

# Communicating the monarchy in the 21st century: analysis of the press releases of the Spanish and British Royal House (2022)

*Comunicar la monarquía en el siglo XXI: análisis de los comunicados de prensa de la Casa Real española y británica (2022)*



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## Abstract:

*This article compares the institutional communication strategies of the Spanish and British monarchies through press releases issued in 2022, a year marked by extraordinary events such as the death of Elizabeth II and the return of Juan Carlos I to Spain. The research hypothesizes that both institutions maintain outdated communication strategies that affect their popularity in a context of growing questioning of their relevance. To this end, a mixed quantitative-qualitative approach is used that includes a bibliographic review of institutional communication and the monarchy, as well as a content analysis of official texts. The results reveal significant differences, especially in the frequency of publications and the plurality of members represented. However, both monarchies share a narrative lacking in empathy and propaganda strategies regarding their heirs. The conclusion is that the British Royal Family*

## Resumen:

El artículo compara las estrategias de comunicación institucional de las monarquías española y británica a través de las notas de prensa emitidas en 2022, año marcado por eventos extraordinarios como el fallecimiento de Isabel II y el regreso de Juan Carlos I a España. La investigación parte de la hipótesis de que ambas instituciones mantienen una comunicación obsoleta que afecta su popularidad en un contexto de creciente cuestionamiento sobre su relevancia. Para ello, se emplea un enfoque mixto cuantitativo-cualitativo que incluye una revisión bibliográfica sobre comunicación institucional y monarquía, así como un análisis de contenido de los textos oficiales. Los resultados evidencian diferencias significativas, especialmente en la frecuencia de publicaciones y en la pluralidad de miembros representados. Sin embargo, ambas monarquías comparten una narrativa poco empática

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*maintains more diverse and frequent communication, although this does not necessarily imply greater effectiveness or higher popularity ratings.*

**Keywords:**

*Institutional communication; Royal Household; monarchy; communication strategies; content analysis*

y carente de estrategias propagandísticas en relación con sus herederos. Se concluye que la Casa Real Británica mantiene una comunicación más diversa y frecuente, aunque esto no implica necesariamente mayor eficacia y mejores índices de popularidad.

**Palabras clave:**

Comunicación institucional; Casa Real; monarquía; estrategias comunicativas; análisis de contenido.

## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, the media have played an essential role in holding public authorities accountable and providing citizens with information that allows them to form their own opinions on social issues and participate actively and effectively in democratic society. This new communication environment has forced institutions, including monarchies, to adapt to these changes marked by misinformation and so-called *fake news*, which represent a long-standing threat to public opinion formation. This transformation also offers an opportunity for institutions to become more democratic, transparent, and closer to citizens.

Currently, there are ten monarchies in Europe: Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, the United Kingdom, Liechtenstein, and Monaco. That is, in these monarchies, the head of state is exercised by a person who, as king or queen, has received power through hereditary means. This is a primarily representative role, lacking political power, but it carries a symbolic and traditional weight in these European societies. Considering that, in Europe, the role of the monarchy is merely figurative and that it forms part of an institution that does not depend on elections to maintain power, the following question arises: what interest could a Royal House have in strengthening its area of communication? “Should the non-King be mute? No, because he must have the power to speak and communicate with the society to which he is linked as head of state and from which he must receive his legitimacy to exercise it” (Palacios Bañuelos, 2015: 208). This author’s quote answers precisely this question. The term “non-king” refers to a monarch who does not play an active role in the country’s politics; that is, he lacks real executive political power and acts primarily as a representative figure.

Despite this limitation of political power, kings and queens play an important institutional role as heads of state. Although their power is often largely symbolic, it is essential for monarchs to maintain effective communication with the society they represent, as their legitimacy and the respect they receive from the population depend on it.

On the other hand, although not all monarchies in Europe enjoy the same popularity, they all face debates and must act to guarantee their future, since there are many voices calling for their reform or disappearance (Brunner and Grande, 2020). In this sense, communication becomes a fundamental tool for any public institution to explain its function to society and justify its role within the political system in which it participates. This is also pointed out by Gómez (2015), who emphasizes that “today the Royal Family’s ability to communicate with the people it represents is more important than ever, since these same people, through their political elections, can decide to modify or end its existence”(p. 31).

This article analyzes how the Royal Households of the United Kingdom and Spain implement their institutional communication in crisis situations and whether it is effective and contributes to improving their reputation.

### 1.1. Justification of the research

The British and Spanish monarchies have faced numerous changes and challenges over the past decade. Both have undergone succession processes, in one case following the abdication of King Juan Carlos I in June 2014 and, in the other, the death of Queen Elizabeth II in September 2022. Furthermore, in recent years, both institutions have been involved in various controversies and scandals, some of which have led to legal proceedings and have been widely reported by both the mainstream media and the royal press.

In the case of the British monarchy, the most notable events are the “*Megxit*” and the accusations of sexual abuse against Prince Andrew, Duke of York. In Spain, the monarchy has faced controversies such as the indictment of Infanta Cristina in the “*Nóos case*” or the departure of the emeritus king from Spain in August 2020 due to his alleged involvement in shady business dealings.

Undoubtedly, the changes in the structure of these royal families and the media interest surrounding the aforementioned scandals, as well as the handling of these situations from a communicative perspective, are some of the reasons that have led us to study the institutional communication of these two monarchies through press releases as an object of analysis. In the words of Burgueño (2016), this is “the queen” of communication tools, so a thorough review of press releases will allow us to understand how the Royal Households work on their institutional communication, how they present themselves to the media, and how they manage information.

Regarding the time period under study, a one-year period has been chosen: from January to December 2022. This choice is based on certain academic and contextual reasons:

- Comparative validity. In a comparative analysis, it is necessary to establish a common time frame for the study to be valid. This allows for the identification of similarities and differences between the communication of both Royal Houses, thus avoiding a time gap that could affect the interpretation of the results.
- Availability of data and information. To conduct research, it is essential to have sources that allow you to extract the data and information necessary to support the analysis. Choosing a time period close enough to the present facilitates data availability, as the information is more up-to-date and more accessible.
- Relevance of time. 2022 was a year of significant changes and events in the two Royal Households under study, as summarized in the following table.

Spanish Royal House	British Royal House
March 2. The Supreme Court Prosecutor's Office closes three investigations opened against the emeritus king.	June 2-6. The United Kingdom celebrates Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, a series of events commemorating her 70 years on the throne since the death of her father, George VI.
April 26. Felipe VI makes public, for the first time, his personal assets: more than 2.5 million euros. The disclosure of this wealth, according to the Spanish Royal Household, reflects the monarch's commitment to "the regeneration and transparency of institutions"(House of His Majesty the King, 2022).	September 8. Elizabeth II dies at the age of 96 at Balmoral Castle, having become the longest-reigning monarch of the United Kingdom and one of the most important global figures in recent history. Following her death, her son, Charles III, acceded to the throne.
May 23. Juan Carlos I returns to Spain for the first time since leaving the country on August 3, 2020, to take up residence in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates.	

The specific objectives, and their corresponding research questions, are as follows:

- a) To reflect on the communication strategy of the Spanish Royal Family and the British Royal Family: To do so, we will seek to understand how both institutions communicate with the media and society through their press releases. Aspects such as the topics covered, the frequency of press releases, and who the key figures in them are will be explored.
- b) To study the connection between institutional communication and the history of the monarchy and the structure of each royal family: we will investigate whether these aspects influence the way they develop their institutional communication strategies. We will study the composition of royal families and the monarchical tradition of each country in relation to communication.
- c) Analyze the factors that drive the British and Spanish Royal Households to develop and implement institutional communication strategies. We will examine the reasons why these institutions, despite not being subject to electoral processes or depending on citizen support in terms of votes, consider it necessary to establish communication channels and the objectives underlying these strategies.

Each of these specific objectives will confirm the three hypotheses presented below:

- a) Hypothesis 1: more effective institutional communication than the Spanish Royal Family, both in qualitative and quantitative terms, which is reflected in the production of higher quality communications with greater persuasive power.
- b) Hypothesis 2: The history and context of both monarchies impact their institutional communication strategies. While the British Royal Family finds itself in a political and social context marked by a long monarchical tradition and a special relationship with the Commonwealth, the Spanish Royal Family has a more unstable recent history.
- c) Hypothesis 3: The institutional communication deployed by both Royal Houses is an instrument to justify the existence of the monarchy in two societies in which criticisms questioning its usefulness are increasing.

## 2. Theoretical framework

In recent years, several think tanks and consulting firms have conducted surveys to understand public opinion on the monarchy. In Spain, the Elcano Royal Institute published research on monarchical succession in 2014, which revealed that up to 37% of Spaniards preferred a republic as a model of state. Six years later, in 2020, another survey commissioned by the Independent Media Platform and conducted by the consulting firm 40dB confirmed an increase in more favourable positions toward a republic (40.9%) compared to a head of state presided over by a king (34.9%).

As for the United Kingdom, a 2023 survey conducted by the *National Centre for Social Research* (NatCen) showed that the institution currently enjoys the lowest ever support among Britons. In that study, 45% of respondents said the monarchy should be abolished, that it is not very important, or that it is not important at all. Another 2023 survey, by the market research company YouGov, indicated that support for the institution has decreased from 62% to 58% in the United Kingdom.

These data confirm a worrying shift in confidence in the monarchy among Spanish and British society. Given this scenario, it can be assumed that the monarchy, like all public institutions, wants to strengthen its image and reputation, in addition to demonstrating its usefulness to citizens. In this regard, Villanueva (2022) argues that the purpose of the Crown is not to inform, but to persuade and demonstrate why it deserves to exist.

Furthermore, to understand how institutional communication works within the Royal Households, it is important to analyze who constitutes them. To this end, the concept of “Royal Household” is defined as the “group of civilian and military personnel who assist the king in the performance of his duties” (Royal Spanish Academy). The term “royal family” is different, referring to “the group to which prominent relatives of the holder of the crown belong” (Pan-Hispanic Dictionary).

Currently, the House of Bourbon is the reigning dynasty in Spain, headed by Felipe VI since June 19, 2014, following the abdication of his father, Juan Carlos I, on June 2 of the same year. This transition occurred in a context marked by various scandals that affected the final years of Juan Carlos I’s reign, including the “Nóos case”, in which his son-in-law, Iñaki Urdangarin, and his daughter, Cristina de Borbón, were implicated. As part of the measures adopted to strengthen the institutional image of the monarchy, Felipe VI reduced the official structure of the Royal Family to six members: the king, the queen, his two daughters, and his parents. This new organizational chart no longer included the king’s sisters, brothers-in-law, or nieces and nephews, thus demonstrating the legacy of a “broken” family that Felipe VI has had to deal with during his reign (González, 2021).

In the case of the British monarchy, the members of the royal family number fourteen, according to the Royal Household website: King Charles III and Queen Camilla; the Prince and Princess of Wales William and Catherine and their three children (George, Louis, and Charlotte); the Duke and Duchess of Sussex Harry and Meghan and their two children (who have renounced their active roles in the Crown). They also include King Charles III’s three brothers and their partners.

### 2.1. Approach to institutional communication

Authors such as Canel (1999), Dolphin (2001) and Rodrich (2022) have reflected on the concept of institutional communication and agree that it is a process that facilitates the understanding, deepening and recognition of the institution. Furthermore, it focuses on establishing the identity and mission of an organization, communicating them to its audiences, with the aim

of achieving a prominent and positive position in collective perception (Dolphin, 2001). To achieve this, the organization must adapt to the needs, convictions and aspirations of its audiences and it is a process that must form an essential part of the corporate strategy, and that can have an impact on performance and, in general, on the competitive advantages of the organization.

Likewise, Martín (1998) describes it as the internal and external management of an organization's information, which affects a specific audience and is transmitted through its own and external media. Canel, for his part, speaks of the "set of rules, principles, procedures, and applications of persuasive communication that, using psychological and informational resources, institutions carry out to influence recipients in order to achieve their permanent support for exercising and distributing power and achieving the public good" (1999: 76).

For Cornelissen (2008), institutional communication is understood as the management function that offers a framework for the effective coordination of all internal and external communications, with the general purpose of establishing and maintaining a favourable reputation among the different groups of audiences on which the organization depends.

Beyond mere reputation management, the political communications agency "La Base" (2021) points out that institutional communication has a fundamental purpose: to establish and nurture a positive and constructive relationship between the institution and its citizens. Therefore, this area is not limited to marketing or advertising practices, but takes on a much deeper social dimension. In this context, the institution is committed to communicating its values and work to society as a whole in a transparent manner. This involves not only disseminating messages but also demonstrating the values and actions that the institution promotes and defends.

In the case of monarchies, they fulfil the social function of raising awareness by disseminating events and news surrounding them. In other words, there is a close relationship between communication and institutional identity. To this end, the institution builds a series of internal and external information channels that benefit the entity's information flow.

In this process, institutional communication has been transformed, with particular emphasis on social media. It is important to highlight that the current digital environment has contributed to the development of communication channels where users participate more actively. Castello, Del Pino *et al.* (2014) assert that the presence of institutions in digital environments is motivated by the advantages they find in social platforms, as they enable institutional communication based on mutual relationships, even if these are not symmetrical.

For Rodríguez and Ureña (2011), Twitter (currently X) brings modernity to the political sphere, allows conversation with citizens, users of this social network become opinion leaders in their environments, it is a source of information for journalists and a way to improve the relationship with them. For his part, Fernández (2011) determines the importance of Twitter to understand the dynamics of the public agenda and to specify which topics will have the greatest impact on the media agenda through tools such as tags (hashtags) or *trending topics*.

Since 2012, the Royal Household has been implementing a media style adapted to *online communication*. On May 21, 2014, it launched an official Twitter account under the username @CasaReal and announced that this account would publish all the institution's news, as well as images of audiences and events of the Royal Family. Furthermore, the monarchy warns that this is an institutional profile, not a personal one, and in order to facilitate its management, it will only follow accounts of national

and international institutions and organizations. Prior to Twitter, in September 2012, it launched its website, and in December, it broadcast the King's Christmas Message live for the first time through the official YouTube channel CasaRealTV.

The British monarchy launched its Twitter account (@BritishMonarchy) on April 28, 2009. In April 2016, following Queen Elizabeth II's 90th birthday, it was renamed The Royal Family (@RoyalFamily) and reports on its main activities and events.

## 2.2. *The press and the monarchy, a complicated relationship*

In the case of the Spanish monarchy, studies on the relationship between the press and the institution point to a complicity between the two since Juan Carlos I was designated by dictator Francisco Franco as heir to the throne. In fact, some authors consider that in Spain there has been a "tacit pact" between the monarchy and the media, something that has hindered critical coverage of the royal family for decades (Carratalá, 2014). This pact is believed to have developed since the Spanish transition, when the press began to forge an image of King Juan Carlos I as a democratizing figure who contributed to a peaceful transition after the end of Franco's regime (Zugasti, 2006). However, this media silence and this respectful and positive treatment have begun to crack in recent years, following the numerous scandals that have ultimately damaged the image of Juan Carlos I and the royal family as a whole (Valera and López, 2013). These events include the controversy surrounding Juan Carlos I's trip to Botswana to hunt elephants, the indictment of Infanta Cristina in the Nóos case, and the flight of the emeritus king to Abu Dhabi following reports of alleged tax irregularities.

Regarding the British monarchy, Billig (1988) focuses on discursive strategies and appreciates the use of a simple and direct language style to connect with the audience and project an image of accessibility. This objective, the author emphasizes, contributes to building its authority and legitimacy as an institution.

According to Labio-Bernal (2001), the British press portrays the different members of the royal family as the protagonists of a soap opera, creating a series of stereotypes that allow British society to identify with each of the characters in this story. This way of conceiving the monarchy has contributed to making it an icon within the United Kingdom.

The narrative surrounding the British royal family has revolved around the personal lives and relationships of its members rather than their institutional work. Unlike the Spanish monarchy, which enjoyed press silence for many years in the face of certain scandals, the British media have consistently reported on any issue related to the royal family's private life, such as the love triangle between Charles, Camilla, and Diana or the poor relationship between William and Harry. In this regard, Shaw's (2022) study analyzes several crisis cases faced by the British Royal Family and highlights how communication strategies vary depending on the severity of the crisis and the potential damage to reputation, incorporating transparency criteria and adapting to the media age, with real-time information management and responding to online criticism.

## 3. Methodology

A comparative study is being conducted through content analysis of press releases issued by the Spanish Royal Family and the British Royal Family to analyze institutional communication between the two institutions during 2022. The results will provide a more complete view of the role that both monarchies give to communication as an instrument of connection with citizens in

a context of reputational crisis and loss of support, according to opinion polls in Spain and the United Kingdom on the current role of the monarchy.

Content analysis is a widely used methodology for studying political, literary, and religious information. In fact, this technique gained significant momentum after World War II, as it was used to analyze propaganda disseminated in the media (Tinto, 2013).

According to López (2022), the content analysis technique seeks to understand the internal structure of a given piece of information, whether its composition, organization, or dynamics. This methodology uses quantitative methods to provide numerical data based on specific units extracted from the documentation under study. For example, specific words or phrases can be selected from the text to record their occurrence. The frequency of occurrence of these words or phrases is used as a basis for drawing conclusions in quantitative document analysis.

### 3.1. *Corpus selection*

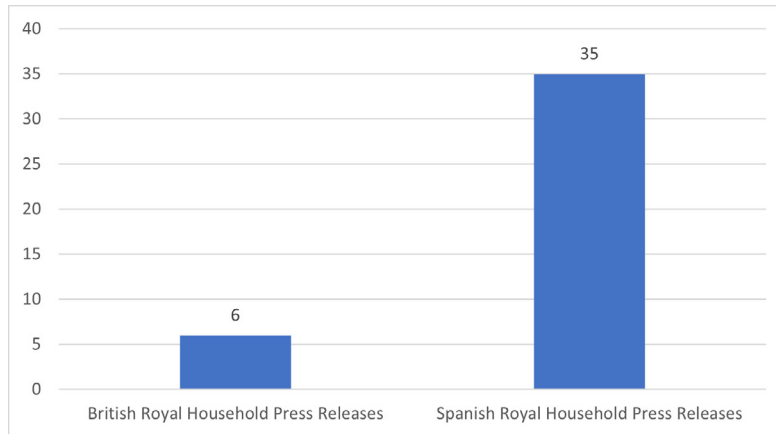
The research corpus consists of press releases published by both institutions between January 1, 2022, and December 31, 2022, which is the period of time subject to analysis due to the exceptional context of crisis facing both dynasties. The documents were accessed through two sections of the websites that referred to similar terms and whose contents had a similar structure: “*Press releases*” on the official website of the British Royal Family <sup>1</sup> and “*Communiqués*” on the official website of the Spanish Royal Family <sup>2</sup>.

All press releases have been counted regardless of their subject matter and the final sample consists of 41. To carry out the content analysis, an analysis sheet has been developed, following the model as a reference the Nogales Bocio sheet (2013) and variables have been introduced that will be applied to the entire sample, with the aim of having homogeneous data susceptible to being compared and treated at a statistical level to extract both quantitative and qualitative conclusions, in addition to the interpretation and analysis of the information production processes that conclude in the impact and visibility of said information.

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1 <https://www.royal.uk/media-centre/press-releases>. Accessed May 15-20, 2024

2 [https://casareal.es/ES/AreaPrensa/Paginas/area\\_prensa\\_comunicados.aspx](https://casareal.es/ES/AreaPrensa/Paginas/area_prensa_comunicados.aspx). Accessed: June 2-12, 2024

**Table 1. Official communications from the Spanish and British Royal Family during 2022**

Source: own elaboration

The variables to be considered are oriented around the types of data that are intended to be extracted and compared: the content of the communication, its characteristics as an information product (format and periodicity), and the data relating to the narrative treatment of the discourse (enunciation, protagonists, conflict).

1. **Publication date:** The date each statement is published will be recorded to identify patterns of temporal distribution and determine whether there are specific moments when the communication strategy of both Royal Households is intensified.
2. **Protagonist:** The protagonist of each communication will be recorded, that is, which member of the royal family is the central character in the narrative. This will allow us to assess whether the structure of each royal family affects the institutional communication of each monarchy.
3. **Content:** The topics covered in the statements will be examined, as well as the most frequently used words or terms. This will allow us to assess whether both Royal Houses share similarities on the issues they consider important or whether they adopt different approaches.
4. **Headline, structure, and length:** The average length of the releases will be measured, and an analysis will be made of whether they follow a common structure, such as opening greetings, headline, body of the report, and signature. This will reveal how both Royal Households present their information. Special emphasis will be placed on headlines, as a central element of any press release.
5. **Statements:** A quantitative analysis will be conducted, in the form of a tally, of the direct statements made by royal members present in the press releases. This will allow us to assess the level of participation and the importance of the voices of royal family members in institutional communications.

**Table 2. Press release analysis sheet**

Variable	Spanish Royal House	British Royal House
Holder		
Publication date		
Protagonist		
Topic discussed		
Number of words		
Statements		
Link		

Source: prepared by the author based on Nogales Bocio (2013)

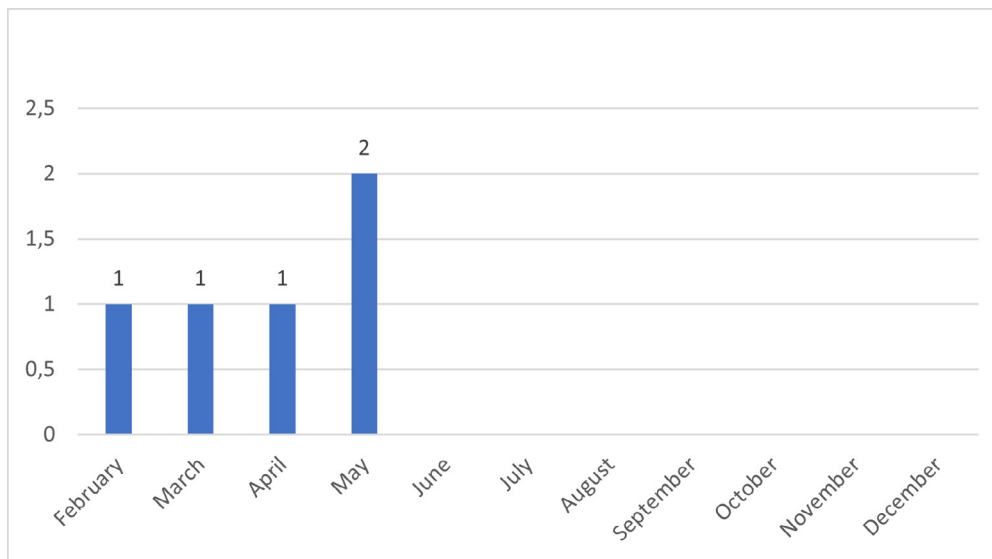
## 4. Results

The results will be addressed in two sections: the first will analyze the statements issued by the Spanish Royal Family according to the variables mentioned in the previous section, and the second will examine the texts issued by the British Royal Family.

### 4.1 Analysis of the Spanish Royal Family's statements

#### Publication date

During 2022, the Spanish Royal Household issued five press releases, all concentrated in the first half of the year. During this period, May stands out as the most active month in terms of official texts, with a total of two. This concentration in the first half of the year and the absence of information from the Spanish monarchy in several calendar months reflects an intermittent institutional communication strategy on the part of the Spanish Royal Household during the study period, in which no consistent pattern is followed.

**Chart 1. Press releases issued by the Spanish Royal Family during 2022**

Source: own elaboration

The lack of a consistent pattern in the frequency of press releases suggests a manoeuvre that maintains a low and discreet profile, avoiding excessive media presence. In this strategy, the Spanish monarchy reserves press releases primarily for crisis situations or to convey highly relevant information to the media.

### Protagonists

Of the five statements issued by the Royal Household in 2022, three feature Juan Carlos I and address issues related to his personal situation, a fact that reveals the constant attention the emeritus king receives. The other two statements refer to Felipe VI, specifically his positive COVID-19 test in February 2022 and the publication of his personal assets.

It is noteworthy that, despite Felipe VI being the current monarch, his father appears even more frequently as the subject of the monarchy's press releases. Furthermore, it is evident that the Spanish Royal Family is aware of how the former monarch's past actions can influence both the present and future of the institution. It is evident that the departure of the emeritus king of Spain, in the face of the publication of information related to alleged shady dealings, places the Spanish monarchy in a delicate position.

### Content

As previously mentioned, during 2022, the Spanish Royal Family issued five press releases, three of which were related to matters concerning the King Emeritus.

The first of them reported on the closing of the investigations opened against him by the Prosecutor's Office, the second announced Juan Carlos I's intention to return to Spain for a visit, and the third communicated the reunion of Juan Carlos I with his son, Felipe VI, at the Zarzuela Palace. The fourth, although not directly related to the emeritus king, announced the publication of Felipe VI's assets, a gesture of transparency that was perceived as a change in trend in the institution with respect to the era of Juan Carlos I. Finally, the fifth reported on the positive COVID-19 diagnosis of King Felipe VI, at a time when the coronavirus pandemic was still very present.

The themes of documents can also be analyzed by studying the most frequently used words or concepts. This word frequency analysis provides insight into the recurring themes and key concepts present in the Royal Family's communications.

**Table 3. Frequency of concepts used in the communications of the Spanish Royal Family (2022)**

Words	Frequency
King	25
Majesty	29
Don Juan Carlos	13
Spain	9
Life	9
Place	8
Residence	6
Letter	6
Abu Dhabi	6

**Source: own elaboration**

The concepts that are repeated most often are "king" (25 times), "majesty" (20 times) and "Don Juan Carlos" (13 times). They are followed by the words "Spain" (9), "life" (9), "place" (8), "residence" (6), "letter" (6) and "Abu Dhabi" (6). In this way, what was highlighted in the previous analysis is corroborated: the figure of the emeritus king has a very prominent weight in the institutional communication of the Royal House during this year. The name of Don Juan Carlos appears repeatedly, in the same way as other terms that refer to his personal situation after leaving Spain in August 2020, such as "life", "place" and "residence".

#### **Title, structure and extension**

Regarding the structure of the Spanish Royal Household's communications, they all share the same title: "STATEMENT FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF HM THE KING", without any specification or specificity as to the topic to be discussed. This title creates

a formal and uniform image across all official communications, although it provides no details or clues as to the content, giving it a rather uninformative character.

After the headline, the texts continue with the body copy. None of them exceed 400 words, and most are in the 150 to 300-word range, with an average of 248. Therefore, the Spanish Royal Family's communication strategy strives for conciseness and avoids redundancy and repetition.

Another common feature of all the releases is that they end with the phrase: "Palacio de La Zarzuela, day, month, and year", which provides a time stamp and a geographical context. This signature also reinforces the authenticity and origin of the note.

### **Statements**

All the statements issued by the Spanish Royal Family tend to lack direct statements from their protagonists. In fact, of the five studied, only two were identified as including statements.

The first official text is the one issued on March 7, 2022, which reproduces a letter sent by King Juan Carlos to his son Felipe VI. In the letter, the emeritus king expresses his desire to return to Spain following the closure of the investigations by the Prosecutor's Office. The inclusion of this letter in the document adds a personal element, showing direct communication between members of the Royal Household and, ultimately, a father and son discussing their personal affairs.

The second statement appears in the April 25, 2022, communiqué, which refers to words spoken by Felipe VI on the day of his proclamation as king before the Cortes Generales, so these are past statements used for context.

#### *4.2. Analysis of the British Royal Family's statements*

### **Publication date**

The British Royal Family issued a total of 36 press releases during 2022, representing an average of three official publications per month. As indicated in the theoretical framework, 2022 was a particularly significant period for the British Royal Family, marked by two important events: The Platinum Jubilee of Elizabeth II and the subsequent death of the monarch.

September was the month with the highest number of announcements, due to the death of Elizabeth II and the subsequent accession to the throne of her son Charles III. A total of 11 announcements were published during this month, demonstrating the importance of this historic event in the communication of the Royal Household.

On the other hand, February and June also stood out as months of considerable activity in the communications area, largely due to the celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. In both months, five press releases were issued, underscoring the interest surrounding this event for the British monarchy.

A relevant fact is that, with the exception of August, at least one press release was published every month. This demonstrates a consistent communications strategy throughout the year and the importance the British monarchy places on communicating all its activities through the media.

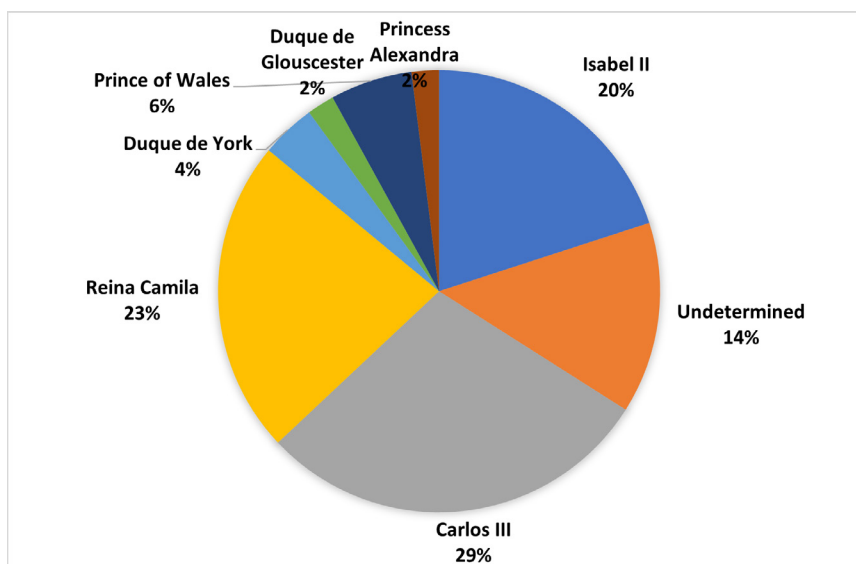
### Protagonists

The British Royal Family includes numerous members, and this diversity is reflected in its press releases. The results reveal that of the 14 royal family members listed under “The Royal Family”<sup>3</sup>, half of them appear as recurring protagonists in the press releases.

First, Charles III, as the reigning monarch, is the member who appears most frequently in the press releases, accounting for 29% of the total (15) (Chart 3). This seems consistent with his central role in the British Royal Family and as head of state. He is followed by Queen Camilla, who is mentioned in 12 news items, and Elizabeth II, who is mentioned in 10. These figures highlight the importance of the most prominent members of the royal family in the institution’s communication, as they account for 72% of the total number of appearances in official texts.

In addition, other members also appear in the statements, albeit to a lesser extent. The Prince of Wales –formerly the Duke of Cambridge– is mentioned three times, while the Princess of Wales –formerly the Duchess of Cambridge– is mentioned twice. Individual mentions of the Duke of York, Princess Alexandra, and the Duke of Gloucester are also identified, each appearing prominently in a statement.

Chart 3. Protagonists of British Royal House press releases during 2022



Source: own elaboration

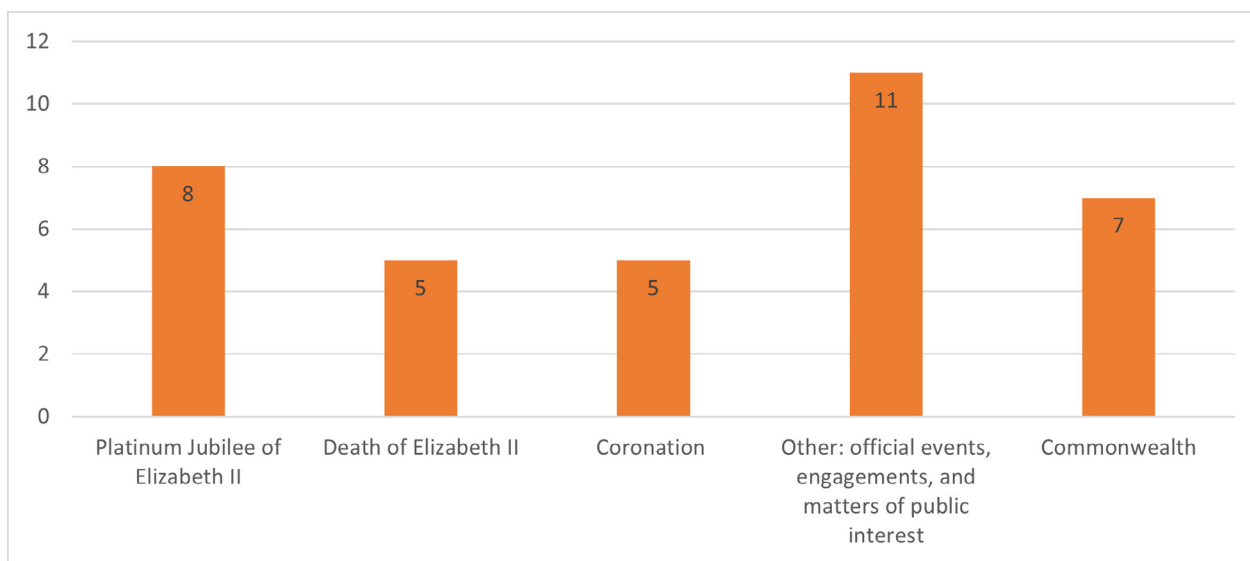
3 <https://www.royal.uk/media-centre/press-releases>

It is worth noting that seven press releases have been classified as having an “undetermined” protagonist, indicating that in these cases there is no central figure in the official document or that various members of the royal family are mentioned. These press releases are usually related to events or matters involving the family as a whole, reflecting the importance of presenting a unified image of the Royal Family in certain contexts.

### Content

Of the 36 statements issued by the British Royal Family in 2022, a total of 11 were closely related to the death of Elizabeth II and the succession to the throne, an event of great historical significance, not only nationally but also internationally. Figure 4 visually presents the topics covered in the British monarchy’s statements:

**Chart 4. Topics addressed by the British Royal Family in its press releases**



Source: own elaboration

Likewise, eight statements were issued related to the Platinum Jubilee events, commemorating the 70th anniversary of Elizabeth II’s reign. The attention paid to Commonwealth-related issues was also notable, with seven focusing on visits, messages, or events related to Commonwealth nations. This underscores the importance of the Royal Household’s relations and commitment to Commonwealth member countries, a significant part of its institutional role.

Finally, 11 others addressed a variety of additional topics, which may include official events, royal engagements, activities, and other matters of public interest that were part of the British Royal Family’s agenda during the period studied.

Special mention should be made of the statement of January 13, 2022, entitled “*A statement from Buckingham Palace regarding the Duke of York*,” announcing Elizabeth II’s decision to withdraw all military honors from her son, Prince Andrew, following allegations of sexual abuse of a minor in the billionaire Jeffrey Epstein scandal.

In terms of term frequency, the most frequently used word, with a total of 212 mentions, is “royal”. This is a key term in the institution’s communication, as it is part of concepts such as “royal family” and “his/her royal highness”. The constant repetition of “royal” underscores the importance of royal lineage in the identity of the British Royal Family.

In second place, with 176 mentions, is the term “queen”, which is not surprising given that until September 2022, Elizabeth II was the highest representative of the British Royal Family. The year 2022 was a particularly significant period for her, as it was marked by her Platinum Jubilee and, subsequently, her death.

In third place, with 102 mentions, is the term “Commonwealth”. The fact that the term “Commonwealth of Nations” is used so often demonstrates the importance the monarchy places on relations between its members and its commitment to promoting and strengthening them.

In addition to these keywords, other frequently repeated words include “prince”, “majesty”, “king”, “state”, “visit”, “service” and “Wales”.

#### **Title, structure and extension**

They contain a variety of headlines and, in most cases, provide an indication of the topic covered. More generic headlines can also be found, such as those beginning with the phrase “*A statement from ...*” or “*A message from...*”. These headings suggest that the press release is a message or statement from a member of the royal family or Buckingham Palace on a specific topic.

Regarding length, the average is around 590 words, although it’s important to note that this length can vary considerably depending on the content of the particular release. Thus, it can be inferred that the text length meets the need to provide detailed information in some cases, while others have a more concise approach.

#### **Statements**

A total of 12 of the 36 communiqués analyzed contained statements, which not only add depth to the information provided but also offer insight from members of the Royal Family on specific topics included in the texts. Some of these are statements in themselves. Specifically, those titled “*A message from...*” are documents explicitly containing statements from a member of the royal family. However, it should be noted that not all of these statements come exclusively from senior members of the royal family. In some cases, statements are included from individuals who are not members of the monarchy, such as the secretaries of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall.

### **5. Discussion**

During the period analyzed in this research, the Spanish Royal Household distinguished itself by issuing a small number of statements in response to specific situations or events, while the British Royal Household adopted a more continuous strategy, publishing statements practically every month. In fact, August was the only month of that year in which no official text was issued by the British monarchy. It is important to note that 2022 was a period of great activity for the British Royal Household,

as indicated. However, when comparing the 36 statements issued from Kensington Palace versus the 5 issued from Zarzuela Palace, a notable difference in institutional communication is evident, one that does not respond solely to the exceptional events experienced in the United Kingdom.

In the scientific literature consulted (Canel 1999; Cornelissen, 2008; Alcoceba, 2010; Castello, Del Pino *et.al* 2014; Rodrich, 2022) it is highlighted that institutional communication plays a fundamental role in defining the identity and mission of an organization in its community. When an organization, in this case, an institution, opts for limited communication or refrains from expressing its opinion for long periods in response to important events or circumstances, it can be concluded that its approach to institutional communication is deficient or, at least, susceptible to improvement.

Regarding the protagonists of the analyzed texts, it is important to consider the scope of each royal family and the members who play an active role within the institution. As noted, the Spanish Royal Family website identifies six members of the royal family, while the British Royal Family includes a total of 14. This implies that a broader and more diverse range of individuals are featured in British Royal Family communications.

In the case of the Spanish monarchy, it is striking that more than 50% of official texts feature Juan Carlos I, despite the fact that during the period analyzed, he resided outside of Spain and has been retired from institutional and public life for years. However, his alleged shady dealings and life in Abu Dhabi have generated significant press interest and, as a result, have been a recurring theme in the Royal Family's institutional communications.

According to the authors consulted, the social dimension is a fundamental aspect of institutional communication, that is, how an institution strives to convey its values to society to maintain its credibility. In the case of the Spanish royal family, it has been portrayed by the press as a "broken" entity, in which the King's sisters lack an institutional role. In the case of one of them, Infanta Cristina, she was even stripped of the title of Duchess of Palma, which she previously held, due to her involvement in the Nóos case. This dynamic is also reflected in the institutional communication strategy of the Spanish Royal Family, which is characterized by press releases that involve a very limited number of protagonists, without the presence of the King's sisters, his brothers-in-law, or his nephews.

In some ways, the institution is seen as trying to establish a clear distinction between what is considered the "royal family", those who play a public and official role in supporting the monarch, and the "king's family", those relatives who are close to the monarch but are not part of the monarchy or perform public duties.

Furthermore, there is a scant presence of four prominent members of the Spanish royal family, who do not appear as protagonists in any of the statements analyzed: Queen Letizia, Infanta Sofía, Princess Leonor, and Sofía, the Queen Emeritus. In contrast, the British Royal Family presents the family leaders, Elizabeth II and Charles III, as the main protagonists in its letters. However, other members of the royal family are also regularly mentioned.

In this sense, this is an example of the propaganda strategy employed by the House of Windsor over decades to consolidate the image of the royal family in the collective imagination. The presence of numerous members in the statements reflects the intention to portray a large, united, and solid family that supports the monarch. In this way, the aim is to promote the legitimacy and stability of the institution by showing the royal family working together.

Regarding the content of official texts, in the case of the Spanish Royal Family, scandals involving Juan Carlos I are a constant, confirming what the empirical evidence consulted indicates: the respectful and positive treatment that Juan Carlos I used to receive in the Spanish press has crumbled. Therefore, the Spanish Royal Family is forced to grapple with these issues and try to restore the public image of the King Emeritus and the monarchy.

It is also perceived that the Spanish dynasty is seeking to mitigate the controversy and reduce media attention on this issue, in a way acknowledging that Juan Carlos's image will never be the same after his departure from Spain to Abu Dhabi. Therefore, it seems to adopt a strategy geared more toward crisis management in its press releases than toward actively promoting the institution, which is fundamental to any communication strategy.

Regarding the issues addressed by the British Royal Family, the fact that the Platinum Jubilee and the death of Elizabeth II are two of the central topics of the 2022 press releases is valued positively, as it demonstrates that the British monarchy, through its communications strategy, is aware of the importance of praising the figure of the Queen, who is the most visible head of the institution. It is also considered positive that events related to the Commonwealth occupy a prominent place in this plan, because it contributes to strengthening the ties of this commonwealth of nations and reinforcing the United Kingdom's position in world politics.

On the other hand, one aspect on which both Royal Households agree is that they use the press release as a document that serves to preempt journalistic initiatives, as demonstrated by the empirical evidence consulted. This is something that is observed in those published texts that put both royal families in a delicate position, such as the statement announcing Elizabeth II's decision to withdraw military honors from the Duke of York or the one announcing Juan Carlos I's intention to return to Spain. Both are examples of press releases that the Royal Households issue ahead of the media, even if they are not favourable, as this way they can avoid potential speculation and try to dominate the narrative and the public discourse.

Regarding the structure of the documents, similarities can be identified. In the case of the Spanish Royal Family, they typically begin with a neutral and repetitive headline, followed by the body of the informative text. The location of the signature, the Zarzuela Palace, is then included, followed by the date of issue. The British Royal Family also adopts a similar structure, beginning with an informative headline, followed by the date on which the statement was issued, and then the body of the text that develops the information.

It is important to highlight that this structure shared by both monarchies is similar to that proposed by the scientific literature consulted, that is, they issue concise and brief statements, which are two crucial aspects for the effectiveness of this communication tool. While the British Royal Family tends to issue statements with a more promotional nature or aimed at strengthening its institutional image, those of the Spanish Royal Family are linked to more controversial issues. This difference in the nature of the topics addressed may provide the British monarchy with greater comfort and, consequently, the possibility of preparing longer texts when addressing these issues in greater detail.

Notable differences also emerge regarding headlines. The scientific literature reviewed indicates that a press release should begin with a generic headline, "Press Release", without offering specific details about the content. This approach is rigorously followed by the Spanish Royal Family, which exclusively uses the headline "Communication from HM the King". In contrast, the British Royal Family adopts a different approach to its headlines, which vary in structure and content. More descriptive

headlines, such as “A message from Buckingham Palace regarding the Duke of York” or “70 facts you didn’t know about Elizabeth II”, are found, which are more informative and align with the arguments of other authors who emphasize the importance of emphasizing headlines in these types of documents issued by institutions.

Finally, neither Royal House is particularly known for including statements in most of their press releases. This observation is noteworthy because, as noted in the analysis of results, statements are important elements both in journalistic and institutional communication. Their inclusion in releases enriches the content, provides authenticity, and humanizes the information.

## 6. Conclusions

Regarding the initial hypotheses, these have been partially confirmed. The first, “the British Royal Family deploys more effective institutional communication than the Spanish Royal Family”, shows that the British monarchy offers a greater diversity of topics, voices, and protagonists, as well as the number and frequency of press releases issued, all of which contribute to making the British Royal Family’s communication richer and more comprehensive than that of the Spanish Royal Family. However, as mentioned above, quantity is not in itself an indicator of quality, and additional data collection would be necessary to definitively state whether the British Royal Family’s communication is truly more effective than that of the Spanish Royal Family or whether there are other factors to consider in this assessment.

The second hypothesis, “monarchical history and tradition influence the institutional communication of the Spanish Royal Family and the British Royal Family”, has been corroborated throughout the research. It is clear that, in the case of the British Royal Family, the longevity of the monarchy and the popularity of Elizabeth II have left a mark on its communication approach, which gives a central role to the monarch, whose figure is promoted. It is also observed that the United Kingdom’s position in the world influences the topics covered in the communications, with numerous pieces dedicated to strengthening ties with Commonwealth nations.

In contrast, the Spanish monarchy has experienced a history marked by periods of instability and, in recent years, has been embroiled in scandals, such as the indictment of Infanta Cristina in the Nóos case and the deterioration of the image of Juan Carlos I, one of the Crown’s greatest assets.

Likewise, the composition and structure of both royal families shape the institutional communication of both monarchies. Although the British family has not been free of conflict throughout its history, most of its members currently maintain an active role, with official duties and support for the monarch, a fact reflected in the diversity of voices and protagonists that appear in press releases. This is not the case in the Spanish family.

The third hypothesis, “the institutional communication deployed by both Royal Houses is an instrument to justify the existence of the monarchy”, has been confirmed. As explained in the theoretical framework, the Crown’s objective is not to inform, but to persuade and justify its existence. The British analysis shows a communication approach focused on highlighting the image of the monarchy, promoting the numerous events and activities it attends, and demonstrating the royal family’s support for Elizabeth II or Charles III. This approach contrasts with the Spanish communication strategy, which, at least during 2022, is

limited to managing crises surrounding Juan Carlos I and in which the voice of the future heir, the Princess of Asturias, is not present at any time.

In conclusion, this article focused on studying the institutional communication strategy of both Royal Houses, addressing quantitative and qualitative aspects of press releases. It has allowed us to verify that the methods of both are clearly distinct and conditioned by various factors, such as their history, the deep-rooted monarchical tradition in each country, the structure of the royal family, and the specific circumstances and challenges they face in the field of current affairs information.

Although the monarchy plays a symbolic role in Spain and the United Kingdom, neither engages in active institutional communication to generate greater empathy, nor do they publicize their heirs, the Prince of Wales and the Princess of Asturias.

### *6.1. Limitations of the study and future lines of research*

First, the selection of the work corpus was limited, focusing solely on official announcements published on the official websites of both Royal Households over a period of one year. This sample may provide a somewhat limited view, as it would be useful to complement it with the analysis of other aspects such as communication on social media or media impact. However, the objective was to conduct research on a more specific aspect.

Secondly, the time period under study has also been a challenge. On the one hand, the death of Elizabeth II and the coronation of Charles III have brought about changes in the structure of the royal family, so the period analyzed has also been a period of adaptation for the Royal Family itself.

Furthermore, the extraordinary events experienced by the British Crown have led to a much more intense communication activity by this dynasty, which may have generated greater differences with the official information disseminated by the Spanish monarchy.

For all these reasons, choosing a longer analysis period would be beneficial to achieving more coherent and rigorous research results, especially the communication made from the Zarzuela Palace following the worst catastrophe in Spain on October 29, 2024, in the province of Valencia, where the King and Queen were verbally reprimanded during a visit to the affected areas in the municipality of Paiporta. Extending the study period and including this exceptional episode would allow access to a greater amount of information, thereby achieving greater statistical robustness and greater representativeness.

Finally, the lack of prior studies comparing these characteristics between the two royal families has also been a limitation. In this regard, numerous studies have been found exploring the relationship and treatment of both monarchies with the media. However, few studies have been identified that compare the institutional communication of both monarchies. One of these is the doctoral thesis by Gómez (2015), which compares the official websites of both monarchies.

In this sense, future research would be interested in considering a broader approach that addresses aspects such as social media communication and determining whether it differs from traditional communication and adopts new languages, themes, and narratives that could offer a renewed image of the institution and improve its popularity in popularity polls. This would provide a more complete view of the institutional communication strategy of both monarchies and allow for a more accurate comparison.

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## 8. Specific contribution of each author

	Name and surname
Conception and design of the work	Anna López Ortega
Methodology	Anna López Ortega
Data collection and analysis	Anna López Ortega
Discussion and conclusions	Anna López Ortega
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Anna López Ortega

## 9. Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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