



Article

Analysis of the Multimedia, Crossmedia and Transmedia Elements in Spanish Journalistic Media Projects During the Period 2020–2022

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Abstract

This paper presents a qualitative exploratory study based on the analysis of a representative sample of 35 projects carried out during the period 2020–2022 by six Spanish newspapers: elDiario.es, ABC, IDEAL, El Correo, ElConfidencial.com and El País. This study aims to detect and analyze the main elements of multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia content in the selected projects using an original analysis sheet designed for this research. In relation to the categories proposed in the categorization model, in this work we will focus on analyzing two in particular: authorship and information architecture. The projects were selected based on criteria of appropriateness, quality and innovation, as well as the results of semi-structured interviews with the heads and innovation managers (laboratories) of the media included in the framework of the projects 'NEWSNET: News, Networks, and Users in the Hybrid Media System: Transformation of the Media Industry and the News in the Post-Industrial Era' and 'IAMEDIA: Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms on Online Media, Journalist and Audiences'. The aim of the qualitative analysis is to propose a list of aspects, characteristics, and fundamentals in the ideation, elaboration, and distribution of these types of products. We conclude that the results of applying the designed analysis sheet help us to understand these processes and also to propose alternatives and improvements in its design and implementation

Keywords: journalism; multimedia production; crossmedia storytelling; transmedia storytelling; analysis sheet



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1. Introduction

This paper presents the results of the analysis carried out on a representative sample of 35 projects produced by six Spanish legacy media, impact relevance by OJD metrics, in the framework of the research projects 'NEWSNET: News, Networks, and Users in the Hybrid Media System: Transformation of the Media Industry and the News in the Post-Industrial Era' and 'IAMEDIA: Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms on Online Media, Journalist and Audiences' with different ideological positions and ways of treating information: *elDiario.es* (elDiario.es, 2022), *ABC* (ABC.es, 2022), *IDEAL* (Grupo Vocento, 2022a), *El Correo* (Grupo Vocento, 2022b), *ElConfidencial.com* (ElConfidencial.com, 2022) and *El País* (El País, 2022; Grupo Prisa, 2022). The analysis work includes a set of first-order topics at the level of information and current affairs, such as COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine, and more open topics that correspond to the logic of the so-called 'multimedia specials' during

the period 2020–2022. The objective of this study is to detect, analyze and characterize the main elements of multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia content in 35 representative projects by applying an analysis sheet that operates as an original categorization model.

The projects were selected based on criteria of appropriateness, quality and innovation as well as the suggestions and answers coming from semi-structured interviews with journalists and innovation managers (laboratories) of the legacy media included in the framework of the projects 'NEWSNET: News, Networks, and Users in the Hybrid Media System: Transformation of the Media Industry and the News in the Post-Industrial Era and 'IAMEDIA: Impact of Artificial Intelligence and Algorithms on Online Media, Journalist and Audiences. We are particularly interested in analyzing the multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia practices that some legacy media are carrying out in response to the changes in the audience's consumption and interaction habits. As a result of this qualitative analysis, the aim of this work is also to propose a list of aspects, characteristics and fundamentals in the ideation, elaboration, and distribution of these types of projects. Based on our analysis results, we describe a series of features, values, opportunities and challenges that allow us, with due caution because the current hybrid media system is liquid and in constant mutation, to propose a guide of good practices that could assist professionals and academics in their work.

Transmedia journalism, for instance, is still an emerging type of field work in progress with enormous potential ahead to be developed. In *Media Life* (Deuze, 2012), the *Design Thinking* approach captured the specific aspects and features related to interface design; creation of content, genres, formats, and models; the affective and rational considerations and descriptions of the media as *artifacts*, *activities*, *and arrangements* as well as the user behavior between *actions and affordances*, *animations*, *and performances* to embrace the challenges as well as become involved in the *Liquid Media System* (Serrano-Tellería, 2023). Previously described as a *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013), studying the intersection between offline and online media ecologies as well as their ambient and technological environments requires flexible methodologies.

2. Approach to Authorship and Information Architecture Within the Hybrid Media, News Life Logics

In the *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013), the struggle to reach, maintain and retain the audience's attention as well as gain its active, involved participation, is divided and shared between agents of very diverse origins, natures, and different technological characteristics. The design of the interfaces (mainly webpages) and its information architecture representing its spinal cord that group, manage and promote this interaction is therefore a fundamental step and strategy for every kind of media because the overall proactive audience demands that they have a meaningful experience.

Therefore, the concept of news, current affairs and information as well as its authorship has been adapting and evolving (Franklin & Eldridge, 2017; Witschge et al., 2017; Eldridge & Franklin, 2018; Steensen & Westlund, 2020; Costera Meijer et al., 2021) in this *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013) where the liquidity of the media and the technological systems that support and organize them through its information architecture facilitate their expansion and diffusion, but also dilute and weaken the borders that allow the content to be grouped and classified into its various rhythms, scales and levels.

In this sense, the idea of the *News Life Cycle* (Serrano-Tellería, 2023) has arisen, as a proposal for describing the concepts of news, current affairs and information (contents, products) its authorship as well as its information architecture in the *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013) and the liquidity observed in the media ecology and in the technological environments that design, structure and influence them. The design of their interface is

also essential for understanding these relations and structures, as well as the general and ongoing product cycle. While the authorship may be shared through the ongoing process of refreshing, adding, sharing and so, its information architecture allows us to recognize better this complex and liquid environment, its conditions and implications.

Therefore, the concept of the *News Life Cycle* (Serrano-Tellería, 2023) arises from the combination of three fundamental axes: the *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013), the liquidity in the media ecology and its technological environment, and the interface design that organizes and structures both the content and the relations. The concept seeks to unite these three defining branches to describe how the news, the current affairs and the information, its authorship as well as its information architecture are defined, connected and function together in this continuous process of evolution.

As the news and its authorship are changing its nature and form, information architecture and interface design have taken on exceptional relevance (interactivity and usability, etc.) as an intrinsic consequence of the need for an intersectional and interdisciplinary approach from all angles: academia, media literacy and professional. This requirement has also been determined by other disciplines related to Human Computer Interaction, Neuroscience, Psychology, Sociology, etc. in the *Liquid Media* and the *Liquid Society* (Serrano-Tellería, 2017). Furthermore, after some famous scandals concerning social media, there is now a demand for an Ethics Code for Interface Design (Serrano-Tellería & Prenger, 2019).

Thus, despite lacking a wide variety of fully developed transmedia journalism projects around the world (Scolari, 2013; Freeman, 2017; Rampazzo-Gambarato & Carvalho-Alzamora, 2018; Freeman & Rampazzo Gambarato, 2020; Rampazzo-Gambarato et al., 2020), the dynamism and production processes have been incorporated and followed at different levels and scales as artists, journalists and other media makers and professionals have started to experiment with some strategies and incorporate different media logics—crossmedia, multimedia and transmedia—in the context of converging media industries and digitalization. The transmedia documentary is one of the main genres explored (Vázquez-Herrero & Gifreu-Castells, 2019).

In this framework, we provide continuity to the ethical and deontological code of the fundamental values of journalism, to which we add a set of transmedia ideals, values, and logics, either because they are shared, continued or required, or because they are part of the characteristics and demands of the current media ecosystem. Therefore, in today's interconnected world, it is suggested that transmedia ideals, core values and logics can offer a suitable framework for embracing the current transition to hybrid, networked systems (Serrano-Tellería, 2023):

- (a) Authenticity, credibility and transparency;
- (b) Creativity, innovation and originality;
- (c) Plausibility, quality and trust;
- (d) The importance of belonging to a community or society and feeling like part of the solution (journalism);
- (e) Cultivating collaboration among professionals, projects, and users; moving from hyperlocal and local issues, scopes, and perspectives to those that are global;
- (f) Enhanced user experience;
- (g) 360° augmented-extended-virtual-mixed reality, internet of things, artificial intelligence, and big data;
- (h) Interface design and information architecture—SEO;
- (i) Media integration or combination (critical selection) and media literacy.

Therefore, the concept of the *News Life Cycle* (Serrano-Tellería, 2023) is defined as the period from the publication of a piece of news (which may also include other types of

information and/or content) until when it is decided to end the news item. It is likely that this period, in the *Hybrid Media System* (Chadwick, 2013) and its ecology as well as a liquid technological ecosystem, will lack clear end points since the news item (information and/or content) may be constantly or sporadically updated, both voluntarily and involuntarily. Thus, the design of the interface that encompasses the different layers of information, update rates, consumption, and dissemination, as well as the active and passive participation of the audience, is essential for facilitating and promoting the different phases, scales, and levels both in the journalistic routines of creation, production and dissemination and in the aforementioned active and passive action, interaction and dissemination of the audience. Therefore, when transmedia logic and productions are used, some key considerations have been developed by experts in the genre from academia and the industry around the world (Serrano-Tellería & Prenger, 2019):

- 1. Study and understand the audience (both for the story as well as the audience segmented across different media);
- 2. Put together a team of truly diverse talents and skills, all with a passion for transmedia storytelling;
- 3. Invest in understanding the unique affordances of each medium used in the transmedia experience;
- 4. Always test elements of the story compared to the overall idea(l) of the storyworld;
- 5. Be ambitious regarding the overall concept (the 'heart' of the story), but start small and build the storyworld outwards gradually, organically—and keep testing whether (parts of) the story still resonate with the audience.

This new habitat and ecosystem, with new laws and species, corresponds to the concept of 'platformization' (Van Dijk et al., 2018; Nieborg & Poell, 2019; Klein, 2020; Radsch, 2023; Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023), a dynamic that began with Web 2.0 and, according to Zhang (2021), extends a new paradigm of communication based on the logic and architecture of the platform and the associated network automation. Several of this Zhang (2021) conclusions in his research into journalistic practices point to the emergence of a set of new laws, dynamics and logics derived from this new technological environment, such as the need to generate linguistic applications, narrative classification and methodological conversion in relation to the automatic curation of news. Journalism is undergoing accelerated and difficult to analyze changes due to the arrival and implementation of artificial intelligence, combined with immersive experiences and virtual transaction systems such as Blockchain.

All the implications of these new technologies in the field of journalism are manifested in new logics and mechanisms such as the need to distribute and monitor news 24 h a day, incorporate interactive and communicative actions, flexible and immersive personalization, and interactive embodiment. All these dynamics, which have close links with news and information, although they may already exist to a lesser extent, are now enhanced by the logics imposed by the platforms that disseminate them. These profound changes in both technology and platforms affect the workflow and journalistic routines, the concept of news and its authorship, and require the implementation and integration of information automation processes related to its information architecture (Zhang, 2021). Therefore, the concepts of news and authorship have evolved and are still evolving.

3. Methodology

According to the theoretical approach presented in the previous section, we have designed our own original analysis sheet based on the elaboration and justification of each item explained below. The design of the analysis sheet also took into account the results of in-depth interviews conducted with the heads of a set of representative media as well as

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the analysis of a selection of projects related to both the interviewees' criteria and our own, following the parameters of quality, suitability and innovation presented in the sheet.

3.1. Journalistic Media and Projects Selected for the Sample

The qualitative study was applied to a small sample of 35 projects published by the Spanish newspapers *elDiario.es*, *ABC*, *IDEAL*, *El Correo*, *ElConfidencial.com* and *El País* during the period 2020–2022. In relation to the justification, these are the criteria followed for the selection:

- (a) Selection of Spanish national and regional journalistic media whose qualitative study exceeds 4 case studies (6 journalistic media are analyzed).
- (b) Journalistic projects that contain multimedia, crossmedia or transmedia development of their contents.
- (c) Projects developed during the period 2020–2022.
- (d) The projects were selected based on criteria of appropriateness, quality and innovation. We define below each category criteria:
 - (d.1) Appropriateness: journalism-based projects produced by Spanish newspapers during the period 2020–2022 (which fall within the scope of reporting on the COVID-19 pandemic).
 - (d.2) Quality: projects that demonstrate rigorous selection and presentation of information and the sources from which it was obtained.
 - (d.3) Innovation: projects that innovate in terms of the content and form of traditional journalism, using digital media, interactivity and transmedia storytelling as forms of narrative expression.
- (e) Priority on current issues of the international agenda that will be developed over a substantial period of time (COVID-19 pandemic, Ukraine war, etc.).

3.2. In-Depth Interviews

In order to complement the qualitative analysis carried out through the application and verification of the analysis sheet, a set of 5 interviews were conducted with key profiles of the selected media. Interviews lasted from one hour and a half to two hours following the same structure, questions made to interviewed, of key strategies employed: structure of the laboratory, media logics and work routines, innovation processes, failures and successes, implementations and selection of best projects carried out. Thus, results were interpreted from a pure qualitative perspective based directly on the complete answers collected manually by us, transcription of the audios recorded. The Table 1 shows the media outlet, interviewee, position in the media and the date of the interview.

NEWS MEDIA	INTERVIEWEE	POSITION	INTREVIEW DATE	
elDiario.es	Ignacio Escolar Ander Oliden	Director Deputy director	Interview conducted on 25 January 2022 Interview conducted on 9 February 2022	
ABC	Elena de Miguel	Deputy director	Interview conducted on 8 February 2022	
ElConfidencial.com	Marcos Lamelas	Economics Editor	Interview conducted on 3 February 2022	
El País	Borja Echevarría	Deputy and Innovation Director	Interviews conducted on 31 January and 4 February 2022	
La Vanguardia	Josep Corbella	Journalist responsible for science	Interview conducted on 18 January 2022	

and health information

Table 1. Table with media news and interviewees. Source: own elaboration.

3.3. Analysis Sheet Proposal

Below, we present the original analysis sheet developed as a methodological tool for the purposes of this research. The designated categories, which we justify and develop below the Table 2, are 'Journalistic Genre' (A), 'Formatting' (B), 'Narrative' (C), 'Authorship' (D), 'Life Cycle' (E), 'Information Architecture' (F), 'Design' (G), 'Expansion and Distribution Channels' (H), 'Audience and Participation Channels' (I) and 'Impact Measures' (J).

To limit this article to an appropriate length, we will focus on analyzing the categories: 'Authorship' (D), and 'Information Architecture' (F). The other categories—'Journalistic Genre' (A), 'Formatting' (B), 'Narrative' (C), 'Life Cycle' (E), 'Design' (G), 'Expansion and Distribution Channels' (H), 'Audience and Participation Channels' (I) and 'Impact Measures' (J)—will not be included in the analysis as they are part of a larger research project to be published in the future. Among the categories included in the analysis, we place particular emphasis on 'Authorship' (D) and 'Information Architecture' (F) as they are key indicators that give us clues to how the crossmedia/multimedia/transmedia tools have been used in the creation of these journalistic projects.

Table 2. Analysis sheet for the Analysis of the multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia elements in Spanish journalistic media projects during the period 2020–2022. Source: own elaboration.

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	DESCRIPTORS
		A.1.1. News
		A.1.2. Chronicle
	A.1. Type	A.1.3. Editorial
		A.1.4. Report
A		A.1.5. Special
OURNALISTIC GENRE	A.2. Hybridization	
		A.3.1. Headline
	A.3. Elements of the title	A.3.2. Subtitle
	A 4 TT 11 1 1 1	A.3.3. Entry
	A.4. Highlighted	
	A.5. Ladillo	
	B.1. Audiovisual	
	B.2. Interactive	
В	B.3. Multi/Cross/Transmedia	
FORMATTING	B.4. Immersive	
	B.5. Hybrid	
	B.6. Gamified	
С	C.1. Idea	
NARRATIVE	C.2. Theme/Story	
NAMATIVE	C.3. Title and subtitle	
	D.1. Author/s	
	D.2. Sources	
D	D.3. Tags	
AUTHORSHIP	D.4. Mentions	
	D.5. Hashtags	
	D.6. Social profile	

Table 2. Cont.

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	DESCRIPTORS
E LIFE CYCLE	E.1. Date of publication (Launch) E.2. Update (Evolution of the news)	
	F.1. Type of hierarchy	F.1.1. Element selection menu F.1.2. Vertical/Horizontal scrolling F.2.1. Menu option selection
	F.2. Layers of information	F.2.2. Access to new page F.2.3. Link to an anchor F.2.4. Access to a section F.2.5. Image pin F.2.6. Set F.2.7. Audio listening
F INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE	F.3. Elements	F.2.8. Video viewing F.3.1. Textual F.3.2. Visuals F.3.3. Auditory F.3.4. Interactive F.3.5. Immersive F.4.1. Hierarchical
	F.4. Type of structure	F.4.1. Hierarchical F.4.2. Linear F.4.3. Circular F.4.4. Spiral F.4.5. Networked F.4.6. Faceted F.4.7. Semantic
	G.1. Hierarchy	G.1.1. Size G.1.2. Color
	G.2. Information layers	G.1.3. Font/typography G.2.1. Option selection menu G.2.2. Access to new page G.2.3. Link to an anchor G.2.4. Access to a section G.2.5. Image pin G.2.6. Game G.2.7. Audio listening G.2.8. Video display
G DESIGN	G.3. Elements	G.3.1. Textual G.3.2. Visual G.3.3. Auditory G.3.4. Interactive G.3.5. Immersive
	G.4. Layout type	G.4.1. Fixed design G.4.2. Elastic design G.4.3. Liquid/fluid design G.4.4. Responsive/adaptive design G.4.5. Flexible design
	G.5. Usability	G.5.1. Intuitive G.5.2. Accessible G.5.3. Simple G.5.4. Optimal/Deficient Usability

Table 2. Cont.

CATEGORIES	INDICATORS	DESCRIPTORS
H EXPANSION AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS	H.1. Channels/Platforms	H.1.1. Website/web platform H.1.2. Written press H.1.3. Social networks H.1.4. News aggregators/distributors H.1.5. Television H.1.6. Radio
	H.2. Other	
	I.1. Channel	I.1.1. Forum I.1.2. Chat I.1.3. Social network I.1.4. Content contribution I.1.5. Participation
I AUDIENCE AND PARTICIPATION CHANNELS	I.2. Social media strategy	I.1.6. Gamification I.2.1. Yes—Which one(s)? I.2.1. No I.3.1. Passive
	I.3. Type of participation	I.3.1. Passive I.3.2. Collaborative I.3.3. Co-creative
	I.4. Strategies to attract and consolidate audiences I.5 Other	I.4.1. Yes—Which one(s)? I.4.2. No
	J.1. Visits	J.1.1. Days J.1.2. Weeks J.1.3. Months
т.	J.2. Likes (and other social network indicators)	J.2.1. Facebook J.2.2. Instagram J.2.3. TikTok J.2.4. Twitter
J IMPACT MEASURES	J.3. Search engine indexing	J.3.1. Google J.3.2. Bing
	J.4. Analytics (similar tracking programs)	J.4.1. Google Analytics J.4.2. YouTube Study J.4.3. Facebook Business
	J.5. Time spent	J.5.1. Hours J.5.2. Minutes J.5.3. Seconds

3.3.1. Justification of the Analysis Sheet

Below, we justify the main categories, indicators and descriptors—Authorship and Information architecture—of the analysis sheet proposed as a methodological tool for analyzing the selected projects.

Authorship (D)

We include tags, mentions and hashtags because these, in addition to categorizing, hierarchizing and locating in the architecture, also design and visualize the information and its SEO, as well as amplify and disseminate the information. In addition, knowing more about the author, their profile in the media, etc., promotes the relationship with the audience and the media community, authenticity and transparency.

Information Architecture (F)

The information architecture is the project design phase in which we define the analysis, organization, arrangement and structuring of information in content spaces and the selection and presentation of data in interactive information systems. The document specifies the organization and relationship of the elements present in the architecture through a set of maps and conceptual schemes. (see Supplementary Materials: annex1).

4. Project Analysis

From the 35 projects analyzed during the 2020–2022 period, we chose a representative sample to analyze in detail, placing emphasis on the categories 'Authorship' (D) and 'Information Architecture' (F), which allows us to focus on how the projects' multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia elements are deployed and connected. The projects were chosen based on their significant use of the analyzed elements, and include: 'Bars, the Great Extinction' (*ABC*); 'Marta and Sandro, the Triumph without Michelin Stars' (*El Confidencial.com*); 'Spain lives in apartments: why we have built our cities vertically' (*elDiario.es*); and 'A Living Room, a Bar and a Classroom: how the Coronavirus spreads in the air' (*El País*). Based on the analysis of the selected projects (35) and the chosen case studies, we have listed and described the most notable aspects extracted from the study regarding each legacy media. (see Supplementary Materials: annex2).

4.1. elDiario.es

'España Vive en Pisos: Por Qué Hemos Construido Nuestras Ciudades en Vertical' ('Spain Lives in Apartments: Why We Have Built Our Cities Vertically')¹

Journalistic visualization project on Spanish cities that explains why vertical housing has been prioritized during the last decades. This project displays interactive, multimedia and immersive elements (understood in this case as spatial navigation on maps through animations and graphics with two movements: zooming into different cities through a zenithal plane of Spain, and the movement from a closer zenithal plane of the chosen city to a more lateral plane, where the buildings seem to become more three dimensional. These two animations are linked with brief explanatory dialog boxes and interactive visualizations.

The authorship of the project is clear and is complemented with social networks and links to the newspaper. The name and surname of the two authors of the work, Raúl Sánchez https://www.eldiario.es/autores/raul_sanchez/ (accessed on 21 September 2025), are provided as a subtitle below the title of the project on the main page of the project. However, it is not easy to access the journal profiles of these two journalists, so the user must perform a separate search on the web to find detailed profiles (Figure 1).

In relation to the 'Information Architecture' category, we can state that the type of architecture is well designed and works well for the type of project it is. In this case, narrative and format are woven together through a type of elegant visualization that works well with the scroll technique, mixing informative messages (data), diagrams and movements on top of different maps of various Spanish cities obtained with cadastral data using the Mapbox software (https://www.mapbox.com/), a visual tool for creating and editing custom map styles. The design that comes out of this type of architecture has been meticulously elaborated to generate a simple and intuitive user experience, since the user only needs to move the mouse or press a key on the keyboard to move forward, step by step, as the information is provided in a gradual, balanced and easily assimilated way (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Image cover of the project 'España vive en pisos: por qué hemos construido nuestras ciudades en vertical' [Spain Lives in Apartments: Why We Have Built Our Cities Vertically] (*el-Diario.es*). Source: web project. https://especiales.eldiario.es/espana-vive-en-pisos (accessed on 21 September 2025).



Figure 2. Image capture of the project 'España vive en pisos: por qué hemos construido nuestras ciudades en vertical' [Spain Lives in Apartments: Why We Have Built Our Cities Vertically] (*el-Diario.es*). Text translation: 'From the 1980s onwards, rural depopulation slowed down. At the same time, urban sprawl, inspired by American suburbs, arrived in Spain'. Source: web project. https://especiales.eldiario.es/espana-vive-en-pisos (accessed on 21 September 2025).

We believe that the use of sound would have enhanced the immersive effect; that is, it would have added to the experience when zooming into the map, in the interactive visualizations. It also would have been interesting to add an audiovisual element, such as interviews. Nacho Escolar, director of *El Diario.es*, said in his interview that they create a specialized team for each project, in this case to cover data journalism and narrate it in the best possible way. For each project they follow criteria based on explaining the

news, contextualizing it, converting it into something useful for citizens and, if necessary, delimiting and discarding false news/disinformation.

In all the *elDiario.es* projects analyzed, the authorship appears clearly and is linked to a detailed profile in the media and social networks. They cite the sources well and also where the data are obtained from. Regarding information architecture, *elDiario.es* has projects in the analysis that follow the same pattern: predominantly textual content combined with data visualization (graphics and technical diagrams) that are sometimes complex to decipher.

4.2. ABC

'Bares, la Gran Extinción' ('Bars, the Great Extinction')²

This project is an original and well-designed *ABC* news special in the style of a 'news report'. Its strong point is the combination of multimedia elements such as text, photographs, graphics, audiovisual reports, podcasts, music playlists, booklists ('Barra libre de libros') and a selection of books centered on the bars of different taverns. In other words, less-used formats, complemented with usual ones such as playlists and booklists, are added to a series of more-used elements (texts, photographs, videos). All this contributes to the metaphor of recreating an interesting and varied collage of elements that allows users to see and experience how one of the most characteristic establishments of Spanish society (bars) has been affected and brought to near extinction during the years of the pandemic (2020–2022).

The authorship is clear and is combined with other elements of the newspaper, such as a recommendation through social networks. Perhaps a link to the author's journal profile or social network profile would also be interesting. Juan Francisco Alonso https://www.abc.es/autor/j-f-alonso-1351/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) is the journalist in charge of the editorial staff and appears in the orange column highlighted below the title. However, Guillermo Navarro's name also appears near the title of the project, but in this case this credit is not contextualized and his role in the project is also not indicated. At the end of the text, the credit information is complemented with the coordination and script (Jesús García Calero https://www.abc.es/autor/jesus-garcia-calero-1423/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) and design (Lucía R. de Lillo and Ángel Ruiz) profiles.

In relation to the category 'Information Architecture', we found a linear structure and vertical displacement. The project does not deploy the 'Layers of information' particularly effectively, but it does successfully and functionally deploy some of its key elements (Textual, Visual, Auditory, Interactive and Immersive) connected through a type of linear structure. The hierarchy is clearly established through color (combination of red, orange, black and gray scales) and text size (Times font), including a usability that is accessible, intuitive and simple. The interactive script developed in this project promotes reader participation and engagement in a simple and intuitive way (Figure 3).

Elena de Miguel Conde https://x.com/DeMiguelConde accessed on 21 September 2025), deputy editor of the ABC newspaper, pointed out in the interview that the newspaper does not have a department or team dedicated to producing new projects; however, that they are aware of their importance and work to have a team specialized in creating multimedia specials and interactive reports. In the case of the project analyzed, they opted for multimedia development because they considered that the subject would become more attractive if it was visual, that is, if it could be 'seen' as well as 'read', given the importance of visual culture and audiovisuals in today's journalistic media (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Image cover of the project 'Bares, la gran extinción' ('Bars, the Great Extinction') (*ABC*). Text translation: 'Business leaders, associations, journalists, and writers describe the situation of a symbol of the Spanish way of life and the devastation caused by the coronavirus.' Source: web project. https://www.abc.es/cultura/bares-la-gran-extincion/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

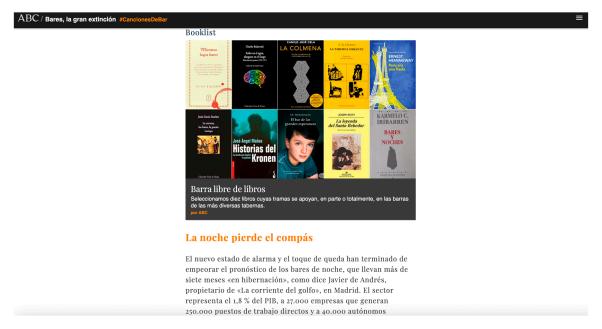


Figure 4. Image capture of the project 'Bares, la gran extinción' ('Bars, the Great Extinction') (*ABC*). Text translation: The night loses its rhythm/The new state of alarm and curfew have further worsened the outlook for nightclubs, which have been "in hibernation" for more than seven months, according to Javier de Andrés, owner of La corriente del golfo in Madrid. The sector accounts for 1.8% of GDP, with 27,000 companies generating 250,000 direct jobs and 40,000 self-employed workers related to music and the performing arts, according to the National Federation of Nightlife and Entertainment. Source: web project. https://www.abc.es/cultura/bares-la-gran-extincion/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

The predominant genre in the analyzed projects from ABC is reportage combined with interviews. In most cases, the authorship appears clearly and linked to the detailed profile in the media and social networks. *ABC* structures several of its proposals offering hierarchy and linearity in projects that can be considered within the category of multimedia

specials (F4). It effectively and coherently combines various multimedia elements (text, video, photo, data, interviews and reports). This can be seen in the case of the project "20 años del 11-S" ("20 years after 9/11"), which is a combination of text, image, news, video, and podcast with interspersed sections such as 'The day that changed the world', 'The witnesses', 'Sounds and images for history' and 'The world after 9/11'.

4.3. IDEAL

Being a differential regional choice in relation to national proposals (*El País*, *ElConfidencial.com*, etc.), we observe how the format of the multimedia special or the report that includes multimedia, crossmedia or transmedia elements, is a bet that involves time and investment. The multimedia deployment offered by the analyzed projects "90 años de historia viva" ("90 years of living history") and "El virus que nos cambió" ("The virus that changed us") is measured and calculated, but it works well and offers a differential degree to the conventional treatment of news with regional impact³.

4.4. El Correo

As in the case of *IDEAL*⁴, *El Correo* also offers regional coverage but focused on northern Spain (Basque Country) and not on the south (Granada). In the case of the project "Auschwitz. 75 años del final del horror" ("Auschwitz. 75 years of the end of the horror"), there is a considerable graphic effort and the use and adaptation of the comic format to multimedia level. This is a very complex subject to address, and the multimedia approach and variety of content provide a different perspective and a fresh, renewed view of the Nazi Holocaust.

4.5. ElConfidencial.com

'Marta y Sandro, el Triunfo sin Estrellas Michelin' ('Marta and Sandro, the Triumph Without Michelin Stars')⁵

We find this project interesting due to its approach: it explains the story of the Brazilian public relations practitioner, economist and decorator, Marta Secoy and the Spanish chef Sandro Silva. Together, they have set up several successful businesses and the report explains the formula they follow. They do not have great recognition or Michelin stars, but they have built an empire based on humility and persistent work. In this case, we believe that it is a very complete 'multimedia special' establishing an initial hierarchy of contents that is very attractive to the reader. In accordance with the subject matter, we could say that this project invites people to enter and 'taste' the content.

The presentation and design of the website is impeccable, generating imagery and combining more traditional content (text, videos, photographs, etc.) with an immersive approach (360 viewer, 360 video). The result is a dynamic and effective mix of audiovisual, interactive and immersive elements. Regarding the authorship, it is specified after the cover that it is a report by Ana Sánchez Juárez. At the end of the work the people who led this complex digital exercise are also specified, but the specific roles of the team that has participated in this 'succulent' project are omitted (Pablo López, Brenda Valverde, Julio Cerezo, Antonio Esquembre, Luis Rodríguez, Antonio Comesaña, Sofía Fernández and Carmen Castellón). However, this project is the one in which most professionals participate, and by extension is perceived as the most elaborated in all senses (Figure 5).

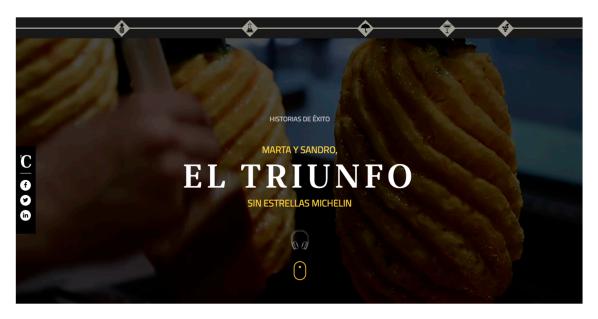


Figure 5. Image cover of the project 'Marta y Sandro, el triunfo sin estrellas Michelin' ('Marta and Sandro, the Triumph Without Michelin Stars'). Source: web project. https://www.vanitatis.elconfidencial.com/gastronomia/2016-07-01/amazonico-paraguas-tenconten-restaurante-madrid_1226328/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

This work stands out clearly in the 'Information Architecture' category. It has a complex but functional and intuitive information architecture that mixes two types of navigation-structure. First, a navigation that uses an 'Element selection menu', arranged in an original way in the upper part and occupying the entire header. And second, it provides access to five sections of content—'Amazonian', 'R&D', 'Umbrella', 'Ten with Ten' and 'Quintin'—which are also anchored by 'Vertical scrolling' that can be navigated manually or by clicking one of the five buttons from the top menu. In addition, it displays a great variety and richness of 'Layers of information' (F.2): 'Menu option selection' (F.2.1), 'Link to an anchor' (F.2.3), 'Access to a section' (F.2.4), 'Audio listening' (F.2.7) and 'Video viewing' (F.2.8).

Visually, each section uses a color that differentiates it from the rest (gray, white, red, black and green). Perhaps, as a recommendation, we would have colored the graphic elements in the top menu of the page (visible at all times) with the corporate colors of each section. The technique of changing color in vertical or horizontal scrolling (called 'Parallax' or 'Scrollytelling') is a very effective method because it makes it possible to clearly delimit and differentiate the different sections of the work. The composition of the information architecture and interaction design come together to enhance user engagement in this particular project.

Marcos Lamelas https://www.elconfidencial.com/autores/marcos-lamelas-116/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) editor of the newspaper El Confidencial, comments that they have created El Confidencial Lab, a section with a dozen people directed by Alejandro Laso Moreno https://www.linkedin.com/in/alejandro-laso-moreno-45a75b25/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) the technological part within El Confidencial. According to Lamelas, the most appropriate genres-formats for each story are improvised in a project built around 'hard journalism' that was born as a means of economy that eventually opens up to politics. Thus, multimedia, crossmedia and transmedia narratives are not a priority for them; however, the Lab has the necessary potential to develop them, and the results are more than proven, as in the case study analyzed (Figure 6).

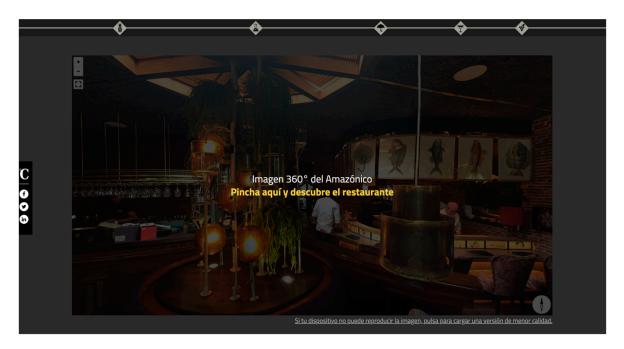


Figure 6. Image capture of the project 'Marta y Sandro, el triunfo sin estrellas Michelin' ('Marta and Sandro, the Triumph Without Michelin Stars'). Text translation: '360° image of El Amazónico/Click here and discover the restaurant.' Source: web project. https://www.vanitatis.elconfidencial.com/gastronomia/2016-07-01/amazonico-paraguas-tenconten-restaurante-madrid_1226328/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

As can be seen from the interview with Marcos Lamelas, the objective of *ElConfidencial.com* is not to innovate in narrative aspects and its formats, but to work well with the information and offer the exact content that readers demand. The predominant genre is the report and the special. In most cases, the authorship and sources are stated. In two cases, the date of publication and update is shown. In most cases, different multimedia resources are used: text, images, videos and audios, offering a certain degree of interactivity.

However, and in spite of a predominantly traditional type of journalistic production, in some cases the projects stand out as innovative multimedia specials and are worked on in depth, as is the case of "Bienvenido. Colonia dignidad" ("Welcome. Dignity colony"), which tells the story of Paul Schäfer, a German who took refuge in Chile in 1961 along with 230 members of his sect. In this case, like the previous project, it stands out for being a very elaborate project at a narrative and graphic design level that manages to take the viewer a step further than the traditional scrolling reading of an online news or journalistic report.

4.6. El País

'Un Salón, un Bar y Una Clase: Así Contagia el Coronavirus en el Aire' ('A Living Room, a Bar and a Classroom: How the Coronavirus Spreads in the Air') (El País)⁶

This report describes the spread of aerosols in a visual way by establishing three everyday scenarios: a social gathering, a bar and a classroom. It has been translated from Spanish into six languages and has won, in addition to other awards (the Ortega and Gasset Prize and the top prize of the Malofiej Awards), the Kavli Prize, considered the 'Pulitzer' of science journalism and the most important distinction for popularization awarded by the association that publishes the prestigious journal Science.

In relation to authorship, journalists Javier Salas https://elpais.com/noticias/javier-salas/ (accessed on 27 July 2022) and Mariano Zafra https://english.elpais.com/author/mariano-zafra/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) worked with José Luis Jiménez, professor of Chemistry at the University of Colorado Boulder and researcher in Environmental

Sciences, to translate the predictive model he had developed into easily understandable information. The authors of the project calculated the risk of COVID-19 infection using a tool developed by Professor Jiménez based on airborne particle dynamics and chemistry. Other researchers from around the world have reviewed this simulator, which relies on published data and methods to estimate the importance of various measurable factors involved in a contagion scenario (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Image cover of the project 'Un salón, un bar y una clase: así contagia el coronavirus en el aire' ('A Living Room, a Bar and a Classroom: How the Coronavirus Spreads in the Air') (El País). Text translation: 'A living room, a bar, and a classroom: how coronavirus spreads through the air. Indoor spaces are more dangerous, but it is possible to minimize the risks by implementing all available measures to combat aerosol transmission. Here are the probabilities of infection in these three everyday scenarios, depending on ventilation, masks, and the duration of the encounter.' Source: web project. https://elpais.com/especiales/coronavirus-covid-19/un-salon-un-bar-y-una-clase-asi-contagia-el-coronavirus-en-el-aire/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

Javier Salas, one of the authors of the work, comments: "I was in charge of arranging the visual information and the narrative coherence. The most relevant aspect of the success of this story is the teamwork. We worked for two intense weeks on this, the efforts of our colleagues were invaluable and the work performed by the Video and Network sections, which disseminated the work quickly in an orderly way, was decisive. We pushed all the right buttons because the machinery of Materia and Narrativas Visuales had been well-oiled for many months and worked very well" (El País, 2022).

Analyzing in detail the category 'Information Architecture', the 'Type of hierarchy' is structured based on a vertical displacement of the contents that are deployed in order and offering a simulation with animated infographics on how the virus is spread in a social gathering, a bar and a classroom. The project has a simple design in the service of the information and does not compete with the content, which is what is really important. The user experience is simple, intuitive and accessible, offering an optimal level of usability. The choices designed to allow the user to advance gradually and discover the information as it unfolds are meticulously thought out in this project, making it one of the clearest examples of how choices through information architecture are shaped in such a way as to increase the level of user engagement (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Image capture of the project 'Un salón, un bar y una clase: así contagia el coronavirus en el aire' ('A Living Room, a Bar and a Classroom: How the Coronavirus Spreads in the Air') (El País). Text translation: They only use masks. If they wore masks all the time, that probability drops to 8 infections.' Source: web project. https://elpais.com/especiales/coronavirus-covid-19/un-salon-un-bar-y-una-clase-asi-contagia-el-coronavirus-en-el-aire/ (accessed on 21 September 2025).

Borja Echeverría https://www.linkedin.com/in/borja-echevarr%C3%ADa-41b931 36/ (accessed on 21 September 2025) deputy director of El País, comments that editorial decisions in the times of the pandemic and public agenda issues were made with the priority of public service with a very clear function of explaining and contextualizing. This is the case of the analyzed project. In the newspaper El País, there is a department or team dedicated to the production of new projects made up of designers, journalists and programmers, as well as specialists in data journalism. Each section chooses susceptible topics and presents them to this team, that, in turn, also proposes topics to the other sections. Echeverría believes that projects such as this one and others make it possible to explain and contextualize information better through visualization and data journalism. This is corroborated by the readership figures and the awards and recognitions obtained. All the interviewees agree that the time spent on the screen is the differential element in terms of metrics to evaluate the public's interest in each project.

Given the already recognized relevance of some of its projects in relation to the awards obtained, the projects and stories of *El País* stand out for their simplicity; that is, they communicate complex issues in a clear, direct and effective way. The authorship, date of publication and update appear clearly at the beginning, as well as the methodology used for carrying them out, and the sources are cited at the end.

In this case, we highlight two projects related to the treatment of COVID-19 information, which is an important part of this research. In the case of "El virus que apagó el mundo en 100 días" ("The virus that turned off the world in 100 days"), this work explains the genesis of the virus and its rapid global spread in a direct, simple way and with a combination of multimedia elements that make the necessary reading of the text more digestible. Undoubtedly, *El País* is a newspaper that must be recognized for its remarkable effort to innovate in the sense of telling information in the most reliable way possible, contrasting and specifying its sources and the methodology used, and at the same time generating mechanisms of simplicity, unity and narrative simplicity (F).

4.7. Key Categories of Comparative Analysis

In the following two tables, we have elaborated a comparative analysis of each category described in depth in this work. The Table 3 focuses on the analysis of indicators

and associated descriptors in relation to 'narrative authorship' (category D); the Table 4 focuses on the analysis of indicators and associated descriptors in relation to 'Information Architecture' (category F).

Table 3. Analysis of indicators and associated descriptors in relation to 'Authorship' (category D). Source: own elaboration.

	T		I	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
	España vive en pisos: por qué hemos construido nuestras ciudades en vertical (elDiario.es)	Bares, la gran extinción (ABC)	Marta y Sandro, el triunfo sin estrellas Michelin (ElConfidencial.com)	Un salón, un bar y una clase: así contagia el coronavirus en el aire (El País)
D.1. Author/s		Mentioned on the cover: Yes Cover author info: Guillermo Navarro Text: Juan Francisco Alonso Contributors: Andrés Calamaro, Érika Montañés, Julián de Velasco, Bruno Pardo, Carlos Maribona, Emma Sueiro, Fernando Muñoz, Lucía M. Cabanelas y Federico Marín Bellón Videos: David Conde and Andrea Carrasco Section: 'Marchando una de firmas de ABC': Various authors Video: David Conde and Carolina Mínguez Special collaboration: Nacho Serrano and Julio Bravo End of text credits: ABC news special courtesy of ABC Premium Coordination and script: Jesús García Calero Design: Lucía R. de Lillo and	Mentioned on the cover: Yes Cover author info: A report by Ana Sánchez Juárez End of text credits: A project of EC Brands Pablo Lopez, Brenda Valverde, Julio Cerezo, Antonio Esquembre, Luis Rodriguez, Antonio Comesaña, Sofia Fernandez and Carmen Castellón	l I
		Ángel Ruiz		

Table 3. Cont.

	Description:	Description:	Description:	Description:
D.2. Sources	To produce this information, elDiario.es has compiled, processed and analyzed the cartographic data of more than 12 million buildings constructed throughout Spain published by the website of the General Directorate of the property register. To elaborate this special edition we have consulted different experts in urban planning and architecture: Oriol Nel-lo, doctor in Geography, former director of the Institute of Metropolitan Studies of Barcelona and former secretary of Territorial Planning of the Generalitat; Javier Martínez, president of the Union of Urbanist Architects Groupings; Joan Romero, professor of Human Geography at the University of Valencia; Laura Gil, architect by the School of Architecture of A Coruña; Álvaro Ardura, architect at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid;	All multimedia contents have their source and author. INE—National Statistics Institute	Not specified	Methodology: The risk of COVID-19 infection was calculated using a tool developed by José Luis Jiménez, an expert in airborne particle chemistry and dynamics at the University of Colorado.

Table 3. Cont.

D.2. Sources	Isabelle Anguelovski, PhD in Urban Planning from MIT and director of the Barcelona Lab for Urban Environmental Justice and Sustainability; Antonio López Gay, researcher at the Centro de Estudios Demográficos, and Adrián Fernández, public works engineer and head of mobility at Greenpeace			
D.3. Tags	No	No	No	No
D.4. Mentions	No	No	No	No
D.5. Hashtags	No	No	No	No
D.6. Social profile	No	No	No	Twitter profiles of the authors
Other	Facebook and Twitter recommendation	Facebook and Twitter recommendation	Facebook, Twitter and Linkedin recommendation	Facebook, Twitter Linkedin and Pinterest recommendation Mail

Table 4. Analysis of indicators and associated descriptors in relation to 'Information Architecture' (category F). Source: own elaboration.

	España vive en pisos:	Bares, la gran	Marta y Sandro, el	Un salón, un bar y
	por qué hemos	extinción	triunfo sin estrellas	una clase: así
	construido nuestras	(ABC)	Michelin	contagia el
	ciudades en vertical		(ElConfidencial.com)	coronavirus en el
	(elDiario.es)			aire (El País)
	Text and image	Vertical displacement	Vertical displacement	Vertical
	animation in this	(Parallax technique—	(Parallax technique—	displacement
F.1. Type of hierarchy	order through	Scrollytelling)	Scrollytelling)	(Parallax technique—
	different maps of			Scrollytelling)
	Spanish cities			
	Immersive map with	Text blocks,	Text blocks	Text blocks
F.2. Layers of	graphics, vertical	interspersed with	interspersed with	interspersed with
information	scroll	photos, video and	photos, 360 photos	animations and
		music playlists	and videos	infographics

Table 4. Cont.

F.3. Elements	Text Image Infographics	Text Photographs Audiovisual reports Podcast Music playlist Booklist—Selection of 10 books centered on the bars of different taverns. Other short stories (Ex: "It's the same construction disaster of a decade ago"—ABC.es by Érika Montañés)	Text Photographic slides Immersive—360° image	Text Infographics Animations Links
F.4. Type of structure	Linear Hierarchical	Linear	Colors contribute to create the structure divided in sections	Linear The animations fulfill the rhetorical function of separators between the different scenarios— proposed spaces.

5. Discussion

Obviously, bearing in mind media structures both from a strictly economic conditions and situations as well as the media work routines conditioned by the mentioned media economic conditions and situations, we may suggest as a relevant discussion that in the current liquid hybrid media ecosystem, media innovation laboratories and cross-, multi- and transmedia projects are a proof that both legacy media and other type of journalistic media as well, may be able to overcome its structural crisis at different dimensions and levels (audience engagement and business models, credibility, etc.; among main ones) little by little and increasingly incorporate cross-, multi- and transmedia strategies. We defend that the innovative and quality work performed by them is a model to follow.

6. Conclusions

After applying the analysis sheet to these 35 projects—once the necessary prior testing and the evaluation of their adequacy, quality and innovation were made—and after the in-depth interviews with the managers and those responsible for innovation (laboratories) of the media, we believe that it is an effective methodological tool. Obviously, in the constant adaptation, experimentation and evolution of this type of content, we understand that future modifications will be necessary to adapt, once again, to the demands of the environment, media ecology and media ecosystem in constant mutation and relationship.

At the level of authorship, understood as story construction and development of journalistic narrative, the versatility and variety of disciplines in each team are the main formula used. Thus, we find profiles of journalists mixed with other key roles such as researchers, disseminators (at the level of narrative construction), and with more technical roles such as designers and web developers.

In some examples, these roles are specified and recognized and in others they are not, depending on the type of legacy media. In any case, authorship is always made explicit either on the cover or at the end of the project, although these profiles are not directly linked

to the profile of each author of the media itself or to their social networks. Authorship and sources are cited in most projects in a clear and concise way, as well as the date of publication; however, updates are less likely to be stated.

In terms of information architecture, understood as the generation of structure, form and use of language, the strategy focuses on simplicity in the accessibility of the contents with a weak interactivity (it makes no sense to make it difficult to obtain the information) and a simple, intuitive and moderate usability. The 'Information Architecture' tends to be simple, arranged for vertical scrolling navigation combining at least two multimedia elements (text, photo, video, audio, etc.) with some level of hierarchy (menu, buttons, etc.) and linearity. The size, color and font of the text establish clear design patterns through simple usability by not deploying complex interactive structures for the type of product and speed with which it develops. The idea here is that the reader quickly becomes familiar with a clear form of structure that, except for very elaborate multimedia specials, remains fixed in most of the analyzed media as a trademark of web design and development. In certain case studies, such as the proposals in Diario.es, the immersive quality of the work in question could be improved by incorporating sound elements or interview excerpts that complement and expand the narrative proposal.

We consider that the sheet gathers three key axes for analyzing these types of projects: the adaptation of the predecessor media to the current one, the design of the interface and the architecture of the information. The intrinsic characteristics of each of these three axes are broken down, and include genres, narrative, structure and hierarchy, authorship and its relationship with the community, dissemination strategies, interactivity and participation, usability, information layers and management, formats, content life cycle and impact measures, among others. We deliberately left out studying language because it was beyond the scope of our research and went into a specific area for which another approach and perspective would be necessary.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/journalmedia6040169/s1. Annex 1: Analysis Sheet Description; Annex 2: Project Analysis; Table S1: Analysis sheet of the Project 'España vive en pisos: por qué hemos construido nuestras ciudades en vertical'; Table S2: Analysis sheet of the Project 'Bares, la gran extinción'; Table S3: Analysis sheet of the Project 'Marta y Sandro, el triunfo sin estrellas Michelin'; Table S4: Analysis sheet of the Project 'Un salón, un bar y una clase: así contagia el coronavirus en el aire'.

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Notes

URL [https://especiales.eldiario.es/espana-vive-en-pisos/?_gl=1*8mz4js*_ga*MTg0ODU1MTE5NC4xNzU1OTczMTIy*_ga_4 RZPWREGF3*czE3NTU5NzMxMjIkbzEkZzEkdDE3NTU5NzMxODMkajYwJGwwJGgw] (accessed on 23 August 2025).

- URL [https://www.abc.es/cultura/bares-la-gran-extincion/] (accessed on 23 August 2025).
- For reasons of length, we do not analyze in this paper any of the projects of this medium in depth.
- See Note 3
- URL [https://www.vanitatis.elconfidencial.com/gastronomia/2016-07-01/amazonico-paraguas-tenconten-restaurante-madrid _1226328/] (accessed on 23 August 2025).
- URL [https://elpais.com/especiales/coronavirus-covid-19/un-salon-un-bar-y-una-clase-asi-contagia-el-coronavirus-en-el-aire/] (accessed on 23 August 2025).

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