

In-depth analysis of exclusives stories in the Spanish political journalism: monitoring and factors of competition

Radiografía de las exclusivas en el periodismo político español: seguimiento y factores de competencia

Radiografia do 'furo' no jornalismo político espanhol: monitoração e fatores de concorrência

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ABSTRACT

Scoops in Spanish political journalism are rare, despite the significant weight given to this kind of content in the whole of the press and to the symbolic importance of its topics. This paper analyzes the scoops published by the five major Spanish newspapers in their politics sections on 2012. The study includes both the amount as the similarities and differences between what was published in the paper and digital versions of each media. The methodology used is based on a quantitative work, under the variant of discourse analysis.

Keywords: Journalism, scoop, source, investigative journalism, newspapers, Internet.

RESUMEN

La exclusiva en el periodismo político español es una rareza, pese al importante peso que se le otorga a este contenido en el conjunto de la prensa y a la relevancia simbólica de los temas que le son propios. Este trabajo analiza los scoops que publicaron los cinco principales diarios españoles en sus secciones de Política durante el año 2012. El estudio contempla tanto la cantidad como las semejanzas y diferencias entre lo publicado en papel y en las versiones digitales de cada medio. La metodología utilizada se basa en un trabajo cuantitativo, bajo la variante de análisis del discurso.

Palabras clave: Periodismo, exclusiva, fuentes, periodismo de investigación, diarios, Internet.

RESUMO

A exclusividade no jornalismo político espanhol é uma raridade, apesar do peso significativo que é dado a este tipo de conteúdo em toda a imprensa e da importância simbólica das questões que lhe são inerentes. Este artigo analisa os furos que publicaram os cinco principais jornais espanhóis nas suas seções de Política em 2012. O estudo contempla tanto a quantidade quanto as semelhanças ou diferenças entre o trabalho publicado em papel e as versões digitais. A metodologia utilizada baseia-se num trabalho quantitativo a partir de análise de discurso.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo, furo, fontes, jornalismo investigativo, jornais, Internet.

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INTRODUCTION

Journalism and scoop are two words that often should appear together. More even in the case of newspapers, because it is assumed that print media is still the one managing the so-called agenda setting (Cohen, 1983; Luhmann, 1995; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). However, it seems not be so, neither in the practice of the profession in Spanish newspapers – where the majority of the information or even of their front pages does not correspond to exclusive themes developed by the editorial department– nor in the academic environments of the country, where the scoop has scarcely been studied as a main field.

The importance of analyzing the scoop is higher in an environment where many voices are calling for a new newspaper model. In the values of classic journalism, the scoop has become an important qualitatively element to consider. However, the works on the quality of the press in Spain, more focused on ethical problems, have left it aside as a strict analysis object.

The Cambridge Dictionary defines a scoop as “a story or piece of news discovered and published by one newspaper before all the others”. And for its equivalent in Spanish, the dictionary of the Royal Spanish Academy states in its entry number 4 that the exclusive is a “news obtained and published by only one media, that reserves the rights to its diffusion”. To this general approach we must add that this front-page stories must not only be new, but, in addition, the competition must have lost them (Lewis & Cushion, 2009).

In the conception of traditional journalism we can perceive a certain “scoop mentality”, a valuation of “being the first in giving an information” (Gahrán, 2011), notoriety that not only implies prestige within a closed community of reporters, but also drives sources to talk to journalists reputed by their scoops which, in theory, leads readers to read their stories.

In a historical imaginary shared by the professional collective of the Western reporting, exclusive information adds value, that both justifies a greater remuneration of the star journalists of each media and implies an influence on the rest of the media environment or a –theoretical rather than real– impact on sales. A scoop is one of the most valued contents by a certain way of understanding free press. Its appreciation is transversal, because it equally affects

all themes and sections; it is multimedia, because it is desired in any media; and global, since it happens in any developed country. A scoop is appreciated not only by the audience, that in the current 2.0 environment will validate or censor it with a Tweet thirty seconds later, but above all by the broadcaster, from journalists to directors, going through all the chain of command to get to editors or multimedia entrepreneurs.

The scoop will be the thermometer that will mark the difference between the success or failure of the most discerning journalism, with the aggravating circumstance that not all can win: the scoop of others is one's fiasco and vice versa.

Thus, it will be its legendary feature that will give value to the scoop. However, some analysts of this dimension have denounced its little practical sense (Fernández, 2010), literally defining the scoop as a social obsession and as a “carrot for all rabbits”, meaning that beyond its symbolic status, it can bring little concrete value to the media. Something more than evident in Spain, where the media is drowned by the crisis of advertising and of the business model.

This paper attempts to clarify who gives the exclusives, which format –paper or digital– prevails, how sources are used, what resources are dedicated, to what extent the most basic ethical aspects are respected and if the media manages to make them profitable. To do so, we have assembled a significant sample during a concrete period, the year 2012, considered crucial by the number and meaning of the cases produced in the analyzed Spanish newspapers.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study takes as frame of reference the theory of agenda setting, because if the publication of a scoop has any meaning, is to set the agenda. When an exclusive fails to draw the attention of the audience, then it has failed in its primary objective. In regards to the agenda setting, Lang and Lang (1966) indicate:

The mass media force attention to certain issues. They build up public images of political figures. They are constantly presenting objects suggesting what individuals in the mass should think about, know about, have feelings about. (p. 177)

As a first approach to the effects on the media we would have to consider the ideas about liquid journalism (Deuze, 2006) or how the evolution of the consumer society leads to a faster reporting, that expires sooner and depends much more than before on a news consumer which, in turn, also produces information, recommends them, endorse them or distribute them. Other classic references (Tuchman, 1978) also supported their theories on the news and the construction of reality on the agenda setting.

The mechanism of scoops makes that the media imitate one another (Lim, 2013), although the press develops certain strategies to avoid that the exclusive theme of a competitor marks the agenda, for example, ignoring the issue or appropriating it through an update. In general, this factor of competition can also be read in sociological terms (Bourdieu, 1996), not only as part of the media strategy. In this perspective, the starting point of the analysis is that journalists tend to write the same and about the same based on how they watch each other and on a hyper-consumption of information, a productive process whose results are barely distinguished by trivial details only evident to savants. The front-page news would seek to break this homogenizing trend, but –as shown by recent works (Mato, 2014)– the exclusive information is being increasingly affected by the change of model produced by the Internet. The speed has shortened both the life of the scoops, which are in danger of extinction as an element of prestige, although Mato acknowledges that its substitute is still not is clear.

The reduction of times in the information flow is changing the paradigm of communication, as shown by some studies, including Parmelee (2013). The new environment, he says, assumes that each time more the agenda is built by others media, for example by Tweets of candidates in the scope of political information, in what he defines as “mini-scoops”.

The essence of the agenda setting (McCombs, 2004) has determined that newspapers are still much more relevant than televisions or other media to determine the themes of public debate. Thus, the press still sets 50% of the issues that will then be treated by the rest of the media. Despite the explosion of the Internet and social networks, paradoxically, the dying daily newspapers

continue to be more influential in setting the agenda. However, the pressure of the Internet makes that traditional media have increasingly more difficulties to set an agenda (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2013). During electoral periods or of political crisis it would be easier to exercise this power, while in calm times it would be more difficult, since audience’s preferences –as crimes, sports or curiosities– impose.

The reputation of the media often depends on procuring exclusive information (Gentzkow & Shapiro, 2008), which they will look for at any price. Some authors (Diezhandino, 2012) consider that the scoop is a *rara avis* limited to newspapers and that it is very expensive in these days. Despite this, the scoop is the main battlefield in the competition between media and an indicator of professionalism (Lehman-Wilzig & Seletzky, 2010). The scoop represents a differentiator between media, and it is often a factor that responds to a competition not only professional, but also commercial, as noted in some works:

However, without an investment in producing exclusive content, the main force for differentiation between news outlets will disappear. This would lead to increasing homogenisation of news delivery, and to a collapse of the major means by which journalists and news organisations derive the cultural capital that sets them apart from rivals within the journalism field. If the job of a journalist is simply to re-write material which has been generated by public relations professionals, it is hard to see how high-calibre entrants to journalism will find the means to “differentiate themselves” within the field (Bourdieu, 2005, pp. 39-40). They are likely to look elsewhere for rewarding work and news journalism will be even further impoverished. (Phillips, 2010, p. 377)

The scoop also becomes a currency between journalists and sources when negotiating the contents to be delivered to the media, as states, for example, Santander (2010). This gives to the exclusive information a dimension that goes beyond the media showcase: it locates it in the kitchen of the newsrooms, where the complicities and pacts between journalist and their informants are cooked. Or said in another way: journalists put the scoop in the showcase, but the key of the door is still in the hands of the sources.

The very nature of the scoop makes it elusive to the academic work. To begin with, because of the problems of the general audience to appreciate an exclusive story and distinguish it from other products, like the first news—information given first by a media, but to which the rest of competitors subsequently have access— or leaks. Indeed, one of the problems that some researchers (Caminos & Camacho, 2011) highlight is the inability to distinguish, from a scientific point of view, investigative journalism from a leak; or, what is the same, that all leaks pose as investigative journalism. Thus, in quality studies, issues such as the little clarity in specifying the source penalize many scoops (Ramírez, Gorosarri, Aiestaran, Zabalondo & Agirre, 2014).

Among the major problems of scoops are those related to sources and their interests. One of the best summaries of the ethical dilemma and, at the same time, the need of sources that journalists have, is proposed by this text:

Regarding the negotiation of control between source organizations and news organizations, it is not straightforward matter to answer the question 'Who controls?' Much of the recent research literature has argued that the news media are very dependent on source organizations. Journalists are portrayed as little more than 'conduit pipes' and 'secondary definers' in relation to their sources (e.g. Chibnall, 1977; Hall et al., 1978; Fishman, 1980). However, as our research documents, from the perspective of sources the news media are very powerful, in possession of key resources that frequently give them the upper hand. For example, sources who realize they can only respond within an established news frame, or who are ensnared in a news context such as question period in the legislature, or who are limited to a twelve-second clip, feel that it is they who function as conduit pipes and secondary definers for the news media. There is considerable variation in who controls the process, depending on the context, the type of sources involved, the type of news organizations involved, and what is at issue. It is a matter of who wants to control whom via news accounts, and how all the sources and news organizations involved see themselves fitting into the picture. (Ericson, Baranek & Chan, 1989, p. 378)

Others authors have deepened in the mythical dimension of the scoop (Gutsche, 2010), an aura that starts in the journalism faculties of universities. The

symbolic weight of the exclusive subjects permeates the journalism in the United States (Kovach & Rosenstiel, 2007). The same occurs in other latitudes, as shown by the study on the values of Nordic journalists (Sylvie, Lewis & Xu, 2010), for which getting a scoop is one of the five more valuable things from a professional point of view. Achieving an exclusive story or the fear of losing it is between the factors of stress of journalists (Reinardy, 2011), and often exclusivity is a value confronted to others, as rigor, that forces to ponder between both. Thus, more thoroughness implies less informational bombings and a lower risk for the journalist and its media, while more scoops can imply, in case they go wrong, a greater credibility threat (Xifra, 2009).

In this context we would have to wonder if the scoop has lost as much value as the whole of information (Casero-Ripollès, 2014); if it has become a luxury product or just a sign of identity of the printed versions of a press that goes increasingly towards the online world (Borrat, 2000); if its high economic or productive cost can be justified, and which media are betting for this type of themes as another defining feature to consider in terms of journalistic quality.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology has been designed to answer the following research questions:

- PI1. How many political scoops had the main Spanish newspapers in 2012, and how have they taken advantage from them?
- PI2. Which newspapers got more front-page news in this section and how did they benefit from them?
- PI3. In what type of sources are supported these exclusive themes?

The text sample to analyze the matter of the scoop was extracted of the Politics/Spain section of 2012 of the five major newspapers (ordered by sales) according to the Office of Justification of Broadcasting (OJD, by its Spanish acronym).

Two thousand and twelve was the year in which the economic crisis began to hit hard on Spanish people: evictions, general strikes and cuts marked

the day to day. In this context, journalism began to reveal or to follow scandals affecting everyone, from the monarchy, with the Urdangarín case, son-in-law of King Juan Carlos I; up to the judiciary, with the resignation of the President of the Supreme Court due to non-justified sumptuary expenses. During 2012 the first cases of political irregularities in three main political parties—*Partido Popular* (PP), *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) and *Convergencia Democrática de Cataluña* (CDC)—began to appear. Subsequently, those cases have configured a social environment that internalizes corruption as one of the main problems of Spanish people. After unemployment, corruption is perceived as the greater concern of citizenship, according to the barometer of the Center of Sociological Research (CIS) of November 2015. And in 2012 cases that had already been exposed, such as the billionaire fraud of ERE (records of regulation of employment) of Andalusia—part of the corpus—also exploded in all its dimension, and the “Pujol case” began to give its first signals.

We opted for following-up on the Politics/Spain section by the preponderance of politics in Spanish newspapers, as an essential issue to their editorial identity. It is the result of works that show that national politics is the dominant theme in the main Spanish newspapers (León Gross & Blanco Castilla, 2009), a subject that ranges from 27% of the editorials of *El País* and 33% of *La Vanguardia* (in the low range) up to 70% in the editorials of *El Mundo* in the period 2006-2008. The relevance of political information also reflects in their front pages, where the political emerges as the more treated issue between 1980 and 2010, with 25% of front-pages news (López Rabadán & Casero, 2012.) But if we added themes as justice, corruption, security or terrorism, treated in the same section, the share of Politics/Spain on the front pages would sum up to 42%, as reflects this study on *El País* and *ABC*.

In our work, we had three complementary and not mutually exclusive criteria to select and classify the sample:

- **The quote.** We quantified the quotes of one newspaper to another within the universe of study (the section of Politics/Spain) during 2012. The reason is that newspapers still keep alive the habit of quoting, which implies recognition: the competitor has given a scoop. This is very useful

in an environment so vindictive against each other as the Spanish press, as pointed by some authors (Dader, 2007). If one newspaper quotes another, we will consider the text quoted as a scoop. This would prevent forgetting information quoted by a media, but that does not appear referenced to the one that published it as scoop, omission related with a protection of the editorial identity or the will to ignore the other's victory.

- **The omission of the quote.** This happens when one of the five newspapers publishes a story, but in the next days another picks it without bring anything new and with an implicit will of avoiding to quote its rival. The application of this criterion was necessary because, in many occasions—as some of the works already mentioned state (Lim, 2013)—, a story is updated or ignored to undermine the position of the competitor.
- **The ignored news.** This option forwards to relevant news, offered by a newspaper as a scoop and that, by any reasons, were ignored by the rest of the newspapers, without finding its place in the agenda setting. At this point, the judgment of the researcher is decisive.

This three-step selection criterion generates a wide and representative sample. This sample excluded interviews, because despite being scoops, they do not incorporate a thorough job with sources. In the interview, the exclusive depends primarily on the will of the interviewee. Thus, there are interviews with great impact and others quite bland. In essence, they represent a more sophisticated phase of declarative journalism, especially in politics, the analyzed section.

The fact that selection rules have been so systematic is supported by classics of the methodology in social sciences (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006), so that each of the elements of the universe of study had the same chance to be included in the sample and, after, identical criteria of evaluation have been applied to it. The unit corresponded to each of the 37 news selected as scoops published by the sections of Politics/Spain of the newspapers *El País*, *El Mundo*, *ABC*, *La Vanguardia* and *El Periódico* during 2012. Each of them has been the main source of this work.

There are 37 headlines and only 34 scoops, since three of them—the Declaration of the driver of ERE in Andalusia, the one of Javier de la Rosa to the Economic Crime and Fiscal Unit and the Bustos case—are scoops published the same day by *El Mundo* and *ABC* in the first two cases, and by *ABC* and *El Periódico*, in the third. As it is the same news, the scoop has been considered only once.

Following the criteria raised by specialists in the quantitative method (Bardin, 1980) this work is carried out under the variant of discourse analysis, by connecting the syntax of the text with the production process. This means encoding, through an analysis table, anchor points, such as quoting of sources, the amount of sources used or if the versions of both sides in the same conflict are reflected. In this table we value not only text aspects, but also the importance given to information—front-page, photo, editorial presence—and its coincidence or not with the web version of the information.

Is evident that these days web environment must be considered. So, we will have to compare the text published in the printed version with the one posted on the Internet. Are there differences? Is there a literal copy-paste? Has the online version been used to preview the scoop?

As the classics in methodology (Grawitz & Pinto, 1972) recommend, all categories present in the analysis tables—headlines, front-page lead, etc.—are in within the analyzed text, including their consistency with the digital version or the reference (or absence thereof) made by other newspapers that are part of the corpus.

The news that conform the sample are listed in Annex 1. From this selection, made during 2012, emerge the 34 scoops and 8 errors, although these are not collected in the list. The contents of this list configure the object of study.

The texts, both on paper and electronic, constitute our primary source of work. The secondary sources are the evolution of OJD during 2012, the studied period, or the staff that occupied the Political sections of the analyzed newspaper that year. The combination of these sources allows not only analyzing of what the studied scoops are made, but also their profitability and the resources allocated to generate them. The model of analysis table applied is presented in table 1.

RESULTS

Once the monitoring of the five major newspapers (by their sales) in Spain were made and the scoops from the sections Politics/Spain in 2012 were analyzed, the number total of exclusive information that year is 34. In other words, the average is very low: 6.8 scoops by political section.

From these data, the most obvious result is that the Politics/Spain sections of the five Spanish newspapers sold 42 news as a scoop, of which seven, i.e., 16%, not only were not scoops, but they also were egregious failures. Very often, the same authors who sign a mistake on the front-page also have irrefutable scoops.

Table 2 presents the winners and losers in the race for scoops in the sections of Politics/Spain of the main newspapers during 2012, once errors were purged.

After applying the analysis table, we detected that scoop may be a *rara avis* in the current information map, but media are trying to take advantage of it. From the 37 information forming the sample, 33 scoops reached the front page and one of them did not by an error of assessment, the one of Ana Botella and the Hospital de la Princesa. Seventeen of these texts had four columns or more at the front page.

Advantage of exclusive information was also taken inside newspapers, since all news had four columns or more. It is in the editorial linkage, whose importance was already highlighted by previous studies (León Gross & Blanco Castilla, 2009) where there is lesser commitment with this type of news. Thus, only twelve of the studied texts were accompanied by an editorial on the topic. At this point, there is a distorting effect: the uses and customs of each newspaper. Thus, for example, *El Mundo* often supports its star information with editorials the same day of their publication, while, for example, *La Vanguardia* does so in subsequent days.

From the point of view of the quality of journalism in the use of sources, the result is quite satisfactory. There are only three news written without sources: “*Nuevo agujero en el gobierno balear*” [“New void in the Balearic Government”] (*El Mundo*), “*Sindicatura de Cuentas entierra un informe del Palau*” [“Accounts syndicate buries a report of Palau”] (*ABC*) and “*Artur Mas rechazó la oferta del PSC para gobernar*” [“Artur Mas rejected the offer of PSC to rule”] (*El Mundo*). In a unique occasion, the scoop lies in a single anonymous source:

Table 1. Model of content analysis

Headline					
Media					
Date					
Author					
	YES	NO	COLUMNS	PHOTO	
Front-page					
	Number/s		COLUMNS	PHOTO	
Pages					
	YES	NO			
Editorial					
	YES	NO			
Follow-up					
SOURCES					
	SIN FUENTES	DECLARED	ANONYMOUS	PARTIAL IDENTIFICATION	
Sources					
	ONE	TWO	THREE OR MORE	DOCUMENTARY	
Number					
	LEAD	2 INITIAL PARAGRAPHS	MAIN TEXT	3 FINAL PARAGRAPHS	
Position					
	YES	NO			
Voice to all those involved					
INTERNET					
	WEB	MOBILE APP	DOES NOT HAVE		
Use					
	YES	NO			
Online preview					
	YES	NO			
Differentiated text					
	YES	NO			
Online follow-up					
	TOTAL	AT THE MARGIN	ON FAVOR	CONTRARY	VALUE
Comments					
REPERCUSSION					
	<i>El País</i>	<i>El Mundo</i>	<i>ABC</i>	<i>La Vanguardia</i>	<i>El Periódico</i>
Quote					
Omission of the quote					
	YES	NO			
Ignored					

Source: Own elaboration.

“Puig deja Interior y va a Empresa” [“Puig leaves Interior and goes to Enterprises”] (*La Vanguardia*).

There is an excess of information based in a unique source, a dozen, but in several of these cases, a total of eleven, it was a documentary source, a report, a court order, a judicial statement... which guarantees the solidity of the story.

The rest of the information, up to 21, were supported by more than one source, and also in 21 of these scoops, although not necessarily in the same, documentary sources were used, providing greater solvency to what was published.

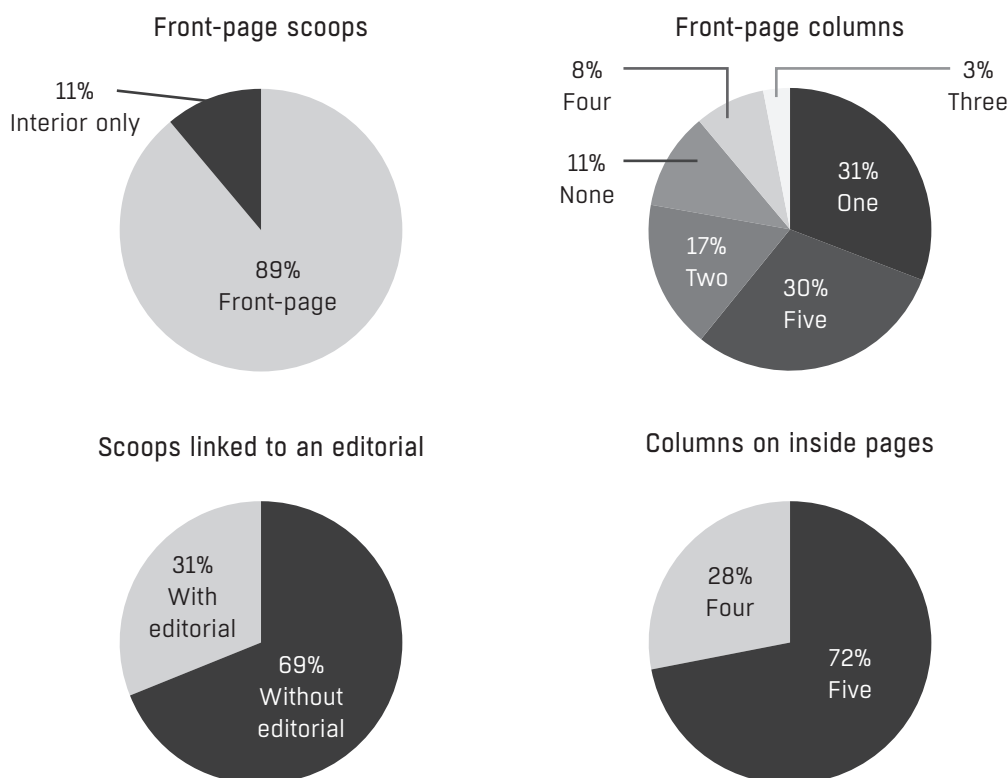
Regarding plurality, those results are not so good. Often, the information are published without giving voice to those affected. Only on eight occasions (merely 21% of the total) the injured party offers its version of the facts on front-page scoops on matters requiring to be extremely careful. An explanation could be the intention of journalists of avoiding the overacting of official political sources produced in any crisis (Pont i Sorribes, 2009) or eluding their pressures. This would not be an excuse, however, and all indications are that this type of practice sharpens the partial and partisan nature of the Spanish press.

Table 2: Political scoops in 2012

Media	Scoops
<i>El País</i>	11
<i>El Mundo</i>	10
<i>ABC</i>	10
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	3
<i>El Periódico</i>	3

Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1, below, shows an overview of the level of advantage taken from political scoops.



Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3: treatment of sources in political scoops, 2012

Use of sources		Type of sources	
No sources	3	Documentary	22
Anonymous	10	Personal	12
Declared	22	No sources	3
Partial identification	1		
Number of sources		Plurality	
No sources	3	Voice to all those involved	8
One source	13	Voice to only one side	29
Two sources	12		
Three or more sources	9		

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 3 summarizes the treatment of sources given in this information.

Regarding the web treatment of this information, the performance was very uneven and depended on the web strategy of each media. *El País*, for example, has unrestricted access to its online version. In addition, scoops expand their temporary space. They are offered from 00:00 hours. In this type of media, the web is converted in a way of previewing their own contents, enlarging the life of an exclusive story. On the Internet, the scoop assumes a new dimension, not only by the interactivity with users, that will discuss and prescribe this information to others readers, but by its advance in the temporary line.

On the opposite side is *El Mundo*. The bet of Unedisa's newspaper was in 2012 to promote the system of payment Orbyt, therefore, *elmundo.es* was then forbidden territory for scoops, which were limited to the printed version. The situation became absurd to readers of the online version, since the reactions to the scoop were online but not the exclusive story, which caused some confusion among web users. This has changed and now *El Mundo* offers in its online version the same scoops that in the printed version.

In the rest of newspapers we found scattered performances, difficult to sort. Sometimes the web published the scoop, sometimes not. For the studied

group, the Internet model was erratic in 2012 and there is no way to establish a pattern. In *abc.es*, *lavanguardia.com* and *elpais.es* they chose mostly to copy-paste the printed version, without variation in the text.

Another of the crucial aspects in this research – considering the relevance given by the written press to political contents and that scoops are the more expensive product– was elucidating the levels of profitability for the media and of internal productivity of newsrooms offered by the quantitative data on scoops of the national sections during 2012. To do so, we compared the number of scoops with each newspaper staff and with the sales registered during 2012 according to OJD. Regarding staff data, for which we used a trade union source, they do not include neither the ERE of *El Mundo*, that closed in June, neither the one of *El País*, that ended at the end of the year. In both cases we must highlight that, given the strategic value of the political sections, they were not the more punished by the adjustment. Staff does not include IT departments, layout designers, proof-readers or graphic designers. We only considered journalists located in Madrid and Barcelona. The results are shown in table 4.

As it can be seen, the level of productivity in terms of scoops is very low. *El País* is the media with more scoops, but most of the times it doubles its competition staff and, in comparison with *El Periódico*, it triples it.

Table 4: staff of the political section involved with scoops

	Journalists	Scoops	Media
<i>El País</i>	30	11	0,36
<i>El Mundo</i>	18	10	0,55
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	10	3	0,3
<i>ABC</i>	18	10	0,5
<i>El Periódico</i>	8	3	0,37

Source: Company committees and own elaboration.

That implies that its scoop average by journalist is very low (0.36), compared to the highest, of *El Mundo* (0.55).

In any case, averages are very relative: in *El Mundo*, three journalists made the 10 scoops of the newspaper then led by Pedro J. Ramírez. In *La Vanguardia* this ratio is more spectacular: the three scoops are signed by a unique professional, Jordi Barbeta, who also exercised as chief editor.

On the contrary, in *El País* almost a third of their scoops are the work of staff that in principle does not belong to the political section, as journalists of Economy, correspondents in Brussels or staff assigned to the Madrid. Therefore, in mathematical terms, the efficiency ratio of the Spain section of *El País* regarding scoops would be even lower than which is indicated on table 4. The same occurs with *El Periódico*, where some of the scoops are signed by journalists of the judicial section, but are published on the Politics one.

In the studied universe, the daily average number of news on a section of Politics/Spain is a dozen. This means that these five newspapers have published more than 21,000 news of this theme during 2012, short news included. Therefore, the share of scoops over the total of news is very small, not even 37 of 21,000, discounting errors. But the margin of error on scoops is very high, in a type of content that should have special attention, because of its front-page importance in and its often linkage with editorial.

Finally, we must wonder if the scoop offers a commercial performance for newspapers at the level of their prestige in newsrooms. One might expect that such a material had a reflection in the sales of companies

that have dedicated so many resources to obtain them. Let us see table 5.

In view of these figures, there is no relationship between scoops and commercial performance. During 2012, the sales of newspapers continued to drop at a similar pace in Barcelona and Madrid and without ideological distinction, as shown in the last column of negative numbers on the table, where we gather the variation of numbers compared to the previous year. It must be emphasized that the fall of sales comes from previous years. Between 2010 and 2012, the figures of these five great newspapers descended almost 30% altogether, according to OJD data.

In any case, the progress of sales is entirely dissociated from scoops from the Politics sections, which –as we have already pointed out– are the most relevant both for their front-page weight as for their linkage with the editorials. I.e., it does not seem profitable for newspapers to financially invest in obtaining scoops. In general terms, despite being the newspapers that has more exclusive stories, on 2012 *El País* sales (-11%) fell even more than the average of Catalan media, which –with only three scoops each– have declined at a similar but inferior rate: *La Vanguardia* fell 9.3% and *El Periódico de Catalunya*, 10%.

It could be argued that it is an specific effect of the studied period. But something similar happened in 2013. *El País* published the Bárcenas papers and *El Mundo* the Bárcenas SMS, two of the more significant scoops of the last years, with a specific weight greater than those of 2012. But, according to OJD, both newspapers lost 13% of their sales that year, not very far

Table 5: Sales and scoops

	Scoops	OJD sales 2012	Annual variation (%)
<i>El País</i>	11	324.814	-11
<i>El Mundo</i>	10	154.791	-12
<i>La Vanguardia</i>	10	118.772	-6,6
<i>ABC</i>	3	172.263	-9,3
<i>El Periódico</i>	3	107.514	-10

Source: OJD and own elaboration.

from ABC, which descended 15%. I.e., the relationship cause and effect by which the scoop could pull up sales has ended. At least in the paper, the crisis of the business model weighs more than the latest scoop.

CONCLUSIONS

The scoop maintains all its symbolic power, but it has lost much of its practical value, even to the press, which continues to aim at setting the political Spanish agenda. It does not seem that the current context of economic and business model crisis is the best for media to bet for a product that has become a minority. As already pointed in a premonitory way (Fuentes, 2006) to focus only on the economics of investigative journalism will lead to its end. It seems little probable that Spanish newspapers, immersed in a strong advertising and business model crisis, can lift their sales thanks to the scoop.

There are very few exclusive front-page contents published, especially in sections as Politics/Spain, that remain the less punished by staff adjustments. Considering the annual news total, the fact that scoops constitute only 0.15% of a section shows the difficulty of newspapers to generate exclusive content. It also evidences the difficulties of the media to try to impose their agenda on the political landscape and shows how this type of journalistic product has gone from

being essential, in theory, to marginal in practice. In this environment of scarcity, *El País* was the Spanish newspaper that got more political scoops during 2012, followed closely by ABC and *El Mundo*.

The level of quality of this type of information is more than acceptable, although there is still a great dependency, total or partial, of anonymous sources. Regarding the sample, we might conclude that, in terms of solvency and rigor, the scoop in the Spanish press would pass, while it would suspend in plurality, since in the majority of cases voice is given to only one party.

Recent work (Salaverriá, 2010) already prescribed, among the measures that should be taken to save journalism, the return to reporting and research. The emphasis should also be put again on the scoop as a differentiator and of quality, beyond its internal prestige for media workers.

A way of breaking this vicious circle would be the production of more academic studies on the scoop, overcoming the limitations of the present one. The methodology of this research can be applied to more sections, and also to other media, as the radio, the television or the Internet. Works on journalistic quality should include the scoop as a positive element and not focus only in its negative aspects –ethics, depiction of minors, minorities, quotation, reproduction of negative roles, etc–, to give a more complete image of all the factors that determine the quality of a communication media.

RECOGNITION

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ANNEX 1: SAMPLE CONTENT

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