

**Media market and audience
study in Central America**

Executive Summary



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COVER PHOTO | Confidencial / www.confidencial.com.ni: Police officers remove computers and other equipment from the Esta Semana and Esta Noche recording studio in Managua, Nicaragua.

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Contenido

Introduction	5
Media and journalistic context	7
2.1 Freedom of the press and expression	8
2.2 Market characteristics	9
Audience analysis	12
3.1 Habits and preferences in sourcing information	13
3.2 Payments and economic support for journalistic media	14
3.3 Comparison of digital newspapers	16
3.4 Conclusion about the audience	16
Lessons learned	17
4.1 Relationship with the audience	17
4.2 Formats and content	18
4.3 Metrics and other data	19
4.4 Organisational aspects	21
4.5 Financial health	21
4.6 Strategic alliances and project	22
4.7 Threats to freedom of the press and expression	23
Recommendations	25
5.1 Relationship with the audience	25
5.2 Formats and content	26
5.3 Metrics and other data	29
5.4 Organisational aspects	30
5.5 Financial health	32
5.6 Strategic alliances and projects	33
5.7 Threats to freedom of the press and expression	34
Bibliography	36

1 Introduction

This publication presents the comparative results of media market and audience studies conducted in three Central American countries: Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala. It was undertaken by A-01 (A Company / A Foundation) at the request of Free Press Unlimited (FPU), as part of VIMES (Viable Media for Empowered Societies), a project focused on independent media and journalists in Central America and Eastern Europe¹.

The research aims to:

- ✚ Learn about the current media market in Nicaragua, El Salvador and Guatemala.
- ✚ Understand how the population perceives the media, and what their news consumption habits are.
- ✚ Develop recommendations to improve the viability of independent media.


¹ See media collaboration platform: www.colabmedios.org

Methodology

This exploratory and descriptive research employed a mixed research method, combining quantitative and qualitative focuses.

For the quantitative focus, a survey was generated in Survey Monkey, sent to contacts and promoted with advertisements on Facebook, Google ads and the websites and social media platforms of various media outlets, in particular by the members of the VIMES project. As no objective population sampling framework was available, the decision was taken to use “snowball” non-probabilistic sampling, which involves asking each respondent to share the questionnaire with their contacts. This procedure results in samples of unknown representativeness, and does not allow statistical inference. To offset this limitation, an attempt was made to obtain the greatest possible quantity of responses, so as to achieve greater diversity of opinion to enrich the results. The surveys were online from 23 November 2020 until 18 January 2021. 2,667 responses were obtained with 1,627 completed questionnaires, representing 61% of the total.

Online research was also conducted, analysing audience data on websites and social media, such as Similar Web, Facebook Insights, Center for Cooperative Media Dashboard.



With regard to qualitative methodology, 36 semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 47 key figures from the sector, including members of the partners' teams, other media journalists, and representatives of academia, private companies that place advertisements, civil society, international cooperation and gender experts. Ten focus groups were also created: Three with people who read the news several times a day, three with people who live outside their own country, three with people who believe that there is freedom of the press, and one with people of higher purchasing power. Lastly, four workshops were conducted with representatives of FPU and the media partners of the VIMES project, to explore in depth and validate the findings.

Session with excavators (affiliated readers) from El Faro, El Salvador

Image: El Faro
www.elfaro.net

2

Media and journalistic context

The research took place within a context laden with challenges for journalism. All three countries have dropped down the world ranking for freedom of the press over the past decade; a climate of hostility towards the press, mainly coming from the State; an increase in disinformation, and unfavourable conditions for media workers, such as low salaries, benefits, and gender discrimination.

In all three countries, the largest media outlets are in the hands of a few business people and/or politicians. The links between the two groups prevent full and genuine democracy, since there is no guarantee of an editorial line independent of political leaders, and hence a plurality of ideas.

There has over recent years been an increase in the quantity and diversity of media, above all through one-person news providers or small groups of journalists (above all in Nicaragua and Guatemala) taking advantage of digitalisation (greater Internet penetration and consumption). However, this does not necessarily lead to greater plurality of ideas, since the media typically split into pro- and anti-government camps.

Social media platforms are consolidating their position, and messaging channels are expanding, while people also have access to multimedia content from other countries with new formats (short videos, infographics, comics, podcasts), tools which are less used by long-standing journalists.

2.1 Freedom of the press and expression

Freedom of the press and expression in the three countries has worsened over recent years, with the State attacking, harassing and demonising the independent press, while increasingly limiting access to public information. The **Nicaraguan** state also imprisons journalists and dismantles media outlets, by passing punitive laws such as the Cybercrime Act and the Foreign Agents Regulation Act. The President of **El Salvador**, Nayib Bukele, adopted and espoused this approach in the Foreign Agents Registration Act [which includes a 40% tax on funds received from abroad]². In **Guatemala**, the proposal known as the NGO Bill was also intended to result in control over civil society organisations in the country, making their work increasingly difficult.

Aggression comes not only from the State, but also **organised crime** and gangs (above all in El Salvador and Guatemala), with journalists receiving threats. This is often expressed in **ensorship and self-censorship** by the media themselves, and their journalists.



Image: PxMolinaA
www.confidencial.com.ni

² The approval of this Law is on hold while greater consensus is sought with the international community, which gave a critical response (El Faro 26/11/2021).

2.2 Market characteristics

Guatemala has the highest percentage of Internet users (65%), followed by El Salvador with 50.5%, and Nicaragua with 41.7% (see Graph 1). The situation is very different for social media, where El Salvador has the highest percentage of users (66.2%), followed by Nicaragua (52.5%) and lastly Guatemala, 51.4%. El Salvador also has the greatest number of mobile connections per person (with an average of 1.5).

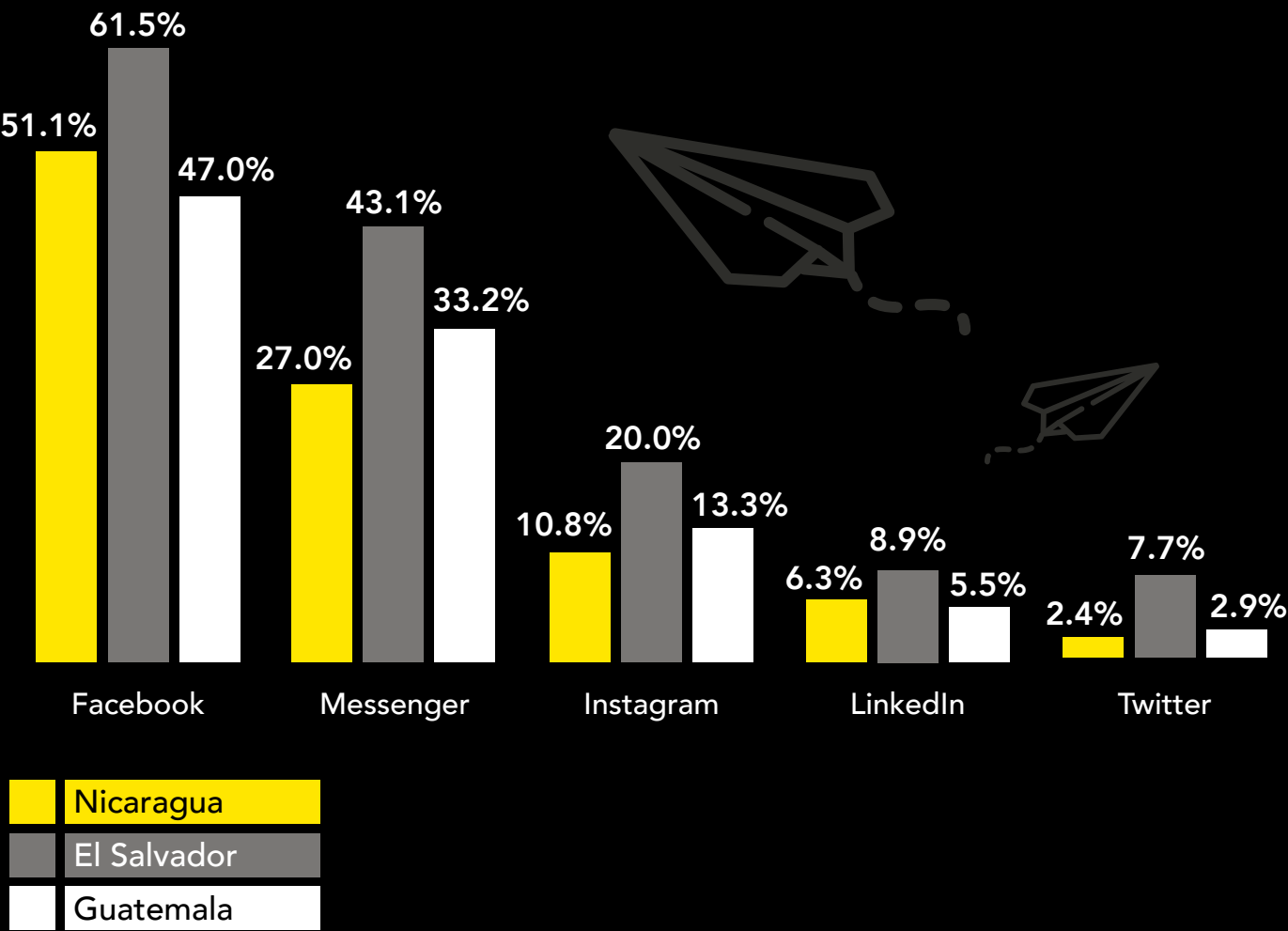
Graph 1. Characteristics of the population and its digitization



Source: Produced by A-01 with data from Hootsuite in Yi Min Shum (2021)

The following graph shows the considerable penetration of social media advertising in each of the countries, with El Salvador having the highest percentage of the population for all the networks analysed. As for the distribution of content and pursuit of new users, audiences are found mainly on Facebook and the other Meta companies (Messenger and Instagram).

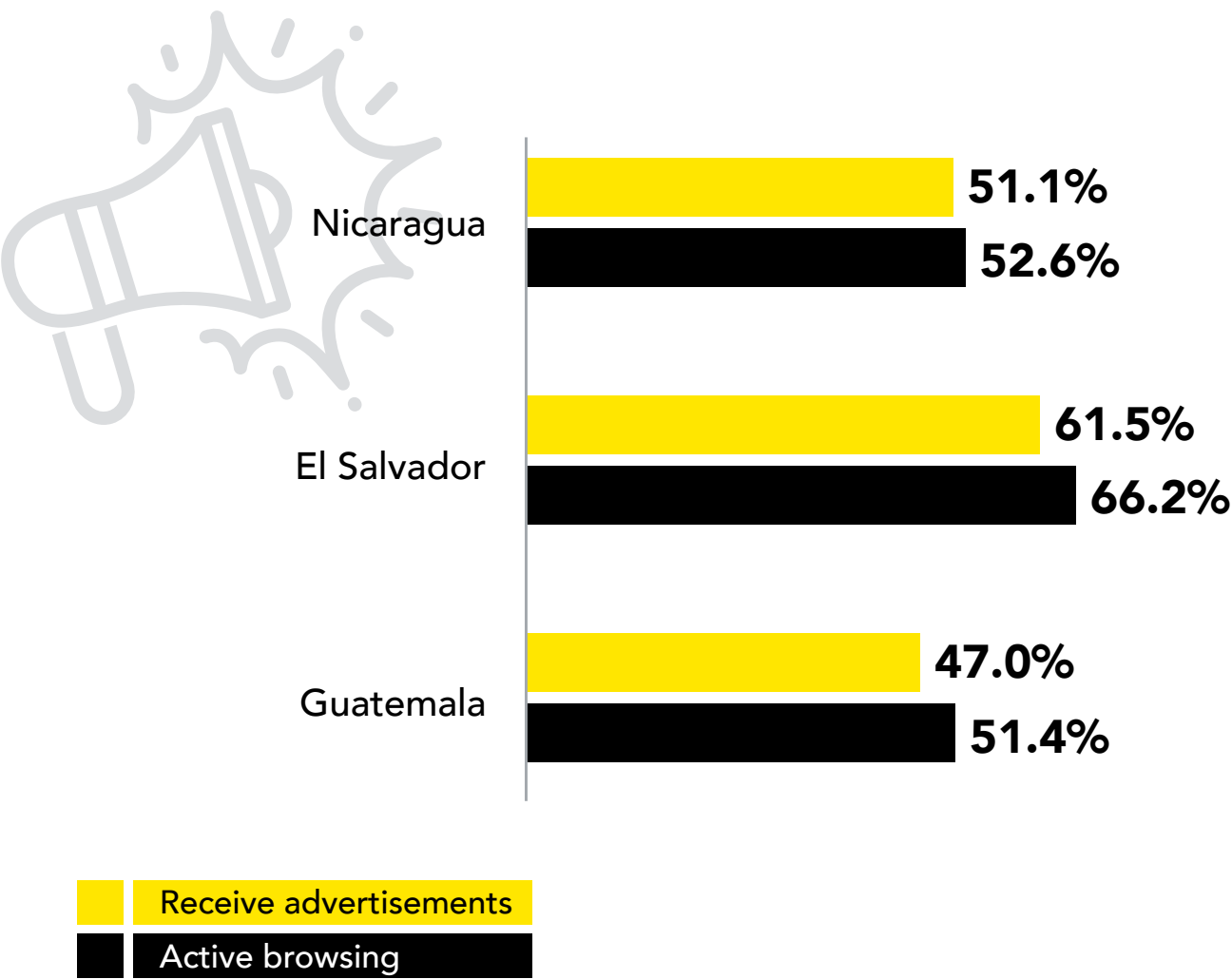
Graph 2. Social media advertising reach



Source: Produced by A-01 with data from Hootsuite in Yi Min Shum (2021)

Graph 3 shows the percentage of people active on Facebook, and receiving advertisements via this channel (practically all of them). Data capture for this population allows highly detailed segments to be designed, thereby focusing adverts for maximum impact on each segment. This means that social media offer tough competition in the fight for advertising space and the corresponding revenues.

Graph 3. Penetration level of active users on Facebook, and users receiving advertisements



Source: Produced by A-01 with data from Hootsuite in Yi Min Shum (2021)

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Audience analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the survey and the discussion groups. The results serve to profile the audience in the three countries involved in the sample and to ascertain their news consumption habits, in particular with regard to digital newspapers.



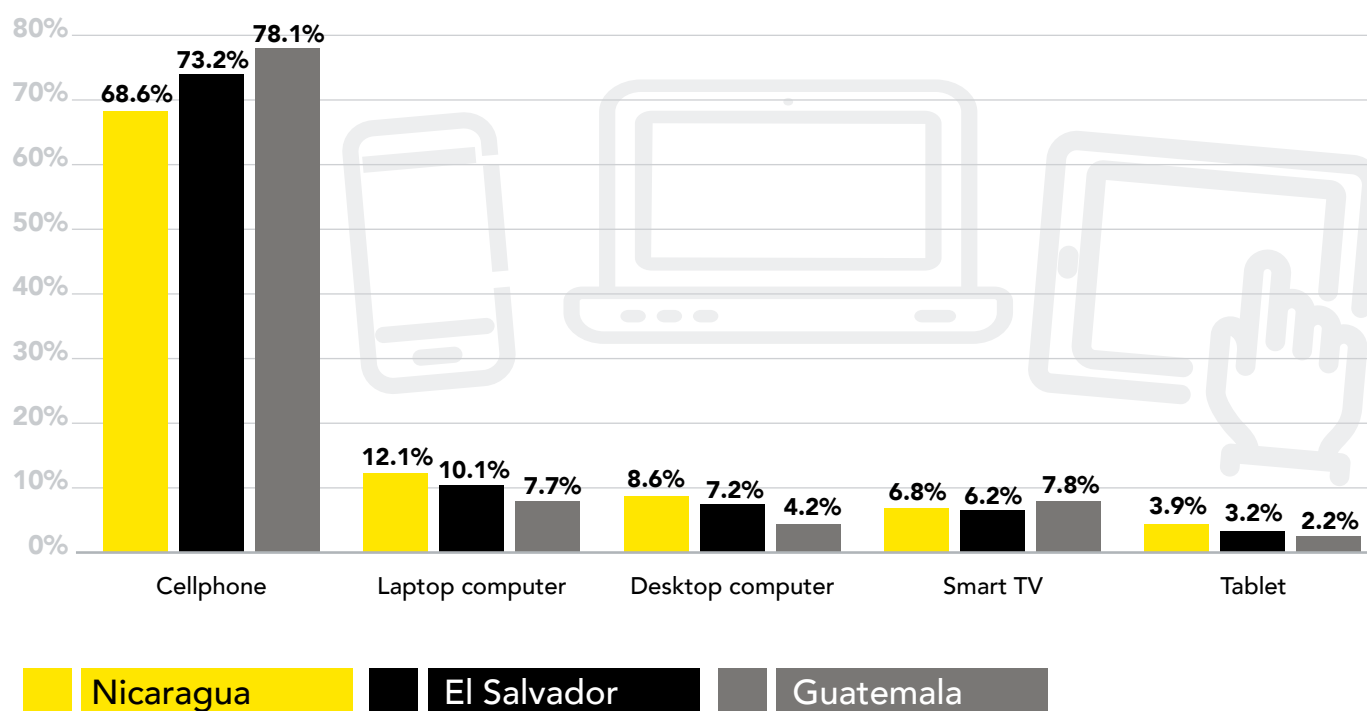
3.1 Habits and preferences in sourcing information

Digital newspapers and social media are the chosen media sources for information, mainly because of their ease of access, immediacy and ubiquity.

National, international and political stories are the most commonly consumed information. The focus groups, above all with migrants, emphasised the need to receive more positive information, success stories, culture and humour.

Two thirds state **that they read the news several times a day**, typically **early in the morning or at night**, and preferably on their **cellphone**.

Graph 4. Devices used most commonly to read, watch or listen to digital news

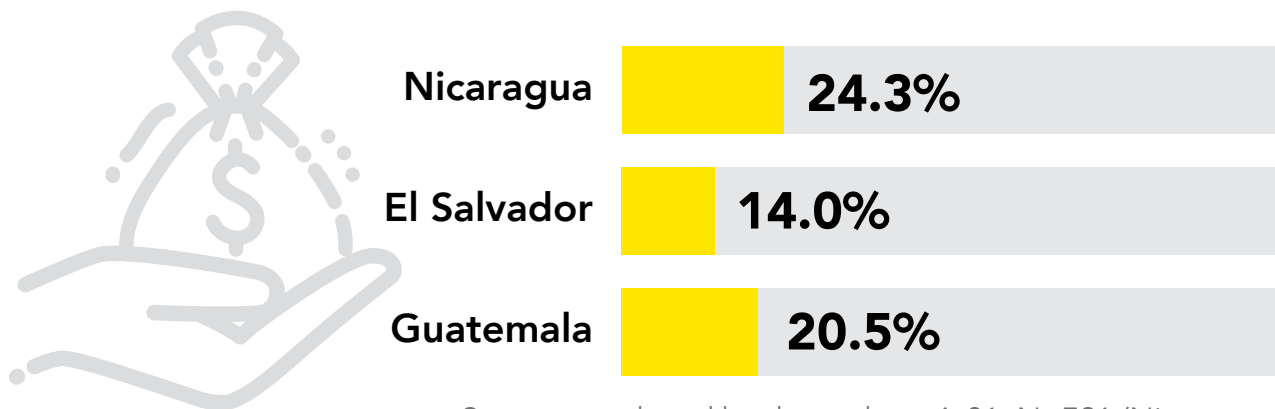


Source: produced by the authors A-01; N=768 (Nicaragua), 1004 (El Salvador), 639 (Guatemala)

3.2 Payments and economic support for journalistic media

The widespread poverty in all three countries raises a barrier to economic contributions to the media. The need for independent media and to receive quality information nonetheless provides grounds for such support. Currently, just 14% of the audience consulted in El Salvador provide economic support to any media outlet; in Guatemala this rises to 20.5%, and in Nicaragua as high as 24.3%.

Graph 5. Percentage of people who pay for a media outlet



Source: produced by the authors A-01; N=721 (Nicaragua), 946 (El Salvador), 571 (Guatemala)

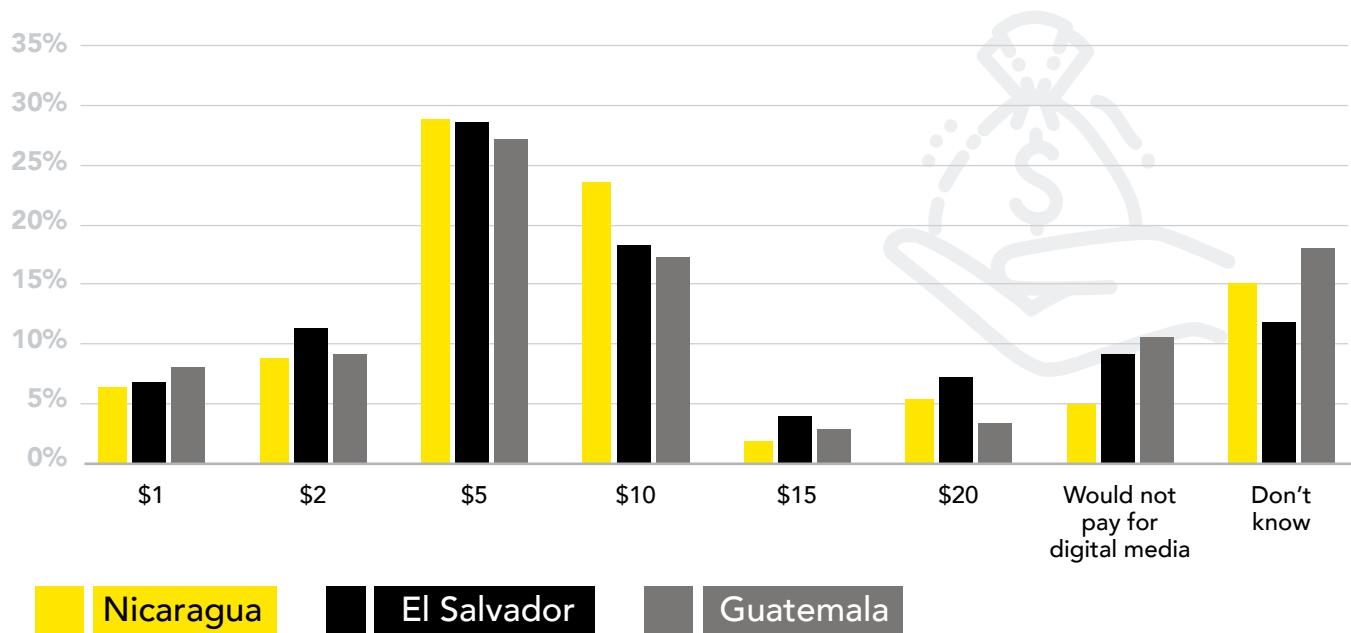
The higher percentage in Nicaragua may be influenced by the membership programmes of the two most widely read newspapers (La Prensa and Confidencial). Nicaragua does indeed have a 14.5% **membership** rate; while in Guatemala and El Salvador, the figures are just 4.4% and 9.3%, respectively. The type of payment most commonly mentioned is **subscription** (mainly annual). This is followed by **donations** (40% in El Salvador and 27% in Guatemala and Nicaragua).

In Nicaragua, 56.5% would provide economic support to a media outlet if their financial position allowed them; barely 32% in El Salvador, and 39% in Guatemala, while 23% and 18%, respectively, would never do so (just 9.7% in Nicaragua).

The main **motivations** to support a media outlet economic are: support quality journalism, journalistic investigation, freedom of expression and the press, accuracy, editorial line and impartiality. Popular **additional benefits** include first of all the opportunity to take part at events, and also access to webinars, podcasts, videos and documentaries; the opportunity to suggest topics for research; receive an e-book; or receive an email with the leading news items.

The maximum amount they would pay per month to support the digital media outlet they most consume is 5 dollars, followed by 10 dollars.

Graph 6. Maximum amount people would pay per month to support the digital media outlet they consume the most



Source: produced by the authors A-01; N=623 (Nicaragua), 680 (El Salvador), 440 (Guatemala)

3.3 Comparison of digital newspapers

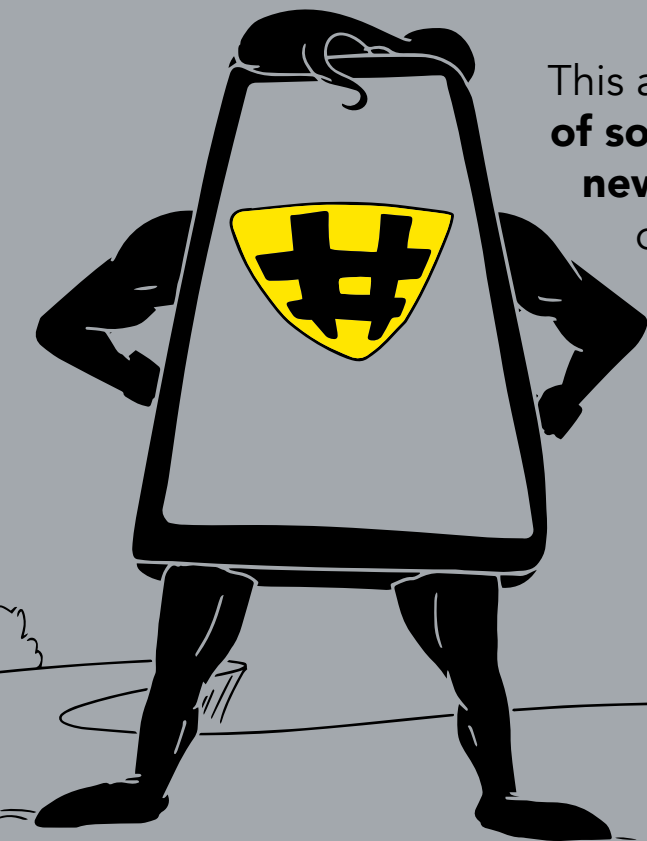
What audiences most appreciate about the media outlets they read are the journalistic content, reliability or credibility, editorial position, independence and the formats in which the content is presented (audio, videos, infographics, photo reportages, live streaming).

Meanwhile, mistrust and disagreement with the editorial position are the main reasons not to consume a media outlet.

3.4 Conclusion about the audience

We are here dealing with a critical audience who are looking for **journalistic quality**, and are even prepared to pay if their economic conditions so allow, or if the outlet is at risk of bankruptcy.

This audience is accustomed to the **immediacy of social media** and **cellphones**, and demands **new formats** so as to digest information in a quicker and more entertaining manner, as well as more diverse and positive content, without thereby neglecting rigorousness, accuracy and objectivity, which are ultimately the reasons why they do or do not support a media outlet.

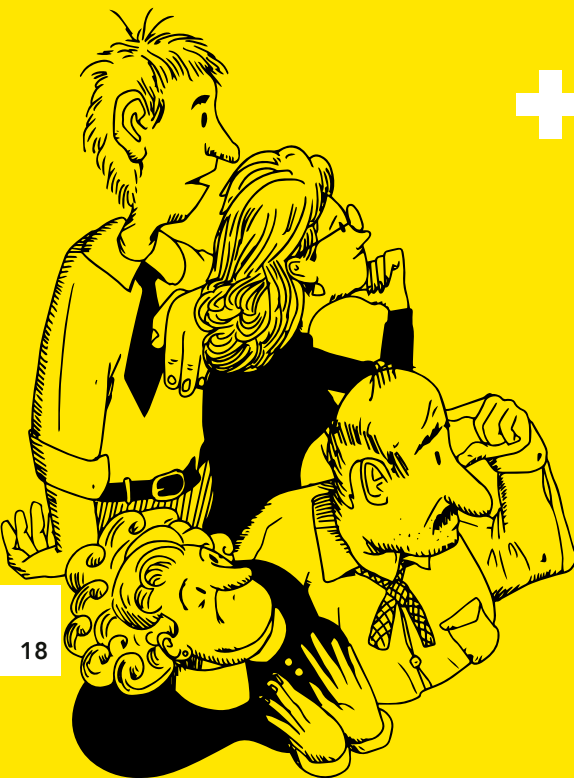


4 Lessons learned

4.1 Relationship with the audience

+ The reach of the media outlets researched in this study extends above all to a **population with greater purchasing power** and educational attainment, who are looking for serious, investigative, quality journalism.

+ This audience likes to feel part of the media outlet, collaborate with it, and have direct contact with its journalists. They specifically like to participate in dialogue and debates through **in-person events and webinars**, suggest topics for investigation, receive information by means of personalised newsletters, and have access to podcasts, videos and e-books. Access to this type of service and product may even be a reason to begin lending **economic support** to a media outlet.





The challenge is to reach more and **new audiences**, of greater diversity and different segments, to whom their current investigations with long, erudite texts do not currently appeal, because they are instead looking for more popular news items or more entertaining formats (such as the videos preferred by the younger population). There is also a considerable group living in rural areas without Internet access, whose source of information and entertainment is via broadcasters (TV and radio) and the most basic version of cellphones, in other words with limited data usage.

4.2 Formats and content



Some of the audience are always on the lookout for **new formats**, and the media therefore need constantly to innovate and accept new narratives. This repackaging of content into other formats or digital platforms must be segmented by audience.



The audience read media outlets that present **content that is truthful**, reliable and transparent, as well as being **easily comprehensible**. **Visualisations** such as videos or infographics may help with this.



One way to **reach a broader audience** is to incorporate new topics within current formats or content, without particularly affecting their identity. One example is provided by *Ojo con mi pisto*, which extended its audience this year when they began to scrutinise the investment of public funds in sport during the season of the Olympic Games. Sport attracts a great many people, and investigation is what they do well, and what their current audience expects.³ Sport also proved

³ <https://ojoconmipisto.com/apoderados-del-deporte/home.html>

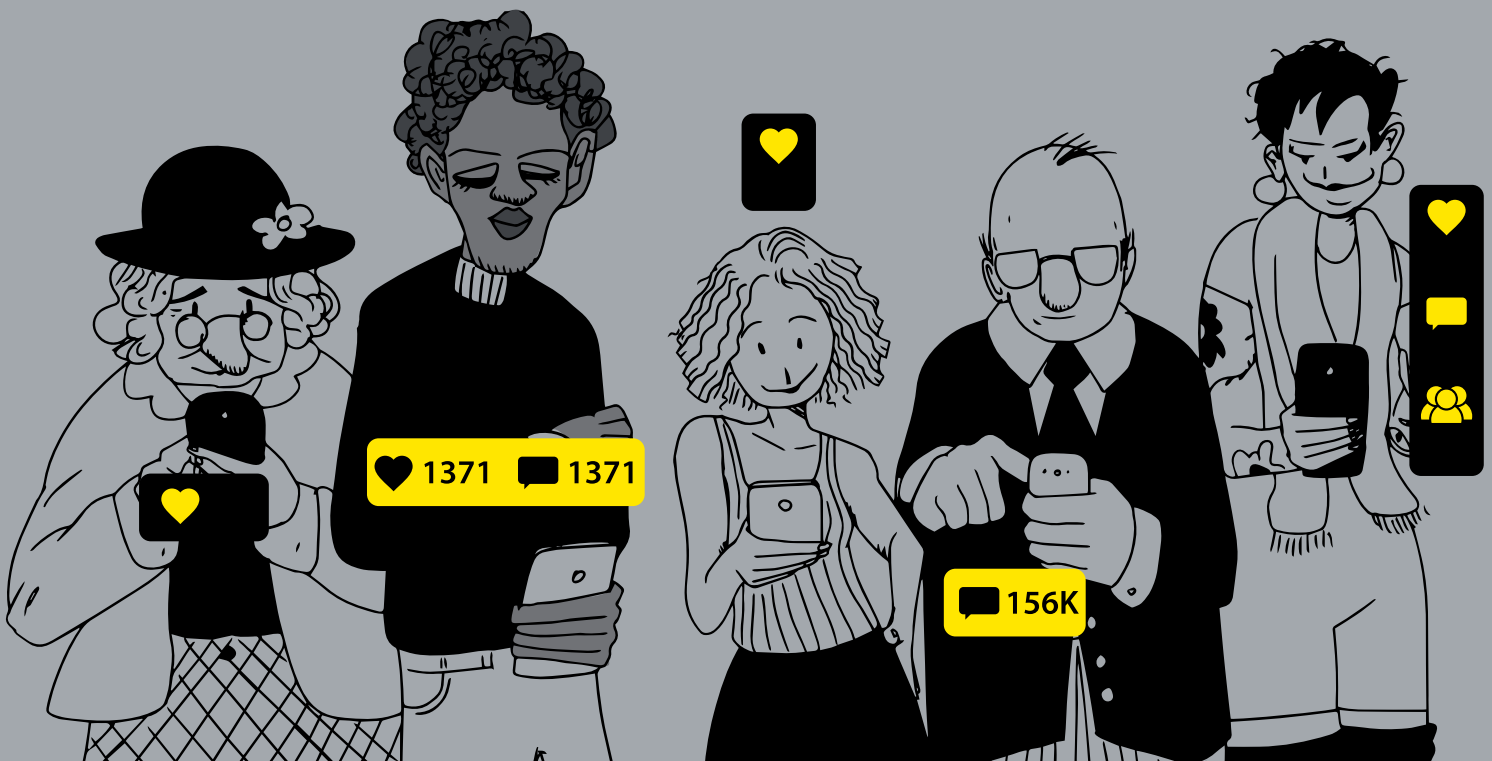
to be a useful hook for El Faro, which published stories about relatives of footballers abroad, thereby addressing the topic of migration. Journalists from both media outlets were even subsequently invited on to sports programmes, allowing their voice to reach audiences that it would not normally. Reading articles about such a popular topic may provide the springboard for people also to read the media outlet's other articles, thereby achieving more sophisticated consumption of information.

- + How, then, could one convert this new, more popular audience into **a loyal media audience?** This also demands changes in format, including new digital and also non-digital approaches to reach an audience with limited Internet access in rural areas.

4.3 Metrics and other data

- + Given the desire to provide daily news coverage, and as resources are limited, operational indicators and metrics are often relegated to the background. If one furthermore considers the technical approach required and the workload potentially involved, we find an apparent reluctance to engage in tasks connected with metrics and data, and limited integration of this aspect into daily operations.
- + The volume of information available for analysis and the need to dedicate time and resources to prioritisation, make it even more difficult to incorporate the analysis of metrics and data into the operational flow. The relationship with the audience is handled more on the basis of anecdote and intuition than through data.

- + Media operations tend to be fragmented, with a particularly substantial gap between the journalistic and commercial sides. While there is a healthy line preserving independent journalism from possible influences, feedback from clients and audiences in some cases fails to reach the decision-makers.
- + Although the media aim to grow their audience, the reference framework and parameters to analyse this growth also tend to be based on anecdote and intuition (e.g. 'publishing more sports stories doesn't work for us'), without analytical structures to analyse and compare data, and with no timeframes allowing robust conclusions to be drawn as to formats, coverage, topics, etc.
- + The media have various gateways and receive a significant proportion of their audience via the social media channel, which also tends to grow in comparison with other gateways (organic traffic, Google searches, and other points of referral such as WhatsApp and links shared via messaging apps).



4.4 Organisational aspects

- + In some of the media outlets studied, the approach to journalistic development and administrative management is fairly meticulous and well-structured. However, the strategic vision is based on traditional practices which leave little room for comprehensive innovation within the organisation.
- + Media organisations typically have a mission-centred hierarchical structure, leaving technology, metrics and data analysis as support activities, not fully incorporated within the flow giving rise to the strategic plan.
- + The media have themselves begun to facilitate participative platforms for their audience, which go beyond mere information. By building a community around distinctive journalistic projects, they spread the rationale that “to inform is to empower”.

4.5 Financial health

- + The study revealed the difficulty in generating sufficient revenues to cover operational costs. Some media have begun to generate revenues through third-party services, such as reporter training, communication consultancy, and even social auditing.
- + Journalistic capabilities, such as data journalism, visualisation design and multimedia content creation are active, and promise to offer added value in this business line, which is a win-win for the media outlet, provided that it has the organisational capacity to handle the team’s internal and external demand.

- ✚ The diversification of revenue streams and generation of new business models are fundamental in media sustainability. They likewise provide a way of improving liquidity and creating greater financial independence, provided that the cost of production is no greater than the revenue.
- ✚ There is an acknowledged difficulty in the management and administration of financial and human resources, in particular when organisations live under attack from their own governments, as is the case in the countries studied. This gives rise to a need to invest in security, to care for staff on the ground, and have reserves to deal with unforeseen circumstances. All these factors contribute to the difficulty of managing operations focused on revenue.
- ✚ Subscription and membership schemes fulfil a cash flow-stabilising function, as they make revenue predictable over time.
- ✚ As a public service, independent information is of incalculable value for society. However, the public are often unfamiliar with the difficult relationship between this independence and healthy and sustainable media funding.

4.6 Strategic alliances and project

- ✚ Alliances with other media outlets, journalists and promoters of fundamental freedoms and democracy have proved a major component in the resilience of such organisations over recent years, in particular in the case of Nicaragua.
- ✚ The current climate increasingly fosters and acknowledges collaborative media, whether through alliances with other media players to publish features and increase their impact, or journalistic alliances to generate content.

- ✚ Strategic alliances with complementary organisations facilitate and embellish journalistic efforts. Alliances with cultural, publishing, academic, human rights and other organisations give rise to positive synergies and enriched coverage.

4.7 Threats to freedom of the press and expression

- ✚ In all three countries the political climate is hostile towards the press. The government attack, harass and demonise a critical press. In Nicaragua, they also imprison journalists or dismantle media outlets. Aggression and threats come both from the State and from organised crime and gangs (less so in Nicaragua). This is often expressed in censorship and self-censorship by the media and journalists themselves. In such a context, survival depends not only on legal support, digital security, physical protection for journalists and staff training, but also financial sustainability.
- ✚ Attacks threaten the sustainability of the media by reducing their income, both from international funds and domestic advertising. Some have also been forced to dedicate time to arbitrary accusations (El Faro, El Salvador), or have had to flee to a foreign country and continue working in exile (Confidencial, Nicaragua). There are even media players, including established publications that have been in existence for decades, that have been forced to close down their operations in part or completely (La Prensa and El Nuevo Diario, Nicaragua).
- ✚ Attacks and open threats go hand-in-hand with the proliferation of surreptitious forms of aggression, which includes journalists and their sources being followed, harassed

and spied on. Troll farms and netcenters further exacerbate the confrontational approach by the authorities, along with baseless arrests. In all cases, extensively explored in national studies, the charges may be false, but the court proceedings are real, and demand time and economic resources.

- ✚ There is no unified trade association in the countries studied. Given the aforementioned crisis, this is nonetheless now beginning to take shape. Unfortunately, in the medium and long term, we must assume that the situation regarding fundamental freedoms will continue to worsen, and must plan for this.



5 Recommendations

This media market and audience study in three Central American countries gives rise to the following recommendations, based on the lessons learned as presented in the previous subsection:

5.1 Relationship with the audience

- + **Commit to investigative journalism**; seek ways of obtaining reliable and appropriate information to assist the general public in reaching decisions.
- + **Diversify the offering of services and products** such as events, webinars, podcasts, videos, e-books or a newsletter to expand the audience (or increase loyalty among the existing audience), or even increase revenue through more subscriptions or paid services.
- + **Acquire a good understanding of the audience**, such as segmentation, priorities, and different ways of consuming news. For example, studies indicate that those aged under 35 look for lots of different, complete items during their browsing time, integrating news with other information and interactions, which is consistent with the findings of this study.

It is important for the media to expand into and conquer new segments, which must be considered in the light of market opportunities and priorities.

- + **Focus the product on the user experience**, with greater internalisation of design methodologies with a product mentality, such as design thinking and user-centred design. This is also important when seeking payment for news, minimising friction and facilitating a single-click purchase.
- + **Analyse audiences based on their potential to generate different revenues by segment.** Any user revenue forecast must be estimated using data and metrics, in particular the following: monthly active users, monthly active user growth rate, conversion rate (from readers to members), average digital revenue per user, churn rate and existing subscribers or members (for news organisations with revenue models based on active users).

5.2 Formats and content

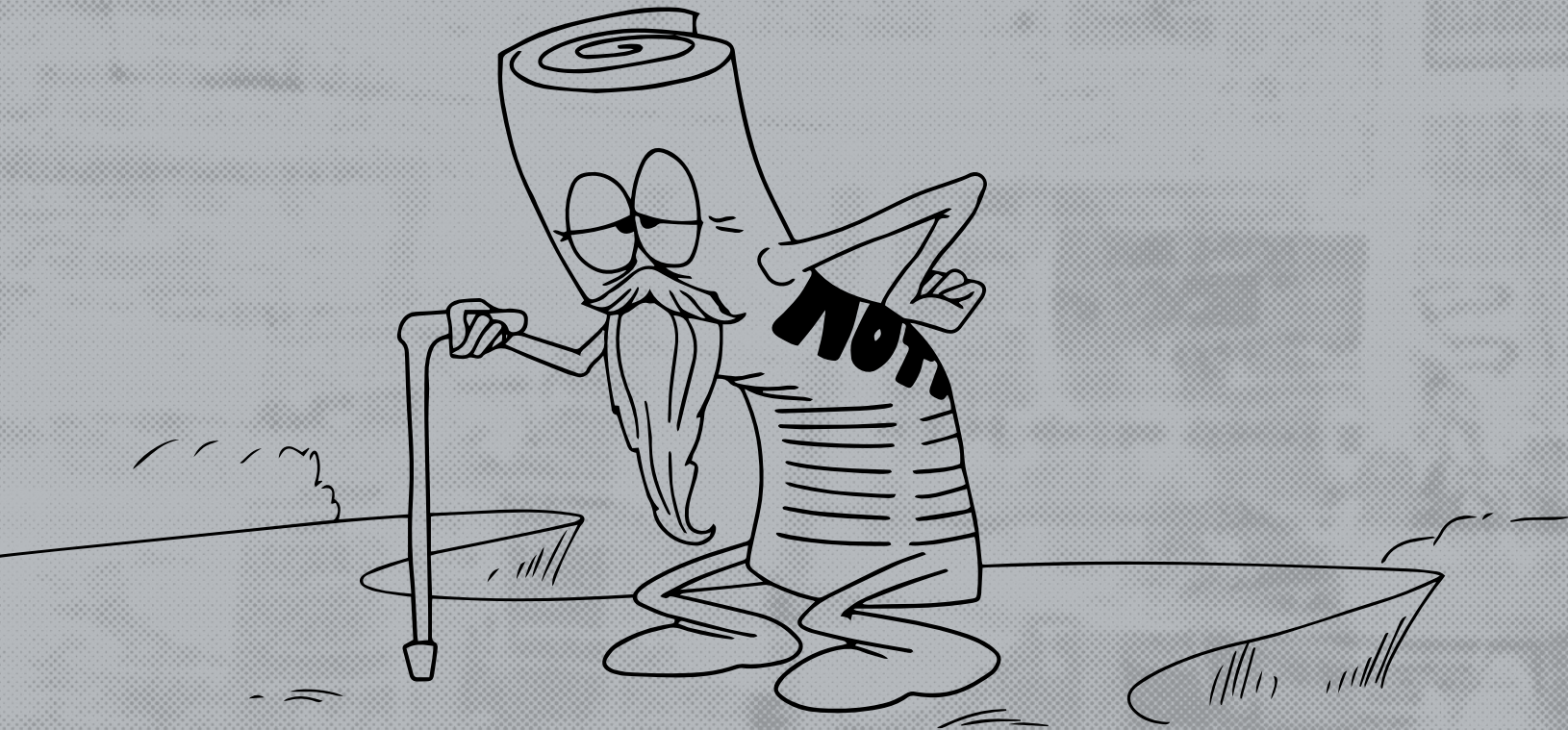
- + **Diversify content and make the content more objective and positive.** The audience do not want to approach all topics from the political angle, and do not want them to be dramatized. In particular, they want fewer downbeat news items, and want content about tourism and culture, and success stories about their compatriots.
- + **Incorporate new, more popular topics into current content** to attract additional audiences. Use may even be made of smart technologies to achieve customised news blends, allowing readers to be presented with elements of both types of content. In such cases, particular emphasis must be

placed on the user experience, in particular to avoid creating a possible sensation of being hoodwinked, such as bait and switch techniques. The clarity of the media outlet brand, its values and information offering are important in this regard.

- + **Diversify formats, in particular those allowing information** to be consumed more rapidly, so as to reach new audiences and build loyalty among the existing audience. There is particular demand for infographics, short videos, podcasts and newsletters with clear titles and links for those wishing to learn more about each topic.
- + **Diversify the channels used to present information**, from new platforms and technologies, to the use of non-digital formats such as radio and television, for populations with limited Internet access.
- + **Refresh formats** to tie in with the new trends in information and communication technologies that audiences like to use for information. Likewise, focus on repackaging content and offer different products to varied audiences in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, rural or urban location, etc. All this requires investment in a sound social media distribution strategy, with innovative formats to present the content.



Image: Quorum
<https://quorum.gt>



- +** **Extend the lifespan of a single news item, and reach different audiences**, by launching other items and/or material on subsequent days in other formats (e.g. infographics) and platforms (Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok). Each news article could also be used to share links to articles previously published about the same topic, even via different social media platforms. All using the same design idiom to foster brand recognition.
- +** **Design strategies based on a thorough understanding** of information consumption patterns and needs, adaptation of distribution mechanisms and formats, including by means of off-line formats.

5.3 Metrics and other data

- + **Capture, build loyalty and retain readers**, by making good use of metrics and analyses to provide information about consumption habits; the path followed to arrive at information, browsing patterns and other aspects. All this contains key elements for both the journalistic team in content generation, and the publication and distribution team deciding the publication times, the sections to which content is assigned, repackaging conditions and related channels, and for the commercial team, who can sell segmented audiences in accordance with these preferences, which are now known to the media outlet.
- + **Continuously improve site performance**, for example in terms of loading times, administration/standardisation of elements such as images, training the editorial team to contribute through good SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) practice, providing appropriate and ongoing support from the technical side.
- + **Establish the most relevant indicators and goals** for each department, so as not to lose sight of what really matters, amid a flood of data. This definition should be tied into the media outlet's priorities, and audience preferences.
- + **Facilitate access to metrics and other reliable data**, training staff in data gathering, analysis and interpretation.
- + **Work in multidisciplinary teams** including editorial staff, the technology and audience team, using the results of the analyses to formulate a growth strategy, indicating areas of geographical and thematic coverage, and identify more effective and profitable distribution formats and channels.

- + **Make use of tools available free of charge**, such as News Consumer Insights and the Google Search Console, the data provided by Google Analytics, Membership Puzzle Project guides, usability heat maps and the Center for Cooperative Media dashboard to analyse the audience by segment, from casual to more loyal users. All the above feeds in to a **continuous and iterative process** to understand and address readers' interests, thereby allowing the proposal of editorial developments and improvements to the website used by the outlet.
- + **Visualise and adopt the potential of promising trends and developments**, such as artificial intelligence, podcasts, voice assistants, wearables and the metaverse.
- + **Take the lead from the executive level** in the implementation, execution and monitoring of the integration of data and metrics, and generate revenue forecasts, reach investment and expenditure decisions in accordance with the expectations for growth and/or development of business lines. The investment in SEO training for journalists is likewise essential.

5.4 Organisational aspects

- + **Optimise Corporate Governance:** first of all, establish a very clear and well-defined decision-making approach, reflecting the values and principles that govern the organisation, while furthermore ensuring effective crisis management by means of contingent bodies capable of steering the course of the organisation in extreme cases in which the leaders are absent or removed.

- + Formulate corporate policies and control mechanisms**, an important task for the board of directors, which may be vital in obtaining donations or investments to avoid or mitigate risk (including interference or hostile takeover), and guarantee that coverage extends to all key players at the organisation.
- + Design mechanisms to facilitate an open mindset, and combat resistance to change.** The search for diverse and disciplinary teams lays the groundwork to achieve incremental changes in new workflows focused more on users' information needs.
- + Register the qualitative and quantitative impacts and achievements** obtained, allowing clear and customised communication of the impact of the media outlet on each key stakeholder (audience, donors, advertisers).
- + Consolidate the technological part, processes and learnings, and exploit synergies** between the different formats, areas of coverage and separate audiences (i.e. a digital media platform, a news programme producer for free-to-air TV distribution and/or various vertical divisions). This requires painstaking design and planning, with all the team involved.
- + Learn from the sectors of user experience**, product design and others, such as the creative economy. Engage young people, who will contribute fresh, innovative ideas and can give the media the digital energy that it sometimes lacks.
- + Develop a gender focus cutting across** all policies, strategies, processes and institutional mechanisms; be proactive in breaking down the gender stereotypes affecting women and LGBT+ people, making use of the great influence that the

media has in shaping the public mindset. Include both external and internal strategic actions at the organisation, with an assigned budget and appropriate indicators, production of handbooks, etc.

5.5 Financial health

- + Have adequate financial control and management systems in place in the accounting and administrative area**, focused on growth and sustainability. Use this to support the consolidation and development of good financial management practices, such as: analysis of cost per unit, generate budgets, monitor revenue and expenditure in comparison with the budget, the organisation's strategies and a set of management indicators.
- + Diversify revenue streams** for greater financial independence. This requires research into which audiences are prepared to pay, and for which types of service and products. In order to get a person or entity to provide economic support for a media outlet, it must show the value of its work in terms of promoting democracy, and also make it clear that a public service cannot be offered without the required income.
- + Pay heed to legal compliance.** Comply with the formal requirements of incorporation, registration of capital and equity structure, as well as the taxes, social charges and other formal company requirements. Independent media players must in particular focus on these issues because of the risk of fines or even closure by the authorities in the event of any breach. Such issues are typically pushed into the background by urgent day-to-day needs, but it is important to bear them in mind all times.

5.6 Strategic alliances and projects

- + **Strengthen the trade association of journalists and communicators** in response to increasing judicial, political and economic repression. This necessarily means building alliances with other media outlets and organisations specialising in issues of security, laws and human rights.
- + **Establish alliances with cultural, publishing and social organisations** capable of generating positive synergies and greater availability of ideas when developing events, training and other possible spheres of content and revenue.
- + **Collaborate with media outlets and organisations outside the capital** to diversify topics and cover newsworthy events that the audience demand, given the minimal coverage. This may also generate gains in terms of diversity.
- + **Forge alliances between independent media outlets and other stakeholders in the region, or even other regions.** The three countries share a fairly similar reality; experiences, research, human and financial resources can be drawn on, providing mutual assistance.
- + **Join forces to expand national and international audiences,** since each media outlet and journalist brings their own audience and experience. Meanwhile, many international cooperation funds only work with collaborative initiatives rather than a single individual (Fundamedios, 2021).
- + **Create strategic alliances with educational institutions** such as universities and national and international think tanks to develop teaching processes that build skills among the

general public to access, reflect and act critically with regard to media content and functions. Such training is currently led in Latin America by institutions including Germany's Deutsche Welle Akademie, with local partners such as UCA and Escuela de Comunicación Mónica Herrera, to train university teachers or provide diplomas for a wider public. The media can themselves make a commitment to developing media literacy on their own account. To this end, the United Nations Education, Science and Culture Organisation (UNESCO) and Deutsche Welle Akademie itself have a great deal of valuable literature and teaching materials, which can be reused with the respective permissions.

5.7 Threats to freedom of the press and expression

- + **Forge alliances with new social movements** using the power of the people (including audiences) to demand and uphold freedom of expression, freedom of the press and access to information, new laws, new civil society organisations, new cooperatives or associations of journalists to improve working conditions, and a host of other innovative institutions, which will undoubtedly come out of the expansion of the civic forum, inclusive commitment and imaginative collaboration.
- + **Exercise collaborative journalism** as a tool against censorship and self-censorship, such as publications of collaborative investigation into the Panama Papers, Paradise Papers and Pandora Papers. These publications were made possible by collaboration among editorial teams around the world, and an infrastructure designed by the International Consortium

of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) to facilitate this. As a result, the governments and controlling bodies of the respective companies were forced to respond, without dealing with the journalists individually (Fundamedios, 2021: 16).

- + Continue to publicise attacks against freedom of expression, of the press and access to information**, through forums, webinars and other collective events, to lend one another mutual support. It is essential to give a voice to leading journalists and media outlets, to seek solutions and generate a regional impact (Fundamedios, 2021:19).
- + Draw up a crisis communication plan** or have a response committee to address laws affecting the work of the media, including funds for legal defence and to guarantee the comprehensive security of journalists, and the inviolability of their communications and devices.

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