

News curation by email: Analysis of the Spanish journalistic newsletters

Curación de noticias en el correo electrónico: análisis de *newsletters* periodísticas españolas

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Newsletters or electronic bulletins are currently a product of growing importance in digital media and represent a channel that is highly conducive to the curation of content, which is one of the services that is considered to be most relevant in 21st-century digital journalism. The main goal of this work is to analyze the use of journalistic content curation in *newsletters* emitted by the Spanish press. **Methodology:** To achieve this goal, a study using an evaluative methodology has been carried out, based on an analysis system composed of parameters and indicators organized around two major areas or dimensions: Content and Curation. All the newsletters (84) from 16 relevant Spanish newspapers, both traditional and native digital, have been analyzed for two months. **Results:** The results provide a snapshot of the characteristics of journalistic curation in terms of the amount of curated content, its time range and origin, the information sources, the authorship, the curation techniques, and how links are used to provide information. **Discussion and conclusions:** Based on the results of this analysis, we can depict the typical journalistic bulletin, offer a ranking of the best Spanish newsletters and the media, and propose a conceptualization of content curation, revealing the existence of two types of curation: intellectual and automated.

KEYWORDS: digital journalism, media, digital press, newspapers, content curation, *newsletters*, information sources.

RESUMEN

Introducción: Las *newsletters* o boletines electrónicos son un producto de creciente importancia en la actualidad en los medios de comunicación digitales y constituyen un canal muy propicio para la realización de la curación de contenidos, uno de los servicios considerados más relevantes en el periodismo digital del siglo XXI. La finalidad de este trabajo es analizar cuál es el uso de la curación de contenidos periodística por parte de las *newsletters* de la prensa española. **Metodología:** Para ello se ha realizado una investigación de metodología evaluativa, que se basa en un sistema de análisis compuesto de parámetros e indicadores organizados en torno a dos grandes áreas o dimensiones: Contenido y Curación. Se han analizado durante dos meses todas las *newsletters* (84) de 16 diarios españoles de relevancia, tanto tradicionales como nativos digitales. **Resultados:** Los resultados muestran una radiografía de las características de la curación periodística en cuanto a la cantidad de contenidos curados, el rango temporal de los mismos, la procedencia y las fuentes de información empleadas, la autoría, las técnicas de curación utilizadas y el uso informativo de los enlaces. **Discusión y conclusiones:** Entre las conclusiones, se presenta cómo es el boletín periodístico tipo, se ofrecen clasificaciones de los mejores boletines y de medios y se avanza en la conceptualización de la curación, concluyendo con la existencia de dos tipos de curación: intelectual y automatizada.

PALABRAS CLAVE: periodismo digital; medios de comunicación; prensa digital; diarios; curación de contenidos; boletines; fuentes de información.

CONTENT

1. Introduction. 2. Objectives. 3. Methodology. 4. Results. 5. Discussion and conclusions. 6. References 7. Curriculum Vitae

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

1. Introduction

Newsletters are a veteran product in digital journalism. At the time “they were one of the first special formats that digital newspapers faced when they leaped to the web environment more than two decades ago” (Trillo-Domínguez and Alberich-Pascual, 2020), although they later took a back seat and it is in recent years that they are experiencing a real resurgence (Jack, 2016), in a situation that some analysts have described as “the maturity of newsletters as a media” (Pellicer, 2018).

This current interest of media companies in newsletters could be explained by some characteristics that differentiate them from other journalistic products. According to data collected in the recent Digital News Reports of 2019 and 2020 (Newman *et al.* 2019; Newman *et al.* 2020), a third of the audiences consult the news in the media itself (web or app) and the other two thirds through social platforms, search engines, or email, the latter being the channel that newsletters reach without competition, in a trend that reflects the growing importance that email is acquiring in daily life (Newman, 2020). Recent research corroborates that readers “appreciate finite editions” (Súarez, 2020): compared to other channels, from the website to social media, in which the information is presented fragmented and changing, the newsletter puts “order in the chaos” (Carr, 2014) and shows the information in a “finite, hierarchical, generally brief, and direct way” (Laboratorio de Periodismo, 2019). To this, we must add that it is a personalized and intentional communication since it has been

the readers themselves who have specifically asked to receive that information in their emails when making the subscription (Nafría, in Torres, 2019).

In the evolution of the *newsletter*, we observe that it has gone from being a characteristic product of digital marketing to fulfilling a relevant journalistic role (Van der Wel, 2019). It has also been defined as "the new social network" (Isaac, 2019), because among other virtues, it avoids the reader some inconveniences of social networks, such as the presentation of news through algorithms that cannot be controlled, or the existence of hoaxes (Salaverría *et al.* 2020). Unlike them, the newsletter offers a private type of communication between author and subscriber that enhances closer bonds (Isaac, 2019).

For the media, newsletters have a positive effect on their business strategies. Recent data indicates that they are quite effective in retaining subscribers and attracting new users. The Washington Post, for example, with 70 different newsletters, states that newsletter recipients consume three times more content than non-recipients (Newman *et al.* 2019).

Its content filtering function against excess "noise" from the Internet would be another element that would explain its success. Charo Marcos, the editor of Klashletter, points out that they work because "the media are beginning to realize that there is too much noise on the networks" (Marcos, in Tones, 2019). This is how they have become a very conducive channel for the realization of what is known as content curation (Rojas-Torrijos and González-Alba, 2018). Journalistic content curation can be defined as: "A complex of activities that includes: 1) search and monitoring, 2) selection, 3) analysis and verification, 4) management and editing, and 5) characterization or sense-making of information published on the web, to produce or improve journalistic products, which implies the (6) dissemination of such products through digital platforms" (Guallar and Codina, 2018).

The concept of content curation comes from digital marketing (Bhargava, 2009) and has spread to various disciplines and professions, from information management to journalism or education (Guallar and Leiva-Aguilera, 2013). Specifically, curation in journalism has been discussed by a good number of researchers such as: Bradshaw, 2013; Thorsen, 2013; Cappelletti-Junior and Domínguez-Quintas, 2014; Bruns and Highfield, 2015; Guerrini, 2015; Jarvis, 2015; Cui and Liu, 2017; Díaz-Arias, 2017; López-Meri and Casero-Ripollés, 2017; Noguera-Vivo, 2017; Guallar, 2017a,b; Bruns, 2018; Guallar and Codina, 2018; Rojas-Torrijos and González-Alba, 2018; Codina and Guallar, 2019.

In this context, we present a study on newsletters from the media, addressing how they carry out content curation. This article is thus part of the line of research in the Communication area that studies the use of curation by journalistic media.

It should be noted that in the Communication literature there is a remarkable bibliography on curation in social media, which analyzes citizens' practices of sharing news on social networks and links to research on active audiences in journalism. In this line, the works of Bruns are relevant (for example, Bruns and Highfield, 2015, or Bruns, 2018) and a review of this approach can be consulted in Masip *et al.* 2019.

Our approach differs from the latter and is in the line of works that study the use of curation by the media themselves. Along these lines, previous research has analyzed its use on newspaper websites (Cui and Liu, 2017), articles (Guallar 2017a), *newsletters* (Rojas-Torrijos and González-Alba, 2018), or platforms that have already disappeared such as Storify (Cappelletti-Junior and Dominguez-Quintas, 2014). In the most direct precedent of our work, Rojas-Torrijos and González-Alba (2018), analyze the *newsletters* of three newspapers (El País, El español, and El Independiente), their contents,

and their business model. It is an exploratory and descriptive work, unlike ours, which has an evaluative intent, as will be detailed below.

2. Objectives

Our purpose is to analyze and evaluate the use of content curation in the *newsletters* of the Spanish press. For this, the following specific objectives are established:

O1. Present an X-ray of the main characteristics of content curation in the *newsletters* of the Spanish press.

O2. Establish what the type of journalistic curation *newsletter* is like in Spain.

O3. Identify the best *newsletters* from the Spanish press in the use of news curation and that can serve as a reference.

O4. Establish a classification of the Spanish journalistic media in the use of news curation in *newsletters* and that can serve as a reference.

3. Methodology

To achieve these objectives, an evaluation methodology research is carried out, which includes expert analysis and content analysis techniques (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 2009; Ferran-Ferrer *et al.* 2017; Morales-Vargas *et al.* 2020). The methodology used in this article is based on a consolidated line of research based on various works by Codina and collaborators applied to the media (Codina, 2000; Rodríguez-Martínez *et al.* 2010, 2012; Guallar *et al.* 2012; Linares *et al.* 2016; Pedraza-Jiménez *et al.* 2016) and fundamentally takes into account the method presented in Guallar *et al.* (2020). Thus, this work follows the methodological orientation of the expert analysis (Morales-Vargas *et al.* 2020) to evaluate the objects studied based on an analysis system composed of parameters and indicators organized around two large areas or dimensions: Content and Curation (Guallar *et al.* 2020). Table 1 shows the parameters or general aspects studied in each dimension (left column) and the indicators that allow evaluating these parameters (right column).

Table 1. Content curation analysis system in journalism. Summary table of dimensions, parameters, and indicators.

A. Content	
A1. Number of contents	Quantity
A2. Time range	Hindsight or timeless information Recent information Current information Real-time information
A3. Origin	Own content External content
A4. The source according to the type of organization	Official sources Corporate sources Media Citizens
A5. The source according to morphology	Websites Blogs Social networks Secondary sources
B. Curation	

B1. Authorship	Authorship
B2. Sense-making technique	Summarize Comment Quote Storyboarding
B3. Link function	Unmodified Describe Contextualize Interpret Cite source Cite author Call to action

Source: Self-made

The indicator scoring system is binary (0-1), evaluating the presence or absence of a characteristic. In only one case, for the Quantity indicator of the Number of contents parameter, the score is multiple (0-3), to assess this characteristic with the scale: bad (0); regular (1); good (2); very good (3), (Guallar *et al.* 2020).

For the analysis sample, it has been sought to be as wide as possible to capture a greater representation of digital journalism carried out in Spain, and seven traditional newspapers or *legacy media* and seven digital native newspapers, a name that we will use to refer to those that are exclusively digital, also known in the literature by other names, such as new media or meta-media (Cabrera Méndez *et al.* 2019) have been included. Likewise, it has been considered convenient to include media that are only *newsletters*, as representative of a recent trend that started in the US with publications such as The Skimm and which has an incipient presence in Spain. To establish this sample, the Spanish digital newspapers with the highest audience were considered, according to the monthly ranking of the top 10 by ComScore between January and May 2019, a ranking that did not experience changes in the composition of the list in that period (although it did in their positions) (DIR Confidencial, 2019; PR Noticias, 2019). The list was completed up to 14 with OJD Interactiva data for digital media in April 2019 (OJD Interactiva, 2019). Thus, the following were selected as *legacy media*: ABC, El Mundo, El País, El Periódico, La Razón, La Vanguardia, and 20 Minutos. The following were chosen as digital natives: El Confidencial, El Diario.es, El Español, El Nacional, Nació Digital, OK Diario, and Público. To them were added two media that are only *newsletters*, Klashletter and Mixxio, as representatives in Spain of this type of journalistic brand.

The *newsletters* of all of them were analyzed for two full months, May and June 2019. For the daily *newsletters*, they were analyzed once a week, on Thursday. For the rest of the periodicities (weekly or monthly), all the *newsletters*. Regarding scores, an individual evaluation of each *newsletter* was performed, scoring the different established indicators by 0-1 point; and in one case, as indicated, 0-3. The final score for each indicator is obtained by taking the average of the scores obtained during the analysis period.

4. Results

4.1. General characteristics

84 *newsletters* have been analyzed (the study's data set is available at <https://figshare.com/s/0882e0913aafcca8a253>). The number of newsletters of each newspaper is very diverse: El País has 31 newsletters; La Vanguardia, 9; El Diario.es, 6; 20 Minutos, ABC, and La Razón,

5; El Confidencial and El Español, 4; El Mundo, El Periódico, and Nació Digital, 3; Público, 2, and El Nacional, Klashletter, Mixxio, and OK Diario one *newsletter*.

By type of media, there are more newsletters from traditional media (72.6%) than from digital natives (27.4%), being evident in the set of El País with 31 (36.9%). There are also more specialized (67.9%) than generalists (32.1%), and the periodicity shows an important variety: the weekly ones are the majority (37.44%), although the various formulas of daily or almost daily periodicity (4 to 6 days a week) make a slightly higher total of 45.2% in its four variants (Monday to Sunday, 26.2%; Monday to Friday, 16.6%; and Monday-Thursday, Monday -Saturday, one each, 1.1%); Besides, we find fortnightly (5.9%), monthly (1.1%), and pop-up or temporary (3.5%) newsletters. The free ones in which the user is asked to register are the majority (90%), and only 9.5% have paid access for subscribers. Finally, in terms of authorship, 12 of them (14.2%) have a clearly identified publisher, being, therefore, more frequent (85.7%) those identified exclusively with the nameplate of the media.

4.2. Analysis of the Contents dimension

The results obtained after analyzing the parameters of the Contents dimension are presented below. A summary of the results and their analysis are provided for each parameter, highlighting the best newsletters in each case.

4.2.1. Amount of curated content

The evaluated newsletters with the most curated content include around 30 informational pieces. Taking this value as a reference, the evaluation of the parameter was performed following the scoring system: 1-10 curated contents: 1 point, 11-20: 2 points, ≥ 21 : 3 points. A significant fact is that almost half of the newsletters analyzed (40, 47.6%) are in the low range, offering less than 10 contents (1 point). At the other end, seven newsletters belonging to five newspapers obtained the highest score (3 points): El despertador, El español, and Mientras dormías (El español), Adelanto para socios (El Diario.es), El Mundo portada (El Mundo), Claves del día (La Razón), and Mixxio. Two more newsletters can be added to that group, with a close score: Klashletter and Ocio (La Razón).

4.2.2. Time range

Four possibilities are considered, following the taxonomies of Guallar (2017a, 2017b): Hindsight information, that published in previous months or years; Recent information, of the last days and weeks; Current information, of the last 24 hours; Real-time information, that is, live or constantly updated. In our analysis, a newsletter obtains one point for each type of information it covers, the maximum achievable score is 4 points. The newsletters analyzed show up to 3 time-ranges in the curated content, obtaining 3 points for this (or scores close to 3). With a maximum of 4, no case has been identified. The best newsletters are: El País escaparate, El País in English, Planeta futuro, Cinco días, and Especial elecciones (El País); Mixxio; Desalambre, Consumo claro, and Cuarto propio (El Diario.es); El despertador and La bruíxola (Nació Digital); and Mientras dormías (El Español). These newsletters are at the forefront of good practices in time diversity of content, highlighting 5 newsletters from the same media, El País. It is also observed as a whole that around 60% cure two time-ranges: either in all cases (26 newsletters, 30.9%) or on occasions (24 newsletters, 28.5%), always being present in these cases the current information, from the last 24 hours, plus a second type of information. A last group of 18 (21.4%) cure only one time-range, which is, in all cases except one, also that of current information. Therefore, it is found that this time range is the hegemonic of newsletter curation, always being present in 75 newsletters (89.2%).

4.2.3. Origin

It is taken into account if the curated contents have been prepared by the media itself or if they are external to it. The results show that approximately one-fifth of the newsletters (9; 19.7%) meet the highest score by always combining their own and external content: Los imperdibles (El Confidencial), Desalambre (El Diario.es), El despertador and Mientras dormías (El Español), El País escaparate and Formación (El País), Internacional (La Razón), Mixxio and La bruixola (Nació Digital). Likewise, another 5 curate the two types of content, but not on all occasions: Cuarto propio (El Diario.es), El despertador (Nació Digital), and La matrioska, Especial elecciones, and La newsletter de Kiko Llaneras (El País). If, on the one hand, it is positive that 9 newsletters reach the total score and that 5 more are close, it is found that a very large majority (70; 83.3%) exclusively offer their own content. Considering these latest data, and except for the particular case of Klashletter that shows only external content, it should be noted as a highly negative aspect that 8 media outlets never offer external content in their newsletters: ABC, El Mundo, El Nacional, El Periódico, La Vanguardia, OK Diario, Público, and 20 Minutos.

4.2.4. Information sources according to the type of organization

There have been considered from, among others, Barnhurst, 2013; Cui and Liu 2017; Guallar and Codina 2018; Orero and Cebrian-Enrique, 2019, four categories: official sources, from public administration agencies; corporate sources, companies, associations, and other private organizations; media; and citizens. Each newsletter receives one point for each type of source, with 4 being the maximum achievable score. The best positions are from newsletters with scores between 2 and 2.32 and coincide with several of the best positioned in the previous section: Ocio (La Razón); Desalambre (El Diario.es); Mixxio; El despertador and Mientras dormías (El Español); El País escaparate and Formación (El País), and La bruixola (Nació Digital). Also standing out in close positions are El despertador (Nació Digital), La matrioska (El País), and Klashletter. The global analysis of the results of the parameter indicates that the curated information comes mainly from the media, being exclusively so in 70 newsletters (83.3%), and the remaining small group of newsletters (17.7%) remaining as references of a journalistic curation based on a greater diversity of sources.

4.2.5. Information sources according to morphology

This section takes into account the morphology of the information source and complements the previous one. From the same references of the previous parameter, 4 types are considered: websites, blogs, social media, and secondary sources, with the newsletters obtaining one point for each type of source curated and 4 being the maximum score. No newsletter with content from secondary sources has been detected. The global scores have oscillated between 1 and 2 points and the best newsletters are four: El despertador and Mientras dormías (El Español), and Planeta futuro (El País) because they always include content from websites and social networks (the first two) or from websites and blogs (in the latter case), as well as Mixxio, which stands out as the newsletter with the best balance between the three types of sources. In a close position appear Ocio (La Razón), La matrioska (El País), El despertador (Nació Digital), and Klashletter. Overall, the predominance of websites is verified as the type of information source most used in journalistic curation in newsletters, overwhelmingly, since it is the only type of source in 74 newsletters (88.1%), while in the rest it is combined with the complementary presence of blog and social media content.

4.3. Analysis of the Curation dimension

4.3.1. Authorship

As mentioned before, only 12 newsletters of the 84 analyzed (14.2%) have an editor or person in charge, whose authorship is explicit. In the rest, the authorship is transferred to the media as a whole. The first group is assigned a score of one point and the second of zero. The newsletters with an identified publisher are: Cuarto propio (Ana Requena Aguilar) and The Guardian en español (Javier Biosca Azcoiti), from El Diario.es; El despertador and Mientras dormías (of Paolo Fava, and in the first one also Pedro J. Ramirez) from El Español; La matrioska (M. Luz Peinado), El País in English (Melissa Kitson), and La newsletter de Kiko Llaneras (Kiko Llaneras), from El País; El despertador (Ferran Casas) and La bruixola (Joan Serra Carné), from Nació Digital; El Nacional (José Antich); Klashletter (Charo Marcos), and Mixxio (Alex Barredo). They coincide in being newsletters with an appreciable level of curation editorial work, beyond the selection of news.

4.3.2. Sense-making techniques

Techniques to add value to curation, known as *sense-making* in the literature, are analyzed (Deshpande, 2013; Guallar and Leiva-Aguilera, 2013; Martínez-Cañadas, 2017). Deshpande's (2013) proposal is adapted to the context of journalistic newsletters, considering as techniques: summarize (mainly informative technique); comment (opinion or interpretive); cite (based on the verbatim quote to the original content); and *storyboarding* (joining pieces of different formats through narration) and assigning newsletters a point for each technique they use. The results indicate that a significant number of newsletters (36, 42.85%) do not use any technique to add value to the content. It is a significant piece of information, and that corresponds to largely automated newsletters based on a headline and sometimes a lead of each news item, without further contribution. The rest of the newsletters that do use some technique (48, 57.14%), do not usually use a variety of them, but mostly use one, that of summarizing (informative). This is thus the one widely used in non-automated curation, either alone (in 33 cases, 39.28%) or complemented (15, 17.85%) with other techniques, which are commenting and citing, without the use of storyboarding being identified. The best scores correspond to 6 newsletters: El despertador and Mientras dormías (El Español), El despertador, La bruixola, and Butlletí del judici (Nació Digital), and El Nacional.

4.3.3. Link function

The informative function that each hyperlink to curated content has within the newsletter is studied, distinguishing, based on Barnhurst (2013), Cui and Liu (2017), and Guallar *et al.* (2020), the categories: unmodified; describe, contextualize, interpret, cite the source, cite author, and call to action, assigning newsletters one point for each category. The results show that all these link functions are being used, although the majority of newsletters either use only the Unmodified option (38; 45.2%), or they use Unmodified together with Describe, in all or some cases (35; 41.7%). The use of the links is thus quite poor in almost 90% of the cases and only in a small group is there greater diversity. This group is headed by El despertador and Mientras dormías (El Español), at an outstanding level (4.11 points out of 7), and they are followed by other regular newsletters of the first positions in other parameters: La bruixola and El despertador (Nació Digital), Desalambre and Cuarto propio (El Diario.es), Especial elecciones, El País in English, and La matrioska (El País), and Klashletter.

4.4. Analysis by newsletters and digital media

Below is an analysis of the results grouped by newsletter and by media.

4.4.1. Newsletters

The newsletters with the best scores are shown in table 2.

Table 2. *Classification of the best newsletters.*

<i>Newsletter</i>	Media	Score
El despertador	El Español	19.41
Mientras dormías	El Español	19.41
La brúixola	Nació Digital	16.53
Mixxio	Mixxio	16.13
El despertador	Nació Digital	15.62
Desalambre	El Diario.es	14.98
Kloshletter	Kloshletter	14.84
Cuarto propio	El Diario.es	13.39
El País escaparate	El País	13
La matrioska	El País	13
El País in English	El País	12.54
Ocio	La Razón	12.19
The Guardian en español	El Diario.es	11.84
La <i>newsletter</i> de Kiko Llaneras	El País	11.25
Planeta futuro	El País	11
Internacional	La Razón	10.76
El Nacional	El Nacional	10.66
Especial elecciones	El País	10.5
Formación	El País	10.24

Source: Self-made

Two newsletters from El Español, El despertador and Mientras dormías, obtained the first position clearly (19.41 out of an ideal total of 29). For this reason, they can be considered the best of the Spanish press in the period studied. Also in close positions, are La Bruixola and El despertador (Nació Digital); Desalambre and Cuarto propio (El Diario.es); Mixxio; and Kloshletter. Altogether, this is the group of newsletters of reference in quality of journalistic curation in Spain.

At a somewhat lower level than the previous ones, but with elements of appreciable quality, we find seven newsletters from the newspaper El País (El País escaparate, El País in English, La matrioska, La newsletter de Kiko Llaneras, Planeta futuro, Especial elecciones, and Formación), as well as The Guardian en español (El Diario.es), Ocio and Internacional (La Razón), and El Nacional.

In the 18 mentioned newsletters, different elements of quality journalistic curation are present which have been detailed in the previous sections: time ranges and various sources of information, external content alongside their own, use of sense-making techniques, and diverse use of the links. These elements are, on the contrary, practically non-existent in the newsletters located in the last positions of our analysis, which are fully automated newsletters with no added value.

4.4.2. Digital media

A media classification can be established (Table 3). The final score of each media has been considered the average of the score obtained by its different *newsletters*.

Table 3. *Classification of media in the quality of their newsletters.*

Media	Score
Mixx.io	16.13
Kloshletter	14.84
El Español	13.95
Nació Digital	13.88
El Diario.es	11.33
El Nacional	10.66
La Razón	9.52
El Periódico	9.50
El País	8.72
ABC	7.54
El Confidencial	7.33
OK diario	7.33
El Mundo	7.00
La Vanguardia	6.89
Público	6.61
20 Minutos	6.08

Source: Self-made

In this classification, we could establish four zones.

- Upper zone (16.13 to 13.88 points). Mixxio and Kloshletter occupy the first positions, the two media in which the newsletter constitutes the only journalistic product (with the nuance that Mixxio also has a podcast). Along with them, El Español and Nació Digital are the two Spanish digital newspapers that best understand and most bet on curation in newsletters in their informative offer. A significant fact is that all four are exclusively digital media, without any representation in this high zone of legacy media.
- Upper-intermediate zone (11.3 to 9.5 points). Equally occupied by digital native newspapers, El Diario.es and El Nacional, and legacy media, La Razón and El Periódico. They are newspapers whose newsletters contain elements of noteworthy value along with automated practices.
- Lower intermediate zone (8.72 to 7.33). It is also occupied by two media of each type: El País and ABC; El Confidencial and OK Diario. They are newspapers that, although they present some quality elements in their newsletters, these are a minority in their entire news offer. This is particularly important in El País: it is the media outlet with the largest number of newsletters, and this means that, despite having some of them of quality, overall, it lands in this position.
- Lower zone (7 to 6.08). Occupied by three legacy media (El Mundo, La Vanguardia, 20 Minutos) and an exclusively digital one (Público). These newspapers use the newsletters as an automated service of links to content published by the media itself in the previous hours and have not taken the step of offering a product with more value.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In the first place, responding to objective O1, this research has allowed an X-ray of the characteristics of journalistic curation in the newsletters of the Spanish press. Regarding the curated content, the following can be highlighted:

- They are newsletters with a moderate amount of content, in many cases around 10 per newsletter, although there is a small group that publishes more content, around 30 per newsletter.
- The curated content is mostly current information, published in the previous hours. However, we find quite a few cases in which current information is combined with another time range: information from the last days or hindsight.
- The curated content is almost always from the media itself, and even 8 newspapers from the sample studied never offer content that is not from them.
- The curated content mainly comes from cybermedia, with little presence from other sources such as social media or official websites.

Thus, in terms of curated content, it has been found that the digital press continues to privilege links to its own information well above links to external content, which is more closely aligned with those research that highlight it (Fondevila-Gascón and Segura-Jiménez, 2012; Orero and Cebrian-Enrique, 2019), than with others that indicate a slight correction of this phenomenon (Karlsson *et al*, 2015). This has implications in the scarce variety of existing information sources, the low presence of social media content being surprising, although these are considered a conducive channel for news curation (Bruns, 2018; Guallar and Codina, 2018).

On the other hand, from the analysis of how the curation is carried out, it can be highlighted:

- Regarding authorship, the fact that only 14% of newsletters identify the editor indicates a very low presence of the concept of authorship and, consequently, the majority use of newsletter as an automated news service of the media outlet.
- Regarding sense-making techniques, a percentage of just over 40% does not use any. In this way, it is verified, with greater precision than with any other parameter, the automated and without professional journalistic contribution nature of a good number of them. When a technique is applied, the most used is to summarize, therefore this is the one that best suits the objective of the journalistic newsletter.
- In the journalistic treatment of links, there is generally poor or limited use of them. In most cases, the original text is used unmodified or with a brief description.

Thus, regarding the characteristics of the curation, this research would allow us to establish, at a conceptual level, two major types of journalistic curation, which we are going to call intellectual and automated.

The intellectual curation is carried out by a professional with identified authorship and uses one or more *sense-making* techniques, with a varied informational use of the links.

The automated curation does not offer a journalistic contribution or has its authorship identified, and is based on a series of links to which no sense making technique is applied nor is there a variety of informational use in them.

This conceptualization allows, concerning research on curation, to advance in the previous proposals made both at a general level (Deshpande, 2013; Martínez-Cañadas, 2017); as focused on journalism (Guallar, 2017a; Cui and Liu, 2017). It also makes it possible to highlight that the technique of summarizing (summarizing in Deshpande, 2013) and the description in the link text (sourcing curation in Cui and Liu, 2017), constitute the central axis of the style of intellectual curation in newsletters.

Secondly, following the O2 objective, we can define the Spanish journalistic newsletter as follows:

The newsletter offers between 10 and 20 curated contents that have been published in the previous hours on the website of the media outlet itself, it does not have an editor's signature, it does not use any sense-making technique, although sometimes it does summarize, and its links have the same text present in the original curated content or their description.

Therefore, these newsletters have characteristics closer to automated than intellectual curation.

Thirdly, responding to objective O3, the study makes it possible to offer a ranking of the quality of curation in the newsletters of the Spanish press. A first reflection is that the newsletters at the top of the list do not meet the characterization of the standard Spanish newsletter that has been indicated before. These newsletters are, on the contrary, examples of good practices in intellectual curation, with different quality elements:

- a significant amount of curated content;
- diversity of time ranges;
- use of external content and not only of their own;
- diversity of information sources;
- publisher identification;
- use of more than one *sense making* technique, and
- varied journalistic use of links.

This group is made up of El despertador and Mientras dormías, (El Español); La brújula and El despertador, (Nació Digital); Desalambre and Cuarto propio, (El Diario.es), and the two media that are exclusively newsletters, Mixxio and Kloshletter. These can be considered, consequently, as the reference newsletters in journalistic curation in Spain.

Fourth, following O4, the analysis by media offers findings and paradoxes regarding the previous point. Regarding the first, the two media that are exclusively newsletters, Mixxio and Kloshletter, together with the two newspapers with the best newsletters, El Español and Nació Digital, are the first on the list and constitute a clear reference for other digital media. The main paradox occurs in the case of El País, which, despite having some quality newsletters, overall is in an inferior position due to the number of its automated newsletters. It should also be noted that in the lower positions are relevant newspapers in the Spanish media system, such as El Mundo, La Vanguardia, and 20 Minutos, which, however, have not opted for quality in the curation of their newsletters.

Lastly, some achievements and limitations of this study should be noted, as well as indications for future research. In terms of achievements, the following can be highlighted: a) it is the first systematic study in the literature to analyze curation in a representative set of media in a country; b) implements a system of analysis that can serve as a reference for future research on curation; c) establishes classifications of newsletters and media outlets regarding the quality of curation, which can guide future actions of the analyzed media and others; and d) presents a characterization of two types of journalistic curation, which allows progress in its conceptualization.

Among the limitations, being the first systematic study with this methodology, we believe that it can and should be refined in successive subsequent studies, adding new parameters or indicators or modifying the current ones, as well as the scoring system; For example, in this article, the score of most of the indicators is binary (0-1), and in some, a gradation (0-3) could be chosen, to further refine the analysis.

Regarding future studies, it is proposed to transfer this methodology to other limited sets of journalistic products, such as newsletters, multimedia reportages, news from the home page, etc., of cyber-media in a country or several countries. Likewise, it would be interesting to go deeper into the types of sources used in news curation, as well as to delve into the relationship between journalistic media and social media from the point of view of the role of the latter as information sources.

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