Digital-native news media: Reach in 46 countries, top brands and user profiles in Spain*

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Submission date: May 2022
Accepted date: May 2023
Published in: June 2023

Recommended citation: KAUFMANN-ARGUETA, J. and NEGREDO, S. (2022). "Digital-native news media: Reach in 46 countries, top brands and user profiles in Spain". *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 68, 63-79. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3543>

Abstract

Digital-pure news publications have become competitive players in many countries, populating audience rankings in the context of a high-choice media environment. With the aim of gaining insight into the performance of digital-native news brands around the world and into how their audiences are similar or different to those of media with traditional roots in Spain, we draw on survey data for 2021 and 2022, respectively. First, we examine what proportion of online adults use any of the most popular digital-pure news brands in 24 mostly European countries and in 22 markets in America, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region, and we highlight how the main digital-native brands rank among online news sources, based on their weekly audience reach. Then we compare the user profiles of the five most-used online-only news organizations in Spain, against the audiences of the top five legacy brands (N = 2028), looking at reader loyalty, gender, age, income and education levels, and political leaning. With this media-centric approach to audiences, we find that digital-native news media brands either lead (in 15 out of 46 countries) or occupy some of the top positions by weekly reach in most markets, with Nordic countries standing out as an exception. In Spain, audiences of the top digital-native brands check them slightly less frequently than the users of news sites with traditional roots. News sites in our study are slightly more popular among males, older people, and more affluent and formally educated users who can define their political stance. Nevertheless, the diversity of editorial approaches found among sites in an externally pluralistic

* This is a result of the Diginativemedia research project, grant PID2021-122534OB-C22, funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and the ERDF, "A way of making Europe".

news media market inevitably results in brands with user profiles that show exceptions to these trends.

Keywords: digital journalism; online news; news publishing; news audiences; digital-native media; Spain

Resum. *Mitjans de notícies nadius digitals: abast en 46 països, principals marques i perfils d'usuaris a Espanya*

Les publicacions de notícies purament digitals han esdevingut actors competitius en molts països i ocupen llocs destacats en les classificacions d'audiència en el context d'un entorn mediàtic d'alta capacitat d'elecció. Amb l'objectiu d'obtenir informació sobre el rendiment de les marques de notícies digitals a tot el món i de saber si les seves audiències són similars o diferents a les dels mitjans amb arrels tradicionals a Espanya, ens basem en dades d'una enquesta de 2021 i 2022, respectivament. Primer, examinem quina proporció d'adults connectats a internet fa servir alguna de les marques de notícies purament digitals més populars en 24 països majoritàriament europeus i en 22 mercats d'Amèrica, Àfrica i la regió Àsia-Pacífic, i destaquem com es classifiquen les principals marques nadiues digitals en funció de l'audiència setmanal que aconsegueixin. Després comparem els perfils dels usuaris de les cinc organitzacions de notícies exclusivament digitals més utilitzades a Espanya, amb les audiències de les cinc principals marques tradicionals (N = 2028), i analitzem la lleialtat dels lectors, el gènere, l'edat, els nivells d'educació i ingressos, i la inclinació política. Amb aquest enfocament centrat en les audiències dels mitjans, trobem que les marques de mitjans de notícies nadius digitals són líders (en 15 de 46 països) o ocupen algunes de les primeres posicions per abast setmanal en la majoria dels mercats, amb els països nòrdics com a excepció. A Espanya, les audiències de les principals marques nadiues digitals les consulten amb una freqüència lleugerament menor que els usuaris de llocs de notícies amb arrels tradicionals. Els llocs de notícies en el nostre estudi són una mica més populars entre els homes, les persones grans i els usuaris més benestants i amb educació formal, capaços de definir la seva postura política. No obstant això, la diversitat d'enfocaments editorials que es troben entre els llocs, en un mercat de mitjans de notícies pluralista, inevitablement dona com a resultat marques amb perfils d'usuari que mostren excepcions a aquestes tendències.

Paraules clau: periodisme digital; notícies en línia; publicació de notícies; audiències de notícies; mitjans nadius digitals

Resumen. *Medios de noticias nativos digitales: alcance en 46 países, principales marcas y perfiles de usuarios en España*

Las publicaciones de noticias puramente digitales se han convertido en actores competitivos en muchos países y ocupan puestos destacados en las clasificaciones de audiencia en el contexto de un entorno mediático de alta capacidad de elección. Con el objetivo de obtener información sobre el rendimiento de las marcas de noticias digitales en todo el mundo y de saber si sus audiencias son similares o diferentes a las de los medios con raíces tradicionales en España, nos basamos en datos de una encuesta de 2021 y 2022, respectivamente. Primero, examinamos qué proporción de adultos conectados a internet usa alguna de las marcas de noticias puramente digitales más populares en 24 países mayoritariamente europeos y en 22 mercados de América, África y la región Asia-Pacífico, y destacamos cómo se clasifican las principales marcas nativas digitales en función de la audiencia semanal que alcancen. Luego comparamos los perfiles de los usuarios de las cinco organizaciones de noticias exclusivamente digitales más utilizadas en España, con las audiencias de las cinco principales marcas tradicionales (N = 2028), y analizamos la lealtad de los lectores, el género, la edad, los niveles de educación e ingresos, y la inclinación política. Con este enfoque centrado en las audiencias de los medios, encontramos que las marcas de medios de noticias nativos digitales son líderes (en 15 de 46 países) u ocupan algunas de las primeras posiciones por alcance semanal en la mayoría de los mercados, con los países nórdicos como excepción. En España, las audiencias de las principales marcas nativas digitales las consultan con una frecuencia ligeramente menor que los usuarios de sitios de noticias con raíces tradicionales. Los sitios de noticias en nuestro estudio son un poco más populares entre los hombres, las personas mayores y los usuarios más pudientes y con educación formal, capaces de definir su postura política. Sin embargo, la diversidad de enfoques editoriales que se encuentran entre los sitios, en un mercado de medios de noticias pluralista, inevitablemente da como resultado marcas con perfiles de usuario que muestran excepciones a estas tendencias.

Palabras clave: periodismo digital; noticias en línea; publicación de noticias; audiencias de noticias; medios nativos digitales

1. Introduction

Digital-native news media have become a sizeable part of many online news markets (Salaverría, 2016) and have thrived despite, or even as a result of, challenging circumstances (Salaverría, 2021; Salaverría and Martínez-Costa, 2023), populating the "media ecosystem" from the periphery to the epicenter (López-García, Silva-Rodríguez and Vázquez-Herrero, 2023; Vázquez-Herrero, Negreira-Rey and López-García, 2023), although legacy brands enjoy structural advantages (Nelson, 2020).

Nichols et al. (2018: 6) identified two "waves" of digital news start-ups: first, "ad-supported aggregators which bundled together news from multiple sources – often as part of a 'portal' model", which we have shown is still present in some countries; and second, digital-born news sites that "produce their own content". Writing about "web-only" publishers, Bradshaw noted that "Gawker Media, the Huffington Post and BuzzFeed launched in the US in 2003, 2005 and 2006 respectively, and were to have a massive impact on the wider industry, including on employment practices and pay" (Bradshaw, 2018: 11).

In a previous publication, we explored this phenomenon from the perspective of the digital transition of brands, we explored the international context with 2020 data, and we profiled the users of digital-native media in Spain (Negredo and Kaufmann-Argueta, 2021). Before that, we found (Arrese and Kaufmann, 2016) a high degree of similarity in the types of readers and reading behavior of legacy and digital-native news brands. Here, we will keep this media-centric approach (Webster and Ksiazek, 2012) in examining legacy and digital-native media audiences.

1.1. Studies on the audience development of digital-native media

Democratic societies with access to digital news exist in a "high-choice media environment" (Prior, 2007). This plentiful supply does not necessarily result in very high audience fragmentation at the top, as the leading online brands in most countries are shared by many users, who consume both mainstream and niche sites (Nelson and Webster, 2017), and combine broadcast, print and digital-born sources (Fletcher and Nielsen, 2017).

Other studies have also used the Digital News Report to examine "the prominence of mainstream, digital-born and partisan or alternative news sources online" across countries covered by the survey (Jungherr and Schroeder, 2022: 32), whereas news repertoires studies have combined a variety of methods (Costera-Meijer and Groot-Kormelink, 2015), such as Q-sort exercises (Peters et al., 2022).

Despite the increased diversity in the news supply, only a few sites concentrate the audience's attention (Hagar and Shaw, 2022). Morejón Vallejo and Villacís Morales (2022) noted the constant stream of launches and closures amid the constant growth of digital-native media in Ecuador. Buschow (2020) explored the obstacles to the development of such news startups in Germany, as Bruno and Nielsen (2012) and Nichols et al. (2018) had done previously across Europe.

1.2. News brand loyalty among legacy and digital-native media

With the digital transformation of news markets, consumers have claimed power back from brands (Gralpois, 2010). Sparviero (2019) defines the reader as an active user whose proactive actions build the brand image of media brands, shifting the balance that Webster (2014) established in the negotiation between individuals and media institutions, in *The Marketplace of Attention*.

The rise of digital native media has created the need to understand if and how the users differ from legacy media. One of these essential consumption patterns is loyalty of the audience towards the news brand. This particular behavior has been studied from a series of different angles: First, from the perspective of trust and how higher levels of trust increase the amount of news that users consume from the news brand (Nelson and Kim, 2021; Goyanes, 2020). Second, loyalty has been connected to the concept of brand attachment, and how to turn casual readers into loyal clients. Greater brand loyalty is related to the idea that user interaction, such as sharing or commenting on news sites, increases their brand loyalty to particular news organizations (Krebs and Lischka, 2019; Lin, Chen and Sung, 2018). Third, another way to measure loyalty is by quantifying the frequency of the audience's exposure to the news site (Napoli, 2011). In other words, the number of times users visit the news brand. Fourth, loyalty has also been linked to social interaction. In accordance with Fournier (1998) and Ross, Lester and Konkes (2021), readers should feel that the news organization is a partner in an interdependent relationship in which they receive something they value in return for engaging with the brand. Most recently, Gajardo and Costera Meijer (2023) have even made the case that loyalty should be studied as a single phenomenon, and not tied to other behaviors such as giving continued attention, sharing and subscribing. In their latest study, they argue that loyalty to journalism is less about actions than about feelings within a relationship, one that is often obscured as we focus solely on its most economically beneficial outcomes.

1.3. Socio-demographic, educational, income and political differences in audiences

We will now look at studies that analyze the audience segmentation variables we are considering in this paper. By tracking millennials' and boomers' use of news sites, Taneja, Wu and Edgerly found that "legacy media's online potential is heavily mediated by the users' generation and their relationships with these media on other platforms" (2018: 1807), making them the preference of older users, along with longer-running digital brands, therefore "foregrounding the residual effect of historical media infrastructures" (2018: 1808), although they describe the generational gap as "modest" (2018: 1809). Household income and formal education also influence media choices, establishing differences by social class (Lindell, 2018). Vara-Miguel (2020) found that traditional news media brands had more predominantly male audiences, with higher income and education levels, than digital-native media.

Finally, in the quest for differences and similarities between these kinds of media, Harlow (2022: 1338) surveyed readers of entrepreneurial, independent digital journalism sites in seven Latin American countries, considering many of the variables that we will use (gender, age, education and political ideology), and conducting focus groups with journalists. She found perceptions of "a model of a hybrid, or *mestizaje,* digital-native journalism" between mainstream and alternative media, shared by users and journalists alike.

2. Methodology

In the international results section, we will review how online-only brands perform in 46 markets, based on rankings in the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (DNR) (Newman et al., 2021) and on a recount of digital-native brand reach by country. We will also compare the audiences of leading digital-native brands against the top sites with traditional roots, based on the most recent DNR survey data in Spain (2022), for which we will present previously unpublished audience breakdowns by gender, age, income, education and political ideology.

The survey fieldwork is conducted by the polling company YouGov in January and February of each year, with national samples based on age, gender and regional quotas (education and political quotas are also present in most markets), representative of adult internet users in each country. The sample size in Spain is around 2000 and the overall sample size in all 46 markets is above 90,000 participants. As contributors to the study from Spain, we provide input throughout the process, from questionnaire design and translation to data analysis, supervision and dissemination.

In this article we concentrate on the questions about offline and online media brands that participants remember having used for news at least once over the last week. As an indicator of greater fidelity and frequency of use, they are also asked if they used the brand on three or more days in the last seven days; we identify these as "loyal users". We believe that comparing national markets and then focusing on one for further comparison between brands in a market is a suitable approach for our purpose, as audience networks are mostly defined by language and geographical similarities (Taneja and Webster, 2016).

We set out to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1.1. How does the penetration of digital-pure media in Spain compare to other countries?
- RQ1.2. In what markets are digital-pure news organizations market leaders according to their weekly reach?
- RQ2. How does the fidelity of digital-pure news media audiences compare with that of media with traditional roots?
- RQ3.1. Are digital-pure media audiences evenly distributed among males and females, or skewed towards a particular gender?
- RQ3.2. Are the audiences of digital-pure media younger or older than those of media with traditional roots?
- RQ3.3. Are the audiences of digital-pure media more or less formally educated than those of media with traditional roots?
- RQ3.4. Do the audiences of digital-pure media have a higher or lower household income than those of media with traditional roots?
- RQ3.5. Are the audiences for digital-native news sites more transversal or more polarized than those of the main traditional sites?

The next section addresses RQ1, while the following section covers RQ2 and RQ3. Later, we discuss the results in the context of similar studies.

3. International results: weekly reach of digital-native media and top brands by country

The average reach of digital-native brands in the mostly European countries surveyed in early 2022 was 54% of online adults: this is the average of the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Spain, Ireland, Poland, the Czech Republic, Turkey, Portugal, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Romania, Slovakia, Croatia and Bulgaria. National data for these countries is shown in Table 1.

In the European Union countries surveyed (the 24 countries listed above, minus the U.K., Turkey, Norway and Switzerland), the reach of digital-native brands was 56%, powered by their popularity in Balkan and Eastern European countries. This data point coincides with the average found in the six Latin American countries surveyed (Brazil, Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Colombia and Peru), which was also 56% in 2022. The average for the United States of America and Canada was notably lower, at 43%, in line with some Western European countries but higher than in the European Nordic countries.

In the Asian countries surveyed (India, Japan, Republic of Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Hong Kong), the average reach of digital-pure or digital-first brands was 69%, with all countries except for Thailand standing above the 46-market average. In Africa, the average for South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria was 84%, with a similar reach in all three countries, where the sample represents a more affluent, educated and urban population with internet access (Table 1).

Table 1. Weekly reach of digital-native media in 46 markets among adult internet users, $N \approx 2000$ in each country

Country	Digital native reach	Country	Digital native reach	Country	Digital native reach
Indonesia	88%	Philippines	72%	Peru	52%
South Africa	85%	Brazil	68%	Australia	51%
Nigeria	85%	Singapore	67%	Switzerland	50%
Greece	84%	Hong Kong	66%	Norway	48%
Kenya	83%	Ireland	64%	Thailand	48%
Croatia	82%	India	64%	U.S.A.	44%
Bulgaria	81%	Mexico	61%	Canada	42%
Taiwan	80%	Portugal	60%	Chile	42%
Romania	79%	Japan	60%	France	41%
Turkey	77%	Total (46 markets)	59%	Germany	39%
Hungary	76%			Austria	37%
Czech Republic	76%	Argentina	59%	Sweden	32%
Slovakia	75%	Netherlands	58%	Belgium	23%
Malaysia	75%	Colombia	56%	U.K.	22%
Rep. of Korea	74%	Italy	53%	Denmark	19%
Poland	72%	Spain	53%	Finland	14%

Note: The percentage represents the respondents who selected any digital-pure or digital-first brand as a source of online news they used in the last seven days, from a list of several dozen of the most popular news brands in their country.
Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2021.

3.1. Top digital-native news brands in Europe

In 2021, a digital-pure brand was the online news market leader in eight out of the mostly 24 European countries surveyed: Croatia (*Index.hr*, with 64% weekly reach), the Czech Republic (*Seznam Zprávy*, 50%), Poland (*Onet.pl*, 50%), Slovakia (*Aktuality.sk*, 47%), the Netherlands (*NU.nl*, 41%), Hungary (*24.hu*, 39%), Greece (*Newsbomb.gr*, 33%), and Turkey, where *Sondakika.com* stepped up from third to joint first position, with 30% weekly reach, shared with *CNN Türk*. In Portugal, *Noticiasaominuto.com* went down to second position (33%).

In the United Kingdom, only *HuffPost* remained a top digital-native alternative to legacy brands, ranking sixth, with 7% weekly reach. In Italy, *Fanpage.it* slipped to fifth in 2021, with 19% weekly reach. In Spain, three digital-native sites made it consistently into the top ten places in the latest few annual editions of the DNR survey; further details are provided in Section 4. In contrast, in France, digital-native outlets remained minority choices: *Brut* grew to 10% and climbed to ninth position in 2021, as the best-performing digital-native.

In Germany, the third most popular online news site in 2020 and 2021 (with 15% weekly reach) was *t-online*. Austria also saw *GMX* (.at, in this case) in a top five position: it was fourth in 2021 with 15%. In Switzerland, *Bluewin* (Swisscom) was fourth in the French-Speaking ranking (with 20% weekly reach) and fifth in the German-language Swiss ranking (18% reach), just below digital-pure player *Watson.ch* (20%).

Ireland is another country with strong digital natives: *TheJournal.ie* ranks consistently second (35% weekly reach in 2021). The only digital-pure operation in a relevant position in Belgium is *7sur7.be*, launched in 2006 by Flemish legacy publisher DPG Media; it was a top five site in the French-language online news list, with 20% weekly reach.

In Bulgaria, commercial publishers owning general online-only news sites alongside a network of specialized sites positioned *Novini.bg* fourth (35%), *Dir.bg* seventh (23%) and *Blitz.bg* ninth (18%), while an independent journalism site, *Bivol.bg*, ranked tenth (16%). In Romania, *Ziare.com*, part of a large network of specialized portals, was third in the online news ranking, with 28% weekly reach.

In Norway, the only popular pure player was digital-native pioneer *Nettavisen*, launched in 1996 and ranking fifth among online news brands, with 27% weekly reach. In the other Nordic countries in our study, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, digital-native outlets did not make it into the top ten brands in 2021.

3.2. Leading digital-native news sites in selected countries in other continents

Outside Europe, *Yahoo! News* remained the largest online-only news player in several countries. In the United States, it held second place in the ranking (16% weekly reach). In Canada, it was the fifth online brand (14%) in the English-speaking market, while *MSN News* was fifth (15%) among French speakers. In Brazil, *UOL.com.br* was second (45%) and *Yahoo! News* was fifth (20%).

In Latin America, *Infobae* ranks consistently first among online news sources in Argentina (46% weekly reach). *Aristegui Noticias* was the leading digital-native source (fourth, with 21%). In Colombia, *Las 2 Orillas* (fourth) and *Pulzo* (seventh) reached 22% of users each. In Chile, *Elmostrador.cl*, founded in 2000, retained sixth place with 21% in 2021. In Peru, online-only *Peru.com*, owned by the main newspaper publishing house in the country, was fourth.

We now look at the Asia-Pacific region. *Yahoo! News* was the absolute leader in Japan (54%) and Taiwan (39%). In Indonesia, long-running digital-pure brand *Detik.com*, founded in 1998, came first (65%). Another digital-native launched in late 1999, *MalaysiaKini*, led clearly in Malaysia, with 50% reach. In South Korea two portals led the ranking consistently: *Naver* (62%) and *Daum* (29%), both operating since the 1990s. In the Philippines, Maria Ressa's *Rappler* (32%, fourth) overtook *Yahoo! News* (30%, fifth) in 2021, nine years after launch. Similarly, in Singapore, digital-native *Mothership.sg*, operating since 2014, was second (42%), and *Yahoo! News* was fourth (25%). Increasing press freedom violations saw two main titles in Hong Kong cease operations in 2021; alongside *Apple Daily* (second, 29%), digital-native non-profit *Stand News* (seventh, 21%) also had to close. In Thailand, *Voice* was eighth (18%). In India, *India.com* (seventh, 21%) belongs to a large media conglomerate and *Yahoo! News* was eighth (20%). In Australia, *News.com.au* lost ground to the public broadcaster, which pushed NewsCorp's site down to second place (22%).

Finally, in the three African countries surveyed, *News24* was the clear leader in South Africa with 73% reach; *Kenyans.co.ke* was third in Kenya (52%), while *Yahoo! News* was eighth (24%); the Nigerian top ten ranking of digital news sources included online news agency *Sahara Reporters* and digital-native *Pulse.ng*, both with 42% reach and sharing fifth position.

4. National results: the main digital-native media brands in Spain and their users

Based on the ranking of weekly online audiences in Spain in 2022, we picked the top five digital-native brands and compared them with the top five brands with traditional roots, discarding generic categories for regional media (Table 2).

First, we analyzed the loyalty of an audience to a media brand by calculating the proportion of the weekly audience that visits the site on three or more days in a week, taking this as shorthand for the loyalty that the media brand enjoys among its readership. The average was 56% for traditional-rooted media and 44% for digital-native media, showing a wide gap.

Of the traditional-rooted media, television brand Antena 3 enjoys the highest user loyalty, with 64%. Among digital natives, *OKDiario.com* has the most loyal following, with 53%. At the other end of the spectrum, *El Mundo* online, with 48%, has the lowest level of loyalty among the leading traditional-rooted media brands. This goes down to 32% for digital-native media, with *El Español*.

Table 2. Comparison between reach weekly and on three or more days in a week, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	Rank	Weekly use	3+ days/week	Proportion
OKDiario.com	2nd	13%	7%	53%
ElConfidencial.com	6th	12%	5%	41%
ElDiario.es	7th	12%	5%	42%
ElEspañol.com	13th	8%	3%	32%
El HuffPost	17th	7%	4%	52%
Traditional online	**Rank**	**Weekly use**	**3+ days/week**	**Proportion**
El País online	1st	18%	10%	52%
Antena 3 online	3rd	13%	8%	64%
El Mundo online	4th	13%	6%	48%
20 Minutos online	5th	13%	7%	53%
Marca online	9th	11%	7%	62%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

4.1. Gender

The average reach of digital-native media among male readers (12.4%) is higher than among female readers (9.2%). Traditional-rooted media are also skewed towards a male audience. Sports newspaper *Marca*'s percentage of male readers is 19%, while it only reaches 3% of female readers; without this, the difference between the average reach of the remaining top four legacy brands among men (12.5%) and women (10.5%) is just two percentage points. Of all the media sites in this comparison, only *20 Minutos* has a higher female audience than male audience, by four percentage points. (Table 3).

Table 3. Weekly reach by gender, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	Total	Gender	
		Male	Female
OKDiario.com	13%	16%	11%
ElConfidencial.com	12%	15%	10%
ElDiario.es	12%	13%	11%
ElEspañol.com	8%	9%	7%
El HuffPost	7%	8%	7%
Average	10.7%	12.4%	9.2%
Traditional online	**Total**	**Gender**	
		Male	**Female**
El País online	18%	22%	15%
Antena 3 online	13%	13%	13%
El Mundo online	13%	17%	10%
20 Minutos online	13%	11%	15%
Marca online	11%	19%	3%
Average	13.6%	16.3%	11.1%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

4.2. Age

The 65+ age group has the highest average results for both media types: 14% for the top digital natives and 16% for traditional media (Table 4). Digital-native media achieve the smallest average reach (8.9%) in the 18-24 age group. *ElConfidencial.com* is the digital-native organization with the biggest differences, found between the 45-54 age group (7%) and the 55-64 (17%) age group. The brand with the largest following among younger users is a traditional-rooted broadcast one, Antena 3 (16% for 18-24s and 25-34s).

Table 4. Weekly reach by age groups, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	**Total**	**Age**					
		18-24	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-64**	**65+**
OKDiario.com	13%	8%	12%	13%	15%	14%	15%
ElConfidencial.com	12%	9%	11%	12%	7%	17%	16%
ElDiario.es	12%	14%	10%	11%	9%	13%	18%
ElEspañol.com	8%	7%	8%	7%	9%	8%	10%
El HuffPost	7%	6%	7%	6%	5%	8%	11%
Average	10.7%	8.9%	9.6%	10%	9.1%	12%	14%
Traditional online	**Total**	**Age**					
		18-24	**25-34**	**35-44**	**45-54**	**55-64**	**65+**
El País online	18%	22%	15%	16%	16%	19%	24%
Antena 3 online	13%	16%	16%	10%	15%	10%	15%
El Mundo online	13%	15%	9%	14%	12%	13%	17%
20 Minutos online	13%	10%	11%	14%	13%	14%	11%
Marca online	11%	7%	10%	12%	12%	9%	12%
Average	13.6%	14%	12.3%	13.3%	13.6%	13.1%	16%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

4.3. Education

Results for both media types show an ascending ladder in terms of education levels: both enjoy the highest reach among those with higher levels of education. Nevertheless, the audiences for some sites do not follow this pattern. For instance, *OKDiario.com* and *Marca* online achieve their highest audiences among the intermediate education level, with 18% and 14% respectively. *20 Minutos* online's readership is evenly distributed among all levels of education.

El País online has a gap of 13 percentage points between their low-educated and high-educated bracket. In the case of *ElConfidencial.com* that space is 11 percentage points. These numbers reinforce the idea that audiences of both kinds of media are similarly educated (Table 5).

Table 5. Weekly reach by level of education, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	Total	Highest level of education			
		Low	Medium	High	University
OKDiario.com	13%	9%	18%	15%	14%
ElConfidencial.com	12%	8%	12%	17%	19%
ElDiario.es	12%	10%	14%	14%	14%
ElEspañol.com	8%	6%	9%	10%	10%
El HuffPost	7%	5%	7%	11%	12%
Average	10.7%	7.7%	12.2%	13.4%	13.9%
Traditional online	**Total**	**Highest level of education**			
		Low	Medium	High	University
El País online	18%	13%	18%	25%	26%
Antena 3 online	13%	13%	13%	14%	12%
El Mundo online	13%	8%	15%	18%	20%
20 Minutos online	13%	13%	13%	13%	13%
ElDiario.es	12%	10%	14%	14%	14%
Marca online	11%	7%	14%	12%	13%
Average	13.6%	10.6%	14.6%	15.9%	16.5%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

4.4. Household income

After answering the previous research question regarding education, we can argue that the level of household income follows a similar pattern. For both media types, the high-income bracket stands out, with averages of 15% for top digital native sites and 18% for the traditional-rooted. At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest income bracket has the smallest percentage, independently of the news organization's origins (Table 6). The brands with the biggest differences between their low and high-income audience are *El Mundo* online (15 percentage points) and *El País* (13 percentage points). The greatest difference among digital natives is for *ElConfidencial.com* (12 percentage points).

Table 6. Weekly reach by household income, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	Total	Household income		
		Low	Medium	High
OKDiario.com	13%	11%	15%	17%
ElConfidencial.com	12%	8%	13%	20%
ElDiario.es	12%	10%	11%	18%
ElEspañol.com	8%	8%	8%	10%
El HuffPost	7%	7%	7%	10%
Average	10.7%	8.7%	11%	15.1%

Traditional online	Total	Household income		
		Low	Medium	High
El País online	18%	14%	19%	27%
Antena 3 online	13%	13%	14%	12%
El Mundo online	13%	8%	12%	23%
20 Minutos online	13%	12%	16%	11%
Marca online	11%	6%	12%	17%
Average	13.6%	10.5%	14.5%	18%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

4.5. Political leaning

Audiences for top digital-native media brands lean towards the right, with a difference of four percentage points, while traditionally-rooted media perform better in the center (15.6%), with the difference between right and left being smaller, at three percentage points Thus, some digital-native brands seem to be more polarized, especially *OKDiario* (22 percentage points more reach among right-leaning users than among left-leaning users). Users who do not define themselves politically use top legacy brands online (9.8% average) twice as much as top digital-native sites (5.4%).

Table 7. Weekly reach by political leaning, *N* = 2028 online adults in Spain

Digital native	Total	Political leaning			
		Left	Centre	Right	Don't know
OKDiario.com	13%	7%	14%	29%	7%
ElConfidencial.com	12%	10%	15%	17%	4%
ElDiario.es	12%	17%	11%	10%	8%
ElEspañol.com	8%	6%	9%	13%	4%
El HuffPost	7%	11%	8%	3%	4%
Average	10.7%	10.2%	11.3%	14.5%	5.4%
Traditional online	**Total**	**Political leaning**			
		Left	**Centre**	**Right**	**Don't know**
El País online	18%	22%	19%	16%	11%
Antena 3 online	13%	11%	13%	18%	13%
El Mundo online	13%	8%	16%	17%	9%
20 Minutos online	13%	13%	16%	9%	10%
Marca online	11%	7%	14%	12%	6%
Average	13.6%	12.1%	15.6%	14.2%	9.8%

Source: Reuters Institute Digital News Report survey 2022.

5. Discussion and conclusions

Leading digital-pure media in Spain represent mostly journalist-backed ventures not linked to internet portals and not dependent on international franchises, save for *El HuffPost*, *Yahoo! News* and *MSN News*. In 2022, they were just short of reaching top place in the ranking, with two different titles coming third in 2021 (*ElDiario.es*) and second in 2022 (*OKDiario.com*) (RQ1.1). Digital-only news organizations led online news audiences in 2021 in 15 out of 46 markets surveyed for the Digital News Report, and reached top ten positions elsewhere, with the exception of Nordic countries. National and international online brands dating back to the early ages of the Web and catering to a wide spectrum of readers coexist with more recently established independent journalism ventures (RQ1.2).

In Spain, average audience loyalty (the proportion of users visiting three or more days a week, based on the brand's weekly reach) is twelve percentage points higher for the top five legacy news brands than for the top five digital-born news brands (44%) (RQ2).

The top Spanish news sites in our study were more popular among men, older people, and more affluent and formally educated users who could define their political stance, with some popular outliers that cater for mid-market audiences. The gender difference is larger for digital-native brands than among traditional-rooted brands, if sports newspaper *Marca* is excluded; and *20 Minutos* stands out in being more popular among women (RQ3.1). All digital-native brands enjoy their highest reach among seniors, and traditional brands are most popular among the youngest and oldest, with *20 Minutos* countering this trend (RQ3.2). Top digital-pure media reach the highly-educated more, with the exceptions of *20 Minutos*, *OKDiario* and *Marca* (RQ3.3). Users with higher incomes are more likely to be readers of digital-native media, but while this is also true for websites and apps of paid-for newspapers (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *Marca*), in contrast, medium-income households follow online news with Antena 3 (TV) and *20 Minutos* (free newspaper) slightly more than wealthier people (RQ3.4). Finally, online audiences for digital natives *OKDiario* and *El HuffPost* are more politically polarized than for any of the main traditional brands we studied (RQ3.5).

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