

# Daily news podcasts in Spain. Predictive factors of multi-platform engagement (iVoox and YouTube)

## *El pódcast diario de noticias en España. Factores predictivos del engagement multiplataforma (iVoox y YouTube)*



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### Abstract:

This paper presents some key points that may be of help to producers of daily news podcasts to strengthen their connection with their listeners. It specifically aims to measure the effect of certain variables that have seldom been researched (topics, links to current affairs, day of posting, reach, and length, among others) concerning the various engagement indicators on iVoox and YouTube. All the episodes posted during the first six months of 2024 by the three main daily news podcasts in Spain were analysed: *Hoy en El País*, *El Mundo al día*, and *Un tema a día* (n=708). The analysis was conducted using descriptive and inferential statistics through correlation tests and predictive

### Resumen:

*Este trabajo ofrece algunas claves que pueden ayudar a los productores de pódcast diarios de noticias a potenciar la conexión con sus audiencias. En concreto, pretende medir el efecto de determinadas variables apenas investigadas previamente (temáticas, conexión con la actualidad, día de publicación, alcance y duración, entre otras) en los diferentes indicadores del engagement en iVoox y YouTube. Para ello, se analizaron todos los capítulos publicados durante los seis primeros meses de 2024 por los tres principales pódcast diarios de noticias de España: Hoy en El País, El Mundo al día y Un tema al día (n=708). El análisis se realizó mediante estadística descriptiva e inferencial a través de pruebas correlacionales y estudios de*

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factor analysis using multiple linear regressions. The results show that the engagement rate on YouTube triples the number achieved by iVoox. Although the generation of engagement is highly contextual (varying depending on the posting platform employed), the fact of addressing political issues is a powerful engagement trigger on both platforms. Short duration (11–18 minutes) is also observed to be a predictive factor of the engagement rate on both iVoox and YouTube.

**Keywords:**

Daily news podcast; engagement; iVoox; YouTube; Spain.

*factores predictivos mediante regresiones lineales múltiples. Los resultados observan que la tasa de engagement en YouTube triplica la cifra obtenida por iVoox. Aunque la generación de engagement es altamente contextual (resulta diferente en función de la plataforma de publicación utilizada), el hecho de abordar temas políticos es un potente activador del compromiso en ambas plataformas. También se observa que una duración breve (entre los 11 y los 18 minutos) resulta factor predictivo de la tasa de engagement tanto en iVoox como en YouTube.*

**Palabras clave:**

*News daily podcast; engagement; iVoox; YouTube; España.*

## 1. Introduction and theoretical framework

News podcasts have emerged in recent years as an important way of narrating and transmitting news, providing fresh nuances to audio communication and the distribution of news to increasingly large audiences (Newman & Gallo, 2020). Despite their limited history, news podcasts have managed to redefine journalistic narrative by virtue of a mix of accessibility, intimacy, depth and credibility. For example, there is evidence of the format's ability to offer reliable information in periods of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Lindgren, 2024). Likewise, news podcasts allow for inquiring into certain topics, prioritising quality over quantity (Körner & Grabl, 2024), while presenting “context, depth and greater editorial independence in journalists' coverage of current affairs” (Martín-Nieto *et al.*, 2024: 2).

According to Digital News Report 2023, the United States is the leader in news podcast listenership, 19% of US users surveyed saying they listened to the format during December 2023. News podcasts' penetration rate in Spain stands at 14%, two points above the international average (12%) and only behind the United States, Sweden, Australia and Ireland (Newman *et al.*, 2023).

Podcasts by journalists can take different forms. Non-fiction narrative projects are particularly common, where the journalist offers serialised in-depth analysis of real events in a way not unlike literary or cinematic narrative. They utilise techniques from the field of fiction, present detailed, high-quality production, and involve exhaustive research work. The so-called daily news podcasts (the focus of this study) provide content usually based on the day's news in a non-serialised manner and at regular intervals (generally from Monday to Friday), in short instalments (3 to 30 minutes), and employing a personal narrative style associated with its presenter, who tries to reinforce the identity of the media outlet that produces it (Leoz-Aizpuru & Pedrero-Esteban, 2022).

Although the origin of the daily news podcast is usually set in 2006 with the launch of *The Guardian's Newsdesk* (Martínez-Costa Pérez & Lus Gárate, 2019), authors such as Bonini (2015) claim that, in reality, the first program in the format was produced a year earlier by the British newspaper *Daily Telegraph*. News podcasts appeared in Spain in May 2018 when *El País* published *El País Noticias*, a podcast news bulletin that presented a summary of the day's main stories. *Las Noticias de ABC* (launched in November that year), adopted the same format in two daily instalments, unlike the *El País* product, which broadcast a single programme per day (Leoz-Aizpuru & Pedrero-Esteban, 2022).

Following these initial forays, the turning point for daily news podcasts in Spain came in 2020, a year of particular growth for the medium both in terms of the supply and consumption of content. The COVID-19 crisis had an impact on the increase in demand for journalistic podcasts internationally, users wishing not only to be informed but also to enjoy immersive non-fiction narratives (Dowling, 2024). News organisations in Spain joined this wave, incorporating voice and audio strategies into their business plans, and the main newspapers launched their own daily audio projects (Martínez-Graña *et al.*, 2023). Professional media's involvement in the world of podcasts has been growing since 2020 in order to explore "its opportunities for news and opinion" (Martínez-Costa *et al.*, 2022: 1). Two prominent news brands such as *El Mundo* and *elDiario.es* began using the format in June and September 2021, while *El País'* product was launched in March 2022. Our study is focused on the daily news podcasts of these three media outlets, which are characterised by their commitment to the deep dive format.

### 1.1. The deep dive format for daily news podcasts<sup>1</sup>

Newman & Gallo (2019) propose a taxonomy of journalistic podcasts divided into four categories: (1) summaries or bulletins, (2) deep dive, (3) audio documentary, and (4) long-duration roundtables or extended discussions. Simplifying this classification, we can affirm that there are basically two formats of daily news podcasts (Carvajal *et al.* 2022; Leoz-Aizpuru & Pedrero-Esteban, 2022): (1) the micro-bulletin, which offers brief instalments as a radio bulletin summarising the day's news items, and (2) the in-depth analysis or deep dive, consisting of a longer monographic programme (usually around 20 minutes) "that goes deeper into an issue, frequently (although not always) something on the immediate agenda, using journalists from that media outlet and experts on the subject to be discussed" (García-Marín, 2024: 5). As mentioned above, daily news podcasts on *El Mundo*, *elDiario.es* and *El País* are examples of the format. All three titles have adopted the structure and style characteristic of the successful *The Daily*, the deep dive podcast launched by the *New York Times* in February 2017, considered a benchmark in the sector.

The format is characterised by the combination of expository (news), conversational (interviews) and narrative (reportage or documentary) genres. It arises, fundamentally, from the dialogue between the presenter or host of the programme and a journalist from the same medium who specialises in the subject chosen for each episode. Its objective is not to deal with the news of the day (closer to the micro-bulletin format), but to provide depth and context in the analysis of a single topic (its programmes are usually monographic) beyond the rapid consumption of headlines. It is considered an example of *slow journalism* as opposed to the faster-paced radio news, which is subject to the demands of live broadcasts and breaking news. The term *slow journalism* was coined by Susan Greenberg in 2007 (Le Masurier, 2015), it favours research and depth when telling stories and offers an alternative to conventional news in order to "give greater meaning to our understanding of the world" (Greenberg, 2013: 381).

Deep dive daily news podcasts offer highly contextualised, in-depth journalism in their analysis, as well as a relaxed and personal narrative clearly set by the podcast host. They are part of a major trend towards the creation of immersive, reflective and profuse narrative formats in the presentation of news. Podcasts are ideal as a means of communication for the presentation

1 Although this study is focused on the deep dive format, we also use the formula common in Spain "daily news podcast" (*pódcast diario de noticias*).

of topics in depth because they provide a focus for listeners' attention, something very common on image-based platforms or media (Dowling, 2024), achieving a greater measure of audience immersion (Dowling & Miller, 2019).

As mentioned above, this type of podcast places emphasis on the figure of the host, who usually adopts a warm, intimate narrative style, forging a close relationship with an audience that gradually becomes a community (Leoz-Aizpuru & Pedrero-Esteban, 2022). The presenters and analysts who participate in these programs do not limit themselves to setting out bare facts, but usually take a position on them in accordance with the editorial line of the medium, which serves to reinforce brand identity. Their usual editorialised tone and the personal narrative that the presenters incorporate in this type of podcast may clash with their informative nature, creating evident tensions between the essence of this type of productions and the limits of traditional journalism (Lee *et al.*, 2023). In this sense, "it is worth asking to what extent listeners are aware that they are listening to editorial content, which is more of an opinion piece than a strictly news report" (Martínez-Graña *et al.*, 2023: 225). This type of journalistic podcast also shows permanent tension between information about the facts and the way they are set out, techniques from fictional stories being employed on occasion (Dowling, 2024; Legorburu *et al.*, 2021).

Deep dive podcasts epitomise the opposite of what Walter Benjamin saw as a widespread tendency toward the simplification of narrative formats. Benjamin (2006) argues that the mechanical reproduction of both 20th-century art and news impoverished the narrative forms and structures of the 19th century, which he considered more complex and sophisticated. On the contrary, the deep dive format, like the narrative non-fiction podcast, favours a neat and polished narrative, rich in detail and resources and carefully crafted.

Nonetheless, this type of podcast can help rejuvenate the audience of audio-based news content (Skalický, 2023). According to studies such as that of Amoedo (2023), under 45-year-olds have a greater preference for receiving news through this medium. Other studies such as that of García-Marín (2024) confirm the tendency. To deepen and expand this connection with a growing number of users, deep dive podcasts must take all possible factors for generating audience engagement into account in a context of information overload where a multiplicity of actors (news brands and content creators) compete fiercely for the consumer's attention.

## 1.2. Engagement and podcast

The concept of engagement refers to the degree of interaction, connection and commitment that users have with a brand, product, content or service (Dolan *et al.*, 2016). Askwith (2007) defines it as the set of user behaviours, attitudes and desires in relation to media consumption, their participation in activities and interactions, their identification with aspects of the message or product, and the motivations linked to all of the previously mentioned aspects. User engagement with media texts can contribute to the achievement of a wide range of functions: gaining perspectives on others' circumstances, identifying with others, and generating feelings of belonging to a group, as well as finding certain common ground in the search for conversation and social interaction (McQuail, 1987).

The generation of engagement is linked to a set of the audience's actions, behaviours and attitudes, including: (1) the volume of interactions, (2) the time that users spend interacting with content, (3) loyalty and repetition (frequency with which users return and continue consuming the content), (4) active participation (content generated by users) and (5) the feeling and

perception that users have about the brand, beyond quantitative metrics. We will focus our work on the first block of aspects, related to interactions.

From the interaction point of view, the level of engagement is measured utilising several indicators, such as the number of likes (an action that expresses conformity and/or enthusiasm towards a post) or the volume of comments (a conversational reaction in which users respond to or foster dialogues with the content creator or with other users). Although their particularities mean it is different on each digital platform, the so-called engagement rate is frequently measured through formulas that relate the sum of likes, comments and times that a content is shared with the number of reproductions, in the case of audiovisual content, or the number of followers for other types of posts (García-Marín & Salvat-Martinrey, 2022). Please note that the engagement rate in this work is calculated following this principle, as shown in Table 1.

Taking all of the above into account, the potential of podcasts to generate engagement with their audiences is evident by building spaces of intimacy and connection between presenters and listeners (Loviglio, 2024; Adler Berg, 2023; Cook, 2023), while upholding journalistic ethics and aesthetics (Miller *et al.*, 2022). Authors such as Cwynar (2023) point out that podcasts by journalists, especially non-fiction narrative formats, sometimes foster the relationship between host and listener even over the story being discussed. Journalists' voices can convey emotions and nuances that are usually lost in written text. Podcasts allow for a more personal, closer experience, creating a sense of complicity between the narrator and the listener that is essential in building audience loyalty (Lindgren, 2021). Listeners connect especially with the tone, accent and rhythm of a voice (Rae, 2023), which constitutes the most immediate means of expression (Kanngieser, 2015).

Clarke & Bjork (2023) argue that the way in which podcasts achieve intimacy is not limited to the revelation of personal information and emotional experiences, but also extends to the ways in which sound design complements and affects those intimate stories. Furthermore, the versatility and adaptability of the medium means that users can access episodes at any time from any device, adapting it to their individual routines and preferences (Budak, 2022).

Engagement with podcasts has been analysed from numerous variables. There have been several studies on the influence of gender and age on user engagement. Studies by Chan- Olmsted & Wang (2020) showed that men listen more widely and deeply than women, and that younger people consume podcasts more intensely and routinely. They also found that women, compared to men, are more likely to listen to podcasts at home and less likely to consume them at work, while younger people consume more podcasts in the workplace or on the move rather than at home. The scientific literature shows such habits decisively influence the generation of engagement with a medium (Perks *et al.*, 2019; García-Marín, 2020a).

Connection with the brand (Rhoden *et al.*, 2022), social engagement (Tobin & Guadagno, 2022), parasocial relationships with hosts (Schlütz & Hedder, 2021), and the amount of listening time are other variables analysed in the scientific literature that foster engagement. According to these contributions, users who develop strong parasocial relationships with the hosts of the programmes –consisting of the unilateral connections that people establish with a media figure or a celebrity (Schlütz & Hedder, 2021)– and those who exceed a certain threshold of regular listening to the medium show greater commitment to podcasts. Tobin & Guadagno (2022) relate the motivation for podcast consumption to factors such as the amount of time spent listening, the environments in which consumption takes place, the podcast format, the devices used for listening, and parasocial relationships. García-Marín's work (2020b) showed that the connection (closeness) between the listener and the

podcast host (Frobenius, 2014) and the user's level of technological and media education are two essential variables in driving engagement with the medium.

Despite all the scientific evidence on the functioning of engagement in the field of podcasts, there is a certain lack of research focused on the relationship between audiences and podcasts by journalists. Some factors that may influence the connection of users with the medium have barely been analysed, such as the themes of the programmes, their connection with current events or their reach (national or international), all of which are variables that are easily controlled by producers. Therefore, this work aims to complement and update research on engagement in this medium by observing variables not yet considered in the scientific literature in order to produce more complete knowledge about podcast listeners' patterns of participation and commitment, with a focus on the journalistic dimension.

This study sets the following objectives:

O<sub>1</sub>: Characterise the current production of daily news podcasts in Spain (in their deep dive format) based on their thematic fronts, connection with current affairs, day of posting, scope (national or international) and duration.

O<sub>2</sub>: Measure the degree of association of the aforementioned variables with the different engagement indicators (likes, comments and views), as well as with the engagement rate.

O<sub>3</sub>: Compare the engagement data (likes, comments, views and engagement rate) of this type of programmes on two different platforms (iVoox and YouTube).

O<sub>4</sub>: Analyse which of the variables considered in the study (topics, connection with current affairs, day of posting, reach and duration) are predictive of the engagement of these podcasts on the two platforms.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research design

To achieve these objectives, quantitative research was designed based on analysis of the three main daily news podcasts produced in Spain: (1) *Hoy en El País (El País)*, (2) *El Mundo al día (El Mundo)* and (3) *Un tema al día (elDiario.es)*. The choice of these three titles is based on several criteria:

1. Their clear commitment to the deep dive format, which involves a more complex production based on The Daily's model, which "inspired the newspapers *El Mundo* and *elDiario.es* in June and September 2021" (Martínez Otto *et al.*, 2022: 6). *El País* joined them in March 2022.
2. Due to their relevance, track record and volume of followers, they are usually the podcasts chosen when it comes to researching the phenomenon of the daily news podcast in Spain. Authors such as Martínez Otto *et al.* (2022), Martínez-Graña *et al.* (2023) or García-Marín (2024) have included these titles in their recent studies. Furthermore, their relevance is confirmed by the fact that they have been awarded *ex aequo* with the 2023 Ondas Revelación Award.

3. The three podcasts are available on the two platforms chosen for the study: iVoox and YouTube, episodes being posted regularly. Note that one of the main contributions of this work is its multi-platform nature, since studies on engagement in digital spaces usually focus on a single platform or service.

Table 1 contains the codebook of the variables analysed. Note that almost all independent variables are related to the thematic focus of the episodes (specific topic, connection with current events and scope). Other variables are added to these variables such as the day of the episode's posting, the length and the formula for preparing the titles (interrogative or not). The dependent variables of the work are those related to the engagement indicators that can be obtained on the platforms analysed (likes, comments and reproductions) and the engagement rate.

The engagement data have been obtained from iVoox and YouTube for several reasons. Firstly, they are the two platforms, along with Spotify, with the highest volume of podcast listening in Spain<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, they offer the data publicly, unlike Spotify.

**Table 1. Codebook of the study**

Variable	Categories	Type	Observations
<b>Issue</b>	Health	Independent	
	Politics		
	Sport		
	Society		
	Economics		
	Education		
	Culture		
	Science / Technology		
	Entertainment		
	Other		

<sup>2</sup> Data available at: <https://bit.ly/3yflLVt>

<b>Current Affairs</b>	Yes	Independent	This refers to whether the episode is connected to the news agenda of the day or, at least, the week.
	No		
<b>Posting day</b>	Monday-Sunday	Independent	Please note that the same episode may be posted on different days on each of the platforms analysed.
<b>Scope</b>	National	Independent	The “Not applicable” category is established when the topic addressed is general and transversal to any area, national or international.
	International		
	Not applicable		
<b>Title formula</b>	Interrogative	Independent	The same episode may have its title in different formats depending on the platform.
	Non-interrogative		
<b>Length</b>	Quantitative variable. Measured in minutes	Independent	The length in minutes is rounded up after 30 seconds. For example, an episode with a length of 12 minutes and 20 seconds is reported as having a length of 12 minutes, while an episode with a length of 12 minutes and 40 seconds is considered to have a length of 13.
<b>Likes</b>	Quantitative variable	Dependent	Available on iVoox and YouTube
<b>Comments</b>	Quantitative variable	Dependent	Available on iVoox and YouTube
<b>Plays</b>	Quantitative variable	Dependent	Available on iVoox and YouTube
<b>Engagement rate</b>	Quantitative variable	Dependent	The following formula is used to calculate the rate: $\left[ \frac{\text{number of likes} + \text{number of comments}}{\text{number of views}} \right] \times 100$ (López-Navarrete <i>et al.</i> , 2021; García-Marín and Salvat- Martinrey, 2022)

Source: created by the author

## 2.2. Sample

All episodes posted by the three podcasts on the two platforms during the first six months of 2024 (January 1 - June 30) were analysed. The choice of this period seeks to obtain the most up-to-date picture possible of the production and consumption of this type of podcast, rather than obtaining a global sample of the entire life of each of the programmes. The sample consisted of a total of 708 episodes, 395 of which were posted on iVoox (55.8%) and 313 on YouTube (44.2%). Since all the episodes included in the period analysed are hosted on iVoox, posting on this service will be taken as a reference for the study of general data

(section 3.1.). The distribution of the sample by media was balanced: 239 episodes of *Hoy en El País* (33.8%), 236 of *elDiario.es* (33.3%) and 233 episodes of *El Mundo al día* (32.9%) were studied.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Descriptive ( $O_1$ ) and inferential ( $O_2$ ,  $O_3$ , and  $O_4$ ) statistical calculations were used for data analysis. Before deciding whether to use parametric or non-parametric tests in the inferential statistics calculations, normality tests were performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test applied to the dependent variables. The tests determined the absence of normality in the distribution of variable values ( $p < .001$  in all cases), so the application of non-parametric calculations was chosen: correlations using Spearman's coefficient and Kruskal-Wallis tests (for non-dichotomous variables) and the Mann-Whitney  $U$  test (for dichotomous variables). In the approach to  $O_4$  (study of predictive factors), multiple linear regressions were performed.

Analysis of the episodes that make up the sample was carried out by a single coder. In order to grant greater robustness to the study, Cohen's Kappa test was applied, taking a total of 71 works from the sample (10.02%). This subsample was analysed by the same coder at the beginning of the field work (1st week of May) and again some three months later (3rd week of July) in order to compare the concordance between the results. For this reliability analysis, only the variables that imply some level of interpretation (topics, connection with current events and scope) were considered. The results of the test were between  $k=1$  and  $k=.920$  in the three variables (see complete results of the intra-coder reliability test at: <https://bit.ly/4dJEtV7>), values that can be considered highly satisfactory according to the existing scientific literature (Landis & Coch, 1977).

All statistical work was performed using SPSS v.26 software (full database available at: <https://bit.ly/3LHGO7y>).

## 3. Results

### 3.1. General characteristics

The results obtained allow us to draw up a general profile of the deep dive daily news podcast in Spain ( $O_1$ ) which, from a thematic point of view, basically focuses on political, social and economic issues. 77.2% of the sample analysed falls into one of these three thematic categories, although the majority look into political issues (50.1%) (Table 2). 73.9% address issues related to current affairs. They are posted on weekdays (Monday to Friday). There are no episodes published on Saturday, and Sunday is practically symbolic as a posting day (6.3%). Most episodes deal with issues of national scope (53.7%) and do not use interrogative formulas in their titles (62.53%). The average duration of an episodes is around 18 and a half minutes (18.34).

**Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the general sample**

Independent variable		Frequencies (%)
<b>Issue</b>	Health	14 (3.5%)
	Politics	198 (50.1%)
	Sport	11 (2.8%)
	Society	85 (21.5%)
	Economics	22 (5.6%)
	Education	9 (2.3%)
	Culture	18 (4.6%)
	Science / Technology	8 (2.0%)
	Entertainment	1 (0.3%)
	Other	29 (7.3%)
<b>Current Affairs</b>	Yes	292 (73.9%)
	No	103 (26.1%)
<b>Posting day</b>	Monday	74 (18.7%)
	Tuesday	74 (18.7%)
	Wednesday	73 (18.5%)
	Thursday	74 (18.7%)
	Friday	75 (19%)
	Sunday	25 (6.3%)

<b>Scope</b>	National	212 (53.7%)
	International	150 (38%)
	Not applicable	33 (8.3%)
<b>Title formula</b>	Interrogative	148 (37.5%)
	Non-interrogative	247 (62.5%)
<b>Duration</b>		$M = 18.34$ minutes (SD=6.10). Range: 11-65

Source: created by the author

From the general data on engagement, and in line with  $O_3$ , it can be seen that YouTube offers better performance than iVoox in all indicators (likes, comments, views and engagement rate) (Table 3). The video platform multiplies the number of likes by 16, has 20 times more comments and quintuples the number of views compared to iVoox. In addition, the engagement rate on YouTube triples the figure obtained by iVoox. The Mann-Whitney  $U$  tests observe statistically significant differences between platforms ( $p = .000$  in likes, comments and engagement rates, and  $p < .001$  in views) in all variables, thus, it can be inferred that the use of YouTube is a relevant factor in the activation of all the engagement indicators observed.

**Table 3. Comparison of engagement indicators between platforms**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Average iVoox (SD)</b>	<b>Average YouTube (SD)</b>	<b><math>p</math> (Mann-Whitney <math>U</math> test)</b>
Likes	15.95 (13.83)	259.94 (488.77)	.000*
Comments	3.08 (4.22)	61.08 (137.88)	.000*
Reproductions	1579.86 (756.44)	8827.57 (14196.85)	<.001*
Engagement rate	1.12 (0.53)	3.17 (1.81)	.000*

\*Significant differences when  $p < .050$

Source: created by the author

### 3.2. Deep dive daily news podcasts on iVoox

#### 3.2.1. Likes (iVoox)

In the case of iVoox, the topic with the highest number of likes is that related to science and technology ( $M = 18.38$ ), followed by politics ( $M = 17.94$ ) (Table 4). However, it is necessary to highlight the low frequency of episodes dedicated to the first category (science / technology), therefore for the rest of the statistical calculations the political category will be considered as the topic with the highest average of likes. Episodes that address current issues receive more likes ( $M = 16.37$  compared to  $M = 15.34$ ), those posted on Mondays and Thursdays, those with national reach ( $M = 16.21$  compared to  $M = 14.67$ ), and those that do not use interrogative formulas in their titles ( $M = 18.55$  compared to  $M = 11.61$ ).

**Table 4. Study of engagement in iVoox**

Independent variable		Average Likes (SD)	Average Comments (SD)	Average Plays (SD)	Average Engagement (SD)
Issue	Health	14,14 (10.59)*	3.07 (4.95)	1559.07 (689.01)*	0.99 (0.41)
	Politics	17.94 (15.24)*	3.26 (4.39)	1719.90 (785.37)*	1.13 (0.43)
	Sport	10.82 (6.86)*	1.82 (2.96)	1212.45 (553.73)*	1.01 (0.46)
	Society	15.66 (13.01)*	3.02 (3.94)	1545.85 (797.12)*	1.17 (0.74)
	Economics	10.32 (5.29)*	2.86 (4.52)	1131.45 (417.04)*	1.13 (0.42)
	Education	10.89 (6.58)*	2.33 (2.34)	1096.67 (435.97)*	1.16 (0.37)
	Culture	11,33 (8.82)*	2.83 (3.01)	1347.22 (671.69)*	0.99 (0.50)
	Science / Technology	18.38 (28.10)*	1.63 (0.91)	1452.38 (712.92)*	1.06 (0.78)
	Entertainment	3 (-)*	2 (-)	816.00 (-)*	0,61 (-)
	Other	14.52 (10.34)*	3.25 (5.38)	1568.86 (633.56)*	1.07 (0.44)
Current Affairs	Yes	16.17 (11.61)	3.14 (4.33)	1607.18 (772.05)	1.13 (0.53)
	No	15.34 (18.81)	2.89 (3.88)	1502.40 (708.20)	1.09 (0.51)

<b>Posting day</b>	Monday	17.74 (20.77)*	3.07 (4.12)	1584.96 (823.24)	1.16 (0.53)*
	Tuesday	15,34 (11.16)*	2.99 (4.54)	1587.18 (746.15)	1.05 (0.40)*
	Wednesday	16,34 (12.51)*	2.74 (3.9)	1674.77 (809.03)	1.07 (0.38)*
	Thursday	17.66 (13.78)*	3.14 (4.74)	1568.86 (751.32)	1.30 (0.80)*
	Friday	15.51 (9.74)*	3.72 (4.14)	1551.76 (757.80)	1.15 (0.35)*
	Sunday	7.60 (3.81)*	2.24 (2.86)	1382.84 (341.62)	0,70 (0.28)*
<b>Scope</b>	National	16,21 (12.16)	3.29 (4.27)	1611.09 (801.34)	1.13 (0.45)
	International	14.67 (9.56)	2.78 (4.27)	1521.95 (640.54)	1.10 (0.60)
<b>Formula of the headline</b>	Interrogative	11.61 (9.81)*	2.14 (3.06)*	1300.72 (639.93)*	1.01 (0.44)*
	Non-interrogative.	18.55 (15.19)*	3.64 (4.69)*	1747.12 (772.51)*	1.18 (0.56)*
<b>Length</b>		$Rho = -.306$ $p < .001^*$	$Rho = -.146$ $p = .004^*$	$Rho = -.072$ $p = .153$	$Rho = -.397$ $p < .001^*$

**\*Significant differences when  $p < .050$**

**Source: created by the author**

In relation to  $O_2$ , statistically significant differences are observed in the thematic variable [ $H(9, n = 395) = 22.915, p = .006$ ], the day of posting [ $H(5, n = 395) = 19.364, p = .002$ ] and the title formula ( $U = 24,712, p < .001$ ). As regards subject matter, deviations in the number of likes are found between politics and (1) cultural topics ( $p = .008$ ), (2) sports ( $p = .047$ ) and (3) economics ( $p = .007$ ). Likewise, the length of the episodes correlates negatively with the number of likes ( $Rho = -.306, p < .001$ ): the shorter the episode, the greater the volume of likes received (within the sample range, between 11 and 65 minutes).

Of all these factors (topic, posting day, title formula and length), only (1) the topic and (2) the length are included in the analysis of predictive factors. The variable related to the day of posting is discarded because the only differences are established between Sunday and weekdays and, given the low number of episodes posted on Sundays ( $n = 25$ ;  $Fr = 6.3\%$ ), the variable is not considered relevant. Neither is the formulation of the titles (with or without interrogatives) taken into account, because the majority of the non-interrogative titles are used by *Un tema al día*, the podcast of *elDiario.es*, whose figures in all the engagement indicators are considerably higher (with statistically significant differences) than the other two podcasts, so we can infer that the results of this variable are affected by another factor, in this case the medium which posts the podcast.

Analysis using multiple linear regression ( $O_4$ ) determines that politics as the subject matter is a predictor of the number of likes ( $\beta = .145$ ,  $_{adjusted}R^2 = .018$ ,  $p = .004$ ) (Table 5). The fact of making podcasts focused on political issues causes an increase in the engagement indicator: political topics explain 1.8% of the variance in the number of likes.

To calculate the predictive capacity of length with respect to the number of likes, this aspect was converted into a dichotomous variable by establishing the following categories: (1) duration below the sample average (18 minutes and less) and (2) duration above the sample average (greater than 18 minutes). As can be seen, the cut-off point was established at the average length of the episodes analysed (18.34 minutes). Note that this was also done for the rest of the engagement factors on the two platforms. The results of the linear regression show that creating podcasts that are shorter than the average (18 minutes or less) increases the number of likes ( $\beta = .343$ ,  $_{adjusted}R^2 = .116$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Creating podcasts that are shorter than the average explains 11.6% of the variance in this variable.

**Table 5. Predictive factors of engagement in iVoox**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Standardised coefficient ( $\beta$ )	$p$	Model Summary
Likes	Political issue	.145	.004	$F=8.38$ $p=.004$ $_{Adjusted}R^2 = .018$
	Short duration (18 minutes and less)	.346	<.001	$F=52.45$ $p<.001$ $_{Adjusted}R^2 = .116$
Comments	Short duration (18 minutes and less)	.224	<.001	$F=20.67$ $p<.001$ $_{Adjusted}R^2 = .048$
Reproductions	Political issue	.186	<.001	$F=14.05$ $p<.001$ $_{Adjusted}R^2 = .032$
Engagement rate	Short duration (18 minutes and less)	.289	<.001	$F=35.75$ $p<.001$ $_{Adjusted}R^2 = .081$

Source: created by the author

### 3.2.2. Comments (iVoox)

The episodes that receive the greatest number of comments on iVoox are those on a political issue ( $M = 3.26$ ), those that address current issues ( $M = 3.14$  versus  $M = 2.89$ ), those posted on Fridays and Thursdays, those of national scope ( $M = 3.29$  versus  $M = 2.78$ ), and those headed by non-interrogative titles ( $M = 3.64$  versus  $M = 2.14$ ) (Table 4). Statistically relevant deviations are observed in the variable related to the formulation of the titles: non-interrogative ones receive a significantly higher number of

comments than those that opt for interrogative formulas ( $O_2$ ). However, as explained above, this variable will not be considered in the analysis of predictive factors.

Likewise, the correlational study between the duration and the number of comments observes a negative association between the two variables: the shorter the duration of the episode, the greater the number of comments ( $Rho = -.146, p = .004$ ). Therefore, the only factor included in the analysis of predictive factors is length. The tests using linear regression determine that length is a factor that influences the number of comments ( $O_4$ ). The variable explains 4.8% of the variance in the volume of comments ( $\beta = .224, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .048, p < .001$ ) (Table 5).

### 3.2.3. Plays (iVoox)

The listening volume (number of times played) of the podcasts analysed follows a similar pattern to the aforementioned engagement factors. The most listened to are those on political matters ( $M = 1719.90$ ), those dealing with current affairs ( $M = 1607.18$  compared to  $M = 1502.40$ ), those posted on Wednesdays and Tuesdays (it is worth noting that, from Wednesday onwards the number of plays decreases), those with national reach ( $M = 1611.09$  compared to  $M = 1521.95$ ) and those that do not have interrogative titles ( $M = 1747.12$  compared to  $M = 1300.72$ ) (Table 4). Notable differences are only perceived in the thematic variable [ $H(9, n = 395) = 32.250, p < .001$ ], especially between politics and (1) education ( $p = .006$ ), (2) economics ( $p < .001$ ), (3) sports ( $p = .012$ ), (4) culture ( $p = .018$ ), and (5) society ( $p = .045$ ). Unlike what is observed in likes and comments, there is no correlation between length and the number of reproductions ( $O_2$ ).

The creation of podcasts on political issues contributes to increasing the number of plays on iVoox ( $\beta = .186, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .032, p < .001$ ) (Table 5). This variable, therefore, influences the number of listens, with a predictive capacity of 3.2% on the behaviour of the number of plays ( $O_4$ ).

### 3.2.4 Engagement rate (iVoox)

Episodes on social issues generate the highest engagement rate ( $M = 1.17$ ), followed closely by those dealing with politics ( $M = 1.13$ ). The other variables keep up the trend indicated in the previously analysed indicators: episodes on current affairs garner greater engagement ( $M = 1.13$  compared to  $M = 1.09$ ), as do episodes with a national scope ( $M = 1.13$  compared to  $M = 1.10$ ) and those that do not formulate the title with interrogative structures ( $M = 1.18$  compared to  $M = 1.01$ ). Thursday and Monday are the posting days with the highest engagement. Significant differences are only perceived in the posting day and the use of non-interrogative headlines ( $O_2$ ). Both variables are discarded for the study of predictive factors for the reasons explained in section 3.2.1.

Length, which is also negatively associated with engagement rate ( $Rho = -.397, p < .001$ ), has an impact on this variable ( $O_4$ ): making podcasts below the average duration explains 8.1% of variance in engagement rate ( $\beta = .289, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .081, p < .001$ ).

### 3.3. Daily news podcast on YouTube

#### 3.3.1. Likes (YouTube)

The distribution of the number of likes on YouTube follows a similar tendency to that observed on iVoox. Political matters receive more likes ( $M = 391.80$ ), as do episodes that deal with current affairs ( $M = 288.87$  compared to  $M = 153.72$ ), those posted on Tuesdays and Thursdays, those of national scope ( $M = 312.10$  compared to  $M = 216.28$ ), and those that do not use interrogative titles ( $M = 325.32$  compared to  $M = 153.35$ ) (Table 6).

**Tabla 6. YouTube engagement study**

Independent variable		Average Likes (SD)	Average Comments (SD)	Averages Plays (SD)	Average Engagement (SD)
Issue	Health	130.54 (190.30)*	16.69 (24.18)*	3086.54 (3633.06)*	3.09 (1.86)
	Politics	391.80 (612.47)*	96.89 (175.78)*	13126.86 (16697.14)*	3.41 (1.80)
	Sport	70.33 (97.26)*	25,11 (59.94)*	4338.00 (8578.08)*	2.77 (1.68)
	Society	120.47 (258.58)*	15.73 (31.17)*	4849.11 (10945.59)*	2.79 (1.61)
	Economics	52.76 (67.71)*	12.76 (27.15)*	2218.14 (2963.17)*	2.94 (1.55)
	Education	53.00 (95.06)	11.00 (19.78)*	538.00 (208.54)*	3.15 (2.59)
	Culture	114.67 (169.73)*	51.33 (125.94)*	2880.92 (3231.22)*	3.91 (2.79)
	Science / Technology	11.33 (3.05)*	1.33 (1.15)*	756.67 (378.80)*	1.89 (0.78)
	Entertainment	16.00 (-)*	2.00 (-)*	1578.00 (-)*	1.14 (-)
	Other	237.80 (364.47)*	49.30 (103.45)*	7682.45 (11809.19)*	2.89 (1.80)
Current Affairs	Yes	288.87 (501.03)*	71.84 (149.88)*	10346.27 (15302.21)*	3.20 (1.80)
	No	153.72 (427.67)*	21.58 (66.82)*	3126.58 (6252.32)*	3.07 (1.84)

<b>Posting day</b>	Monday	250.17 (501.76)*	53.16 (111.43)*	7980.18 (12172.11)*	3.22 (1.95)
	Tuesday	364.39 (618.21)*	102.95 (227.13)*	12567.29 (18924.37)*	3.42 (1.83)
	Wednesday	215.46 (379.65)*	46.67 (84.71)*	8010.76 (12288.42)*	3.30 (1.92)
	Thursday	253.03 (434.59)*	59.07 (125.97)*	8756.87 (13549.43)*	3.06 (1.57)
	Friday	248.66 (497.24)*	52.25 (101.90)*	7980.03 (13457.13)*	3.06 (1.82)
	Saturday	16.25 (20.29)*	3,13 (3.56)*	850.38 (531.23)*	1.97 (1.27)
<b>Scope</b>	National	312.10 (527.10)	72.84 (145.87)	10414.57 (14279.33)	3.14 (1.78)
	International	216.28 (503.32)	54.50 (137.28)	7721.30 (14942.80)	3.36 (1.86)
<b>Title formula</b>	Interrogative	153.35 (439.36)*	53.77 (167.07)*	7470.68 (16426.02)*	2.47 (1.56)*
	Non interrogative	325.32 (506.82)*	65.57 (116.67)*	9654.42 (12622.68)*	3.60 (1.82)*
<b>Length</b>		<i>Rho</i> = -.181 <i>p</i> = .001*	<i>Rho</i> = -.161 <i>p</i> = .004*	<i>Rho</i> = -.126 <i>p</i> = .027*	<i>Rho</i> = -.267 <i>p</i> < .001*

\*Significant differences when  $p < .050$

Source: created by the author

Significant differences are observed in the following variables: (1) issue [ $H(9, n = 313) = 47.663, p < .001$ ], (2) topicality of the subject addressed ( $U = 6020, p < .001$ ), (3) day of posting and (4) headline formula ( $O_2$ ). The association between length and the number of likes is also maintained ( $Rho = -.181, p = .001$ ). In the case of the first variable (subject matter), deviations are established, above all, in relation to politics and (1) science/technology ( $p = .028$ ), (2) education ( $p = .010$ ), (3) economics ( $p < .001$ ), (4) sports ( $p = .012$ ), (5) society ( $p < .001$ ), (6) culture ( $p = .045$ ), and (7) health ( $p = .040$ ). Concerning the day of posting, differences are observed between Saturday and the other days (no deviations are established between working days). Given the small number of episodes posted on Saturdays ( $n = 8, Fr = 0.25\%$ ), this variable is not considered in the calculation of predictive factors. Neither is the variable related to the title formula included for the reasons explained in section 3.2.1.

The only predictive factor of the number of likes on YouTube is the subject matter ( $\beta = .279, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .072, p < .001$ ) (Table 7). Coverage of political issues explains 7.2% of the variance in the number of likes received ( $O_4$ ).

**Table 7. Predictive factors of engagement on YouTube**

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Standardised coefficient ( $\beta$ )	$p$	Model Summary
<b>Likes</b>	Political issue	.279	<.001	$F=13.174$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .072$
	Posted on Tuesday	.125	.023	$F=10.200$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .081$
<b>Comments</b>	Political issue	.237	<.001	$F=10.200$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .081$
	Posted on Tuesday	.125	.023	$F=10.200$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .081$
<b>Reproductions</b>	Political issue	.262	<.001	$F=13.333$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .107$
	Short duration (18 minutes and less)	.134	.019	$F=5.606$ $p=.019$ $Adjusted R^2 = .015$
<b>Engagement rate</b>	Short duration (18 minutes and less)	.369	<.001	$F=48.533$ $p<.001$ $Adjusted R^2 = .134$

Source: created by the author

### 3.3.2. Comments (YouTube)

In the case of comments, the results are practically the same as for the variable related to likes. The podcasts receiving most comments are those on politics ( $M = 96.89$ ), or current affairs ( $M = 71.84$  versus  $M = 21.58$ ), those posted on Tuesdays and Thursdays, being national in scope ( $M = 72.84$  versus  $M = 54.50$ ) and those that do not have interrogative titles ( $M = 65.57$  versus  $M = 53.77$ ) (Table 6). There is also a correlation between brevity and the number of comments ( $Rho = -.161$ ,  $p = .004$ ).

Significant differences are also established between political issues and the other categories [ $H(9, n=313) = 64.694$ ,  $p < .001$ ], current affairs ( $U = 4850,500$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and the formulas for writing the title ( $O_2$ ). Added to these is the posting of the podcast on a Tuesday [ $H(5, n=313) = 12.985$ ,  $p = .024$ ], a variable that will be integrated into the study of predictive factors.

The linear regression model ( $O_4$ ) determines that both political matters ( $\beta = .232$ ,  $adjusted R^2 = .081$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the podcast being on a Tuesday ( $\beta = .125$ ,  $adjusted R^2 = .081$ ,  $p = .023$ ) are factors that predict the number of comments on YouTube (Table 7).

### 3.3.3. Plays (YouTube)

The patterns observed in the case of reproductions are identical. Political issues ( $M = 13,126.86$ ), current affairs ( $M = 10,346.27$  versus  $M = 3,126.58$ ), episodes posted on Tuesdays and Thursdays, those of national scope ( $M = 10,414.57$  versus  $M = 7,721.30$ ), and those that do not use interrogative titles ( $M = 9,654.42$  versus  $M = 7,470.68$ ) are listened to more often (Table 6). Likewise, the negative correlation between duration and listening volume is maintained: the shorter the podcast, the greater the number of plays ( $Rho = -.126, p = .027$ ).

The deviations are exactly the same as those detected in the case of comments ( $O_2$ ). They are observed in the variable of subject matter (between politics and the rest of the categories) [ $H(9, n = 313) = 59.647, p < .001$ ], current affairs ( $U = 4882, p < .001$ ), appearing on Tuesday [ $H(5, n = 313) = 12.376, p = .030$ ], and the formulas for writing the title.

The factors that predict the number of views are: (1) political issues ( $\beta = .262, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .107, p < .001$ ) and (2) being shorter than average ( $\beta = .134, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .015, p = .019$ ) (Table 7).

### 3.3.4. Engagement rate (YouTube)

After cultural topics ( $M = 3.91$ ), politics is the thematic category with the highest engagement rate on YouTube ( $M = 3.41$ ) (Table 6). However, the data on episodes that address cultural issues is not deemed to be relevant due to their low frequency ( $n = 12, Fr = 3.88\%$ ).

Almost all the trends present in the previously analysed indicators are repeated: current affairs topics achieve higher rates ( $M = 3.20$  versus  $M = 3.07$ ), as do episodes published on Tuesdays (it is relevant that, from this day onwards, the engagement rate decreases) and those with non-interrogative titles ( $M = 3.60$  versus  $M = 2.47$ ). Unlike the previous factors, it is surprising that issues of international scope achieve higher rates than national ones ( $M = 3.36$  versus  $M = 3.14$ ). Duration and engagement rate are inversely associated ( $Rho = -.267, p < .001$ ).

Finally, no significant differences are observed for any variable, except for length ( $O_2$ ), so only this last factor is considered for the study of predictive factors. In this case, a duration below the average contributes to a higher engagement rate ( $\beta = .369, R^2 \text{ adjusted} = .134, p < .001$ ) (Table 7).

## 4. Discussion and conclusions

This study allows the sketching of the central characteristics of the daily news podcast in Spain in its deep dive modality through consideration of the three main titles posted in the country in 2024. From a thematic point of view, this type of podcast basically focuses on political, social and economic issues (almost 8 out of 10 episodes in the sample address those topics), although the single commonest thematic focus is political. Almost three out of four podcasts in the first half of 2024 address aspects related to current affairs, which register better values in all engagement indicators on both platforms than episodes not connected to the news agenda. Those results coincide with previous studies that affirm that information needs, rather than social or emotional needs, may be more relevant motivations for podcast listening (Chan-Olmsted & Wang, 2020; Tobin & Guadagno, 2022).

Most episodes deal with issues of national scope and do not use interrogative formulas in their titles. Episodes last an average of around 18 and a half minutes (18.34). This result confirms that obtained by Martínez Otto *et al.* (2022) in a study carried out on the same podcasts two years before this study, which seems to point to the existence of a certain stability and standardisation in the length of this type of programme.

Despite not being a specific tool (nor designed) for podcast consumption, YouTube offers better performance than iVoox in all the indicators analysed (likes, comments, plays and engagement rate). The larger number of plays on YouTube is not surprising given that it is second among platforms where most podcasts are listened to in Spain, just ahead of iVoox (Statista, 2024). Our results show that the posting of podcasts on YouTube (only in audio, without the need for an accompanying video) is a relevant factor in the fostering of such engagement factors. Future research will be able to confirm whether this trend is maintained in other types of podcasts, apart from the titles studied here. The deviations in the data on the two platforms confirm that, in the field of podcasts, the generation of engagement is highly contextual: it may differ depending on the posting platform used. Previous studies had already demonstrated this contextual nature of engagement depending on the type of user and the sector analysed, as well as the geographical and sociocultural location of the study (Wahid & Gunarto, 2021). Kim & Yang (2017) for example found that posts on Facebook which incorporate photographs stimulate the number of likes, but negatively influence the volume of comments. In contrast, De Vries *et al.* (2012) and Tafesse (2015) claim that visual content does not affect the number of likes and comments. Along similar lines, other studies such as that of Cvijikj & Michahelles (2013) show that the use of video has no impact on the number of comments on social media platforms.

However, the results of our study show certain coincidences worthy of mention in the engagement achieved on iVoox and YouTube, as they point to several trends that remain unchanged regardless of the posting platform analysed (see comparison of engagement indicators on iVoox and YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/485OESS>). This is one of the most original contributions of this research, which measures the same object of study – engagement – on two different platforms. On the one hand, political topics (in terms of engagement rates, politics is second behind social issues), current affairs, national reach (except in the case of the engagement rate, where international topics perform better on YouTube) and non-interrogative titles receive more likes, comments, reproductions and higher engagement rates. Although there are hardly any coincidences in the functioning of the variables with respect to the day of posting, Thursday turns out to be the second-best day to receive likes and comments. On both platforms, a negative correlation is observed between length and number of likes, comments and engagement rates. Only for that latter variable (engagement rates) is a short duration (below average) a predictive factor both on iVoox and on YouTube. Likewise, on both platforms, political issues have a statistically significant impact on the number of likes and views. It is therefore observed that addressing political topics is a powerful activator of engagement in the deep dive daily news podcast and that the effect of this variable is transversal on several platforms. This fact confirms previous studies that show that “the specific topics of each episode generate differences in the level of engagement, therefore it is possible to find episodes of a podcast widely commented on by its followers while others go completely unnoticed” (García-Marín, 2020b: 56).

According to our results, the weekend is hardly used to post on either platform and, when it is, engagement figures are very low. There do not seem to be any major differences in the engagement observed between episodes published on different weekdays, although the number of comments received by podcasts published on Tuesday on YouTube is double that of the

rest of the days. The figure is surprising because episodes released on Tuesdays on iVoox are relatively little commented-on compared to the rest of the week.

In summary, the results of this work contribute to greater understanding of engagement and the factors that drive consumption and participation in podcasts, complementing previous studies focused on other variables. The work of García-Marín (2024) shows that (1) listening to journalists' podcasts is associated with age in that those under 45 years of age are twice as likely to consume news podcasts, and (2) the habit of reading newspapers that produce news podcasts predicts the listening to this medium for informational purposes. However, previous evidence determines that feelings of gratitude and connection with a brand also have a statistically significant positive impact on user engagement in podcasts (Rohden *et al.*, 2022). Although they cannot be considered chat podcasts (Martín-Nieto *et al.*, 2024), the narrative form of daily news podcasts, based on a dialogue between the presenter and other journalists or experts, helps listeners connect with the programme's hosts (Perks & Turner, 2018).

Finally, the limitations of this work are to be found in three aspects. Firstly, as is usual in studies of this type, the results may be influenced by the period selected (the first half of 2024), which may have caused certain issues specific to that period to be somewhat overrepresented. Secondly, although the study focuses on more than one platform, it does not include data from other actors essential to an understanding of current podcast consumption in Spain, such as Spotify (the aggregator where most podcasts are listened to over the period observed) or the platforms of the media analysed. Studies of podcast consumption in those spaces could complement or qualify the results presented here. Finally, our work incorporates variables almost exclusively focused on the thematic focus of the programs (content, topicality and scope) that could be completed with research on engagement focused on other variables of a narrative (genres, openings, intros and outros), expressive (resources / effects, tunes, use of music, sex of the participating voices, indicators, etc.) or strategic type (promotion of the newspaper or design of the covers) (Martínez Otto *et al.*, 2022). Thus, a comprehensive understanding of how engagement occurs in deep dive daily news podcasts would be achieved, which would help producers who invest in the medium to improve their connection with the public, reinforce their brand image and enhance the impact of quality audio-based journalism.

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## 6. Conflict of interest

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

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