



Journalist Fellowship Paper

A Central American audience opportunity: the U.S. diaspora

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Foreword

*"...the paths of the human exodus are not free.
Immense caravans travel the world,
caravans of fugitives from the impossible life."*

Eduardo Galeano, *Bocas del Tiempo*

Introduction

Much has been written about the challenges facing the news industry: media and business journals have archives full of earnest papers about the decline of legacy media, new revenue models, social- and search-engine optimization, and the like.

But the vast majority of that work is based on learnings gleaned from U.S. data and other countries in the Global North. Media outlets in Central America have faced all the same challenges, but are rarely the focus of study.

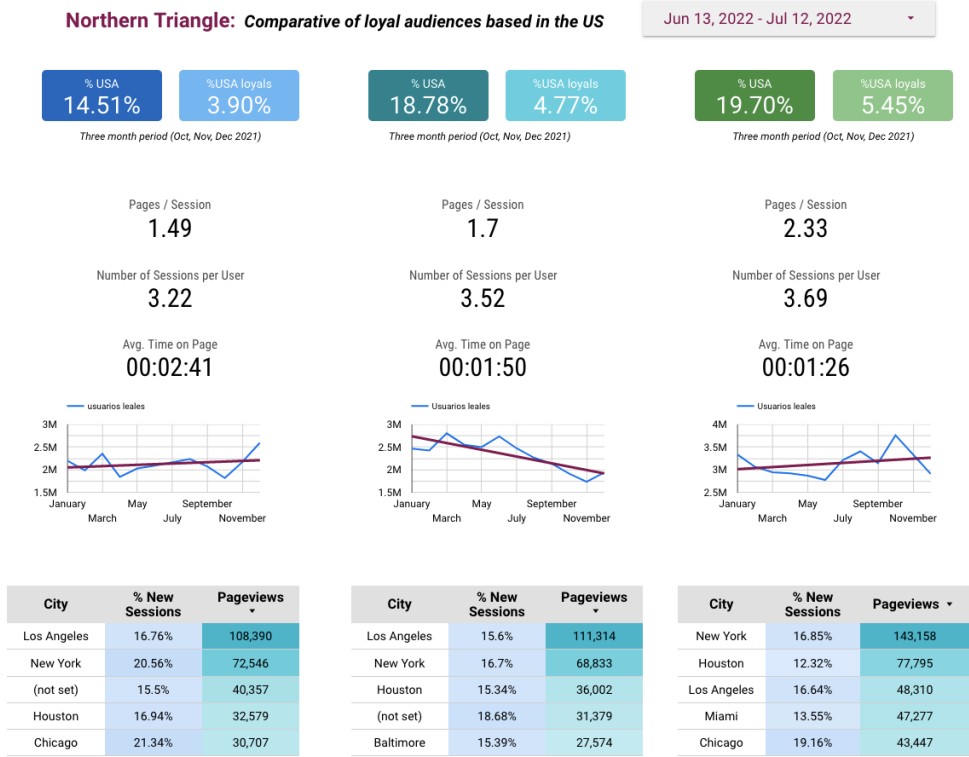
That's why I chose to spend my time as a journalist fellow at the Reuters Institute on audience questions facing the Northern Triangle in Central America, made up of my home country of Guatemala, as well as Honduras and El Salvador.



Map of the Northern Triangle

With this in mind, I asked three of the biggest newspapers in the Northern Triangle to grant me unlimited access to their Google Analytics: *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala), *La Prensa Gráfica* (El Salvador), and *La Prensa* (Honduras).

With key insights and advice from Anntao Diaz, Head of News Consumer Insights at Google, I built custom dashboards for each outlet that highlighted audience opportunities.



A screengrab from one of the dashboards Claudia built

I then further focused my analysis on what I see as a key monetization opportunity for all three outlets: the diaspora from the Northern Triangle to the U.S., which accounts for 85% of all migrants from Central America – or over 5 million people.

This paper presents the aggregated findings of that analysis, builds a profile of the unique needs of that audience segment, sets out a plan for other newsrooms looking to experiment with creating a minimum viable product (MVP) for a diaspora segment, and includes advice from other outlets that have successfully leveraged a diaspora audience segment, including *444.hu* in Hungary, *NewsLaundry* and *NewsMinute* in India, *Fuengirola.fi* in Finland, *BANTUMEN* in Portugal, and the *BBC World Service*.

Why target the diaspora?

For the three Central American publishers I analysed in the Northern Triangle, web traffic from the U.S. accounts for approximately 17% of their total traffic. But what do we know about this potential market segment?

There are more than 5 million people from Central America living in the United States (U.S.), according to the Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey.^{1,2} The majority hail from the Northern Triangle (NT) countries of El Salvador (2,311,574), Guatemala (1,683,093) and Honduras (1,083,540). Migration from these three countries accounts for more than 85% of the total Central American population in the country.

According to the 2019 [census data](#), Guatemalans gravitate towards California, Florida, New York, Texas, and New Jersey. Salvadorans are mostly based in California, Texas, New York, Maryland, and Virginia. Most Hondurans are based in Maryland, Texas, California, New York, and Florida.

Within California, the cities with a majority NT migrant population are Los Angeles and San Francisco. In Florida, Miami is most popular, and, in the case of Texas, Houston and Dallas top the list.

On average, the gender ratio within this three-nationality group is close to being even: men account for between 50 and 55.1% and women account for between 44.9 and 50% of the community. Most of the current Guatemalan immigrants are operators,

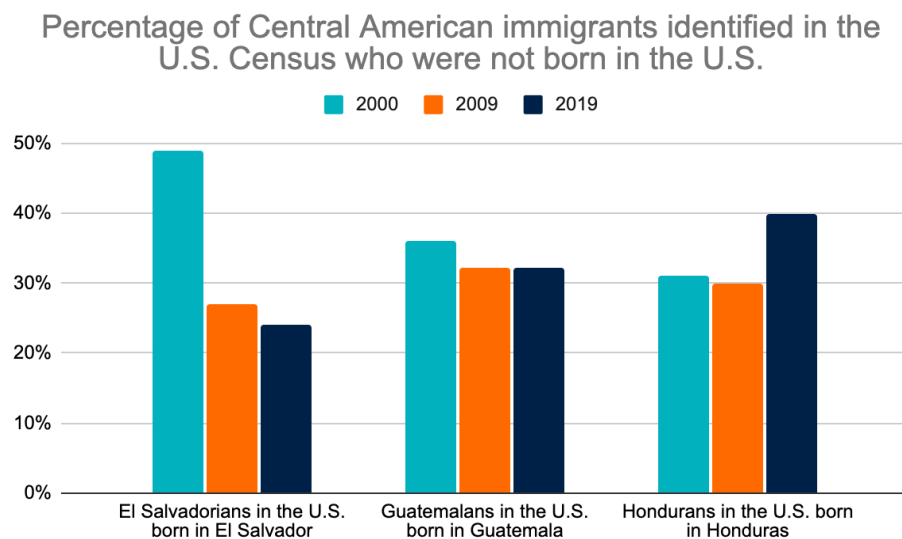
¹ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>

² It is worth noting that Census Bureau data is not fully representative: it only includes Central Americans with regular migratory status in the United States (holders of permanent residency, citizenship, Temporary Protected Status [TPS], and Consideration of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA]). However, we can extract some interesting findings about the profile of the diaspora, particularly of the Central American caravans that started as early as October 2018 and continued into 2021.

craftsmen, mechanics and masons; Hondurans and Salvadorans are mostly in the service industry, construction, and maintenance occupations.^{3,4}

Among at least 79% of those surveyed, their living arrangement was recorded as a family household, on average formed by four people. Up to 52% of these households included children under the age of 18. Of these, between 43 and 51% were attending elementary school.

Close to a third of Central Americans reported in this Census were born in the United States, but most – 57 to 62% – were born in their home countries. That statistic in particular seems to be changing in a slow but steady way.



The U.S. census counts children of immigrants born in the U.S. as part of the immigrant population

Before 2000, 49% of accounted Salvadorians in the U.S. were born in their country of origin. In 2009, that percentage dropped to 27% and in 2019 to 24%. Among Guatemalans, 36% were born outside the U.S. in 2000, 32.20% in 2009, and 32.10% in

³ Encuesta sobre Migración Internacional de Personas Guatemaltecas y Remesas OIM 2016

⁴ Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

2019. Only Hondurans based in the U.S. buck the trend: before 2000 31% were born abroad, in 2009 30%, and by 2019 the figure jumped to 40%.

Another distinctive aspect of the Central American diaspora in the U.S. has to do with the language they speak. Only 11% of the Guatemalans, Hondurans and Salvadoreans speak English alone. The vast majority, aged 5 and over, speak a “language other than English” (Spanish) and at least 47% speak English “less than very well”.

It's also worth noting their commuting patterns: up to 68% of workers aged 16 years and older travel to work by car, truck or van, and drive alone. A further 15-20% carpool. In both instances, the average travel time to work is around 30 minutes.

The Census does not detail mobile internet scope for this community but it does state that 78 to 85% have a broadband internet subscription in their home.

Causes and future prospects for NT migration

As a regional phenomenon, migration from the Northern Triangle of Central America is “exacerbated by natural disasters and poor governance” according to a Congressional Research Service factsheet produced in March 2022.⁵ A high percentage of the population in Honduras (20%) and Guatemala (28.9%) fall below the line of multidimensional poverty, which correlates with poor access to health service and food insecurity.^{6,7} El Salvador’s portion of the population in this category is lower, but still accounts for the majority of migrants in the US.⁸

⁵ <https://crsreports.congress.gov>

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report. 2019. "Human Development Index." Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GTM>

⁷ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report. 2019. "Human Development Index." Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/HND>

⁸ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report. 2019. "Human Development Index." Retrieved from <https://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/SLV>

The gross national income (GNI) per capita is highest in Guatemala at US\$4,610 a year and lowest at \$2,390 a year in Honduras. By comparison, the GNI per capita in the U.S. is close to US\$65,970 a year – almost 14 times that of Guatemala’s.⁹ This is a strong indicator for continued migration from the Northern Triangle.

Within the Northern Triangle, Honduras has the largest population of child migrants with a 35.3% share of all international migrants to the U.S. 19 years old or younger. Guatemala's and El Salvador's share is around half of that with 16.9% and 16.50%, respectively.

Remittances

In terms of analysing a market opportunity in the diaspora, understanding how much money is sent home – and what for – is important. But, while many different organisations have researched and published reports about remittances to NT, they show significant dissimilarities.¹⁰ For the purposes of this profile, I’ve focused on information that correlates and highlighted particularities by country.

According to the World Bank, remittances to Guatemala in 2010 totalled US\$4.2 billion, followed by El Salvador with US\$3.5 billion and Honduras with US\$2.6 billion.¹¹ In 2014, Guatemalans sent home US\$5.8 billion, followed by El Salvador with US\$4.2 billion and Honduras with US\$3.4 billion. Remittances reached a new high in 2020: Guatemalans sent home US\$11.4 billion – double the amount from Salvadorans (US\$5.9 billion) and Hondurans (US\$5.6 billion).

⁹ World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. GNI per capita, Atlas method (current US\$) - Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, United States 2019

¹⁰ Among those who have researched remittances are different government offices, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the Centre for Latin American Monetary Studies (CEMLA) and the Multilateral Investment Fund at the Inter- American Development Bank Group.

¹¹ Personal remittances, received (current US\$) - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras 1974-2020

(<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT?locations=SV-GT-HN>)

Remittances from Honduran and Salvadoran immigrants in 2020 accounted for more than 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP) at home. In Guatemala, remittances accounted for 14.7% of the country's GDP. By comparison, in Mexico – which is one of the world's top three receivers of remittances from immigrants after India and China – these funds only account for 4% of the GDP.^{12,13}

In terms of fees paid by NT immigrants to send their remittances home, Hondurans paid about 4.6% over their remittances in 2020 followed by Guatemala (3.9%) and El Salvador (2.8%).¹⁴ The process of sending remittances to all three countries has become increasingly easier and more reliable over the years – the percentage spent on fees has reduced by almost half in the past decade.

Beneficiaries of remittances in Guatemala are based in Guatemala City, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and El Petén; in Honduras they are located in Cortes, followed by Francisco Morazán, Olancho, and Atlántida; while in El Salvador they are in San Salvador, followed by San Miguel, La Libertad, and Santa Ana.¹⁵

How are remittances spent?

In the case of Guatemalans, remittances are spent on groceries, education, health and housing.¹⁶ The OIM states that around 49.8% use the remittances for investment (housing construction, real estate purchase, home repair, insurance) and savings.¹⁷

¹² Resilience COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens, Migration and Development Brief 34, May 2021. Knomad and World Bank Group report.

¹³ Personal remittances, received (% of GDP) - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?locations=SV-GT-HN-IN-MX>)

¹⁴ Average transaction cost of sending remittances to a specific country (%) - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Mexico 2011-2020 (<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.RMT.COST.IB.ZS?locations=SV-GT-HN-IN-MX>)

¹⁵ Remittance Recipients in Guatemala/Honduras/El Salvador, A Socioeconomic Profile by The Multilateral Investment Fund, Inter-American Development Bank. 2016

¹⁶ Organización Internacional para las Migraciones (OIM) y Fondo de Población de las Naciones Unidas (UNFPA). 2018

¹⁷ Encuesta sobre Migración Internacional de Personas Guatemaltecas y Remesas, OIM, 2016

In Honduras, most remittance goes to general consumption – this includes basic needs such as maintenance, medical treatment and education.¹⁸ Only a small percentage uses this income for fixed capital investments such as buying or improving properties. This group also reports sending extraordinary remittances at least once a year for family celebrations, medical expenses, funerals, or construction.

Among Salvadorans, 94% say they use remittances for general consumption, and also for education, health, and savings.¹⁹ Extraordinary remittances are sent for birthday celebrations, Christmas, Mother's Day, Father's Day.²⁰

All three groups also send remittances in kind, including clothes, shoes, gadgets, mobile internet vouchers, cars, toys, appliances and supermarket orders.²¹ This averages out to around US\$247 sent monthly, and contributes about 44% to the total household incomes of those receiving remittance.^{22,23}

¹⁸ Resultados de la encuesta semestral de remesas familiares, Banco Central de Honduras, 2021

¹⁹ "Remittance Recipients in El Salvador A Socioeconomic Profile", IDB, September 2016

²⁰ Encuesta Nacional de Migración y Remesas El Salvador, OIM, 2017

²¹ Encuesta sobre Migración Internacional de Personas Guatemaltecas y Remesas, OIM, 2016; Resultados de la encuesta semestral de remesas familiares, Banco Central de Honduras, 2021; Encuesta Nacional de Migración y Remesas El Salvador, OIM, 2017

²² Encuesta sobre Migración Internacional de Personas Guatemaltecas y Remesas, OIM, 2016; "Remittance Recipients in Honduras A Socioeconomic Profile", IDB, 2016; Encuesta Nacional de Migración y Remesas El Salvador, OIM, 2017

²³ Remittance Recipients in Guatemala A Socioeconomic Profile, IDB, 2016; "Remittance Recipients in Honduras A Socioeconomic Profile", IDB, 2016; "Remittance Recipients in El Salvador A Socioeconomic Profile", IDB, September 2016.

The media landscape in NT

The media spectrum of the Northern Triangle includes at least 30 media outlets.²⁴ Each country in the triangle is home to a few strong legacy media brands in print, radio and TV. There is also a small but promising group of new media devoted to investigative journalism.

Most of these regional brands stick to the advertising revenue model, but a small number of reader revenue-based media projects have begun to emerge in the region: *Prensa Libre* and *elPeriódico* in Guatemala, and *El Diario de Hoy* in El Salvador.

Most large outlets are owned and funded by wealthy families, while medium and small outlets depend on funding from international NGOs, digital technology moguls, and other organisations supporting independent media.

Regional approach to the diaspora audience

As for coverage of the diaspora audience and related topics, the approach by most has been minimal: focused on the political and economic aspects around immigration, breaking news regarding caravans and tragedies faced by immigrants going to the north.

A recent direct approach to cater to this audience comes from Guatemala, where Diarios Modernos S.A., owner of the tabloid *Nuestro Diario*, offers an app to the Guatemalans based in the U.S..

Aldo Martínez, Digital Products Editor, said it was launched two years ago. The app, available in Spanish via Google Play and Apple's App Store, is only accessible in the U.S., and as of February 2022 it had been downloaded 10,000 times.

²⁴ <https://medialandscapes.org>

After a seven-day free trial it offers a US\$4.99 monthly or US\$39.99 yearly subscription.

Nuestro Diario app offers users “exclusive news from Guatemala and the United States only for Chapines” (a colloquial nickname for Guatemalans), “information about your community and all of Guatemala”, and “news that Guatemalans have to know about the United States”.

In reviewing the app, it seems much of the content mirrors what is published in the print version that circulates in Guatemala. In terms of non-editorial elements, the app includes a “safe social network” called “Red Chapina” where users are invited to interact with other Guatemalans to “get job offerings, make announcements, find the nearest mobile consulate or share photos with nearby chapines”.

Articles displayed in the infinite-scroll frontpage included news about weather, sport, traffic, as well as community issues with public services, life of immigrants abroad, and immigrant activism in the U.S.. The articles are geotagged and can be filtered into five regions of Guatemala: the capital, south, east, west and north. This classification can be accessed from a top dropdown menu.

In the description of the app, there is also a mention of a “Citizen Reporter” feature which is not clearly identified inside the app. Martínez was contacted for an interview about the app, but declined to confirm more than the app’s age.

In El Salvador, *La Prensa Gráfica* has had two web front pages for the past four years: one for the U.S. based diaspora and another for those living in El Salvador. “We saw the potential for monetization through ads,” said Margarita Funes, Head of Multimedia Content there. “Also, for over 20 years we have had a section called ‘Departamento 15’.” (El Salvador is made up of 14 “departamentos” or provinces; the 15th refers to those that live abroad.)

“Some time ago when the newsroom was larger, we had a dedicated team with a group of correspondents abroad devoted to producing articles from Virginia, Los Angeles, Canada, Australia, Milan, Houston, and Sweden, among others,” Funes explained. “They would pitch topics related to Salvadorans in those cities and we would print them with the Departamento 15 logo and it would also be published digitally under the same section.”

“Departamento 15 section has very few [new stories] these days,” she said. The concept of diaspora content, in principle, remains but has narrowed to reporting on Salvadorans living abroad: portraying their life experiences, rather than a news agenda that might be relevant to them. It also lost importance because very few people were coming to the web to visit specific sections; most of the news consumption is triggered by the frontpage or social media.

Funes said they still have a stringer in Washington. She reports on important developments that impact Salvadorans – “especially now that we have a Senator with Salvadoran origin”.

La Prensa Gráfica has found that news about the national football team and almost any story around Mexican entertainment news works well with the diaspora. They also live-stream patron saint festivities in towns, which usually perform well and are easily monetized via Facebook.

In Guatemala, Antonio Barrios, Managing Editor at *Prensa Libre* said the outlet has an internal committee that manages the strategy for the U.S. diaspora audience. “Based on their evaluation and monitoring of traffic from the United States, we prioritise improving technical aspects related to our website, which also impacts the way we measure and profile said audience.” *Prensa Libre* has already run several tests and, based on results, added more journalists to the Audiences team.

A final publisher from the region that considers the diaspora audience, is *El Faro*: a 24-year-old investigative outfit based in El Salvador. José Luis Sanz, Washington Correspondent, English editor and former editor-in-chief at *El Faro*, said around 25% of readers are outside of El Salvador, mainly in the United States.

For Sanz, knowing what a diaspora audience wants requires challenging assumptions about what they need to hear from home, and what they want to know about their new lives abroad. “Part of the old mistake is thinking that information has an economic value purely as a nostalgic product. For them to pay, you have to make a contribution that affects their life. If you are not constant, no one will think of you.”

“None of us want to read five newspapers a day,” he said. “Someone who works 10-14 hours a day wants to listen to a radio show that will tell you how the [national football team] performed, play a *cumbia* that you miss, reminds you of a recipe, tell you if something important happened back home – for example, a landslide in Guatemala – and whether or not the immigration law is going to be approved here, or if schools in DC are going to be closed tomorrow.”

Sanz also warned that catering to the diaspora audience requires understanding that they live in a very different media ecosystem. “In other countries you differentiate yourself by breaking the silence. [Here] there is a lot of information [to compete against].”

The media landscape in the U.S.

The Craig Newmark Graduate School of Journalism published *The State of the Latino News Media* report in 2019, analysing the work of more than 600 U.S. media outlets serving Latin American audiences.²⁵

Although the study focuses on the Latino audience as a whole, there are some key takeaways relevant to creating a strategy for the Central American diaspora audience:

- New generations of Latinos are moving from traditional platforms (print and TV) to the Internet.
- They are going “from Spanish – the language of their parents and grandparents – to a bilingual lifestyle in which they pick and choose what language to live in.” Managing both languages properly may yield a professional advantage.
- Only one-third of all the Latino audience are immigrants – the rest are U.S. born and, on average, of young age. In general, the Latino audience is defined as young and bilingual.
- Most of the content for these audiences is in Spanish and there is a known demand for content in English, but it seems that the opportunity is in between: being able to offer bilingual information.
- The majority of Latino news outlets worry about sustainability: they are small, Latino-owned and independent. Small media outlets are leading much of the innovation and experimentation happening with the Latino news. Most of the analysed outlets focus on hyperlocal coverage of the Latino communities. This would suggest room for fruitful partnerships.

²⁵ <http://thelatinomediareport.journalism.cuny.edu/>

- Anglo-owned publications tend to translate English content and lack original reporting.
- The business model for most of these media outlets relies heavily on advertisements. A well-thought subscription-based formula – specifically targeting the diaspora audiences – could add a new revenue opportunity.
- Radio is seen as the most efficient way to reach rural areas with “majority presence of Latino workers and students.”
- Live events (virtual or in person) are an effective method of connecting with the top part of the audience funnel to create awareness. These types of initiatives have worked effectively in cases like *Radio Ambulante*.

As mentioned already, this report looks at Latino audiences as a whole, meaning information should be tested for the Central American diaspora, but it remains an invaluable resource for understanding the competitive market and exploring possible partnership opportunities.

Audience analysis results

To better understand the interests of Central American audiences based in the U.S., I analysed audience data from *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala), *La Prensa Gráfica* (El Salvador), and *La Prensa* (Honduras) – three of the largest media outlets in the Northern Triangle.

All three granted access to their Google Analytics data and I worked with Anntao Diaz, Head of News Consumer Insights at Google, to create custom dashboards in Google Data Studio that showed the consumption patterns of audiences based in the U.S..²⁶

Following Diaz's advice, the analysis was based on a 30-day period of traffic. Although it is customary to look at the data over longer periods, observing this period was key to identifying particular loyalty patterns. These loyalty patterns, based on Google's News Consumer Insights panel, include: Casual users who visit once, Loyal users who visit two to 14 times; and Brand Lovers with at least 15 visits or more.

The information presented here is an amalgamation of all three data sets, and is intended only to show trends.

Key findings from the consolidated data, point to the following:

- Based on the October, November and December 2021 users, the diaspora accounts for 15% to 20% of their total audience.
- On a 30-day analysis (January 12 to February 10, 2022), the trend is solid: Brand Lovers may only account for 4% of all users, but they drive between 30 and 57% of all traffic. A separate analysis was done to double check if the trend remained in other months in 2021, and it does.

²⁶ Anntao Diaz's full job title is Head of News Consumer Insights, Realtime Content insights and Surveys for Publishers at Google

- Loyal users were less a third of the number of Casual users, but drove between 26 to 37% of the traffic. The number of pages per session is at least 35% higher within the Brand Lovers than in the Loyals.
- Loyalty is key to developing monetizable editorial projects. Both the Loyals and the Brand Lovers show very particular signs of loyalty, which would suggest a decisive but challenging opportunity exists to target them with a specific audience strategy. This strategy could take the form of automated curation based on observed interests, or custom-made content.

These were by far the most important findings of this analysis, but the following are also worth considering:

- There seems to be no significant difference in the average time spent on page among the three loyalty segments. The metric needs to be improved and should be tackled with an integrated approach: check the editorial content, but also the formats, the advertising layout, the Core Web Vitals, and the user experience (UX) that contains it all.
- Los Angeles, New York and Houston seem to be the markets with the most potential, having the highest percentage of Loyal and Brand Lovers. Cities like Miami and Chicago are emerging markets with higher pages per session.
- Again, Los Angeles, New York and Houston show the highest revenue potential in terms of relevant advertising opportunities. For this forecast two possible rates were applied: display (lower rates) and rich media (higher rates). The former was calculated at US\$1.5CPM and the latter at US\$4.00CPM. The Loyal audience might render potential ad revenues in the above locations ranging from US\$137 to US\$383 per thousand pageviews; while those among the Brand Lovers would range from US\$338 to US\$872 per thousand pageviews. With a carefully planned editorial proposition (e.g. being associated with the authority of a

legacy brand), and a person dedicated to negotiating direct advertising contracts and proposals, this revenue can become a significant stream.

Key findings regarding content consumed:

- Local news and information of national interest was among the most-read content by Loyals, along with a significant amount of international entertainment news. Among the Brand Lovers, however, there is a slight change in interest towards more hyperlocal information from the countryside, immigrants and migration, as well as local sports.
- To this point, there may be a chicken-egg scenario to consider: is that what they consume because that is what is published? Based on the diaspora audience profiles in the first section of this paper, how might the Loyal audience react to a different editorial mix? Or in the case of the Brand Lovers, would they be willing to pay for a more customised editorial product?
- Analysing direct traffic only shows the diaspora seems more drawn to sections like Economics, Sports and International news. But social and organic search were the top traffic drivers – specifically, Google News and Facebook. Instagram and Twitter were also popular traffic referrers. Other strategies that seem to work to bring traffic from the digital diaspora include push notifications as well as AMP versions.
- This audience is mobile first, although there is also traffic coming from desktops (10%) and tablets (2.5%).
- A best-times for publication analysis was run in all datasets and the results were consistent with a single pattern: Wednesdays from noon to midnight seem to be the optimal publication times for this type of audience.

Finally, it is worth noting that while all three outlets have analysed data for the diaspora audience in the past – and even created content for them – the analysis was conducted in the context of sustaining the ad revenue model. Analysing data in this framework can create noise that prevents editors from really understanding what constitutes an added value for this audience.

For this, I looked to media outlets in other countries that have been successful in generating a new revenue stream from their respective diasporas.

Lessons from abroad

Paying attention to diaspora audience trends is not a new idea: outlets are already successfully targeting them in Hungary, India, Finland, and Portugal.

Hungarian news outlet *444.hu* reports that 16% of their paying members live outside of Hungary in places like Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine, Austria, the U.S. and Australia.

Only 5% of the site's content is behind a paywall, but readers pay for membership because the site offers more than just content. Director of the outlet Peter Erdélyi explained that membership is divided into three tiers: Tier One grants access to all content; Tier Two includes all content and the ability to comment on the articles, premium newsletters, an invitation to a closed Facebook group and access to a future members-only podcast; Tier Three includes everything in Tier Two, including an additional membership to gift to a friend, and a quarterly print magazine.

The diaspora audience tends to be among their most active members, said Erdélyi. "Whenever we have a call to action – it is not just about money – they tend to be super active and they care about Hungarian public life and the Hungarian media and us in some ways more, and they want to do more."

Exclusive content is an incentive, he said, but it is not the most important one. "People really value the connection with the newsroom. [...] Be mindful that these people want to connect to the motherland, to the places where they grew up. You have to offer them a sense of connection. In my experience, they are not looking for any specific service."

To generate reach and awareness in the diaspora, Erdélyi said they have experimented with Facebook's geo targeted campaigns and messages aimed specifically at diaspora communities as well as with lookalike audiences.

In India, *NewsLaundry* and *NewsMinute* both consider the diaspora, known in India as “NRIs” (non-resident Indians).

At *NewsLaundry*, which publishes in English and Hindi, the key to serving NRIs in the United States and different parts of Europe has been to focus their journalistic efforts on more ground and investigative reports – keeping opinion to a minimum, and avoiding breaking news. As Senior Editor Mehraj D. Lone described it: “substantial work, the kind that people won't find anywhere else”.

NRIs are also important to *NewsMinute*. Navin Sigamany, Outreach Manager at the Indian media outlet, launched an annual membership program in April 2020. His advice: know the size of your diaspora audience. *NewsMinute*'s diaspora audience represents about 15-20% of their total audience and one sixth of their new members are abroad.

Members abroad pay three times more for membership, so it was important to *NewsMinute* to figure out what their differentiating proposition was for NRIs. To do this, they simply asked: what would be of value to you? The overwhelming answer was unexpected: “We just want you to keep doing what you are doing.”

Still, they felt an added benefit was needed and that is how they came up with the “Help Desk”, a service for NRIs who need to get things done back home, whether it be hiring an accountant, or a lawyer, or finding traditional music teachers for their children.

Sigamany said they constantly evaluate what is and isn't working for their members: “You need to keep looking at what is happening so you can change your approach when you see it's not working out like you wanted. Something that you thought initially would work, but in real life didn't, might start working later with a tweak.”

The Spanish city of Fuengirola in Andalusia hosts one of the largest colonies of Finnish expats in the world. *Fuengirola.fi* is a newspaper that runs a print version every Friday and maintains a digital version – both intended for the local Finnish community, although the latter is also widely visited by Finns living in Finland.

Janne Leipijärvi, Managing Editor at *Fuengirola.fi*, highlighted the importance of focusing on a specific community.

“We work on news that affects people's lives at a local scale,” he said. “Our [main] audience is the Finnish people living here. Their ability to read Spanish newspapers is limited and also English language newspapers. Therefore, whatever news happens in Spain that affects our readers, we try to tell them about it.”

Fuengirola.fi understood the meaning of focusing on their audience's actual needs, and not investing time in matters they can solve in other ways. “We don't really have any news from Finland unless they are in contact with our area in Spain. Because of the internet, every Finn all over the world can read in Finnish what happens in Finland,” he said.

Bruno Ferreira Garcez, Asia Digital Editor for the BBC World Service, works with 10 Asian Language Services (Bengali, Burmese, Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Nepali, Sinhala, Thai, Urdu and Vietnamese). Asked what types of stories appeal to diaspora audiences, he said: “Many of the topics that interest our audiences tend to involve people of Asian origin or background doing extraordinary feats; stories about successful entrepreneurs, ground-breakers, trendsetters; those who've made accomplishments in areas which were once considered off-limits for people of Asian origin. Those are stories that resonate both with Asian diasporas as well as with Asian audiences overall in their home markets.”

Asked if he thought, like Sanz, that content should focus on content local to the diaspora audience, he offered an alternative viewpoint: “It would all depend on what the news is: what diaspora community we are talking about, and how close the ties of that specific diaspora are with the new country and with the country from which they were either originally from or with which they have ties with. It all depends on the degree to which those diasporas have been absorbed or not by their new country of residence. For instance, for a first-generation Vietnamese who’s settled in the U.S. or Australia, political news related to his home country might still generate great interest, but less so when it comes to his children or grandchildren, who’ve preserved some cultural and traditional elements of their ancestral roots, but also assimilated many of the values and cultural references from the country in which they were born in and raised.”

BANTUMEN is a Lisbon-based media outlet founded in 2015 as a digital magazine for the young black Portuguese-speaking community. It was originally founded in Luanda, Angola, but “and as soon as we understood we were reaching the African Portuguese-speaking diaspora in Europe, we decided to move to Lisbon and focus on that audience,” said Vanessa Sanches, co-founder and editor-in-chief.

Their approach is boldly minimalist: “The only metrics we focus on are age and location. We know most of them are between 18 and 35 years old, almost half of them are located in Africa, followed by Europe, Brazil and North America.”

How do they cater to such a widely dispersed diaspora in one product?

“Afro-descendant audiences around the world are clearly demanding increasingly empowering Afro-centric narratives that counter the widespread colonial and paternalistic narratives,” said Sanches. “At the beginning we noticed an almost exclusive consumption of entertainment content, but we’ve increasingly noticed that

our audience wants better access to content on entrepreneurship and financial literacy.”

Getting feedback is important to all of these outlets: *444.hu* conducts regular surveys, *NewsLaundry* hosts engagement gatherings, and *NewsMinute* used Zoom meetings before switching to a closed Facebook group where members can interact.

And, as with all of these communities, the Hungarian diaspora have very strong feelings about the country they left behind. Therein lies the opportunity. As Erdélyi put it: “A meaningful way to connect to Hungary and to alleviate [the emotions that surround] leaving is to support independent media.”

How to launch a diaspora content strategy

If at least 15% of your total traffic regularly originates from immigrants outside the country, you may have a meaningful audience segment worth targeting – and potentially monetizing.

Below is a five-step plan for creating a minimum viable product (MVP) for that audience segment. This is, of course, an oversimplification of a complex undertaking, but use it as a gateway to a task that is inaccurately seen as “impossible”, “expensive” or “complicated”.

1. Form a task team. Appoint a multidisciplinary team, define a specific set of goals, as well as a work methodology. If you have them, ensure the newsroom, sales, finance, information technology (IT), marketing and subscriptions departments all have a strong and equal representation on the team. Have weekly meetings and manage the project by breaking it up into phases using the [Agile methodology](#).

2. Make data-based decisions. As illustrated in the opening sections of this paper, you need accurate and up-to-date information about your diaspora audience with which to build a profile of their news consumption needs.

- Start by investigating what tools will work with the data you have available. Given that many publishers already use Google Analytics, [Google Data Studio](#) may be a good initial choice.
- Identify the key performance indicators (KPIs) you need to track in order to meet your goals, and then monitor them regularly. To measure the diaspora opportunity, I tracked: size of the diaspora audience in relation to the total, loyalty segments based on the number of sessions over a 30-day period, country and city-based performance, referring sites, top-read articles by section, front-page and search performance, and projected ad income based on CPMs

from the sales team. Keep an eye on loyalty segments by monitoring the ratio of users to pageviews. Users yielding more pageviews will help you define your most loyal diaspora audience. These are the users you have to study, cater to, and where you might find the best chances of monetization.

- As time passes, you will have other indicators to keep an eye on: newsletter signups and open rate, web registries, and others. Be disciplined in keeping track of these figures.
- Consult official third-party sources – such as the International Organisation for Migration ([IOM](#)), the [World Bank](#), the [Inter-American Development Bank](#), the [United Nations Human Development Reports](#), the [Migration Data Portal](#), and others that apply – for additional information about your diaspora.

3. Start experimenting. You know you have a relevant diaspora audience, you have a team focused on working with them, now you need to act. You can do this through editorial, tech, subscription or marketing actions. You should consider running different tests in all of these areas, but make sure you do not run them at the same time to avoid confusing results.

From a newsroom perspective, based on the findings of your diaspora audience profile, design a new content strategy. Depending on how much space you have for new projects, you might consider dividing this implementation into two phases. In phase one, focus on curating your existing content in a newsletter, section, app or social media channel targeting this audience. In other words: use what you already have, but mix and display it in the best possible formats for the intended audience. In phase two, once phase one is yielding significant insights, you can move into the production of tailored content.

Ensure these projects are tracked, and once the data shows good engagement, consider implementing a membership and revenue strategy.

While experimenting, supplement your metrics with feedback from the audience. Use any tool available to ask directly what they think about whatever changes or new products you are launching. Keep track of the impact and reactions within the newsroom.

From a technical perspective, you should be monitoring your [Web Core Vitals](#). In many cases, the best efforts to produce relevant high-quality content are undermined by a poorly designed and maintained website.

4. Explore new formats and delivery opportunities. Does your diaspora audience show a pattern of significant commute time, or any other distinctive habit? Consider these aspects when creating new delivery formats. You can experiment with video, graphics, data, visualisations, cartoons. You can deliver content via a podcast, an app, a newsletter.

You can use geo-targeting on social media to highlight special content to the diaspora. You can also check peak times by location in each of your social media accounts. Other aspects that could positively influence the outcome of your social delivery include involving key diaspora influencers or running a paid campaign.

There is no silver bullet for this: each media outlet and audience segment is different, and that is why it is so important to test.

5. Follow the innovator's guide to change. That is: create a minimum viable product, test it with your defined market, gather feedback to MVP performance, adapt the product (or pivot to a new approach), and repeat.

Depending on what you are testing, make sure the period of testing is relevant but not too long. If you fail, you want to do so quickly so that you can learn and adapt with minimal wasted expenditure.

Remember that testing need not be limited to huge transformations. Small but consistent and targeted changes can yield good insights.

Make sure you share results with your newsroom. Celebrate successes and learn from failures with them.

Conclusion

Advertising-based revenue strategies tend to create a tunnel vision within regional media outlets, distracting them from investing time and resources in innovation to explore other audience opportunities.

Take the example of catering to the diaspora: what would happen if *Prensa Libre* (Guatemala), *La Prensa Gráfica* (El Salvador), and *La Prensa* (Honduras) created a task force to experiment with a 30-minute podcast for loyal users to listen to while commuting to work that rounded up news from home?

What if they supplemented that podcast with a newsletter summarising key news items, and linked back to full versions hosted in a geo-tagged section given to a sales team in the U.S. to sell as premium ad space?

What if they collaborated with independent outlets in key markets to incorporate local news items relevant to the diaspora?

What if all of this were supplemented with a social media strategy including a closed membership Facebook group, for example, where paying members of the diaspora communities can safely share information and support?

What might an annual in-person event look like for this community? And what unique revenue opportunities would each of these present for legacy outlets? Crowd-funded investigations, membership fees, merchandising, targeted advertising opportunities sold at a premium, audio sponsors, and native content opportunities are all possibilities that experimentation could yield.

The first goal of any outlet looking to explore new opportunities like this should be profiling the audience in the most detailed way possible, and then considering how

your existing product might meet their unique needs. This exploration should go beyond audience data to incorporate research that will give you the clearest possible information about your customer segment.

The core question to ask is this: what would this segment consider an added value? Central to answering that question is understanding people's needs – both material and emotional. And here is where a cold business strategy begins to align with the core mission of journalism itself. Because innovative business practices will build bridges between under-served audiences and the information they need to help them live better lives.

As [*The State of the Latino News Media*](#) report notes, U.S. outlets are struggling to meet these audience needs not just due to a lack of resources, but a “lack of vision and lack of investment in Spanish-language audiences”. To put it another way: legacy news outlets in the NT are sitting on an unused competitive advantage.