
Dolors Palau-Sampio

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9051-0239>

dolors.palau@uv.es

Universitat de València

Antonio Cuartero

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9099-8254>

cuartero@uma.es

Universidad de Málaga

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The evolution and hybridization of reportage: characteristics of the genre in *La Vanguardia* and *ABC* (1982–2018)

Abstract

The article herein presents the results of a research study focused on the evolution of reportage in the Spanish press over a span of four decades. This is the first longitudinal study covering such an extensive period (1982–2018) with regard to this narrative journalistic genre, through publications in *La Vanguardia* and *ABC*, the two oldest national newspapers in Spain. The aim of the study is to discover how the genre has evolved in recent decades, in terms of authorship, length, section in which it is published, headlines, visual and complementary elements, and the degree of hybridisation with other journalistic genres. Based on a quantitative and qualitative methodology, a sample was analysed using the constructed week sampling technique (N=346 issues). The results obtained show an increase in the amount and general length of the reports published from the year 2000 onward, as well as a tendency toward hybridisation with genres such as the *crónica* and the news report. However, there is no evidence of a commitment to narrative aspects. The increase in pagination has been fostered by the incorporation of visual and design elements, while the Society section continues to have the highest share of reportage pieces. Most of the reportage items analysed were by-lined by one person, who were predominantly men, which suggests a gender gap in the authorship of prestigious journalistic genres.

Keywords

Reportage, journalistic genres, hybrid genres, narrative journalism, daily press.

1. Introduction

The emergence of journalistic genres is linked to an evolution in the forms of expression in this field (Gomis, 2008). Thus, it is not mere chance that more complex categories such as reportage have been consolidated posterior to informative genres such as the news (Benito, 1973), as the press has begun to compete with other media that have a greater commitment to urgency. Publication of the first reportage pieces in the US press dates back to the end of the 19th century (Hartsock, 2000), and during the subsequent decades it underwent a significant evolution, coinciding with the conditions of the press itself and closely related to the design of news products. In Spain, this genre started to gain visibility in the 1930s, and it gradually achieved a strong position as one of the main narrative genres (Chillón, 2014).

Current references to journalistic genres, and especially to classification criteria, is considered an anachronism from various perspectives (Parratt, 2003; Gutiérrez Palacio, 2005), and even more so in the digital environment (Larrondo Ureta, 2008), where hybrid narratives are on the rise (López Hidalgo, 1997). However, genres are still present in newsrooms as a working model, as well as in the curricula of communication degrees, and they are easily recognizable to the audience. After the latest attempts to systemize the segmentation of genres in the printed press, which date back to the 1990s, there is still a need to continue conducting research and investigation in this field, yet from new perspectives that take into account advances in the fields of linguistics and literature. Such perspectives leave aside closed and prescriptive categorizations in order to contemplate the evolution and tendency toward hybridisation (Sánchez & López Pan, 1998; Chillón, 2014). This provides evidence of the thin border that exists between genres, as well as their potential to take elements from others, an example of which is reportage with fragments of the *crónica* or dialogue, yet without losing their unique essence.

The present article analyses the way in which reportage has evolved over the last forty years in two historic media of the Spanish press, the newspapers *La Vanguardia* and *ABC*, from the vantage point of both its prevalence and content. In analysing the development of this genre, the aim has been to contrast one of its main characteristics, namely its hybrid nature, which has made it difficult to establish a classification of genres.

The multifaceted capability of reportage to adapt to multiple writing procedures and incorporate parts of other journalistic genres, whether informative or essay-focused (Chillón, 1999), has allowed journalists from different parts of the world to use it to write great narrative works, which demonstrates the productive relationship between literature and journalism. Some examples of such works include John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946), Rodolfo Walsh's *Operation Massacre* (1957), Svetlana Aleksievich's *Voices from Chernobyl* (1997), and Ryszard Kapuściński's *Ebony* (1998).

2. State of the issue

2.1. Reportage in journalistic genre theory

The concept of genre has been around since ancient times. Etymologically, it comes from the Latin word *genus*, which implies lineage and naturalness. From the ancient world to the present, it has been an identifying element of the diverse possibilities of literary discourse in the Occidental world, yet it has been the subject of numerous controversies (Aguar e Silva, 1972). The classification of journalistic productions into genres was initiated by Kayser in the 1950s, and Parratt credits the disputes to the fact that journalism is not an "exact science," but instead is subject to time-space influences and the intervention of a "subjective component" (2008, pp. 11-12). When naming and classifying journalistic genres, categorization has relied on heterogeneous criteria, including composition, form, and content. Unlike the classification of genres in literature, which has made use of certain canonical works, categorization in discursive productions of the media is based instead on a series of routines and stereotyped behaviour, which have become stable over time (Maingueneau, 1998). The characteristics of collective work, such as that involved in journalism, require the classification of its productions into genres. This point is argued by Gomis (2008, p. 109) as follows:

The need for genres is more immediate and urgent in journalism than in literature because literature is the work of one author who is the signer, whereas in journalism, the work of many people is combined in the same newspaper or news program, in which some of the names appear, yet others do not.

The theory of journalistic genres originated as a didactic vocation linked to the development of university journalism studies in Spain (Gomis, 2008). One of the first classifications of genres in the Spanish press was carried out by Martínez Albertos during the 1960s of the past

century, in the manual of journalistic writing in which he presented a theoretical corpus of genres for pedagogical purposes. His classification was based on the guidelines established by Dovifat (1964) in Germany, as well as Warren (1975) in the United States (Edo, 2003). Moreover, Martínez Albertos divided the genres into two main groups: the first was informative, which included news, reportage, and *crónicas*, and the second was opinion, comprising articles and columns. In other words, he maintained the traditional separation between fact and opinion, which had characterized Anglo-Saxon journalism. This distinction was based on the culture of journalistic objectivity, which symbolized the profession throughout the 20th century (Schudson, 1990). This permeated the theory of genres, which were divided according to the presumed degree of objectivity. As such, the subjectivity of the journalist as a mediator of the cognitive process has been neglected in the process of defining genres (Vidal, 2002).

In his work entitled *Redacción Periodística* [Journalistic Writing] (1974), Martínez Albertos again added a new macro-genre to the initial division into two large blocks (informative and opinion-focused). This new macro-genre was identified as interpretative, and its purpose was to accommodate formats such as the *crónica* and reportage, which did not fit neatly into the previous two categories. Thus, this new classification was comprised of the following: informative journalistic genres, which included the news and objective reports; interpretative genres, such as interpretative reports and the *crónica*; and finally, opinion genres (Martínez Albertos, 1974).

This classification into three major macro-genres has influenced many theorists who have addressed the issue of genres in journalism. Most of the proposals developed in subsequent decades tried to broaden, refine, or clarify Martínez Albertos' division, though without substantially modifying the fundamental principles. The contribution of Casasús and Núñez Ladevéze emphasizes that an interpretative aspect is present in the news and is comprised of four macro-genres: informative or narrative; interpretative (in which these authors include the *crónica* and reportage); argumentative; and instrumental (Casasús & Núñez Ladevéze, 1991).

Along the same line, Gomis (1991) highlights the interpretative essence of journalistic activity beyond its exclusive association with certain genres. However, his categorization follows the Anglo-Saxon model, with a distinction being made between information (news, reports, interviews, and *crónicas*) and commentary (criticism, letters to the editor, articles, columns, editorials, and humorous sketches) (Gomis, 2008).

2.2. Criticism of rigid classifications and hybridisation

Researchers began to intensely question the traditional classification of journalistic genres during the final two decades of the last century. Parratt points to academic dissatisfaction with a system that was excessively rigid. The theoretical classification of the time was not able to respond to new phenomena observed in genres, one of which included reportage (Parratt, 2003; Rodríguez Betancourt, 2004). As Chillón explains, "It is not that journalistic genres are disappearing, as is often proclaimed with astounding casualness; rather, it is the journalistic theory of genres that is in crisis" (1999, p. 427). The author points out that the causes of this critical situation are to be found in the prescriptive character of its conceptual framework, and he adds that contemporary linguistics and literary theory can help provide a deeper explanation of how to interpret genres.

In fact, the rigidity of traditional taxonomy was not able to respond to phenomena such as the New Journalism, which emerged in the 1960s in the United States (Wolfe, 1994), and which resulted in a revolution in the relationship between journalism and literature, due to the hybridisation of genres, formats and styles. Works such as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1965) represented a milestone, and they helped shape a generation of literary journalists highlighted by names such as Gay Talese, Norman Mailer, and Wolfe himself.

Reflections developed in the field of linguistics and literature, especially from the 1960s onward, as well as the impetus of modern genre theory, helped to dismantle the rules-based aspect that had characterized genres and changed the precept of a strict separation between them which, until then, were seen as watertight compartments. Such contemplation also assisted in confirming the hybrid nature of genres, which were subject to changes and transformations (Palau-Sampio, 2008). This led to a new approach to genres, which involved seeing them not as moulds that constrained and encouraged imitation and repetition, but which allowed for intervention in order to gradually modify such models according to the relationship between elements that are essential and variable, yet without endangering their existence (Palau-Sampio, 2008).

The thesis developed by Bakhtin (1999) in relation to discursive genres and their social component has had a strong impact on critical approaches to journalistic genres. Bakhtin called for a multidisciplinary view, focusing on the discursive and heterogeneous aspects of genres, which are linked to social processes with certain objectives and conditions. Thus, in the communicative sphere, genres can be understood as relatively stable forms of declarations that display certain consistent patterns of conformance that are socially accepted (Bakhtin, 1999).

In *Periodismo informativo de creación* [Creative and informative journalism] (1985), Bernal and Chillón proposed a classification system that introduced the variable of creativity as a differentiating feature. With this variable, they sought to include a series of texts which, due to their aesthetic characteristics and argumentative features, did not fit neatly into either news journalism or conventional interpretative journalism. In this way, meaning was provided to texts offering features that were mixed, narrative, descriptive, and/or argumentative. Their proposal was comprised of journalism that was conventional (descriptive and narrative texts), interpretative (argumentative texts), and creative-informative (descriptive-explanatory and narrative-explanatory texts with an aesthetic function and formal innovation) (Bernal & Chillón, 1985).

With the aim of suggesting alternatives to a questionable classification of genres, as well as reflecting on hybridisation, Sánchez and López Pan delved into an interpretation of genres based on the function that these texts offer the reader, abandoning “criteria such as objectivity/subjectivity, intentionality/non-intentionality, and in the case of macro-genres, even stylistic standards” (Sánchez & López Pan, 1998, p. 17). Their proposal is based on three criteria: the type of authorship; the opportunity for the author to imprint his or her vision of the world on them; and finally, the level of specialization required. Moreover, their approach establishes a classification into three main groups: genres specific to reporters (news, *crónicas*, reports, interviews, and profiles); authorial genres (editorials, freelance pieces, and columns); and finally, genres of specialised journalism, such as critiques and *crónicas* that specialise in a specific topic (Sánchez & López Pan, 1998).

The crisis and rigidity in these classification systems was exacerbated by digital publishing options. Larrondo (2008) points out that the emergence of the new media has caused changes in the categories of genres, due to the impact of cyber-journalistic language, which has led to the emergence of new prototypes, as well as modifications of genres regarding structure, aspects, and traditional roles. The evolution of narrative journalism (Sims, 1984; Hartsock, 2000; Bak, 2011; Herrscher, 2012; Chillón, 2014; Palau-Sampio & Cuartero, 2018) has helped to further highlight the shortcomings of the classic theory of journalistic genres, which is unable to accommodate expressions that explore diverse literary techniques, yet do not abandon the commitment to factual accuracy (Chillón, 2014).

2.3. Definition and characteristics of reportage

The definition and characteristics of reportage has resulted in various proposals that have tried to identify its features. Along with those who affirm its essence as an interpretative genre

between information and opinion (Martínez Albertos, 1983), or in other words, “a higher level of information with more expository freedom” (Martín Vivaldi, 1999, p. 353), other authors have stated more recently that this genre is complex and diverse. In this regard, Ulibarri refers to reportage as a journalistic genre that resorts to multiple sources and methods, which investigates topics of public interest in depth, with a great variety of expressive and structural resources (1994). In a proposal that merges several previous formulations, Parratt (2003, p. 35) points out the following:

Reportage is a journalistic genre of variable length that usually delves into, and even explains and analyses current events, which are not necessarily newsworthy, whose author enjoys greater structural and expressive freedom, which generally involves a publication that is signed or accompanied by photographs and infographics.

Chillón includes Bakhtin’s proposals in his definition of reportage and presents it as a complex, discursive genre, due to its “functional, thematic, compositional, and stylistic diversity,” or in other words, a “multifaceted and widely intertextual” genre that is capable of incorporating and combining multiple writing procedures, as well as absorbing, “in part or in whole,” the remaining journalistic genres, as well as those that are literary and artistic (1999, p. 178).

Maciá-Barber emphasizes that reportage is the quintessential narrative style, “an interpretative genre based on narrating, describing, analysing, and explaining facts or events, which are not necessarily related to the news,” of which the journalist offers “background, scope, and possible consequences without making personal value judgements, through a style that is journalistic, personal, creative, entertaining, and interesting, in a long, freely structured, graphically-illustrated, signed text” (2007, p. 40).

Reportage is the benchmark of narrative genres in the quality press (Gómez Mompert, Gutiérrez Lozano & Palau-Sampio, 2013), both for the production demands it requires as well as for its contribution to interpreting a complex social reality (Chillón, 1999). In terms of style and subject matter, as well as its adaptation to different media formats, its variety provides multiple creative options and a strong tendency toward hybridisation. Several authors have confirmed this diversity by proposing various typologies (Grijelmo, 1997; Armentia & Caminos, 2003; Parratt, 2003; Maciá-Barber, 2007; Echevarría-Llombart, 2011).

This capacity for hybridisation draws on the features of other journalistic genres. Regarding its contact with the news, reportage serves to reinforce current events (Grijelmo, 1997). Furthermore, together with the results of statistical studies, press releases help support background information and place it in context, so that the audience can better understand such messages (Núñez Ladevéze, 1995). This genre is linked to precision journalism (Dader, 1997) and is a predecessor of data journalism, which has developed in the digital context.

Unlike a report, the analysis in reportage does not always rely on quantitative data, but instead requires reasoning to support an interpretation. As Grijelmo points out, this requires the writer to have competence and experience in the subject matter, along with a view that is far removed from value judgements (1997). On the other hand, the *crónica* not only provides a link to current events that is characteristic of the news. It also offers the fundamental, chronological structure of a narrative that the journalist contributes in his or her position as a “qualified observer” (Núñez Ladevéze, 1995, p. 87), or in other words, as a direct witness in the location where an event take place (Durán & Aguilera, 2021).

Regarding its link with the interview, reportage can be enriched by the conversational style of an informative, interview-type dialogue with the person who is the protagonist of the information, which allows the journalist to bring his or her voice closer to the audience (Balsebre, Mateu & Vidal, 1998), thereby interrupting the purely narrative structure of the writer in order to incorporate fragments of dialogue. The profile piece has been inspired by the biographical tradition. Moreover, unlike the conversational exchange involving the person

being interviewed, this genre offers the opportunity to interpret the personality of a public figure, with the aim of displaying the details that provide knowledge about their career path, biography, and lesser-known aspects of the person (De Rosendo, 2010).

From the point of view of professional practice, media stylebooks usually offer a description of journalistic genres. However, in the case of the two media analysed, the reference is concise. *ABC* devotes a mere three-paragraph section to the subject in which the *crónica* is also included, offering the following reflections:

These genres are more personal than pure, concise information. Moreover, both styles allow the author to have a more prominent role to the extent that they investigate, select, present, and enrich the events that they have witnessed: the writers connect and interpret them, both with their antecedents and foreseeable consequences (Vigara, 2001, p. 166).

Along the same lines, *La Vanguardia* summarises the essence of this genre in less than seven lines, describing it as “in-depth work on a newsworthy event.” Moreover, this newspaper highlights the importance of visual elements and a headline that catches the reader’s attention in order to arouse interest and curiosity. “This style can offer prose that is more elaborate. Moreover, it enables a personal, human touch, and it might contain some value judgements as well” (*La Vanguardia*, 2018, p. 47).

3. Methodology

The aim of this research is to analyse the evolution of the reportage genre and its characteristics from 1982 to 2018, in a longitudinal study that includes nearly four decades of publications in two Spanish newspapers with more than a century of history: firstly, *La Vanguardia*, founded in Barcelona in 1881, which is connected to the Catalan bourgeois and has a liberal leaning; secondly, there is *ABC*, published in Madrid since 1903, with a monarchist, conservative stance. The selection was based on the desire to cover this period in its entirety in both media, which is why we chose the date after the closure of *La hoja del lunes*, which was the only newspaper authorised to be published on Mondays during the period of 1925 until April 1982 for the purpose of guaranteeing a Sunday rest. This time frame has made it possible to use the constructed week sampling technique as it was originally conceived (Luke, Caburnay & Cohen, 2011), which also includes Mondays.

To guarantee a sample that was both accessible for qualitative analysis and representative of the period in question, three-year samplings have been chosen for the purpose of observing subtle changes in the evolution of the genre in both publications. In this regard, 26 samples were taken from each newspaper since 1982, which correspond to two constructed weeks every three years (1982, 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018). The aim of this time-frame choice has been to obtain an accessible, representative corpus of analysis, with a periodicity that guarantees the identification of changes and trends. In order to have representation from all months of the year, the decision was made to start counting the second constructed week three months after the first.

As such, if the first constructed week of 1982 started on 3 May, the second (+3 months) would start in August, and so on. Moreover, with the change in the three-year period, the decision was made to start the construction of each of the weeks a month later: for example, in 1985 the first one was established on the first Monday in June (May +1), and the second one three months later in September of 1985 (June +3). In short, for each selected year in both newspapers, we have reviewed 14 days, or two constructed weeks, which have been chosen with different combinations every three months ($N = 14 \text{ days} \times 13 \text{ years} \times 2 \text{ newspapers} = 364 \text{ issues}$). In both dailies, the study was carried out based on print copies, in pdf version, which are accessible through the virtual newspaper archives of the newspapers themselves.

The analysis carried out is both quantitative and qualitative, and it was conducted in two phases. In the first, a selection was made of the reportage published in the 364 issues of the

sample, bearing in mind that most of the following conditions were met: a) analytical treatment of a subject; b) a creative headline; and/or c) an alternative approach to the inverted pyramid. This resulted in a total of 776 items. In the second phase, the items identified were analysed according to a data collection sheet that focused on eight aspects (Table 1), which allowed us to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1. How has the publication of reportage evolved over the four decades under study, and has the length of the pieces increased over the years?
- RQ2. What type of authorship does the reportage have, and is there a gender bias in relation to the writing of these prestigious texts?
- RQ3. Which sections have a higher concentration of reportage?
- RQ4. With which genres does hybridisation occur? What type of headline is most prevalent?
- RQ5. What visual and complementary resources accompany the reportage?

Table 1. Analysis sheet of the reportage.

Item	Characteristics
Decade of publication	1980s; 1990s; 2000s; 2010s
Text length	Limited: less than one page on average; Average: one page; Lengthy: from one to two full pages; Very long: more than two full pages
Authorship	Number of signatures Gender
Section	International; National; Local; Society; Culture and Entertainment; Economy and Business; Sports
Hybridisation	News; <i>Crónica</i> ; Analysis; Profile; Report; Interview
Headline	Creative Non-creative/informative
Visual elements	Number of photographs Number of infographics
Complementary elements	Number of sub-articles

Source: Own elaboration.

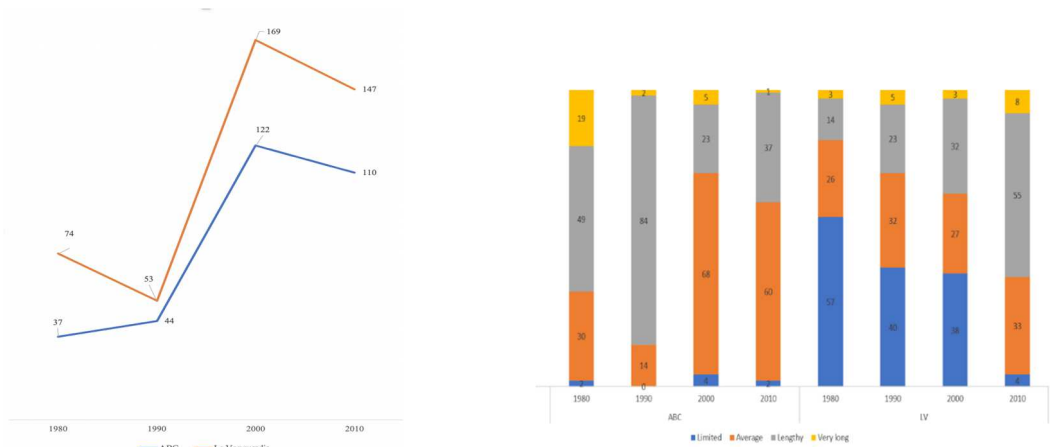
4. Results

4.1. Historical evolution

The analysis of four decades of reportage that appeared in the newspapers *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* (*LV*) shows an uneven influence of this genre in both publications. Thus, while the newspaper published in Barcelona (*LV*) (n=443) includes nearly six out of ten reportage pieces in the sample (58.5%), the figure for the Madrid newspaper is 41.5% (n=313). The longitudinal analysis also shows uneven gender presence throughout this period (Figure 1). Another interesting fact is that both newspapers concentrated most of reportage pieces in the last two decades, which confirms the growing interest in this genre.

Firstly, the *ABC* reportage sample from the 1980s and 1990s barely comprises 25% of the total, while in the 2000s, the figure is nearly 40%. In the case of *La Vanguardia*, the figures are similar: the sample from the final two decades of the last century accounts for 28% of the total sample, while the decade of the 2000s registers 38%. In both newspapers, the number of reportage pieces published since the year 2000 exceeds one third of the sample, although it has fallen slightly in the last decade analysed. This circumstance must be considered in relation to the economic context of the press, and of the media in general during this period, both of which had to confront falling advertising revenues and the search for a viable business model. In fact, investment in newspapers fell by 82% between 2007 and 2020, going from 1,894 million euros in advertising expenditures to 336 million (Infoadex, 2008, 2020).

Figure 1. Evolution in the number and length of reportage pieces (%) per decade.



Source: Own elaboration.

Secondly, in addition to the presence of this genre in both dailies, the evolution in terms of the amount of space these newspapers devote to reportage is also relevant. The aspects of this narrative genre, in which the analysis of causes and possible consequences, along with explanations given by experts and witnesses, provide highly relevant, qualitative information. However, reportage requires more space than other journalistic genres. In both publications, an average length of one page is the most prevalent size, followed by a longer pagination of up to two full pages (Figure 1).

However, when observing the issue by decade, we have been able to identify specific aspects that are associated with the format of each newspaper. In this regard, as *ABC* uses a tabloid model, it hardly publishes any reportage items of less than one page in length, while *La Vanguardia* offered pieces that were mostly shorter than one page in its reportage published in the 1990s and 2000s. Unlike *La Vanguardia*, in the final two decades of the last century, *ABC* included more long-page reportage pieces than average, a circumstance which has been reversed since the year 2000. In this regard, from 2000 onward the Madrid-based newspaper prioritised the one-page format, with lengthy pagination coming in second.

In the transition period from the decade of the 2000s to the 2010s, the results of the analysis regarding the length of *La Vanguardia*'s reportage pieces show an evolution from the predominance of items of limited length to the long format, with more than half of the publications of this genre having a length of up to two pages.

4.2. Genre and authorship

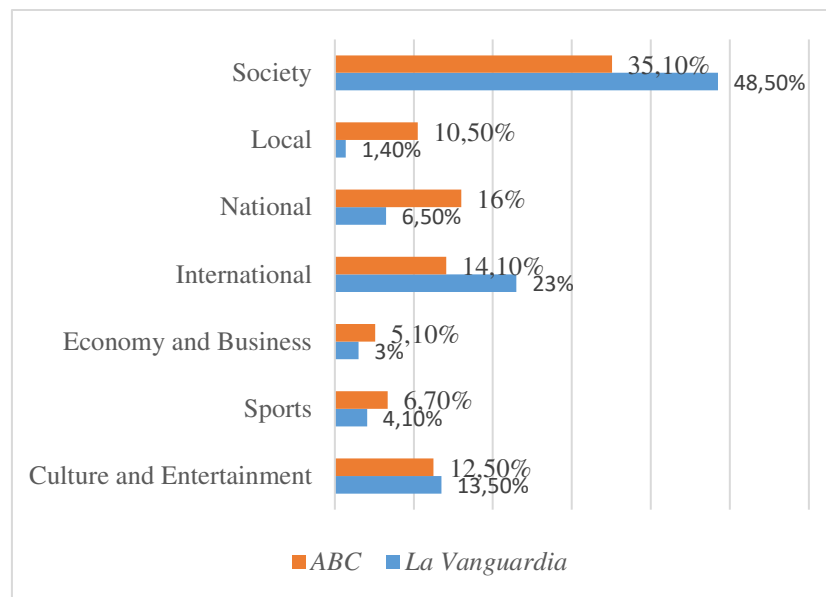
The vast majority of the reportage published by *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* over the four decades analysed are single-authored, which shows a tendency toward one-person pieces, in which collaboration is the exception. In both cases, the rate of single-signed publications reaches 94% of the reportage pieces analysed, which are only exceptionally carried out by two or three people. In *La Vanguardia*, there has been a trend toward an increased number of multi-signature pieces over the last two decades, although in absolute terms, it is still quite limited. By contrast, dual authorship was especially prevalent in the 1990s and 2010s at *ABC*.

Bearing in mind that reportage is one of the most prestigious genres in the press, advances in the presence of women journalists as authors has been analysed as well. The overall results show that just over a quarter (26%) are written by women, in the case of *La Vanguardia*, with a figure of 31% at *ABC*. If we focus on the evolution of authorship over the four decades analysed, we can observe that most of the texts written by women journalists were published from the 2000s onwards. Nevertheless, the percentage of reportage pieces written by women has never exceeded 34%, with a slight advantage of *ABC* over *La Vanguardia*.

4.3. Sections

The largest number of reportage items can be found in the multifaceted Society section, which includes topics related to health, education, environment, and lifestyle. Although both newspapers coincide in placing a large percentage of their reportage in this section, there are some differences between the two regarding volume (Figure 2). While *La Vanguardia* devotes nearly half of its publications to this macro-themed section, which includes *Revista*, *Vivir* and *Tendencias*, the percentage at *ABC* is just slightly more than a third. In both cases, however, about a quarter of the reportage pieces related to topics that appear in the Society section were published in the first two decades of the current century.

Figure 2. Publications by section.



Source: Own elaboration.

ABC shows a clear commitment to local and national issues, with reports such as the following: “El Escorial y San Lorenzo se disputan el histórico monasterio” [El Escorial and San Lorenzo compete for the historic monastery] (*ABC*, 20/11/1988); “El poder de Felipe González depende de la alianza con los comunistas” [Felipe Gonzalez’s power depends on an alliance with the communists] (*ABC*, 14/09/1991); “Sin rastro de la herencia de Gallardón” [No trace of Gallardón’s legacy] (*ABC*, 4/05/2015); and finally, “Más usuarios y menos trenes hacen que Metro ya no vuela” [More passengers and fewer trains make the Metro less rapid] (*ABC*, 21/10/2018). While the Madrid-based newspaper placed more than a quarter of the reportage pieces in these two sections, the figure for the Barcelona daily barely reached 8%, with titles such as, “La pájara de la Rambla” [The Rambla bird] (*LV*, 19/02/1997), “Cien días para afianzar un gobierno” [One hundred days to consolidate a government] (*LV*, 21/06/2015), and “Pactar (incluso) en tiempos de cólera” [Reaching agreements (even) in times of indignation] (*LV*, 21/10/2018).

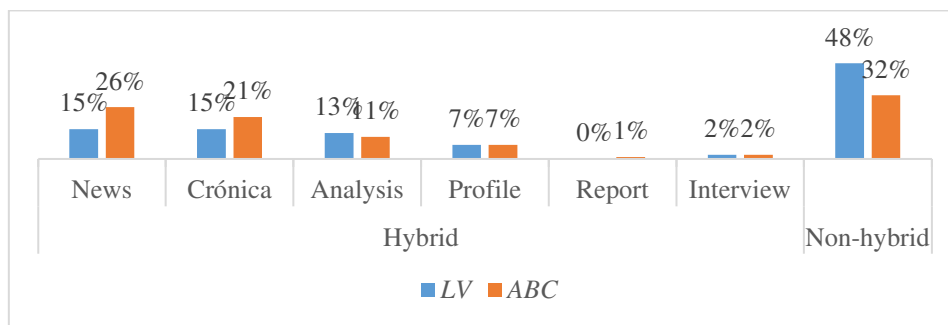
In *La Vanguardia*, the publication of international issues stood at 23%, with reports such as the following: “La exportación de la ‘Perestroika’” [Exporting ‘Perestroika’] (*LV*, 21/08/1988); “Kigali, la ciudad sin gente, pero con ley” [Kigali, the city without people, but with law and order] (*LV*, 5/09/1994); the “Gran bronca en la pequeña Habana” [The big reprimand in Little Havana] (*LV*, 23/04/2000); and “Historia de Aylan” [Aylan’s story] (*LV*, 4/09/2015). By contrast, in the case of *ABC* this percentage falls to 14%. In both media, the highest percentage of publications of this type was in the 1990s.

Culture and entertainment comprised slightly more than one out of ten reportage pieces published in both newspapers, with a slight advantage of *La Vanguardia* over *ABC* and, proportionally, with greater weight in the 1980s. However, economic and sports issues were more prominent in *ABC* than in *La Vanguardia*. This indicates the traditional position of a genre such as the *crónica* in the sports section.

4.4. Hybridisation of genres and headlines

Results of the research show a trend toward hybridisation in at least half of the reportage pieces analysed since the 1980s (Figure 3). This tendency has been stronger at *ABC*, where two out of three reportage items have features that are characteristic of other journalistic genres. The news report is the most influential journalistic category, as a quarter of the texts are of this type. This aspect is reflected in a writing style closely linked to an inverted pyramid, which focuses on an informative, news-style approach, with little presence of resources or any narrative vocation.

Figure 3. The hybridisation of journalistic genres.



Source: Own elaboration.

For both *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, the news and the *crónica* are the two genres that are most frequently hybridised with reportage, yet this occurs more often in the Madrid-based newspaper. On the other hand, there is a slight tendency to hybridise with the *analysis* genre in *La Vanguardia*, through texts in which the journalist's interpretative approach takes precedence over expert sources. This trend can be observed in “El laberinto de la política cántabra” [The Cantabrian political labyrinth], in which the author's interpretation plays an important role:

Whatever happens with the vote of no confidence, the controversy within the PSOE caused by the proposal, and the resulting polemic between the PSOE and the PP, has ended up raising the Hormaechea case to the category of a state problem, in the political sense of the term. In democratic Spain, it is the clearest example of the often harmful effects that a certain style of politics based on populism can have on those who encourage it, those who allow themselves to be dragged along by the ones who exercise it, and even those who are incapable of stopping it from their bulwark as the political opposition (*LV*, 3/01/1994).

To a lesser extent, reportage has adopted some typical aspects of genres such as the profile, especially in those cases where it focuses on a personality and his or her activities. The reportage piece entitled “El hombre del tren” [The man on the train] hybridises with this genre from the very beginning:

The Puigcerdà train is much more than a means of transport for Josep Comas. “I have a real affection for it. I have had many experiences on it. And I still enjoy it,” he says. Josep is 62 years old and retired. He lives between Barcelona and Puigcerdà and is a regular user of the railway line that links both cities. The first time he got on this train he was three months old (*LV*, 7/04/2003).

In a more modest degree, the interview genre also lends itself to a certain hybridisation with reportage. The article entitled “De Barcelona a Londres, en teletransporte” [From Barcelona to London by teleportation] mixes a general reportage structure with different interview fragments in a direct style, with the explicit insertion of the journalist’s questions together with the answers given by the protagonist of the story:

- Dr. Slater, for whom have you developed this technology?
- I thought that as people are constantly moving around, it wouldn’t be bad if we could go to another place without having to move.
- But it must be very expensive.
- Well, the sensors that the visitor wears are quite cheap. The expensive part is the robot. But if this technology becomes more widespread and more robots are produced, the price will go down.
- How long has it taken you to develop this technology?
- We’ve been at it for two and a half years now, and it’s a four-year project. We still have a long way to go. The system is still not perfect (*LV*, 20/05/2012).

One of the most distinctive features of the texts presented as reportage is the tendency to choose a creative headline (Echevarría Lombart, 2011, pp. 119–124). In fact, three quarters of the texts analysed (74% in *ABC* and 81% in *La Vanguardia*) use a headline that gives clues about the topic, yet the most significant details are not displayed, as would be typical of a news story. In spite of this, the writing of the texts is closer to the informative style than to the options of structural freedom provided by a genre such as reportage. The text entitled “Música en los pasillos” [Music in the halls] uses a creative title, yet its structure follows the typical parameters of a news story: “More than 500 students go to the Ángel Arias Macein Music Conservatory in Carabanchel every day, only to find that they have neither sufficient space nor the necessary security measures. Government authorities turn a deaf ear to parents’ protests” (*ABC*, 14/03/2000). In the article entitled “Aguirre pone en marcha su primera desamortización” [Aguirre launches her first disentailment], the desire to go for a creative beginning is frustrated by the lack of consistency and informative synthesis:

The first phase of the *POP* will be launched at the end of July. This acronym, which sounds like a musical style, stands for the *Plan de Optimización del Patrimonio*. This is the first ‘disentailment’ carried out by the Autonomous Region of Madrid. Thus, the government of this region is auctioning 15 properties valued at more than 62 million euros with the clear intention of selling them (*ABC*, 10/07/2012).

La Vanguardia headline reads, “El duro oficio de eliminar mosquitos” [The hard work of mosquito abatement], a text that follows the typical precepts of news articles with the inverted pyramid structure:

Seven town councils on the Costa Brava have a jointly organized service aimed at exterminating what is considered to be one of the biggest enemies of this tourist area: mosquitoes. The *Servei de Control de Mosquits (SCM)* has introduced a new system for eliminating the pest in Spain, which consists of exterminating the larvae at their place of birth, and the results have been excellent (*LV*, 2/09/1985).

In “El ‘golfo’ de Bosnia” [The Bosnian ‘gulf’], this publication devotes the first paragraph to a purely informative beginning: “NATO has deployed the largest military operation since the Gulf War, which has been used to put pressure on Serbian troops in order to weaken the siege of Sarajevo” (*LV*, 20/02/1994).

However, not all the reportage pieces included in the sample follow the characteristic orthodoxy of this genre. In the case of *ABC*, one out of four reportage items does not meet the criterion and chooses informative headlines instead. In an article published as reportage in the Local section, the newspaper headline reads, “Madrid consumes one million two hundred thousand cubic metres of water daily” (*ABC*, 11/05/1982). A similar situation occurs in the

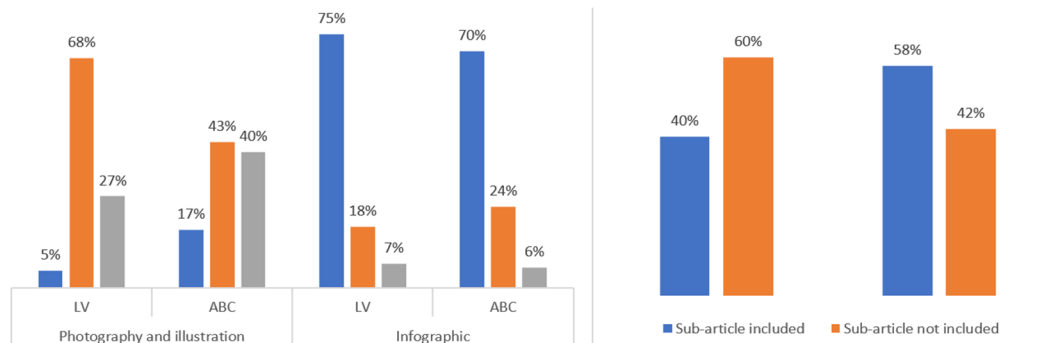
article entitled “El edificio [Hotel Ritz] incluido en el Plan Especial, será totalmente restaurado” [The [Hotel Ritz] building included in the Special Plan will be fully restored] (*ABC*, 19/09/1982), which is presented as reportage. With lesser impact, nearly one out of five reportage pieces in *La Vanguardia* uses informative headlines such as “La UB cumple 550 años” [The University of Barcelona celebrates its 550 year anniversary], and “La Costa Brava aspira a ser en el 2020 una reserva de la biosfera” [The Costa Brava aspires to be a biosphere reserve by 2020] (*LV*, 22/07/2018), despite developing an article structure that is more in line with reportage than information.

4.5. Visual and complementary elements

Photography, along with illustrations and infographics to a lesser extent, are an essential visual element in the reportage pieces analysed. Ninety-five percent of the reports published by *La Vanguardia* include at least one photograph, and a quarter of them include two or more. In the case of *ABC*, the number of photographs and illustrations is slightly lower (83%), yet half of the reportage items provide several examples of this resource in the same report (Figure 4).

The Madrid newspaper’s use of infographics shows a slightly higher percentage, with nearly a third of the reportage items having this resource, while in *La Vanguardia*, seven out of ten did not have it. The latter has tripled the presence of this resource from the last two decades of the last century to the present. Photography, illustrations, and infographics are present in nearly all the items analysed. In fact, there was only one item in *La Vanguardia* that did not have all of these resources, and it was published in 1982. In *ABC*, three such items have been found, two of which appeared in 1994 and another in 2003.

Figure 4. Visual elements and sub-articles.



Source: Own elaboration.

The presence of sub-articles in reportage is a design element that distributes space in a more balanced way and helps highlight details that would otherwise be lost in the overall structure of the text. The use of this resource is more prevalent in the reportage pieces in *ABC* than in those of *La Vanguardia*, the latter of which includes sub-articles in four out of ten items analysed. However, a sharp increase can be observed from the year 2000 onward, when the Barcelona newspaper nearly doubled the inclusion of sub-articles in its reportage.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This research presents a longitudinal analysis of reportage, which is a journalistic genre dedicated to the in-depth analysis of current events. This is the first study of its kind in Spain to cover four decades. To carry out the investigation, we have examined two centenary newspapers of the daily press, one which is published in Madrid, and the other in Barcelona. This long-term view has allowed us to observe important features in the evolution of this genre in the newspapers analysed, and even its very nature as well.

Firstly, there has been an increase in the presence of reportage pieces in both newspapers from the decade of the 2000s onward. This situation can be explained by the need for the printed press to compete with other media by delving more deeply into issues, which coincides with the years of expansion prior to the economic and business model crisis at the end of the first decade of the current century. In fact, this trend in the commitment toward the publication of reportage experienced a decline from the 2010s onwards, which can be attributed to the onset of the economic crisis and the subsequent drop in media advertising investment (Infoadex, 2020), although such expenditures today are at higher levels than in the 1980s and 1990s.

Secondly, in order to establish the existence of a real commitment to the genre, it is necessary to examine whether or not this is reflected in the dedication of more space and visual resources. Different developments have been observed in each of the two media, which can be attributed to a certain extent to the publication in paper format. From the year 2000 onward, *ABC* showed its support for this genre with one-page reportage pieces, and to a lesser extent, with longer pieces as well. On the other hand, in the 1990s and 2000s, the strong influence of reportage in *La Vanguardia* was initially reflected in short pieces of less than one page, following the so-called *reportage-oriented* model. This consists of information on current events with a scant depth of context, presented with a creative headline or as an urgent reportage piece, which is in line with Grijelmo's classification (1997), and to some extent conforms to the trend toward the *magazinization* (Labio Bernal, 2008) of the daily press since the end of the last decade.

However, the Godó Group's newspaper consolidated its promotion of medium and long-form reportage from the year 2000 onward, especially through sections that have incorporated the trend toward a magazine model, with a full-page or double-page layout, yet even this format was occasionally exceeded. In both newspapers, the commitment to reportage has been reinforced by an increase in visual and design resources, which have benefited from advances in digitization in the production and post-production processes of these newspapers. However, the limited presence of very long reportage pieces indicates a lack of commitment to large-format, narrative journalism in the newspapers analysed.

Thirdly, in line with critical theories of journalistic genres, a tendency toward hybridisation has been observed throughout the period analysed, mainly when linked with current event genres such as news reports and the *crónica*. This is reflected in a certain group of reportage that uses a creative headline in line with stylebooks yet is more informational in its approach. To a lesser extent, it should be noted that the reportage pieces analysed show increasing hybridisation with profile and analysis genres. This evolution reflects the interpretative vocation attributed to reportage by stylebooks, and it also confirms that the fusion of this genre with others was continuous in the years examined.

Fourthly, with regard to the tendency to place items of this genre in certain sections, a clear link to topics in the Society macro-section has been revealed. Not only is this tendency due to the diversity of issues addressed in this section, but also to the social challenges that are often linked to such matters, ranging from health to education, or environment to multiculturalism, which require in-depth analysis and coverage through testimonies and expert sources. Along these lines, the International section also responds to the need for in-depth coverage, although *La Vanguardia* shows a stronger tendency in this regard than *ABC*, which devotes a higher number of reportage pieces to local and national issues. In both newspapers, Culture and Entertainment topics have only an average degree of prevalence. The chronological evolution of the three most emblematic sections allows us to observe moments with a higher level of influence during the four decades analysed. Thus, with regard to being at the top, those of Culture and Entertainment were at their best in the 1980s; International issues were most prominent in the final decade of the last century; and issues in the Society section reached their peak at the turn of the millennium.

The fifth point is that the results show a gender gap in the authorship of one of the most prestigious forms of journalism in the press. This provides additional information, along with data from other studies, which have highlighted this gap in relation to the presence of authors in positions of authority in the media (APM, 2018), despite the fact that for decades females have comprised the largest group of graduates in Communication programs (Baños, Martínez & Papí, 2021; De Miguel *et al.*, 2017). This lack of representation occurs not only at the national level, but in the rest of Europe as well (Martinho *et al.*, 2018).

The limitations of this research should be pointed out, so that they might be addressed in future studies. On the one hand, expanding this analysis to other newspapers will make it possible to verify whether the trends detected in the newspapers analysed are widespread. Even though the object of this research was not editorial content specifically, it would be interesting to observe whether such content is maintained in other publications that have a more progressive editorial line, and in the regional press as well. In this sense, it would be beneficial to carry out a comparative analysis in order to see how the main social, political, economic, and cultural events of the time are reflected in reportage.

On the other hand, bearing in mind that the increased presence of reportage in the print press coincides with the beginning of digital publications, it would also be worth exploring the way in which these publications have adapted the genre to their editions, the impact on the number of sources, and the use of narrative modes, based on a more qualitative analysis of the techniques used in these texts. Likewise, it would be useful to include an analysis of the design elements of these reportage pieces in future research, a factor that could offer interesting data on how the genre has evolved, as well as on the content and paratextual aspects that comprise reportage, ranging from the headlines to highlighted stories. Finally, another possible future study related to the research herein might be to conduct in-depth interviews with journalists and section managers. The purpose of such an investigation would be to delve more deeply into the characteristics of this type of study yet carried out from a qualitative point of view.

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