

ORIGINAL

## Journalistic Quality in Sports Journalism Ventures in Spain and Mexico, Based on the Concept of Diversity

### La calidad periodística en el periodismo deportivo en España y México, desde el concepto de diversidad

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#### ABSTRACT

The increasing consumption of sports content, the versatility of the digital world, the desire to rethink corporate sports journalism, and the need to generate new sources of employment have fostered the emergence of sports journalism ventures in Ibero-America over the last ten years. Many of these ventures are led by communication and journalism students and professionals. This research studies two online experiences in Spain and Mexico: Deporadictos ([www.deporadictos.com](http://www.deporadictos.com)) and El Míster ([www.elmister.substack.com](http://www.elmister.substack.com)), in order to identify features of journalistic quality in these sports' journalism ventures, based on the concept of diversity. A mixed methodology with a concurrent design was used, applying digital ethnography (qualitative) and content analysis (quantitative) methods. The results and conclusions indicate that the operation of these two cybermedia outlets displays characteristics of a certain journalistic quality and that, with some adjustments on information, economic sustainability, and user interaction, they have the potential to consolidate as an attractive and diversified informational option for their various Spanish-speaking audiences. Deporadictos from Spain and El Míster from Mexico are led by communicators, journalists, and other related professionals who lack strong corporate backing. This lack of strong support adds to the complexity of meeting the concept of journalistic excellence and maintaining sustainability over time.

**Keywords:** Journalism; Sports; Ventures; Quality; Economic Sustainability; Diversity.

#### RESUMEN

El creciente consumo de contenido deportivo, la versatilidad del mundo digital, el deseo de repensar el periodismo deportivo corporativo y la necesidad de generar nuevas fuentes de empleo han impulsado el surgimiento de proyectos de periodismo deportivo en Iberoamérica en los últimos diez años. Muchos de estos proyectos están liderados por estudiantes y profesionales de la comunicación y el periodismo. Esta investigación estudia dos experiencias digitales en España y México: Deporadictos ([www.deporadictos.com](http://www.deporadictos.com)) y El Míster ([www.elmister.substack.com](http://www.elmister.substack.com)), con el fin de identificar características de calidad periodística en estos proyectos, basándose en el concepto de diversidad. Se empleó una metodología mixta con un diseño concurrente, aplicando métodos de etnografía digital (cualitativa) y análisis de contenido (cuantitativo). Los resultados y conclusiones indican que el funcionamiento de estos dos cibermedios presenta características de cierta calidad periodística y que, con algunos ajustes en la información, la sostenibilidad económica y la interacción con el usuario, tienen el potencial de consolidarse como una opción informativa atractiva y diversificada para sus diversas audiencias hispanohablantes. Deporadictos (España) y El Míster (México) están liderados por comunicadores, periodistas y otros profesionales afines que carecen de un sólido respaldo corporativo. Esta falta de apoyo sólido complica aún más el cumplimiento del concepto de excelencia periodística y el mantenimiento de la sostenibilidad a lo largo del tiempo.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo; Deportes; Emprendimientos; Calidad; Sostenibilidad Económica; Diversidad.

## INTRODUCTION

The media distribution of professional sports has become one of the most valuable assets in the cultural industry. According to Boyle<sup>(1)</sup>, there are three factors that contribute to this: globalization, digitalization, and commercialization.

The rise of competitive sports as an entertainment industry can be evidenced in television viewership numbers. The Olympic Games in Tokio reached a global audience of 3 000 billion people<sup>(2)</sup> and the World Cup final in Qatar between Argentina and France was viewed by 1,5 billion spectators.<sup>(3)</sup>

The increasing consumption of sports content, the versatility of the digital world, the desire to rethink corporate sports journalism, and the need to generate new sources of employment have fostered the emergence of sports journalism ventures in over the last ten years, many of such ventures are led by communication and journalism students and professionals.<sup>(4)</sup> For instance, the website *SembraMedia*<sup>(5)</sup> lists 324 Spanish-language media outlets from Spain, Hispanic America, Canada, and the United States that are dedicated to sports information.

Although Rowe<sup>(6)</sup> labels sports information in newspapers as the “toy department” due to its common lack of journalistic rigor, we consider this to be an outdated concept that does not take into account the renewed efforts currently made by reporters to professionally inform about athletic and competitive activities. In fact, many sports journalism ventures have emerged trying to find a space in the media market by offering rigorous and creative information.<sup>(7)</sup>

Therefore, our interest lies in investigating the journalistic quality of two online ventures in sports journalism: one from Spain ([www.deporadictos.com](http://www.deporadictos.com)) and the other from Mexico ([www.elmister.substack.com](http://www.elmister.substack.com)), both of which met the selection criteria presented in the methodology of this research. It is worth noting that during the literature review, references were found to studies on sports journalism ventures in English-speaking contexts with robust corporate and economic backing, such as the case of *The Athletic*.<sup>(8)</sup> However, no sports journalism ventures in Spanish-speaking contexts that originated from students or graduates in communication, journalism, or related disciplines were identified.

We understand journalistic quality from the operational concept of diversity, which assumes that the breadth of argumentation, sources, themes, coverage, and user engagement, among other aspects, provides depth and more elements for readers to consider.<sup>(9,10)</sup> In this research, the concept of diversity focuses on content diversity, economic revenue sources, and user interaction.

With this context in mind, the following are the research questions for this project:

Regarding content: How much diversity is found in *Deporadictos* and *El Míster* in relation to sports journalism coverage, genres, information sources, reach, and use of digital resources?

Regarding sources of sustainability: how is diversity expressed in the economic revenue sources of *Deporadictos* and *El Míster* to ensure their sustainability in digital environments?

Regarding user interaction: what characteristics do the interfaces of *Deporadictos* and *El Míster* employ to promote diverse interactions with the user?

## Theoretical framework

### *Quality sports journalism*

Sports journalism is being transformed by social media and digital environments, allowing reporters to establish closer contact with the audience and tell extended stories. However, these environments can also become a space of hostility and misinformation because anyone posing as a journalist can provide inaccurate information.<sup>(11)</sup>

This research defines journalistic quality through the concept of diversity in journalistic content, as proposed by Voakes et al.<sup>(9)</sup>. This concept implies that the reader has more elements to assess a publication on a topic of interest through different narrative genres. This idea, expanded by Chari et al.<sup>(10)</sup>, considers that both analog and digital journalistic pieces should include a variety of sources, themes, narratives, and digital resources to be considered excellent and adaptable to both physical and virtual spaces.

In relation to sports, journalistic quality in democratic countries is evidenced when reporters plan their work and have a deep understanding of sports disciplines, making sure that the user finds novel thematic approaches, independence, and criticism based on facts, observations, and data.<sup>(1,12)</sup> Similarly, excellence in sports reporting is understood as the journalist’s ability to master various journalistic genres so that the reader can clearly tell apart opinions, news, and interpretations.<sup>(13)</sup> Consequently, a varied, balanced, and ethical publication of different journalistic narratives is synonymous with good journalism,<sup>(14)</sup> as is being enthusiastic about writing and sports.<sup>(15)</sup>

Sports journalists must report on all areas of sports, as this is an essential function of their public service.<sup>(16)</sup> It is suggested, therefore, that reporters should not focus their coverage only on the most popular sports, which receive more time, space, and audience in the media, but also on minority sports disciplines that produce news and have a high number of practitioners.<sup>(17)</sup> With this in mind, the use of social media platforms like Twitter<sup>(18)</sup>, as well as data journalism, precision journalism, and investigative reporting, would suggest that the coverage of sporting events is moving towards informational quality.

With these properties, sports information can no longer be considered the “toy department,” as Rowe<sup>(6)</sup> dismissively labeled it. Instead, it transforms into a finance department, due to the high revenues generated from user attention and the purchase of advertising by companies.<sup>(19)</sup> According to these two authors, excellence in sports journalism implies that reporters must learn to report on serious issues such as racism, corruption, environmental degradation, and the commercialization of physical and competitive activities.

In this sense, it is necessary that this journalistic specialty expands the focus and context of its news pieces, so that they are not solely centered on competition results, but also establish connections with disciplines such as law, medicine, sociology, economics, among.<sup>(20)</sup> This approach provides the public with the opportunity to understand humanity and society through the microcosm of sports.<sup>(21)</sup>

Moreover, the plurality of sources is a paramount principle for ensuring that these new approaches and contexts display qualities of depth, analysis, and reflection.<sup>(17)</sup> In other words, incorporating testimonies, concepts, and opinions from specialists in these disciplines—different from the usual sports protagonists (coaches, athletes, fans)—can allow users to enhance their sports culture.

Ketterer et al.<sup>(22)</sup> examined the skills and abilities that sports journalists must possess in converging environments. According to the authors, the ones media directors and users value the most are writing skills, general sports knowledge, plurality of sources, and the ability to work in multimedia.

The growth of the Internet has generated a vast array of websites dedicated to sports, operated by media organizations, sports clubs and organizations, and fans. This development creates job opportunities for sports journalists, as it provides an additional source of income for media organizations by offering sports updates and reports on the web or via mobile phones.<sup>(15)</sup>

#### *The sustainability of sports journalism ventures*

These kinds of enterprises face challenges such as market saturation, sustainable monetization, and striking a balance between commercial demands and editorial independence, if they wish to establish themselves nationally and internationally, gain credibility with their audience, and ensure their journalists receive proportionate remuneration for their work.<sup>(23)</sup>

The evolution of sports in digital media revolves around the continuous production of content, the acceleration of information flows, and the expansion of web communication capabilities.<sup>(24)</sup> Consequently, online media examines how sports leagues and media companies attempt to measure user activities and commodify website metrics.

Sports journalism is an attractive but very volatile professional activity, as it requires a business model that ensures the sustainability of the media outlet. This conclusion was drawn by Marín<sup>(25)</sup>, who presents a list of ten practices to innovate in sports journalism companies. The decalogue can be summarized in these recommendations: (1) establish a clear and explicit competitive strategy; (2) create value through innovative products; (3) establish specific and defined processes to study the market; (4) incorporate agile and low-cost solutions; (5) seek profiles that combine a focus on journalism with economy and product areas; (6) systematize continuous training; (7) diversify income and business lines; (8) establish strategic alliances; (9) pursue business ambidexterity to capitalize on new business opportunities and (10) implement various initiatives and self-assess them continuously.

Meanwhile, Carvajal<sup>(26)</sup> identifies three sectors from which the appropriate business model(s) for each venture can be configured: (1) revenue from users/readers; (2) advertising or its equivalents; and (3) other services or secondary businesses.

#### *User interaction*

Rojas<sup>(27)</sup> asserts that the personal journalistic brand is a well-established strategy in sports journalism. This brand identity is reinforced through continuous social conversation, where the professional is not merely an observer but an expert source whose publications transcend boundaries.

Regarding digital sports media, innovation is paramount because it deepens information, broadens content, and applies new practices and digital tools, such as those integrated in multimedia production. This includes photographs, graphics, analog and animated memes, audiovisual narratives created with mobile phones, and data journalism.<sup>(28)</sup> Today, journalists must adapt to multimedia systems so that their reports can be consumed and replicated by large global communities while also maintaining contact with users, even if it's to receive criticism, suggestions, or trivial comments.<sup>(12)</sup> This new skill set includes recording video or podcasts, providing

interactive statistics, among other resources, to monetize interactions and ensure the media's presence and impact in the digital ecosystem.

For example, social media provides extraordinary content transmission capabilities, which are changing how sports media are produced and consumed. According to Sanderson<sup>(29)</sup>, fans are capitalizing on the interactivity offered by social media channels to interact directly with media outlets, athletes, and sports organization personnel.

#### *Deporadictos from Spain*

The website was created in October 2012 in Madrid, Spain, and it is still active on its website and on social media platforms. The idea of the website came from two journalists, Luis Murillo and Daniel Riobóo. Deporadictos has a group of eight voluntary contributors from different disciplines, but mainly from audiovisual communication, and journalism. The proposal focuses on providing sports information from a practical perspective (exercise tips) and a cultured perspective (connections with literature, politics, and economics).<sup>(30)</sup>

#### *El Míster from México*

El Míster was created in late 2018 by Iván Pérez, a Mexican journalist. He worked at a business newspaper in Mexico. The first stage started as a website (2018-2020), then it transformed into a newsletter (2020-2021), and now it is a platform for editorial content and products, including podcasts, dossiers, and a Telegram channel.<sup>(31)</sup> It also aspires to become a sports research company. The team consists of nine communicators.<sup>(32)</sup> In the creative process, one of the team members collects material for review and potential publication. However, there are also opportunities for journalistic pieces to be proposed and written collaboratively, which, according to the members of the El Míster team, results in the highest quality content.<sup>(32)</sup>

## **METHOD**

This research was carried out through a mixed-methods approach, as its aim was to obtain a deep understanding of the phenomena by applying both quantitative and qualitative methods (content analysis and digital ethnography, in our case) to solve complex problems.<sup>(33)</sup> In this case study, we employ the typology of multiple units of case analysis,<sup>(34)</sup> where each case is evaluated holistically on its own before identifying trends or common patterns.

A universe of digital sports journalism ventures can be found on the SembraMedia website<sup>(5)</sup>, a non-profit organization that brings together independent media from America and the Iberian Peninsula that meet the following selection criteria: digital, original content in Spanish, current and public service, non-partisan, and non-corporate.

#### *Sample of media outlets*

From that universe of media outlets, a sample of two online platforms was selected: Deporadictos from Spain ([www.deporadictos.com](http://www.deporadictos.com)) and El Míster from Mexico ([www.elmister.substack.com](http://www.elmister.substack.com)), as they were the only ones that met both the SembraMedia criteria and the criteria specific to this research: (1) they were conceived as business models and, consequently, pursued profit through monetization strategies; (2) they were active and have been operating continuously for more than two years; (3) they belong to Spain and the Spanish-speaking world (countries where Spanish is the official language); (4) they originated from entrepreneurs who are students or professionals in communication, journalism, or related disciplines; and (5) they publish under the multi-sport modality, meaning their coverage included various sports rather than specializing in just one.

#### *Digital ethnography*

Digital ethnography is a method that is theoretically grounded in the conception of the internet as a cultural product, where specific social interactions, practices, and beliefs occur.<sup>(35)</sup>

This method is ideal for this research, as it demonstrates the degree of interaction between creators and users through ethnographic navigation of the websites and identifies the monetization strategies employed by the online media to achieve financial balance and sustainability.

#### *Content Analysis*

This method constitutes a research technique that uncovers the DNA of media messages in order to reconstruct their structure, components, architecture, and function.<sup>(36)</sup> The content analyst develops procedures to code various aspects of textual, auditory (spoken), or visual material and then analyzes them within the framework of their research objectives.<sup>(33)</sup>

This method facilitates the description and quantification of variables related to quality sports journalism in the most objective way possible, such variables include the use of interactive digital resources and many more.

*Temporal and Content Sample*

Journalistic pieces from various sports are analyzed and coded, not just content related to a single sport like football. The entire universe of contents published by the two digital media ventures in the year 2021 was considered, including 47 journalistic pieces from Deporadictos in Spain and 227 from El Míster in Mexico. For this research, different variables of the journalistic pieces published by the sports journalism ventures El Míster in Mexico and Deporadictos in Spain were analyzed to show quantitative trends. These variables are those of the journalistic genre, sources, thematic focus, type of sport, converging media used, and geographical scope. (37,38,39,40,41,42)

**RESULTS**

**Results of Digital Ethnography in Deporadictos**

*Diversity in Economic Revenue Sources*

This type of sports journalism gained momentum after the year 2010 when the Spanish economic crisis began and many faculties of Communication Sciences incorporated entrepreneurship as a subject in their curricula.<sup>(43)</sup> This digital media sustains itself economically with the hiring of advertising banners, advertorials, and external links to bookstores and online sales of t-shirts.<sup>(44)</sup>

They do not have a logo to position their brand. According to the website Infoperiodistas<sup>(45)</sup>, Deporadictos.com receives over 40 thousand monthly visits to its sports information contents. It proposes a vertical information model, meaning that the journalistic pieces with their multimedia content are produced by the Deporadictos’ team of journalists.

*Diversity in user interaction*

Deporadictos follows a vertical informative model, meaning that the journalistic pieces along with their multimedia contents are produced by the group of journalists at Deporadictos. The prosumer figure has no clear presence.<sup>(46)</sup> The contents of Deporadictos create connections between culture and sports, incorporate humor, and provide recommendations for practicing sports. It is evident that there is frequent production of contents for sports tourism enthusiasts.

Deporadictos uses the WordPress 6.1.1 platform (although it is updated automatically), a maintenance version that incorporates 29 core bug fixes and 21 block editor bug fixes from WordPress version 6.1.<sup>(47)</sup> It uses social media platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and includes links that direct users to purchase books and t-shirts.<sup>(48)</sup> Tweets from Twitter appear directly on the media platform without the need to click on the social media icon.

Below the top tabs of the portal (home, our philosophy, who we are, and contact), there is a classification of sports and related themes that the owners of the digital media refer to as “addictions.” Each category is distinguished by a differently colored underline. All icons and buttons are functional, and the interface is intuitive and easy to navigate, allowing for quick returns to the homepage and easy access to categories. Additionally, the search function helps users locate specific topics. However, user interactivity is minimal, as comments can only be made on homepage content in the section labeled “contact.”

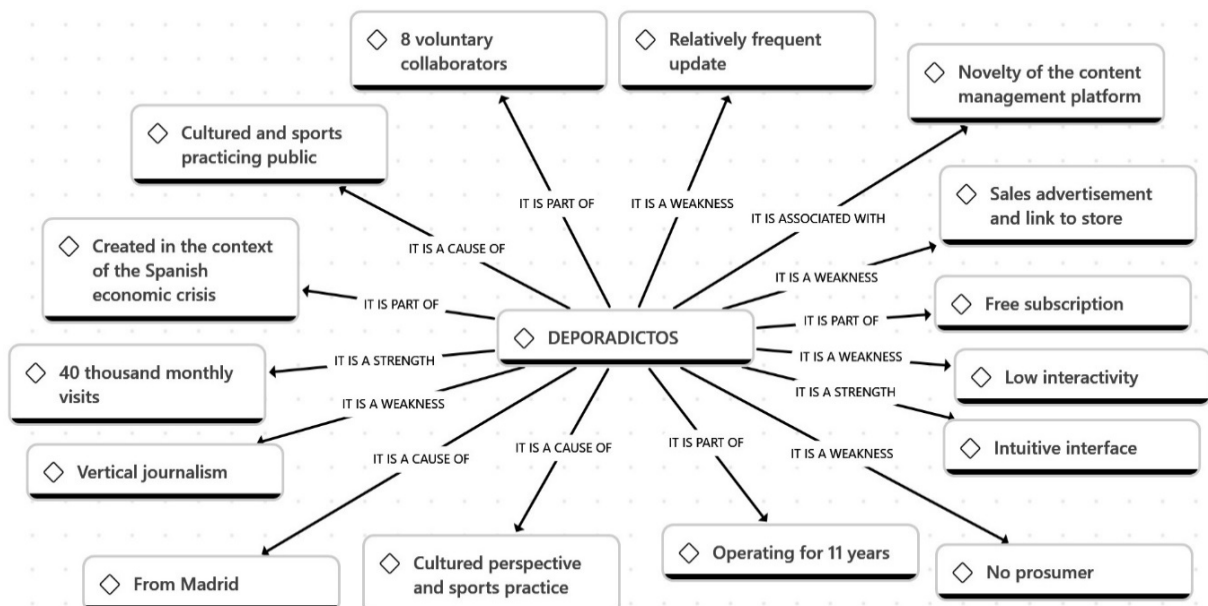


Figure 1. Synthesis of digital ethnography in a network of codes

The digital ethnography of Deporadictos is synthesized in this network of codes derived from coding in the Atlas. ti software.

**Results of digital ethnography in El Míster**

*Diversity in User Interaction*

El Míster aims to appeal to the 20 % of fans who do not feel represented by the other sports media outlets. Its objectives are to become a reference in the industry, to boost its brand, and to establish a strong position within the digital ecosystem. According to the creators, the audience consists of communities eager for analysis, information, reviews, and documents related to the sports industry.<sup>(31)</sup> Additionally, the platform aims to be utilitarian, targeting sports and marketing companies as another audience group.<sup>(32)</sup>

The business model is based on both free and premium (paid) subscriptions, content production for other companies in the sports industry, the introduction of their own store<sup>(49)</sup>, redaction and download of e-books, affiliate marketing, promotion of online courses (such as data journalism), and the supply of subscribers data to other companies. The concept of El Míster and its logo encompasses the metaphor of their cybermedia presence. The English word “Mister,” a formal attribute of a gentleman, is often associated in Spain, Mexico, and other countries with the figure of a team’s football coach or technical director.

*Diversity interaction user*

To engage and connect with the audience, El Míster employs a strategy of conducting periodic surveys. These surveys serve two purposes: firstly, to understand the audience’s preferences regarding sports topics and approaches, and secondly, to gather data that marketing companies can utilize to make decisions related to the areas of management and marketing of athletic and competitive activity.

El Míster is hosted on the Substack platform, which allows writers, bloggers, brands, and other creators to produce and monetize their newsletters through a simple and user-friendly interface.<sup>(50)</sup> This outlet uses social media channels such as LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram, which are accessible by clicking on their icons. The contents focus on the relationship between sports, economics, and sports marketing, with a preference for the Mexican professional football league.

The navigation through the interface is intuitive, providing easy access to the home page. Finding current and past information can be done quickly through thematic categories and the search function. The level of interactivity is primary, meaning users can comment and share sports news on El Míster’s page and across social media platforms. However, the possibility of becoming a content producer is not prominently featured. The informative model is vertical, as the journalistic pieces with multimedia content are produced by the team of journalists at El Míster. The figure of the prosumer is not clearly present.<sup>(46)</sup>

A preliminary interpretation of El Míster’s digital ethnography is summarized in this network of codes derived from coding in the Atlas. ti software.

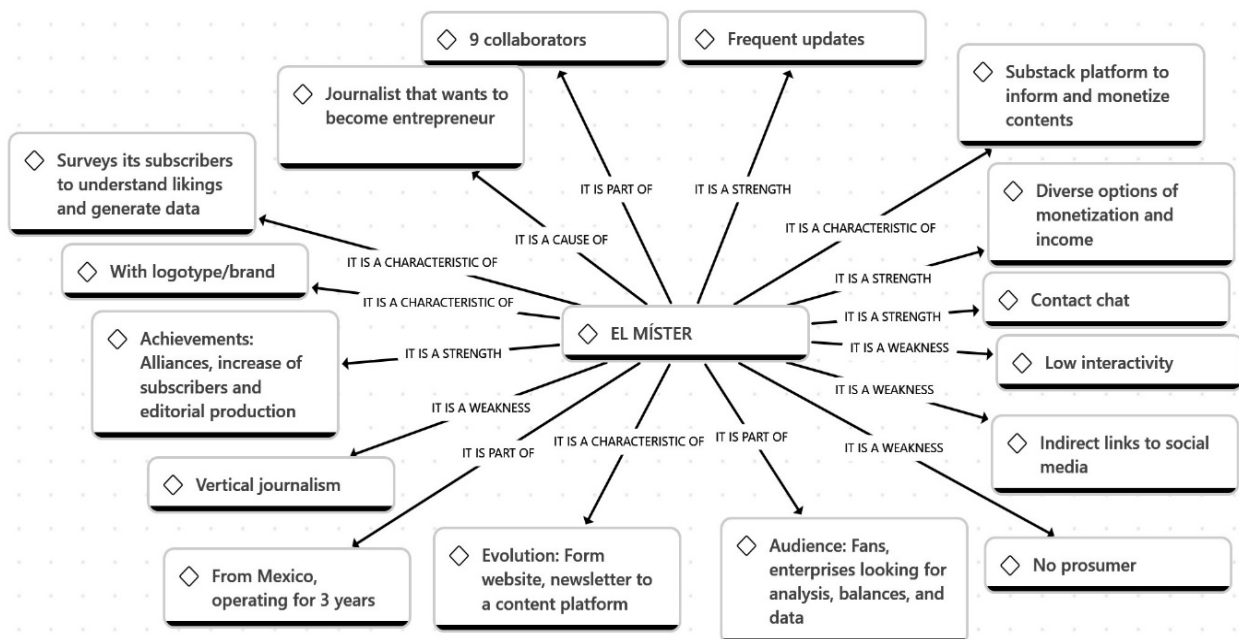


Figure 2. Preliminary interpretation of digital ethnography in a network of codes

*Results of content analysis in Deporadictos*

Deporadictos had a total of 47 pieces, which means an average of one publication every seven days or four in a month.

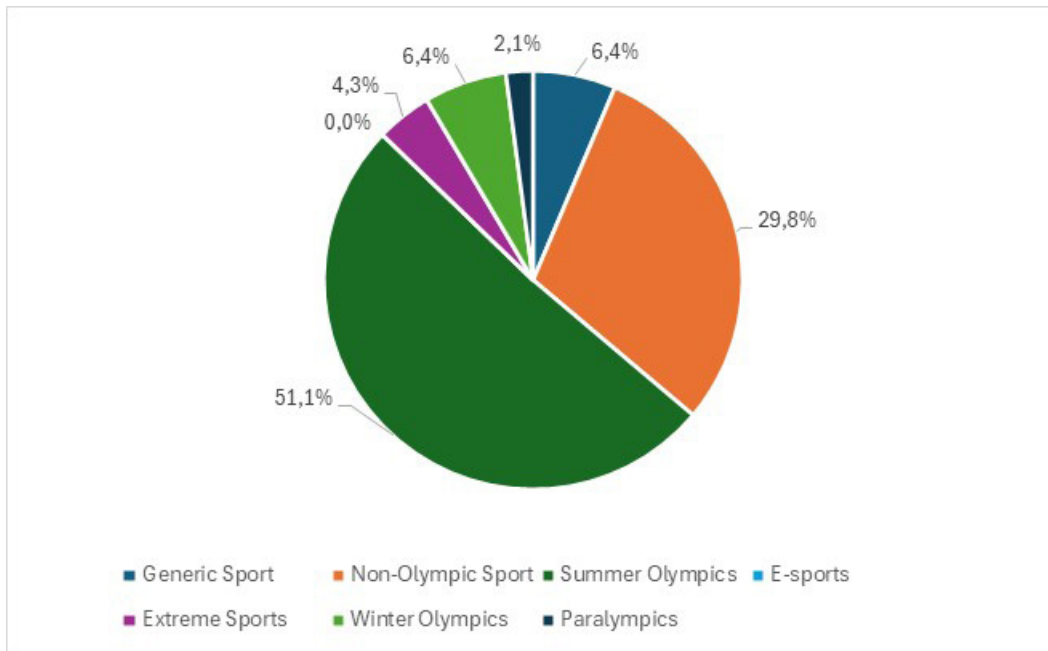


Figure 3. Type of Sport in Deporadictos

N= 47 journalistic pieces

The predominant type of sport on Deporadictos is Summer Olympics (n=24/51,1 %), followed by non-Olympic sports (n=14/29,8 %). Other types of sports present lower percentages like Winter Olympic sports (n=3/6,4 %), generic sports—which refers to the concept of sports in general—extreme sports (n=2/4,3 %), and Paralympic sports (n=1/2,1 %).

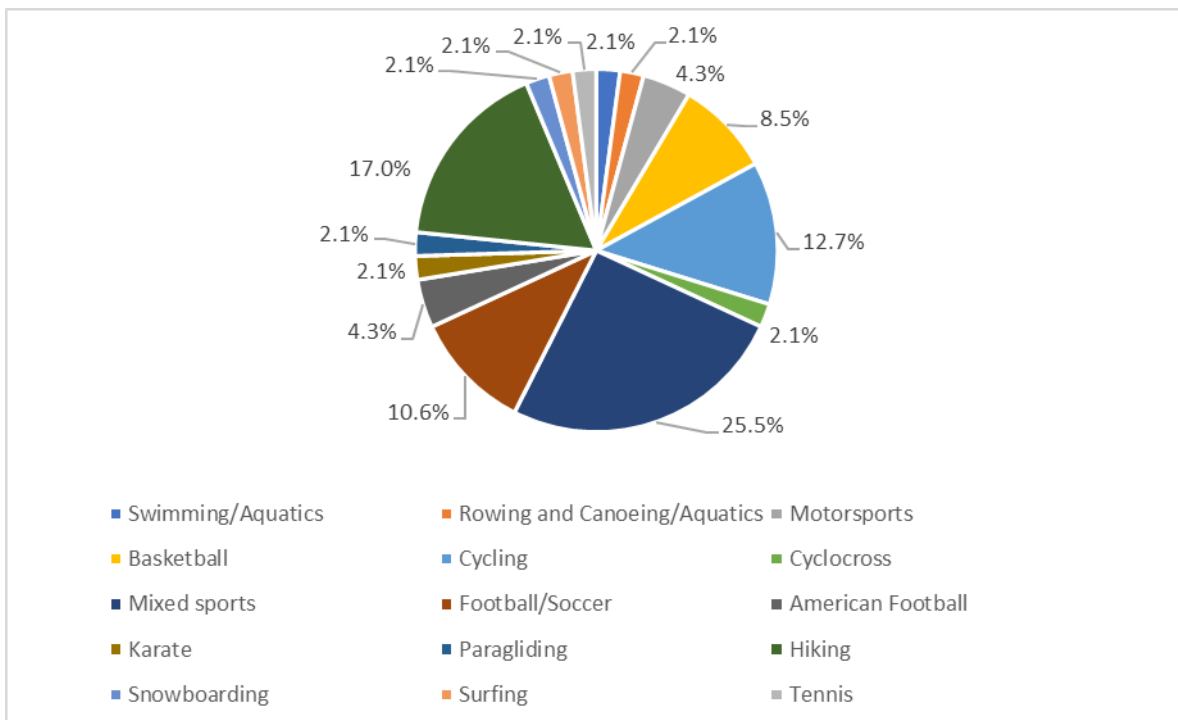


Figure 4. Sports in Deporadictos

N= 47 journalistic pieces.

The category with the most entries on Deporadictos is Mixed Sports (n=12/25,5 %), which incorporates information on various sports disciplines. Among specific sports, we have hiking (n=8,17 %), followed by cycling (n=6/12,7 %), football (n=5/10,6 %), basketball (n=4/8,5 %), and motorsports (n=2/4,3 %). The rest of sports report 2,1 %. One of the notes about hiking published in Deporadictos appeared on May 5 2021 and is titled “La ruta del Cares, la senda más recorrida de los picos de Europa” (The Cares Route, the Most Traveled Path in the Picos de Europa).

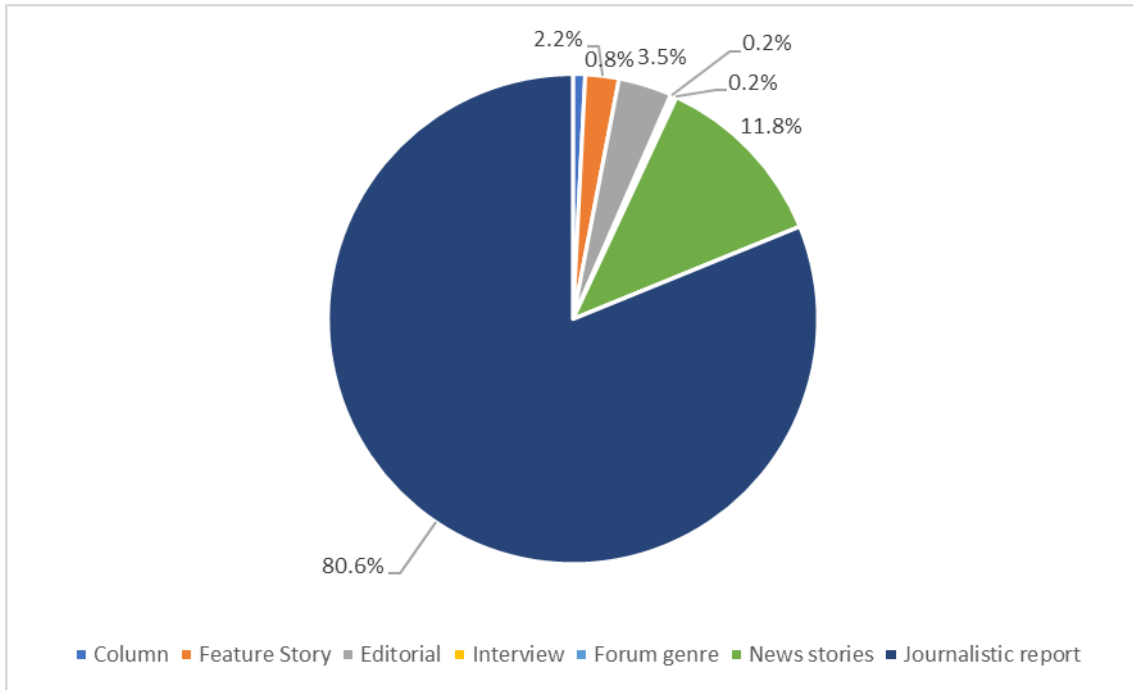


Figure 5. Journalistic genre in Deporadictos

N= 47 journalistic pieces.

The feature story (n=16/36,1 %) is the most frequently used interpretative genre in Deporadictos, along with the column (n=16,34 %). The report (n=7/14,8 %) and the news stories (n=6,13 %) also register significant values.

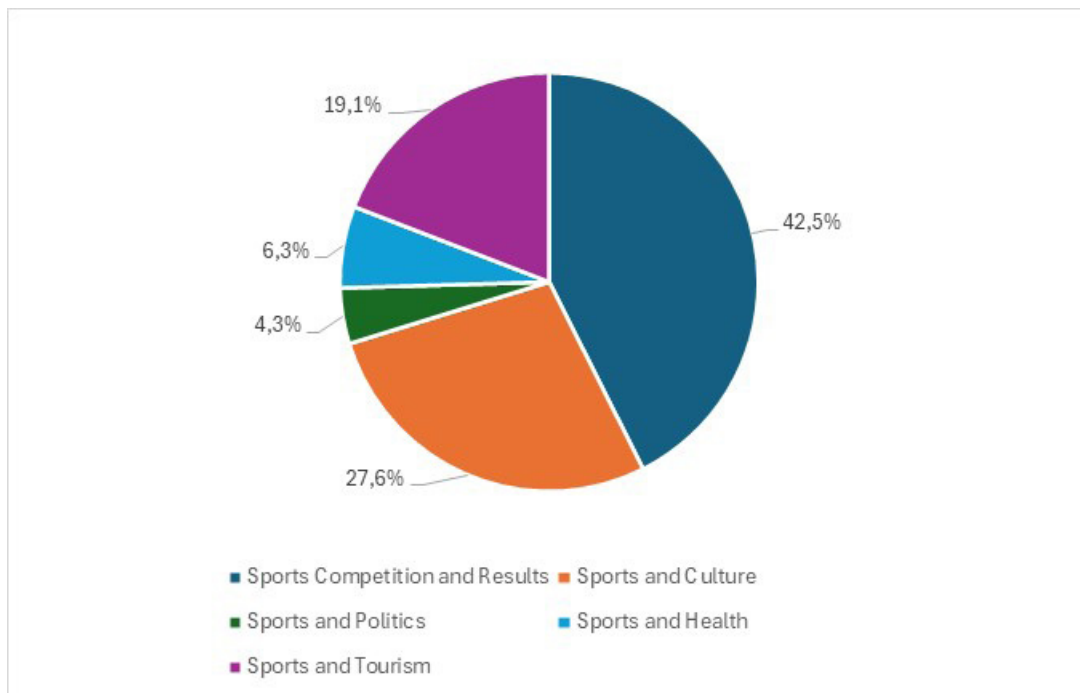


Figure 6. Journalistic focus in Deporadictos



N= 47 journalistic pieces.

The most frequent focus on Deporadictos is related to competition and results (n=20/42,5 %), followed by sports and culture (n=13/27,6 %). Additionally, the focus on sports and tourism (n=9/19,1 %) also represents a significant percentage. The lower percentages correspond to sports and health (n=3/6,3 %), and sports and politics (n=2/4,3 %). The focus on competition and results is evident in the article ‘The Greatest Feats of the Olympic Games I,’ published on July 27, 2021.

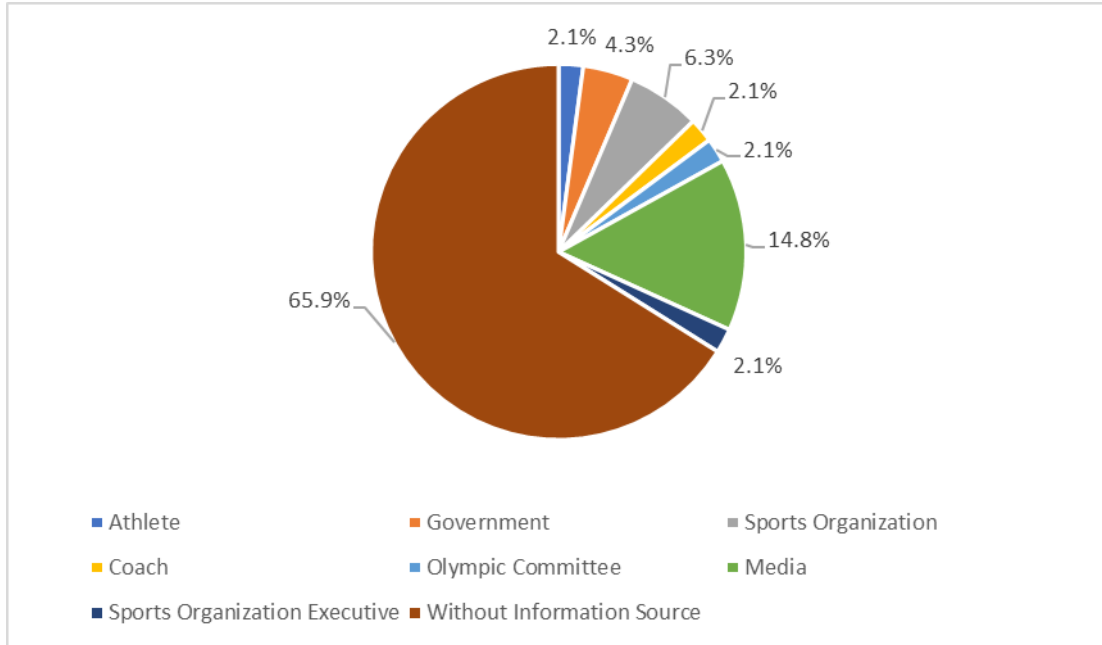


Figure 7. Information sources in Deporadictos

N= 50 journalistic sources.

Most of the journalistic pieces on Deporadictos (n=33/65,9 %) do not consult textual sources. A relatively high percentage reveals the consultation of other media outlets (n=8/14,8 %), sports organizations (n=3/6,3 %), and government sources (n=2/4,3 %). A very low percentage (n=1/2,1 %) is observed in relation to important sources such as athletes, coaches, the Olympic committee, and executives.

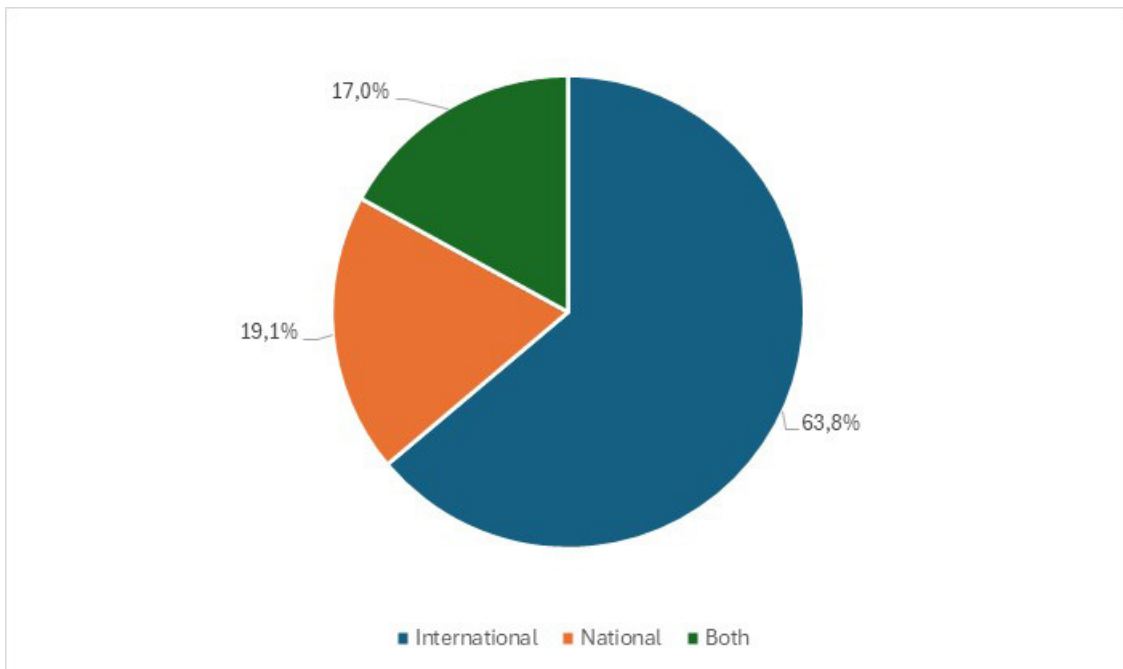


Figure 8. Reach of the journalistic piece in Deporadictos

N= 47 journalistic pieces.

The predominant reach is International (n=30/63,8 %), followed by National (n=9/19,1 %) although with a significantly smaller percentage. The reach classified as “both,” meaning when the coverage focuses on one country (Spain, for example) and then branches out to others, accounts for 17 % (n=8).

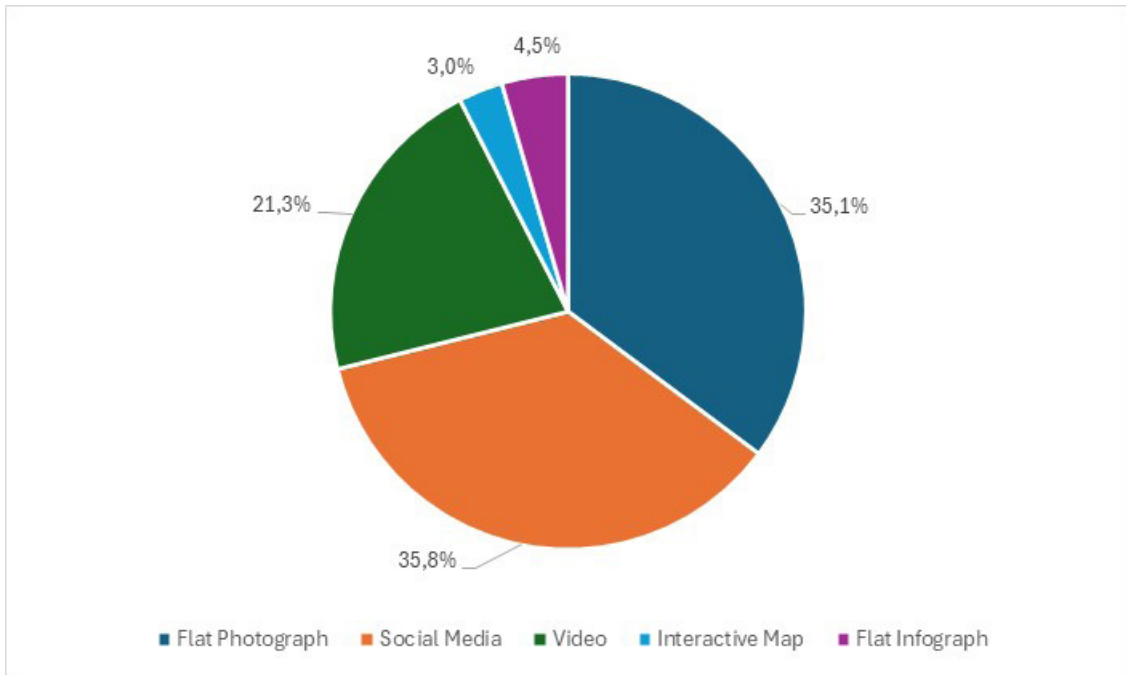


Figure 9. Digital resources used in Deporadictos

N= 131 digital resources.

The most used digital resources are social media (n=47/35,8 %) and flat photography (n=48/35,1 %). Video has a low presence (n=28/21,3 %), and the only interactive resource is the map, which registers a percentage of 3,9 % (n=4). It is worth noting that this resource, along with the video, is not produced by the digital media outlet itself but is incorporated from other websites.

Results of content analysis in El Míster

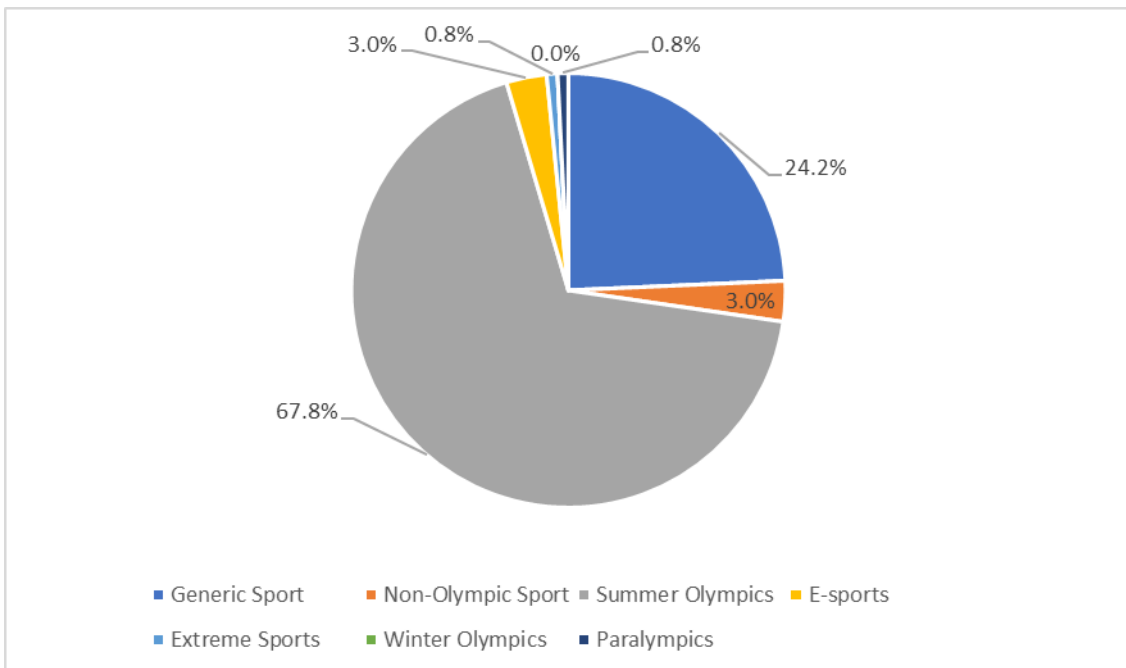


Figure 10. Type of Sport in El Míster

The results are presented based on the category system mentioned in the methodology. It is worth noting that all the journalistic pieces from the year 2021 of both cybermedia outlets were analyzed: El Míster had 227 pieces, with an average of four publications every seven days or 18 per month.

N= 227 journalistic pieces.

The predominant type of sport in El Míster is Summer Olympic (n=154/67,8 %) and generic sport (n=55/24,2 %), referring to multiple sports or the general category of sports without specifying a particular discipline. The percentages for non-Olympic sports (n=7/3,1 %), extreme sports (n=2/0,9 %), and Paralympic sports (n=2/0,9 %) are low. There is a notable percentage for a new category in the sports field, such as E-sports or sports-themed video games (n=7/3,1 %). An example of this can be found in the journalistic piece titled *Mexicans in eSports: What Have They Achieved?*, published on December 12, 2021.

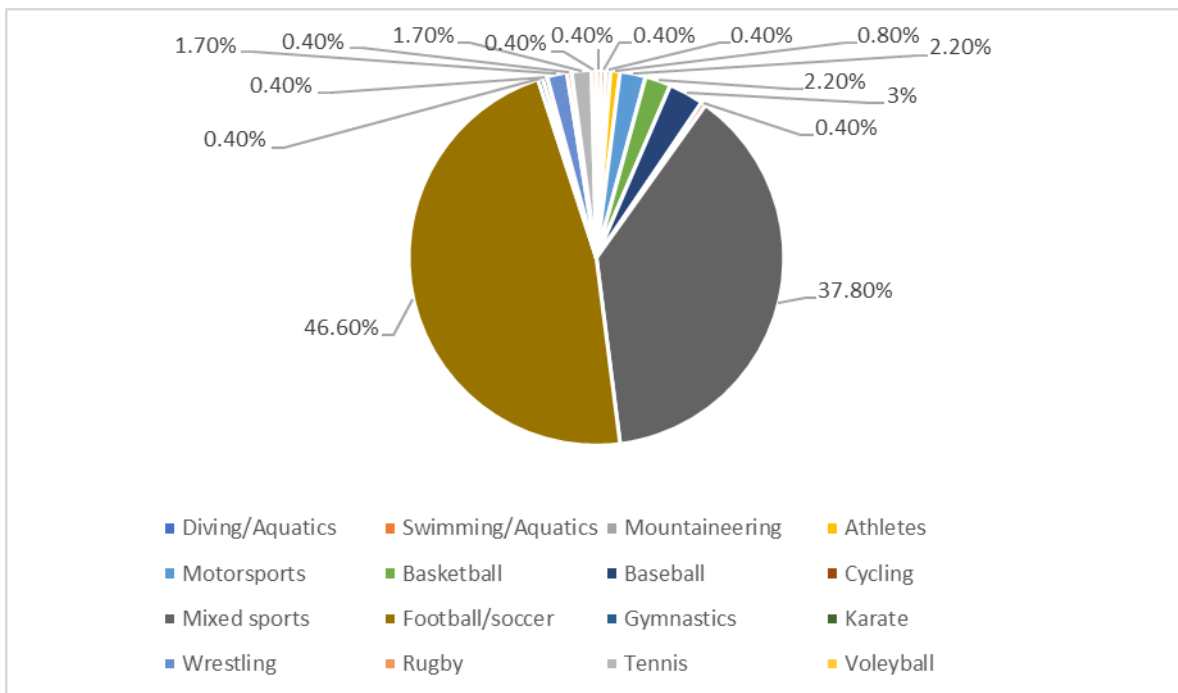


Figure 11. Sports in El Míster

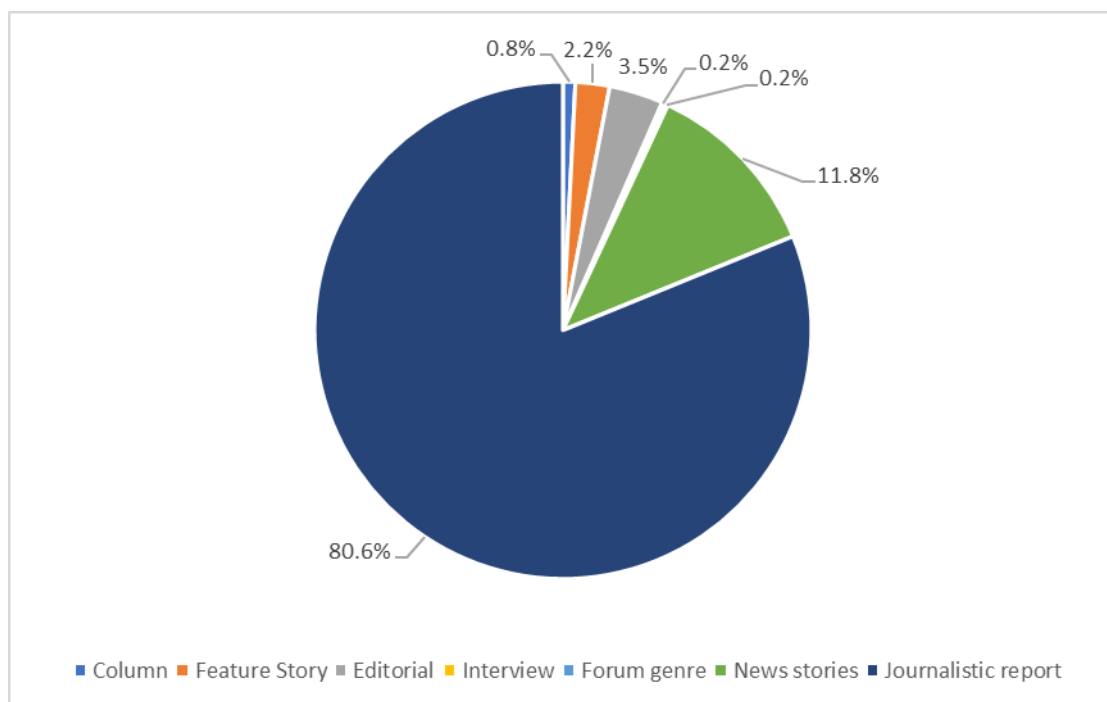


Figure 12. Journalistic genre in El Míster

N= 227 journalistic pieces.

Football (n=106/46,7 %) is the most frequently covered sport in El Míster, followed by a set of multiple sports (n=86/37,9 %). Other disciplines do not show very high values, except for baseball (n=7/3,1 %). Traditional and iconic Mexican sports, such as boxing, do not have entries on the digital media.

N= 227 journalistic pieces.

The most employed journalistic genre in El Míster is the report (n=183/80,6 %) followed by news stories (n=27/11,8 %). Other genres have significantly lower percentages, such as editorial (n=8/3,5 %) and feature story (n=5/2,2 %).

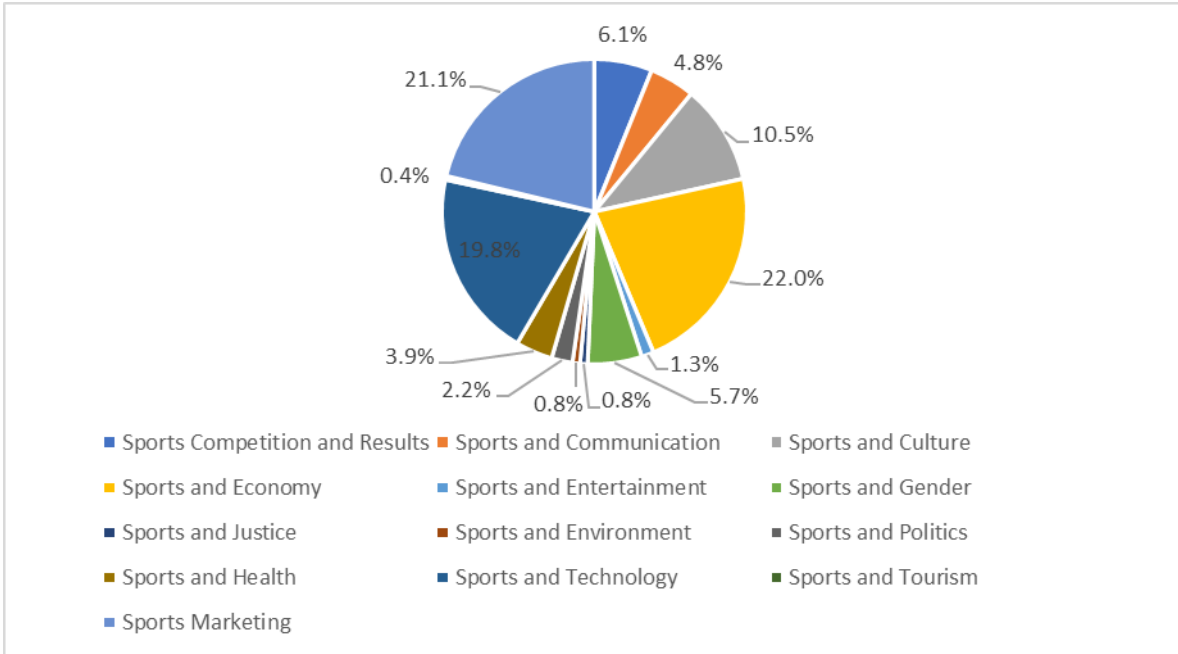


Figure 13. Journalistic focus in El Míster

N= 227 journalistic pieces.

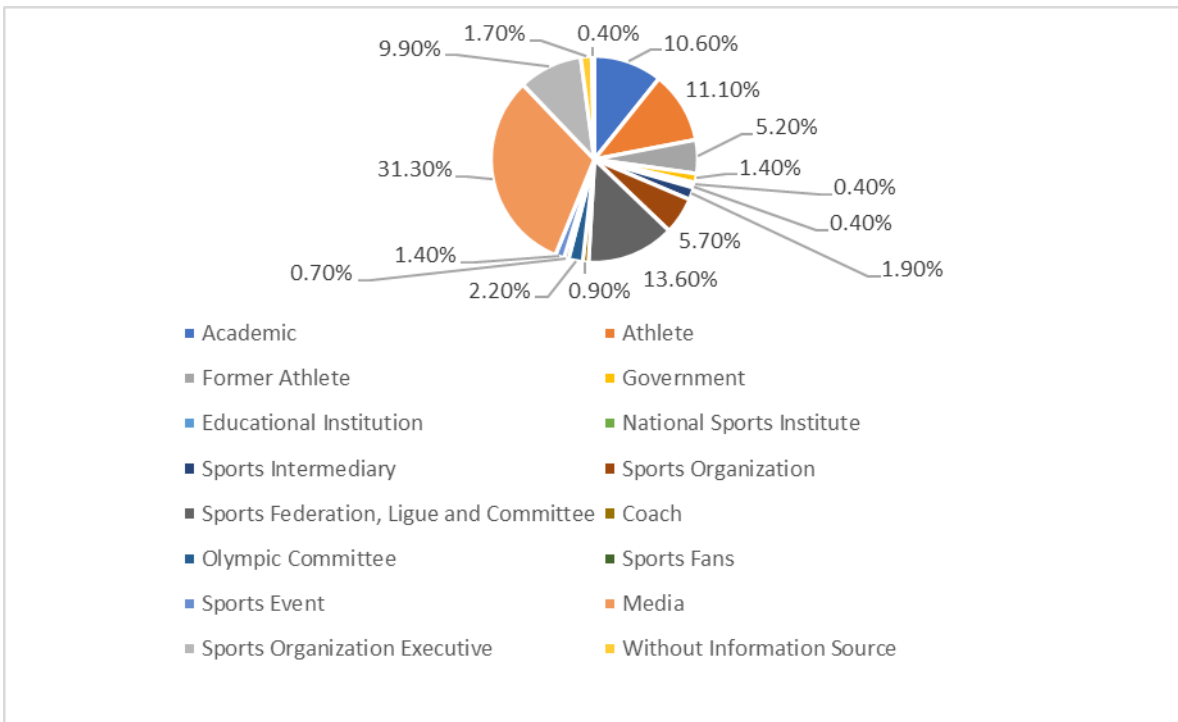


Figure 14. Information sources in El Míster

The predominant focus in El Míster is on sports and the economy (n=50,22 %), closely followed by marketing (n=48/21,1 %) and technology (n=45/19,8 %). Other significant percentages are recorded in the focus areas of sports and culture (n=24/10,5 %), competition and results (n=14/6,1 %), gender (n=13/5,7 %), and health (n=9,4 %). A frequent focus in this cybermedia outlet is sports marketing, as demonstrated in the article Mexican Sports Brands by Author, published on April 5, 2021.

N= 402 information sources.

El Míster consults a variety of journalistic sources with a preference for the category “other media outlets” (n=126/31,3 %), where testimonies from various origins are also gathered. It is also common to find statements from federations, leagues, or committees (n=55/13,6 %), athletes (n=45/11,1 %), executives (n=40/9,9 %), academics (n=43/10,6 %), and sports organizations (n=23/5,7 %).

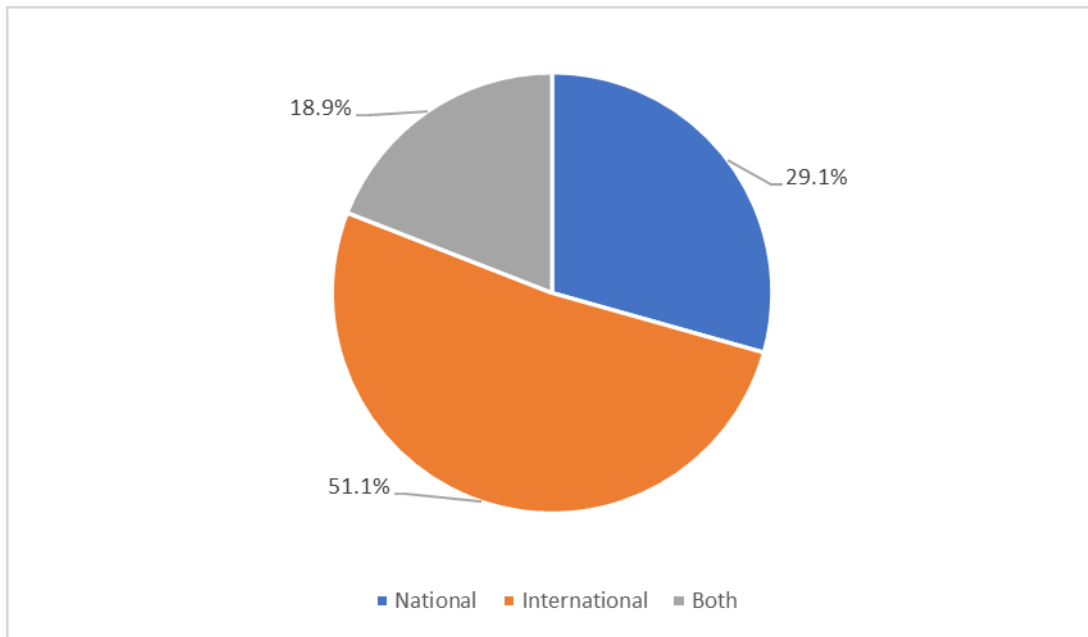


Figure 15. Reach of the journalistic piece in El Míster

N= 47 journalistic pieces.

This cybermedia outlet features a higher percentage in the international reach of its journalistic pieces (n=116/51,1 %), although it also shows a significant percentage in national reach (n=66/29,1 %).

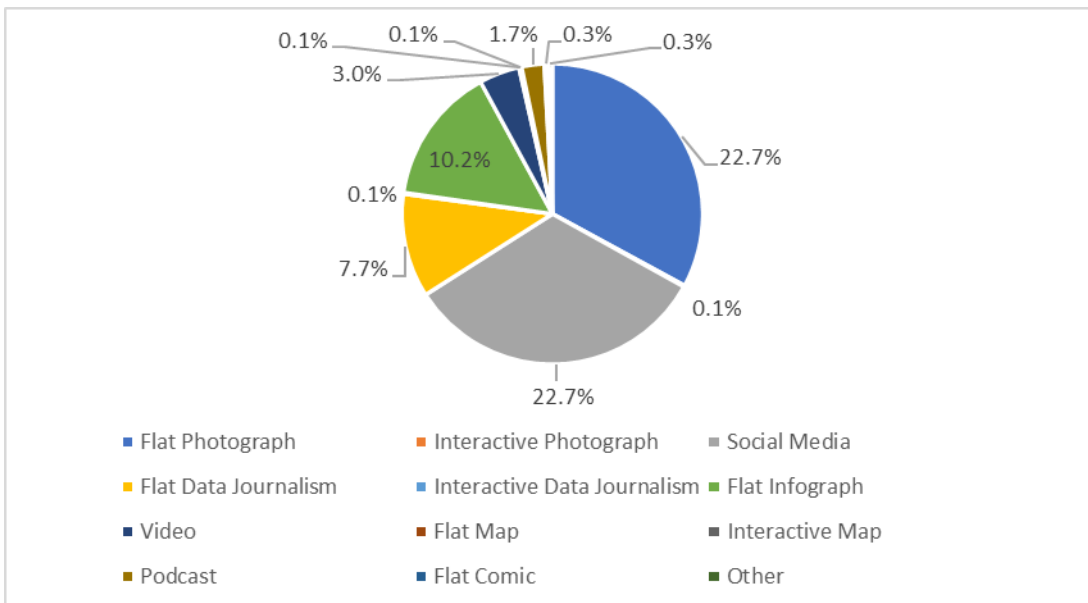


Figure 16. Digital resources used in El Míster

N= 597 digital resources.

The digital resources most frequently used are flat photography and social media, both at 38 % (n=22,7 %). They are followed by flat infographics (n=61/10,2 %), flat data journalism (n=46/7,7 %), and podcasts (n=10/1,7 %). Some interactive resources appear with lower percentages, such as maps (n=1/0,2 %), photography (n=1/0,2 %), and interactive data journalism (n=1/0,2 %). The report *Confirmed: Fans Don't Play in Liga MX*, published on January 13, 2021, showcases the use of interactive data journalism.

## DISCUSSION

How much diversity is found in Deporadictos and El Míster in terms of sports coverage, genres, information sources, reach, and the use of digital resources?

Despite Deporadictos being a cybermedia outlet that does not publish frequently (47 journalistic pieces, an average of almost one publication per week), it reports variety in the types of sports covered. Although there is a strong presence of Olympic sports (n=24/51,1 %), other significant percentages are distributed among non-Olympic sports (n=14/29,8 %) and Winter Olympics (n=3/6,4 %).

Deporadictos aims to expand the reader's sports culture, as it publishes on a variety of sports (hiking, cycling, football, basketball, motorsports) and does so by grouping various disciplines under the category of multiple sports (n=12/25,5 %). It is evident, for example, that the focus is not exclusively on football, a sport with widespread popularity in Spain and the Western world, because they consider that some distinctive aspects of their informational approach are diversity, the relationship between competitive activities and culture, and practical recommendations on how to exercise the body with different movements. This stance is consistent with a key quality of sports journalism, which seeks to avoid "footballization" of content.<sup>(27)</sup>

The previously mentioned diversity may be associated with the fact that the reach of its publications is more international (n=30/63,8 %) than national (n=9/19,1 %), which theoretically suggests that its journalistic pieces are more universal and consumable in other Spanish-speaking countries. Thus, having a kaleidoscopic view of sports would theoretically capture the attention of users with multidimensional consumption preferences in the digital environment.

However, Deporadictos does not diversify the focus of its articles. The predominant focus is on competition and results (n=20/42,6 %), followed by sports and culture (n=24/27,7 %), sports and tourism (n=9/19,1 %), and sports and health, among others with less significant percentages. Focusing on competition and results might be less appealing to readers as this is often the approach taken by industrial media outlets, which have much stronger economic, organizational, and personnel support for the distribution of content before, during, and after sporting events. Additionally, it is worth noting that this outlet competes with 26 other similar ventures in Spain.<sup>(5)</sup>

Meanwhile, the coverage of topics focuses on features stories and opinion columns, which belong to the genres of interpretation and opinion, both of which are common in this journalistic field.<sup>(51)</sup>

In line with the nature of these genres, the writing tends to be subjective often expressing judgments and opinions. This approach can occasionally reveal a lack of more robust and well-founded arguments to describe or explain a sports phenomenon or performance. For example, consulting experts or academics could be addressed by accessing databases of peer-reviewed academic journals, where relevant research on sports and its relationship with medical, social, and human sciences can be found. This tendency has come to exist as a result of a widely diagnosed dysfunction in sports journalism: The limited consultation of information sources.<sup>(41)</sup>

Despite El Míster publishing 227 articles per year, an average of four per week and 18 per month, its content is primarily focused on Olympic sports (n=154/67,8 %) and generic sports (n=55/24,2 %). There is little variety in the coverage of non-Olympic sports, Winter Olympics, and Paralympic sports, although the presence of e-sports (n=7/3,1 %) is notable. Additionally, football (n=106/46,7 %) is the most covered sport, followed by multiple sports. Other sports disciplines have lower percentages. This cybermedia outlet competes with 25 similar ventures in Mexico.<sup>(5)</sup>

The emphasis on football goes against the idea of "footballizing" content and contradicts the goal of fostering a more diverse sports culture, rich in athletic performances, results, and key figures. Additionally, El Míster frequently reports on the Mexican professional football league, whose appeal is relatively limited on the international football stage, taking into account it ranks 36th among the most competitive leagues in the world.<sup>(52)</sup>

The preferred narrative formats are reports (n=183/80,6 %) and news articles (n=27/11,9 %), which belong to the interpretive and informative genres. As a result, the writing in El Míster tends to be more objective and analytical. Although there is no balance with other genres like columns and chronicles to showcase more diversity, the cybermedia outlet consults a broader range of information sources to ensure that topics are approached with depth and context—key features of journalistic excellence. In fact, only 1,7 % (n=7) of its articles do not cite a source. Nevertheless, the most frequently cited sources are other media outlets (n=126/31,3 %), then athletes (n=45/9,9 %), and academics (n=43/9,4 %). It is worth noting that citing other media does not necessarily require significant reporting effort, although the inclusion of expert testimony on sports topics is worth highlighting.

The consultation of varied information sources leads to a diversity of approaches in El Míster's sports coverage. However, the predominant focuses are on the economy (n=50,22 %), marketing (n=48/21,1 %), and technology (n=45/19,8 %), which align with the cybermedia outlet's objective of becoming a reference for the industry, enhancing its brand, and establishing a strong position within the digital ecosystem. To achieve this, this outlet prioritizes audiences such as sports organizations, fans interested in creating wealth through sports, and top executives of companies, as well as focusing on football, the preferred sport among Mexicans.<sup>(53)</sup>

It is also worth highlighting the inclusive focus on sports and gender (n=13/5,7 %), which is addressed in a serious and responsible manner. The reach of its articles is predominantly international (n=116/51,1 %).

How is diversity expressed in the sources of economic income for Deporadictos and El Míster to try to ensure their sustainability in digital environments?

According to its creators, Deporadictos is a portal that emerged after the economic crisis in Spain in 2018, the same year when journalism schools began to include entrepreneurship topics in their curricula. The cybermedia outlet was conceived as a venture positioned in the Spanish market, serving as a reference that connects sports with culture and guides users on how to practice certain sports disciplines.

This promise is shared by Murillo and Ribóo, the two project leaders, who rely on a group of volunteers to write the articles. This approach ensures the uninterrupted publication of journalistic pieces that, as mentioned earlier, are diverse in both sports and narratives that appeal to opinion, judgment, and a combination of data. However, one aspect that falls short is the lack of diverse income sources to sustain the cybermedia outlet in the short, medium, and long term.

Precisely, the digital ethnography reveals only two alternatives: advertising sales and affiliate marketing. Advertising is a strategy that has been re-evaluated in the communication field because its growth does not fully finance the new cybermedia outlets emerging in the market. Additionally, it requires specialized personnel (not just their own journalists) to make it a solid income source that ensures the operation of the cybermedia outlet without compromising journalistic independence. Affiliate marketing is evidenced when Deporadictos includes a link on its website that redirects users to purchase t-shirts and books, which means the producers receive a percentage of the sales made through the website.

The key issue here is that no diversity is evidenced in income sources and, of course, the absence of a strategy that combines different alternatives to generate revenue out of the informational service provided. One disadvantage Deporadictos faces is the lack of a brand, logo, or corporate image proposal that identifies the outlet and that could help offer other services, such as training courses, sales of products, and more, all this considering the advantage of the 40 000 monthly visits to its website.<sup>(45)</sup>

El Míster stands out for its diverse strategies to generate economic resources, including premium subscriptions, offering courses, forming alliances with other organizations, generating data through user interaction, selling merchandise in its online store, affiliate marketing, among others. These strategies are combined based on users' needs, which are measured through surveys. To support these efforts, the cybermedia outlet has established a strong corporate image characterized by sobriety and elegance.

The key to El Míster's success lies in its conceptualization, first as a website, second as a newsletter, and then as a research company.<sup>(31)</sup> The research results help various audiences and market niches, such as companies, fans, marketing directors, sports organizations, and media outlets, make informed decisions. El Míster has also established alliances with these groups for producing journalistic pieces and organizing events. The organizational structure of El Míster is on the path to consolidation, as it employs journalists who gain job stability and salaries in exchange for innovating in sports content. Although no specific figures are given, the media producers claim that one of El Míster's achievements has been the increase in the number of subscribers in Spain and Mexico, as well as the creation of other informational ventures like El Puto Amo and Patadura.<sup>(54,55)</sup>

What characteristics do the navigation interfaces of Deporadictos and El Míster have to promote diversity in user interactions?

The platforms of Deporadictos (WordPress) and El Míster (Substack) are user-friendly, intuitive, and all buttons and icons function properly. Users can seamlessly navigate to the homepage in either one, and each platform includes the essential features and functionalities necessary for a journalism venture, such as links to social media platforms, publication archives, a highlighted or most-read articles section, document downloads, and a subscription button for email notifications and payments.

Deporadictos stands out for incorporating a Twitter feed window without requiring users to click on the social media icon. The platform is visually appealing, featuring a well-organized classification of contents by categories and a pleasant use of color. However, user interaction with the site is basic, as it is limited to providing a space for comments and opening links to access content. There is no innovative strategy for connecting with different audiences or market niches through social media.

In the digital realm, it is paramount to offer various digital resources that harmoniously integrate into journalistic pieces by adding imagery, interactivity, and enhancing the overall navigating experience. Deporadictos makes use of very few resources of this type. Social media announcements of content are the

most common resources (35,9 %), but without a clear strategy for engagement and interaction. Next, we find that non-interactive infographics (35,1 %) and videos (4,6 %) from other information sources are used. Interactivity is minimally reflected through maps (3,1 %).<sup>(56,57)</sup>

El Míster aims to increase user interaction through the use of surveys. This method constantly explores users' information needs, and the data collected is frequently sold to organizations with an interest in sports. However, this practice might require an ethical evaluation due to the potential confidentiality of the data provided. This website also employs interactive digital resources such as data journalism (n=1/0,2 %), infographics (n=1/0,2 %), and interactive maps (n=1/0,2 %), and it has ventured into podcast production (n=10/1,7 %) to ensure the website remains at the forefront of modern online information consumption.

## CONCLUSIONS

Studying the quality of sports journalism ventures through the lens of diversity is a complex matter, as it requires more financial, logistical, and personnel resources to achieve variety in content, revenue streams, and interactions. Deporadictos from Spain and El Míster from Mexico are led by communicators, journalists, and other related professionals who lack strong corporate backing. This lack of strong support adds to the complexity of meeting the concept of journalistic excellence and maintaining sustainability over time.

Despite this challenge, the operations of these two cybermedia outlets reflect elements of journalistic quality and, with some adjustments, hold the potential to consolidate themselves as appealing and diversified informational ventures for their respective audiences. This outlook is supported by the fact that both adhere to a fundamental principal: good writing and a thorough understanding of sports.

Deporadictos demonstrates diversity in themes, approaches, and narratives. However, certain evident weaknesses negatively impact its progress towards journalistic excellence. These include the lack of consultation of sources, absence of a revenue-generation strategies, and insufficient user interactions to understand their informational interests and explore options for greater economic engagement with the content. An important step towards market positioning within the Spanish-speaking community would be to start by seeking testimonies from other sports-related figures who are more easily accessible (such as executives, academic experts, fans, etc.), rather than solely relying on athletes and coaches, who are increasingly reluctant to provide spontaneous testimonies outside of press conferences. Additionally, creating a corporate image for the venture and designing a strategy that fosters dialogue between users and the Deporadictos interface would be key to its market positioning.

El Míster exemplifies a more refined organizational model, committed to achieving excellence through greater diversity and a mix of monetization strategies for its content and user interactions, primarily through surveys and continuous exploration of the sports market. Its focus on economic, marketing, and technological topics undoubtedly aids in revenue generation, as it fosters ongoing connections with various companies looking to grow through sponsorships in the sports industry. This cybermedia outlet can overcome its most evident weakness—concentration on certain sports (especially football) and narratives (reporting)—by diversifying its coverage of other athletic disciplines and incorporating other genres such as interviews, while consulting sources beyond other media outlets.

Both online media platforms, particularly Deporadictos, should, as far as their resources allow, increase the inclusion of multimedia tools to foster productive dialogue with their audience and gain a competitive advantage over other informational offerings in Spain and Latin America.

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