

Studies about the digitalisation of newsrooms have found changes in the organisation of the work and the creation of new job positions with different rhythms and responsibilities to adapt to the new routines and temporalities of their digital versions (Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Domingo and Paterson, 2011; Peters and Broersma, 2013; Usher, 2014; Peters and Broersma, 2017). Digital natives and legacy newspapers news production is done by online editors and reporters. As discussed in Chapter 5, the main difference between these roles is that online editors focus on the monitoring of their sources or platforms from the newsroom to report the most recent events on the online edition. In contrast, journalists focus on the

coverage of a beat or source and frequently report about scheduled events. In Table 5, the main characteristics of these roles are summarised, and their practices are analysed below, comparing the responsibilities between journalists and online editors of the four news organisations.

Table 5 Comparative table of responsibilities of journalists and online editors

		Animal Político	Aristegui Noticias	Reforma	El Universal
Assigned specific sources to cover	Journalists			✓	✓
	Online editors				
Fixed beats to cover	Journalists			✓	✓
	Online editors				
Deskbound job	Journalists				
	Online editors	✓	✓	✓	✓
In-depth reporting	Journalists	✓	✓	* Occasionally	* Occasionally
	Online editors	* Occasionally	* Occasionally		* Occasionally
Re- purposed/ repackaged news	Journalists				
	Online editors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Flexibility in their routines	Journalists	✓	✓	* Occasionally	* Occasionally
(i.e., to make another kind of reporting or cover a different beat)	Online editors	✓	✓		* Occasionally

6.2.1 Online editors

Online editors from digital natives and legacy newspapers have certain similarities in their responsibilities: they each have a deskbound job monitoring a set of sources and producing short news stories. Usually, their work does not carry a byline, and, in the case of online editors who work for legacy newspapers, their stories are rarely published in the printed newspaper.

The shift of an online editor starts by getting the 'day's feel' about what their news organisations have published already, what other news organisations have published, and what is expected to happen while they are on their shift. Newspapers have staff working 24 hours to always have online editors on standby in case of important news breaks during the night, while digital natives only have staff covering day schedules.

Online editors are assigned a beat to cover, but this is more flexible than the assignments of journalists from legacy newspapers, as online editors should be ready to cover an event even when it is not part of their regular assignment. Online editors from digital natives have even more flexibility to cover other topics than their counterparts in the legacy newspapers and collaborate to produce in-depth reporting along with journalists. The mix of sources they monitor regularly includes official sources, news agencies, other news organisations, and social media. Sourcing information from other media to be rewritten and published is what Anderson (2013b) calls aggregation.²³ The author warns that this way of producing content does not add to making new information available. However, this practice allows the readers to be informed of what other media is producing without leaving the news site. The content they generate also relies heavily on pre-packaged or PR content; the risks of using this kind of content are discussed in-depth in Chapter 8.

In some cases, online editors actively look for sources about a specific event, especially with breaking news. In this case, they search for information about the event and look for new sources of information, either official sources, witnesses through social media, or live

²³ There is another meaning for aggregation: the automatic compilation of news into one site or an app from various news websites (such as Google News). This is not the meaning used here.

streaming from the site – what Bakker (2014) calls content curation. This term not only refers to the use of content published in other media to produce news stories but includes the use of all kinds of sources to combine them into a single story, which will contribute to a better understanding of an event.

Phillips (2010b) explains that the main reason for the media to take material from others is the economy of resources, such as time and money needed for making original reporting, and not having incentives to produce ‘original scoops’. These practices contribute to the homogenisation of the information available for the readers in the media market. The present study found that the content produced by online editors from digital natives and legacy newspapers is rarely original. However, despite the limitations that online editors have, digital natives are looking for ways to create content that differentiates them from other news media. So far, the practices that online editors from both kinds of news organisations have in common have been discussed. The following subsections discuss what practices characterise each news organisation, highlighting how they generate added value to the content based on other news organisations' content or pre-packaged content.

6.2.1.1 Digital natives: Producing content with added value

As discussed in the previous chapter, digital natives try to differentiate themselves from legacy news organisations not only by generating in-depth reporting but also in the daily news they produce. Even when the processes in both kinds of news organisations are similar, the practices described in the interviews for online editors from digital natives are different from those who work for the legacy newspapers. Online editors are assigned beats to cover. They are struggling with balancing the coverage of an agenda structured around the activities and press releases of the main political institutions and the coverage of issues they have taken an editorial decision to prioritise, such as human rights and corruption. Due to the time pressures and the small team of contributors in the news organisations, most of the content produced by online editors is based on content generated by news agencies and other news media. However, online editors from the digital natives have also set up practices to ‘add value’ to the content they publish and to generate content that differentiates them from the legacy news organisations.

Digital natives do not generate the same volume of content as legacy newspapers. As discussed in the previous chapter, newspapers produce over 1,000 daily entries, while the digital natives manage less than 100. Therefore, the online editor's role is also to prioritise what news is the most relevant during the day instead of covering every event or trying to break new stories. Thus, digital natives must be more selective with the news they cover.

Animal Político produces fewer stories a day (on average, around 25 pieces of content a day against 100 in Aristegui Noticias and 1,000 from the newspapers). However, these stories aim not only to communicate about an event, but also to contextualise and explain it:

We did not conform with what the institutions communicate, we do not conform with the press releases or the statements, but we always have to be looking how to turn things around, or checking if it is true or going one step forward (Interviewee 2, Online editor, Animal Político).

In addition to the most relevant news of the day, the online editors also produce what Animal Político calls *notas de servicio* or service news, which is content dedicated to informing about issues relevant to their readers. The interviewees gave some examples such as information about highways during the holiday season, alerts about bank fraud schemes, water cuts due to maintenance, and how to find polling stations. This content is seen as fulfilling a double function: providing the readers with useful information and generating traffic to the site, not only for the day, but for a season, as the information has a longer lifespan.

But we do clickbait making useful journalism [...] information that really gives something, is not 'Ah! Look at this kitty doing cartwheels', but more like 'I want you to read and be informed of something you did not know' and in an attractive way (Interviewee 4, Editor for Audiences, Animal Político).

The shift in practice at Animal Político to 'add value' to the news makes the difference between reporting events and civic journalism. This added value gives further context to help readers understand news events, leaving immediacy of stories in second place. As discussed in Chapter 3, civic journalism aims to distance itself from pressures of power (such as the market and the state) and from a classic conception of objectivity based on presenting

standalone facts. This kind of journalism also contextualises those facts and explains important issues to citizens (Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017).

Another routine observed at Animal Político is updates to a news item. Animal Político edits their news stories throughout the day to update information. They consolidate the information about an event in a single post instead of having several entries that reflects the information at a specific moment during an event's development.

We are updating the text in real-time to make them more complete as possible and having all the points of view necessary about the issue (Interviewee 2, Online editor, Animal Político).

Usher (2014) found in her study of the *New York Times* that having many different stories ended up crowding the organisation's homepage. Consequently, this could bury more relevant content with news with a short lifespan. Animal Político's practice of updating a single entry helps their readers to find all the information about specific events in a single news story and avoids the problem identified by Usher, improving the quality of a news story over time rather than prioritising quantity over quality.

In the case of Aristegui Noticias, online editors have a routine that revolves around the newscast's live online streaming. All the reporters, and online editors have set deadlines to contribute content for it and additionally they must feed the website throughout the day. It took a greater workload for some, in the sense that products had to be generated for the programme, not just for the site [...] instead of being just text news stories, we have to think about the programme as well (Interviewee 10, Online editor, Aristegui Noticias).

Instead of having just one video with a duration of four hours (the duration of the newscast), the content is segmented and uploaded as standalone videos on fixed sections such as national news, the summary of the first pages of the most prominent national and international newspapers, editorial columns, and featured interviews. From the total news stories analysed from Aristegui Noticias (N=350), 19% were standalone clips from live streaming. In this way, they repurpose the content they created, making it more readily

available to audiences, so they can choose the segments they want to consume according to their interests and the time they have available to invest in the site.

The second way to repurpose the content from the newscast is by creating news posts from featured interviews or the highlights of the day. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the main contribution of Aristegui Noticias is the interviews their director, Carmen Aristegui, conducts in the live stream. There are two kinds of sub-products from the interviews that online editors produce for the website: a selection of clips from the interviews that stand alone on the site and news stories that use the information from the interviews from the live newscast of the day and create one or more posts about the main topic discussed, embedding short clips with the highlights. Aristegui Noticias enhances the interviews by putting them in context, highlighting the main points, adding links to other sources, or additional materials such as reports or graphics. In this way, the new story moves from a question-and-answer format to create a narrative about the issue reported.

In the following section, the distinctive practices of the online editors from the newspapers analysed are discussed.

6.2.1.2 Newspapers: Repackaging the news

The previous section analysed how the digital natives analysed 'add value' to their content. In the case of the online editors from the newspapers analysed, they were said to have more time pressures than the digital natives. Therefore, they have fewer strategies to add value to the content they generate. Online editors of the four news organisations have a deskbound job. They described how most of the content they produce is based on news agencies, press releases, press conferences, social media, and content generated by other news media. This means that there is little space for them to create original content.

As noted in Chapter 5, El Universal aims to be the first to break the news and keep its position as the top-read news website in the country. The online editors of El Universal are the ones who are constantly monitoring their sources to get the breaking news and are the first response to generate content that can boost visits when traffic on their website is not hitting milestones during the day (as discussed later in this chapter). Reforma has as a policy not to

use or discuss work produced by other news organisations. However, online editors still use content retrieved from agencies, press releases, press conferences, and social media. They are continually monitoring what other news organisations publish, so even when they do not publish news from other news organisations, they still react to the content published by other news organisations to decide if they will cover a topic that others are reporting.

In both newspapers, online editors mostly generate their content by “repacking content produced by other media” (Paterson, 2008, p.7), which Paterson calls shovelware. This term is used when media copy content from their peers without adding elements to the story, contributing only to the volume of content produced and not to the diversity of information available for readers in their respective markets (Franklin, 2005). Another practice of online editors is the coverage of fixed events from their desks. One example is the president's daily press conferences. Reforma has a few online editors dedicated to reporting and fact-checking the daily press conferences of president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO).

In Andrés Manuel's morning conferences, the reporter must identify several things the president dedicates himself to saying are false. The job of the reporter is to hold AMLO to account. That is, if he said, "In the last six-year term they grew only 1%, the dollar was quoted at so much, or six-year term, in the three months of my Government we have raised domestic consumption to such", then the reporter must determine the veracity of these statements (Interviewee 27, Reporter, Reforma).

However, it is essential to point out that this practice started in this presidential period, as Reforma has not been focused on the president or the party currently in power. In contrast to the fact-checking done as part of Verificado 2018 (analysed in the following chapter), Reforma does not have a specific methodology. This practice is important because, as noted in Chapter 2, the presidential beat rarely included interrogation of statements made by the President or government so as to avoid retaliation (Lawson, 2002; Márquez Ramírez, 2012). However, this fact-checking exercise was adopted because Reforma has an adversarial stance against president Andrés Manuel López Obrador that precedes his election (Cortés, 2022).

Right now, I think that the agenda that has Reforma against the president, against AMLO, against the government, which seems to me to be a little bit beyond being just a counterweight; I openly see a fight between both of them, even López Obrador's Government itself is openly fighting with the newspaper (Interviewee 25, Reporter, Reforma).

To summarise the similarities and differences in the practices between digital natives and legacy newspapers, it is important to note that both kinds of news organisation start with similar practices: from their desks, online editors consult their set of sources to identify the relevant issues of the day. However, there is an important difference between the practices of the digital natives and legacy newspapers: the added value to the content that digital natives produce, which provides readers with context to understand news stories, providing practical information about day to day life, information on community events, and making the most of the original content they produce by creating news stories that approach the same information from different angles and formats.

6.2.2 Journalists

The disparity in the number of journalists employed by the digital natives versus the legacy newspapers is considerable. When the interviews were conducted in March and April 2019, Animal Político had seven journalists and Aristegui Noticias only two. The legacy newspapers did not disclose the number of journalists hired; however, they had a team of more than 500 members that included journalists, online editors, and photographers.

The difference between the practices of journalists from both news organisations stems from time pressures. Journalists from the digital natives have more flexible deadlines, while journalists from the legacy newspapers must meet deadlines for print and generate content throughout the day for their websites. In the following subsections, the differences and similarities of this role are analysed.

6.2.2.1 *The autonomy of digital natives*

Animal Político's journalists have a different routine from the journalists of the other three news organisations analysed here. The content they produce is rarely in response to an

immediate event. Journalists in this digital native organisation do not have to cover a specific source, and the beats they cover are not as rigid as in the newspapers. Each journalist specialises in the coverage of a topic, and their regular job consists of finding issues that can have a journalistic interest to the audiences. In this sense, the journalists' practices are oriented to produce a kind of journalism with a slower temporality and more depth than their counterparts on the legacy newspapers. As the next chapter is dedicated to understanding the practices that produce investigative journalism and in-depth reporting, this section only discusses how journalists contribute content daily.

Animal Político intends to produce at least one piece of original and exclusive content daily. This means they must publish a story that is not part of the daily media agenda. To achieve this they have deliberately less structured routines than their counterparts on the legacy newspapers. Rather than focus on the coverage of daily events reporters are focused on proposing an agenda of topics that are an editorial priority for Animal Político, such as corruption and human rights. For this, they propose diverse issues to their editors and the sources they will use to inform their news stories. This is what Tuchman (1978) called focusing on issues instead of events. As she argued, events have a specific lifespan and the beginning and the end of the event can be identified, even when it continues over an extended period. Issues do not have a specific timeframe, they can have a lifespan of a few days or even years, which also has the advantage that the content can keep generating traffic for an extended period, as it does not get 'old' as fast as the coverage of events.

Animal Político aims for the reporting of issues. The news making process of their journalists intends each news story to form part of a bigger picture instead of reacting to institutions' news agenda. Thus, the reporters report 'issues' that require deeper investigation, and depending on the project, it can take days or weeks. This requires coordination between the director, editor, journalists, and online editors to manage the workloads and timings that each news story needs.

We have a phased work methodology. Thus, two [journalists] are doing investigative work, and the other two support news stories or *reportajes* that are not necessarily an investigation. I mean, it implies an in-depth reporting of days,

maybe weeks, big *reportajes* but not an investigation of a year (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

Chapter 7 analyses the practices of investigative journalism and other forms of in-depth reporting, but here it is important to highlight the time Animal Político invest in investigative reporting it is something that speaks of the central role this practice has within their organisation, specially being a small team of reporters.

Aristegui Noticias only has two journalists, and their daily responsibilities fall between the practices of journalists from Animal Político and legacy newspapers. Both journalists belong to the ‘Special Investigations Unit’, and they do not have a specific beat. The reporters directly discuss their findings and leads with the owner and director, Carmen Aristegui, and together they decide what to focus on. They are continually searching for issues that can be relevant for covering in more depth. However, their workload demands are in opposition to this aim. While Animal Político is flexible with the journalists to allow them to investigate, Aristegui Noticias has airtime to fill, and this is the main priority in the day-to-day tasks of all the team.

In general, I feel really proud of what we did. I had a crisis at the end of last year and the beginning of this. I feel that last year was a really busy year where the newscast absorbed us, and we couldn’t design many things outside it (Interviewee 7, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

6.2.2.2 Legacy newspapers and coverage of elite sources

During their daily coverage, the journalists who work for newspapers are responsible for producing content for the printed version and updating the website throughout the day. During the coverage of an event, journalists do not think about producing content for the printed version versus content published only online. They aim to send the news story or the raw material to the newsroom as quickly as possible, particularly journalists from El Universal, and the decision about whether the content will be used in the printed edition or published only on the website falls to the editors of their sections.

Within the newspaper, there is great pressure for us to send in real-time. If possible, to make live recordings and send alerts. For example, in the Chamber of

Deputies, the reform to the labour laws is about to be approved, and there are always two of us, my partner and me: "I'm going to watch the voting process, and you prepare the alert". So, I have the alert written. As soon as the chamber president dictates the vote figures, I send it to the website, which immediately appears in the app. And we have won the breaking news (Interviewee 21, Journalist, El Universal).

The findings of journalists' routines that work for the legacy newspapers analysed are similar to the findings of other studies (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 2004; González Macías, 2012; Márquez Ramírez, 2012). As mentioned previously, the legacy newspapers' journalists are assigned a source or beat. The sources that are conceived as more relevant are covered permanently by one or more journalists, such as the Presidency, Congress, and the Senate.

For those journalists who cover a single source, most of the events they cover are scheduled and predictable. Late at night or first thing in the morning, journalists of legacy newspapers check their agendas to be aware of what event they are going to cover, the issues and actors they need to focus on, and possible conflict that could emerge. For example, those reporters who cover the chambers know in advance what issues will be discussed. Their knowledge about their sources allows them to envisage events' possible outcomes and decide whether protests are expected during a session inside or outside the buildings.

When we are in the daily news [making], something that is asked from us a lot here is to send it quickly to the website. Why? Because we are in a time in which news is almost produced in real-time, then it is necessary. I see it with other colleagues from other media, how they take it as very calm to send the note, to write it. No, here we have to generate it quickly. But we are complying with the quality standards requested by the newspaper. Before sending a note, we have to review the wording and the reliability of the data. That is, if I go to a conference, what I am saying has been said verbatim by some official or a person who has organised a press conference, a demonstration, or so on. We have to send it quickly. Why? Because users also demand it, they say, "Where is this news report?" Even the bosses – "No, hey, why does the competition have this note and why do we not have it, if you are there because you have not sent it to them", we

are given all the materials and resources to report in real-time (Interviewee 22, Journalist, El Universal).

Due to having to send their news stories as soon as possible, the reporters write their stories about what is happening in the event they are covering and what the actors said without further fact-checking or contrasting the information given by their sources. Reyna García (2018) called this kind of reporting “the internalisation of the role as stenographers of power” (p.98). These practices are generally known as soundbite journalism, and the literature suggests three disadvantages. First, they are associated with having the verbatim context removed. Second, they do not add to the understanding of a problem, as in most cases they are used to illustrate a conflict. Third, and most importantly, there are no checks on the veracity of the claims; what is verified is that the source said it, not whether it is true (Rosen, 2009; Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Reyna García, 2018).

Daily routines shape journalists' agendas at both newspapers; they do not have much freedom to cover different beats or sources, and prescheduled events mostly dictate their agendas. The flexibility to dedicate their time to issues different from their regular job depends on the relevance assigned to the sources they cover. Journalists who cover high-profile sources can rarely dedicate their time to covering events outside of the agenda fixed by their sources, and frequent travel gives them less time to focus on other issues or to explore deeper.

Covering specific sources is an informal way to reflect the journalist's status. Those with more experience and skills will cover the most ‘relevant sources’, the ones the newspaper does not want and cannot afford to stop publishing, Presidency and the federal ministries and an example of them. This status also allows them to obtain more resources from the news organisation, for example, to cover travel expenses. Márquez Ramírez (2012) found that in Mexico, covering the Presidency is the highest symbolic rank, and the practices of covering this source have not changed in the legacy news organisation during the last decade.

In my section, National, I feel that it is one of the few sections that is like the backbone of the newspaper, the strongest section. We can say that as reporters we also have advantages. I am not sure if we are the ones that earn the most,

maybe not. But they gave us a mobile, with limited credit [...]. When we go out on a trip, the newspaper is in charge of all our travel expenses [...]. They pay for taxis, plane tickets, transport. They make sure that your stay in complex places is the best possible. That is, not in luxury places, but where you can have the minimum facilities to be communicated, the security measures. We have major medical insurance in case something happens to us (Interviewee 27, Journalist, Reforma).

Journalists who have a beat assigned have more input into what to report and what sources to consult, and usually have fewer fixed events to cover. They still have a set of sources to monitor, but reporters need to look for stories in other places as they produce less information than their co-workers who cover the primary sources in the newspaper.

One begins to understand what the mechanism is like. You do your events of the day, to which everyone goes, to which they summon other news media, but you also give follow-up to your town halls, to your dependencies, to officials, to neighbours, which for us in City [beat] is a fundamental voice [...]. Then you schedule your events and get a tour and go; that is the text of the day (Interviewee 26, Journalist, Reforma).

As noted in this section, the practices of digital natives and legacy newspapers are shaped by the resources available along with their objectives. The following section analyses how the metrics can drive changes during the news making process in the four news organisations analysed.

6.2.2.3 Metrics, engagement and trends

As highlighted at the beginning of this section, the news organisations analysed data relating to the different objectives they had for their readers. While all the news organisations aim to gain readers who engage with their sites, some depend more on traffic volume. For the four news organisations metrics are relevant, no matter their aim, because their finances depend directly or indirectly on the number of readers they have. As noted in the previous chapter, except for Reforma, the other three news organisations depend on site visits to generate income through programmatic advertising. However, the site's traffic is also helpful for selling

other kinds of advertising and applying for grants or funding. In this chapter, the discussion about metrics is focused on how they impact the news making process.

Technology allows news organisations to collect a large amount of information from audiences and Internet users in general. Most of the literature about metrics is focused on the danger of excessive tailoring of content to address what audiences want over journalistic values, such as newsworthiness (Usher, 2010; Anderson, 2011; Tandoc, 2014; Tandoc and Thomas, 2015). The news organisations studied here constantly analyse their websites and social media channels' metrics. However, these audience data have little influence on the practices of journalists who are more subject to scheduled events. In contrast, online editors must respond more to website trends, traffic volume and the general trends of searches on Google and social media.

El Universal actively aims to be the most consulted news media in Mexico. They continually monitor their traffic at different times of the day (see Figure 1). This objective of the legacy newspaper is reflected in the practices of journalists and online editors. They try to be the first media outlet that publishes a piece of news, which means they do not need to gather a large amount of information since a few lines are enough to publish breaking news. While journalists and online editors do not monitor the site hits of the content they produce, the senior online editors regularly study the site trends and react accordingly. If a topic is becoming a trend on social media or Google, they will assign an online editor to write a story.

The day dawns and in general, the operation goes hand in hand with your editorial commitment, yes, and then you put the topics that we are going to be looking at, and it is not only hard information. If yesterday the Pumas [soccer team] played and the technical director fought, well, of course you are going to have it. You must have it. It is a fact that does not happen every day and that it is also working. [...] and then, helped by the graphs that we are seeing the minute by minute and how certain information is working, we operate and then search. We have a meeting in the morning. I think it should be earlier so that the metrics people tell us, “you have so much readership right now in these topics. Yesterday you brought so much traffic, blah blah blah, and these topics can be functional for today, blah blah blah,

a video too". And then the soft areas sell us their content and we can structure a much more complete site (Interviewee 15, Web Editor, El Universal).

Figure 1 El Universal's daily targets for unique visitors

TRÁFICO POR HORA Objetivo: 2 millones de visitantes únicos diarios APERTURA <table border="1"> <tr><td>1 AM</td><td>70 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>2 AM</td><td>100 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>3 AM</td><td>120 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>4 AM</td><td>130 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>5 AM</td><td>145 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>6 AM</td><td>170 mil</td></tr> </table> MAÑANA <table border="1"> <tr><td>7 AM</td><td>230 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>8 AM</td><td>320 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>9 AM</td><td>430 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>10 AM</td><td>550 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>11 AM</td><td>670 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>12 AM</td><td>780 mil</td></tr> </table> TARDE <table border="1"> <tr><td>1 PM</td><td>890 mil</td></tr> <tr><td>2 PM</td><td>1 M</td></tr> <tr><td>3 PM</td><td>1.11 M</td></tr> <tr><td>4 PM</td><td>1.22 M</td></tr> <tr><td>5 PM</td><td>1.33 M</td></tr> <tr><td>6 PM</td><td>1.45 M</td></tr> <tr><td>7 PM</td><td>1.54 M</td></tr> <tr><td>8 PM</td><td>1.65 M</td></tr> <tr><td>9 PM</td><td>1.75 M</td></tr> <tr><td>10 PM</td><td>1.85 M</td></tr> <tr><td>11 PM</td><td>1.93 M</td></tr> <tr><td>12 AM</td><td>2 M</td></tr> </table> CIERRE	1 AM	70 mil	2 AM	100 mil	3 AM	120 mil	4 AM	130 mil	5 AM	145 mil	6 AM	170 mil	7 AM	230 mil	8 AM	320 mil	9 AM	430 mil	10 AM	550 mil	11 AM	670 mil	12 AM	780 mil	1 PM	890 mil	2 PM	1 M	3 PM	1.11 M	4 PM	1.22 M	5 PM	1.33 M	6 PM	1.45 M	7 PM	1.54 M	8 PM	1.65 M	9 PM	1.75 M	10 PM	1.85 M	11 PM	1.93 M	12 AM	2 M	<table> <tr> <td colspan="2">Traffic per hour</td></tr> <tr> <td colspan="2">Objective: 2 million daily unique visitors</td></tr> <tr> <td>Opening</td><td>Locate issues that worked at night and viral issues.</td></tr> <tr> <td>1 AM – 70,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>2 AM – 100,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>3 AM – 120,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>4 AM – 130,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>5 AM – 145,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>6 AM – 170,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Morning</td><td>Peak hours</td></tr> <tr> <td>7 AM – 230,000</td><td>Identify the issues of the day and develop those that are most popular.</td></tr> <tr> <td>8 AM – 320,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>9 AM – 430,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>10 AM – 550,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>11 AM – 670,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>12 AM – 780,000</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Evening</td><td>Traffic break</td></tr> <tr> <td>1 PM – 890,000</td><td>Do everything possible to make the consumption curve go down slowly.</td></tr> <tr> <td>2 PM – 1 million</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>3 PM – 1.11 million</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>4 PM – 1.22 million</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>5 PM – 1.33 million</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>6 PM – 1.45 million</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Closing</td><td>(Not legible)</td></tr> </table>	Traffic per hour		Objective: 2 million daily unique visitors		Opening	Locate issues that worked at night and viral issues.	1 AM – 70,000		2 AM – 100,000		3 AM – 120,000		4 AM – 130,000		5 AM – 145,000		6 AM – 170,000		Morning	Peak hours	7 AM – 230,000	Identify the issues of the day and develop those that are most popular.	8 AM – 320,000		9 AM – 430,000		10 AM – 550,000		11 AM – 670,000		12 AM – 780,000		Evening	Traffic break	1 PM – 890,000	Do everything possible to make the consumption curve go down slowly.	2 PM – 1 million		3 PM – 1.11 million		4 PM – 1.22 million		5 PM – 1.33 million		6 PM – 1.45 million		Closing	(Not legible)
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El Universal has an open-plan office shared by online editors and journalists. The screens continually show figures for website traffic and Google trends. During the interview, the online section editor talked about the relevance of monitoring Google trends in Mexico and worldwide and thinking about the potential relevance that an event could have, checking if the site already has something published, and if not, ask to write about it.

To illustrate his point, he showed the issues that were at the top of Google trends and gave an example. The name Britney Spears was at the top of the list. He quickly searched why it was trending and said it could be a topic he could request the online editors to write a news story about. Coincidentally, during the interview Animal Político's Editor brought this same topic as an example. She explained that as the mental health of Britney Spears had been discussed, there was an opportunity to make a story not about the singer, but about mental health in Mexico. Although she emphasised that Animal Político does not focus on issues only because they are popular in the country, but because their readers show interest.

We do the opposite. We look for issues, or the issues arrive at us. We always prioritise public interest and after we think about, and I'm telling you this is also part of my job, all the communication strategy. How I'm going to sell this to generate impact and to be read for many people, and to be read for an audience outside Animal Político (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

This example shows how these two news organisations think about their content: El Universal responds to market demand while Animal Político adheres to their editorial priorities. This does not mean Animal Político does not use the data compiled from their website, rather they

use it differently to promote engagement with their readers. The interviewees talked about two kinds of metrics they continuously assess: the stories with most views, and the time spent reading content.

There is general monitoring of what stories attract more views. However, according to the Audiences Editor at Animal Político, this is used with the content metrics about where readers spend more time reading. In the second case of using metrics, they use diverse utilities of the Content Management System to assess the contents before being published and *a posteriori*.

Journalists and online editors can use utilities to assess the readability of the text determining how easy it is to understand for an average reader considering the length of the sentences and the language used. Once the content is published, the organisation measures the time readers spend on each post, how far they scroll on the screen, and when they stop reading. With this information, Animal Político decides what content can be produced in different formats to be distributed on their social media platforms daily. However, it is also used to determine the issues that their readers are interested in.

The practices are tied to the news temporality of each news organisation: a slower kind of reporting for digital natives and a fast pace in legacy newspapers. The following section reveals what news temporalities prevail in each news organisation and how they relate to their objectives.

6.2.3 News temporality

The analysis of digital editors' and journalists' practices shows how the aims of the news organisations have an impact on one element that shapes all other practices: the temporality of the news. Many news organisations look to stand out in a news ecosystem marked by an abundance of competitors by being known as the ones that break the news (Rantanen, 2009; Usher, 2014; Craig, 2016; Greenberg, 2016; Usher, 2017a). This can also lead to attracting more revenue, therefore "the deadlines for ALL news organizations become NOW!"²⁴ (Usher, 2014, p.11). Immediacy has always been one of the core values of news, but its meaning is

²⁴ Emphasis in the original.

changing. Old news used to be yesterday's newspaper – metaphorically, yesterday's newspaper is only useful for wrapping fish and chips in the UK and fruit in Mexico. Editorial decisions determine the news's temporality, whether it is more important to communicate events quicker or to take the time to create more complex content for readers (Rantanen, 2009; Usher, 2014; Craig, 2016; Greenberg, 2016; Usher, 2017a).

In this study, the legacy newspapers are larger and older organisations that are used to structuring their routines around print deadlines. However, their migration to the Internet brought a change in journalist practices, adapting their routines to fit the Internet's 24-hour news cycle. In contrast, the two digital natives are rethinking the temporalities of news cycles. Instead of reacting to reporting the latest events, they focus on reporting events with longer lifespans, in part because of their resource limitations, but also as a way to fulfil their aims.

As mentioned above, digital native journalists mainly produce news that is not focused on immediacy. Some of the content they produce is so-called slow journalism, investigative reporting, or other reporting types that require more in-depth reporting. These are discussed in the following chapter. However, their everyday content is also published at a different pace from the legacy newspapers analysed here. As discussed before, digital natives produce less daily news; instead, they look to provide their readers with more information to understand the main news of the day, providing them with context and explanations.

For El Universal, the immediacy of the events is crucial; they count on online editors to be in constant search of breaking news, and they want to be the first to publish it. Occasionally, online editors work together with a reporter to cover a story in real time. In the interviews, online editors and journalists from El Universal said that when a journalist is covering a busy event, online editors publish the news stories journalists dictate on the phone, or they write and publish the news story with the information given by a journalist.

The news content produced by online editors from legacy newspapers has a short lifespan. They are snapshots of a specific moment during the day, usually short texts that provide minimal information about an event that could be updated in later news stories. Tuchman (1978) called developing news unexpected events where the collection of 'facts' serves to develop the story; as more facts are known, the story can change. However, this results in

fragmented and decontextualised information on the website at the end of the day, "quick and agile delivery diminishes and simplifies the news, often while sacrificing accuracy, intensifying information overload, and muddying the potential for productive deliberation" (Zelizer, 2018, p.112).

Everything we send to the newspaper appears on the website. Everything, everything, everything. When you buy the newspaper, all those articles are on the site, but we also produce articles exclusively for the newspaper's website and, therefore, sometimes it is replicated on their social media. News that is important, but due to the limited length of the newspaper, it does not fit in the printed form. So we send it directly to the website, or news that is not so relevant and that is of the day. I repeat bulletins, communications, well you send those to the website, and you know as a reporter, you know that that news is not going to have space in print because there is more important news for print. [...] 100% of the news you make must go to the website. All that goes in the print goes on the website (Interviewee 22, Journalist, El Universal).

The content produced by digital editors is usually not included in the print edition. As noted above, their content aims to respond rapidly to the influx of information. What goes in the printed version is discussed by the editors of each section and its directors. The content created by journalists during the day might be rewritten into a news story that could go into the printed version the next day, or there may be new stories or information that has not been published in the online version yet. Readers already know most of the news, and the newspaper provides a curated version of the content published on the website that day, expanding on those facts that sit alongside opinion pieces, cartoons and in-depth reporting.

Reforma also rushes to publish their news stories, but less so than El Universal. Interviewee 27, a journalist from Reforma, explained the differences between the two newspapers' timelines – her description reflects interview content from the two legacy newspapers.

Before, we used to try to publish the news in real-time. That is still an aim. We take our time because we want, precisely because of that commitment to the readers, to give them better information. Because it could be and as El Universal,

for example, has more subscribers, or more followers, or its impact, its influence is greater. They can upload a headline, with about two lines and put more information in a moment. In Reforma, that is prohibited. It does not matter if you wait ten more minutes, you give the reader a more complete news story, reporting the event even with verbatim quotes, a bit of context. Let's say that immediacy tries to be done, as quickly as possible, but with better data, let's say (Interviewee 27, Reporter, Reforma).

Usher (2017a) observed this sense of immediacy in her study of four metropolitan newspapers in the USA. The author found that journalists changed their practices from producing news in a 24-hour cycle to *now* (close to instant publishing) to increase traffic, retain audiences, and compete with other news organisations – not only newspapers but all other news media, as all now share the same deadlines. Digital natives want to change the rhythm of the content they produce not only because they lack the staff to compete with legacy news media, but also because this gives them a differentiating point in the market, as noted in Chapters 3 and 5.

6.2.3.1 Lifespan of news on newspaper homepages

As discussed above, the two digital natives have less time pressure than the legacy newspapers analysed in this study. Two dates were recorded from the content: the date of content collection and the date the content was published (see Chapter 4 for content collection criteria). As the content was collected from the homepages of the four news organisations, this data demonstrates the differences in the lifespan of the content from each news organisation.

The homepages of the news media are considered to be equivalent to the front pages of the newspapers (Benson et al., 2012), where headlines are positioned strategically, highlighting the topics considered newsworthy by the editors. Front pages have been abundantly studied, showing the decisions made about what stories will be placed on the front page of newspapers, to reflect the 'editorial stance' of the organisation, where the headlines are positioned strategically, highlighting the topics that are considered newsworthy by the editors (Costanza Chock and Rey Mazon, 2016).

However, the placement of the news on the homepages has received less attention. At the beginning of the day, the newspapers publish all the content from the printer version, with the most relevant news having a similar placement in print and online. However, as the news of the day is being published on the website, the online team decides their placement on the homepage; this was also observed by Usher (2014) in the *New York Times*. The placement of news on the homepage is decided by a small team “so that the page appears ‘fresh’ – so that the imagined audience demanding this content will keep coming back for more” (Usher, 2014, p.90). One explanation for homepages receiving less attention than print first pages is the printed version's symbolic relevance and the ever-changing nature of the homepage, which can be and is quickly and constantly updated.

In the present research, the content of the newspapers remained on the homepages for fewer days than the content of the digital natives: 70% of the content collected was published within the same day during the regular period, and 75% of the content collected during the campaign period (see Table 6). The newspapers studied published significantly more content than the digital natives and at a quicker pace with the result that the homepage was constantly updated. This is due to two factors. Firstly, they have to produce enough content to publish in their printed versions, which is also reproduced on their website, and secondly, because they are in constant competition with other news organisations to be the ones to break the news, thus their news becomes ‘old’ faster (Usher, 2017a). These characteristics were observed in the newspapers studied here.

The main news story will be the one that the editorial direction defines in coordination with all the areas in the daily editorial board. There are also several [news stories], but that central story is going to be the one that you are going to feed and that you are going to take care of, and the one that should give you strength the next day. And then, in a hierarchical structure on the home site, we will put the contents that we know are functional, yes, but that are also the strength of the newspaper, right? The main stories that are our editorial bet as a news media should always be central, and then, of course, the content that we know are working from the previous day or two days. Many news or themes die

on the third day. The idea is that the day before, we know what is working and transfer it so that we keep it alive (Interviewee 15, Web Editor, El Universal).

In contrast, digital natives produce less information; therefore, their content sits on their homepages longer. These news organisations also keep on stories from in-depth reporting on their homepages as they promote this content for an extended period. This news content is typically not about the most recent events but about issues that have been investigated for periods that vary from a few days to more than a year (Chapter 7 focuses on the practices of in-depth reporting).

Table 6 Number of days that news stories have remained on the homepages in both sampled weeks

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total (%)	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Same day	78	108	110	132	138	113	164	169	490	522
1 day	80	55	37	32	9	0	10	5	136	92
2 days	12	6	10	0	2	1	1	0	25	7
3 or more	5	5	18	11	5	0	0	0	28	16
Unknown	0	1	0	0	21	61	0	1	21	63
Total	175	175	175	175	175	175	175	175	700	700
									N= 1400	

This chapter has so far focused on discussing the news making practices of the digital natives and legacy newspapers studied in the present research. The following section focuses on the content analysis to understand the characteristics of the content published.

6.3 Characteristics of the content

This section focuses on discussing the characteristics of the content produced. Following a focus on understanding what journalists say they do, the chapter will consider the findings from the content analysis to understand what kind of content the four news organisations are producing. In particular the content analysis aims to understand both the issues covered by the different news outlets and who is featured in their coverage. In addition, the analysis will consider how news is presented, and the presence of journalistic 'genres' and the use of multimedia elements. Finally this section will consider transparency in news reporting and consider how this might function to increase trust in news and news organisations.

6.3.1 Issues covered

In Chapter 5, the objectives of the four news organisations were analysed using the statements of the news organisations and the interviews. It was suggested that the digital natives define themselves in contrast to the legacy media in Mexico by criticising two characteristics they attribute to the latter: passive reporting and a lack of independence. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias highlighted that freedom to report is essential in a country where the Mexican state still plays an interventionist role.

The digital natives also define themselves by arguing that they have news agendas focused on issues such as corruption, human rights, and violence, which are identified as core problems in the country. For their part, Reforma claimed to be interested in covering corruption issues, while El Universal claimed to be focused on politics. Thus, according to the information provided in the interviews and the statements of the four news organisations analysed, the objectives of the media are directly connected with the topics they prioritise covering. Each media organisation builds their news agenda according to the values each news organisation assigns to the newsworthiness of issues and how they are going to be

reported. A news agenda is “a set of issues that are communicated in a hierarchy of importance at a point in time” (Dearing and Rogers, 1996, p.2). In other words, the events that news media decide to include in their spaces, how much importance it gives to them, shaped by organisational factors, news values and sources (Dearing and Rogers, 1996). This section analyses the topics reported by the news organisation to understand whether the objectives and routines of the news organisations reflect in their news agenda the issues they claim to prioritise.

All four news organisations claimed that the most important topic to report on is politics, although all four are dedicated to the coverage of ‘general news’ (they do not specialise in the coverage of a particular topic). The content analysis confirmed that politics is the topic with the most coverage in Animal Político, Aristegui Noticias and Reforma. In the case of El Universal, the topic with most coverage is entertainment, with politics in second place (see Table 7).

Table 7 Topics covered by the news organisations in both sampled weeks

Topics	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Politics	46%	32%	30%	23%	35%	31%	27%	25%	35%	28%
Law enforcement	27%	23%	13%	11%	17%	15%	19%	13%	19%	16%
Economy	1%	4%	15%	14%	9%	9%	5%	5%	7%	8%
Social problems	15%	21%	12%	10%	7%	10%	6%	5%	10%	11%
Science, Health, Tech.	6%	10%	8%	5%	6%	5%	5%	10%	6%	7%
Entertainment	5%	10%	22%	37%	27%	30%	37%	41%	23%	30%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
									N=700	N=700

The topic with the biggest difference in coverage between legacy newspapers and digital natives is ‘social problems’. Digital natives had more coverage of this topic than the legacy newspapers: 15% and 21% of Animal Político’s content reported on social problems during the normal and campaign period, respectively, while Aristegui Noticias’ content on social problems represented around 10% of their content. The content analysis supports the claims

of both digital natives that they prioritise these kinds of issues in their news agendas, as claimed in their objectives. As noted previously, digital natives aim to reach elite audiences who are more interested in 'quality news', so they provide the news their audiences are looking for (Cook and Sirkkunen, 2013; Benson, 2018).

While niche news is driven by market interest in most cases, "it has opened opportunities for civic advocacy journalism by creating platforms for news coverage on issues related to social justice" (Waisbord, 2009, p.376). Both digital natives are clear in their stance on social issues, and aim to actively bring these issues to public attention. Coverage of such issues also reflects characteristics of civic and advocacy journalism, as they are in constant search of issues that affect citizens and enable them to find solutions and make decisions. This includes exposing the wrongdoings and demanding accountability of those in power (Hughes, 2006).

With El Universal there is a predominance of entertainment in the legacy newspaper, which could have originated in their aim to reach the largest audience possible, diversifying their content in many sections and supplements, and monitoring trends to produce content. At the same time, Animal Político rarely covers issues that can be considered soft news (Animal Político has verticals dedicated to this kind of content, as discussed in the previous chapter). Entertainment also has an important presence in the homepages of Aristegui Noticias and Reforma, increasing during the campaign period as the dates overlapped with the World Cup: 112 of 130 news stories about the World Cup were coded under the entertainment category.

The concepts of soft and hard news have been used to separate news that is important from news with less relevance to civic and political life. While the concept invokes vague notions of 'quality', there is no consensus on what content characteristics make the news soft or hard. Earlier research about soft and hard news by Tuchman (1979) pointed out the difference in the immediacy in which an event should be reported. Hard news must be reported immediately, while soft news can wait. Most extended conceptualisations identify topics that are considered more important to report, such as politics and economy (hard news), than others, such as entertainment and sports (soft news). A critique of these conceptualisations is that even topics such as the economy can be reported in a soft way style using sensationalist features (Boczkowski, 2009; Reinemann et al., 2012; Jóhannsdóttir, 2018; Glogger and Otto,

2019). Similarly, so-called 'human interest' stories can highlight social issues and, in some cases, achieve social impact.

In this research, the concepts of soft and hard news are used to distinguish between the different topics covered. According to the classification of topics used in the content analysis, Politics, Law Enforcement, Economy, Social Problems and Science, Health, and Technology are all considered hard news. All the topics grouped under Entertainment are considered soft news (as described in the coding book, this category groups lifestyle, sports, arts and culture).

The interviewees from Animal Político claimed their scant coverage of soft news topics and their clickbait content is focused mainly on *service news*. Examples of this kind of news given during the interviews included water quality on beaches or information about highways or the most common destinations from Mexico City, which can be useful during the Easter holidays.

We have two parts of Animal. That is the deep part, the hard part, which are hard topics, complicated topics, complex analysis, and we have the part that would be like our clickbait, which it is, but we give clickbait doing useful journalism (Interviewee 4, Editor for Audiences, Animal Político).

Even when the digital native considers this content 'soft news', not all examples above would have been coded as soft news. For example, a news story about water quality on beaches could have been classified under the headings of Science, Health, Technology or Politics, depending on how the news story was framed. As discussed in the previous chapter, both digital natives tried to reach a niche audience of 'critical readers'. Even when Aristegui Noticias covers important entertainment news, its nature is different from the legacy newspaper, as it is more focused on an 'elitist' approach, such as focusing on book reviews and cultural events and less on sports or celebrity news.

6.3.2 Diversity of subjects in the news

Analysis of representation in the news stories is drawn from the analysis of two variables. The first is 'diversity', which measures news stories focused on vulnerable groups, as discussed in Chapter 3. The other is the 'genre of subjects' portrayed in the news.

6.3.2.1 Representation of vulnerable groups in the news

The digital natives claimed in their descriptions (see Chapter 5) that they wanted to cover issues about human rights and inequalities. A category of analysis that coded the representation of vulnerable groups in Mexico was designed based on the conceptualisations of the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) and the National Council to Prevent Discrimination in Mexico (CONAPRED, 2018), to determine whether diverse groups from society are represented in the news as normative democratic claims suggest (Christians et al., 2009). The content analysis coded whether the news explicitly mentioned actors who were part of the following groups: LGBTQ+, indigenous, disabled, excluded by age (such as kids, elders), the socially disadvantaged (including poverty, access to education, health, food, and housing), woman (violence against women and girls), and migrants.

From all the content analysed (1400 news stories), only 7% (N=97) portrayed a subject that corresponded to a diverse group, with most representation of migrants (N=31), people with some kind of social disadvantage (N=19), and women (N=18 each). The four news organisations increased the coverage of these groups during the campaign period sampled, particularly in the coverage of migrants, which grew from 6 during the normal period to 25 news stories. The increase in cases was not directly related to the political campaigns but to news about the Trump administration separating children from their parents at the Mexican-American border.²⁵ The following table shows the number of news stories that covered disadvantaged groups.

²⁵ The following text from *The Guardian* summarises the news' development: <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/27/us-mexico-border-family-separations-parents-contacted-court>

Table 8 Analysis of diversity in both sampled weeks

Groups	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
LGBT+	1	8	1	1	0	1	1	1	3	11
Indigenous	0	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	5
Disabled	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	3	0
Age	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Social disparity	7	7	1	2	0	1	1	0	9	10
Woman	2	6	1	4	0	0	1	4	4	14
Migrants	1	10	1	4	3	6	1	5	6	25
Other	1	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	5	0
Total	13	33	9	14	5	8	5	10	32	65
									N= 32	N=65

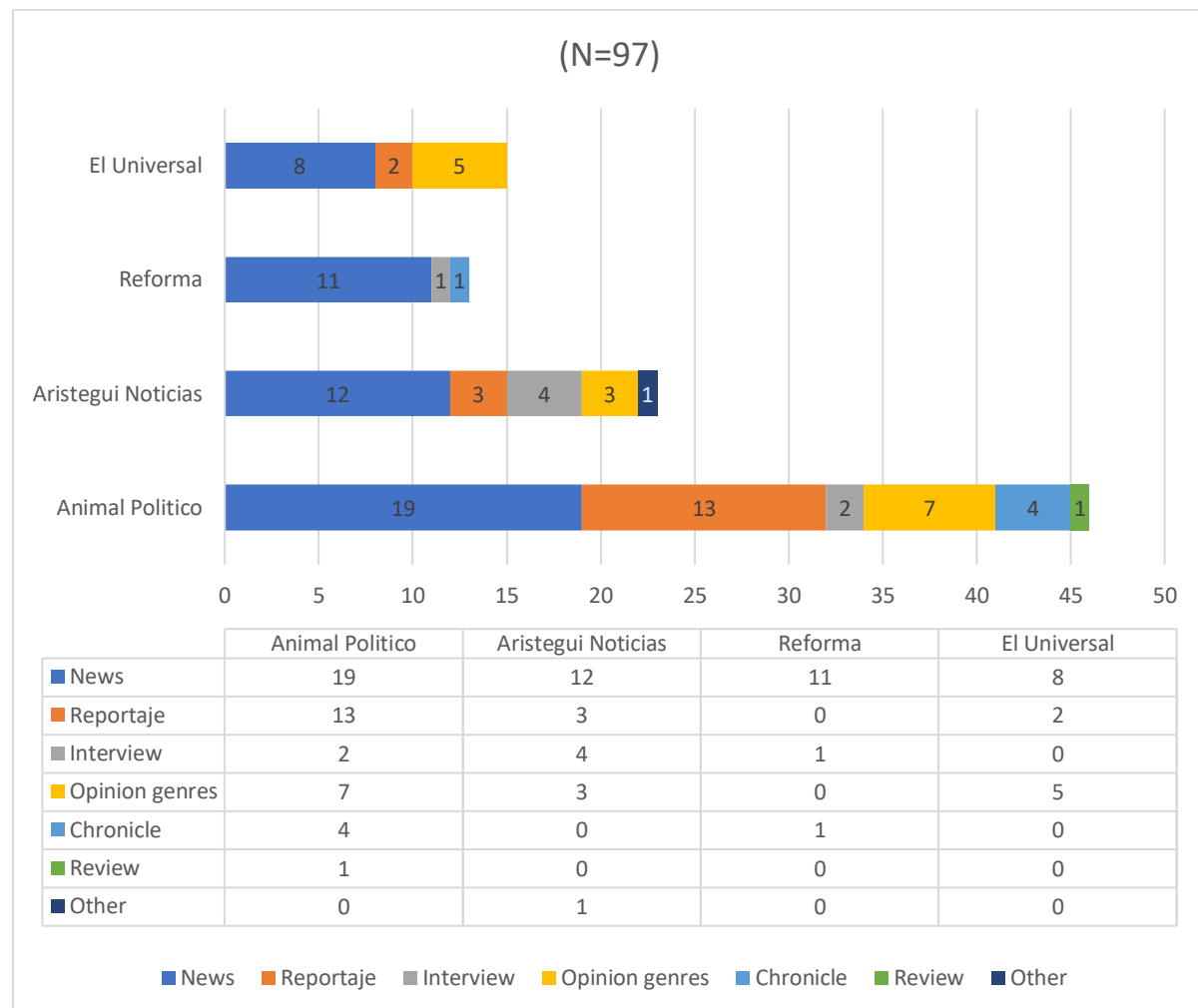
The coverage of women also rose during the campaign period; all the stories included reporting on feminicides. In Mexico, gender-based violence has been rising dramatically in recent years, including domestic violence, sexual violence, disappearances and feminicides²⁶ (UN Women et al., 2020; Secretariado Ejecutivo de Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, 2023), therefore reporting about this systematic violation of women's human rights is an imperative for Mexican news media.

Digital natives give more space to the sectors that are recognised as disadvantaged. Animal Político gives most coverage to these groups and has a special section for the coverage of inequality (see Chapter 5), showing that the organisation assigns symbolic importance to these issues. Animal Político also reported the news using range of journalistic genres other than news reports (see Figure 2). As discussed later in the chapter, how the news is delivered

²⁶ To understand the rise of feminicides, in 2015 there were 412 officially registered cases, in 2022, 954 cases and in the first six months of 2023, 423 cases. However, these only represent the murders officially recognised as gender-based violence. This category is not recognised in all Mexican states and the methodology to tick this box changes across the country (UN Women and CONAVIM, 2020; Secretariado Ejecutivo de Sistema Nacional de Seguridad Pública, 2023).

matters. Analysing how the news organisations covered these topics, most of the content was published as news stories (40 of 97). However, both digital natives used a larger mix of genres, which reflect more in-depth reporting, such as *reportaje* (special feature) and interviews. Therefore, digital natives are not only publishing more content representing these groups, but they are also carrying out more complex reporting.

Figure 2 Genres used in news about vulnerable groups in both sampled weeks



6.3.2.2 Gender of subjects represented in the news

As well as the vulnerable groups represented, I analysed the representation of gender in the news. In this case, the gender of the subject was coded, along with who the news was primarily talking about. From the content analysed, around 60% of the news discussed an institution, event or issue (for example Cambridge Analytica, presidential campaigns or petrol prices). In all news organisations, the news subject was not a person (see Table 9). Overall,

only 40% of the content had a person as the subject of the news, and most involved male subjects.

Table 9 Genre of subjects portrayed in news in both sampled weeks

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period
Male	33.7%	21.1%	32%	37.1%	26.9%	28%	38.9%	34.3%	32.9%	30.1%
Female	8%	6.3%	5.7%	5.1%	4%	2.3%	17.7%	11.4%	8.9%	6.3%
Not Applicable	58.3%	72.6%	62.3%	57.7%	69.1%	69.7%	43.4%	54.3%	58.3%	63.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
									N=700	N=700

Underrepresentation of women in the news has been found in many studies globally (Shor et al., 2014), and it is suggested that this is because male dominance in newsrooms reproduces gender-imbalance in reporting, “by privileging issues seen to be in both the interest and purview of men and privileging their views and voices over those of women, news discourse contributes to the ongoing marginalization of women’s participation as citizens” (Ross and Carter, 2011, p.1150).

At El Universal, more women were subjects of the news stories. However, this did not translate into better representation, as most were portrayed in Entertainment stories (see Table 10 and Table 11), mostly covering issues unrelated to their work. The focus of the stories about celebrities was on their lifestyles and not on their work.

Table 10 Genre of subjects portrayed in news by topics during the normal period

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Politics	62.7%	35.7%	42.9%	30%	63.8%	71.4%	36.8%	25.8%	50.4%	33.9%
Law enforcement	28.8%	28.6%	16.1%	20.0%	17.0%	0%	26.5%	9.7%	22.6%	14.5%
Economy	0%	0%	1.8%	0%	4.3%	0%	1.5%	0%	1.7%	0%
Social problems	1.7%	28.6%	1.8%	30.0%	2.1%	14.3%	2.9%	12.9%	2.2%	19.4%
Science, Health, Technology	3.4%	7.1%	3.6%	0%	4.3%	0.0%	4.4%	0%	3.9%	1.6%
Entertainment	3.4%	0%	33.9%	20%	8.5%	14.3%	27.9%	51.6%	19.1%	30.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N=59	N=14	N=56	N=10	N=47	N=7	N=68	N=31	N=230	N=62

Table 11 Genre of subjects portrayed in news by topics during the campaign period

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Politics	45.9	36.4%	32.3%	22.2%	49%	25%	30%	10%	37.9%	20.5%
Law enforcement	35.1	54.5%	12.3%	0%	18.4%	25%	17.6%	10%	19%	20.5%
Economy	0%	0%	3.1%	11.1%	0%	0%	3.3%	5%	1.9%	4.5%
Social problems	2.7	9.1%	3.1%	33.3%	4.1%	0%	3.3%	10%	3.3%	13.6%
Science, Health, Technology	0%	0%	3.1%	0%	0%	0.0%	0%	0%	0.9%	0%
Entertainment	16.2%	0%	46.2%	33.3%	28.6%	50%	46.7%	65%	37%	40.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	N=37	N=11	N=65	N=9	N=49	N=4	N=60	N=20	N=211	N=44

Digital natives are fostering more plural spaces, and the organisational structure and news making routines are shaped to regularly include these topics and groups in their news agenda, not only when events are more visible on the national and international agenda (as discussed in Chapter 5) because digital natives assign resources for more in-depth coverage. In the following section, the narrative resources are analysed to understand how these organisations communicate their news.

6.3.3 Narrative/storytelling

How news stories are communicated has changed with the migration from newspapers to the Internet. They have adapted to the new technologies and platforms introduced in the newsrooms. Studies of digital natives argue that these news organisations are looking for new ways to present the news. However, most such studies do not analyse the content that is produced (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Meléndez Yúdico, 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). It has been argued (Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017) that BuzzFeed has influenced

other digital natives and legacy news organisations to adopt attractive headlines and new formats such as listicles, chronologies, and Q&As. However, digital natives predominantly use traditional news reports based on the inverted pyramid structure (Tandoc, 2017; Stringer, 2019).

Studies of digital natives have claimed that one of the distinctive characteristics of this kind of media is their use of new ways to narrate the news, making them more attractive, especially for the young public, by using new genres. They do this by distancing themselves from an objective reporting style and including opinions and pieces that appeal to the emotions of their readers (Kilgo and Sinta, 2016; Wu, 2016; Tandoc, 2017; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017).

6.3.3.1 News formats

The content analysis conducted in this study measured the formats used by the news organisations based on what the literature indicates as emerging digital formats and on traditional formats used in Mexico, such as *nota informativa* (news report) and *reportaje*²⁷ (special feature). As shown in Table 12, the format most used by all the news organisations is the news report, representing more than half of the content from all four organisations. The use of this format decreased by 18% during the campaign period compared to the normal period, and formats such as opinions, chronicles or timelines increased during the campaign period. The larger diversity in formats used during the second sampled period was due to the coverage of the World Cup (see Table 13).

²⁷ *Reportaje* is explained in more detail in Chapter 7.

Table 12. Formats used by the news organisations in both sampled weeks

Journalistic formats	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
News	69%	51%	62%	44%	62%	52%	78%	53%	68%	50%
Reportaje	21%	21%	5%	4%	5%	10%	3%	8%	9%	11%
Interview or Q&A	2%	2%	13%	14%	3%	2%	1%	1%	5%	5%
Opinion formats	0%	17%	6%	13%	3%	8%	14%	26%	6%	16%
Listicle	6%	1%	1%	1%	8%	2%	1%	3%	4%	2%
Chronicle/ timelines	0%	3%	1%	8%	1%	6%	0%	4%	0%	5%
Review	1%	2%	4%	3%	8%	3%	2%	1%	4%	2%
Other	2%	3%	7%	14%	10%	17%	1%	5%	5%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
								N=700	N=700	

Animal Político's website was restructured between the two sampled periods. During the first sampled period, content from the opinion section was not published on their homepage. This does not mean Animal Político did not consider the opinion section relevant. A link to the whole section had a prevalent spot on the homepage. However, the content was confined within the section site (see Chapter 4 for the sampling method used to collect the content analysed). These changes to the website explain the rise of opinion formats during the second sampling period, limiting the understanding of opinion formats.

Besides the increase in news reports and opinion formats during the campaign period, there were few differences between the two periods for the other formats. The use of listicles decreased from 6% to 1%, and chronicles or timelines went from 0% to 3%. Reforma saw relatively less drastic changes in its use of formats between both periods, but their use of

other formats rose from 10% to 17%. Reforma had most content in this category, which could indicate an ambition to innovate in relation to news formats. Contrary to expectations, the newspaper Reforma makes more use of new formats such as listicles and infographics than the digital natives. El Universal used the most news reports during both periods sampled (78% and 53%), and had the most significant decrease in its use between periods (25% difference) – it increased the number of opinion formats (from 14% to 26%). There is less diversity in the use of formats or more use of traditional formats, and this could be due to the fast pace at which they produce content. All the news organisations used a broader range of formats during the campaign period, not only to cover the political campaigns but also the World Cup. Half of the news published (49%) during the campaign period focused on ordinary coverage, 32% on issues related to the campaigns and 19% on the World Cup. Table 13 shows that in the coverage of the campaigns, the formats most often used are the news report and opinion formats. In the coverage of the World Cup, the most used formats were the news report, chronicles, and others.

However, differences can be seen between the formats used by the digital natives and legacy newspapers to cover these issues. More than half of the content produced by Animal Político about the campaign were news reports, and almost a third were *reportajes*. One third of the content produced by Aristegui Noticias were news reports, and another third were opinion formats. Two thirds of the Reforma's campaign coverage took the form of news reports, and almost two thirds of the coverage by El Universal could be described as opinion. The prevalence of news reports in the coverage of the campaigns shows a prevalence of fast-paced reporting. However, this does not mean that in-depth reporting was not conducted, as *reportaje*, and other formats also increased in the coverage of the campaigns, as discussed in the following chapter.

An exception to this was El Universal, in which the use of opinion genres prevailed. This shows the editorial priorities of the newspaper – subjective reporting over objective or fact-based reporting (as in the news reports) – and the lack of in-depth coverage found in the sample. Animal Político made more use of *reportaje* than the other three news organisations, allowing to produce in-depth coverage of issues. Coverage of the campaigns and the World Cup increased the use of different formats. These events changed the daily routines and put in

place special routines for their coverage. As these events happen in regular cycles, news organisations can plan the kind of coverage they want and dedicate extraordinary resources to producing content related to it.

Table 13 Formats used by the news organisations during the campaign period to cover the campaigns and the World Cup

Journalistic formats	Animal Político			Aristegui Noticias			Reforma			El Universal			Total		
	Campaigns	World Cup	Regular coverage	Campaigns	World Cup	Regular coverage	Campaigns	World Cup	Regular coverage	Campaigns	World Cup	Regular coverage	Campaigns	World Cup	Regular coverage
News	20%	2%	29%	11%	9%	24%	21%	3%	28%	10%	10%	33%	16%	6%	28%
Reportaje	10%	1%	10%	1%	1%	3%	2%	2%	6%	0%	2%	6%	3%	1%	6%
Interview or Q&A	1%	0%	1%	5%	2%	7%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Opinion formats	5%	1%	11%	9%	1%	3%	5%	2%	2%	17%	2%	7%	9%	1%	6%
Listicle	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Chronicle	1%	1%	1%	1%	7%	0%	0%	5%	1%	1%	2%	1%	1%	4%	1%
Review	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Other	1%	0%	2%	4%	9%	1%	4%	4%	9%	0%	5%	0%	2%	5%	3%
Total	38%	6%	57%	30%	28%	42%	33%	17%	50%	28%	24%	48%	32%	19%	49%
N=700															

6.3.3.2 Multimedia content

The Internet has allowed news organisations to employ a range of tools and formats to present information. Using multimedia in the news has become the norm on digital platforms. Almost all content uses at least one audio-visual resource (only 4% of content does not use any – see Table 40), and images are the resource that is most often used (53.7%). While most news has at least one audio-visual component, their role in the narrative is primarily illustrative – the news could be equally understood with or without the resource (see Table 41 in Appendix 6). With the migration of newspapers online, and later with the appearance of digital natives, the use of different formats to narrate the news is seen as one of the affordances of the Internet, and with these, new storytelling styles emerge and evolve (Deuze, 2004).

Unlike print newspapers in which space is at a premium, an online news story does not have space limits that dictate the length of a story. Additionally, the Internet allows the incorporation of a range of informational formats into the news story. Using these multimedia elements has the potential to increase the quality of the news provided and allowing audiences to explore issues in greater depth. Therefore, this section provides a dedicated analysis of these formats to understand how the news organisations analysed use these affordances to construct their news stories.

Table 14 Type of audio-visuals used in the news stories in both sampled weeks

	Animal		Aristegui		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Político		Noticias							
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Images	68.6%	61.4%	35.0%	28.1%	65.8%	67.1%	67.7%	60.3%	56.9%	50.6%
Audio/Video	9.9%	6.3%	23.9%	23.6%	19.9%	22.8%	8.4%	10.9%	15.6%	16.0%
Data visualization	0.8%	8.8%	4.7%	5.3%	13.3%	9.2%	3.5%	3.7%	4.5%	6.4%
Interactive	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	1.0%	0.4%	1.0%	1.1%	0.4%	0.5%
Social Media	20.3%	21.6%	35.5%	42.0%	0.0%	0.4%	19.4%	23.9%	22.2%	25.8%
Documents	0.5%	1.7%	0.9%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	0.7%
Total	100.1%	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	100.0%
	395	352	448	488	196	228	310	348	1349	1416

A quarter of the audio-visual elements were inserts from social media, such as tweets and Instagram posts. However, social media is mainly used by the digital natives to substantiate a story or to provide context (Table 42 and Table 43 in Appendix 6, show how each news organisation used audio-visuals in their news stories). The content analysis shows that social media has become an accepted news source. The news organisations use social media to monitor the tweets of certain ‘newsworthy’ actors, to use as the basis of news stories. In the sample, the tweets of the Mexican presidential candidates and Donald Trump are used to construct news about them, and Instagram is used as a source of news about celebrities. Comparing the number of social media inserts against their use as a source shows that Reforma used social media as a source more times than they used an audio-visual elements in their content (see Table 38 and Table 39 in Chapter 8).

Across the four organisations the use of audio or videos accounts for 15% of multimedia content. Aristegui Noticias stands out for favouring audio and video over other media (see Table 14), with almost a quarter of the audio-visuals used being videos. Aristegui Noticias

creates an online newscast, and then extracts video clips from that content. The newspaper *Reforma* also produces their own videos, and a quarter of their multi-media elements are audio or video. Some of the videos used stand alone as the only element in the post.

Animal Político expressed their willingness to use the affordances of the web to enrich their content, and to “use all the tools offered by the digital world, so we will be adding photo galleries, maps and infographics. But above all, we want to have a different language, typical of the web and no longer of the printed media” (*Animal Político*, n.d.-d). As can be seen in Table 41 in Appendix 6, both digital natives make more use of different kinds of multimedia elements to substantiate and contextualise the news than the legacy newspapers. This supports their claim of ‘adding value’ to their reporting as noted earlier in this chapter.

More complex multimedia, such as data visualisations and interactives, were not extensively used. The use of data visualisation resources (5.4%) is scarce, as are infographics, tables, charts or maps that help users to understand information. However, all the news organisations did make use of this kind of resources. The use of interactive elements was rare at 0.4%, and was mostly used by the newspapers, which could be a consequence of the resources available to produce such elements.

The use of documents, such as reports and communications (such as letters or memos), accounts for less than 1% of the multimedia used, and only by both digital natives: 13 of 16 documents were included in the news to support the arguments presented in the news stories, two triggered the story and one was used for contextualisation (see Table 42 and table 43 in Appendix 6). Reich and Barnoy (2021) argue that the documents used in news stories can fulfil four roles: they can trigger a news story, confirm information, provide evidence, and provide details. Existing research notes that journalists include documents in their news reports to present evidence and to corroborate the validity of the information they are presenting in the news (Anderson, 2015; Mor and Reich, 2018; Reich and Barnoy, 2021). A hypothesis for the use of documents by digital natives analysed in the present research is that the digital natives see themselves and their readers as more engaged with the issues they are reporting on and want a deeper understanding of the issue.

Clear differences can be seen between digital natives and legacy news organisations in terms of the kind of audio-visuals they use and with what purpose, and who produces these elements. The two newspapers use much more self-produced audio-visual elements, while the digital natives use more elements retrieved from other sources (see Table 15). The content analysis showed that the newspapers used photographs from their archives or taken by their reporters. In contrast, the digital natives used more elements from news agencies or other sources. This is perhaps unsurprising given that digital natives covered fewer press events than the legacy newspapers. These audio-visual resources are used the most because they are faster to produce. Images, audio and videos are part of traditional media routines and organisational structures, and they are easy to retrieve from archives or buy from agencies. The use of social media posts can be explained as they are easy to retrieve and use, and they are ‘free’; the news organisations do not have to invest resources to use these sources.

Table 15 Authorship of the audiovisual elements in both sampled weeks

	Animal		Aristegui		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Político		Noticias							
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Generated by the media	8.40%	14.2%	12.30%	28.5%	62.80%	60.1%	41%	30.2%	25.10%	30.4%
Retrieved	91.60%	85.8%	87.70%	71.5%	37.20%	39.9%	59.00%	69.8%	74.90%	69.6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
N=	395	352	448	488	196	228	310	348	1349	1416

The least used audio-visuals are interactives and data visualisation, which take longer to produce because they require data processing and summarising. This involves collaborating with a multidisciplinary team less traditionally involved with producing news stories, such as graphic designers, coders or even specialist videographers and equipment for 360° videos. Therefore, the use of these resources is linked to forms of in-depth reporting, analysed in the following chapter.

The use of multimedia resources in the news stories reflects the “editorial organization patterns, and challenges to established journalistic ways, norms and values of storytelling” (Deuze, 2003, p.216). The digital natives analysed here have emerged intending to present the news differently to legacy newspapers, building their organisational structures and technical and human resources with this aim. Meanwhile the legacy newspapers must organise their online pages linked to the printed versions, adapting the existing organisation to new online challenges. The following section focuses on the analysis of different elements of the content to instrumentalise transparency in the practices of the four news organisations analysed.

6.3.4 Transparency and trust

In this section, four elements of content are analysed to assess transparency: news authorship, the disclosure of sources used in the reporting, the use of hyperlinks in news stories, and sponsored content. The practice of transparency, according to Karlsson (2010), should serve the media to be accountable, and at the same time, help them to gain credibility with their readers. Strategies to exercise transparency include disclosure of the news making process, such as selection of sources, corrections made to published content, and the bias of the journalist and the media. In a context of distrust in the media, as appears to be the case in Mexico, these practices can be a way to help gain the trust of readers, particularly because new media organisations need to gain symbolic capital to be recognised in the journalistic field and by potential readers.

Many scholars have discussed distrust in the Mexican media (Riva Palacio, 2004; García and Treré, 2014; Meneses Rocha et al., 2017), however, there is little empirical data that measures

it. The *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2017* noted that 49% trusted the news most of the time (Newman et al., 2017) but since then, trust in Mexico has been declining: in the 2023 report, 36% trusted the news (Newman et al., 2023). This decline has been partly attributed to constant criticism by President Andres Manuel López Obrador, who declares that media organisations and journalists spread ‘fake news’ about his persona or his government (Newman et al., 2023). It is not surprising that the credibility of the news has declined when, in Mexico and globally, concepts such as fake news and post-truth have become buzzwords. Trust is necessary for news consumption to continue, therefore news organisations cannot fulfil their more essential role: to inform citizens. Transparency about the news making process and news organisations may increase their credibility and the trust of (Koliska, 2022; Prochazka and Obermaier, 2022), consequently they may increase consumption of news (Toff et al., 2023). The following sections are focused on the analysis of transparency by considering different aspects of the content; the first aspect is the authorship of the news content.

6.3.4.1 Bylines

Initially, bylines were coded to analyse gender equality in the newsroom. However, this variable gave a deeper understanding of transparency of the news organisations than it did about gender equality. Almost half of the content analysed in both sample weeks is not ascribed to a particular journalist but by the media itself (42%), other news organisations, or news agencies (8%).

Table 16 Bylines used by the news organisations in both sampled weeks

Bylines	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total (%)	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period %	Campaign period %
Male	22	32	29	41	82	95	54	57	25.7%	30.2%
Female	32	56	25	41	55	47	31	30	19.7%	23.4%
Staff	98	88	121	100	35	39	66	75	44.0%	40.6%
News agency or other media	25	11	0	0	17	13	35	19	10.6%	5.8%
Total	177	187	175	182	189	194	186	181	100.0%	100.0%
									N= 727	N=744

Not attributing the authorship of the news to one person could be an attempt by the news organisation to perform objectivity in a news report. Being signed by the institution instead of being subject to someone's version of the facts retains the institution's authority as a news provider (Schudson, 1978; Reich, 2010). As can be seen in Table 16, digital natives used more generic bylines than legacy news organisations. In the case of Aristegui Noticias, the whole news organisation relies directly on the 'brand' of their director, Carmen Aristegui, in earning the 'trust' of her public. Most of the ordinary content produced is signed with a generic byline, part of an unwritten policy.

Using generic bylines was a common practice in US newspapers, which started to shift in the second quarter of the 20th century to recognise the subjectivity of certain kinds of reporting, such as those written in the first person, specialised reporting, and the surge of interpretative reporting. In this way, newspapers distinguished between objective and subjective reporting (Schudson, 1978). Both legacy newspapers analysed here have more content assigning authorship to their reporters. However, there is no more information about these reporters on the website, such as an extensive directory, profile, or contact details. They seem to rely

on the 'social capital' of the authors of opinion columns, as they are selling the authority they have in their field. In some cases, news organisations use bylines as brands and rely on the traction of a specific author. This recognition of the labour of journalists also plays a role in gaining public recognition and "their ascent to stardom" (Reich, 2010, p.708). This is the approach of Aristegui Online: the director, Carmen Aristegui, is the brand of the whole organisation.

Personal brands were an exception for a few news presenters or columnists, but when news organisations and journalists adopted social media, the 'branding' of their personas became a more common practice (Holton and Molyneux, 2019). Steensen (2016) explains that with a greater dependence by journalism on social media, outlets rely more on the 'intimisation' and 'individualisation' of journalism, where professional and individual personas are constructed simultaneously. In his doctoral thesis, Stringer (2019) arrived at a similar conclusion, explaining that BuzzFeed and Vice used the profiles of their contributors to market themselves and attract readers. Holton and Molyneux (2019) explain that allowing audiences to see journalists as individuals is a way to increase readers' trust and, therefore, to increase audience size.

Animal Político has a more traditional approach to the use of bylines, selling the 'institutional brand' over 'personal branding'. However, they recognise the authorship of subjective content or when the content requires a larger investment of resources. The use of personal bylines has become a way not only to recognise the role of the author but also to make the news making process transparent (Reich, 2010). Regarding transparency, Animal Político was the news organisation with fewest personal bylines, however, it is the only news organisation with a complete directory of their staff, including the position of the contributor, their job title, and contact information with at least an email address in all cases and, for most of them, their social media links. This allows the reader to 'know' and contact the contributors. The other news organisations only have a directory listing the higher positions and opinion authors within the news organisation, with no contact details.

6.3.4.2 Disclosure of sources

Objectivity as a news value is a matter of debate, with transparency increasingly promoted as an alternative. Transparency means organisations being open to disclosing "their processes, methods, limitations, and assumptions" (Vos and Craft, 2017, p.1507). Transparency allows journalists to be accountable for their labour, as "the most credible journalism is transparent about its sources" (Anderson et al., 2016, p.114). According to the content analysed, a fifth of the news articles do not report the source or methods that the journalists used to create their content, and the newspapers have more content that does not attribute any source. As seen in Table 17, a third of El Universal's content and a quarter of the content published by Reforma do not declare their sources.

Table 17 Content without sources in both sampled weeks

	Animal	Político	%	Aristegui	Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El	Universal	%	Total	%
Normal Period	4	2.3%		13	7.4%		36	20.6%	44	25.1%		97	13.9%
N= 700													
Campaign period	24	13.7%		38	21.7%		50	28.6%	72	41.1%		184	26.3%
N= 700													
Total													
N=1400	28	8%		51	14.6%		86	24%	116	33.2%		281	20.1%

Most content that does not use sources involves entertainment topics, followed by politics. Sometimes, the omission of sources is understandable in content such as reviews, lists, or recipes. But when it comes to politics, the lack of sources is less justified, especially during the election period, because the lack of sources was not relegated only to the opinion genres; it was also visible in the news reports, particularly in legacy newspapers.

In all cases, omitting sources used to construct the news is not a practice used to protect the identity of sources (or at least this is not stated in the text). The news organisations are simply not disclosing where or how information was obtained, especially in the legacy newspapers. Chapter 8 is dedicated to analysing sources in greater depth, however I note here a widespread tendency not to identify sources in everyday reporting. The following section considers the use of hyperlinks in a news story can allow the understanding of transparency.

6.3.4.3 Hyperlinks

The inclusion of hyperlinks news reporting was one of the characteristics of digital content analysed frequently in the early days of the Internet. Hyperlinks were considered significant for the possibility they afford audiences to jump from platform to platform following more content or sources, “providing layers of contextualization to content” (De Maeyer and Holton, 2016, p.777). De Maeyer and Holton (2016) propose that hyperlinks in the news can be used to emphasise the transparency of the news making processes, contextualising news and impacting the user experience. The use of internal hyperlinks in the news contributes to the narrative by allowing the reader to expand their knowledge about the news by reading related items. External hyperlinks that lead to journalists’ sources perform a more critical role by making the process of news making transparent, which can be translated into credibility by readers as it will “increase user trust and that the context surrounding a news text also has an effect on how users perceive credibility, public opinion and issues” (Karlsson et al., 2014, p.669).

However, hyperlinks also play an economic role by generating income from linked sites. Including hyperlinks to the sources in content is a way journalists can be more transparent with readers and accountable for their work by making public the process of obtaining information. According to Vos and Craft (2017) hyperlinks “can indicate where journalists stand on particular issues by revealing which sources they tend to align with and draw from” (De Maeyer and Holton, 2016, p.778). Domingo (2008) explains that some researchers see the incorporation of hyperlinks in the news content as a sign of good practice in using the Internet’s communicative affordances, where journalists have successfully incorporated the language of the Internet. However, the literature shows that most media outlets are not

making substantial use of hyperlinks or are not driving readers to external sites (Domingo, 2006; Domingo, 2008; De Maeyer and Holton, 2016). There may be an economic motivation for news organisations' linking practices with organisations keen to keep readers on their own site to increase their advertising value and the revenues of programmatic advertising.

In the content analysed, most of the news does not include hyperlinks (70.1%). 98.3% of the content from the legacy newspaper Reforma does not have hyperlinks, followed by the digital native Aristegui Noticias (77.1%), the legacy newspaper El Universal (74.3%), while Animal Político uses the most hyperlinks – only a third of their content did not include them.

Table 18 Normal period: number of hyperlinks used per news item

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
0	54	30.9%	135	77.1%	172	98.3%	130	74.3%	491	70.1%
1	51	29.1%	26	14.9%	2	1.1%	30	17.1%	109	15.6%
2	32	18.3%	8	4.6%	0	0.0%	10	5.7%	50	7.1%
3+	38	21.7%	6	3.4%	1	0.6%	5	2.9%	50	7.1%
Total	175	100.0%	175	100.0%	175	100.0%	175	100.0%	700	100.0%
N=700										

In the campaign period, more hyperlinks were used, although the number of news items without hyperlinks was similar (69.7%). The legacy newspaper Reforma only had two news items that used links, El Universal increased its number of news stories that use links, and both digital natives increased the number of stories with links (Aristegui Noticias 79.4% and Animal Político 36%). However, the number of links per news story increased.

Table 19 Campaign period: number of hyperlinks used per news item

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
0	63	36.0%	139	79.4%	173	98.9%	113	64.6%	488	69.7%
1	42	24.0%	27	15.4%	0	0.0%	35	20.0%	104	14.9%
2	25	14.3%	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	19	10.9%	47	6.7%
3+	45	25.7%	6	3.4%	2	1.1%	8	4.6%	61	8.7%
Total	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	700	100%
N= 700										

The digital natives use more external hyperlinks to sources (Aristegui Noticias 56.3% and Animal Político 38.3%) and background for the news (Animal Político 33.6% and Aristegui Noticias 17.2%) and fewer to self-reference its own content. The newspaper El Universal uses most of the hyperlinks to self-reference its content (89.6%), as seen in Table 20.

Table 20 Normal period: type of hyperlinks used

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Internal - Source	6	2.2%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	6	1.5%
Internal - Background	71	25.9%	17	26.6%	1	16.7%	60	89.6%	149	36.3%
External - Source	105	38.3%	36	56.3%	4	66.7%	3	4.5%	148	36%
External - Background	92	33.6%	11	17.2%	1	16.7%	4	6%	108	26.3%
Total	274	100%	64	100%	6	100%	67	100%	411	100%

During the campaign period, the digital natives again used more external hyperlinks to lead to sources (Aristegui Noticias 80.8% and Animal Político 51.4%). At this time, the number of hyperlinks to their own content increased to contextualise stories (Animal Político 30% and Aristegui Noticias 17.2%). El Universal again used more hyperlinks to self-reference its content (88.9%) than to link to external resources.

Table 21 Campaign period: type of hyperlinks used

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Internal - Source	9	2.7%	2	2.7%	0	0%	0	0%	11	2.1%
Internal - Background	100	30%	8	11%	0	0%	88	88.9%	196	37.6%
External - Source	171	51.4%	59	80.8%	16	100%	11	11.1%	257	49.3%
External - Background	53	15.9%	4	5.5%	0	0%	0	0%	57	10.9%
Total	333	100%	73	100%	16	100%	99	100%	521	100%

The digital natives make more use of hyperlinks, particularly Animal Político, who extensively use them to lead readers to consult the sources used to create their content, but also to take them to other sites to obtain more information, this is consistent with their idea of serving to more engaged readers, who will be interested in consult additional resources. Both digital natives showed more of the transparency mechanisms analysed here. First, they produce less content that does not use sources than the legacy media. Also, both digital natives used more hyperlinks to the sources, a practice that can increase the trust in the media because the reader can consult the sources by themselves – this also speaks to the lack of incorporation of digital practices into the content of legacy media, in part, because journalists have to write their stories while they are covering an event, not having time to look for additional resources. But online editors are also pressured to publish news as fast as possible, as discussed previously.

The following section discusses the problem of sponsored content in relation to transparency and trust.

6.3.4.4 Sponsored content

As discussed in Chapters 3 and 5, sponsored content has become part of the business models of news organisations. Such content is in conflict with the journalistic values of objectivity and autonomy, which can weaken the credibility of news organisations (Carlson, 2015). The content analysis found two stories clearly identified by the news organisation as sponsored content, both published by Animal Político. In addition two stories published by El Universal that were not labelled as sponsored content had characteristics that seemed different from the organic content, such as presenting a story focused on communicating the positive characteristics of specific products and services unrelated to ‘recent events’ (Wojdyski, 2016; Hwang and Jeong, 2019). An advantage of being a single coder in the present research is that some details that are not captured by the coding scheme can be analysed a posteriori by the researcher, while this information might be missed by an additional coder (Neuendorf, 2017).

Animal Político openly claims that they publish sponsored content, mainly in their verticals, but they also publish sponsored content on the main site. Their policy is to clearly indicate when a specific entry is sponsored and not organic content. Animal Político adds a 'sponsored content' ('*contenido patrocinado*') ribbon at the top of the content to alert readers to the nature of the story. The sales area of the news organisation produces this content. All contributors are aware of this practice and know what mechanism of identification this kind of content should have. In addition, the digital native includes on their 'About us' page a graph of their sources of revenue, where they specify their income from 'sponsored content' (Animal Político, n.d.-d). In the case of Aristegui Noticias, only one person mentioned during the interview that the news organisation tried to have sponsored content as a revenue model when it was created, but this idea was discarded later; they do not currently produce sponsored content. Staff interviewed from both newspapers said their news organisation publish sponsored content, that the sales area manages this, and that they had little knowledge about how it is managed. As noted above, in the case of El Universal, two entries had characteristics of sponsored content, although the content was not labelled as such.

In summary, both digital natives demonstrated more of the transparency mechanisms analysed. First, they produce less content that does not use sources than the legacy media. Second, both digital natives used more hyperlinks that lead to the sources used, which is identified as a practice that can increase trust in the media because the reader can consult the sources themselves. The use of hyperlinks also speaks to the lack of incorporation of digital practices into the content of legacy media, in part because journalists must write their stories while covering an event, not having time to look for additional resources, while online editors are pressured to publish the news as fast as possible, as discussed in the first part of this chapter. Third, Animal Político labels and has a section to identify the sponsored content they produce, while both newspapers declared that they produce sponsored content, but there is no clear section where this content can be found.

6.4 Discussion

The findings from interviews and content analysis were discussed in this chapter to answer the research sub-question: 'Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations, and how does this shape the content that they produce?' There is a romantic image of the job of a journalist as someone who 'hits the streets' looking for news, an inquisitive character searching for the 'truth'. However, most of the time, newsmakers are restricted by routines dictated by the agendas of their sources. The interviews for this research revealed the practices of online editors and journalists working for the four news organisations analysed. At the same time, the content analysis provides an understanding of the characteristics of the content produced.

The main findings about the practices of both kinds of staff is that their job description is similar. Online editors for both digital natives and legacy newspapers have deskbound jobs monitoring sources online and writing news stories about the most recent events of the day. The main difference is the 'added value' that both digital natives give to their content. Instead of prioritising quick reporting to 'beat their competition', both digital natives focus on providing context to events and explaining complex issues. What the interviewees call 'added value' makes the difference between detached reporting and civic reporting. This kind of reporting not only presents information but goes a step further to provide citizens with a better understanding of public issues (Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017).

A journalist's job relies on their search for news 'in the streets'. Newspapers have assigned reporters to cover specific beats, and many are in charge of following the activities of a single source. This requires a large number of journalists to cover the main sources, thus small media outlets cannot operate in this way. In contrast, journalists from digital natives have more freedom to choose their own agenda and sources. The time pressure in both kinds of organisations also reflects their resources and goals. Their journalists are required to produce less content per day so they can carry out deeper reporting on their news stories; this is reflected in the complexity and kind of content produced. The legacy newspapers require journalists to provide constant updates for the website across the day, in addition to content for the printed version.

These practices of the digital natives are shaped not only by the limited resources of the news organisations but also by their aims. The findings of this chapter show that both digital natives dedicate resources to producing content that follows their own agendas. Both digital natives, Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias, aim to differentiate themselves from legacy news organisations by covering issues related to human rights, social problems, and corruption. While all the digital natives' staff report on these topics, the content created by online editors is more focused on the coverage of daily events to maintain traffic to their website, and their journalists focus on deeper reporting on niche issues. This focus on the reporting of social problems was characterised as civic advocacy, a form of journalism that is oriented to give a voice to groups and problems that have not been represented in the news and to promote social change. In new democracies, this journalism represents movements that are not exclusive of an ideology or political party but problems that go further than these divisions and are related to social justice, such as "health, the environment, domestic violence, immigration, global poverty, and children's rights" (Waisbord, 2009, p.375). The news narrative also contributes to a better understanding of the information presented. Digital natives use more in-depth journalistic genres such as *reportaje* and interviews. They also use multimedia resources to substantiate and contextualise the news instead of as props. Chapter 7 is more focused on understanding in-depth reporting formats.

As news organisations are distancing themselves from detached and objective reporting, there is a question of what journalistic values guide their journalistic practices instead, or in addition, because objective reporting can also benefit from transparency practices, including transparency of the organisations and their practices (Vos and Craft, 2017). Transparency is also important in a context like Mexico, where the press has lost credibility, to rebuild the trust of readers (Koliska, 2022; Prochazka and Obermaier, 2022), and to incentivise them to consume news (Toff et al., 2023).

This chapter has analysed transparency mechanisms through content analysis. The findings point to the need to reinforce transparency practices after analysing the use of bylines, number of sources, use of hyperlinks and sponsored content. Digital natives can improve their transparency practices by recognising content creators with bylines, as both showed more

use of institutional bylines such as 'staff' or the name of the news organisation. Animal Político dedicates space on their website to a complete directory of the news organisation, including names, roles and contacts, while Aristegui Noticias does not provide any information about their organisational structure. Both legacy newspapers only provide a directory of the main positions in the organisation.

Both legacy newspapers need to be more transparent about who their sources are or how these were obtained. They had more news stories where they did not list the sources used, either in the body of the text or by including hyperlinks. Animal Político makes more use of hyperlinks that lead to the sources used and to content that can expand on the information presented. This practice of linking to sources may lead to more trust among readers, evidencing the factuality of the information presented (De Maeyer and Holton, 2016; Karlsson and Clerwall, 2018).

The last element analysed around transparency was sponsored content. Aristegui Noticias's interviewees declared that the news organisation does not produce this kind of content, while the other three do. The content analysis only found sponsored content in Animal Político: this was clearly identified with a ribbon, and it has its own category on the website menu, while these characteristics were not found in the legacy newspapers, which could mislead readers into mistaking sponsored content for organic content.

In general, this chapter has shown that even with fewer resources, digital natives can produce different kinds of news content that may contribute to performing a better informative role by adding content and explanations to everyday events. The niche topics that both digital natives focus on also improve the representation of diverse groups in the news. The routines of the digital natives allow reporters to be constantly thinking about the production of in-depth content. The following chapter focuses on analysing in-depth reporting, such as *reportajes*, interviews as features, fact-checking, and investigative journalism.

Chapter 7. In-depth reporting

7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses practices involved in producing in-depth content and their characteristics. It mainly focuses on investigative reporting and fact-checking but also analyses *reportajes*, a long reporting format used in Latin America, and interviews. In-depth reporting is a practice that news organisations and journalists highly value and it give news organisations their symbolic capital by 'putting them on the map'. Such reporting is discussed in the public sphere and recognised in the field by being quoted, used as an example, or commended by awards – or at least nominated. All of this capital can be used to attract advertising and other kinds of funding.

The research question that guides this chapter is: What routines are established by the news organisations to produce in-depth content (investigative journalism and fact checking)? The findings show that in-depth content, in the form of investigative reporting, *reportajes*, interviews and fact-checking, contributed to producing more original content by reporting on issues that are not publicly known, performing a watchdog role. However, such content uses a different rhythm in terms of production and publication. It requires a slower pace to allow the understanding of a news event, corroborate information provided by public figures, and incentivises the readers' media literacy to empower them when they are consuming news content. However, this kind of content also requires more resources to produce; it requires time, journalists with a particular set of skills, and money to be able to travel to cover expenses and salaries. Both digital natives are producing more in-depth content such as investigative reporting, *reportajes*, interviews, and fact-checking because they have established practices and designate resources to these tasks on a regular basis. Even when it is highly desired, in-depth reporting is not considered part of the regular tasks of journalists in

the legacy newspapers analysed in this research, as their priorities are meeting daily targets of visits to their websites and producing content for their printed editions.

This chapter has three sections. The first analyses the in-depth reporting practices and investigative journalism that prevails in the four news organisations and the most salient formats that result from those practices, including *reportaje* and interviews. The second part focuses on the analysis of fact-checking, and the third analyses the collaborations of the news organisations to produce and distribute their content.

7.1.1 In-depth reporting practices

We start from the basis that there is no journalism without investigation. We bet that the reporters work on their own stories with our angles, our interests and so on, and obviously, exclusives that can be done in a day, a week, or six months. That is, the reporter is constantly working on different tracks [...]. The first tool we provide them is absolute freedom, which is perhaps the most important element of all. Reporters at Animal Político have the freedom not only to address the topics we consider necessary, that is, we do not limit them. We do not have an agenda of the characters who cannot be touched, which matters in Mexican journalism. That is the first tool. The second tool is that we greatly respect the reporter's creativity and initiative. [...] So, the reporter has a lot of room to propose coverage, topics and reports. Third, another intangible tool is training. That is to say, a very important part of our reporters here have took diploma courses, workshops and others to complete their training and to learn new tools, which is also important (Daniel Moreno, Director, Animal Político).

All the interviewees for this research pointed to investigative reporting as an essential role of journalism. However, staff from the legacy newspapers analysed report that they have little opportunity to conduct interviews due to their assigned workloads and the little flexibility they have to change their assignments. On the other hand, both digital natives shaped their

staff's organisational structure and practices to make in-depth reporting part of the daily tasks of their journalists. Journalists of both digital natives have less pressure to publish content every day. They are not assigned a specific source to cover therefore they have more flexibility to build their agendas, find their own sources, and dictate the pace of the reporting. The content analysis reflected this: investigative reports and fact-checking articles were only found among digital natives. However, before analysing these findings, this section focuses on analysing the practices that prevail in all news organisations to produce in-depth reporting.

Reporters from both digital natives have a similar role: they focus on finding issues worthy of investigation, drawing hypotheses, collecting data and evidence, and preparing the findings to be published. Digital natives' reporters are less subject to the 24-hour news cycle and are consequently less focused on day-to-day information (this is a task for the online editors of their organisations – as discussed in Chapter 6, they do less passive reporting and instead set their own agenda, similar findings from what Carson (2020) identified in her study of investigative journalism in Australia, the UK and the USA. The researcher conducted a content analysis of investigative journalism produced in Australia from 1956 to 2011. A second content analysis of winning investigative journalism from the three countries between 2007 and 2016 was done, followed by interviews with 50 media specialists.

The reporters have more flexible deadlines, although they are expected to publish a couple of articles a week. All the reporters have various ongoing projects, and the speed at which they move varies from case to case. The reporters present their leads in weekly editorial meetings, where they discuss what resources and skills might be needed, their possible scope, and how to proceed. The General Editor of Animal Político explained how they manage workloads to allow all the reporters to develop their investigations. Half of the team investigates what is expected to be extensive reporting, while the other half works on creating original reporting that might not be investigative but will be in-depth reporting that requires a few days or weeks to complete. When there are waiting times in the big investigations, the other team switches to the project on hold.

In all investigations, there is a time when it stagnates, you have to wait, or when you have to pause to continue investigating. So, when that happens, they switch,

and then the reporters who were more with broad reports change and advance their research topic and that has allowed us to move forward and deepen our investigations (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

Some timelines depend on external factors such as waiting times for freedom of information requests through government transparency offices; others require more information than first expected. Only some of the investigations lead to a story or substantial reporting, as expected.

Our commitment is that if we do not have proof, we will never publish it. We have to have the evidence, the documentation; everything perfectly tied up and investigated [...]. For example, the investigation of the 'Master scam' took us a year. A year of our lives was dedicated to documenting, proving you, teaching you, showing you, and explaining to you how the federal government stole 7 million pesos from you (Interviewee 6, Reporter, Animal Político).

The findings of this study relates with studies of investigative journalism in other parts of the world²⁸, the news organisations need to assess if continuing investigating is going to be fruitful or is going to lead to a dead end investigation. There are risks to consider when deciding which leads are going to be pursued and which discarded (Carson, 2020), “the decision to dig deep is making a bet on whether a story will be there and the effort will pay off” (Hamilton, 2016, p.12), as the resources of the news organisations are finite. Some of the investigations end in smaller projects than expected, in “better substantiated news items than the average hard news pieces” (Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando, 2014, p.524).

Once the investigation is completed, Animal Político plans how it will be communicated to the reader. They emphasise the importance of two things: producing easy-to-understand

²⁸ Carson (2016) analyses investigative journalism in Australia, the USA and the UK, Hamilton (2016) analyses the USA, and Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando (2014) analyses Latin America.

content and ensuring that their longer investigative work reaches a larger audience than their website.

There are many investigative journalism outlets that are difficult for people to digest. They are reports that are, at best, very extensive, very technical and challenging. What we are looking for is that it is research, that it is deep, that it is a serious topic. Nor are we going to trivialise a serious topic into something that is not, but we seek to reach the greatest number of people and also have them understand it, and know what we are talking about (Interviewee 6, Reporter, Animal Político).

For Animal Político, the use of different formats and platforms to communicate their stories is a common practice, but they also take the initiative of not seeing these products as an afterthought. This is defined as a transmedia narrative, whereby “a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best” (Jenkins, 2006, pp.95-96). Transmedia journalism differentiates itself from multimedia because it is not contained to a platform. It unfolds on different platforms, products that stand independently but can also contribute to a deeper understanding of an issue. Therefore, the narrative of the news is not an afterthought, it is mainly used for the reporting of planned events (Gambarato, 2018). When a report is developing, Animal Político’s reporters work with a broader team during their weekly editorial meetings to come up with the best way to make the story easy to understand and appeal to readers.

We add all the findings and shape the research until we reach the final product. Then other team begin to intervene, [...] which is when we say, “well, and how we are going to explain it to people, how it is going to be translated, how we are going to reach them beyond a text” with videos, infographics, even comics. They were devising this entire product of the 'Master scam', even down to choosing the colours and the graphic visual identity of the texts. That was not the work of the reporters. It was the work of a totally different team. In fact, we, the reporters,

didn't know how it was titled until it was published; we didn't even know (Interviewee 6, Reporter, Animal Político).

While Aristegui Noticias produces more visual resources for its newscast, it does not fit the definition of transmediality. Aristegui Noticias is less focused on generating visual resources for their reporting and they think less about the transmediality of their content. They present the main investigative reporting in a text-based form on their website, and in an audiovisual form for streaming. Then, the video from the newscast is repurposed to create content for the website using smaller clips, either standalone in the post or used along with text. They do not create different content for different platforms: "I think that the Internet is not being exploited to the maximum and that there is still a lot of progress to be made. I believe that many media in Mexico have made a lot of progress using multimedia tools, multimedia products, infographics, and visual storytelling, which I think the site Aristegui Noticias lacks" (Interviewee 9, Online Editor, Aristegui Noticias). Despite the limitations of digital natives in terms of resources, they have more possibilities to use innovative narratives; they have team meetings during the process to discuss findings and how to present them. Meanwhile, journalists from the legacy newspapers work separately from the design and audio-visual production teams.

According to the interviewees from legacy newspapers, the main limitations to producing investigative journalism are related to their organisations. The main restriction for reporters in the newspapers is their workload; they can only do investigative or in-depth reporting when an opportunity appears, and the schedules are more flexible: "I think it's problematic because it's not so much that a reporter like me can decide what to cover, 'Ah, damn, this topic, #MeToo, is super relevant, I'm going to do something'. 'Dude, you cover AMLO', and you have to be with AMLO right now going to Mérida or Morelos or being in the National Palace'. Then you can propose it and in one of those they tell you 'OK, I'll give you one day', but it doesn't happen at the moment" (Interviewee 25, Reporter, Reforma). They are subject to the deadlines for the online and print editions, and in most cases, more in-depth reporting is done in their free time or when they successfully negotiate a change in their daily workload with their editors.

Apart from exceptional occasions, they do not focus their in-depth reporting on a large investigative project; instead they focus on shorter in-depth reporting that can be done in a few days. At Reforma, reporters were due to deliver a special report weekly or fortnightly. However, the newspaper has been reducing its staff, so they dedicated fewer resources to special reporting: “The problem is that since there have been many cuts, there are few reporters left, and we have to absorb the work that others are doing, so we have less and less free time to do special reporting. [...] The newspaper, right now, cares more about doing daily news than investigative work” (Interviewee 25, Reporter, Reforma). The interviewees from newspaper El Universal also said that in-depth reporting had been reduced due to lack of resources: “Although, at this moment, we have a very small research area, as I said, it is long-form journalism, so it does not generate jobs for us as often. So if a good work is published perhaps every 15 days [...]. The company would like to publish more but does not have the human resources to do so. Right now, the newspaper cares more about doing daily news than research” (Interviewee 16, Homepage editor, El Universal). However, it was observed that reporters with more seniority have more flexibility to dedicate time to in-depth reporting.

Despite having a more significant focus on investigative reporting, the work of the 'special investigations' team at Aristegui Noticias is impacted by the production of their daily newscast, as there is pressure to have content for the 3 hours of streaming, five days a week. Another limitation pointed out by the journalists of Aristegui Noticias is limited resources. Their 'special reports unit' is formed by only two journalists focused on doing in-depth reporting. They also have the pressure of generating original content for the newscast, which can rush them to get results or communicate with fewer resources than planned.

Returning to the quote opening this section, Daniel Moreno listed training as an important tool for doing investigative reporting. Journalists from different news organisations also pointed out that training, or the lack of it, can significantly impact their work.

The main limitation, I think, is the training. The truth is that in terms of the journalism done today, especially investigative, it is 100% technical. There are times when you stop, or you don't know how to continue because you don't know where to look, you don't know how to read it. You know how to organise, so I

think, if you ask me, that is my main concern, to be looking for tools, looking for sources, learning. There are even times when you have the information, and you don't know what to do with it, and it is a matter of training, of methodology, of work, of ways of reading, of organising. So, without a doubt, that is my main limitation (Interviewee 11, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

A little lack of professionalisation, I needed to use Excel and that type of thing. I had to do it [the analysis] by hand with coloured pens, one by one; what day was missing, what proof they provided. The truth is it was a titanic work. Fortunately, I was given the time to sit down and do my little colours for a week (Interviewee 26, Journalist, Reforma).

While most interviewees said their news organisations allow them to continue their training, the interviewees from the legacy newspapers said they have to find the time and resources to do it. At the same time, the interviewees from Animal Político saw training as being encouraged by the news organisation. Most of them have assisted in different workshops that have helped to improve or widen various techniques to collect or process information or enrolled on more academic-oriented courses. The organisation itself has organised training focused on investigation techniques and fact-checking.

The bigger limitation of doing investigative work is external to the news organisations and concerns the context. As discussed in Chapter 2, the independence of journalism in Mexico has been limited by two important elements: pressures from the government; and violence against journalists. The case of Aristegui Noticias is an example of pressures from the government. As explained in Chapter 4, in March 2015 Carmen Aristegui and her team of reporters were illegally fired from the radio after releasing an investigative report pointing out the corruption and conflicts of interest in the acquisition of a house by president Peña Nieto's wife, and their partnership with Méxicoleaks, a whistleblowing platform (Malkin, 2015; Sandoval). Aristegui had been fired on two previous occasions for expressing her opinion about the president. In November 2016, the Aristegui Noticias newsroom was broken into and robbed (Article 19, 2017b); both reporters said in the interviews that after this event, they experienced 'strange' situations that made them feel it was to alert them they had been

‘seen’. In 2017, it was confirmed that the Mexican government installed spy software on journalists’, activists’ and their relatives’ mobile phones (Article 19, 2017a). While the rest of the interviewees said they had not felt intimidated or pressured due to violence directly, they could all point to where they have seen it happening to friends and colleagues.

7.1.2 Investigative reports in the content analysis

The content analysis conducted for this research categorised 16 articles as investigative reporting, which were part of six different investigations. Five projects from Animal Político and two from Aristegui Noticias were analysed (see Table 44 in Appendix 6). As it was mentioned previously, digital natives tend to collaborate with other news organisations to produce or distribute content, the sample captured that both digital natives published the same investigation conducted by the NGO Quinto Elemento Lab; eight news stories were part of this investigation and all were different as the NGO created exclusive articles for each digital native. This is an example of collaboration to distribute content, which will be analysed later in the chapter. While the investigative content represents only 1.1% of the total of the content analysed, it is important to remember this research did not specifically focus on investigative reporting, or any other kind of reporting, to form the sample. Therefore, considering that a journalistic investigation can take weeks and even months, it is positive that in a sample of 14 days, examples of this kind of content were captured in the snapshot.

Investigative reporting is not a news genre – the results of an investigation can have different outputs: it could be a traditional journalistic genre such as *reportaje*; it could be long enough to make a book or be split into different issues; or it could use different multimedia elements and storytelling techniques. Eleven of 16 investigative reports analysed in this research were text-based, and five were live interviews in Aristegui Noticias newscasts. The choice of the format depends on the platform where it will be distributed, the length and complexity of the story, and the resources of the news organisation. In addition, some investigations are not fruitful enough, but they can still contain enough information to write a short news report or even a long reporting form. This is not a minor achievement: even when investigative reporting does not achieve a breakthrough, the content generated following investigative techniques adds to original content and building a news agenda. The following sub-sections

are focused on the analysis of the outputs of *reportaje* and interviews, as these genres were used to present in-depth reporting.

7.1.3 Reportaje

What differentiates Animal Político's uses of news formats from other news organisations was its use of *reportaje*. In both sampled weeks, this format represented a fifth of its content (see Table 44 in Appendix 6). *Reportaje*, is considered the most ambitious of the journalistic formats. There are different styles of *reportaje*, but according to Garza Acuña (2003, p.380), the main characteristics of *reportaje* are that it is based on original reporting, includes background information, analysis and interpretation, and discusses a general issue even when it focuses on a particular event. It "is the star genre, but is also the one that requires more time, more research, more reflection, and a mastery of the art of writing. It is, in reality, the meticulous and truthful reconstitution of the fact. That is to say: the complete news, as it happened in reality, so the reader knows it as if it had been on the scene" (García Márquez, 1996, no pagination).

Reportaje is the genre most used to communicate the results of investigative articles found in the content analysed (11 of 16) – see Table x. It was used to discuss all the topics studied, but politics and entertainment prevailed in this format. Animal Político used *reportaje* for most of the topics analysed and dedicated this in-depth reporting to most of the diverse groups analysed.

Table 22 Reportaje's topics add percentages to table

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Politics	23	14	6	1	1	5	0	0	30	20
Law enforcement	3	6	0	2	2	2	1	2	6	12
Economy	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	1	4
Social problems	8	8	1	0	1	0	1	3	11	11
Science, Health, Technology	3	5	2	0	1	1	1	2	7	8
Entertainment	0	4	0	3	3	6	2	7	5	20
Total	37	37	9	7	9	17	5	11	60	75
		N=60					N=75			

Table 23 Diverse groups in reportaje

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
LGBTQ+									0	0
Indigenous	1	1		2					0	3
Disabled									0	0
Age	1								1	0
Social disparity	3	4	1				1		5	4
Woman	1	1							1	1
Migrants		2						1	0	3
Total	5	8	1	2	0	0	1	1	7	11
			N=7				N=11			

Reportaje can also be an outlet for the creativity of journalists as it can be used to discuss issues in more depth, embracing the use of different multimedia elements and different narrative rhetoric. The development of journalism in Mexico (and similarly in all Iberoamerica) has been influenced by the inverted pyramid model and literary genres. Around the world, journalism has been influenced by literature, and many writers started by writing for newspapers or magazines. Journalistic genres have blurred boundaries with literature, such as ‘new journalism’, in which Truman Capote was a pioneer and one of the best known representatives. However, Iberoamerican journalism has had a close relationship with literature. Almost parallel to the development of New Journalism in the US, the Latin American Boom was also developing (Benavides, 2015). In Latin America, literature and journalism have evolved hand in hand. One of the values of journalism that is not often

formally acknowledged is knowing how to ‘write well’: not only writing following grammatical and syntax conventions but also stylistically. One of the informants for the present research was asked about his background:

The degree [of Communication Sciences] includes writing classes, journalistic genres, etc. I chose not to study the final option of journalism because it seemed to me that I had already learned what the final option taught, which was writing. So I went to Political Science [as a specialisation area] because I wanted to learn theory. I also studied sociology and philosophy as electives. From my point of view, having mastered the genre, I went to study to understand the world (Interviewee 25, Reporter, Reforma).

Due to generic conventions, *reportaje* (special feature) and *crónica* (Chronicle) are some of the journalistic genres that allow journalists to maintain objectivity, to embrace a literary language that draws the reader closer to the subjects. It can be used to report hard issues backed up with data from a detached point of view. But it also can be used to make a subjective report, where the author can present a more human side of a story. *Reportaje* allows readers to have an in-depth point of view of an event and contribute to raising awareness about issues that might not receive attention in daily reporting due to its fast pace. The following sub-section analyses the interview as a journalistic genre, not just as a tool to obtain information.

7.1.4 Interviews as a feature

I believe our distinctive feature is the programme as a product. As for content, I would say that they are the investigations or Carmen interviews. Carmen is the central icon of the project (Interviewee 11, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

All the staff interviewed from Aristegui Noticias said Carmen Aristegui’s interviews are the brand of their director and the news media. Aristegui has been recognised for her interviewing style for most of her career. As discussed in the previous chapter, Aristegui Noticias not only publishes full interviews as a single news item but online editors create other

entries from interview fragments, making it easier for the reader to understand the different arguments. As explained in the previous chapter, the interview fragments have two different treatments: the first consists of a standalone video or audio with the fragment of the interview they want to highlight; second involves taking a segment of the interview, explaining the arguments given, and putting them in context by adding explanations, numbers, or contrasting points of view. These segments from the interviews help the reader to focus on the highlights of the conversation.

The journalistic interview in Latin America has been valued as an important journalistic genre, not only as a method to collect information. The interview oscillates between a conversation and an interrogatory. Knowledge about the topic is required to ask the right questions to obtain relevant information and deepen understanding of important issues: "One cannot agree to listen only to what the interviewee wants to answer, but one must find a way to be allowed to ask about what really matters to you for the context" (Aristegui quoted in Fundación Gabo, 2019, n.d.).

The interviews that prevail in Aristegui Noticias are not impromptu interviews. They have a conversational style, developed from radio and TV interviews, as the newscast is streamed through video and broadcast on the radio. The dialectic process of the interview can lead to debate and criticism, and it can be used to perform democratic functions. The interviews with public figures contribute to public debate when journalists are "soliciting statements of official policy, holding officials accountable for their actions, and managing parameters of public debate, all of this under the immediate scrutiny of the citizenry" (Clayman and Heritage, 2002, p.2).

The interview can also be used to humanise news stories so the audience can understand the impact of an event from the point of view of the individuals portrayed in the news. This aims to make the reader emotionally connect and empathise with the story and can lead to open spaces for diverse people not represented in the news, to help understand their perspective. However, there is a risk of exploiting persons in vulnerable situations, which can increase their risks because they made their stories public (McBride, 2023).

Aristegui Noticias published over two-thirds of their interviews as a format to communicate the news, including five of the investigative articles analysed in the present study. They used this format to communicate most of the topics analysed; Science, Health, and Technology was the only topic not found in the content sampled. Diverse groups were barely represented in the interviews (7 of 66), almost all in content produced by the digital natives. The use of interviews in both legacy newspapers analysed is focused mostly on coverage of politics and entertainment.

Table 24 Interviews' topics

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Politics	1	1	6	8	2	2			9	11
Law enforcement			4	4	1				5	4
Economy			7	5					7	5
Social problems	2	1	4	2			1		7	3
Science, Health, Technology			0	0					0	0
Entertainment		1	2	5	3	2	1	1	6	9
Total	3	3	23	24	6	4	2	1	34	32
		N=34				N=32				

Table 25 Diverse groups in interviews

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
LGBTQ+									0	0
Indigenous			1	1					1	1
Disabled									0	0
Age									0	0
Social disparity	1								1	0
Woman				1					0	1
Migrants		1	1						1	1
Other					1				1	0
Total	1	1	2	2	1	0	0	0	4	3
			N=4				N=3			

The content analysis shows that the use of interviews as a format is limited in the content sampled, and most of it was used by Carmen Aristegui, showing that the news organisation not only values this practice, but it is also a feature that is different from other news organisations.

Both digital natives have organisational structures to allocate regular resources to in-depth reporting. As analysed in the previous chapter, the day-to-day content of both digital natives is produced by their online editors, while their reporters are dedicated to in-depth reporting with different outputs: investigative reports, *reportajes*, and interviews. The content analysis shows that Animal Político is the news organisation with more investigative projects and

reportajes, and the news organisation that has more coverage of social problems and gives more representation to disadvantaged groups. Aristegui Noticias' characteristic content is the interview, although overall the use of the format is rare. While fact-checking is also a kind of in-depth reporting, the routines established for this kind of content required a separate analysis, on which the following section focuses.

7.2 Fact-checking and fake news: Verificado 2018

The practices of fact-checking are analysed in this section alone, because, even when it shares skills needed to do investigative journalism, it also has particularities that does not make them fit in the dynamics of the other forms of in-depth reporting analysed in this chapter. Fact-checking requires an important investment of resources as it is a time-consuming practice, and Animal Político is the only news organisation analysed in this study that has integrated fact-checking as part of their regular reporting practices; it has a fixed structure and resources in place to do it. As discussed previously in the chapter, the legacy newspapers prioritise day-to-day reporting, while the Aristegui Noticias newscast has put pressure on resources destined to do in-depth reporting.

Within the content analysed for this study, only 24 of 1,400 items (1.7%) illustrated examples of fact-checking, and Animal Político was responsible for all of them. It was expected that this digital native would lead their production among the news organisations analysed, as they promote their fact-checking exercise as one of the activities that differentiates them from other news organisations in the country. During the period sampled and until the summer of 2019, Animal Político had one person on staff (albeit part-time) to dedicate exclusively to work in the section El Sabueso ('the bloodhound'), the section dedicated to fact-checking and exposing fake news (Animal Político, 2015), in addition to reporters and online editors who also contribute to these tasks.

Everyone in our newsroom has to contribute to that fact-checking section [...] that verification work that all our journalists always do and that is sometimes published

in these specific verification sections. But we also fight against disinformation. We give workshops on how to verify, about disinformation (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

For the 2018 electoral period, they led a nationwide fact-checking project called Verificado 2018. Sixty organisations²⁹ took part, including news media, universities, tech companies, think tanks, and NGOs (Verificado 2018, 2018). Animal Político, along with *AJ+ en Español* and *Pop Up Newsroom*, recruited, trained, and coordinated the activities of the participating journalists and organisations. The role of Animal Político was central, Verificado 2018 adopted the methodology they created for El Sabueso, and Tania Montalvo, Animal Político's news editor, coordinated the initiative.

Considering that fact-checking is a relatively new journalistic practice,³⁰ it was expected that most of the fact-checking exercises would be done by online organisations. Before Verificado 2018, the only fact-checking exercises in Mexico registered by the literature are El Sabueso since 2015, from Animal Político, and El Polígrafo from the legacy newspaper Milenio, a short-lived initiative (Galarza Molina, 2020). The literature on fact-checking shows that most initiatives in Latin America and East and Southern Europe emerge outside legacy news organisations, such as digital natives and NGOs (Graves and Cherubini, 2016; Magallón Rosa, 2019; Salaverría and De Lima Santos, 2021), as they are more likely to adopt new practices than established legacy news organisations.

After the period monitored, the newspaper Reforma analysed in the present research started a section to fact-check presidential speeches from daily morning conferences.³¹ However,

²⁹ El Universal is listed as a participant in the fact-checking exercise, but in the sample analysed, no examples were found. Aristegui Noticias and Reforma did not participate.

³⁰ The emergence of fact-checking has been attributed to the creation of FactCheck.org in the USA in 2003 (Amazeen, 2020).

³¹ The president elected in 2018, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador (AMLO), implemented daily morning press conferences. There was strong criticism of these press conferences, as AMLO and other

they do not have a designated methodology for their fact-checking. While this exercise still contributes to verifying the information provided by public figures, the media's motives align with their antagonist position against the party and the president, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Although the sample analysed did not show many fact-checking examples, Animal Político proved to be leading this activity in Mexico, doing fact-checking routinely since their beginning, but also by leading Verificado 2018. The aim of the project was to first fact-check speeches in the news, contrasting the information given by public actors against facts and data; and second to verify information in the news that became viral and potentially be could fake news (Verificado 2018, 2018). The methodology was based on that presented by PolitiFact in the USA and Chequeado in Argentina, following the Code of Principles from the International Fact-Checking Network (IFCN) from the Poynter Institute (Animal Político, 2015).

In the content analysed for the present study, Animal Político published 15 fact-checking stories during the normal period and nine during the campaign period. From these, 11 stories were fact-checking statements for candidates, and 13 were verification of fake news, as seen in Table 26.

Table 26 Type of fact-checking content

Type of content	Normal period	Campaign period	Total
Fact-checking	5	6	11
Fake news	10	3	13
Total	15	9	24

members of the cabinet criticise the news media for conspiring against him when they question his government (Newman et al., 2023).

The content of the fact-checking articles was predominantly about Politics (21 of the 24 stories), with one about Law enforcement (although related to a politician) and two about Science, Health, and Technology, with fact-checked information given during a debate between the presidential candidates about energy, science and technology. The geographic focus was on national issues, with only one story concerning international issues and two regional issues. None of the issues represented diverse groups. As expected, the fact-checking focused on issues related to the political campaigns. However, content analysis conducted by Palau-Sampio (2017)³² found that the fact-checking initiative with El Sabueso also focuses on social problems and human rights topics, showing consistency with their objectives.

The average number of sources used per news story in the total content analysed in this study was 1.5, while the fact-checking content used an average of 3.7 sources (see Table 27). One fact-checking story did not include a source because the element of the discourse in need of correction was solved with basic maths. This shows that fact-checking requires a more extensive research practice. Fact-checking incorporates a series of practices to assess the veracity of the political representative's speech by reviewing the source, using data analysis and research techniques to determine the accuracy of the information (Palau-Sampio, 2017) and the context in which the information is used. These practices are rarely part of the daily practices of journalists because, as explained in previous chapters, most media organisations aim to cover the most recent events, and do not leave time for a deeper analysis.

Table 27 Number of sources used in fact-checking stories

	Normal period	Campaign period	Total
Mean	1.9	6.8	3.7
Median	1	6	2
Mode	1	4	1
Minimum	0	2	0
Maximum	6	13	13
Number of sources used (N)	28	61	89

³² Palau-Sampio (2017) analysed 30 fact-checking news articles published in three weeks between January 2016 and July 2017.

In addition to the research skills needed, fact-checking also requires particular writing skills that allow communicating to the reader the level of facticity of the information or statement, whether true, out of context, misleading, or definitely false (fabricated events), and persuasive (Palau-Sampio, 2017). Studies of Verificado 2018 social media content conducted by Martínez Carrillo and Tamul (2019) and Magallón Rosa (2019) argued that the language and sense of humour used in their social media accounts helped to connect with the audience and make it 'shareable'.

I think my role is to avoid misinformation. Because the right to information is one of the pillars of democracy, so that is what my job is, right? Contributing to journalism being a vertical accountability mechanism where we are helping citizens to be informed and make decisions (Interviewee 3, Fact-checking, Animal Político).

Fact-checking is considered the most fundamental practice in journalism to provide accurate and reliable information (Galarza Molina, 2020). When the interviewees of the present research were asked about fact-checking in their organisations, most answered that fact-checking was an everyday task. However, these answers corresponded with the verification of sources, where they can back up that some information was said but not necessarily find out whether it was factually true, a practice known as 'he said, she said' or *declaracionitis*. Galarza Molina (2020) conducted interviews with 13 journalists who took part in Verificado 2018. The paper highlighted the differences between daily reporting and Verificado 2018's practices. While the journalists conceive the fact-checking practice as a core activity of any journalist and is linked to an objectivity principle, they also specified that the methodology used for Verificado 2018 required analysis and understanding of data to verify the information.

Fact-checking goes further with checking the validity of the source: it also checks the factuality of the information published/broadcast. Galarza Molina (2020) highlights journalists' realisation about the frequency of the *declaracionitis*, the reporting of phrases by public

figures without verifying the veracity of the information. The main purpose of fact-checking is to provide information to citizens by solving “factual debates in an objective way” (Graves, 2016b, p.10), to move away from the “focus on the accuracy of reported speech” (Amazeen, 2020, p.97) by publicly correcting false claims from public officials. In contexts like the Mexican case, as the partisanship of the news organisation has limited the autonomy of journalists to report, the role of fact-checking is even more relevant. In this context, fact-checking can be a tool to fight disinformation from government officials and the news media.

Fact-checking may contribute to democracy in three forms: contributing to the roles of providing information; the watchdog role; and incentivising the media literacy of citizens. Fact-checking fulfils the main journalistic role of providing information; it goes beyond presenting information to readers, correcting the declarations of public figures, and presenting evidence to citizens to have accurate information to make decisions (Graves, 2016b; Amazeen, 2020) – in the case of Verificado 2018, to decide their vote, but also in critical situations. An important temporary fact-checking initiative in Mexico was #Verificado19S, a spontaneous and real-time fact-checking event that occurred immediately after an earthquake shook the centre of Mexico on 19 September 2017 (Verificado19S, 2019).

#Verificado19S had a vital role during a crisis to combat the lack of official information and the misinformation that was mainly circulating on social media and in text messages. This case exemplifies how a fact-checking methodology can aid in providing citizens with information in a crisis; when the expediency of news is critical, the information volume goes beyond the news organisation's capabilities, and the official information is not as fast as needed. Similarly, analysis of fact-checking during the COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico shows that social media and personal communication had an important role in spreading misinformation and fake news, as did public figures (Aguila Sánchez and Pereyra Zamora, 2022; Quintana Pujalte and Pannunzio, 2022).

Verifying discourse can incentivise the accountability of public officials by analysing their actions and words. The literature confirms that fact-checking can discourage politicians from disseminating false or deceptive information in the future (Graves and Glaisyer, 2012; Amazeen, 2020). A regular fact-checking exercise can increase news organisations'

accountability and trust in the news organisations that do fact-checking (Martinez Carrillo and Tamul, 2019).

I am super proud of what Verificado achieved because I am convinced that Verificado influenced the public debate and raised the quality of public debate at a very important moment for the country, such as the election.

Maybe now we already have a president and all that and “Ah! There is still misinformation and fake news and whatever”, but let's say that at the time, during the campaign, we did see candidates and political parties worried about what they were going to say, how they were going to say it. Because if Verified found that they were lying, that affected them politically. And so here you see a group of citizens influencing politics, in public debate, in a super important way (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político).

The fact-checking exercise by Verificado 2018 had an educative and explicative aim. Therefore, Verificado 2018, and fact-checking in general, may contribute to building the media literacy of the readers. Handing readers a methodology or tools to analyse the information they consume and share may empower them to be more critical when consuming news, therefore they can better identify false information (Magallón Rosa, 2019; Galarza Molina, 2020; Aguila Sánchez and Pereyra Zamora, 2022). Martinez Carrillo and Tamul (2019) argue that Verificado 2018 “may have whetted the appetite of Mexicans for greater accountability” (p.2607) – their audiences expressed the wish to continue with the project after the elections.

Although the analysis in this chapter shows that Animal Político assigns most of its resources to investigative reporting, it is the only news organisation with a fact-checking project in Mexico since its creation. In addition, they led a project with dozens of news organisations nationwide to fact-check news during the electoral campaigns in 2018. The following section discusses how collaboration with other organisations can provide additional resources to newsrooms not only for fact-checking but also for other modalities of in-depth reporting.

7.3 Collaborations and networks

Cooperation between news organisation peers is an effective way to pool resources and expertise to produce and distribute content. Several authors have discussed the role of the Internet in the development of 'networked journalism' – digital technologies aid cooperation between journalists, news organisations and audiences to produce and distribute content, particularly in terms of in-depth reporting such as investigative journalism and fact-checking (Graves and Konieczna, 2015; Schmitz Weiss et al., 2018; Carson, 2020; Cueva Chacón and Saldaña, 2021). These different types of collaboration enable different results. Anderson (2013a) identified three kinds of collaboration that can be established temporarily or long term: 1) sharing resources for the production and distribution of news; 2) cross-organisational content partnerships, working together to produce a specific product; and 3) materially-inscribed collaborations, sharing the content produce by others by linking to them. Deuze and Witschge (2020) categorise networking from an individual perspective: journalists connect outside their organisations in 1) editorial collectives; 2) informal online associations such as social media groups; 3) starting a business together; and 4) participating in networking activities such as conferences and grassroots associations (pp.32-33).

Building on the categories observed by Anderson (2013a), Deuze and Witschge (2020), and the findings of the interviews and content analysis conducted for the present study, the collaborations found in the four organisations analysed can be mapped across three categories according to their purpose: 1) to create content; 2) to distribute content; and 3) networking.

Table 28 Typology of collaborations

Create content	Distribute content	Networking	Duration
=	=	=	
expand resources	expand markets	establish connections	
Build teams for a project	Syndication a) send content b) bring content	Allies	Permanent
		Memberships to associations	
	Publish content from freelance journalists		Temporal
	Send content to other news organisations		

The interviews conducted for this research and the content analysis both showed that the digital natives collaborated more often than the legacy newspapers. Both digital natives have established different kinds of temporal and permanent relationships with journalistic organisations to produce and distribute content. Reforma is just opening up to collaborate with other organisations. In 2018, with a new direction, Reforma started to establish alliances with NGOs to fill a gap in investigative journalism due to resource cuts at the newspaper. The following subsections focus on revising these types of collaboration and use some examples as illustrations, but they do not provide an exhaustive analysis of all of them.

7.3.1 Content creation

Digital natives use collaborations to produce content and to expand the resources they have to produce, particularly in-depth reporting content. Previously, in this chapter, the case of Verificado 2018 was analysed, which exemplifies the impact cooperation can have. Verificado 2018's relevance was only possible with the collaboration of different kinds of organisations. The staff, equipment, time, and money involved in supporting the initiative is challenging to achieve otherwise. Even when the sample analysed did not show a large number of fact-checking examples, Animal Político proved to be leading this activity in the country by

showing their compromise with fact-checking since their beginnings, but also by leading Verificado 2018, which became an example of fact-checking in an emerging democracy.

Verificado 2018 allowed news organisations with different audiences and editorial interests in different parts of the country to 'share an audience' (Magallón Rosa, 2019). Tania Montalvo said about Verificado 2018, "There are regions in Mexico in which digital journalism does not reach, with audiences that keep trusting and only watching legacy news organisations. Verificado2018 was there thanks to their allies. [...] Animal Político [Verificado 2018] was not meant to grow as news media, but to reach a different audience with trustworthy information" (Montalvo, cited in Del Castillo, 2018). Galarza Molina (2020) points out that the interviewees recognised it as a success indicator to see other news organisations as allies, not competitors.

All digital media are gradually understanding the dynamics, what are the things that the platform offers us to practice our profession, and some of us better learn to handle some instruments better than others or unequally, right? But also, that same thing has led us to do fraternal, joint work, right? We have done cool things with colleagues from Pie de página, sometimes individually and sometimes institutionally. Cool things have been done with the people of Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción; La Estafa Maestra and Las Empresas Fantasma de Duarte were done in tandem with them. Then, that unhealthy commercial competition between conventional media is being replaced on the Internet by loyal, fraternal, and supportive competition between digital media (Interviewee 5, Reporter, Animal Político).

As Amazeen (2020) identified, the socio-political environment dictates the most important challenges fact-checkers face. Therefore, in the Mexican context, with limited autonomy to report, collaboration can give journalists "greater levels of independence and autonomy" (Martínez Carrillo and Tamul, 2019, p.2608), and also brings together journalists from other regions of the country which could face more risks in reporting (Brambila, 2018). However, Cueva Chacón and Saldaña (2021) found that, for investigative journalists in Latin America,

the main motivation to collaborate is not safety but “to strengthen investigative journalism” (p.210).

7.3.2 Distributing content

7.3.2.1 *Syndication*

This research found two kinds of collaboration to disseminate content: 1) the news organisations share their content with other news organisations to increase their reach; and 2) the news organisations reproduce content from other news organisations.

7.3.2.2 *Exporting content*

In the first type of collaboration, Aristegui Noticias is a leading proponent, in syndicating their newscasts to Grupo Radio Centro, a national-reach radio group. Their own team does all the production in the Aristegui Noticias newsroom. By syndicating the content instead of being produced on the radio station, Aristegui Noticias retains its autonomy, but it can reach a market that does not have access to the Internet. Having independence to report is one of the central objectives of Carmen Aristegui, as she has had her newscast cancelled three times due to editorial disagreements with the radio stations that hosted her newscasts, despite the high ratings of the broadcast (Tucker, 2015).

7.3.2.3 *Importing content*

As an example of the second kind of collaboration, Animal Político has an ongoing agreement with other news organisations to reproduce content: *Newsweek en Español* and *BBC News Mundo*. Newsweek is part of the same editorial company as Animal Político (*Grupo Editorial Criterio*), and *BBC News Mundo* is the BBC’s Latin American site. In the content analysis, Animal Político published in-depth reporting using content from these news organisations, so their readers are informed about issues that align with the editorial profile of Animal Político, saving resources to produce them. According to the *BBC News Mundo* website (BBC, n.d.), El Universal also has a collaboration to reproduce their content, although it was not observed in the content analysed.

7.3.3 Temporal collaborations to distribute content

Two kinds of temporal collaborations were identified: the first is to distribute their own content to other news organisations; the second is to distribute content produced by others, such as content created by freelance journalists.

7.3.3.1 Distributing own content to other news organisations

Animal Político send their investigative reports in full to other news organisations before they publish them, with an embargo. In this case, it is not part of a commercial agreement; their objective is to reach new readers in other markets, i.e., local news organisations, printed news media, and audiences with different profiles.

By collaborating with print media, for example, and telling them: "I'm going to do this research, here you go, publish it, and we'll do an exchange," etc. We reach totally different audiences; I always give the example of Yucatán and the Master Scam because the Diario de Yucatán, well, to begin with, in Yucatán Animal Político does not have a presence. People in Yucatan not only do not know Animal [Político], but they are not so used to reading news on the Internet; that is, they are very traditional in consuming their local media. I believe that with these collaboration techniques, at least, we are fulfilling or fighting to fulfil our responsibility of reaching the sector that does not have access to the Internet and which I insist we should also empower with information (Interviewee 1, General Editor, Animal Político)

This kind of collaboration brings information to new readers; digital natives attract new readers to their websites and increase their reputation as news organisations by association (Martínez Carrillo and Tamul, 2019). Requejo-Alemán and Lugo-Ocando (2014) pointed out in their analysis of non-profit investigative journalism in Latin America (the Mexican case was not studied) that the connections with legacy news organisation are also essential to expand their audiences to make them economically sustainable in the longer term.

7.3.3.2 Freelance journalists' reporting

Publishing content created by freelance journalists is another way news organisations can bring in-depth content to their websites. The relationship between news organisations and freelance journalists can vary widely: they can commission content, pay for a finished product, for their contribution to a project, act as a stringer, and so on. The advantage for news organisations is the incorporation of the expertise the freelancer brings to the organisation; the organisation does not lose resources to maintain the production of their day-to-day content; and they are not investing resources in failed investigations. The disadvantages fall on the freelancers, who are usually paid for published content and have precarious work conditions (Deuze and Witschge, 2020).

7.4 Networking

These collaborations are formal or informal affiliations with associations, NGOs, and professional groups and have a less consistent impact on the content produced.

7.4.1 Allies

This research identified an ally of the news organisations as a group that has similar interests; they have established a long-term relationship, but they do not have a set agenda or project to collaborate on. Some examples of outcomes of the relationship are producing and distributing content, running workshops, sharing resources, and participating in conferences.

A cool part of the programme is that it has also become a platform for disseminating content that is not ours, which I think is cool. The good thing is that journalists seek the space for different reasons, such as access to the public that we have had, that we have built or also because they censor them in their spaces, or they cannot, or they seek more power when disseminating it. So, they are alliances that are not signed, that appear on paper, as far as I know, I have been working there, and well, it is not that they are signed, but they are sought at the

convenience of the people who spread it, the people who make the content. And from us, then, we have the perspective of, well, they are quality content from people who are at the highest level in journalism, like those that you said about Quinto Elemento, who are very professional people, who work very well and if they are looking for an alliance with us, it is convenient for us, it is a win-win. So maybe we have published with many people, journalists, and organisations; what we are looking for is that they win with us and we with them (Interviewee 11, Reporter, Aristegui Noticias).

Another form of collaboration with NGOs involves distributing content. As noted in this chapter, both digital natives published investigative work by *Quinto Elemento Lab*. The main objective of this NGO is to produce investigative reporting. The investigations are funded, produced, and distributed by Quinto Elemento Lab, but they are also shared by one or more 'allied' news organisations. All four news organisations have published content from this NGO. In addition, the NGO also runs webinars and a Master lab with and for journalists to provide tools and experiences to produce investigative journalism (Quinto Elemento Lab, n.d.).

Not only are journalistic nonprofit organisations producing news but NGOs have developed their own PR strategies to gain access to the news media, as explained in more depth in Chapter 8 (Waisbord, 2011; Powers, 2015; McPherson, 2016). They are also creating their own journalistic teams to produce journalistic content to be distributed on their own websites or through other news organisations. An example of this is the alliance that Animal Político, Aristegui Noticias and Reforma have with Mexicanos contra la Corrupción, an NGO that aims to investigate, produce journalistic content, denounce, litigate and mobilise against corruption in Mexico (Mexicanos Contra la Corrupción y la Impunidad, n.d.).

These are just a few examples of networks established with NGOs dedicated to producing investigative journalism, observed through the interviews and content analysis. However, other NGOs are pushing their agendas to news organisations and creating relations with them to create awareness about the importance of the topics for which they advocate: “[T]his new breed of advocacy organizations are primarily interested in promoting news coverage of

issues related to social change. [...] These organizations feed information to newsrooms, provide logistical support to facilitate coverage, bring journalists together through virtual networks, form alliances with news organizations, organize training workshops, produce articles and series for publication, and so on” (Waisbord, 2009, p.380).

Animal Político is an ally of this type of NGO, which is more evident in their collaboration in opinion content, where organisations that have published opinion pieces listed under the opinion section *Plumaje* total 93 NGOs up to 2023 (Animal Político, n.d.-c). The digital native also runs workshops about investigative journalism and fact-checking for different news organisations, NGOs, and universities. Sharing their knowledge is a practice observed by Quintana Pujalte and Pannunzio (2022), who analysed 48 fact-checking platforms in Spanish and found that 75% of them run workshops to share their know-how.

NGOs are not the only allies of journalists. Other institutions, such as universities, have also collaborated to host conferences and run workshops together. Animal Político's partnership with Facebook (Meta) is a different kind of collaboration, as one of the news organisations that help identify fake news on their platform and stop its spread by limiting its appearance in their news feeds (Lyons, 2018). This partnership included Verificado 2018 during the electoral process (Bassante, 2018).

7.4.2 Memberships of associations

El Universal interviewees emphasised being part of the Grupo de Diarios América (GDA by their initials in Spanish – America Group of Newspapers), which “is a consortium integrated by the eleven most influential newspapers in Latin America” (GDA, 2022, no pagination). The activities of this group include workshops and conferences, and they have established temporary collaborations to conduct special reporting together, focusing on the problems shared by the region, which enriches the reporting they can do and expands the public they reach.

7.5 Discussion

Digital natives are dedicating more significant resources to conduct more in-depth reporting, which involves reshaping the news organisations to achieve this goal. The research question that guides this chapter was: What routines are established by the news organisations to produce in-depth content (investigative journalism and fact checking)? Digital natives have established reporting routines that differ from the newspapers aims for their journalists. Reporters are permanently doing investigative reporting and looking for subsequent work; they work simultaneously on different projects requiring different timings, techniques, and resources. Online editors from news organisations have almost full responsibility for reporting the daily news. These practices result in digital natives publishing more in-depth reporting. From the content analysed, they were the only news organisations that published investigative journalism. They reported on five projects that they produced, plus one created by the Quinto Elemento Lab, an NGO dedicated to producing investigative journalism. Other outputs of in-depth reporting included *reportaje* and interviews. Animal Político's content made the greatest use of *reportajes* analysed in the sample, while Aristegui Noticias led in the use of interviews.

Animal Político was the only news organisation that produced fact-checking – not only that, but they were one of the leading organisations that formed part of the fact-checking platform Verificado 2018, which was created to fact-check the discourse of public figures during the 2018 Mexican elections, debunking fake news, and educating readers about how they could identify it when consuming news. The practices required to produce in-depth reporting need extensive resources. Digital natives have formed many networks that allow them to share resources with other organisations to create and distribute content and share knowledge and experiences in workshops and conferences.

The first thing to consider about in-depth content is that all the journalistic formats analysed contribute to the informational role by providing a deeper understanding of an issue or event, verifying the facticity of the declarations of public officials, and debunking fake news. Fact-checking and investigative journalists also perform a watchdog role by reporting the wrongdoings of governments and corporations. Most discussions about the contributions of

investigative reporting and fact-checking are done in countries with a relatively healthy democracy, mechanisms of accountability, an effective justice system, and news media with editorial independence to report. However, an important discussion is the impact of investigative reports documenting corruption and wrongdoing of political actors in countries without robust accountability systems, such as Mexico. Waisbord (2000) argues that, to date, a "pervasive cynicism" has grown among politicians who do not see consequences, leading to increased polarisation in the country (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Guerrero, 2014). This does not mean that a watchdog role is not important or desirable, but in this context, it can represent a limitation for this kind of journalistic work.

The caveat is that digital natives have a niche audience with a higher level of education and are more engaged with the problems they report, as discussed in Chapter 5. Therefore, digital natives are filling the gap in the in-depth reporting market: "I think that the demand from *Animal Político*'s audience to maintain content nourished by more extensive, deeper investigations is also increasing, and well, that's the challenge, right? Do them more and more and take advantage of the accumulated experience to better design investigations" (Interviewee 5, Reporter, Animal Político). Their collaborations with other news organisations to distribute their work could broaden their audiences and consequently the demand for content that contributes to the watchdog and informational roles, such as investigative journalism, fact-checking or *reportajes*.

Chapter 8. Source Analysis

8.1 Introduction

Sourcing practices are essential to understanding how news organisations produce content, and, most importantly, who is represented in the news. One of the normative roles that journalism should perform is giving voice to the diverse sectors of society. However, sourcing practices do not always allow the inclusion of multiple voices and elite sources are usually prioritised in the news making process. Most of the time, the lack of plurality in the sources used to report the news is the result of something other than explicit bias in the newsrooms. Sourcing practices are influenced by the power relationships between the sources and the media or journalists and the dynamics in the newsrooms, such as news cycles, time pressures, staff workloads, resources available, and the personal background and biases of the reporters. The main findings in this chapter show that both legacy and digital native media primarily rely on the same type of sources, and passive reporting prevails. However, looking closer at the data, the digital natives studied are making use of a broader range of sources and doing more active reporting, which is essential to the watchdog role's performance.

This chapter's findings were obtained by analysing two main subjects: a plurality of sources and sourcing practices. These two topics will contribute to answering the main research question: How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico? The first part of the chapter is focused on the analysis of the predominant type of sources in the content produced, who has a voice, and how the sources were retrieved. The analysis is based on a content analysis with a focus on four variables: number of sources, type of source, how the source was retrieved and source gender. In some cases, additional variables were used to contextualise the findings. The statements of both digital natives underlined their commitment to independently producing content, as noted in Chapter 5. Therefore, it was

expected that they would have more autonomy in the choice of sources they use. The second part of the chapter analyses the sourcing practices. While these are discussed throughout the chapter, this section focuses on analysing how the sources used in the content analysed were obtained.

8.2 Plurality of sources

One of the normative roles that journalism should be performing is giving voice to the diverse sectors of society to enable them to participate in the public sphere. Societies are not static: they constantly undergo transformation, different social groups and problems emerge, and their needs change. In a democracy, an array of voices should be heard to accommodate their interests and needs (McQuail, 1992; Christians et al., 2009; McNair, 2009; McChesney, 2012; Voltmer, 2013). News organisations should be open spaces for presenting information that serves society's needs and amplifies their voices. However, the sourcing routines prevailing in newsrooms around the world present a problem: official or elite sources prevail in the reporting, as they are easy to access and seen as a legitimate provider of facts. In contrast, other sources that could represent diverse voices are more difficult to reach, or they do not have the same visibility to be considered by the media. The groups or individuals underrepresented in the news are many. This section focuses on the analysis of sources that prevail in the content analysed from the four news organisations and is organised into three subsections: the first analyses the type of sources used by the four news organisations; the second analyses the gender representation of those sources; and the third focuses on the discussion about the number of sources in a single news story and plurality.

8.2.1 Type of sources

In the content analysed in both weeks sampled, more than a third of the sources used are 'official' (34% in the regular period and 38% in the campaign period – see Table 29). Animal Político used them most (more than 40%), followed by legacy newspaper El Universal (around 35%). The second source most used is 'experts' (14%); after the use of sources from the

government, this was the second type most used by El Universal (22% in total). ‘Other media’ were also among the most used (13.5% in total), representing almost a fifth of Aristegui Noticias’ sources (19%), which makes the most use of this kind of sources.

‘Ordinary citizens’ represented 8% of the sources used during both weeks analysed and were used more by both legacy newspapers. ‘Civil society’ accounted for 7.5% of the news sources, with more representation by Animal Político. These two kinds of sources represent the voices of diverse groups, and even when they are not the most used sources overall, together represent 15% of the total sources analysed in this research. The following subsections discuss the use of governmental sources, civil society, ordinary citizens, experts and other media as sources in more depth.

Table 29 Normal period: type of sources used

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Government	138	41.2 %	89	30.6 %	68	28.8 %	58	33.1 %	353	34%
Opposition	44	13.1 %	27	9.3%	34	14.4 %	14	8%	119	11.5 %
International Organisations	2	0.6%	3	1%	6	2.5%	0	0%	11	1.1%
Private sector	15	4.5%	41	14.1 %	16	6.8%	22	12.6 %	94	9.1%
Experts	21	6.3%	45	15.5 %	31	13.1 %	32	18.3 %	129	12.4 %
Media	47	14%	59	20.3 %	30	12.7 %	25	14.3 %	161	15.5 %
Civil Society	38	11.3 %	11	3.8%	17	7.2%	12	6.9%	78	7.5%
Ordinary Citizens	28	8.4%	15	5.2%	30	12.7 %	11	6.3%	84	8.1%
Reporting	1	0.3%	1	0.3%	4	1.7%	0	0%	6	0.6%
Other	1	0.3%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.6%	2	0.2%
Total	335	100%	291	100%	236	100%	175	100%	1037	100%

Table 30 Campaign period: type of sources used

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Government	189	41.3%	85	30.5%	89	41.2%	55	36.7%	418	37.9%
Opposition	41	9%	21	7.5%	38	17.6%	13	8.7%	113	10.2%
International Organisations	22	4.8%	3	1.1%	2	0.9%	1	0.7%	28	2.5%
Private sector	31	6.8%	35	12.5%	15	6.9%	13	8.7%	94	8.5%
Experts	54	11.8%	51	18.3%	26	12%	39	26%	170	15.4%
Media	51	11.1%	51	18.3%	12	5.6%	13	8.7%	127	11.5%
Civil Society	44	9.6%	21	7.5%	13	6%	0	0%	78	7.1%
Ordinary Citizens	19	4.1%	9	3.2%	8	3.7%	12	8%	48	4.4%
Reporting	7	1.5%	3	1.1%	12	5.6%	4	2.7%	26	2.4%
Other	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.5%	0	0%	1	.1%
Total	458	100%	279	100%	216	100%	150	100%	1103	100%

8.2.1.1 Governmental sources

In the campaign period, the use of governmental sources slightly increased (from 34% to 37.9%). Digital native Animal Político again used more of this kind of sources (41.3%), a similar number in the normal period. However, the newspaper Reforma presents a significant increase in its use of this kind of source at 41.2% (in the normal period, this organisation used such sources the least, 28.8%). Mexican journalism has a heavy reliance on official sources, initiated during the authoritarian period, but it persists in practice, as noted previously. Márquez Ramírez (2012) identified the "passive newsgathering methods, reporting practices, and narrative devices that still give prominence to 'knowledgeable', official and elite sources"

(p.213). This is a characteristic of the *officialism*³³ that Waisbord (2000) also observed in the rest of Latin America.

The prevalence of government sources is not only observed in this context. It is a global practice given the ease of accessing such information. Diverse authors have pointed out official sources' predominance because the government normally produces the information and makes it easily available (e.g. Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 2004; Schudson, 2012; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Also, journalists who cover high-powered officials or politicians still receive more symbolic capital (Gans, 2004; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). This is the case of the president's coverage in Mexico, as noted in Chapter 6 and explained by other studies (Waisbord, 2000; Hughes, 2006; Márquez Ramírez, 2012). Many scholars have documented the strong reliance of legacy media on governmental sources, but the same seems to happen with digital natives. The comparative study between the *New York Times* and BuzzFeed conducted by Tandoc (2017) found that government sources were the most used in both media, but the *New York Times* used those sources more frequently (51%) than BuzzFeed (29%). Political opposition represented 11.5% of sources used in both weeks and did not show significant changes between the period's samples, but it might be expected to increase during the campaign period. For content analysis purposes, this research coded opposition to the members of a political party that was not ruling in a particular geographic region or position (see the Codebook in Appendix 2). The presence of the opposition in the media is complex due to Mexico's political structure. In Mexico, local and federal authorities are directly elected and therefore several parties can rule at different government levels: the municipal council, governor and president of the country could belong to three different political parties. In a study of Mexican newspapers, Hughes (2006) found that during the presidential campaign in 2000, which led to the end of the authoritarian regime, the newspapers presented a balance between government and opposition sources; in some cases, the opposition was even used more often as a source. One of the limitations of this content analysis is that it did not

³³ '*Oficialismo*' describes the lack of a critical position of the government's official information. It is a partisanship of the press, not necessarily for dedicated support of their policies but due to the context of restricted press freedom.

measure how the sources were portrayed in the news stories. Therefore, the predominance of governmental sources does not mean positive coverage. As mentioned before, the media that has shown partisanship with the government is the newspaper *El Universal*, while *Reforma* has a history of being more critical (Riva Palacio, 2004; Hughes, 2006), and both digital natives have been directly critical of government and their officials.

8.2.1.1.1 Use of official sources

The following analyses how the government sources were retrieved to understand what kind of practices prevail in all the news organisations studied. Comparing the kinds of sources and how they were retrieved during the normal period (see Table 31), almost a third of the information from governmental sources was obtained from press releases or press conferences (34%). The legacy newspapers used significantly more of this kind of information (*El Universal* 58.6%; *Reforma* 44.1%) than the digital natives (*Aristegui Noticias* 30.3%; *Animal Político* 20.3%). In the campaign period (see Table 32), the governmental information obtained via press releases or press conferences overall remained the same (35%). However, the legacy newspapers diminished their use while the digital natives increased it. Nevertheless, both legacy newspapers retrieved their information in this way (*El Universal* 47%; *Reforma* 51%) more than the digital natives (both 28%). Social media (16%) was an important way to obtain information from the government during the normal period, along with documents (14%). Both digital natives retrieved more information from social media (*Animal Político* 21.7%; *Aristegui Noticias* 14.6%) than the legacy newspapers (*Reforma* 11.8%; *El Universal* 6.9%). During the campaign period, the use of social media overall decreased to 9%, however, it saw a dramatic increase in *El Universal* from 7% to 20%. Using other media and social media to collect information from the government is a common digital media practice due to the demand for content without a deadline, as in the printed press, as Bane (2017) explains. The use of official documents doubled in the campaign period (from 14% to 25%). Both digital natives made the most of them and increased their use during the campaign period. In *Animal Político*, their use went from 14% to 34% and in *Aristegui Noticias* from 24% to 33%; in *Reforma*, their use did not change significantly (from 6 to 7%) and it

decreased slightly in El Universal (from 10 to 7%). Wheatley (2020) explained that the same source can be used to make different kinds of content.

Table 31 Normal period: how Government sources were obtained

	Animal Político	%	Ariste gui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universa l	%	Total	%
Press release/ press conference	28	20.3 %	27	30.3 %	30	44.1 %	34	58.6 %	119	34%
Scheduled event	5	3.6 %	1	1.1 %	6	8.8 %	2	3.4 %	14	4%
Interview	6	4.3 %	3	3.4 %	3	4.4 %	3	5.2 %	15	4%
Public sessions	9	6.5 %	4	4.5 %	5	7.4 %	3	5.2 %	21	6%
Improvised interview	0	0%	0	0%	1	1.5 %	0	0%	1	0%
Documents	19	13.8 %	21	23.6 %	4	5.9 %	6	10.3 %	50	14%
Investigation of the media	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Media	22	15.9 %	8	9%	0	0%	2	3.4 %	32	9%
Social Media	30	21.7 %	13	14.6 %	8	11.8 %	4	6.9 %	55	16%
News Agency	6	4.3 %	2	2.2 %	3	4.4 %	0	0%	11	3%
Web Pages	3	2.2 %	2	2.2 %	2	2.9 %	1	1.7 %	8	2%
Not identified	10	7.2 %	8	9%	6	8.8 %	3	5.2 %	27	8%
Total	138	100 %	89	100 %	68	100 %	58	100 %	353	100 %

Table 32 Campaign period: how Government sources were obtained

	Animal	%	Aristegui	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
	Político		Noticias							
Press release/ press conference	53	28%	24	28%	45	51%	26	47%	148	35%
Scheduled event	9	5%	3	4%	14	16%	3	5%	29	7%
Interview	20	11%	11	13%	8	9%	4	7%	43	10%
Public sessions	4	2%	2	2%	4	4%	1	2%	11	3%
Improvised interview	0	0%	2	2%	2	2%	0	0%	4	1%
Documents	65	34%	28	33%	6	7%	4	7%	103	25%
Investigation of the media	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	0%
Media	10	5%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	11	3%
Social Media	13	7%	7	8%	6	7%	11	20%	37	9%
News Agency	10	5%	4	5%	0	0%	0	0%	14	3%
Web Pages	1	1%	2	2%	1	1%	0	0%	4	1%
Not identified	3	2%	2	2%	3	3%	5	9%	13	3%
Total	189	100%	85	100%	89	100%	55	100%	418	100%

The two digital natives seem to be looking for information in different places and institutions, even when it belongs to the government. As Dekavalla and Jelen-Sanchez (2017) explain, “[n]ot all official sources are equally powerful in getting their perspectives heard, there are often power struggles between official sources” (p.451), and the digital natives seems to be giving voices to different kinds of official sources. All the media relies more on government sources than any other kind, but the digital native Animal Político relies on this type of source more than the other media (41%). However, when looking closer at the news stories, the digital natives are digging deeper to report wrongdoings with the information that the government produces, which corresponds to a more active type of reporting. A few differences in the use of sources were observed when the news stories were coded. After the content analysis, those news stories were analysed to understand how the sources are used and whether they led to different practices.

As an example of news stories where official sources prevailed, Animal Político used reports from the Superior Audit of the Federation (Auditoría Superior de la Federación) to inform

audiences about inconsistencies in how the government used the public budget. It also used reports about women's human rights in Mexico published by the National Commission for Human Rights (CNDH) and the National Council to Prevent Discrimination in Mexico (CONAPRED), among other organisations. Aristegui Noticias mostly used reports about the Mexican economy published by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).

Most documents are used in extended reports, mostly in investigative journalism. A specific example of the use of a document in a news story can be seen in Animal Político's story: "New record of violence in the first report of the year: almost 5 million people were killed".³⁴ The story used a single source: data about criminal incidents published by the Executive Secretariat of the National Public Security System. The story analyses the data on homicides in Mexico during the first bimester of 2018, discussing the states with more homicides, and the raise of feminicides in the country. News in other media about this report was sought but no other news stories were reported in the same period. It was found that more stories in Animal Político used the same report in previous editions. The examples in Figure 3 and Figure 4 show how both digital natives use official sources for more in-depth reporting.

Figure 3 Example 1

Title: The truth does not matter, to present a detained yes... Even though it is innocent (<i>La verdad no importa, presentar a un detenido sí... aunque sea inocente</i>)			
URL: https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/06/la-verdad-no-importa			
ID Number in content analysis: 113	Campaign period week	Media: Digital native, Animal Político	Date published: 21 June 2018
Type of story: Reportaje, investigative journalism	Number of sources: 17 identified	Byline: Investigation by Arturo Angel, Paris Martínez, Daniela Rea. (See other credits in the mini site of the series, https://www.animalPolítico.com/muertos-mexico-homicidios-impunidad/)	
Part of a series of reports to present the investigation titled: Kill in Mexico: Guaranteed impunity (<i>Matar en México: impunidad garantizada</i>). The investigation was produced with the support of Open Society Foundations.			

³⁴ ID Number of the story: 31, Normal Period. Published here: <https://www.animalpolitico.com/2018/03/nuevo-record-de-violencia-en-el-primer-bimestre-del-ano-casi-5-mil-personas-fueron-asesinadas/>

The series comprises 8 texts, 3 videos, 11 infographics and a VR experience.

In 95% of the killings in Mexico, the perpetrator(s) is sentenced. The miniseries explores the impunity of this crime in Mexico. Half of the reports present the point of view of the authorities, and the other half the case of the victims.

In the sample of content analysed, only the following reporting was included from this series, which portrays the side of the authority.

Sources

Mentions a request for access to public information via the mechanisms for transparency in the public sector. However, it was not stated what kind of information was successfully retrieved and from what institutions was included in the analysis.

The journalists interviewed different actors in the justice system and one lawyer from an NGO and analysed statistics about it. The report shows the lack of resources to conduct the investigation of a homicide. The interviews portray the routines of workers in the justice system who evidence the precarity in their jobs. From lack of basic resources like computers and fuel for official cars, to the need for methods to investigate and process the cases. The interviews pointed out torture and corruption as standard practices during the investigation. The narratives from the interviews are intertwined with official statistics. The journalists report using two sets of data from the National Institute of Statistics and Geography and statistics from the Mexican Attorney General's Office. They also used three studies to assess the information, one published by a university and the other elaborated by two NGOs.

Documents analysed:

1. Statistics about the number of Prosecutor's Offices or Procurator's Offices to solve homicides, INEGI (National Institute of Statistics and Geography)
2. National Survey of Victimisation and Perception on Public Safety (ENVIPE) 2017, published by INEGI
3. Statistics about complaints of torture filed in Mexico, Mexican Attorney General's Office (PGR)
4. A diagnosis of the criminal procedure reform and attorneys in Mexico, published by the National University Autonomous of Mexico
5. Index of the performance of the attorneys and attorneys by state, a report published by the NGO Impunidad Cero
6. Study: Guidelines for a Homologated Model of Criminal Investigation, published by the think tank Research Centre for Development (Cidac)

Interviews:

1. Alejandro, a male investigative police officer
2. Laura, a female investigative police officer
3. Said Villalobos González, attorney
4. Héctor Hawley, expert
5. Ricardo Realivázquez Domínguez, Secretary of the Municipal Police in Ciudad Juárez
6. Guillermo Naranjo, a lawyer from the NGOs Id(h) eas
7. Control Judge

8. Enrique Inzunza Cázares, Chief Justice of the Sinaloa Court
9. Luis Fernando Cuyás, expert
10. Jorge Nava, public prosecutor
11. José Alberto Mosqueda, judge and secretary of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN)

Figure 4 Example 2

Title: EPN and Mancera also hired Rioboó Group (EPN y Mancera también contrataron a Grupo Rioboó)			
URL: https://aristeguinoticias.com/1406/mexico/contratos-millonarios-de-grupo-rioboo-del-ayuntamiento-de-macuspana-hasta-el-gobierno-de-eqn/			
ID Number in content analysis: 230	Campaign period week	Media: Digital native, Animal Político	Date published: 14 June 2018
Type of story: Reportaje, investigative journalism	Number of sources: 13 identified	Byline: Arturo Ilizaliturri	
During the third debate between the presidential candidates, Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador was accused of assigning contracts to Rioboó Group for 162 million pesos. This was during his periods as Mayor of Mexico City and without a process of bidding. The report analysed diverse contracts to evidence those assignments and consulted other contracts assigned to the same company by other governments.			
Documents: 1. Trust for the Improvement of the Communication Roads of the Federal District (Fimevic) 2. Contracts Rioboó with Federal District's government, Ministry of Communications and Transportation, Government of the State of Nuevo León (4), database entry from Contratobook 3. The contract between Mexico City's government and Rioboó Group, Ministry of Construction and Services, Mexico City 4. Contracts Rioboó with Ministry of Communications and Transportation, transparency website of the Ministry 5. Minutes of the session of the Senate on July 6, 2006 6. Official Newspaper of Tabasco on December 28, 2005 7. Sentence of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (SCJN) 8. Official Gazette of the Federation of April 15, 2004			
Press releases: • Rioboó Group • Ministry of Public Education • Tlalpan City Hall			
Website: • Rioboó Group			

In summary, the prevalence of government sources is unsurprising, as this happens in journalism worldwide. What is important is the discussion of how the media uses that information. Analysing the governmental sources, it is possible to conclude that while the digital natives rely more on the use of government sources, they depend less than the legacy newspapers on press releases or press conferences and they consulted more official documents than the newspapers to obtain their information, which is evidence of more active reporting.

8.2.1.2 Civil society and ordinary citizens

Ordinary citizens are not particularly well represented in this research's data; their inclusion, on average, represented only 6% of the sources coded. In the normal period, the newspaper *Reforma* (12.7%) stood out, followed by *Animal Político* (8.4%). During the campaign period analysed, the representation of this sector almost halved (from 8.1% to 4.4%). This time, *El Universal's* newspaper used more citizens as a source (8%), followed by *Animal Político* (4.1%).

Including ordinary citizens as a source is a sign of inclusion of non-elite actors in the news, contributing to the plurality of voices in the public debate. Kleemans et al. (2015) note that the inclusion of voices from ordinary citizens is mainly used as a narrative resource to involve readers emotionally; the media rarely perceives citizens as a source of relevant information.

According to the analysis of two television newscasts in the Netherlands, the role of citizens as a source predominates as vox pops, eyewitnesses and victims to "increase story attractiveness, concreteness, and vividness and to add a feeling of authenticity" (Kleemans et al., 2015, p.467) and there is scarce representation of citizens committed to doing something or with specific knowledge about the issue. In their comparative study, Tandoc (2017) found that BuzzFeed incorporated more 'ordinary people' as sources in news stories (15.7%) than the *New York Times* (11.7%). They did this primarily by including tweets with reactions about the topic discussed in the news which can be understood as a new form of vox pops. How ordinary citizens were represented varies according to the type of media. Ordinary citizens were a source of more news about social problems in both digital natives. In the normal

period, 57.1% of citizens were used to cover issues of social problems, and 47.4% in the campaign period. In *Aristegui Noticias*, 66.7% of these sources were used in social problems topics during the normal period and 55.6% during the campaign. While the legacy newspapers mostly include the voices of ordinary citizens in topics about entertainment. In *Reforma*, 60% of these sources were used in entertainment stories in the normal period and 62.5% in the campaign period. *El Universal* used ordinary citizens in the coverage of entertainment 36.4% of the time in the normal period and 58.3% in the campaign period.

The voices of ordinary citizens are not usually reflected in the news, but with the development of the Internet there was an expectation of increasing sources available to journalists, not only in number but also in diversity. With this came a change in power relationships between sources and journalists where the elites are not privileged, and diverse sectors of society can have access to the media to be heard and represented (Papacharissi, 2002; Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Phillips, 2010a; Hermida, 2013). However, social media's expectations as a channel for ordinary citizens to reach the media more horizontally have been proven to be unrealised.

Social media is mainly used to collect reactions from the general public (Broersma and Graham, 2012; Broersma and Graham, 2013) or to inform soft news issues (Paulussen and Harder, 2014). Only occasionally are primary sources used to report on an event, mainly when they are the only sources who can provide information about it (Hermida et al., 2014; Lecheler and Kruikemeier, 2015). However, social media sources are primarily being used to connect with elite sources (Wallsten, 2015), as explored later in the chapter. A limitation of this study is the need to explore how these media represent ordinary citizens and whether they have representation for what they offer to the news or are being used as victims, vox pops, or narrative resources (Kleemans et al., 2015). The lack of representation of ordinary citizens is a problem. The most effective way for citizens' interests to reach the news media is through organised civil society. NGOs represent the organised efforts of citizens to organize themselves, mobilise, and participate in the public sphere in an institutionalized way (Waisbord, 2011; Powers, 2015), and these organisations have developed strategies to place topics onto the agenda of the media effectively (Manning, 2001; Cottle and Nolan, 2007;

Waisbord, 2011; McPherson, 2016). Larger organisations have more resources to establish tactics that get them covered by the media, incorporating journalists consequently having a greater potential to be included by news organisations as sources (Powers, 2015; McPherson, 2016). However, the voices of ordinary citizens need to be heard by these organisations to gain representation in the news. Civil society represented 7.3% of sources used. Animal Político is the only media claiming to be interested in doing more civic-oriented journalism, describing itself as a space that gives voice to "the initiatives of those who exercise their citizenship and do not passively accept the decisions of the political class" (Animal Político, n.d.-d). In line with this ambition, the content analysis showed that this outlet had the most representation of civil society (10.4% in total). Additionally, in their opinion section, diverse representatives of organised civil society write articles for them, giving more space to this sector that is not visible in this analysis of sources.

NGOs are an additional way for the interests of citizens to be represented in the media. McPherson (2016) studied the relationship between journalism and human rights NGOs in Mexico. Her findings showed that both actors have a win-win relationship where they push their agenda to the media, and journalists do not have to look for that information. In this way, journalists save time looking for sources while also opening spaces for the NGOs to contribute to the public discussion about the topics that NGOs advocate.

8.2.1.3 Experts

Experts were the second most used kind of source (14% during both weeks). The newspaper El Universal made most use of experts (22.1%), followed by Aristegui Noticias (16.9%); Reforma (12.5%) and Animal Político (9%) used fewer experts. The use of experts as a source increased slightly during the campaign period, except for El Universal. Experts are defined for content analysis purposes as researchers or qualified practitioners of a profession. Experts as sources are part of elite sources; they have the function of explaining complex issues to readers or giving a more in-depth perspective, while journalists maintain rituals of objectivity (Ross and Carter, 2011; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Using experts in the news can help citizens be informed about issues that are in their interest but are complex to understand, and to help them form their own opinions and make decisions. Experts as news sources are

valued for their knowledge; however, their research does not always back up their contributions, and they are chosen because journalists know what they will say (Ross and Carter, 2011; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Merkley (2020) argues that when there is 'expert consensus' about an issue, the experts can have a persuasive role for readers. However, when there are conflicting stances, the voice of experts can increase polarisation on particular topics.

8.2.1.4 Other media as a source

The news organisations analysed (except for Reforma) rely heavily on other media to construct their content because they would need more resources to produce more original content. The use of other media as a source is also common in all the media analysed, even though its use decreased during the campaign period (from 15.5% to 11.5%). The digital native Aristegui Noticias used this source most (18.3%), while legacy newspaper Reforma used it least (5.6%). As discussed previously, different authors (Franklin, 2005; Paterson, 2008; Phillips, 2010b; Anderson, 2013b) note that the use of content generated by other media organisations to write their news stories is a practice that impoverishes the information available for the readers, adding information to the news ecosystem only in terms of volume but not in diversity (Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Phillips, 2010b).

Most of the discussion about other media as a source comes from qualitative studies about news routines, and there is little to compare the volume of information produced using this kind of source. In a rare content analysis, Tandoc (2017) found that using other media as a source is rare. The content produced by BuzzFeed only uses other media as a source in 4.4% of the cases, and the *New York Times* in just 0.9%. Although a methodological difference between both studies should be considered, while all sources were coded in this study, the author counted only the dominant source per news story, so the comparison is not equal.

8.2.2 Gender of sources

There is a lack of representation of women as sources. In some cases, when the news organisation gives them a voice, they do it stereotypically: by objectifying or victimising them,

as exemplified above. As discussed in Chapter 3, women in the media are underrepresented in both newsrooms and news stories. The 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project³⁵ reported that, in Mexico, from the total of sources where gender could be identified, 20% were women. In the 2015 report, women's representation rose to 26%, analysing all kinds of media, but with only 21% of representation in the press (the analysis includes newspapers and digital natives in the same category) (GMMP, 2015), the last report (GMMP, 2020) show a slight increase to 28% of women representation in the press and 31% on digital media.

Half of the sources in the current research are identified as persons, of whom less than a third are women.³⁶ Both digital natives used fewer female sources and more institutions. In the normal period, more than half of the sources coded represented institutions (53%). From those sources where gender was identifiable, almost three-quarters of sources (73%) were male, and only 27% were female. The legacy newspapers used more female sources than digital natives. Almost all media made similar use of male sources. In the campaign period, the sources identified as institutions decreased slightly (49%), while the male sources increased too, but overall, the changes were negligible.

Table 33 Normal period: sources' gender

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Male	131	76.2%	105	75%	96	69.5%	70	69.3%	402	72.9%
Female	41	23.8%	35	25%	42	30.5%	31	30.7%	149	27.1%
Total	172	100%	140	100%	138	100%	101	100%	551	100%

³⁵ The GMMP report from 2020 is the most recent available study analysing women's representation in the news in Mexico.

³⁶ The coding scheme indicated adding any other non-binary category to recognise gender diversity. However, none was identified in the analysis of sources.

Table 34 Campaign period: sources' gender

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Male	132	75.9%	101	77.1%	109	77.3%	64	68.8%	406	75.3%
Female	42	24.1%	30	22.9%	32	22.7%	29	31.2%	133	24.7%
Total	174	100%	131	100%	141	100%	93	100%	539	100%

Overall, the newspapers used more women as sources than digital natives. However, when it came to topics, the newspapers included more women in stories related to entertainment. At the same time, the digital natives represent women on topics about social problems (see Table 45 and Table 46 in Appendix 6). A problem is observed when women's main presence is in topics about entertainment or social disparity, portraying them in a stereotypical role of a victim or in a sexualised way. As discussed in Chapter 6, the representation of women and their problems in the news is essential when they suffer a dramatic increase in gendered violence (UN Women et al., 2020). In Mexico, there are laws that support the inclusion of women in the legislatures, and the gender gap in the chambers is reducing. During the observed period, the Senate comprised 39.8% women and the Federal Congress 42.8%. The number of women in positions of State Secretaries was low (16.6%) as was their representation in the SCJN (18.1%) (INMUJERES, 2018). There were five presidential candidates, just one of whom was a woman, but she resigned on 17 May, between both periods analysed here. The representation of women is far from equal to men in Mexican politics. As their inclusion in different positions varies drastically, it is hard to say how much these results reflect women's role in Mexican society and to what extent there is a gender bias among journalists and their media. Diverse authors (Tuchman, 1979; Ross and Carter, 2011; Shor et al., 2014) have found that women are underrepresented in the media. Even when women held a high position in organisations typically covered, they had less coverage than their males in similar positions. Part of the underrepresentation is the need for more representation of women in the newsrooms therefore the issues that concern them are seen as less newsworthy. Around half of the sources in the organisations analysed are not identified with a person but with an institution. This could be because the media based more

of their news on the information pushed by government PR teams than on reporting work by the journalists, as mentioned before. The prepacked content will be analysed in more depth later in this chapter. The following subsection analyses the number of sources used per news story and what this can say about plurality and sourcing practices.

8.2.3 Number of sources in a story

The importance of including more than one source in a news story means incorporating different kinds of voices and points of view. Shoemaker and Reese (1996) note that “[e]ach source provides journalists with different information” (p.178), thus it is likely that the media using multiple sources per story improves their quality by reporting different approaches and angles of a single event. However, even using numerous sources can represent a single point of view (Franklin and Carlson, 2011; Boehmer et al., 2017).

The sources used by these four media was reviewed by analysing the variable *Number of sources used per story*. The limitation of only counting sources is that it does not allow us to assess whether different views are reflected in a news story. Despite these limitations, this variable gives a starting point to understand the sourcing practices of the news organisations analysed by pointing out three issues to explore with other variables: the abundance of news relying on a single source, news stories where the source is not declared, and the possibility that using many sources could lead to more in-depth reporting.

González Macías (2012) analysed the coverage of political issues in the local newspapers of the city of Morelia, Mexico, finding that the use of single sources to construct the news is a recurrent practice. The present research found similar results: in the normal period, half of the news (53%) used only one source, and 18% used two sources. In total, 1,037 sources were used in 700 news stories analysed. Animal Político used most sources (1.9 on average), followed by Aristegui Noticias (1.7 per story). The newspaper Reforma uses 1.3 sources per story, and El Universal used fewest sources (1 on average). During the normal period, 14% of the content does not state any source, with newspapers having more content that does not attribute a source. A quarter of El Universal's content and a fifth of the content published by Reforma do not declare their sources. In the campaign period analysed, 1,103 sources were

used in the 700 news stories, representing a slight increase in the total sources used. The use of a single source per story decreased (from 53% to 39%), while the news stories that do not make explicit the use of a source doubled compared to the normal period (from 13.9% to 26.3%). Despite the increase of items without sources and the overall rise of sources counted, the average of sources per news remained the same compared to the normal period. Animal Político increased its average number of sources per news item (2.6 on average), and Aristegui Noticias used 1.6 sources. In contrast, the newspapers used the fewest (Reforma uses 1.2, and El Universal uses 0.9 on average).

Table 35 Normal period: number of sources used per news item

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
0	4	2.3%	13	7.4%	36	20.6%	44	25.1%	97	13.9%
1	85	48.6%	101	57.7%	82	46.9%	104	59.4%	372	53.1%
2	43	24.6%	31	17.7%	36	20.6%	16	9.1%	126	18%
3	23	13.1%	16	9.1%	11	6.3%	8	4.6%	58	8.3%
4+	20	12%	14	8%	10	6%	3	2%	47	7%
Total	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	700	100%
	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news
	335	1.9	291	1.7	236	1.3	175	1	1037	1.4

Table 36 Campaign period: number of sources used per news item

	Animal Político	%	Aristegui Noticias	%	Reforma	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
0	24	13.7 %	38	21.7 %	50	28.6 %	72	41.1 %	184	26.3 %
1	51	29.1 %	71	40.6 %	77	44%	74	42.3 %	273	39%
2	33	18.9 %	37	21.1 %	25	14.3 %	17	9.7%	112	16%
3	26	14.9 %	13	7.4%	10	5.7%	8	4.6%	57	8.1%
4+	41	23%	16	9%	13	7%	4	2%	74	11%
Total	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	175	100%	700	100%
	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news	Total of sources	Mean per news
	458	2.6	279	1.6	216	1.2	150	0.9	1103	1.6

As can be seen in Table 7 and Table 8, there is a prevalence of content that relies on a single source in all kinds of media. However, while using multiple sources is rare in legacy newspapers, digital natives have more content with more than one source per news story and less news without sources. During the campaign period, Animal Político showed a significant increase in content without sources. This is even though, generally, the media increased their average number of sources per news story from 1.9 to 2.6 sources. A key reason for the increase in unsourced stories at Animal Político was the increase in opinion pieces that do not use sources; as mentioned before, when the content for the second week was collected, the website changed its structure and now placed opinion content on the homepage. This issue does not allow us to understand if the opinion content increased in this organisation. Animal Político Overall, the opinion genre increased from 6% in the content analysed during the normal period to 16% during the campaign period (see

Table 12 in Chapter 6). The content analysis does not reflect whether the increase was due to more opinion content produced or whether the opinion content had a more prominent space on the websites' homepages. As shown in the table below, the content analysis results showed that more news stories that do not use any source were found in Politics and Entertainment genres (the latter includes lifestyle, sports, arts and culture issues). Sometimes, the omission of sources is understandable in content like reviews, lists, or recipes. But when it comes to politics, the lack of sources is less justifiable, especially during the electoral period. This is particularly the case because the lack of sources was not restricted to opinion genres, it was also visible in news reports, particularly in legacy newspapers.

Table 37 Comparative table between content without sources and topics in both weeks analysed

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
Politics	25%	29.2%	30.8%	21.1%	16.7%	26%	31.8%	38.9%	25.8%	30.4%
Law enforcement	0%	4.2%	0%	5.3%	2.8%	0%	15.9%	9.7%	8.2%	5.4%
Economy	0%	12.5%	0%	0%	11.10%	10%	4.5%	1.4%	6.2%	4.9%
Social problems	0%	16.7%	7.7%	2.6%	5.6%	2%	0%	5.6%	3.1%	5.4%
Science, Health, Technology	0%	4.2%	15.4%	0%	5.6%	2%	4.5%	4.2%	6.2%	2.7%
Entertainment	75%	33.3%	46.2%	71.1%	58.3%	60%	43.2%	40.3%	50.5%	51.1%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
									N=97	N=184

In general terms, the digital natives studied used more sources to construct their news and had less content without sources. The analysis of sources does not reflect how each source is used in the news. Therefore, more sources could represent more facts and points of view in a single news story, which can help make more substantial arguments. Although many sources still represent only one point of view, they can also mean a more nuanced understanding of the events reported. As noted in Chapter 6, the newspapers analysed favour single source stories as they are required to publish their stories as fast as possible, so they only include the source from the event they are covering. However, digital natives have more time to publish their stories and therefore use information from other sources. With a predominance of passive reporting in the media, content is strongly shaped by what sources are willing or keen to make public. In contrast, active or proactive reporting practices require that journalists find reliable and suitable sources, analyse information, compare and contrast it with other sources, and look for different points of view. This kind of reporting may lead to original content and a deeper understanding of facts, points of view, and the incorporation of diverse sectors of society and will ideally also contribute to the performance of a watchdog role (Gans, 2003). The following section analyses how the sources were retrieved to understand the news making practices that prevail in the news organisations analysed.

8.3 Sourcing practices

This chapter has discussed the importance of understanding what sources have been used and how they have been retrieved to understand what sourcing practices prevail in the news organisations analysed. Sourcing practices constitute a fundamental step in the news making process. Even before deciding what news is, journalists turn to their sources for information (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 2004). News sources are "where journalists get their information from" (Manning, 2001, p.1). Those who "provide information as members or representatives of organized and unorganized interests groups" (Gans, 2004, p.80) to construct the news, either by providing interviews that will be quoted, background information, or information that leads to investigation of an issue (Gans, 2004; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Sources are more than fact providers. From a sociological perspective, journalists look for facts to

construct news stories, while sources want to reach the public. Gans (2004) defined this relationship as a "tug of war between sources and audience interests" (p.89). Some sources are more likely to be covered than others. As discussed in previous chapters, news organisations do not give the same coverage to all sources, assigning more importance to some over others, and routines established in the newsrooms influence their sourcing practices.

Specific sources have more coverage than others because they are more readily available, produce a large volume of information, have a high position in the hierarchy of groups they represent, or for the credibility that the media imbues them with; therefore, presenting reliable sources in news stories can build audience credibility (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 2004; Schudson, 2012; Shoemaker and Reese, 2014). Consequently, news organisations tend to use more elite sources, where the government institutions and high hierarchy officials prevail, as they already have the legitimisation of being providers of factual information. Therefore, smaller organisations or ordinary citizens (non-elite sources) have less coverage as journalists need to prove the factuality of the information they provide (Tuchman, 1978).

The news making routines of the four news organisations were analysed in Chapter 6, and it was noted that news organisations and their journalists have sources they routinely use in their reports. They are also constantly searching for new sources to inform about a particular event or add them to the actors they frequently monitor online or offline. It was also discussed how passive reporting stands out in the work of online editors, as the sourcing process is time-consuming, looking for sources and dealing with limited availability when needed can lead to more passive practice from journalists (Tuchman, 1978; Gans, 2004; Berkowitz, 2009; Schudson, 2012).

Active reporting implies collecting information to create original content or breaking news, such as looking for sources, investigating, and analysing documents. Reactive or passive reporting is the use of information that does not require journalists to go out to look for facts. Instead, they have information waiting for them in press releases, press conferences, the coverage of scheduled events, and similar resources (Gans, 2003; Lambie, 2016). The reliance on this kind of reporting can translate into more content produced with fewer resources as a

response to the limited resources of the news organisation and time pressure, as noted in Chapter 6. The following sub-sections discuss the findings of the content analysis in relation to sourcing practices. To this end, the variable *How the source was retrieved* was analysed. This variable categorises 12 ways of obtaining information, including what could be considered active and passive practices.

8.3.1 Prepacked content

A prevalence of information from press conferences and the coverage of scheduled events was observed,³⁷ with this content representing 24% of all sources analysed in both weeks. The literature widely discusses the role of public relations and news agencies in the construction of news, with the extensive use of prepacked information and the influence of the public relations offices (Manning, 2001; Davies, 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Jackson and Moloney, 2016). The increase in prepacked information use was found to diminish the content's quality and independence. Sources also want to be heard and set their information in the media agenda, as "sources often proactively try to influence what becomes news through news releases, news conferences, planned events, and leaks that can jump-start the reporting process" (Berkowitz, 2009, p.104).

However, in Mexican legacy media, the nature of the media's relationships with those in power meant that press releases and press conferences from the government became not only primary sources, but that the news organisations reproduced them without adding to or challenging the content provided (Hallin, 2000b; Trejo Delarbre, 2011), as noted in Chapter 3. Another recurrent practice for reporting the news was the so-called *declaracionitis* or sound bite, which consisted of only reproducing quotes with minimal context or assessment of the sources (Guerrero, 2010b; Márquez Ramírez, 2012). With these practices, the journalist

³⁷ The content was coded under this category when the news story openly declared using this kind of source or reproduced a copy of the press release or a video in the news story. When it was unclear how the information was obtained, the researcher tracked the information to its source by looking for fragments of quotes from the news story online. See Appendix 2, Codebook.

became more of a content curator, as reporting is becoming expensive, time-consuming, less productive and less critical in news organisations (Phillips, 2010b).

Coverage of press conferences and scheduled events increased during the campaign period (from 20.9% during the normal period to 26.7% during the campaign period). The legacy newspapers used these sourcing practices significantly more than the digital natives (see Table 38

Table 38 and Table). The use of other media (13.8% in both weeks) was also an important way to retrieve information, particularly during the normal period (it decreased during the campaign period from 17.7 to 10.1%). The digital natives used more other sources than the legacy newspapers; this can be explained by differences in the practices to produce ordinary content noted in Chapter 6. Digital natives relied more on deskbound practices to produce daily content. While their use of media and social media (from 18 to 10%) was reduced significantly in all cases, their use of other media as news sources resulted from the limitations of organisational affordances and time pressures. Chapter 6 discussed how this practice does not contribute to new information circulating in the news ecosystem. However, only some organisations replicate news stories, there are those that add value by contextualising or explaining the news published by other news organisations (Franklin, 2005; Paterson, 2008; Phillips, 2010b; Anderson, 2013b).

Table 38 Normal period: how the source was obtained

	Anima l Polític o	%	Aristeg ui Noticias	%	Reform a	%	El Universal	%	Total	%
Press release/ conference	37	11%	37	12.7 %	46	19.5 %	53	30.3 %	173	16.7 %
Scheduled event	12	3.6%	11	3.8%	14	5.9%	7	4%	44	4.2%
Interview	39	11.6 %	38	13.1 %	52	22%	14	8%	143	13.8 %
Public sessions	10	3%	6	2.1%	14	5.9%	8	4.6%	38	3.7%
Improvised interview	1	0.3%	2	0.7%	2	0.8%	1	0.6%	6	0.6%
Documents	35	10.4 %	27	9.3%	9	3.8%	12	6.9%	83	8%
Investigatio n of the media	6	1.8%	7	2.4%	5	2.1%	0	0%	18	1.7%
Media	81	24.2 %	59	20.3 %	20	8.5%	22	12.6 %	182	17.6 %
Social Media	71	21.2 %	50	17.2 %	31	13.1 %	28	16%	180	17.4 %
News Agencies	11	3.3%	29	10%	12	5.1%	12	6.9%	64	6.2%
Web Pages	10	3%	12	4.1%	10	4.2%	5	2.9%	37	3.6%
No identified	22	6.6%	13	4.5%	21	8.9%	13	7.4%	69	6.7%
Total	335	100%	291	100%	236	100%	175	100%	1037	100%

Table 39 Campaign period: how the source was obtained

	Animal Político	%	Ariste gui Notici as	%	Refor ma	%	El Universa l	%	Tot al	%
Press release/ conferenc e	73	15.9 %	41	14.7 %	65	30.1 %	31	20.7 %	210	19%
Schedule d event	28	6.1 %	13	4.7 %	32	14.8 %	12	8%	85	7.7 %
Interview	80	17.5 %	64	22.9 %	38	17.6 %	19	12.7 %	201	18.2 %
Public sessions	4	.9%	2	.7%	4	1.9 %	1	.7%	11	1%
Improvise d interview	0	0%	3	1.1 %	13	6%	0	0%	16	1.5 %
Documen ts	133	29%	46	16.5 %	12	5.6 %	20	13.3 %	211	19.1 %
Investigat ion of the media	6	1.3 %	10	3.6 %	10	4.6 %	5	3.3 %	31	2.8 %
Media	59	12.9 %	33	11.8 %	5	2.3 %	14	9.3 %	111	10.1 %
Social Media	26	5.7 %	23	8.2 %	20	9.3 %	37	24.7 %	106	9.6 %
News Agencies	38	8.3 %	32	11.5 %	2	.9%	0	0%	72	6.5 %
Web Pages	5	1.1 %	6	2.2 %	6	2.8 %	1	.7%	18	1.6 %
No identified	6	1.3 %	6	2.2 %	9	4.2 %	10	6.7 %	31	2.8 %
Total	458	100 %	279	100 %	216	100 %	150	100 %	1103	100 %

8.3.2 Interviews

The use of interviews conducted by all the news organisations increased from 13.8% during the normal period to 18.2% during the campaign period (except for Reforma). As expected, the digital native Aristegui Noticias stood out in terms of the interviews they used with a fifth

of their sources being interviews. This digital native is known for the interviews conducted by their director, Carmen Aristegui and her adversarial interview style has been essential to establishing her profile. As discussed in previous chapters, the company produces a streaming newscast following the format of a radio newscast.³⁸ On their website, some clips from live interviews are published as standalone content, and others are used as an additional source in the news stories.

Reforma is the second organisation who made most use of interviews during both periods. During the non-campaign sample period interviews made up 22% of sources, however, during the campaign period, interviews decreased (to 17.6%), while all the other media increased their use. The other news organisations also have significant use of interviews, accounting for 15% of the sources used by Animal Político and 10% by El Universal. The news interview is one of the most used active ways to gather information (facts and opinions). In journalism, interviews are usually the raw material used to produce news stories, either enriching a news story with facts, producing sound-bites or as a journalistic genre in itself (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Gans, 2004; Adams and Hicks, 2009; Nylund, 2011).

The interview can be conducted and used in different ways. The depth of the information obtained varies accordingly: quick questions during or at the end of a staged event, quick phone calls to get a fact or statement, scheduled face-to-face extended interviews mediated by technology, live interviews and recorded interviews (Adams and Hicks, 2009). Most of these examples were practices only used by TV and radio journalists, but the affordances of the Internet have allowed formats that were only used in broadcasting due to technological specifications to be used in online news. As discussed in Chapter 6, the interview as a news genre represented less than 2% of the content produced by the news organisations without considering Aristegui Noticias, for which 13.5% of their news content is based on the interview genre.

³⁸ It is important to note that Carmen Aristegui set up the digital native to be able to keep producing journalism after her radio newscast was suddenly cancelled by the radio station as a censorship measure, the result of a tribunal sentence.

8.3.3 Documents

Documents are an essential resource to validate the information presented by reporters, as they are considered "evidentiary objects" (Anderson, 2015, p.352) and "the most authoritative" (Reich and Barnoy, 2021, p.34) kind of source. The use of documents also rose by 10% (from 8% to 19.2%) during the campaign period, with digital natives using them more (Animal Político 29% and Aristegui Noticias 16.5%). The increase in the use of documents by Animal Político can be explained by the increase of different kinds of more in-depth reporting conducted by the digital natives, as discussed in Chapter 7. The fact-checking lab³⁹ and the investigative reports of this digital native explain why the number of documents used by that organisation increased during the campaign period, as analysis of documents is a common source used by reporters as part of their methodology for fact-checking exercises and investigative reporting. For readers, documents are perceived as evidence. However, their role in the news making process can vary from triggering a news story, confirming information, providing evidence, and providing details (Reich and Barnoy, 2021).

8.3.4 Social media

The use of social media was significant during the normal period (17.4%). Almost half of social media sources used were governmental (42.3%), while just 5.6% corresponded to citizens. The use of social media almost halved during the campaign period (9.6%); half of the government sources were obtained through social media (50%), and this time no citizens were used as social media sources. It is important to discuss the use of social media in the news making process. Content published on Twitter is not only considered a source but tweets themselves are becoming news. The same happens with content retrieved from other social media but on a smaller scale. Bane (2017) compared the use of Twitter in two digital natives (Buzzfeed and the Huffington Post) and two legacy newspapers (the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*) and found that while the digital natives used Twitter in 31% of their content, the newspapers only did it in 5%. The findings also show that the most prominent

³⁹ As noted in the previous chapter, Animal Político started a fact checking project called *Verificado 2018*.

use for Twitter was to present an opinion or reaction (68% of total tweets, while only 32% had an informational use). In a comparative study of the use of Twitter in eight British and Dutch newspapers, Broersma and Graham (2013) found that Twitter was consolidating its use as a source in both countries. Social media is used to contact a particular beat or with persons who can provide information. Either through their usual sources, new actors, or ordinary citizens, by looking for quotes made available by Twitter, "[j]ournalists can harvest a rich vineyard filled with utterances of diverse voices" (Broersma and Graham, 2013, p.461).

Broersma and Graham (2013) argue that Twitter makes it easier to contact sources that previously depended on the news organisation's social capital. However, they warn that elite sources still dominate the public discourse by "increasingly developing PR techniques that take advantage of the interplay between Twitter and traditional news outlets" (Broersma and Graham, 2013, p.461). Wallsten (2015) analysed the use of Twitter in the 2012 US election in American newspapers and found that only 5% of Twitter quotes used belonged to 'average Twitter users', while 50% belonged to politicians. The predominance of elite sources retrieved from social media in these studies is consistent with other studies' results (Papacharissi, 2002; Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Phillips, 2010a; Hermida, 2013). While social media has not closed the distance between citizens and news organisations, they allow the newsroom to monitor and reach a diversity of sources without having to leave the newsroom.

The diversity of sources journalists can access has increased with the Internet. Not only can they access many official sources around the world, but new institutions are pushing their information to the media, including private enterprises and NGOs (Phillips, 2010a). In contrast with this positive assessment, Fenton (2012) points out that on digital media where the flow of content should be constant, journalists are more likely to do less original reporting and use more prepacked information. However, this problem did not start with the digitalisation of newsrooms. Gans (2004) pointed out that deadlines and time pressures impact sourcing routines, making it more likely that journalists will have a set of sources they consult frequently. This tends to favour official sources and limit their use of sources that represent smaller and less powerful actors.

The online editors of all four news organisations do deskbound reporting with most of their sources being prepacked information or news published by other outlets. Reporters from the newspapers have their schedules dictated primarily to cover events from their main sources, such as press conferences and sessions in the Chambers of Senators and Deputies, as discussed in Chapter 6. These sourcing practices confirm that passive reporting prevails. In the four organisations, prepacked content and content retrieved from other media are dominant. The use of press releases, press conferences, and scheduled events increased during the campaign period analysed. However, some types of active reporting also increased, such as the use of interviews and the use of documents.

8.4 Discussion

The results show that the digital natives and newspapers use similar sources, but there are important differences. The digital natives use a larger number of sources and are more diverse as they have less news without sources and use a broader range of sources to construct their content. The digital natives rely more on government sources than legacy newspapers, but they use fewer press releases and look more deeply into the documents they produce, such as reports or statistics. Active reporting is an essential part of the watchdog role; without the active search for information, the media would struggle to fulfil this role. A heavy reliance on government sources was observed in all cases, a phenomenon present in studies around the globe, as noted previously. In Mexico, the predominance of governmental sources is part of the media's partisanship that developed during the authoritarian regime in Mexico and evidences that such practices are changing slowly (Waisbord, 2000; Márquez Ramírez, 2012).

During the campaign period, it was expected that opposition as a source would lead to a more balanced coverage of the actors. Instead, there was little change in representation of views. However, looking only at the sources, it cannot be said that the ruling party candidates were privileged in the coverage, as one governmental source, the National Electoral Institute, was key to informing citizens about the electoral process. The citizens' voice is mostly represented

via the organised society, as they have mechanisms to provide information to the media. In contrast, the ordinary citizen has fewer possibilities to have their voice heard. The newspaper *Reforma* and the digital native *Animal Político* used more ordinary citizens as sources, but did so differently. Citizens' voices were reflected in entertainment topics in both newspapers, while both digital natives gave them a voice on 'social problems' issues. In the newspapers' reporting, the inclusion of women as sources prevailed. However, they were mostly used in the coverage of entertainment topics, meaning they were represented stereotypically, similar to results found by other studies (Meyers, 1997; Krijnen and Bauwel, 2015; GMMP, 2020).

Passive reporting predominates in the four news organisations analysed. Primarily, they relied on press releases or press conferences. The risk of relying on this prepacked information is the impoverishment of journalism, as "if the information is not questioned, and politicians and officials are not held to account, information too easily becomes propaganda" (Phillips, 2010b, p.374). All the media used information produced by other media as a source, predominantly in *Aristegui Noticias*. Although the analysis does not look deeper into how such information is used, the discussion in the literature notes that this kind of sourcing does not contribute to making more, original information available to the readers, creating repetitive content in the news ecosystem (Paterson and Domingo, 2008; Phillips, 2010b). Chapter 6 discussed how the resources of digital natives are used to cover day-to-day news and to produce original content. These news organisations rely on passive reporting to inform about everyday events while dedicating their resources to inform about and report on more in-depth events that can impact citizens, as explained in Chapters 6 and 7.

More active reporting was expected during the campaign period as it represents a critical moment in the democratic process. Passive reporting that relies on prepacked information increased by 6% during the campaign period, and some active forms of reporting, such as interviews increased by 4.5% and reporting citing documents, doubled (from 8% to 19%). For example, *Animal Político* allied with other media to create a lab for fact-checking information given by the candidates or about the electoral process and the revision of news that went viral and could potentially be fake news. The data indicates a change in sourcing practices during the period of the elections. World Cup coverage also influenced sourcing practices.

The use of a single source in a news story, or a lack of sources, increased, particularly when reporting on entertainment topics.

The routines and practices performed during the newsgathering process are central to news making, as noted in the previous two chapters. The content analysis indicated that all the media rely mainly on passive reporting, drawing on press releases or conferences, coverage of scheduled events and using information from other news organisations. However, the small differences observed in the digital natives seem to indicate that their content is more inquisitive and gives more space to both organised and unaffiliated citizens.

The newspaper Reforma fell somewhere between the practices of the digital natives and the legacy newspaper El Universal, which used significantly fewer sources and was less diverse. Riva Palacio (2004) argues that Reforma was born as a critical media, even though it had to adapt its infotainment content to respond to market demands, while the apparent increase of the civic role at El Universal was more a consequence of market conditions in the 2000s than a genuine interest to distance itself from its partisan role and create a more civic or watchdog kind of journalism. This can explain why the newspaper Reforma performed more similarly to the digital natives than the newspaper El Universal, which stands out for using a smaller number of sources per news story and having more news where it was not possible to identify a source, which did not contribute to reflecting a plurality of voices.

Chapter 9. Conclusions

As a result of the investigations that we have been doing, such as the recent 'Master scam' or with 'The ghost companies of Veracruz', or 'To kill in Mexico', they have been constructing this identity of Animal Político as a cool news media but also as a serious news media and investigative journalism news media. (Interviewee 6, Reporter, Animal Político)

[Aristegui Noticias] is a site of resistance, of defending your freedom (Interviewee 7, Investigative Reporter, Aristegui Noticias)

9.1 Introduction

Digital native news organisations have emerged around the world, garnering praised for being innovators and creating and transforming journalistic jobs and practices (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Tandoc and Jenkins, 2017; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Despite the large diversity of formats, aims and niche audiences, previous research agrees that digital natives want to produce 'better journalism', filling the gaps in the market (and society) that legacy news outlets have left underserved (Bruno and Nielsen, 2012; Nicholls et al., 2016; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). To understand what this 'better journalism' represents, this thesis has explored the roles of journalism in the specific context of Mexico.

In democracies that have not matured, and where there is a clientelistic relationship between the press and politics, such as in Mexico, digital natives have the opportunity to produce journalism with more autonomy from the government than legacy news organisations (Higgins Joyce, 2018; Schmitz Weiss et al., 2018). My research has shown how two of the most important Mexican digital natives positioned themselves as alternatives to legacy newspapers by creating new structures, business models and practices that allow them to produce a

different kind of reporting. My research contributes new empirical understanding of the kinds of practices and content they produce, and how these contribute to democracy.

I analysed four case studies – two digital native organisations, Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias, and two legacy newspapers, Reforma and El Universal – to address the question: **How are Mexican digital native news organisations using the affordances of the Internet to produce a kind of journalism that can contribute to democracy in Mexico?** In the preceding chapters I used a mixed approach, I analysed the content of 1,400 news stories and 28 face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews from the four news organisations to explore the following sub-questions:

- RQ 1. Which organisational structures are most prevalent among digital native news organisations and how are they reflected in journalistic practices?
- RQ 2. Which professional journalistic practices predominate in digital native news organisations and how do these shape the content they produce?

The findings of my research confirm that Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias have designed organisational structures and practices that allow them to focus their efforts on creating in-depth reporting. Digital organisations have more flexible structures because they are not tied to set deadlines or to producing a specific volume of information and, importantly, need fewer resources to operate. Their online editors generate the day-to-day content, allowing reporters to focus on investigative journalism. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias publish everyday news at a slower pace than the legacy newspapers; they aim to produce comprehensive reporting of the news, providing context and explanations, which reflects a civic-oriented informational role. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias produce in-depth reporting periodically, which can take the form of more substantiated news reports, *reportajes*, interviews and investigative reporting. Animal Político also dedicates specific resources to fact-checking on a regular basis. This in-depth reporting contributes to the watchdog role by exposing wrongdoings and power abuses, combating disinformation by challenging the official discourse, and debunking fake news. Both digital natives produce more content that contributes to a plurality of reporting by giving representation to the issues and voices of diverse sectors of society. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias produce a lower

volume of information than both legacy newspapers analysed. However, they produce more robust reporting that contributes to performing an enhanced role of providing information to citizens.

In this chapter, I summarise the key findings of this thesis that substantiate this conclusion in a discussion divided into two sections. The first section reflects on the relationship between the organisational structures and practices that prevail in the news organisations, the patterns in news content shown by the content analysed, and how the content of digital natives contributes to the roles of journalism of providing information, being a watchdog and reflecting a plurality of voices. In the second section, the chapter concludes with reflections on directions for future research.

9.2 Organisations, practices, and content

Organisational aims, structures and resources shape the practices of staff, and with this, the content they produce (Shoemaker and Reese, 2014; Hellmueller and Mellado, 2015). Aiming to produce ‘better’ journalism than legacy media is a common point observed across the world: digital natives try to differentiate themselves by focusing on a specific type of reporting or the coverage of a niche topic (Carlson and Usher, 2016; Nicholls et al., 2016; Usher, 2017b; Deuze and Witschge, 2020). Both digital native news organisations, Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias, state their aims as being to differentiate themselves from legacy news organisations by focusing less on passive reporting, having more autonomy to report, and covering issues about human rights, corruption and violence, as discussed in Chapter 5.

Digital natives have more editorial autonomy to do more in-depth reporting because they do not rely on official advertising that can be used to limit it, and their ownership is not linked to the big media groups that have grown up in Mexico under clientelistic relationships with the government, as analysed in Chapters 2 and 5. These two organisational characteristics enable them to produce more content with a watchdog role, as Mellado and colleagues (2018) also observed in digital natives in Chile. Although the primary source of income of all four news

organisations analysed is advertising, the sources of this revenue creates a different set of conditions. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias rarely receive official advertising because they are perceived as adversarial news organisations. Both rely on native advertising, which gives them more independence from advertisers (from direct purchase) and government pressures, but also makes them more dependent on traffic and on Google and Meta as intermediaries – this can lead organisations to focus more on content that attracts more traffic (Blom and Hansen, 2015; Alves, 2016; Einstein, 2016). Animal Político also applies for grants from international journalistic NGOs to fund specific investigative projects. Both newspapers have official advertising as a primary income source, therefore their editorial autonomy can be dependant on this income.

Digital natives having smaller organisations allows them to invent themselves with more freedom to fulfil their goals. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias have different organisational structures than the two newspapers analysed, Reforma and El Universal. The most apparent difference between the news organisations is their size; digital natives each have around 30 staff members, while the newspapers have about 700-800 each. Legacy newspapers are tied to producing a high volume of information to keep their websites updated and to fill their printed editions, and the size of their organisations makes change more complex. Consequently, each of the news organisations has different production rhythms and practices. Animal Político publishes, on average, 25 news stories per day, Aristegui Noticias publishes 100, while both newspapers publish around 1,000 per day. El Universal aims to be the news organisation that breaks the news, and for Reforma speed is also crucial; however, their staff emphasised that their priority is to publish news stories with more context about a particular event.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the most important normative role of journalism is to provide the information that citizens need to make decisions; this information needs to be “relatively accurate, accessible, diverse, relevant, and timely independently produced” (Nielsen, 2017, p.1253). While all the journalistic content contributes towards providing information to citizens, not all news organisations perform this normative role in the same way. Having more information does not mean citizens are better informed. The fast pace in the race for breaking

news results in multiple short updates of an event; this contributes to an oversaturation of content through which the reader has to sift to obtain information (Usher, 2014). Digital natives' resources do not allow them to have the same production rhythm as legacy newspapers. Instead, as discussed in Chapter 6, their daily coverage aims to publish the most relevant events of the day with 'added value'; their approach is to create stories that provide the reader with context and explanations. Digital natives also use more hyperlinks and audio-visual resources to substantiate the news and provide additional information to readers, characteristic of civic journalism, which proposes that journalism not only should present the facts, but also contextualise information and explain to citizens important issues and processes as well as explaining why they are important. This approach creates a distance from the objectivity rituals of presenting the facts alone (Rosen, 1999; Mellado, 2015; Mellado and Van Dalen, 2017).

The production of day-to-day content and in-depth reporting shapes the roles of online editors and reporters within their news organisations. Online editors of the four news organisations analysed have deskbound jobs: they monitor their regular sources from the newsrooms to publish the day-to-day content. Most of their work is not original, as they rely on content published by news agencies, news media, social media, and press releases. Digital natives take more time to add background and explain the news, while fast-paced newspapers do not always have the opportunity to add further information to their content.

The watchdog role and a plurality of voices are other normative roles that the literature also recognises as the most important contributions of journalism to democracy. These two roles contribute to the informational role by promoting more robust reporting practices. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias structure their news organisations to enable their journalists to do more investigative journalism. This was reflected in the content analysed as investigative reporting was only found among digital natives, along with more in-depth reporting outputs. While Reforma and El Universal produce investigative content, it is not as frequent because they do not have resources regularly allocated to this output. Investigative journalism performs the watchdog role by exposing wrongdoings and abuses of power; it

advocates for transparency and the accountability of public institutions and officials (Carson, 2015).

The job of reporters varies substantially between digital natives and legacy newspapers. Newspaper reporters have a beat to cover; their agenda is dictated by covering pre-scheduled events of their primary sources, they must constantly submit information to keep the site updated, in addition to content for the printed edition. Churnalism and *declaracionitis* prevails in the newspapers as a reporting practice wherein, as discussed in Chapters 2, 7 and 8, they reproduce the official discourse without verifying the factuality of their declarations – this has been reported by diverse studies in Mexico (Guerrero, 2010a; Trejo Delarbre, 2011; Márquez Ramírez, 2012; González Macías and Echeverría, 2017). Legacy newspaper staff must negotiate time to do in-depth coverage, and investigative reporting is rare. In contrast, reporters from both digital news organisations are not assigned to cover a specific beat or source; although they specialise in certain topics, they have more flexibility. They are not dedicated to covering the daily agenda of the news organisations; they are focused on doing in-depth reporting, which, depending on the event, can take them days, weeks, or even months to investigate. They have more fluid deadlines which allow them to focus on quality and fulfilling their objectives instead of meeting deadlines. Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias both have organisational structures to produce regular in-depth reporting, as analysed in Chapter 7.

Animal Político's analysed content reflected more investigative projects and reports; it is the only news organisation that engaged in fact-checking, not only within the news organisation but also leading a nationwide fact-checking project during the electoral period in 2018, in which 60 organisations took part. In the case of Aristegui Noticias, while their reporters are also focused on investigative reporting, the three-hour daily newscast shapes the routines of all the staff, as content for it takes priority over other kinds of reporting. However, the news organisation's 'star product' resides in the newscast: the interviews conducted by its director, Carmen Aristegui. Collaboration with other organisations is crucial for digital natives because it allows them to expand their resources to produce content and reach new audiences by sharing their content. The content analysis shows that both digital natives published stories

from the same investigative work produced by an NGO dedicated to funding this reporting, although with different outputs.

Investigative journalism and other forms of in-depth reporting also contribute to the informational role by providing a deeper understanding of important issues. However, there is a risk that in a country such as Mexico without a relatively healthy democracy, mechanisms of accountability, and an effective justice system, investigative reports documenting corruption and wrongdoing of political actors can create a "pervasive cynicism" (Waisbord, 2000) when entities are not held accountable for their acts. Márquez Ramírez (2012) and Guerrero (2014) also argue that investigative reports are dismissed as an attempt to 'beat' politicians, a term that has been used by the current president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (Cortés, 2022; Newman et al., 2023), increasing the polarisation in the country.

Animal Político was the only news organisation that had carried out systematic fact-checking in Mexico from its inception, but their collaborative efforts to run *Verificado 2018* during the electoral period expanded the impact they had. Fact-checking scrutinises the discourse of public officers to expose false or misleading claims and contributes to challenging official narratives by verifying their discourse and debunking fake news, which fights against disinformation and misinformation. Investigative journalism and fact-checking both contribute to making officials accountable for their acts and discourse and presenting evidence to citizens to access factual and reliable information to inform their decisions (Graves, 2016b; Amazeen, 2020). This exercise is essential in Mexico, where *sound bite* reporting without verifying the truth of the information prevailed to avoid accusations of being biased, to maintain their privileges, or not be 'punished', as discussed in Chapter 2. Graves and Konieczna (2015) argue that fact-checking can help the field repair through "responding to a perceived rise in political misinformation" (p.1968) created by government officials and the news media – they do this through avoiding passive reporting of official discourse, not publishing false and not leaving misleading statements unchecked.

Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias claim to be focused on covering human rights, social problems, corruption, and violence. Although the four news organisations analysed prevailed in reporting on politics, the content analysed also reflects that digital natives focus on writing

about social problems in their ordinary content and in-depth reporting, as the content analysed in Chapters 6 and 7 shows. Another characteristic of civic journalism observed in the content was the coverage of topics related to human rights, justice and equality (Hughes, 2006), which are part of the niche topics Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias are covering.

This thesis's findings also suggest that Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias produce more content that contributes to plural reporting, which contributes to a more robust informational role. Having practices that ensure diverse groups see themselves represented periodically in the news contributes to making news relevant for them to discuss problems that affect them in the public sphere (McQuail, 1992; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007; Christians et al., 2009). Analysing the subjects portrayed in the news stories, digital natives portrayed more diverse groups in their news stories, being migrants, people in situations of social disparity (such as poverty, access to education, health, food, and housing), and women (as subjects of violence). Therefore, both digital natives are trying to fulfil their aims to report issues in which they differentiate their agendas from the legacy news organisations and to give voice to a group rarely represented in the news. The analysis of sources also supports this, as discussed in Chapter 8: it showed that both digital natives use more ordinary citizens when discussing social problems, while newspapers represent them mostly in terms of entertainment issues. Animal Político represents civil society more as a source but also employs regular and invited opinion columnists.

Even when all news organisations rely primarily on official sources, digital natives use more periodic press releases and press conferences in their reporting and rely more on reports and statistics; while this is also a passive reporting practice, the 'added value' mentioned above, makes the digital natives' content more robust. Analysis of sources showed that Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias use more sources per news story than the legacy newspapers, and they have fewer stories that do not mention any source. This shows more transparency in the news making process, which contributes to gaining the credibility of their readers, according to Karlsson (2010), which could be used to repair the journalistic field on Mexico, where distrust has been increasing in recent years if the digital natives work on being more transparent not only about the content production, but also about their organisation, as

discussed in Chapter 5. It might also help news organisations to increase their symbolic capital and their recognition among audiences, which could increase their readerships (Newman et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2023).

9.2.1 Normative roles of journalism

The previous section of these conclusions has already discussed how the practices of news organisations reflect normative roles. This section aims to highlight that there is limited literature about the normative roles of Mexican journalists, however, the limited studies that have explored the role perception of Mexican journalists confirm that classical Western normative roles prevail, although the literature points out that the roles adopted are not entirely aligned with a libertarian ideology, this coexistence of theoretically opposite roles is also found in long standing-democracies. (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Márquez Ramírez and Hughes, 2016a; Mellado et al., 2021).

The study of Márquez Ramírez (2012) and the Journalistic Role Performance global study (Mellado et al., 2021), also points out a gap between the journalistic role conception and how they are performed, as has been evidenced by where the content shows roles that have been theorized as opposites. These studies argue more journalists of newer generations have a degree in comparison with the journalists of the authoritarian regime in Mexico, and therefore, their ideals and practices are slowly shifting towards liberal roles (Márquez Ramírez, 2012; Márquez Ramírez and Hughes, 2016a; Mellado et al., 2021). This generational change can also contribute to digital natives emerging with less 'baggage' of 'old practices'. In addition, emerging NGOs and professional collectives are actively sharing knowledge and specific practices (such as investigative journalism and data journalism) and coordinating strategies to improve journalists' safety, as discussed in Chapter 7, which contributes towards the professionalisation of the journalists.

The focus of this thesis is on the organisations and the practices prevailing in them. While we have explored some aspects of the individuals' role perception, the present study analysed the aims of the news organisations, the journalistic practices that prevail in them, and how they influence the content they produce, or borrowing the term used by the JRP study, the

role performance. Despite the different practices, journalists working in newspapers and digital natives share, in general terms, common role perceptions. As discussed throughout the empirical chapters, journalists working for legacy newspapers face limitations in managing their agendas due to organisational structures. In contrast, journalists working in the digital natives analysed demonstrate greater autonomy. Thus, digital native news organisations are spaces where journalistic practices are narrowing the gap between the role conception and perception as part of everyday practices.

Journalistic roles are not static, they are renegotiated constantly (Hanitzsch and Vos, 2017), so the journalistic roles discussed here might need to be reassessed as journalism and the country continue their democratisation process, which has not been linear. This thesis confirms that despite the content were old values and practices remain and new challenges emerging, such as violence against journalists, some spaces can operate with more autonomy to pursue their objectives.

Nielsen (2017) argues that other institutions can better fulfil some normative roles; however, as the findings of this thesis have shown, it can be done collaboratively. Freelance journalists specialised in a certain kind of reporting, and NGOs collaborating with media organisations (digital natives and legacy media) have contributed to expanding the resources of news organisations to overcome their limitations. The directions for future research suggested by the findings and limitations of this thesis are discussed in the following section.

9.3 Future research

Since this research project began, there have been many changes in digital journalism and politics in Mexico. Digital native big players such as BuzzFeed News, Vice News and the Huffington Post closed many international offices, including those based in Mexico, in 2019 (Fernández and Acevedo, 2020). During the spring of 2023, BuzzFeed closed their news division, and Vice filed for bankruptcy (Sullivan, 2023) due to financial pressures and 'platform dependence' on Google and Meta to reach audiences and advertising revenues (Carson and

Muller, 2024). The closure of digital natives in Mexico was part of a global response by the organisations; however, in Mexico, it also influenced the change of government in December 2018. During 2019 and 2020, many news organisations in Mexico closed or suffered cuts due to decreases in the government's official advertising, coming from a presidential period characterised by expenditure in this matter (Fernández and Acevedo, 2020; Cortés, 2022). As analysed in Chapter 5, Animal Político and Aristegui Noticias earn little income through official advertising; since their beginnings they have had to consider business models that are not dependent on this revenue, therefore they have not suffered a loss of revenue from this source, and they continue to serve their social media followers. Aristegui Noticias has increased traffic to their website. Animal Político had a drop in readership since 2022, but have grown their staff, from 28 members identified in Autumn 2019, to 33; while this is not a large difference, it reflects organisational growth.⁴⁰

While this thesis has discussed the advantages of being digital, a significant disadvantage was shown with the closure of these organisations and the ephemerality of the web. It was a shock for the former staff of the Huffington Post Mexico when they closed the office, firstly because of the lack of notice of their layoff and second because content was deleted from the website a few days after they announced the closure (Díaz, 2019). The content of *Verificado 2018* had the same fate: the website is no longer available, and with this, access to their content has also vanished. This is a loss not only of journalistic content but also of the symbolic role of contributing to the 'memory' of a society (Tenenboim-Weinblatt and Motti Neiger, 2020). A general research inquiry that should be considered is the impact of losing journalistic digital archives and what considerations are required regarding the archival aspect of digital-only journalistic content.

⁴⁰ The number of monthly unique visitors recovered from ComScore in November 2023 are as follows: Animal Político 1.5 million; Aristegui Noticias 6.4 million; Reforma 37.1 million, Reforma 3.9 million. The traffic data recovered from ComScore at the start of this project in 2019 is as follows: Animal Político 2.9 million; Aristegui Noticias 6.4 million; Reforma 24.7 million, Reforma 2.6 million. Animal Político reported 4.5 million unique visitors in 2022 (Editorial Criterio, 2023, p.6).

A more specific future research direction that emerged from the findings of this thesis is to have a deeper understanding of Mexican digital natives' specific practices for creating investigative reporting and fact-checking, their outputs, and their impact. This thesis argues that the collaboration of digital natives with other organisations enables them to increase their resources to produce and distribute in-depth reporting. These relationships are an important aspect to focus on in future investigations to understand the risks and advantages of establishing these collaborations, how they influence all the parts involved, whether they shape routines and limit or enhance their autonomy, and what they gain. The collaborations mostly reflect collaborations with other national organisations; an analysis of these networks would help to understand the specific impact of this collaboration for all organisations involved. The Western literature also highlights the cooperation of news organisations around the world to produce large-scale investigative projects such as the Panama Papers, to understand experiences of working collaboratively from the point of view of the 'Global South', as most of the analysis to date is based on Western experiences (Carson, 2020). Finally, an important research direction to analyse involves the impact of investigative journalism in Mexico, to understand whether it promotes the accountability of the government and their officials. From the point of view of audiences it will be useful to understand how they perceive the government and their institutions when investigative reporting evidences wrongdoings, how officials respond to these reports, and how readers perceive the news organisations that do this kind of reporting.

Appendix 1. Cases of study general information

Name of the site	Type of media	Description ⁴¹	Funding
Animal Político animalpolitico.com	Digital native news organisation National coverage	Traffic: 2.91 M Emerged in 2010, directed by Daniel Moreno. The main offer of the site is space given to people from different civil society groups, investigative journalism and fact checking.	• Advertising • Grants • Crowdfunding • Subscriptions • Consultancy and training
Aristegui Noticias aristeguinoticias.com	Digital native news organisation National coverage	Traffic: 6.49 M Emerged in 2012, directed by: Carmen Aristegui. Site created after Aristegui's radio newscast was cancelled. Since 2017 it also transmits a live newscast on YouTube. Carmen Aristegui is recognised for the kind of interviews she conducts.	• Advertising
El Universal eluniversal.com.mx	Legacy media National coverage	Traffic: 24.77 M The newspaper launched in 1916 and migrated online in 1996. It is the most read news site in the country and is identified as being aligned with the government during diverse periods of its history.	• Advertising
Reforma reforma.com	Legacy media National coverage	Traffic: 2.6 M The newspaper launched in 1993 and migrated online in 1996. The newspaper marked the process of the Mexican market opening up. Its online version is the only one in the country with a paywall.	• Advertising • Subscriptions

⁴¹ Site traffic was measured using the tool <https://www.similarweb.com>. The figures represent the unique visits during the previous month. The data presented here were collected on July 2017.

Animal Político

Type of media: Digital Native

Created in 2010. Started as a Twitter account (@pajaropolitico) that reported news about politics in October 2009

Director: Daniel Moreno Chavez

Editor: Tania L. Montalvo

[Self-description on their website:](#)

Animal Político is a new digital publication that brings together a group of journalists who have decided to bet on this way to do journalism.

Although it is a portal focused on political information, it understands not only what political actors say and do, but also that which emerges from the initiatives of those who exercise their citizenship and do not passively accept the decisions of the political class.

Nor does it evade the fact that today information on security and organized crime is essential to understand what is happening in the country.

In Political Animal we bet on the information generated by our own team, as well as the opinion of those who have agreed to join this initiative. But we also want to offer our readers a service that includes the highlights of national and international events, humour and debates, which can be found through our newsletter system.

We aspire, in addition, to use all the tools offered by the digital world, so we will be adding photo galleries, maps and infographics, but above all we want to have a different language, typical of the web and no longer of the printed media.

We want this space to offer context, to understand the national events, and to use the memory to not forget informative facts that remain without explanation or investigation.

This is Political Animal and we aspire to be a space of reference, of obligatory consultation for those who are interested in knowing what is happening in the country.

Section	Description
Expediente Animal (Animal File)	Special reports
México Desigual (Unequal Mexico)	Special reports about inequality
Especiales (Specials)	Series of special reports
El Sabueso (The bloodhound)	Fact Checking reports
Nacional (National)	-
El Plumaje (The Plumage)	Opinion columns
El Palenque	Space where the media propose a topic and different actors express their point of view
Sociedad (Society)	Social problems
Internacional (International)	-
Tendencias (Trends)	-
Ramón	Cartoon
Videos	-

Awards:

Award & date awarded	Work awarded	Notes
Breach/Valdez Journalism and human rights awards 2023 (Mexico). Category: Children and adolescents rights.	Niñez migrante, promesas de papel (Migrant childhood, paper promises) Investigative reporting	Journalist awarded: Manuel Ureste
Honoring reporting on Latin America & the Caribbean, Maria Moors Cabot Prizes, Columbia University Special Citation	Trajectory	Journalist awarded: Nayeli Roldán

German Journalism Award Periodismo Walter Reuter (PAPWR) (Mexico-Germany) 2022	Series of <i>reportajes</i> about the flooding of a public hospital. Se ignoró llamado de auxilio del hospital del IMSS en Tula; ni Conagua o Protección Civil alertaron sobre la inundación (The call for help from the IMSS hospital in Tula was ignored; Neither Conagua nor Civil Protection warned about the flood) Conagua y Sacmex descargaron e inundaron con aguas negras a Tula; se planeó así para salvar al Valle de México (Conagua and Sacmex discharged and flooded Tula with sewage; It was planned this way to save the Valley of Mexico) Sacmex reserva por 3 años las bitácoras relacionadas con el desbordamiento del río Tula y la inundación que causó 14 muertes (Sacmex reserves for 3 years the logs related to the overflowing of the Tula River and the flood that caused 14 deaths)	Journalist awarded: Zedryk Raziel Cruz Merin
Online Journalism Awards Category: Excellence in Collaboration and Partnerships	Reporting in “Verificado 2018”	Media awarded: AJ+ Español, Animal Político and Pop-Up Newsroom
Ortega and Gasset Awards 2018 (Spain) Category: Best story or journalistic investigation	La estafa maestra (The master scam)	Journalists awarded: Miriam Castillo, Nayeli Roldán y Manuel Ureste With the NGO Mexicanos contra la Corrupción e Impunidad (MCCI) (Mexicans against Corruption and Impunity)
German Journalism Award Periodismo Walter Reuter (PAPWR) (Mexico-Germany) 2017	La negra historia de Odebrecht en México (The dark history of Odebrecht in Mexico)	Journalists awarded: José Raúl Olmos Olmos y Daniel Lizárraga Méndez Media Awarded: El Financiero-Bloomberg, Animal Político, Aristegui Noticias y Reforma

National Journalism Award 2016 (Mexico) Category: Report/research journalism	Las empresas fantasma de Veracruz (The ghost companies of Veracruz)	Journalists awarded: Arturo Angel Mendieta V́ctor Hugo Arteaga Daniel Moreno Ch́vez Oḿr Sanchez de Tagle Omar Bobadilla Yosune Chamizo
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Aristegui Noticias

Type of media: Digital Native

Created on 16 April 2012. On 16 January 2017, starts the transmission of a newscast on streaming.

Founder: Carmen Aristegui

[Self-description on their website:](#)

We are a group of independent journalists, specialists in the Internet and social networks. Under the direction of the journalist Carmen Aristegui, we have developed one of the most important news sites in Mexico for more than 5 years.

The project combines the diverse experiences of those who carry it out. Some of us have developed in other media -such as radio, television and the written press- and we approach colleagues, whose work and identity have played in digital journalism and horizontal communication on social media.

We know the importance of journalism and free expression in the development of societies and in the construction of democracies. We also know the strength and potential of social networks and the new communication phenomena that today dominate and determine a fundamental part of the lives of millions of people.

In societies like ours, where the design of the social communication system is characterized by the possession in a few hands of the concessions of mass media, the old cultural inertias that restrict free expression, debate and accountability, they continue to mark the public life of our country. Hence our conviction that journalists and independent professionals must take on the task of developing new projects, considering new spaces and creating alternatives.

Our purpose for this digital era is to exercise, from here, as in other spaces, a journalism in freedom.

From here and from now, we thank those who decide to put their eyes and intelligence on this site that is born today. In this two ways communication - between you and us - we have everything to learn. We welcome you.

Sections:

Section	Description
Aristegui en vivo (Aristegui Live)	Livestreamed Newscast
México	National
Economía (Economy)	-
Deportes (Sports)	-
Opinión (Opinion)	Editorial columns
Multimedia	Multimedia galleries
Libros (Books)	-
Lo+Destacado (The most outstanding)	Carrousel with the most outstanding of the day
Última hora (Last minute)	Breaking news

Awards:

Award & date awarded	Work awarded	Notes
IPI World Press Freedom Heroes 2023	Trajectory	Journalist awarded: Carmen Aristegui
XIX Journalism award 'Diario Madrid' 2023	Trajectory	Journaliss awarded: Carmen Aristegui
German Journalism Award Periodismo Walter Reuter (PAPWR) (Mexico-Germany) 2017	La negra historia de Odebrecht en México (The dark history of Odebrecht in Mexico)	Journalists awarded: José Raúl Olmos Olmos y Daniel Lizárraga Méndez Media Awarded: El Financiero-Bloomberg, Animal Político, Aristegui Noticias y Reforma
Verdienstorden der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany) (2015)	Trajectory	Journalist awarded: Carmen Aristegui
Latin American Investigative Journalism Prize (2015)	"La Casa Blanca de Enrique Peña Nieto" (The White House of Enrique Peña Nieto)	Journalists awarded: Daniel Lizarraga, Rafael Cabrera, Irving Huerta, Sebastian Barragan, and Carmen Aristegui
National Journalism Award 2015 (Mexico) Report/research journalism	"La Casa Blanca de Enrique Peña Nieto" (The White House of Enrique Peña Nieto)	Journalists awarded: Rafael Cabrera, Daniel Lizárraga, Irving Huerta, Sebastián Barragán, Cármen Aristegui, Gustavo Varguez
Gabriel García Márquez Award 2015 Category: Coverage	La casa blanca de Enrique Peña Nieto (The White House of Enrique Peña Nieto)	Journalists awarded: Rafael Cabrera, Carmen Aristegui, Daniel Lizárraga e Irving Huerta
National Journalism Award 2015 (Mexico) Category: Coverage	Investigación de la masacre de Apatzingán (Investigation of the Apatzingán massacre)	Journalist awarded: Laura Castellanos, from Aristegui Noticias, Proceso and Univision
Légion d'honneur, grade Chevalier (Legion of Honour, Knight) (France) (2012)	Trajectory	Journalists awarded: Carmen Aristegui

Reforma

Type of media: Legacy Newspaper

Created on 20 November 1993

Owner: Grupo Reforma, property of Alejandro Junco de la Vega

Director: Alejandro Junco de la Vega

General Editor: Lázaro Ríos

Online Editor: Alejandro Junco de la Vega E.

Circulation: 139, 469

[Self-description on their website:](#)

With the most extensive network of professional journalists covering Mexico, REFORMA Group is the most credible and prestigious information institution in the country. Through its newspapers, internet sites and information services, Grupo Reforma sets the informative agenda of the Mexican society. A team of 700 reporters and photographers in three major cities of the country and a network of correspondents throughout the Republic capture the image of Mexico today. Together with them, sent in the main capitals of the world offer a vision of the global panorama.

Sections:

Section	Description
Internacional (International)	-
Nacional	-
Voto 18 (Vote 18)	Elections
Ciudad (City)	Mexico City
Justicia (Justice)	-
Estados (States)	-
Negocios (Business)	-
Cancha (Court)	Sports
Gente (People)	Celebrities
Cultura (Culture)	-
Ciencia (Science)	-
Revista R (R Magazine)	Weekly supplement about politics.
Opinión (Opinion)	Editorial Columns
Estilos (Styles)	Lifestyle
Sociales (Social)	Socialite
Esquelas (Obituaries)	-
Guías (Guides)	TV guide, films screening
Diversión (Fun)	Events, Crosswords, Sudoku, horoscopes
Avisos de ocasión (Classified adds)	-
Lo más visto (The most seen)	-

The newspaper do not accepted awards

Award & date won	Work awarded	Notes
German Journalism Award Periodismo Walter Reuter (PAPWR) (Mexico-Germany) 2017	La negra historia de Odebrecht en México (The dark history of Odebrecht in Mexico)	Journalist awarded: José Raúl Olmos Olmos y Daniel Lizárraga Méndez Media Awarded: El Financiero-Bloomberg, Animal Político, Aristegui Noticias y Reforma

El Universal

Type of media: Legacy Newspaper

El Universal is the oldest Mexican newspaper with national coverage, founded in 1916. In 2002 the evening edition is transformed into a morning tabloid.

Owner: El Universal, Compañía Periodística Nacional

Director: Juan Francisco Ealy Jr.

General Editor: David Guadalupe Aponte Hurtazo

Circulation: 115, 110

[Self-description on their website:](#) None

Sections:

Section	Description
Nación (Nation)	-
Mundo (World)	-
Metrópolis (Metropolis)	Mexico City
Estados (States)	-
Elecciones 2018 (Elections 2018)	-
Rusia 2018 (Russia 2018)	-
Opinión (Opinion)	Editorial Columns
Cartera (Portfolio)	Business
Universal Deportes (Universal sports)	-
Espectáculos (Entertainment)	-
Cultura (Culture)	-
Tiempo de Relojes (Watches Time)	Watches
Ciencia y Salud (Science and Health)	-
Techbit	-
Menú (Menu)	-
De Última (Last news)	-
Destinos (Destinations)	Travel
Autopistas (Motorways)	-
English	News content published in English
Minuto x minuto (Minute x minute)	-
El Universal video	-

Awards (since 2010):

Award & date won	Work awarded	Notes
Inter American Press Association (IAPA) Awards Category: coverage	Cobertura de producción, tráfico y consumo de fentanilo en México	Journalists awarded: Miriam Ramírez, Ernesto Aroche and Miguel Angel Vega
Communication award José Pagés Llergo 2023	“La acidez del narco frenó la producción del limón”	Journalist awarded: Carlos Arrieta
Sigma Award, Data Journalism Awards 2020 Category: Best data-driven reporting Category: <i>Reportaje</i>	El peligro de ser joven en México (The danger of being a young in Mexico)	Journalists awarded: Íñigo Arredondo, Daniela Guazo, and Melissa Amezcua Web design and visualisation: Miguel Ángel Garnica and Daniel Gómez
Cultural Journalism award René Avilés Fabila (Mexico) 2019 Category: Press	El Sinaia y el humor: 80 años del exilio en México (Sinaia and humor: 80 years of exile in Mexico)	Journalist awarded: Agustín Sánchez González
Ortega y Gasset Awards 2016 Category: Press	Narcotráfico en el corredor centroamericano (Drug trafficking in the Central American corridor)	Journalists awarded: Pablo Ferri Tórtola, Alejandra Sánchez Inzunza and José Luis Pardo
Ortega y Gasset Awards 2016 Category: Best multimedia coverage	Desaparecidos (Missing)	Journalists awarded: Lilia Saúl and Ginna Morelo With El Tiempo de Colombia
German Journalism Award Periodismo Walter Reuter (PAPWR) (Mexico-Germany) 2017	Rallar amapola, ¿juego de niños? (Grating poppy, child's play?)	Journalists awarded: Vania Nayeli Pigeonutt Jacinto
National Journalism Award 2015 (Mexico) Category: News	Cobertura noticiosa del expediente Ayotzinapa (News coverage of the Ayotzinapa file)	Journalists awarded: Zorayda Gallegos Valle and Siber Meza Camacho
National Journalism Award 2015 (Mexico) Category: Honorable Mention	Tiene Secretaría asesores Patito (Ministry have "off brand" advisors)	Journalist awarded: Zorayda Gallegos Valle

National Journalism Award 2013 (Mexico) Category: Report/research journalism	Narcotráfico en América Latina, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panamá, Colombia y Venezuela (Drug trafficking in Latin America, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia and Venezuela)	Journalists awarded: José Luis Pardo, Pablo Ferri and Alejandra Sánchez Inzunza
National Journalism Award 2013 (Mexico) Category: Cartoon/humour	Reforma Energética (Energetic reform)	Journalist awarded: Ángel Boligan Corbo
National Journalism Award 2012 (Mexico) Category: Photo	Niños ABC III a 3 años de la tragedia (Children ABC III, 3 years of the tragedy)	Journalist awarded: Luis Felipe Cortes Zuzunaga
National Journalism Award 2011 (Mexico) Category: News	Paga la SSP 118 mdp por serie de tv (The Ministry of Public Safety pays 118 mp per TV series)	Journalist awarded: Lilia Saúl
National Journalism Award 2010 (Mexico) Category: Cartoon/humour	De vuelta a la realidad (Back to reality)	Journalist awarded: Omar Díaz Trujillo

Appendix 2. Codebook

Variables	Categories	Definition of the categories
1. ID Variables		
1. Case number		ID number of the item, consecutive numbers
2. Media	1. Animal Político 2. Aristegui Noticias 3. Reforma 4. El Universal	Name of the media
3. Special Characteristics	1. Verificado 2018 2. Clip from livestreaming 3. Free access Reforma 4. Sponsored content	1. Content from Verificado 2018 2. For Aristegui Noticias. Multimedia clips retrieved from livestream 3. Code just for <i>Reforma</i> . Free access means that the content can be accessed without a password. Even if <i>Reforma</i> have a paywall check if the content is accessible for everyone 4. Paid content. When the media make it explicit
4. Publication date	Dd/mm/yy	Publication date
5. Retrieving date	Dd/mm/yy	Date in which the content was collected
6. Section		Name of the section as is named in every media
7. Author		Full name of all the authors. Check list of names or add it to it to maintain consistency. “Staff” will be used to homogenize the publications signed by the media. If the byline mentions other media or news agency write that name. Check if in audio or video items the name of the author is mentioned
8. Author gender	1. Male 2. Female 3. Staff 4. News Agency or other media	

2. Coverage of topics		
9. Topics	1. Politics 2. Law enforcement 3. Economy and business 4. Social Problems 5. Science, health, technology 6. Entertainment	1. Also include government, elections, and policies. 2. Judicial and/or administrative processes (trials), violence and crime 3. Economy and business 4. Human rights, education, protests (public demonstrations), sexual harassment, 5. Include environment, natural disasters, accidents 6. Lifestyle, sports, arts and culture
10. Subjects		Who is the main subject portrait in the story? (Name of the person or institution) Homogenise names mentioned before.
11. Tone	1. Positive 2. Balanced 3. Negative 4. Neutral	1. Supports statements of actions. Uses of positive adjectives. 2. Equal amount of positive and negative information. Presents 2 or more points of view. 3. Presents criticism, question the statements or actions. Uses negative adjectives. 4. Neither positive or negative.
12. Gender	1. Male 2. Female 3. Non applicable	Gender of the main subject portrait in the story.
13. Diversity	1. LGBT 2. Indigenous 3. Disabled 4. Age 5. Social disparity (education, poverty) 6. Other 7. Woman 8. Migrants	The item explicitly points out the following aspects as a characteristic of the subject portrayed. 1. Or other gender identity-based groups 2. Self-recognition of an indigenous identity 3. Self-recognition as disabled 4. Explicitly indicated as excluded per their age (kids, elders) 5. Explicitly indicated a social disadvantage that can include economical, access to education, health, food, housing, etc. 6. Any other disadvantage of the subject explicitly indicated as other ethnicities, religion, etc. (in doubt refer to the definitions given by the CONAPRED) 7. News that shows news of women as a vulnerable group (Violence, inequity) 8. News about migrants
14. Geographic focus	1. Local 2. Regional 3. National 4. International 5. Mexico City's issues	1. City, municipality, community 2. State, region 3. National impact 4. International impact, even if it happens in Mexico 5. News focused on events that only concern to Mexico City

3. Sources		
15. No. Sources	Total count (#)	Total of sources used (Numeric category)
16. Source		Name of source Use acronyms for the name of institutions. Check list of names or add it to it for maintain consistency.
17. Type of source	1. Government institutions or representatives 2. Opposition 3. International Organizations 4. Private sector 5. Experts 6. Media 7. Civil society 8. Ordinary citizens 9. Reporting 10. Other	1. Government institutions, representatives. 2. Candidates or party members that are not ruling in a specific position or geographic place. Political parties that are not (as when only it is mentioned the party as an institution). Registered independent candidates. Consult who is the ruling party in each instance, as the same party can be the opposition or ruling party depending on the context. 3. i.e. the UN 4.- 5. Researchers, professional practitioners (like doctors, lawyers, architects), public personalities (actors, writers, directors, celebrities) 6. Other news media and news agencies. 7. Non-Profit Organisations, universities 8. Non described as affiliated to an organisation 9. Information collected first-hand by reporters (observation/witnessing)
18. Gender	1. Male 2. Female 3. Non Applicable	3. Used to code institutions. Note: add a category if a source identifies themselves with other category such as gender neutral, non-binary, etc.
19. Source retrieving	1. Press release/ press conference 2. Scheduled event 3. Interviews 4. Public sessions (Congress, Supreme Court) 5. impromptu interview 6. Documents 7. Investigation of the media (polls, surveys, reporting of the media, investigative work)	How the source was obtained, look in the story for direct quotes, links embedded material such as tweets, videos, audio files. 4. Public sessions of governmental institutions such as Congress, Senate, Supreme Court. 5. I.e., Quick questions with the informant while getting in their cars, at the end of an event but not as part of a Q&A. 6. Reports, records, minutes, contracts, data bases.

	8. Media 9. Social media 10. News agency 11. Web pages 12. No identified	
--	--	--

4. Journalistic roles

20. Opinion	0. Absent 1. Present	
21. Investigative Journalism Fact-checking	0. Absent 1. Investigation done by the media 2. Investigation done by others 3. Fact-checking	1. Find key words such as: exclusive reporting, investigation, special report, original content/reporting The news story needs to provide evidence, state sources used (or say sources were kept anonymous). 2. Investigation explicitly attributed to other news organisation 3. Key words such as verification of discourse, fact-checking, assessment of factuality and variations of this.
22. Background	0. Absent 1. Present	

5. Narrative

23. Temporality	1. Breaking news 2. Recent events 3. Long temporality "slow news" 4. Timeless	
24. Journalistic genre	1. News 2. Reportaje 3. Interview or Q&A 4. Opinion genres 5. Listicle 6. Chronicle 7. Review 8. Other	

6. Audiovisual Elements

25. Audio-visual elements count		Count-numeric
26. Audio-visual content	The use of: 1. Images 2. Audio and/or Video 3. Data visualization 4. Interactive elements	1. Include photos and illustrations 2. Audio and/or video 3. Infographics, maps, tables, diagrams (static, the user cannot interact with the element) 4. The user can interact and modify the experience of use

	5. Social media 6. Documents	5. Tweets, Instagram photos, YouTube videos, etc. 6. PDFs of reports, memos, laws, etc.
27. Author of the audio-visual content	1. Generated by the media 2. Retrieved	If not credited code 0
28. Role in the piece	1. To construct the story 2. To substantiate 3. To contextualize 4. To illustrate	1. Trigger the story 2. Provide evidence 3. Help to understand the information presented (diagrams, charts, tables, infographics, and timelines). 4. Decorative. Audio-visuals without a function.

7. Hyperlinks - transparency

29. Hyperlinks count	Total number of links within the body of the content	Do not include hyperlinks to embedded content (like YouTube videos, tweets)
30. Hyperlinks	1. Internal - source 2. Internal - Background 3. External - source 4. External - background	Do not count repeated hyperlinks in the news (identical URL). Include if the page is the same site but links to different sections.

8. Other features

31. Elections/ World cup content	1. Elections 2. World cup content	Only code presence. 1. Information about candidates, political parties, process or Electoral institutions. 2. It doesn't need to be only content about sports, only have a reference to the World cup or the FIFA (and officials).
32. Days after publication date	Total count (numeric)	How many days are between the date of collection and date published.

Appendix 3. Interview questionnaires

A 3.1 Questions to DN's Directors

Aims of the organisation

1. What motivated you to create Animal Político/Aristegui Noticias?
2. How would you describe [name of the organisation]?
3. How do you communicate the aims of the organisation to your employees?
4. How would you compare the work done by your organisation against that is done legacy media? And against other digital natives? What makes [name of the organisation] different to other news organisations? What are the main similarities?
5. What advantages and disadvantages of being a digital native has? Can you give me an example?
6. What do you see as your responsibility to them or the public in general?
7. How satisfied are you with the journalism/content that your media organisation is producing? Can you give me an example of content that makes you proud? Can you tell me what issues your media needs to overcome or improve to be up to the media ideals?
8. What topics are more important for your news organisation to cover?

Organisation's economics and resources

9. What kind resources (space, equipment, training) your organization provide to your staff to perform their work? In what ways these resources are supporting to the staff to do a better work? There are any ways in which the access to resources limits the work of your staff?
10. What guidelines or policies does your news organisation have to guide your work (for example codes of ethics, style guidelines, guide of procedures, etc.)? There are any unwritten guidelines? If yes, how are they introduced and enforced?

11. Which business model do you follow to finance your organisation? It does intend to be a profit or a non-profit organisation? Who is supporting the news organisation? Who are the main advertisers or sponsors?
12. Does [name of the organisation] receive funds or contributions to produce a specific kind of content? For example, investigative journalism, fact-checking, or to cover a specific topic? Does [name of the organisation] produce sponsored content? If yes, what are your considerations when producing sponsored content? What guidelines about producing sponsored content do you follow? If not, Why not?
13. How would you describe the relationship between the sponsors/advertisers and the content? Can you give me an example?
14. Does the economy of the news organisation limit your work? (explore pressures from advertisers, lack of resources) Can you explain why? Can you give me an example?

Investigative journalism, fact-checking, original reporting

15. Can you explain me, what is the approach of [name of the organisation] to investigative journalism?
16. Animal Político/Aristegui Noticias produce investigative journalism. What are the motivations to produce it? What opportunities and constraints have [name of the organisation] during the process of producing investigative journalism?
17. Can you explain me, what is the approach of [name of the organisation] to fact-checking?
18. (For Animal Políticoonly) What are the motivations to produce it? What opportunities and constraints have Animal Político during the process of doing fact-checking?How often your news organisation produces investigative journalism?
19. I am interested in the resources that your organization dedicated to investigative journalism, can you tell me how many people are involved? It is part of the staff's everyday workload, or they have to dedicate extra time?
20. How often your news organisation produces fact checking?
21. I am interested in the resources that your organization dedicated to fact checking, can you tell me how many people are involved? It is part of the staff's everyday workload, or they have to dedicate extra time?

Journalists' role perception

22. What kind of journalism do you think Mexico needs?
23. What do you consider your role as a journalist to be? In what ways do you consider you are fulfilling that role or roles in your current job? What are the biggest challenges you face to fulfil that role or roles? What factors enable you to fulfil that role or roles?
24. From the following list, what are the most important values that guide your work?
(Rate them from 1 to 13, 1 means more important)

The list was adapted from the Worlds of Journalism Study (2016)

Report things as they are	
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	
Advocate for social change	
Let people express their views	
Monitor and scrutinise political leaders/business	
Provide analysis of current affairs	
Provide information people need to make political decisions	
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	
Motivate people to participate in political activity	
Be a detached observer	
Support government policy	
Be an adversary of the government	
Being transparent of the process of constructing the content for your media (for example: disclose what sources were used and how the information was obtained, recognise mistakes made, make corrections and declare them)	

25. Can you explain why do you think that those values are the most important?
26. Do you feel your work reflects these values? If no: What constraints are there. If yes: What facilitates this.

Closing questions

27. We have discussed about [name of the organisation] and Mexican journalism, according to this, what is the most important aspect I should consider when I talk about the future of digital natives in the Mexican context? Do you have any question or suggestion regarding this research?

A 3.2 Questions to editors/journalists

Opening questions (Journalists' background)

1. What is your job title/role?
2. How long have you worked here?
3. What studies/training do you have? In what other news organisations have you work?
4. Did you have specialised training to work in digital media? If so, what did the training consist of? If not, how did you adapt yourself to the job?

Aims of the organisation

5. Which were the motivations that take you to work for Animal Político/Aristegui Noticias?
6. How would you describe [name of the organisation]?
7. How would you compare the work done by your organisation against that is done legacy media? And against other digital natives? What makes [name of the organisation] different to other news organisations? What are the main similarities?
8. What advantages and disadvantages of being a digital native has? Can you give me an example?
9. What do you see as your responsibility to them or the public in general?
10. How satisfied are you with the journalism/content that your media organisation is producing? Can you tell me what issues your media needs to overcome or improve to be up to the media ideals?
11. What topics are more important for your news organisation to cover?

Organisation's economics and resources

12. What kind resources (space, equipment, training) are you supplied to do your work?
In what ways these resources are supporting you to do a better work? There are any ways in which the access to resources limits your work?
13. What guidelines or policies does your news organisation have to guide your work (for example codes of ethics, style guidelines, guide of procedures, etc.)? There are any unwritten guidelines? If yes, how are they introduced and enforced?
14. Does [name of the organisation] receive funds or contributions to produce a specific kind of content? For example, investigative journalism, fact-checking, or to cover a specific topic?
15. Does [name of the organisation] produce sponsored content? If yes, what are your considerations when producing sponsored content? What guidelines about producing sponsored content do you follow? If not, Why not?
16. How would you describe the relationship between the sponsors/advertisers and the content? Can you give me an example?
17. Does the economy of the news organisation limit your work? (explore pressures from advertisers, lack of resources) Can you explain why? Can you give me an example?

Routines in everyday news

18. How many hours would you say you work in a week? What is your typical workload per day?
19. Do you work for a specific section or do you cover different topics?
20. How decisions are made about what topics to cover, and how to cover them? Can you give me an example?
21. I would like you give me an example of a story that you are particularly proud. Can you tell me, how was the idea conceived? Which was the reporting process you followed? What resources did you use? In which way was different or similar to your ordinary work?

Investigative journalism, fact-checking

22. Can you explain me, what is the approach of [name of the organisation] to investigative journalism?
23. Animal Político/Aristegui Noticias produce investigative journalism. What are the motivations to produce it? What opportunities and constraints have [name of the organisation] during the process of producing investigative journalism?
24. Can you explain me, what is the approach of [name of the organisation] to fact-checking?
25. (For Animal Políticoonly) What are the motivations to produce it? What opportunities and constraints have Animal Político during the process of doing fact-checking?How often your news organisation produces investigative journalism?
26. I am interested in the resources that your organization dedicated to investigative journalism, can you tell me how many people are involved? It is part of the staff's everyday workload, or they have to dedicate extra time?
27. How often your news organisation produces fact checking?
28. I am interested in the resources that your organization dedicated to fact checking, can you tell me how many people are involved? It is part of the staff's everyday workload, or they have to dedicate extra time?

Journalists' role perception

29. What kind of journalism do you think Mexico needs?
30. What do you consider your role as a journalist to be? In what ways do you consider you are fulfilling that role or roles in your current job? What are the biggest challenges you face to fulfil that role or roles? What factors enable you to fulfil that role or roles?
31. From the following list, what are the most important values that guide your work? (Rate them from 1 to 13, 1 means more important)

The list was adapted from the Worlds of Journalism Study (2016)

Report things as they are	
Promote tolerance and cultural diversity	
Advocate for social change	
Let people express their views	
Monitor and scrutinise political leaders/business	
Provide analysis of current affairs	
Provide information people need to make political decisions	
Provide the kind of news that attracts the largest audience	
Motivate people to participate in political activity	
Be a detached observer	
Support government policy	
Be an adversary of the government	
Being transparent of the process of constructing the content for your media (for example: disclose what sources were used and how the information was obtained, recognise mistakes made, make corrections and declare them)	

32. Can you explain why do you think that those values are the most important?
33. Do you feel your work reflects these values? If no: What constraints are there. If yes:
What facilitates this.
34. Do you think that the aims and values of [news organisation] are similar of different
to yours? Can you explain why?

Closing questions

35. We have discussed about [name of the organisation] and Mexican journalism,
according to this, what is the most important aspect I should consider when I talk
about the future of digital natives in the Mexican context?
36. Do you have any question or suggestion regarding this research?

Appendix 4. Ethical review documentation

A 4.1 Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

DIGITAL NATIVE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE MEXICAN NEWS ECOSYSTEM

22nd March 2018

You are being invited to take part in this research project. Before you take a decision, it is important for you to understand what my study is about and what will be involved if you decide to participate. Please take time to read the following information carefully, if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information feel free to ask me. You should agree to take part only if you want to take part, take your time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is this study about?

This study is part of my research for my PhD, which aims to make a comparative study of the journalistic roles, values and practices of journalists that work in Mexican digital native media against the ones that work in the digital versions of newspapers, and assess the potential of the Mexican digital native news organizations to make a positive contribution to the Mexican society and democracy. I'll be looking at digital newsrooms including your workplace and I'll be making interviews and observing how is produced the content in your workplace.

What will happen if I participate?

You are invited to take part in a face-to-face interview and/or in an observation of your everyday activities.

About the interview: You are invited to take part in a face-to-face interview (or if not possible via video call) that I conduct. The interview will last around 60 minutes and during that time I might ask about your practices at work and your thoughts about it. If you have questions or concerns before or during the interview please let me know at that moment.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been approached as a journalist that belongs to one of the news media organizations that I am studying in my research project. My particular interest in you is as a professional journalist that develops its work in a digital news media. As such your input will bring valuable experiences and make an important contribution to my study.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation is voluntary. If you agree to take part you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are able to refuse to answer questions or withdraw your participation within 30 calendar days after the interview without giving a reason. In case of withdrawal, any research data related to you will be deleted within one week after your notification.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

Yes, I will follow strict mechanisms to protect your confidentiality and anonymity. Only I will have access to your confidential data and all the information collected about you during the study will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) using the hard drives provided by the University of Leeds, which are safe servers. All the paper materials will be digitalized and stored in the same way, and the hard copies will be destroyed.

I will assign you a pseudonym by which you will be referred on the research and only I will have access to the document that contains your name and the pseudonym, I only kept this information for my own referencing.

Will I be recorded and how will the recordings be used?

The interviews will be audio recorded to be transcribed later to be used in my research and direct quotes can be used in my PhD thesis and potentially in other publications. The audio recording will be accessed only by the researcher and no third parties can use them without your written permission. Photos might be taken during the interviews or observation and if they contain information that can make you identifiable will be kept confidential.

What are the risks or benefits of participating in this study?

I do not foresee any risks or hazards for participants taking part in this research. However, if you are concerned about the potential sensitivity of some the topics discussed as part of the research you should let me know immediately.

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will help to understand how digital journalism can contribute to democracy and what we can do to improve it.

Who is funding and organising the research?

This study forms part of my research as a PhD Student at the School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. My research is funded by the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT) in Mexico. This study has been reviewed and given a favourable opinion by Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Cultures Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds on 17 April 2018, ethics reference PVAR 17-088.

What will happen to the results of the research?

The results of this research will be presented in my PhD thesis, academic publications, reports, and at conferences. Quotations from the interviews may be used.

If you have further questions about this research, who can you contact?

If you have questions concerning this study at any stage I will be happy to be contacted, here are my contact details:

Martha Palacios

<http://bit.ly/2ogEQ3E>

Email: memlpd@leeds.ac.uk

Mx mobile: [number]

UK mobile: [number]

If you want to discuss some aspect of this research with other than me, you can contact my supervisors in the School of Media and Communication, University of Leeds:

Dr. Julie Firmstone

J.A.Firmstone@leeds.ac.uk

Telephone number: 0113 343 5874

Dr. Jairo Lugo Ocando

j.lugo-ocando@leeds.ac.uk

Telephone number: 0113 343
5874

Thank you for participating in this study!

A 4.2 Consent form

CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT: DIGITAL NATIVE NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN THE MEXICAN NEWS ECOSYSTEM		Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated 12/02/2018 explaining the research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw within 30 calendar days after the date of this document without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. Any data provided will be destroyed after the withdrawal from the study.		
I understand that my participation will be audio recorded and photography can be taken.		
I give permission to the researcher to have access to my data. I understand that my name will not be linked to the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.		
I agree for the data collected from me to be stored and used in relevant future research under the conditions of anonymity and confidentiality stated.		
I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of the information as stated in this form.		
I understand that my words can be used in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs if anonymity and confidentiality of the information are preserved as stated in this form.		
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.		
I agree to take part in the above research project and in case of having further questions or concerns I will contact the researcher or her supervisor via the contacts provided on the information sheet.		

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	
Name of lead researcher	Martha Lizbeth Palacios
Signature	
Date	

Appendix 5. List of interviewees and their positions

Media	Interviewee	Position
Animal Político	Daniel Moreno	Director
	Interviewee 1	General Editor
	Interviewee 2	Online Editor
	Interviewee 3	Online Editor (fact-checking)
	Interviewee 4	Editor for Audience
	Interviewee 5	Reporter
	Interviewee 6	Reporter
Aristegui Noticias	Interviewee 7	Reporter
	Interviewee 8	Online Editor
	Interviewee 9	Online Editor
	Interviewee 10	Online Editor
	Interviewee 11	Reporter
	Interviewee 12	Ex-online Editor, correspondent
	Interviewee 13	Ex-coordinator of web and social media
El Universal	Interviewee 14	Online coordinator
	Interviewee 15	Web editor
	Interviewee 16	Home page editor
	Interviewee 17	Online Editor
	Interviewee 18	Metric's Director
	Interviewee 19	Reporter
	Interviewee 20	Reporter
	Interviewee 21	Reporter
	Interviewee 22	Reporter
Reforma	Interviewee 23	Editorial Coordinator (Web)
	Interviewee 24	Reporter
	Interviewee 25	Reporter
	Interviewee 26	Reporter
	Interviewee 27	Reporter

Appendix 6. Additional tables

A 6.1. Chapter 6 additional tables

Table 40 Number of audio-visual elements used per news item in both sampled weeks

	Animal		Aristegui		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Político		Noticias							
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
0	0	24	0	0	6	8	2	18	8	50
1	79	66	86	93	153	150	108	88	426	397
2	49	36	33	21	9	7	36	31	127	95
3	19	25	13	8	6	2	14	10	52	45
4-5	16	16	21	24	0	3	11	13	48	56
6-10	11	6	20	26	1	4	3	14	35	50
10+	1	2	2	3	0	1	1	1	4	7
Total	395	352	448	488	196	228	310	348	1349	1416
									N=700	N=700

Table 41 Role of the audiovisuals in the news in both sampled weeks

	Animal		Aristegui		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Político		Noticias							
	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period	Normal period	Campaign period
To construct the story	7.1%	2.0%	13.6%	13.1%	32.1%	28.1%	15.8%	6.3%	14.9%	11.1%
To substantiate	42.3%	29.8%	52.5%	30.5%	15.3%	7.0%	30.3%	33.6%	39.0%	27.3%
To contextualize	0.5%	16.8%	0.4%	26.6%	0.0%	4.4%	0.3%	7.8%	0.4%	16.0%
To illustrate	50.1%	51.4%	33.5%	29.7%	52.6%	60.5%	53.5%	52.3%	45.7%	45.6%
Total	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %	99.9%	100.0 %	100.0 %	99.9%	100.0 %	100.0 %	100.0 %
	395	352	448	488	196	228	310	348	1349	1416

Table 42 Role of the audiovisuals used by the news organisations by type. Normal period.

Audiovisual Resources' Type								
Media	Role	Images	Audio/Video	Data visualization	Interactive	Social Media	Documents	Total
Animal Político	To construct the story	14	8	0		5	1	28
	To substantiate	66	27	2		71	1	167
	To contextualise	1	0	1		0	0	2
	To illustrate	190	4	0		4	0	198
	SubTotal	271	39	3		80	2	395
Aristegui Noticias	To construct the story	3	46	8		0	4	61
	To substantiate	21	55	11		148	0	235
	To contextualise	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
	To illustrate	132	6	2	0	10	0	150
	SubTotal	157	107	21		159	4	448
Reforma	To construct the story	0	39	22	2	0	0	63
	To substantiate	26	0	4	0	0	0	30
	To contextualise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	To illustrate	103	0	0	0	0	0	103
	SubTotal	129	39	26	2	0	0	196
El Universal	To construct the story	18	15	2	0	14	0	49
	To substantiate	43	11	9	3	28	0	94
	To contextualise	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	To illustrate	149	0	0	0	17	0	166
	SubTotal	210	26	11	3	60	0	310

Total	767	211	61	5	299	6	
N=							1349

Table 43 Role of the audiovisuals used by the news organisations by type. Campaign period.

Audiovisual Resources' Type								
Media	Role	Images	Audio/ Video	Data visualiz ation	Interac tive	Social Media	Docum ents	Total
Animal Político	To construct the story	3	2	0	0	1	1	7
	To substantiate	41	7	4	0	48	5	105
	To contextualis e	8	4	27	1	19	0	59
	To illustrate	164	9	0	0	8	0	181
	SubTotal	216	22	31	1	76	6	352
Aristegui Noticias	To construct the story	1	46	14	0	3	0	64
	To substantiate	1	45	6	0	94	3	149
	To contextualis e	3	22	6	1	97	1	130
	To illustrate	132	2	0	0	11	0	145
	SubTotal	137	115	26	1	205	4	488
Reforma	To construct the story	0	51	12	1	0		64
	To substantiate	15	0	0	0	1		16
	To contextualis e	0	1	9	0	0		10
	To illustrate	138	0	0	0	0		138
	SubTotal	153	52	21	1	1		228
El Universal	To construct the story	1	8	4	0	9		22
	To substantiate	38	20	0	0	59		117
	To contextualis e	0	6	7	4	10		27
	To illustrate	171	4	2	0	5		182
	SubTotal	210	38	13	4	83		348
Total		716	227	91	7	365	10	1416
N=1416								

A 6.2 Chapter 7 additional table

Table 44 General characteristics of the investigative reports analysed

Title and URL (translated by the author)	News organisation	Case number	Sources	Topic	Diversity	Narrative resources	text	Single article or part of a series
Conagua [National Water Comission] and the Army disregarded the EPN [Enrique Peña Nieto] orders and dug wells in a protected aquifer	Animal Politico	006 Campaign period	Total: 6 5 documents 1 Investigation of the media	Politics		Reportaje, based	text	Single article
IMSS [Mexican Institute of Social Security] gave 315 million pesos in contracts to a company that simulated competition to attend to minor surgeries	Animal Politico	201 Campaign period	Total: 2 1 Documents 1 Investigation of the media	Politics		Reportaje, based	text	Single article
The Legislative Assembly of CDMX delivered contracts for 37 million pesos to ghost companies	Animal Politico	401 Campaign period	Total: 11 4 interviews 3 documents 2 investigation of the media 1 information from website 8 other news media	Politics		Reportaje, based	text	Single article

The truth does not matter, to present a detained yes... Even though it is innocent	Animal Politico	501 Campaign period	Total: 17 6 documents 11 interviews			Reportaje, text based 1 interactive 1 infographic	Part of a series of reports to present the investigation titled: Kill in Mexico: Guaranteed impunity
The TV Azteca Foundation fraud: it gives almost nothing to its orchestras	Animal Politico Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	404 Campaign period	Total: 7 3 interviews 6 documents 1 scheduled event	Entertainment		Reportaje, text based	Part of a series of reports to present the investigation titled: The false philanthropy of Salinas Pliego
Salinas Pliego children's orchestras are financed with public resources and not by the businessman	Animal Politico Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	419 Campaign period	Total: 10 6 documents 1 scheduled event 2 interviews 1 Other news media	Social Problems		Reportaje, text based	
Culture suffocates, while the Azteca Orchestras flourish	Animal Politico Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	624 Campaign period	Total: 9 2 press releases 4 interviews 1 document 1 social media	Entertainment		Reportaje, text based	
The #FalsePhilanthropy of Salinas Pliego	Aristegui Noticias Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	428 Campaign period	Total: 13	Entertainment		Reportaje, text based 1 video	

Salinas Pliego orchestras have received 1,700 million pesos of public money: journalist	Aristegui Noticias Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	429 Campaign period	Total: 1 1 Interview	Entertainment		1 standalone video interview with the author of the investigation	
Salinas Pliego boasts orchestras financed with public money: Carmen García Bermejo	Aristegui Noticias Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	430 Campaign period	Total: 2 2 interviews	Entertainment	Indigenous	1 standalone video interview with the authors of the investigation	
The Mixtec town from which TV Azteca stole the soul	Aristegui Noticias Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	533 Campaign period	Total: 8 8 Interviews	Entertainment	Indigenous	<i>Reportaje</i> , text based 9 videos	
"A great hope was taken away from us" and "the sustenance of our mouths for other purposes": Mixteca Symphonic Band	Aristegui Noticias Investigation by NGO Quinto Elemento Lab	534 Campaign period	Total: 3 3 Interviews	Entertainment	Indigenous	<i>Reportaje</i> , text based 3 videos	
Meade cannot object that he is not involved in the Ethylene XXI case: Figueroa	Aristegui Noticias	426 Campaign period	Total 5 1 interview 2 documents 1 Investigation of the media 1 Impromptu interview	Economy and business		Interview	Ethylene XXI case

EPN executed a secret Odebrecht subsidiary strategy to promote Etileno XXI	Aristegui Noticias	427 Campaign period	Total 7 5 documents 1 Impromptu interview 1 Other news media	Economy and business		Reportaje, text based	
We will go deeper into the Etileno XXI case, warns Figueroa, from the 'Frente', in #AristeguiEnVivo (Summary)	Aristegui Noticias	434 Campaign period	Total 2 1 document 1 interview	Economy and business		Interview	
"We must make transexennial pacts visible," says Figueroa and points to Meade (Find out)	Aristegui Noticias	450 Campaign period	Total 2 1 document 1 Investigation of the media	Economy and business		Interview	

A 6.3 Chapter 8 additional tables

Table 45 Normal period. Gender representation in the different topics

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal %		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Politics	40.1 %	11%	35.0 %	7.1%	35.5 %	10.9%	23.8 %	11.9%	34.7 %	10.2%
Law enforcement	15.1 %	2.9%	6.4%	5%	5.8%	4.3%	13.9 %	1%	10.3 %	3.4%
Economy	2.3%	0%	10.7 %	2.1%	7.2%	0%	2%	1%	5.6%	0.7%
Social problems	12.2 %	8.7%	9.3%	7.1%	4.3%	5.1%	4%	3%	8%	6.4%
Science, Health, Technology	6.4%	0.6%	7.1%	2.9%	3.6%	0%	5.9%	0%	5.8%	0.9%
Entertainment	0%	0.6%	6.4%	0.7%	13%	10.1%	19.8 %	13.9%	8.5%	5.4%
Total	76.2 %	23.8%	75%	25%	69.6 %	30.4%	69.3 %	30.7%	73%	27%

Table 46 Campaign period. Gender representation in the different topics

	Animal Político		Aristegui Noticias		Reforma		El Universal		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Politics	23%	6.9%	28.2%	3.1%	37.6%	7.8%	16.1%	2.2%	26.9%	5.4%
Law enforcement	28.2%	5.7%	6.1%	5.3%	9.9%	3.5%	9.7%	3.2%	14.8%	4.6%
Economy	0%	0%	9.9%	2.3%	6.4%	1.4%	4.3%	1.1%	4.8%	1.1%
Social problems	11.5%	8.6%	6.1%	6.9%	7.1%	2.8%	6.5%	3.2%	8.2%	5.8%
Science, Health, Technology	4%	1.1%	4.6%	0%	5%	1.4%	7.5%	3.2%	5.0%	1.3%
Entertainment	9.2%	1.7%	22.1%	5.3%	11.3%	5.7%	24.7%	18.3%	15.6%	6.5%
Total	75.9%	24.1%	77.1%	22.9%	77.3%	22.7%	68.8%	31.2%	75.3%	24.7%

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