

# The Press Stopped Posting on Facebook. Evolution of the Positioning of Spanish Newspapers on Facebook from 2014 to 2023

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Recibido: 03/11/2023  
Aceptado por pares: 16/04/2024

Enviado a pares: 07/12/2023  
Aprobado: 22/05/2024

DOI: 10.5294/pacla.2024.27.4.6

## Para citar este artículo / to reference this article / para citar este artigo

Díaz-Lucena, A. (2024). La prensa está dejando de publicar en Facebook. Evolución del posicionamiento de los diarios españoles en Facebook, 2014-2023. *Palabra Clave*, 27(4), e2746. <https://doi.org/10.5294/pacla.2024.27.4.6>

## Abstract

The social media platform Facebook turned twenty in 2024 and currently has three billion monthly users. From the beginning, the press relied on this platform to publish its news content, achieving a high engagement rate and significant website traffic from Facebook. This research aims to study the positioning that the Spanish press (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Español*, *elDiario.es*, *El HuffPost*, and *20 Minutos*) is developing on this platform to confirm mainly whether there have been variations in this period and what their short- and long-term strategies could be as a result of the latest events that have impacted this platform. This research will adopt a mixed approach. In the first phase, we will quantitatively analyse the evolution of the acquisition of followers, the number of posts, and audience interactions over 10 years, from 1 January 2014 to December 2023, with a sample of  $N = 1,579,267$  posts. The second part analyses qualitative data collected through interviews with the selected media managers. This research concludes by

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confirming that most of the newspapers in this sample are changing their strategy on this platform, mainly due to the difficulty of acquiring new users and the decrease in the engagement rate of their community.

## **Keywords**

Facebook; newspapers; news; social media; journalism.

# La prensa está dejando de publicar en Facebook. Evolución del posicionamiento de los diarios españoles en Facebook, 2014-2023

## Resumen

La red social Facebook cumplió en 2024 veinte años en funcionamiento y en la actualidad mantiene conectados mensualmente a tres millones de usuarios. La prensa ha confiado desde el principio en esta plataforma para publicar su contenido informativo, que ha alcanzado una gran tasa de participación de la audiencia y cifras importantes de tráfico hacia sus páginas web desde Facebook. La presente investigación tiene como objetivo estudiar el posicionamiento que la prensa española (*El País, El Mundo, ABC, La Vanguardia, El Español, elDiario.es, El HuffPost y 20 Minutos*) está desarrollando en esta plataforma para confirmar principalmente si ha habido variaciones entre 2014 y 2023 y cuál podría ser su estrategia a corto y largo plazo a raíz de los últimos acontecimientos que han impactado en esta red social. Se aborda la investigación con un enfoque mixto. En una primera fase se analiza cuantitativamente la evolución de la adquisición de seguidores, el número de publicaciones y las interacciones de la audiencia durante 10 años, desde el 1 de enero de 2014 hasta diciembre de 2023, con una muestra de  $N = 1.579.267$  publicaciones. La segunda parte se centra en el análisis de datos cualitativos que se han recogido mediante una entrevista a los responsables de los medios seleccionados. Se concluye confirmando que la mayoría de los diarios de esta muestra están cambiando su estrategia en esta plataforma, principalmente por la dificultad de adquirir nuevos usuarios, pero también por la disminución de la tasa de involucramiento (*engagement*) de su comunidad.

## Palabras clave

Facebook; periódicos; noticias; redes sociales; periodismo.

# A imprensa está parando de publicar no Facebook. Evolução do posicionamento dos jornais espanhóis no Facebook, 2014-2023

## Resumo

A rede social Facebook completará 20 anos em 2024 e atualmente tem três bilhões de usuários conectados todos os meses. A imprensa confiou desde o início nessa plataforma para publicar seu conteúdo de notícias, que alcançou alta taxa de participação do público e números significativos de tráfego para suas páginas da web a partir do Facebook. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo estudar o posicionamento que a imprensa espanhola (*El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia*, *El Español*, *elDiaro.es*, *El HuffPost* e *20 Minutos*) está desenvolvendo nessa plataforma para confirmar, principalmente, se houve variações entre 2014 e 2023, e qual poderia ser sua estratégia de curto e longo prazo como resultado dos últimos eventos que afetaram essa rede social. A pesquisa é feita com abordagem mista. Na primeira fase, são analisados quantitativamente a evolução da aquisição de seguidores, o número de publicações e as interações do público ao longo de 10 anos, de 1º de janeiro de 2014 a dezembro de 2023, com uma amostra de  $N = 1\,579\,267$  publicações. A segunda parte concentra-se na análise de dados qualitativos coletados por meio de entrevista com os gerentes de mídia selecionados. Conclui-se confirmando que a maioria dos jornais dessa amostra está mudando sua estratégia nessa plataforma, principalmente por causa da dificuldade de adquirir novos usuários, mas também por causa da diminuição da taxa de engajamento de sua comunidade.

## Palavras-chave

Facebook; jornais; notícias; redes sociais; jornalismo.

Since its launch in 2004, Facebook has become one of the most influential and popular social networks globally. As an illustration of this, it reached almost three billion monthly active users in 2023, an increase of 4% over the previous year (META, 2023). Facebook is still the most commonly used social network in general terms, but despite its annual decline since 2020, it is in the news sector, as internet users choose it above the rest to become informed (Newman et al., 2023). Similarly, although the Facebook audience grows annually, the acquisition of new users slowed in Q3 of 2023, which has not been observed since 2012 (We Are Social, 2023, p. 209).

## Theoretical framework

The relocation of news from digital versions of information media to social networks became widespread in 2007 (Guallar, 2008). This strategy has increased annually and is now a common practice in the media (Reevell, 2007; Micó and Masip, 2008; Mayoral and Edo, 2014; Lawrence, 2020). However, not all news companies implemented this strategy at the same time (Díaz-Lucena et al., 2022), nor were all the media sure that this transfer of content to social networks was the best option, mainly because they would lose control over it (Carlson, 2017; Jurno and D'Aandréa, 2020). However, a transfer of power has been configured (Carlson, 2018b; Zamith, 2018; Ekström and Westlund, 2019) because, with this, the social networks that host informational content have begun to control what the audience could consume and, with this, the type of journalism and the format to be used (Gillespie, 2014; Bell et al., 2017).

To this end, platforms have been increasing their technological investment to personalize the consumption of information through algorithms (Gillespie, 2014; Paulussen et al., 2016; DeVito, 2017). The *news feed* or the list of stories that is constantly updated in the center of the home page—of Facebook, which is powered by machine learning (*machine learning*), was a great revolution in 2006 (D'Onfro, 2016), and today, it reaches three billion users (González-Moreno and Elías, 2024). Another milestone came with the possibility of hosting news videos on social networks (Miners, 2014; Shearer and Mitchell, 2020), which, in a short time, were viewed more times than the same videos located in their digital editions (Kalogeropoulos,

2017). In this way, a large flow of content began to be sent from the media to social networks (García-Avilés, 2015; Santín and Álvarez Monzoncillo, 2020). Likewise, the media and platforms perceived that the public interacted with the published information, which in turn generated communities around topics of interest (Raun and Petersen, 2021). To this end, social networks have decided to introduce audience interactions with published content as an algorithmic variable and thereby promote the emergence of the concept of a “*trending topic*” (Struhar, 2014), which combines the visualization of content with the interaction of users, generating real-time conversations about the published topics. Additionally, trend topics support content virality (Owens and Vickrey, 2014), such that news that fails to spread has begun to be overlooked (Bazaco et al., 2019).

Informational companies have adapted their content to the platforms that host them to achieve more views and interactions since both variables are important for their business models (Poell and Van Dijck, 2014; Dafonte-Gómez and Martínez-Rolan, 2015). On the one hand, visualizations of the content in the social network itself provide economic benefits to companies dedicated to information through contracts with platforms (Dafonte-Gómez and Martínez-Rolan, 2015; Díaz-Lucena et al., 2022). The interactions in social media facilitate the ability of users to become producers and consumers of published content (Benkler, 2006; Bruns 2008; Shirky, 2008), increasing the rate of engagement or *engagement* with the medium (Sarmiento et al., 2017), as well as the accumulation of data with which to negotiate with advertisers (Poell and Van Dijck, 2014).

Consequently, companies dedicated to information began to address their followers’ level of involvement (Góngora and Lavilla, 2020), which they have gradually promoted with marketing strategies (Moe et al., 2016). The Anglo-Saxon concept of *engagement* focuses on the behavioral manifestations of customer engagement, that is, it is about evaluating the cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity that a customer shows with a brand through their interactions (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Examples of participation that encourage this commitment or engagement in social networks include clicking on the “like” icon, sharing publications or commenting

on the published content (Vale and Fernandes, 2018; Martín-Nieto and Díaz-Lucena, 2024). The most commonly used engagement rate can be found by dividing the total number of interactions in a specific period by the number of followers in that same period, multiplied by one hundred (Sehl and Tien, 2023). In this way, both the investment in the acquisition of new followers that enlarge the community and the strategy to make them interact continuously (Schivinski et al., 2021) seem crucial for obtaining a high engagement rate.

The team who runs Facebook, who also own Instagram, know that the number of interactions generated by younger age groups is greater than that produced by older generations. The new social networks that have been created to promote the use of multimedia elements are the ones that are concentrating the greatest number of young audiences, who also consume informative content, as shown by their annual increase in recent years, collected by the Digital News Report. Reuters 2023. These generations feel closer to audiovisual content to inform themselves (Galan et al., 2019; Blanco and Palomo, 2021), and this preference has led to a great change, which no longer affects only the youngest individuals. In November 2023, the Pew Research Center published a study on adults in the United States that confirmed that one in three people in the age group of 18 to 29 years old reported on TikTok. In addition to young adults, 15% of adults between 30 and 49 years old follow the news on TikTok, a figure that increased by 5% from 2022 to 2023 (Matsa, 2023), which is a significant number for this age group.

Generation Z is known to have abandoned Facebook (Vogels et al., 2022), but what is worrying is the increase in departures from millennials, i.e., users between 26 and 41 years old, beginning in 2023 (Lebow, 2022). Facebook has begun to “Instagram” its blue social network to make it more attractive to young people through the use of functions such as reels or short videos. Furthermore, “Facebook and Instagram applications are changing to offer users more synergies with each other” (Araque, 2022). The goal of these strategies is to stop younger generations from abandoning Facebook, which impacts the number of total interactions on the platform. In this sit-

uation, TikTok is a real threat to Facebook. The number of active monthly users at the end of 2023 exceeded 1.4 billion (Mansoor, 2024). Similarly, the economic benefits that the Asian company obtained from advertising in 2023 exceeded the combined amount earned by Meta, X and Snapchat (Koetsier, 2023). Consequently, all of these circumstances are affecting the growth and development of Facebook today, an issue that this social network recognized in the presentation of results given by its CFO David Wehner in February 2022 (Ghaffary, 2022).

In conclusion, Facebook has the intrinsic problem of growing faster because its business is based mainly on the connection and participation of users with the common characteristics of a social network (Boyd, 2010), unlike TikTok, which, beyond being considered a platform “that focuses on entertainment”, in the words of Blake Chandlee, the president of the Department of Global Solutions of TikTok (Sherman, 2022), and enhances the interaction of users with the content created by them themselves (Chen et al., 2019). This generates two great advantages: a profile with too much personal information is not needed (Klug et al., 2023), and interaction with content allows one to capture the attention of their audience for a longer time (Naughton, 2022). Although, owing to some circumstances or others, many users are changing their relationship with Facebook (Perin, 2018), a vast majority are still linked to this platform, which continues to grow and connect new users globally.

## Objectives and hypotheses

This study aims to examine the position that the Spanish press has been developing on Facebook. From this main objective, other, more specific ones can be derived: to know the evolution of the numbers of its audience; count and group publications; measure the interactions of its followers in terms of “likes”, comments and shared content to find the engagement rate; determine the possible changes in the related strategy; and assess the commitment of the press to this social network in the short and medium term. In this way, two working hypotheses that structure this research are established. H1: The Spanish press is beginning to find it difficult to acquire new followers. Despite the increase in the number of daily posts, the number



of new users is decreasing. Additionally, the audience that follows these accounts could interact less with the published content, which decreases their engagement rate. H2: The positioning of the Spanish press on Facebook in the short term will continue as it is now, as the hyperlink created in the digital version is published on the platform to generate the highest possible traffic and sell the brand. This is mainly because this strategy pays them more than the effort needed, although traffic and interactions with published content may have decreased in recent years.

## Methodology

To confirm or refute the working hypotheses that were proposed, a mixed approach that combines quantitative and qualitative techniques is used in this research. Quantitatively, we conducted an empirical analysis of the data extracted from the Facebook accounts of the selected newspapers via the META CrowdTangle application. We used a sample of  $N = 1,579,267$  publications on Facebook that spanned 10 years (January 1, 2014, to December 31, 2023). The main variables that we studied were as follows: the evolution of the number of followers, the number of publications and the number of interactions of the audience: likes, shares and comments. Similarly, with these last three items, we found the *engagement rate by post*, following the formula of Sehl and Tien (2023). The type of analysis follows a model that has been used in other investigations on the same topic (Mayoral and Edo, 2014; Peña-Fernández et al., 2022). We selected the newspapers that made up the sample of this study on the basis of three variables: Spanish newspapers dedicated to generalist information that publish at least thirty daily impacts and have a significant number of followers who show their activity with daily interactions regarding published content. Therefore, to increase the diversity of this study, we chose four traditional newspapers with a print run and digital version and another four with a digital native newspaper profile (in this group, *20 Minutes* have been incorporated, which, although it was born as a paper newspaper, began with its digital version in 2005 and has been doing a great job in publishing content on social networks). Thus, complying with these requirements, the newspapers selected for this study are *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*, along with *El Español*, *elDiario.es*, *El Huffpost* and *20 Minutos*.

In the second phase of the research, we focused on qualitative data obtained through semistructured interviews, with the majority of those responsible for the aforementioned media that took place during the month of June 2022 via email and telephone calls. This meeting was divided into two blocks: what Facebook represents today for its newspapers and the short- and long-term strategy on Facebook. The people interviewed were as follows: Lucía González, head of social networks at *El País*; Pau Rodríguez, marketing director (CMO) of *La Vanguardia*; Guacimara Castrillo, head of social networks at *El Mundo*; Javier Corcuera, head of social networks at *ABC*; Mario Vidal, head of innovation at *El Español*; Daniel Ventura, director of *El HuffPost*; and Carlos Serrano, responsible for social networks of *20 Minutes*.

## Results

the first Spanish newspapers to operate on Facebook were *El País*, *El Mundo* and *20 Minutos*, and they were registered in 2008. Three years later, *La Vanguardia* joined and, as of 2012, the rest. The data collected in the research by Merino-Bobillo et al. were as follows. (2013) in 2012 and compiled in Table 1, the audience that followed each newspaper on Facebook was marginal compared to the figures for 2023.

**Table 1. Audience of each newspaper on Facebook**

Diaries	The country	The world	The Vanguard	ABC	The Spanish	eDiarios	The HuffPost	20 minutes
Seguidores 2012	233.369	117.455	16.402	Unknown	Did not exist	Did not exist	Did not exist	63.193
Seguidores 2017	3.832.723	1.998.365	3.446.942	1.383.083	404.390	447.679	997.291	1.054.129
Seguidores 2023	6.863.019	3.393.427	5.582.310	1.656.563	1.045.154	668.053	1.640.337	1.234.464
Seguidores 2024	6.872.328	3.417.340	5.709.633	1.682.758	1.101.954	679.774	1.632.928	1.266.134

Source: Own elaboration, from raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application and the study by Merino-Bobillo et al. (2013).

However, in terms of the information accumulated annually since 2017 (Figure 1), particularly slow growth was detected in the acquisition

of new followers, especially in the last two years. This finding highlights the difficulty of acquiring new users in this social network.

Consequently, the annual growth figure found and listed in Table 2 shows the continuous decline in the acquisition of followers. The most striking case is observed in *El HuffPost*, which is already decreasing with 0.45% acquisition compared with the previous year. If this pattern continues, possibly in 2025, many newspapers may obtain negative figures in this metric, such as *El País* or *El Mundo*, large newspapers that do not reach 1% annual growth.

**Table 2. Audience growth in Facebook accounts**

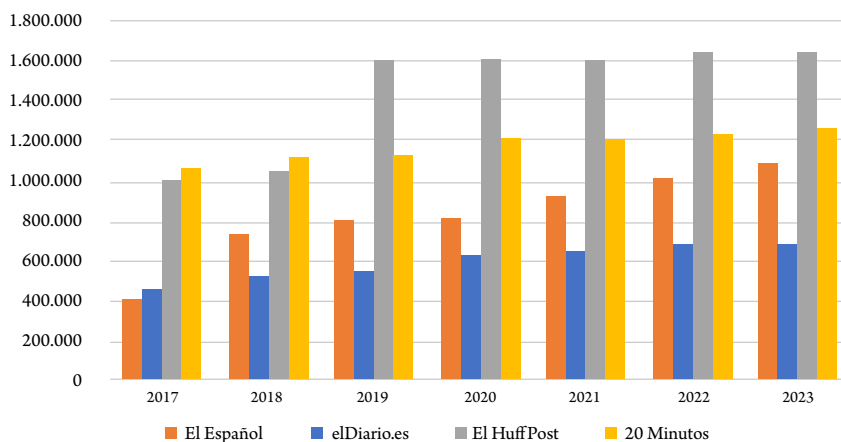
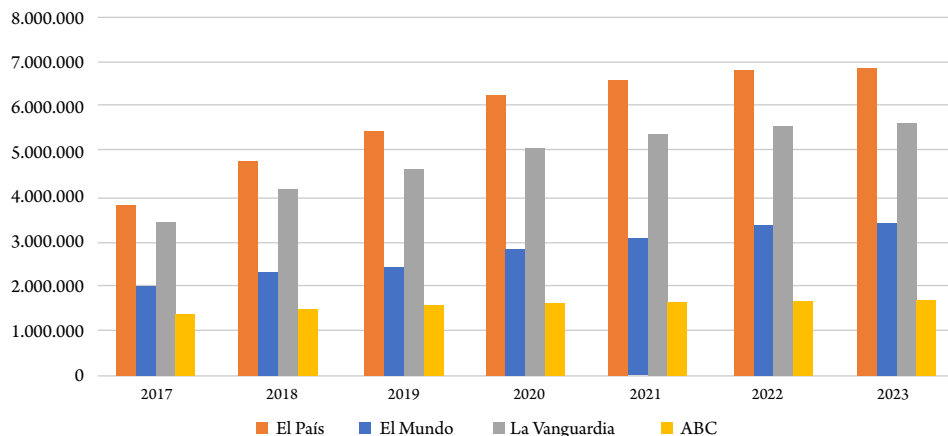
Date	The country	The world	The Vanguard	ABC	The Spanish	elDiario.es	The HuffPost	20 minutes
2018	25.5%	15,9%	21.0%	8.6%	80.1%	13.9%	4.8%	4.7%
2019	13.4%	4,8%	10.2%	2.8%	8.3%	6.3%	52.0%	1.7%
2020	14.4%	16,2%	10.5%	6.6%	3.1%	15.3%	1.6%	7.5%
2021	5.7%	8,8%	6.4%	-0.1%	13.0%	3.1%	-0.6%	-0.6%
2022	3.3%	9,2%	3.4%	0.1%	10.0%	3.1%	2.3%	2.0%
2023	0.9%	2,0%	1.4%	1.9%	6.5%	1.6%	-0.2%	2.4%
2024	0.14%	0,70%	2.28%	1.58%	5.43%	1.75%	-0.45%	2.57%

Source: Own elaboration, with raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application.

Within the publication of content on Facebook, newspapers that are classified as traditional, owing to their long history in this sector, have grown vertically, as shown in Figure 2. However, with respect to younger newspapers, which are mostly digital natives, their development has also been increasing but more gradual. However, in both cases, peculiarities can be observed that will be explained below.

Between 2015 and 2016, newspapers that started earlier on Facebook, such as *El País*, *El Mundo* and *20 Minutos*, especially show a decrease in published content. This can be explained by two causes: scandals derived from presidential campaigns in the U.S. (Tucker et al., 2018; Allcott et al., 2018; Guess et al., 2019) and new market strategies that have begun to be implemented by competitors. For example, YouTube launched the

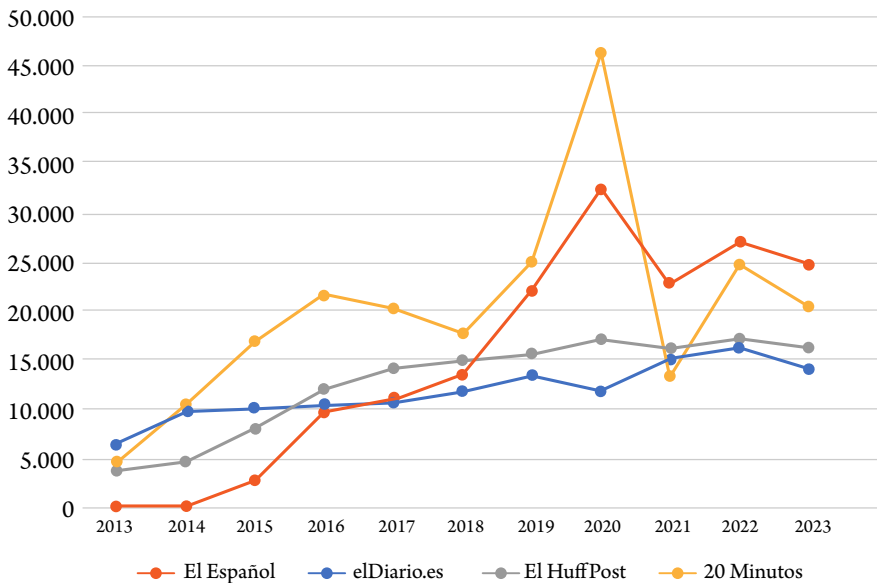
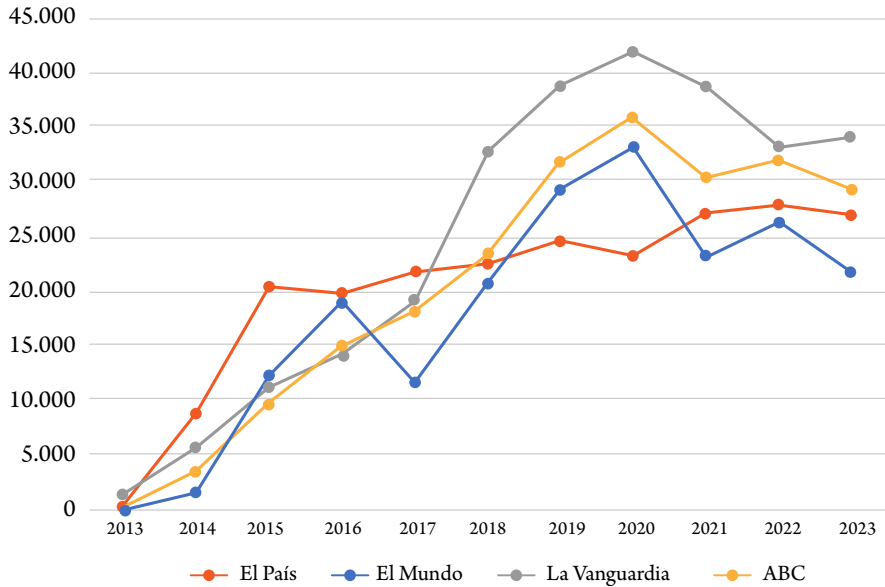
**Figura 1. Evolución de los seguidores de la prensa en sus cuentas de Facebook**



Fuente: elaboración propia, con datos extraídos en bruto de la aplicación CrowdTangle.

Google News Lab program (2015). In Spain, newspapers such as *El País* and *El Mundo* (Díaz-Lucena et al., 2022) are enrolled in the experimentation of this initiative. The year after its pilot with the press of different countries, YouTube launched its famous Player for Publishers, which improved the time spent publishing content and increased its visibility on the platform. Thus, Figure 2 shows how the newspaper *El País* has continued to rise, but moderately since 2015, that is, it has begun to slow down. Similarly, in

**Figure 2. Evolution of the number of annual publications of the press in their Facebook accounts**



Source: Own elaboration, with raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application.

2016, significant changes were observed in the number of content publications in *El Mundo* and *20 Minutes*. However, as of 2017 and 2018, both newspapers show notable new growth, caused by the new investments that Facebook implemented in its platform to re-engage the media, with specific programs, such as the prevention of misinformation or the META Journalism Project. (Simo, 2017). However, the loss of confidence derived from the events that occurred in 2016 did not affect the press in the same way. *ABC* and *La Vanguardia* show notable increases in Facebook scores until 2020. Table 3 shows that *La Vanguardia* went from publishing an average of six daily news items in 2013 to 114 messages in 2020. The same path was followed by *ABC*, which went from 1,7 daily news items in 2013 to 98 publications in 2020. Although the presence of the Catalan newspaper in other social networks has been substantial from the beginning, distributing its content between each platform, *ABC*'s strategy was to bet mostly on Facebook and Twitter until 2022, the date on which it embarked on TikTok, as well as YouTube, in this case, in 2023. This suggests that one of the possible reasons that could explain this new change in strategy in social networks has been the slowdown that are experimenting with on Facebook.

**Table 3. Annual evolution of the average number of daily publications**

Date	The country	The world	The Vanguard	ABC	The Spanish	elDiario.es	The HuffPost	20 minutes
2013	2.3	0.5	6.0	1.7	0	30.2	17.2	21.3
2014	24.2	4.2	15.3	9.7	0	27.5	12.5	28.7
2015	55.8	33.4	30.5	26.4	7.3	27.8	22.0	46.6
2016	54.2	52.2	39.3	40.8	26.6	28.6	33.0	59.5
2017	59.5	31.9	51.9	50.1	30.0	29.2	38.9	55.5
2018	61.7	56.7	89.5	63.7	36.9	32.2	41.0	48.8
2019	67.4	80.1	106.2	87.0	60.7	36.9	42.7	68.6
2020	63.7	90.9	114.6	98.2	88.9	32.6	47.0	127.4
2021	74.0	63.6	105.8	83.1	62.6	41.5	44.2	36.2
2022	76.4	71.6	90.7	87.2	73.9	44.7	46.8	67.9
2023	73.9	59.4	93.3	80.3	68.0	38.9	44.5	56.1

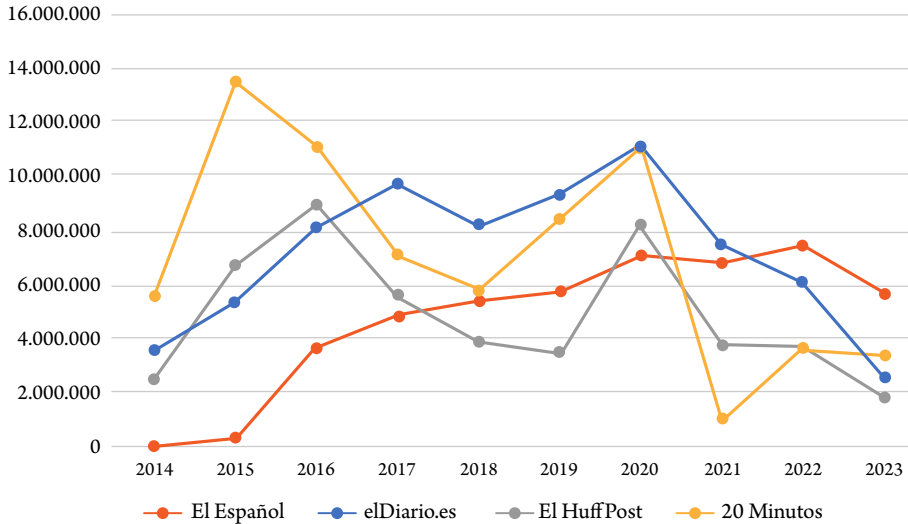
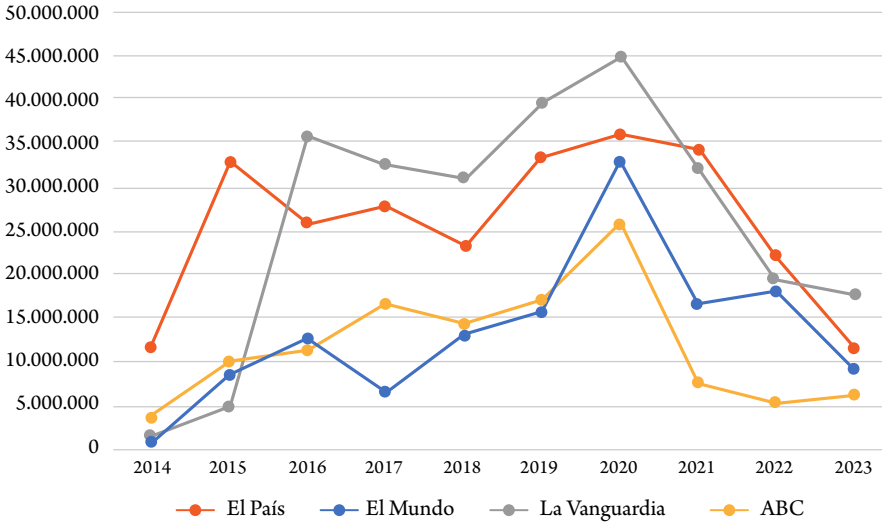
Source: Own elaboration, with raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application.

Table 3 shows that 2021 was another period of great significance due to the decrease in the number of publications. In the previous year, the COVID-19 pandemic occurred, and information in the media generally increased, according to the *Digital Report* (We Are Social, 2023). In this regard, in Spain, *20 Minutes* and *ABC* stood out above the rest in covering the pandemic (Lázaro-Rodríguez and Herrera-Viedma, 2020), which is evidenced in this analysis of their work on Facebook. Similarly, if the number of publications in 2023 is compared with that in 2022 of all the newspapers that make up this sample, it can be seen that, in most of them, the number of daily news publications on this platform was reduced. This fact is much more evident in newspapers such as *El Mundo*, which fell 17.02%; *20 Minutes*, which fell 17.29%; and *El Diario.es*, with 12.93% less. All the news coverage decreased, except for that of *La Vanguardia*, which increased by 2.82%.

The participation of an audience with published content constitutes another variable that needs to be analyzed. Users show their behavior with the posts they read through, such as likes, comments, and forward. All these interactions are summarized in Figure 3, which mostly shows a decrease in audience interactions. *El Mundo*, together with *El Español* and *El HuffPost*, reversed the fall with the figures obtained in 2022. *ABC* deserves separate consideration because it has grown slightly in this metric from 2022 to 2023. However, as shown in Table 3, the number of user interactions with the content published by newspapers has mostly decreased since 2017. A fact that is also evidenced in the engagement rate is the *engagement rate by post* formula (Sehl and Tien, 2023), which specifically measures the level of participation and loyalty of the public with the messages published. Overall, there is a majority drop in the interest of their audience with the content they publish on Facebook. However, not all newspapers see it in the same way. Those that have decreased in this metric have been *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ElDiario.es*, *El HuffPost* and *El Español*. With a moderate decrease are *La Vanguardia* and *20 Minutes*. The only newspaper that has reversed the decline and is in line with the previously mentioned data on audience interactions has been *ABC*, which slightly increased its engagement rate.

The technology company Parse.ly supplies web analysis software mainly to companies that are dedicated to the publication of digital

**Figure 3. Sum of all audience interactions: likes, comments and shares**



Source: Own elaboration, with raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application.

content. Following the data they provide, until 2015, Facebook was the first provider of traffic to digital media, ahead of Google (VanNest, 2015). However, as of 2017, Facebook has reduced the traffic it generates to the



media (Lee, 2017), as well as to other industries (Radogna, 2018). Consequently, if participation decreases, the traffic that is sent to the media also decreases. Although there are no figures that allow a comparative frequency of the decrease in interactions and the traffic sent to the media website, the interviewed press has ratified this decrease in Facebook traffic, although it is still the social network that most users send.

**Table 4. Annual downpayment rate**

Date	The country	The world	The Vanguard	ABC	The Spanish	elDiario.es	The Huff Post	20 minutes
2017	7.2	3.3	9.5	11.9	12.0	21.8	5.6	6.7
2018	4.9	5.7	7.5	9.5	7.4	16.1	3.7	5.3
2019	6.1	6.5	8.6	11.0	7.3	17.2	2.2	7.5
2020	5.8	11.7	8.8	15.6	8.7	17.8	5.1	9.1
2021	5.2	5.4	6.0	4.6	7.4	11.6	2.4	0.8
2022	3.3	5.4	3.5	3.2	7.4	9.1	2.2	3.0
2023	1.7	2.7	3.1	3.7	5.3	3.8	1.1	2.7

Source: Own elaboration, raw data extracted from the CrowdTangle application.

## Media interviews

Guacimara Castrillo, from *El Mundo*, explained that they continue to bet on this social network and that they publish all the URLs that are generated in the newspaper on Facebook. However, he argued that the point is that the traffic generated in this social network has dropped substantially in the last year. He also suggested that although it is still the network with the most followers—of those they manage—they seem to be more inactive. For this reason, their strategy is not as Facebook-centric as before. They are not doing Facebook live or feeding groups, for example. He concluded by stating that they are not going to abandon Facebook, but they do begin to assess how to automate and stop the number of publications.

Lucía González, from *El País*, noted that Facebook is the main traffic return network. On this platform, they publish “selected content” that is occasionally “optimized” for its output to this social network. Sometimes,

they also test headlines, photographs or *copies* (the text that accompanies the publication). On the other hand, she argued that they have a very broad community in the general account and that, therefore, there is specific content in sections that mainly feeds this audience. However, she continued to explain that each platform and social network offers a different return and requires different efforts and narratives that, additionally, do not always translate into traffic returns. Regarding the future, Lucía commented that it would be difficult to predict how the work would develop in this social network, but she believes that its content needs to be continually explored and adapted since “it is the only roadmap”. In this sense, her colleague Virginia López Enano justified the following: “Facebook is a social network that usually changes its parameters and makes us have to adapt our strategy more frequently than other social networks. [There are] Seasons in which long videos, for example, or certain types of content are awarded more. So venturing our relationship with this social network in the future is complicated. “

Daniel Ventura, the director of *El HuffPost*, confirmed that the decline of Facebook is evident as a source of organic traffic for the media, as they have experienced reductions of more than 50% or 60% in recent years. However, he argues that it continues to be a useful platform for the media in their task of building community:

Certainly, changes in the platform seem to have been punishing the content from the media, but its internal dynamics offer possibilities that we should explore. This is the case, for example, for groups as niche spaces in which to offer specific coverage and develop a fairly direct relationship with the audience. It does require time, resources and the ability to withstand frustration.

He also argued that “it is not convenient to forget that the average age of the Facebook user has been increasing, but these users are part of age segments that continue to be interesting for the media, for many reasons.” Additionally, he concludes by sharing the following reflection: “If with the media still actively working within Facebook, the network is already an ocean of disinformation, what would happen if journalism renounced the

more or less precarious capacity to reach that it currently has? The outlook is not very encouraging. “

Javier Corcuera, from *ABC*, confirmed that Facebook is fundamental to their social media strategy, mainly because of the volume of traffic it brings them. Today, it is still its main source from social networks, much different from the rest, despite having reduced traffic in recent years. He also argues that at *ABC*, they understand Facebook as a network to share news with editorial content and other lighter ones that combine entertainment with the possibility of being a source of information for users of this social network. Its strategy on Facebook is based on action campaigns aimed at boosting newspaper subscriptions that overlap with those dedicated to boosting organic traffic and brand presence, as well as taking care of interactions and feedback. of the community of followers. It concludes by confirming that they will continue with this policy, although it is open to possible future changes and new investments in other new social networks.

Mario Vidal, from *El Español*, explained that “his previous strategy was more focused on creating a community of loyal readers and connected with the brand”, but after the constant algorithm changed and the scope decreased, they were in charge of “to promote the content that brings the most traffic to the newspaper”. Additionally, this confirms that, for the moment, Facebook is still a social network on which it is inexpensive to acquire paid traffic, so its investment strategy “remains in the same line.” However, he argued that they have detected “a worrying reduction in the scope of publications, especially news of a more political, economic or current nature” that is the core of their subscriptions. He concluded that his Facebook strategy will continue to change and that efforts will be reduced in time and financial resources.

Pau Rodríguez, from *La Vanguardia*, affirmed that five years ago, in 2017, Facebook was a social network that enabled them to bring much traffic to the newspaper website. On the other hand, he added that in this social network, they found a large number of female audiences who found it difficult to attract to their website, although today, there is gender parity.

His main focus right now at Facebook is brand positioning. There is a general sensation in the media that, to generate volume, Facebook alone is no longer useful and that, on the other hand, the new competitors, the other social networks, are facilitating an opening to journalistic content that Facebook does not like or does not like. It suits you, by your advertising providers. He concludes the interview by confirming that their strategy on Facebook is changing but that they need to be there to reach a target audience that they cannot find elsewhere.

Carlos Serrano, from *20 Minutes*, argues that it is difficult for Facebook to be able to hook younger generations again, although “perhaps with the new improvements they can retain or slow down their abandonment rate, but not acquire new users as before.” On the other hand, he argued that the real bet of META is being played on Instagram, where they are managing to lead in the market with this product and compete against TikTok. He concludes by confirming that they publish almost all the material they create on Facebook in *20 Minutes* by placing the link of their digital website on the platform. They also receive less traffic annually, but they do not consider leaving the blue social network, despite the uncertain future that they think awaits them, but they do mitigate their efforts and investments.

## Conclusions

The quantitative analysis of the three variables measured shows a decreasing pattern for the most part, since it costs, first, to acquire new users if one considers its evolution since 2013. Additionally, the number of publications since 2021 has slowed in many newspapers, mainly due to the decrease in the number of interactions of the audience with the content, a fact evidenced in the analysis. It is understood, therefore, that the decrease in the number of interactions is also related to a reduction in the amount of traffic that is sent to media websites (Kümpel et al., 2015; Häuptli et al., 2020), a fact confirmed by those responsible for the newspapers interviewed. Every month, they receive less audience from Facebook, which is an indicator that has led them to rethink, in many cases, their strategy on social networks, as has been the case with ABC. Despite the fact that in 2023, they were the only newspaper with positive records of the number of interac-

tions and the engagement rate, the slowdown of Facebook pushed it to explore new social networks to tell news, such as YouTube and TikTok (Mora and Díaz-Lucena, 2024).

The most important turning point in the trajectory of these newspapers on Facebook was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, as although their publications increased exponentially and were positive in that period—if the interactions reached are observed and, therefore, the traffic sent to the internet—in the following years, there were substantial changes in their metrics. Various studies have confirmed that the habits and consumption trends of citizens have been modified by the pandemic (Montaña et al., 2020), especially among the youngest people (Volkmer, 2021; Feldkamp, 2021), who have begun to abandon Facebook since 2011 (Matthews, 2014), but in the last two years, this number of abandonments on the blue platform has grown exponentially (Heath, 2021; Pew Research Center, 2022; Vogels et al., 2022). The pandemic has led many young people to look at other social networks where audiovisual content is published that connects more with them (Román-San-Miguel and Olivares-García, 2021; Wang, 2022; Díaz-Lucena and Vicente-Fernández, 2023). On Facebook, younger users prefer to watch audiovisual content to read headlines, and for this reason, they are trying to revitalize the platform by betting on tools that have worked very well for them on Instagram, such as the option for short videos or *reels*, which attract more creative audiovisual publications to hook these younger generations (Vincent, 2022; Naughton, 2022). Therefore, the idea of instagramizing Facebook began with the announcement of the extension of *reels* up to 90 seconds, along with the launch of new creative tools to generate and edit more personalized videos (META, 2022).

All of the media interviewed have assured us that, in the short term, they will continue to be present on Facebook, although, for the most part, their investments will be reduced. In this way, their possible changes in strategy can be justified on the basis of the following points: the publication effort is truly small because most of them insert the hyperlinks of their news from the digital version on the platform; its presence in the social network gives visibility and value to the brand on a daily basis; and they continue to

maintain a truly high number of adult audiences on Facebook that are difficult to locate on other social networks.

This is about an audience that, as has been discussed, seems little connected with the content that is published, and perhaps this opens the door to future works that could shed more light on the reason for this reduction in interaction in such a drastic way. If these headers accumulate millions of followers on their Facebook accounts. Similarly, the new movements of Facebook that encourage the publication of audiovisual content and provide greater visibility to the informative content of verified accounts can help the press increase the number of interactions related to its news and, therefore, increase traffic to its web pages. Consequently, continuing to analyze the work of these newspapers in the coming years to verify if the decreasing pattern observed is reversed cannot be ruled out.

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