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Identity orientations of Latino print media in Spain: the reinforcement of Latino popular culture

Abstract

The evolution of Latino print media in Spain has coincided with the demographic increase of Latin American immigrants in the country since the early 1990s. Starting with one publication in 1992, the market started to grow in 2003 and reached its peak in 2007 with the edition of more than 100 titles. The advertising crisis of 2008 ended this trend, and the number of publications began a continuous and permanent decline in the following years despite a demographic recovery of Latin Americans in Spain after 2016. This research presents a quantitative analysis of the contents of 1,500 news items from 14 Latino newspapers and magazines that survived the 2008 advertising downfall. Six of these 14 media outlets continue publishing in 2023. The objective of this study is to show the connections between the contents of the analyzed Latino print media and the cultural identities of their readers. The results show that the prevalent themes related to culture, society and politics represent the identities of their Latino readers. Latino publications give visibility to Latinos as the protagonists of their contents. In addition, the origin of the protagonists shows the wide range of Latin American countries in correlation with the diverse Latin American origins of the readers. We discuss the implications of these findings within the volatile context of Latino print media in Spain, the growing Latin American demographics, and the formation of diverse Latino identities.

Keywords

Latino print media, Latin Americans, Spain, news contents, cultural identities.

1. Introduction and state of the issue

At the start of the 20th century, Park (1922) claimed that immigrants coming from Europe to the United States wanted to read newspapers in their own language due to the lack of freedom of the press in their countries of origin. Ethnic media began to fulfill an informative role, because they told readers how to incorporate into their new host country (Park, 1922). Today ethnic media provide information that includes community and cultural celebrations as well as practical advice to help immigrants find employment and housing, enroll their children in school, open a bank account, or apply for medical assistance and social services, among others (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2016).

Ethnic media reflect the worries of their readers and exercise social control by drawing attention to what is and isn't acceptable within the dominant rules and values of the community they target. Gutiérrez (1977) said many of the first newspapers in Spanish in the United States were already institutions of social control connected to political parties which published lifestyle news and reprinted stories from other newspapers. In connection with the exercise of social control, ethnic media can carry out a watchdog role, acting as a radar and warning system of external threats to their community of readers, including information about the legal rights of immigrants or changes in migratory laws. Ethnic media can also foster a positive and successful image of the members of the community (Viswanath & Arora, 2000). Thus, media for migrants, also conceptualized as diasporic media, can be platforms of self-representation and protest for migrant communities against the negative stereotypes they endure in the public sphere (Ogunyemi, 2015).

In regard to their cultural role, ethnic media can promote the cultural identity of their readers, expressed in the use of their own languages, customs and religious practices, their links with family, friends and neighbors, and their participation in ethnic organizations (Jeffres, 2000). Ethnic media can reinforce ethnic identity through the lessons taught by older members of the ethnic group in the cognitive dimension, in accordance with group norms in the behavioral dimension, and through the feelings of belonging to that group in the emotional dimension (Matsaganis, Katz & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). Having studied the use of ethnic media by Arabs and Russian migrants in Israel, Adoni, Caspi, and Cohen (2006) show that the construction of the cultural identity of migrant communities increases with the use of their native languages in ethnic media.

1.1. *Latino media and cultural identity*

As other ethnic media do, Latino media can function as vehicles of the cultural identities that their Latin American readers bring from their homelands to their host countries, in this case Spain. Their identities, many of indigenous descent, are as diverse as the Spanish-speaking countries which they come from, comprising a population of more than 600 million people. But Latino media in Spain reach all Latin Americans living in the country, with topics that represent elements of cultural identity that most Latin Americans regard as their own.

Some of these Latino cultural elements would include the Spanish language, the importance of family and community, the cultural activities that show their ancestral and indigenous traditions, their cuisine, their practice of religion as a devotion to local patrons and saints from Latin America, and their deep attachment to patriotic symbols of their homeland, like the flag and the national anthem.

Dávila (2000) says that when media address Latinos as one, they reaffirm the existence of a common Latino identity. Latinos constitute “‘a nation within a nation’ with unique family values, communal disposition, traditionalism, spirituality, etc.,” and the Spanish language is the primary tool to define their uniqueness and need for culturally specific media and advertising (pp. 38–39).

Ethnic media reproduce cultural identity “as an ‘essence’ shared by all Latin American migrants, focusing on three topics: the indigenous origins, the Catholic religion and the ‘Latino’ popular music” (Echevarría Vecino, Ferrández Ferrer & Dallemagne, 2015, p. 93). Ethnic media create a specific Latino cultural identity connecting past and present media cultures:

In short, the linking of the traditional and mass cultures enables the media to create a specific “Latino” cultural identity. “Latino” identity integrates a pan-national imaginary built upon an indigenous (traditional) common identification as a particularity shared by most Latin American countries that implies a shared colonial history, common religious practices and a musical mass culture (p. 95).

Based on an analysis of the contents of *La Raza* newspaper in Chicago, González-Veléz (2002) says that Latino media express *Latinidad* as a unified discourse that legitimizes the Latino community as being one. The discourse of *Latinidad* in Latino media in the United States describes Latinos as a cohesive but at the same time diverse community that honors their cultural heritage through the Spanish language, their homeland, and Catholicism, but also as a community of productive citizens who subscribe to the American dream (Silber Mohamed, 2017).

Although women are traditionally considered the backbone of Latino families, *Latinidad* is mostly framed within a hypersexualized representation of Latina women, which is focused on their physical attributes, as we can see in showbiz celebrities like singer Jennifer Lopez or actress Sofia Vergara (Hurtado, 2017; Luño-Luño, 2015; Negrón-Muntaner, 2017).

The concept of *Latinidad* as a homogenous Latino cultural identity is being questioned because it may lead to the ghettoization of Latinos (Suárez Navaz & Ferrández Ferrez, 2012) and to the commodification of Latino identities (Guedes Bailey, 2007). In addition, the term 'Latinx' has emerged in the last few years as a gender-neutral alternative to 'Latino' or 'Latina' in social media and academia (Noe-Bustamante, Mora & López, 2020). Latinx (for some, LatinX) constructs identities that include a wide variety of racial, national and even gender-based identifications (Morales, 2019), and the X works as a symbolic nexus that questions conventional groupings of Latino, Latina, and Latin@ (Milian, 2019).

Our study looks further into the specific contents published by Latino print media in Spain to establish the presence of common cultural traits that can develop a Latino or Latinx identity.

1.2. Publications for Latinos in Spain

The creation of publications geared to Latin Americans in Spain reveals the new consumer demands made by the first flow of immigrants arriving in the country from Latin America in the beginning of the 1990s. Journalistic production began in 1992 with the magazine *Revista Pueblo Nuevo*. In 1995, the magazine considered the dean of the Latino print media in Spain, *Ocio Latino*, was created in Madrid, and the magazine *Mujeres del Mundo-munduko emakumeak* and the newspaper *Resumen Latinoamericano y del Tercer Mundo* came out in the Basque Country. The rising demographics of Latinos in Spain bring on the emergence of an associative movement, and some Latin American groups begin to publish newsletters with useful information and institutional activities. The number of new titles increased, reaching 17 in the year 2000 (Mendieta-Bartolomé, 2018).

The number of Latin Americans living in Spain multiplied by 4,7 times between 2000 (364,998) and 2005 (1.721.371) (INE, 2023). Following this demographic growth, Latino publications increased by 53% between 2002 and 2003. In 2004 and 2005, the free weekly publications *Sí, Se Puede* and *Latino* were created, marking a milestone in the Latino publishing market because each one had a weekly circulation of more than 100,000 copies in different cities in Spain. Between 2005 and 2006 alone, 30 new publications appeared, and in 2007 the Latino press market reached its threshold with a total of 105 publications in Spain. In 2007, the first daily national newspaper *El Nuevo Ciudadano* was born in Madrid, but it lasted only five months before becoming a weekly. As far as the topics covered, Latino newspapers and magazines focus on the latest news from the immigrant's viewpoint, and highlight practical matters such as home buying and renting, employment, health care, social benefits, and administrative procedures to adjust an immigrant's legal status. The language of these Latino publications incorporates Latin American slang and expressions, and their design shows big headlines and photos, with lots of color and short texts, normally used in free publications (Gómez-Escalonilla *et al.*, 2008). Almost 20 of these publications were geared specifically at readers from specific Latin American countries.

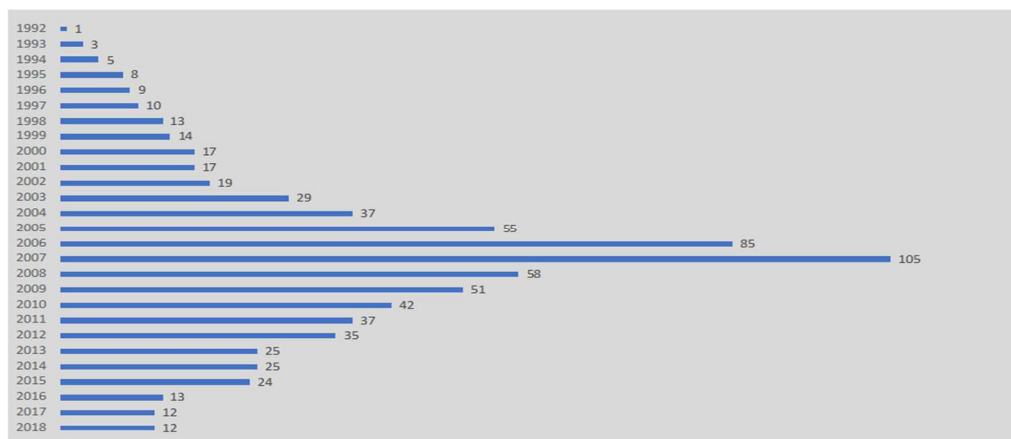
But the year 2008 represented a turning point in the evolution of Latino publications. The 105 publications edited in 2007 dropped by almost 45%, and only 58 survived. Some of the publications that had to close down had been in the market since the mid-1990s. The drastic reduction in advertising investment, both private and institutional, explained the downturn in the Latino press, both in number of pages and in circulation and distribution (Retis, 2014).

This publishing crisis took place within a context of an economic recession, which also affected the Latin American community in Spain. In fact, the number of Latin Americans living in Spain decreased by almost 8% between 2010 (2.312.148) and 2016 (2.122.813) (INE, 2023).

The editorial market continued to plummet after 2008. In six years, between 2008 and 2014, the number of Latino publications reduced by more than half, from 58 to 25, and the market stabilized with the publication of 25 newspapers and magazines. The closings of the weeklies *Latino* and *Sí, Se Puede* in 2012 were very significant, due to their national ranking and circulation. In 2023, eight of the 14 newspapers and magazines printed in 2014 were no longer publishing.

The volatility of Latino print media in Spain has made it difficult for researchers to develop a comprehensive census of the Latino newspapers and magazines since 1992 to date. Several authors have elaborated maps of Latino media outlets in Spain (Ferrández-Ferrer, 2014; Forero Bordamalo, 2015; Navarro, 2008; Retis, 2006). Figure 1 shows the evolution in the number of Latino publications in Spain in a 26-year-long period, based on a census elaborated by the authors with the titles found in paper or digital format between 1992 and 2018.

Figure 1. Evolution in the number of Latino publications in Spain (1992-2018).



Source: Own elaboration.

2. Research design

Shortly after the rapid growth of Latino media in Spain, research began to focus on the construction of differentiated Latino identity patterns in these media. The research design of this article is based, in part, on the works of Retis (2008) and the concept of “latinoamericanidad” (the essence of being Latin American); Sabés Turmo (2009) and the term “nación latina” (Latin nation); Suárez Navaz (2011) and the Latino identity as manifested in shared experiences of migration, history and discrimination; and the integration of Latino media in local communities (Agirreazkuenaga & Larrondo, 2018).

The objective of this article is to study the contents of a sample of Latino-oriented newspapers and magazines in Spain to determine if these contents represent the Latino cultural identity of their readers.

Considering the complexity to define what constitutes the Latino cultural identity, defined by many as Latinidad but today also as Latinx, different authors point out the importance of family, race and language, and ethnic celebrations (Aparicio, 2019). But other

concepts are key to understand Latinos, and those involve the consideration of Latinos and/or Latinas as subjects of commodification (sexualization or criminalization, among others), the food and the music as indicators of a deep sense of community and regionalism, and the immigration as it pertains to the laws that affect the incorporation of Latinos in the country of destination (Aldama & González, 2019). The first hypothesis in this article links Latino media contents with the identity of their readers.

H1. The prevalent themes in the Latino publications in Spain represent the main elements related to the Latino identity.

Despite the rise of Latin American migrations around the world, Latinos are underrepresented and portrayed by negative stereotypes in the media, both in the United States (Reis, 2017) and Spain (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2018). Latinos have been made invisible in mainstream media, they are newsworthy if they are involved in topics of social conflict, and they are perceived as a market but less as content producers (González de Bustamante & Retis, 2017). The media portrayal of Latinos in mainstream media leads us to our second hypothesis regarding the role of Latinos in Latino media.

H2. Latinos have visibility as the protagonists of the prevalent themes of Latino culture, society and politics in the contents of Latino publications in Spain.

The diversity of the Latin American countries which Latino protagonists come from proves their heterogeneous nature and vast national, regional and ethnic differences (Del Río, 2017), despite the public discourse that implements pan-ethnic labels such as Latino, Hispanic, or Latinoamericano (Retis, 2019). The third hypothesis is grounded on the diversity of the Latino media protagonists.

H3. The diversity of the Latino protagonists in the contents of Latino publications in Spain corresponds with the variety of the Latin American countries represented in Spain.

In order to tackle these hypotheses, we have selected a diverse and heterogeneous group of Latino titles in regards to their nature (mostly informative or entertaining), contents, targeted readers, format, frequency, circulation, and area of distribution. The market of Latino publications in Spain has been volatile since its inception in 1992. Our work has verified the existence of 131 Latino publications edited in Spain between 1992 and 2018. The year chosen for this study was 2014 because it was the first year in which the number of Latino print titles in Spain didn't decrease after the crisis of 2008. Our sample selected 14 of the 25 Latino newspapers and magazines edited in Spain in 2014 and available in either paper or digital format. Only content available to the researcher was analyzed using a non-probabilistic and convenience sampling (Zabaleta Urkiola, 1997).

The 14 publications included the political left-wing newspapers *Resumen Latinoamericano y del Tercer Mundo* and *Hola Latinoamérica*, the political left-wing magazine *Encuentros*, the bimonthly newspaper *Baleares sin fronteras*, the feminist magazine *Mujeres del mundo-munduko emakumeak*, the Bolivian-oriented newspaper *Bolivia Es* and magazine *Haz Bolivia*, the Paraguayan-oriented newspaper *Guay del Paraguay*, the Argentinean-oriented magazine *Argentinos.es*, the Venezuelan-oriented magazine *Yo Soy Venezolano*, the cultural magazine *Aquí Latinos*, the entertainment oriented magazines *Ocio Latino* and *Somos Latinos*, and the entertainment/erotic magazine *Shock Magazine*. This last magazine had a double cover, the front cover for men and the back cover for women, with 80 pages each. For the codification we divided the magazine into two, *Shock Magazine Man* and *Shock Magazine Woman*, to make the analysis more manageable.

Following the convenience sampling, our study included four issues published by each of the 14 publications in 2014. For each of those 56 issues, we analyzed all the news items from front to back page, which amounted to 1,507 items. These 1,507 informative items were categorized according to three variables, which are Themes, Protagonists, and Origin of the protagonists. We wanted to determine if the contents of Latino publications correspond with

the themes related to the identity of their Latino readers, if they give visibility to Latinos as protagonists in the media, and if they represent the diversity of Latino nationalities. The three variables and their corresponding subvariables are included in Table 1.

Table 1. Variables and subvariables for this study.

Themes	Protagonists	Origin of the protagonists
Politics in origin	Politicians/government	Spain
Politics in destination	Journalists/communicators	Colombia
Politics in third countries	Writers	Ecuador
Migrations	Activists/NGOs	Perú
Economy/labor	Cultural associations	Bolivia
Culture	Football players	Argentina
Sports	Singers	Paraguay
Society	Other artists	Uruguay
Science and technology	Animals and objects	Cuba
Others	Others	Venezuela
		Chile
		Europa
		USA
		México
		Other Latin American countries
		Others

Source: Own elaboration.

The following codebook explains all the subvariables above with their respective variables. Themes:

1. Politics in origin: Themes related to the politics in the country of origin, always a Latin American country.
2. Politics in destination: Themes related to the politics in the country of destination, always Spain, since the analyzed publications and their readers are in Spain.
3. Politics in third countries: Themes related to the politics of third countries which are neither Spain nor a Latin American country. However, they affect Latin Americans in Spain, mostly in regard to their immigration status.
4. Migrations: Themes related to migratory issues in general, and immigration laws.
5. Economy/labor: Themes related to economy or labor, either in origin or destination.
6. Culture: Themes related to cultural traditions and activities, including cuisine, from the Latin American countries of origin.
7. Sports: Themes related to any sports or sports players, in the country of origin or in Spain.
8. Society: A variety of themes that would appear in the Society section, related to women, celebrations and festivities (mostly from the country of origin but held in Spain), as well as beauty, health, sex or environment.
9. Science and technology: Themes related to science and technology, either in the Latin American country of origin or in Spain.
10. Others: Diverse themes that can't be categorized in any of the above subvariables.

In the variables of Protagonists and Origin of the protagonists, all the subvariables are self-explanatory except for these ones. Protagonists:

1. Other artists: Different types of artists who are not singers, including actors, dancers, painters, sculptors, photographers, filmmakers, models, or beauty pageant contestants.

2. Animals and objects: Protagonists who are either animals or objects, such as technological devices or vehicles, among others.
3. Others: Diverse types of protagonists that can't be categorized in any of the above subvariables.
4. Origin of the protagonists:
5. Other Latin American countries: The Latin American countries that are not singled out in the table, such as Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Panamá, Guatemala, El Salvador or Brazil.
6. Others: Countries in Asia and Africa, Australia or New Zealand.

To process the collected data we followed two steps. In the first step, we calculated the annual average percentage obtained by each subvariable of the variables Themes, Protagonists, and Origin of the protagonists in each publication. To do that, we added up the percentages of the subvariables in the four issues analyzed per publication, and then divided each amount by four. In the second

step, we calculated the annual total average for each subvariable of the variables Themes, Protagonists and Origin of the protagonists in all publications by adding all the items by subvariable in all the 56 issues analyzed for the 14 publications, and then dividing each amount by the total of 1,507 items categorized.

The codification analysis was conducted by the authors of the article. In order to ensure the accuracy of the results, an inter-coder reliability test was performed with 10% of the sampling. For that matter, a social science researcher who was not involved with this study used the same coding book and the average result obtained was 0,83 ($SD = 0,11$) in the Kappa Cohen's coefficient.

3. Results

In the first variable analyzed (Theme), data demonstrates that the three prevalent themes or topics (68% of the total) are culture, society, and politics in origin connected with Latin America (see Table 2).

Table 2. Predominant themes in Latino publications in Spain.

	Number of items	Percentage
Culture	411	27,3%
Society	356	23,6%
Politics in origin	258	17,1%
Migrations	94	6,2%
Economy/labor	90	6%
Sports	64	4,3%
Politics in destination	49	3,3%
Politics in third countries	49	3,3%
Science and technology	31	2,1%
Others	105	6,9%
	1.507	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

Culture is the predominant theme in five publications. Of those, *Ocio Latino*, and *Somos Latinos* have the highest percentages of culture-related contents. The main cultural contents in these two magazines, which always feature a Latino artist in their front page, are musical. They include the releases of new songs or videos by Latino pop singers such as Jennifer Lopez or Shakira, and coverage of Latino music related events like the Latin Grammys or the Billboard Latin Music Awards. Indigenous folklore and cuisine also occupy an important place in the cultural coverage of Latino print media because they are two major traits of their Latin American readers' cultural identity, which trace back to their indigenous roots. The culture related stories in *Bolivia Es* showcase traditional carnival parades held by Bolivian cultural associations in different parts of Spain, as well as traditional dishes based on the quinoa seed. The magazine *Yo Soy Venezolano* has different stories on the Venezuelan cornbread *arepas*, and *Shock Magazine Woman* features *Chef Pepín's* section of Cuban dishes.

The second overall prevalent theme, Society, is the principal one in the contents of *Yo Soy Venezolano*, *Shock Magazine Man*, and *Shock Magazine Woman*, which are mostly centered on the physical attributes and sex appeal of their protagonists. Beauty queens crowned as Miss Universe or Miss World in different years are the face of almost all covers in *Yo Soy Venezolano*. They represent women's physical beauty as an element of cultural identity and national pride based on the fact that Venezuela has won the majority of Miss Universe and Miss World contests (seven and six times respectively). *Shock Magazine Man* and *Shock Magazine Woman* feature many male and female models in erotic poses. Social celebrations, like Mother's Day, and religious festivities of local patron saints from Latin America, also have a relevant place in the contents of Society as the second prevalent theme.

As for the third prevalent theme, Politics in origin is the most important one in the political left-wing newspapers *Resumen Latinoamericano y del Tercer Mundo* and *Hola Latinoamérica*. Their political coverage centers on the success of left-wing regimes in Latin America, especially in Venezuela with Nicolás Maduro, and in Bolivia with now ex-president Evo Morales. *Haz Bolivia* and *Bolivia Es* devote a large part of their political coverage to the registration of Bolivian voters in Spain for the presidential elections in their home country. The political contents of *Hola Latinoamérica* give relevance to the peace talks between the government and the guerrillas in Colombia.

In regard to the second variable analyzed, the most mentioned protagonists are animals and objects, politicians and government, other artists, singers, activists, and cultural associations, as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Predominant protagonists in Latino publications in Spain.

	Number of items	Percentage
Animals and objects	462	30,7%
Politicians/governments	324	21,5%
Other artists	157	10,4%
Singers	141	9,4%
Activists/NGOs	125	8,3%
Cultural associations	71	4,7%
Writers	52	3,5%
Journalists/communicators	49	3,3%
Football players	33	2,2%
Others	93	6,1%
	1.507	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

Politicians are the main characters in the Bolivian-oriented publications *Bolivia Es* and *Haz Bolivia*, and in the political left-wing newspapers *Hola Latinoamérica* and *Resumen Latinoamericano y del Tercer Mundo*. Politicians in *Bolivia Es* and *Haz Bolivia* include the Bolivian president and his cabinet, electoral candidates, and members of the diplomatic corps (ambassadors and consuls) based in Spain. Other Latin American presidents (often Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro) and elected officials are the political protagonists in *Hola Latinoamérica* and *Resumen Latinoamericano y del Tercer Mundo*. Politicians are closely followed as protagonists by singers and other artists, mostly in the entertainment-oriented magazines. Singers are the leading figures in *Ocio Latino* and *Somos Latinos*. Other artists are the main protagonists in *Shock Magazine Woman*, featuring male and female models and actors and actresses, and also in *Yo Soy Venezolano*, featuring former Venezuelan beauty queens. Activists are the leading protagonists in the feminist magazine *Mujeres del mundo-munduko emakumeak* and in *Hola Latinoamérica*. *Bolivia Es*, which includes most if not all the events held by Bolivian associations in Spain, is the publication with the highest percentage of cultural associations as protagonists.

Regarding the third variable analyzed, the Origin of the protagonists, data indicates that more than 60% come from almost the entire spectrum of different Latin American countries (see Table 4). Of those countries, the highest individual percentages of protagonists correspond to Bolivia, Paraguay, Colombia, Argentina and Venezuela, because there are two publications specifically oriented to Bolivians (*Bolivia Es* and *Haz Bolivia*), one to Paraguayans (*Guay del Paraguay*), one to Argentineans (*Argentinos.es*), and one to Venezuelans (*Yo Soy Venezolano*). Although the percentage of Colombians and Argentineans is very similar, there are no publications specifically targeting Colombians in the analyzed sample.

Table 4. Origin of the protagonists in Latino publications in Spain.

	Number of items	Percentage
Bolivia	275	15%
Others	270	21,8%
Other Latin American countries	187	9,4%
Spain	139	9,2%
Paraguay	110	7,3%
Colombia	83	5,8%
Argentina	75	5%
USA	75	4,9%
Venezuela	67	4,5%
Perú	61	4,2%
Ecuador	49	3,2%
Cuba	33	2%
México	31	1,6%
Europa	30	1,7%
Chile	13	0,8%
Uruguay	10	0,7%
	1.507	100%

Source: Own elaboration.

To show the diversity of Latin American protagonists in Latino publications in Spain, the protagonists of *Encuentros* come from 11 countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, Ecuador, Cuba, Colombia, Bolivia, Venezuela, Chile, Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina), and the protagonists of *Ocio Latino* come from nine (Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Perú, México, Venezuela, Argentina, Ecuador and Paraguay).

As for the rest of the predominant protagonists, about one out of four come from countries other than Latin America, Europe, Spain and the United States, and 14% come from Spain and the United States.

4. Discussion of the results

Ethnic media have historically played an important role in the reinforcement of the cultural identity of their readers as vehicles of their native languages, customs, religious practices, and community ties to their homeland and to their host countries.

To highlight the importance of this role in the Latino print media in Spain, we have studied over 1,500 news items from 14 different publications in order to prove that these contents represent the cultural identity of their readers in regard to their prevalent themes, protagonists, and origin of the protagonists.

Our data shows that almost seven out of every ten contents relate to culture and society issues concerning Latinos living in Spain as well as politics in Latin America. Six out of every ten of the most mentioned protagonists are Latino politicians, singers, other artists, activists, cultural associations, writers, and journalists. Also, six out of every ten protagonists come from 17 different Latin American countries, almost all the countries existing in Latin America. The predominant themes found in this analysis allow us to interpret that they coincide with the first hypothesis, to the extent that they represent the main elements regarding the Latino identity of their readers in their coverage of Latino pop music, indigenous folklore and cuisine (culture), women's physical beauty and social and religious celebrations (society), and political issues related to their home countries (politics in origin). It appears that Latinos have visibility as the protagonists of the main themes in regard to Latino culture, society and politics, as stated in the second hypothesis. This leading role of Latinos collides with the low representation that they have in the mainstream media in Spain (Romero-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2018), and also in the United States (Retis, 2017; Vaquera, Aranda & Gonzales, 2014).

Our research shows that the percentages of the predominant types of protagonists (61% of them are politicians, singers, other artists, activists, cultural associations, writers and journalists) are similar to the percentages of the predominant themes (68% of them are politics in origin, culture and society). These results suggest that the second hypothesis is confirmed. According to the third hypothesis, the diversity of the Latino protagonists in the contents of Latino publications correlates with the variety of the Latin American countries represented in Spain. Our data reveal that the majority of protagonists come from 17 Latin American countries, and in some publications, protagonists represent up to 11 different Latin American nationalities. These media contribute to the unity of Latinos of very diverse countries since they all share the informative contents analyzed in this paper under the common umbrella of Latinidad (Dávila, 2000; Del Río, 2017; González-Veléz, 2002; Suárez Navaz & Ferrández Ferrer, 2012).

This diversity coincides with the large scope of Latin American countries represented today in Spain (18 in 2021), which seems to support the third hypothesis as well. In addition, this heterogeneity of targeted nationalities suggests that the contents of the Latino publications reach out to the vast majority of Latino readers. This can contribute to the creation of a community linked by the consumption of these contents, taking into account that the accumulative use of mass media makes readers take on topics published in media as their own (McCombs & Maxwell, 2006). The communities of Latino media users have crossed national borders and formed transnational media spaces in which they produce and/or consume their own media outlets that connect them to their countries of origin and destination. After decades migrating North to the United States and Europe (mostly Spain), Latinos have not broken their ties with their home countries, and they have created transnational social fields in order to face the challenges of urban social stratification and a negative media discourse. In fact, Latinos in Spain have remained almost invisible or have been

portrayed through emotions of fear or compassion (Retis 2019, 2021). This media representation of Latinos may explain the importance given to Latino-oriented positive themes (music, cuisine, folklore, or social celebrations) in the publications analyzed for this research.

Having analyzed a wide range of Latino print media contents in Spain, the present article contributes to the research of different authors on the issues of transnational media spaces (Aksoy & Robins, 2000; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Fazal & Tsagarousianou, 2002; Mendieta-Bartolomé, 2021; Shumow, 2012); and the links between transnational media and identity (Aziz, 2022, Christensen, 2012; Retis, 2019, 2021; Sidury Christiansen, 2017). Our study also joins other works that examine the representation of the Latino identity in Latino media in Spain (Agirreazkuenaga & Larrondo, 2018; Echevarría Vecino, Ferrández Ferrer & Dallemagne, 2015; Forero-Bordamalo, 2015; Gómez-Escalonilla *et al.*, 2008; Retis, 2008; Sabés Turmo, 2009; Suárez Navaz, 2011).

However, the concepts of Latino/Latina and Latinidad have been evolving into the concept of Latinx¹ to include diverse racial, national and gender-based identities. It is an inclusive term increasingly used in online media and social media sites that acknowledges the correlations of sexuality, language, immigration, ethnicity, culture and phenotype (Salinas & Lozano, 2017). The word Latinx clarifies the diversity of genders and sexualities of people who identify with Latinidad as an ethnic identity (Haddock-Lazala, 2016). All terms (Latino, Latina, Latinx and Latinidad) coexist in recent academic works (Aldama & González, 2019; Acquie, 2021; Aparicio, 2019; Valdivia, 2017).

On the other hand, the digital environment has boosted the development of digital-native Latinx news media outlets, accelerating the changing patterns in the production, dissemination and consumption of Latino ethnic media during the last two decades (Retis & Cueva Chacón, 2021). Digital-native news media are “journalistic ventures launched, developed, and maintained online to gather, assess, present, and disseminate news and information about, or relevant to, Latinx communities” (p. 42). They produce original content for more than one platform and engage with their audiences through social media. Since they have a cross-border news production, dissemination and consumption, they are transnational media spaces in themselves.

As a result of the growing use of Latinx and the rise of digital media, the diverse identities of Latinos are now represented in virtual communities within transnational media spaces. Latinos in Spain use free cross-platform messaging services like WhatsApp to communicate both with family and friends in Latin America and in very diverse contexts within Spain. Social media like Facebook or YouTube also play an important role as media outlets, replacing the consumption of Spanish mainstream media and even digital media from their home countries (Concepción Sepúlveda, Medina Cambrón & Ballano Macías, 2019). The consumption of social media platforms by Latinos in Spain ties in with the high use of mobile phones by the foreign-born population in Spain (96,6%), a percentage almost identical to that of Spaniards (96,3%) (Accem, 2018). The use of mobile phones to access Internet outside home or work is even larger among foreigners (82,2%) than Spaniards (79,3%). The digital bridge in favor of Spaniards is noticeable mostly in the use of desktop computers by Latinos (41,2% versus 23%).

The representation of the Latinx identity in digital platforms strengthens the bonds of Latinos with Latin America. In the first place, their media consumption centers around national parameters, despite the globalization and mobility of international migrations. But, secondly, their media use focuses on supranational parameters as it relates to a broad sense of belonging to a Latino identity (Concepción Sepúlveda, Medina Cambrón, & Ballano Macías, 2019).

¹ We use the terms Latino, Latina, and Latinx interchangeably to refer to people of Latin American descent, or as a qualifier of their identity or identities. We also employ the term Latinidad to refer to the common identity traits of Latinos because it is used by many authors in coexistence with Latinx identity or identities.

As we have already mentioned, the prevalent themes, protagonists and origin of the protagonists in the contents of the analyzed publications represent the culturally diverse identity of Latinos living in Spain. In contrast with this diversity, we found that the role played by women in these publications can be mostly framed within homogeneous conservative and sexist values based on physical beauty, regardless of nationality or ethnic origin. Beauty queens (mostly Venezuelans), models in erotic poses (Latinas from Latin America or the United States), and queens of cultural associations in Spain (mostly Bolivians) appear in the front covers of many of the magazines as a symbol of cultural and national pride. This portrait of women in Latino media resembles the mainstream media representation of Latina celebrities known worldwide such as Jennifer Lopez or Sofia Vergara (Hurtado, 2017; Lugo-Lugo, 2015; Negrón-Muntaner, 2017).

In the course of this analysis, we have also seen a frail market of Latino print media, mostly due to the publishing and economic crisis after 2008. The unemployment rate of immigrants grew from 21,3% in 2008 to 36,5% in 2013 (Valero-Matas, Coca & Valero-Oteo, 2014), and 600,000 Latin Americans left Spain between 2007 and 2011 (González Ferrer, 2013). The media market in Spain suffered the same situation. From 2008 to 2014 the print media in Spain lost half of their advertising revenue, the unemployment of reporters doubled, and two out of every ten dailies closed down due to the plunge of the advertising revenue, the audience's loss of trust in traditional media, and the growing consumption of digital media (Barrera, 2018). The readers of daily newspapers went down from 42,1% in 2008 to 13,4% in 2021, while the Internet audiences almost doubled, from 45,4% in 2008 to 87,6% in 2021 (AIMC, 2022).

Only a small group of the 105 Latino publications existing in Spain in 2007 continue publishing today, mostly thanks to advertising from small Latino businesses. Eight of the 14 Latino newspapers and magazines examined in this research have closed down, but the other six were publishing on paper as of February of 2023. However, the weakness of the Latino publications isn't correlated with the recovery of Latino demographics in Spain from 2016, after eight years of continuous decline in the annual arrivals since 2008 (Lacomba Vázquez *et al.*, 2021). From 2016 to 2022 the number of Latin Americans (born in Latin America) living in Spain has increased by almost 43% (INE, 2023). Thus, the correlation or lack thereof between the Latino demographics and the Latino editorial market in Spain would merit further research.).

Keeping in mind that Latino identities are now represented in these transnational media spaces (Codagnone, Cruz & Maya-Jariego, 2017; Jaramillo-Dent, Contreras-Pulido & Pérez-Rodríguez, 2022), we should highlight the fact that their reinforcement hasn't prevented the sociocultural and political integration of Latinos in Spain in the last few years. On one hand, Latinos are more likely to develop a sense of belonging to Spain because of the cultural linguistic proximity and the institutional selective policies given to postcolonial immigrants (Lobera, 2021). Latin Americans have a fast-track access to naturalization after two years of legal residence, compared to ten years for all others. This may explain the fact that Latinos represented almost 70% of the more than one million immigrants who became Spanish citizens between 2004 and 2014 (Martínez de Lizarrondo, 2016). Naturalization is an indicator of integration, because it may not be related to the identification of the new Spanish citizen with Spain, but it removes any obstacles regarding their legal status to access the job market. For Latin Americans, becoming Spanish citizens allows them to maintain a double citizenship and participate in the political life by voting and/or being elected for office both in origin and destination (p. 33).

In 2011, Latinos were allowed to be candidates for local councils. Once elected, Latino councilors identify themselves with their country of origin, but they show much higher levels of identification with the municipality and Spain, which may suggest that the maintenance of a Latino identity is compatible with the integration in the host society (Cordero *et al.*, 2021).

In conclusion, Latino publications in Spain strengthen the ties of their readers with their countries of origin through their predominant themes related to Latino identity. As Latinx transnational media spaces, they can serve as a meeting point of mutual knowledge and recognition for the Latin American diasporas.

4.1. *Limitations, strengths, and future research*

We consider that the results of our study suggest there are connections between the contents of Latino publications in Spain and the representation of the Latino cultural identities of their readers. However, our study also shows the difficulties in examining and categorizing the contents of miscellaneous publications, from left wing political newspapers to entertainment magazines, geared to a wide range of Latin American nationalities, ethnicities and sociodemographic origins, even if they all share the Spanish language. This diversity has influenced the categorization of subvariables, because many have been given a special classification due to their oddness (animals and objects in the variable Protagonists), or their tiny representation below two percent (mass media, human rights, religion or education in the variable Themes).

The analysis of such an extended sample creates limitations but also strengths, because it offers a wide and ample view of the Latino-oriented publications today, and at the same time it sets the foundation for future research to gauge the significance of a disperse catalogue of categories in the study of contents of Latino media. We believe that research would also benefit from the mapping and analysis of Latino digital media in Spain.

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