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Submitted

December 15th, 2021

Approved

October 11th, 2022

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Communication & Society

ISSN 0214-0039

E ISSN 2386-7876

doi: 10.15581/003.36.1.47-64

www.communication-society.com

2023 – Vol. 36(1)

pp. 47-64

How to cite this article:

Dávila Garza H., Alarcón Martínez,
G. J. & López Pérez, J. F. (2023).
News website users in Mexico:
factors influencing their loyalty,
Communication & Society, 36(1), 47-
64.

News website users in Mexico: factors influencing their loyalty

Abstract

Recent technological advances have significantly impacted news media in the way they provide news to the public, evolving into a digital environment. Therefore, digital media today focuses on generating readers' loyalty to their news websites. In this sense, a multiple linear regression analysis was carried out on a sample of 344 surveys of adult residents in the cities of Mexico and Monterrey. The results show that factors such as familiarity, satisfaction and reputation are positively related to the loyalty of news website users. However, they also show that the importance of the impact of these factors is different when the analysis is carried out in a stratified manner, such as residence, gender or education, which allows us to conclude that digital media can guide their loyalty efforts depending on the profile of their readers and the market they seek to target. To illustrate focusing on stratification by place of residence, the most significant factors for the Mexico City group corresponded to familiarity and satisfaction, while for the Monterrey group the most significant factors were reputation and familiarity in that order. Results with this type of differences between groups were also obtained when comparing by gender and schooling. It is recommended for future research on the subject, to include other cities within the country, with the purpose of contrasting these paper's findings.

Keywords

Loyalty, digital news, news websites, online news, digital journalism.

1. Introduction

With the explosion of the Internet in the mid-1990s the first digital news media were born. Particularly in the case of Mexico, where it was during the years 1995 and 1996 that the first news media appeared in this way (Salaverría, 2019). This technological advance caused journalistic organizations around the world to update the way they convey information to their readers and users (Ramos, 2015), altering their business model significantly. It was 2008 when printed newspaper sales clearly began to decline as the result of the transition of news from the traditional format to the digital environment. A few years later, in 2011 and 2012, with the decrease in newspaper buyers, advertising expenditures also decreased (Segura-Anaya, Marta-Lazo & Martínez, 2014).

Nelson and Kim (2020) warned that there would be a significant number of professionals and people interested in journalism, people who have invested efforts and millions of dollars, "willing to make the news more attractive and transparent, in the hope that doing so will generate more public trust and, consequently, more audience loyalty" (p. 2). On the other

hand, Hacek (2017) points out that the increase in competition in the online news market has raised the need for different media to increase the number of their readers and to keep their loyalty. Along the same lines, Berger, Geimer and Hess (2017) establish that “in the online environment, competitors’ offers are mostly only a few clicks away” and “the need to actively retain existing customers has therefore increased” (p. 3960).

Significant statistical data related to users of information and communication technologies (ICT) are provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) in Mexico. In its latest national survey on the availability and use of information technologies in households (2019), it states that there are 80.6 million people who use the Internet in the country. 90.7% of these people use it to obtain information, and specifically 47.3% use it to read newspapers, magazines or books, which clearly indicate that the near future of the information media will be in the digital environment.

The general research hypothesis is stated as follows: The reputation (of the news medium), the usability (of the news website), the satisfaction (of the reader) and the familiarity (of the news website user) are factors that positively influence the loyalty of the news websites users in Mexico.

Regarding the rationale for the research, although the loyalty of readers to news websites is a topic with limited research in Mexico, the problem faced by the news media to gain the loyalty of the users of their news websites is a current issue. This research seeks to provide knowledge in the context of our country and be useful for the journalistic industry. It also seeks to offer information which adds up to the efforts that are being carried out to overcome the business crisis that information media are going through. In addition, the various studies found in the literature present statistical models with global results, while the current research proposes a statistical model applied by stratification, first by city and then by gender and schooling, allowing to know which variables have the greatest impact in each of those segments.

The research focuses only on news website users up to 18 years old, inhabitants of Mexico City and the metropolitan area of Monterrey, without distinction of education or income level. It was decided to select these two cities in the country because they correspond to metropolitan areas of great importance in the country, both economically and in terms of population. These areas have shown to have relevant news media and are significantly popular among news readers. The field tests were carried out between December 2020 and March 2021.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Loyalty (of news websites users)

The theory of uses and gratifications is directly related to the dependent variable under study. This theory dates back to the mid-20th century and was elaborated by communication theorists such as Blumler and Katz. It focuses on the audience and states that the media satisfy the needs related to the social interaction of this audience (Martínez, 2011).

As stated by Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley (2010), classic authors like O’Donohoe (1994) and Cantril (1942) highlight that the theory of uses and gratifications is based on the rewards or benefits that attract and retain audiences to various types of media and to various types of content, satisfying social and psychological needs. They themselves indicate that this theory has been applied to a variety of mass and content media at different times, agreeing with those that are dominant or emerging at the time, such as radio, newspapers and magazines, and television. According to these authors, in recent years several researchers have requested the application of the theory in the context of the so-called “new” media, such as everything related to the Internet.

This theory is clearly associated with loyalty. It represents an antecedent of the importance for the information media for having permanent preference of news readers in the current digital environment. This permanent preference obtained through the use of media information platforms by readers give them the gratification they expect as a result of their reading. From this perspective, this research will focus on the analysis of loyalty with respect to factors that may impact it to a greater or lesser extent.

Regarding the definition of the loyalty concept referred to in the studies that speak of news consumption in digital format, Flavián, Guinalú and Gurrea (2006), they establish that “consumer loyalty is the feeling of attachment or union with the people, products or services of a company” (p. 364). They themselves add as a complement to the definition: “these feelings are positively reflected in the behavior of consumers towards an organization” (p. 364). In the same way, Hacek (2017) refers to loyalty as “the probability that the same user will visit a certain website again” (p. 58). This definition will be the one used in this research, but with emphasis on news websites.

More recent authors such as Vargas, De Esteban and Moura (2020) consider that loyalty “is assumed as an effort by the company to maintain the connection with the customer. Thus, its creation and daily maintenance is of vital importance, due to the strong competition of the current context” (p. 136). For Martínez-González and Álvarez-Albelo (2021), loyalty or fidelity online “refers to the intention of consumers to repeat the online purchase of the same product, service or brand, or recommend it through the web, mobile phone or social networks” (p. 2). These authors establish their definitions of loyalty under the understanding that there is a commercial exchange or purchase between the consumer and the service provider. In the case of this study, loyalty is analyzed from the perspective of free access to the news website for the information user.

On the other hand, taking into consideration the empirical studies found in the literature review, direct and positive relationships were determined between loyalty and the reputation, the satisfaction and the familiarity. An example of this are the studies of Antepará-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019); Hacek (2017); Casaló, Flavián and Guinalú (2008); Flavián and Gurrea (2007) and Flavián, Guinalú and Gurrea (2006). In particular, although this research replicates variables that have been addressed by other authors, it presents an important scientific contribution by reporting results by stratification, in this case by city of residence, by gender and by schooling. So, it is valuable for knowing which factors mainly impact loyalty at this level of detail.

2.2. Reputation (of the news outlet)

Jere and Borain (2018) point out that organizations with a recognized brand increase the value of the products they offer above their functional value. They themselves add that companies which have a corporate image of reputation and prestige have a greater capacity to differentiate themselves in the market.

Likewise, Goyanes and Vara (2017) identify that a trait of the profile of the digital news consumer is that they “perceive a media system independent of political and economic influences” (p. 489). On the other hand, Hacek (2017) recognizes that reputation “promotes the good name of the given news website” (p. 59), and Jere and Borain (2018) point out that “the corporate or brand image is an important factor in the general judgment of a service provider, which reflects the reputation and prestige of a company or brand” (p. 99). Also, Goyanes, Artero and Zapata (2018) address the concept of media brand and relate it to identity, pointing out that “media brands are strongly linked to professional journalistic values.” They add that “brand equity in journalism is associated with factors such as uniqueness, relevance and preference for readers” (p. 5).

For Perona-Páez *et al.* (2020), “corporate reputation is determined by the notoriety of an organization, the experience and the relationship that has been obtained from what is

expected in the future of the organization and the perceptions about the general attractiveness of this organization” (p. 3). In other perspective, Caviggioli *et al.* (2020) establish that “essentially, corporate reputation can be defined as the admiration and respect that a person feels for an organization at a certain moment” (p. 878).

In the case of the present study, it is considered important to relate the idea of the independence of the medium to the previous definitions, arguing that this element is of utmost importance in the positioning of the brand and reputation in a communication medium. Therefore, for the definition of reputation of the news medium, a comprehensive definition is proposed. Thus, the reputation of the media is identified as the corporate image that reflects the general prestige of a journalistic company, which includes the perception of independence that its readers have, as well as the professional journalistic values with which readers identify.

Regarding the empirical studies that demonstrate a positive relationship between reputation and the loyalty of news websites users, Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019) applied a model of structural equations and used satisfaction as a mediating variable, which ends up being positively related to the intention of both to revisit and to recommend the site, two elements that clearly refer to loyalty. Another of the authors whose study showed a direct relationship between loyalty and reputation corresponds to Hacek (2017), and Casaló, Flavián and Guinalú (2008).

2.3. Usability (of the news outlet)

According to Flavián and Gurrea (2007), there is currently a line of research that has focused on virtual establishments and how they are perceived by consumers. Therefore, it becomes relevant to address the issue of website design and user-friendliness, as this has become important in marketing strategy. In new digital markets, including news websites, usability is an element that can motivate users in their choice of which site to access.

Hacek (2017) points out that “the concept of usability refers to the benefits that consumers experience when it is easy to navigate the content of a website” (p. 58). For Flavián, Guinalú and Gurrea (2006), the factors that must be taken into account to understand the concept of usability of a website are a) ease of understanding the structure, functions, interface and content; b) simplicity of use from the first time; c) speed to find what you are looking for; d) ease of navigation; and e) ability to control what is done at all times.

Other authors like Medina-Quintero, Ábrego-Almazán and Echeverría-Ríos (2020) define usability as “the degree to which using an innovation is effortless” (p. 27). Also, Kous *et al.* (2020) cite Roy, Pattnaik and Mall (2014) and refer that “in general, the usability of a website can be defined as a quality characteristic that describes the simplicity with which a user can browse a website” (p. 76).

For the purposes of this research, usability will be defined in a comprehensive manner. Therefore, it refers to the benefits that users experience when the content of a news website is easy to navigate. It is the quality attribute in terms of the easiness with which users can access the standard features of the website. This includes the question of how simple it is to understand the structure of the system, its functions, the interface, and the content available to users.

On the other hand, the direct and positive relationships of this variable with loyalty are reported by Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019), Hacek (2017), Flavián and Gurrea (2007), and Flavián, Guinalú and Gurrea (2006).

2.4. Satisfaction (of the reader)

The term ‘satisfaction’ can be understood from the perspective of two points of view, the economic and the non-economic. It is the latter that is of interest for this research, since “it

includes psychological factors such as the fulfillment of mutual promises or the smooth functioning of relevant relationships” (Hacek, 2017, p. 59).

To define the reader satisfaction of the news websites, Hacek (2017) points out that it corresponds to the “emotional state that results from a general evaluation of all the important factors that contribute to the consumer’s relationship with the site.” He also points out that “satisfaction can be linked to the subjective attitude of a consumer or user towards a news website,” ending with the idea that “it is a permanent emotional predisposition based on the benefits obtained” (p. 59).

According to Yuda-Bakti *et al.* (2019), many authors have used the structure of the perceived quality-satisfaction-loyalty service theory. In the opinion of these authors, perceived service quality and satisfaction are two constructs that are widely discussed in the service and marketing literature. In the case of this research, the study and interest variable correspond to reader satisfaction, which could well be applied to definitions of customer or user satisfaction. Other definitions of satisfaction can be found in studies such as Islam *et al.* (2020), who say that “customer satisfaction is an evaluation based on the comparison between real and perceived experiences” (p. 125). They themselves cite Herrmann, Monroe and Huber (2007) and complement the definition by arguing that “customer satisfaction is a reflection of positive feelings” (p. 125).

Also, according to Choi and Kyung-Lee (2020), “satisfaction is subjective because each person perceives it differently to the extent that the individual feels the information useful” (p. 28). They add that “satisfaction is determined by the results of subjective judgments about expectations and previous experiences, which can be evaluated based on judgments through personal feelings that can be determined by psychological factors” (p. 28).

Based on the previous ideas, the definition of reader satisfaction refers to the permanent emotional state based on the benefits obtained and is the result of a general evaluation of all the important factors that contribute to the relationship of the user or reader with the news website.

On the other hand, Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019) obtained for satisfaction a direct relationship with loyalty in its structural equation model, coming from variables of perceived quality and directed towards the confidence variable, which shows the positive relationship. Similarly, Hacek (2017) reported a correlation for this same variable. In another study by Casaló, Flavián and Guinalú (2007), a direct relationship between satisfaction and loyalty is revealed.

2.5. Familiarity (of user with news website)

Flavián, Guinalú and Gurrea (2006) and Flavián and Gurrea (2006) indicate that, for internet users, familiarity is a key factor that allows them to decide whether or not to access a website. The more familiar your news site readers are, the easier it will be to decide which digital portals to visit. On the other hand, Flavián and Gurrea (2007) point out that there is a certain logic in thinking that users or readers who feel familiar with a news site will be more predisposed to read. From his part, Hacek (2017) defines familiarity as “the impression that people have of a certain product or service based on their previous contact with it” (p. 58). This same author identifies familiarity, “as the means by which the initial uncertainty of a user about a news website is overcome” (p. 58).

Other authors such as Chun, Lee, and Park (2020) indicate that familiarity is defined as “an individual’s memory of a stimulus object in a gradually complex memory structure elaborated through repetitive exposure processes, encoding and representation of stimuli” (p. 957). They also say that familiarity with the brand “is a subjective evaluation of the experience, the amount of information and the level of knowledge accumulated by consumers about a specific place or experience” (p. 957). Finally, Oday *et al.* (2021) argue that familiarity

“has a notable influence on consumer decision-making processes, such as their intention to continue using a site” (p. 4).

In the present study, familiarity is defined as using and complementing the description of Hacek (2017), remaining as follows: familiarity refers to the impression that people have of a certain news portal based on their previous contact with it, depending on reading and visiting habits.

This variable also shows direct and positive relationships with loyalty to websites. Such is the case of Flavián and Gurrea (2007), Hacek (2017) and Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019).

2.6. Hypotheses

Based on the literature presented in this study, the following hypotheses are presented that raise four causes of loyalty:

- H1. Reputation (of the news outlet) is positively related to the level of loyalty of news website users.
- H2. Usability (of the news website) is positively related to the level of loyalty of news website users.
- H3. Satisfaction (of the reader) is positively related to the level of loyalty of news websites users.
- H4. Familiarity (of the news website user) is positively related to the level of loyalty of news website users.

It is important to highlight that, although these hypotheses were raised from a theoretical perspective, the challenge is to verify them in relation to the environment of two of the most important cities in Mexico and from their respective stratification, since there are no studies in the country that address this relevant topic. Therefore, some examples of additional hypotheses of interest considering the stratifications are the following:

- H5. Familiarity (of the news website user) is the factor with the greatest impact on its positive relationship with the loyalty of news websites users.
- H6. In Mexico City, satisfaction (of the reader) is the factor with the greatest impact on its positive relationship with the loyalty of news websites users.
- H7. In Monterrey, reputation (of the reader) is the factor with the greatest impact on its positive relationship with the loyalty of news websites users.
- H8. For women, satisfaction (of the reader) is the factor with the greatest impact on its positive relationship with the loyalty of news websites users.
- H9. For post-graduate, reputation (of the reader) is the factor with the greatest impact on its positive relationship with the loyalty of news websites users.

3. Methodology

3.1. Making of the instrument

To gather information, a measuring device was developed taking into account the questionnaires applied in the previously mentioned empirical research. Additionally, the authors of the current research project developed complementary items based on their experience and the definition of each construct. As for the design of the questionnaires, seven experts, two scholars, and five industry professionals were involved in the validation of its content.

The instrument was structured in two main sections. In the first section of the information, different variables were covered. For each variable, about four to six questions were used, and they were measured using 7 points on the Likert scale: From “I totally disagree” to “I totally agree.” In the second section, information was collected on the profile of the respondent, including sex, age, education, and place of residence. The details of the measuring instrument are shown in Addendum 1.

The questionnaire was developed using the Google forms tool and later distributed through the internet among the main contacts on Facebook and WhatsApp. In turn, contacts were encouraged to share the survey with their own contacts to reach a greater number of participants, aiming to create a snowball effect. The criteria for participating were accepting to be users of news websites and residents of the cities considered for this study.

3.2. Population and sample

According to figures from the latest National Survey on the availability and use of information technologies in households (2019), INEGI reported that there are 80.6 million internet users in our country, of which 38.1 million use this tool to read newspapers, magazines or books. These last users represent the study subjects of this research project, since the use of the Internet is a condition for reading news websites. Regarding the research population, this project focused its attention on users of Mexico City and Monterrey, obtaining a total of 344 responses.

It is important to note that the sample size for a 95% confidence level is 385 responses, so the sample for this research is considerably close to this number.

3.3. Descriptive statistics

The instrument included a series of demographic questions that made it possible to know the profile of the participants. Of the 344 surveys in the sample, 62.2% belonged to Mexico City and 37.8% to Monterrey. According to gender, 53.8% people surveyed were women and 46.2% were men. Regarding the ages, the dominant ranges were from 40 to 49 years with 32.0% participants, 18 to 29 years with 24.7% and from 50 to 59 years with 22.0%. The last demographic classification was the level of education, where people with a bachelor's degree dominated, 54.3% being the number of participants at this education level.

3.4. Reliability analysis

Based on the responses obtained in the sample, an internal consistency analysis of the measurement instrument was performed through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha for each of the variables. IBM's SPSS computer program was used for this task and the result is shown below:

- Loyalty (of the news websites users) / 6 items / 0.834
- Reputation (of the news outlet) / 5 items / 0.715
- Usability (of the news website) / 4 items / 0.868
- Satisfaction (of the reader) / 4 items / 0.870
- Familiarity (of the user with news website) / 4 items / 0.837

According to Reidl-Martínez (2013), in an internal consistency test, values below 0.650 should not be accepted. Therefore, the indicators shown above are acceptable since they are above the recommended threshold.

4. Analysis and discussion of results

4.1. Multiple linear regression statistical analysis

To determine how much the theoretical model embodied in the present investigation adjusts to the reality of the collected data, the multiple linear regression exercise was used. This statistical method refers to: "an explanatory model in which a dependent variable is studied based on a series of explanatory or independent variables" (Treviño, 2014, p. 297). The regression analysis was performed in Stepwise mode with the support of the IBM SPSS program. The summary of the results is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of models resulting from multiple linear regression analysis (stepwise).

Mod.	R2	DW	F	CI	Familiarity		Satisfaction		Reputation		Usability	
					Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
1	.419	1.736	247.1	8.0	.648	.000	--	--	--	--	--	--
2	.486		161.0	15.2	.408	.000	.352	.000	--	--	--	--
3	.497		111.9	17.8	.352	.000	.292	.000	.150	.006	--	--
4	.504		86.0	20.2	.365	.000	.329	.000	.174	.002	-.104	.033

Abbreviations: R2: R Squared, DW: Durbin Watson, F: Statistical F, CI: Condition index

Source: IBM SPSS.

As observed in Table 1, the analysis yielded a summary with four models, with R squared results ranging from 0.419 to 0.504 and with a Durbin-Watson indicator of 1.736, which is within the acceptable range of between 1.5 and 2.5. The analysis of variance yields a statistical F value higher than 3.45 for all models, an adequate dispersion of the data with respect to the value of the mean.

Regarding the analysis of coefficients, in the four models all the standardized Beta coefficients of all the proposed variables resulted in p-values lower than 0.05, managing to cover the criterion of significance. However, the case of the variable “usability” stands out in model 4, whose standardized coefficient was negative.

The collinearity diagnosis yielded condition indices above the threshold of 15 from the second model. As can be seen, each of the models, by adding an explanatory variable, impacts the multicollinearity index. These changes in the index must be evaluated in conjunction with the changes generated in the value of the Beta coefficients of each variable, which is manifested in the discussion of the results according to Table 2.

Regarding the theoretical part of the recommended threshold for condition indices, Bresley (1991) points out that condition indices between 20 and 30 suggest serious problems of multicollinearity, while for models with indicators above 30, the problem is understood as manifestly serious.

Therefore, model 3 of the multiple linear regression analysis in its version of successive steps, is considered as the proposal of the result of the present investigation, which supports the hypotheses H₁ (reputation), H₃ (satisfaction) and H₄ (familiarity), with their respective impact factors.

4.2. Alternative models Intro

In order to compare the models resulting from the stepwise option, it was decided to perform an alternative analysis using different combinations of variables through the Intro option. The summary of the analysis can be seen in Table 2, where the intro models are shown.

Table 2. Summary of models resulting from multiple linear regression analysis (intro).

Mod. (*)	R2	DW	F	CI	Familiarity		Satisfaction		Reputation		Usability	
					Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
A1	.458	1.720	143.9	12.8	.484	.000	--	--	.255	.000	--	--
A2	.439	1.681	133.4	14.7	--	--	.454	.000	.271	.000	--	--

(*) The letter A (alternative) was prepended to differentiate itself from the models in stepwise.

Abbreviations: R2: R Squared, DW: Durbin Watson, F: Statistical F, CI: Condition index

Source: IBM SPSS.

Of the possible combinations of variables using the Intro option, only two models of these were significant. The contribution afforded by this exercise lies in the fact that it proposes two scenarios where the selected variables are different from those produced by the stepwise

model, reflecting a lower condition index. However, these models, unlike the one from stepwise, present an absent variable, proposing only two explanatory variables. Therefore, taking as a basis the results from the analysis of variance, the standardized Beta coefficients and the collinearity diagnosis, it was decided to choose model 3 as the result of the proposal for investigation at hand. Although this model slightly increases the suspicion of multicollinearity by increasing the condition index, it also increases the explained variance and recovers an additional predictor variable that the other models do not have. Another aspect that favors the selected model is the fact that the impact coefficients show marginal changes. Proof of this is that the variables familiarity and satisfaction decrease their coefficients as the impact is redistributed with the variable that is additionally included in the model. It should be remembered that model 4 was rejected, because the explanatory variable usability resulted in a negative impact coefficient, multicollinearity increased and the value of the other impact coefficients volatilized, that is, they increased instead of being diminished.

Thus, based on what is stated in this section, it is concluded that the variables familiarity, reputation and satisfaction are directly and positively related to loyalty of news websites users, in that order, reaching 49.7% of the explained variance. These results generally align with previous research like those performed by: Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019), Casalo, Flavián and Guinalú (2008), and Flavián and Gurrea (2007) who also considered these variables.

4.3. Result comparison of linear regression by stratification

Taking as a reference the sample that was used to determine the results of the linear regression of the models presented in the previous section, a regression by stratification analysis was taken into practice, considering residential area, gender, and level of education. It is important to clarify that this stratification exercise was carried out using some of the control questions that were asked of the survey participants. The results are directly linked to the independent variables defined in the theoretical framework and for this reason they do not represent variables themselves, but they do allow the information to be broken down and relevant results to be obtained, as shown below:

Table 3. Proposed global model vs stratifications (residence, gender and education).

Group	Obs.	R2	F	CI	Familiarity			Satisfaction			Reputation		
					Beta	Err.	Sig.	Beta	Err.	Sig.	Beta	Err.	Sig.
Proposed global model	344	.497	111.9	17.8	.352	.063	.000	.292	.074	.000	.150	.068	.006
Mexico City	214	.496	103.8	15.5	.342	.078	.000	.419	.092	.000	--	--	--
Monterrey	130	.552	78.2	13.9	.301	.082	.000	--	--	--	.500	.093	.000
Men	159	.499	77.7	14.4	.512	.083	.000	.252	.101	.001	--	--	--
Women	185	.512	63.4	18.8	.221	.084	.006	.378	.101	.000	.203	.090	.009
Highschool or under	93	.394	59.2	10.8	--	--	--	.628	.109	.000	--	--	--
Bachelor	187	.560	77.5	17.1	.287	.072	.000	.361	.091	.000	.230	.087	.001
Post-graduate	64	.317	28.8	10.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	.563	.140	.000

Abbreviations: Obs: Number of observations (sample), R2: R Squared, DW: Durbin Watson, F: Statistical F, CI: Condition index, Err: Standard error

Source: IBM SPSS.

Of the seven analysis groups, in two of them the significant variables were the same as in the proposed global model, being familiarity, satisfaction and reputation. However, in none of the cases was the order of impact of the variables in the stratified models different from the main model. If we add to this trait, that the remaining five models did not match in the number of variables, it can be concluded that the information provided by the stratification analyses brings to light specific and additional relevant information. Thus, journalistic companies can use such information depending on the type of readers that mainly make up their market, or, where appropriate, the type of readers to whom they intend to address.

In the case of stratification cases by residential area, it is observed that for Monterrey users the reputation factor has a greater impact, while in Mexico City, the main impact is presented in satisfaction. This may be due to the different expectations that both groups have of the news source. While in Monterrey they tend to identify with a critical and truthful medium, in Mexico City they do so with the medium they think provides them with a state of greater well-being by knowing that they are informed.

On the other hand, if looking at stratification by gender, for the male group the variable with the greatest impact was familiarity which shows that men give greater importance to the habit they have for reading up on the same news website. The group of women leans towards well-being, demonstrated by satisfaction being the most important variable.

Finally, regarding stratification by education level, for the group of high school or under, the only meaningful variable was satisfaction. An explanation of the aforementioned could be that people with less education have a greater disposition to immediate well-being. On the other hand, in the undergraduate group, the variable satisfaction was also present in the results, but it was not the only one that was shown to have an impact, since familiarity and reputation also appeared with significance in the model. Regarding individuals with postgraduate education, it is observed that the response variable was concentrated exclusively on reputation, which might indicate that, at a higher level of study, the image of reputation of the medium becomes fundamental, that is, users need to feel informed with truthfulness and independence.

It is worth pointing out that in the reputation factor is the most difficult for a journalistic medium to build, since it requires the effort of years of perseverance accompanied by quality in the final product. One way to underpin this effort is to reach out to collaborators with previously earned reputations in order to send a message to readers of the importance of this element for the news medium. In contrast, a possible disadvantage of building reputation is the fact that, in order to do so, it is necessary to keep a distance from political and economic interests, which often restricts possible advertising contracts that would help the media themselves to pay for their projects and cover their news production costs.

Additionally, it can be pointed out that it could be a less complex task to implement the variables of familiarity and satisfaction. In the case of familiarity, the news media would have to concentrate on making their product a news website that is in frequent contact with users so that their reading becomes part of their daily work. This can be achieved with advertising and market penetration campaigns or with special promotions for readers. In the case of the factor satisfaction, the reader should be understood as a whole, especially considering the type of information that he or she is looking for and that it is to his or her liking.

However, the most important contribution of this research focuses on the results obtained from the statistical analysis by stratification, which allow knowing by groups the factors that are related to loyalty and their respective impacts.

Regarding this aspect, the complementary hypotheses proposed in section 2.6 of this study and that they were accepted, were as follows:

- H₅ = Familiarity: (.408)
- H₆ = Mexico: Satisfaction (.419)
- H₇ = Monterrey: Reputation (.500)

- H8 = Women: Satisfaction (.378)
- H9 = Post-graduate: Reputation (.563)

It is relevant to comment that the different stratification sections resulted from control questions that were part of the measuring instrument, that is, they do not correspond to variables for which it is required to document antecedents of the literature.

4.4. Result comparison of lineal regression by similarity

With the intention of finding similarities between the global model and the stratified models already presented, the Euclidian distance was calculated. This calculation allowed to determine a similarity index between each model, in which the smaller the index the greater the similarity shown. The fact of knowing which stratified models are more or less similar to the proposed global model allows the digital journalistic media to also know how much the location, gender or education of the users modify the variables that influence loyalty, in order to have greater detail and serve the target market. The result is shown on Table 4.

Table 4. Proposed global model vs stratifications (residence, gender and education). Order based on similarity of results.

Grupo	Obs.	R2	F	CI	Familiarity			Satisfaction			Reputation			Similarity
					Beta	Err.	Sig.	Beta	Err.	Sig.	Beta	Err.	Sig.	
Proposed global model	344	.497	111.9	17.8	.352	.063	.000	.292	.074	.000	.150	.068	.006	--
Bachelor	187	.560	77.5	17.1	.287	.072	.000	.361	.091	.000	.230	.087	.001	.124
Women	185	.512	63.4	18.8	.221	.084	.006	.378	.101	.000	.203	.090	.009	.165
Mexico City	214	.496	103.8	15.5	.342	.078	.000	.419	.092	.000	--	--	--	.197
Men	159	.499	77.7	14.4	.512	.083	.000	.252	.101	.001	--	--	--	.223
Monterrey	130	.552	78.2	13.9	.301	.082	.000	--	--	--	.500	.093	.000	.459
Highschool or under	93	.394	59.2	10.8	--	--	--	.628	.109	.000	--	--	--	.509
Post-graduate	64	.317	28.8	10.9	--	--	--	--	--	--	.563	.140	.000	.616

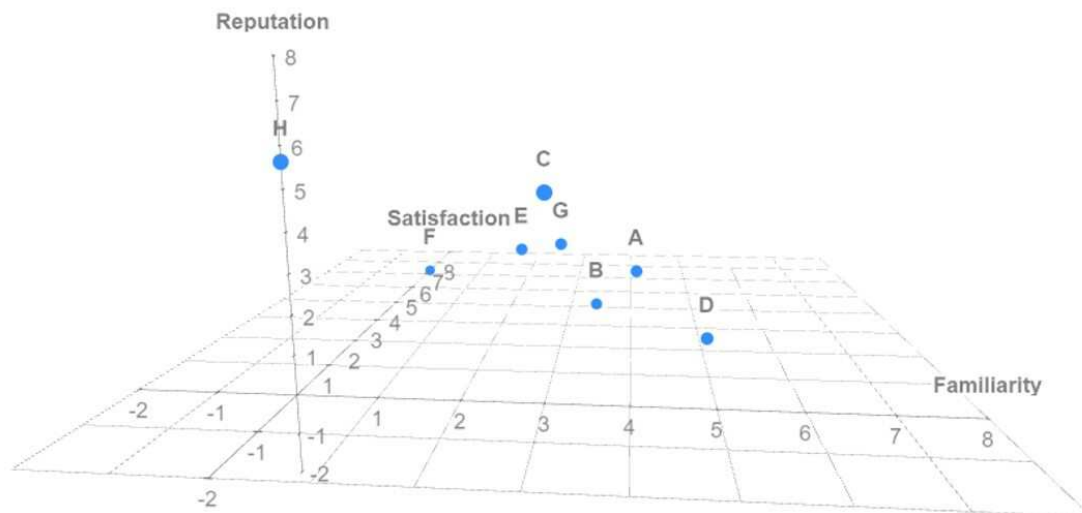
Abbreviations: Obs: Number of observations (sample), R2: R Squared, DW: Durbin Watson, F: Statistical F, CI: Condition index, Err: Standard error. Similarity: similarity index with global model based on Euclidean distance

Source: IBM SPSS.

In the last column of the table above, it can be observed that the models of the groups: bachelor, women and Mexico City present greater similarity with the proposed global model when obtaining similarity indices below 0.2. On the contrary, the least similar groups correspond to the groups Monterrey, high school or under and postgraduate with indices above 0.5. Such results could be related to the number of elements in the sample of each group, since the most similar groups have a greater sample and vice versa. However, it is also possible that the order of the similarities displayed in these groups is related to the importance of each test subject assigned to the variables of the study. In this way, it can be observed that in the global model, the variable with the greatest impact was familiarity, and, even while being the most similar groups, bachelor, Mexico City and women, their main impact variable corresponded to satisfaction.

To complement the above information, a three-dimensional graph was made considering the impact coefficients of the three variables that were significant in each group. This places each group with respect to the global model and with respect to the rest of the groups, as can be seen in Graph 1.

Graph 1. Three-dimensional image based on the impact coefficients of the different groups analyzed.



Nomenclature of groups in the three-dimensional graph:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| A. Global model | B. Mexico City | C. Monterrey |
| D. Men | E. Women | F. Highschool or under |
| G. Bachelor | H. Postgraduate | |

Source: Private elaboration with the support of a graphic designer at <https://www.math3d.org>.

This comparison provides additional information of interest by revealing not only which stratified groups have greater similarity with the global model, but also shows the similarity of each group with respect to all the others. This would allow journalistic companies, depending on the composition of the market they target, to develop strategies that cover the factors that impact the loyalty of users of their news websites, according to whatever each company sees fit.

A relevant note in relation to the statistical model used in this research corresponds to the fact that multiple linear regression was selected in order to be able to carry out the series of comparisons that have been presented in this document and that are part of the scientific contribution. Most of the publications that served to build the theoretical framework of this study used structural equations as a statistical model. However, they did not present results by stratification.

4.5. Research limitations

The most important limitation is related to the procedure to carry out the field tests, since the collection of information focused on users of WhatsApp and Facebook due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The procedure to cover the field tests consisted of requesting the personal contacts of the author of the study in these social networks to answer the survey, and in turn, asking them to do the same to increase the number of participants. Finally, the number of empirical studies related to the particular topic of loyalty of users of the digital press is

limited, understanding that it corresponds to a relatively new topic and problem. Therefore, the exercise of comparing results was limited to existing research.

5. Conclusions

This research project had determined the factors that influence on the loyalty of news websites users. The mentioned factors were taken from empirical studies from the existing literature on the topic. Due to the fact that the study was undertaken from a quantitative approach, a measuring device was developed which abided by the expert validation process and the internal consistency test through the Cronbach Alphas' calculation. The measuring device was applied to users from Mexico City and Monterrey, with the attempt to correspond with the two main cities of the country.

The results of the multiple regression analysis show that the variables familiarity of user with the news website, satisfaction of the reader and reputation of the news outlet present a direct, positive and significant relationship with the loyalty of news websites users. In the case of the variable usability of the news website, it was not considered due that its inclusion did not imply an unsatisfactory level of collinearity. The set of the variables included justified an explanation for nearly half the total variance, which indicates that there are also other factors which have an effect on loyalty. Consequently, it becomes relevant to explore new variables that are not yet recognized by current literature. The results obtained from this study align with those reported by research papers referenced before in the theoretical framework, such as Antepara-Basurto, Braganza and López (2019), Hacek (2017), Casaló, Flavián and Guinaliú (2008), and Flavián and Gurrea (2007).

Additionally, a stratification analysis with the following criteria was performed: residential area, gender and level of education. The explanatory variables of the compared models matched with those resulting from the global model, but with the peculiarity of obtaining a different order of importance according to their greater or lesser impact. The obtained results offer valuable information to news companies to focus their efforts on variables according to the profile of the readers that make up their market. As an example, there is the group analysis carried out on the city of residence. In Mexico City the factor with the greatest impact was reader satisfaction, while in Monterrey it was the informative medium reputation. This shows that the difference between these two groups implies on one side that the feeling of well-being from being informed (satisfaction) and, on the other, the need to identify with an environment with a certain level of prestige (reputation). Results detailing the differences between these two groups were also obtained by comparing the relative data from gender and level of education.

For each of the three explanatory variables that resulted in the different groups, focused strategies can be implemented to encourage them. In the case of reputation, a strategy may consist of assembling a group of recognized collaborators and journalists who give the news outlet a certain prestige. In the same way, advertising campaigns and special promotions could contribute to the promotion of the familiarity variable, since the key to this factor is the continuous presence of the news website among news users. Finally, the satisfaction factor can be addressed by identifying and publishing the type of information that interests readers.

As an advice for future studies on the subject, it would be important to include cities of other states in Mexico in addition to the already considered places. This would help to know the effects of the different factors on loyalty in different geographical areas and contrast them with those already obtained. As a last reminder, it is also of utmost importance for future studies to follow up on the strategy of the news industry to offer information to the public, either by maintaining free access to news content or taking a fee for the information, since loyalty factors could be uniquely different according to the employed market strategy.

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Addendum 1: Data collection survey

Loyalty of news websites users

Likelihood that the same user will visit a given news website again

#	Ítem	Scale
1	I have a news website in which I spend more time, compared to other news websites on the Internet	Likert 1-7 1= Totally disagree 7=Totally agree
2	The news website where I spend the most time in has been my favorite news website for several years	
3	Although there are a variety of information media available, to keep myself updated I access the news website of my choice	
4	The news website that I access the most, I consult it at least 5 days a week	
5	I share content from my favorite news website on social networks	
6	When I spend a day without consulting my favorite news website, I feel uninformed	

Reputation (of the news outlet)

Corporate image that reflects the general reputation and prestige of a journalistic company, which includes the perception of independence that readers have of it, as well as the professional journalistic values with which readers identify

#	Ítem	Scale
1	I only consult reputable news websites	Likert 1-7 1= Totally disagree 7=Totally agree
2	I verify the veracity of the information of my interest, in the news websites that I consider independent	
3	The news websites that I consult have a positive influence on the community	
4	The news websites that I access the most has greater popularity compared to other news websites	
5	For me, the information on my favorite news website is totally true	

Satisfaction (of the reader)

Permanent emotional state, based on the benefits obtained and resulting from a general evaluation of all the important factors that contribute to the relationship of the user or reader of the news website

#	Ítem	Scale
1	I am pleased with the news content presented by the news website of my choice	Likert 1-7 1= Totally disagree 7=Totally agree
2	My favorite news website meets my daily information expectations	
3	I am willing to access a news website if it generates a state of well-being for me by being well informed	
4	I enjoy being informed on my favorite news website	

Usability (of the news website)

Easiness of understanding the structure, functions, interface and contents of the news website. Simplicity of use from the first time. Speed to find what you are looking for. Ease of navigation. Ability to control what is done at all times

#	Ítem	Scale
1	The news websites that I consult most frequently are simple to use	Likert 1-7 1= Totally disagree 7=Totally agree
2	The news website that I access the most, it was easy to use from the first time	
3	The general structure of the news website that I consult the most allows me to quickly find the information I need	
4	I have control of what I can do when I browse my favorite news website	

Familiarity (of user with news website)

The impression that people have of a certain news website based on their previous contact with it, reading habits and visiting habits

#	Ítem	Scale
1	I have a feeling of affinity with the news website that I access the most	Likert 1-7 1= Totally disagree 7=Totally agree
2	I only consult news websites with which I feel identified	
3	I have become accustomed to consulting my favorite news website to stay informed	
4	I know extensively everything related to my favorite news website	

Demographic or control data

#	Ítem	Options
1	City of residence	Mexico City, Monterrey
2	Age range	18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 years or older
3	Gender	Male, Female
4	Education	Highschool or under, Bachelor, Post-graduate
5	General interest about the news	Likert 1-7
6	Average daily time dedicated to consulting news websites	15 minutes. Between 15 and 45 minutes. Between 45 minutes and one hour. More than one hour
7	Types of news media with which you stay informed	Radio and television, Newspapers, News websites, Social networks