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Brand Rejuvenation of RTVE in the Digital Era: Communication Strategies and Consolidation on Digital Platforms

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Abstract

TVE has faced challenges arising from audience fragmentation and digital expansion, particularly among younger audiences. This study analyses the rejuvenation of the RTVE brand, focusing on its adaptation to digital platforms, content diversification, and strengthening of brand positioning. The main objective is to examine RTVE's renewal strategy in digital environments, assessing changes in content, platforms, and brand perception. To this end, a qualitative approach supported by secondary quantitative data was employed, based on official and corporate reports, platform and audience metrics, social media views, and academic literature. A thematic analysis of content and trends was conducted, applying methodological triangulation. The results show sustained growth in users and views on digital platforms, diversification of content with an impact on younger audiences, and increased engagement on social media. Taken together, these actions demonstrate an effective strategic brand rejuvenation, combining digital innovation, content adaptation, and consolidation of RTVE's positioning within the contemporary media ecosystem.

KEYWORDS: Brand rejuvenation; TVE; digital communication; OTT platforms; multiplatform engagement.

INTRODUCTION.

Over the past two decades, the audiovisual industry has undergone an unprecedented structural transformation driven by digital convergence, audience fragmentation, and the proliferation of on-demand consumption platforms (Videla-Rodríguez, García-Torre & Formoso-Barro, 2025). This disruptive context has posed particular challenges for major public service communication corporations, whose historic brands, such as Televisión Española (TVE), have been forced to rethink their strategies in order to maintain social relevance, audience competitiveness, and emotional connection with younger population segments. The TVE brand, created in 1956 as a benchmark of Spanish public broadcasting, faces, like other European public broadcasters, the challenge of reconciling its public service mission with the dynamics of an audiovisual environment in constant transformation (Fieiras Ceide, Vaz Álvarez & Túñez López, 2024).

Indeed, the transition from linear television to a hybrid ecosystem of content production and distribution has required television brands to profoundly redefine their value proposition (García-

Rivero, Moreno-Albarracín & Martínez-Estrella, 2022). This transition involves not only technological adaptation to digital platforms and OTT (Over-The-Top) services, but also the reinvention of programming content and brand positioning to meet the expectations of audiences whose identities and media consumption habits differ markedly from traditional ones (Lotz, 2014; Napoli, 2019). This challenge is intensified for public service broadcasters, whose funding and social legitimacy are subject to perceptions of usefulness, cultural relevance, and audience representativeness (Born & Prosser, 2001).

In the case of TVE, recent developments within the digital context have involved the implementation of multiple initiatives combining content innovation, institutional reorganisation, expanded digital presence, and a renewed focus on emerging age groups. For example, the promotion of digital platforms such as RTVE Play and youth-oriented transmedia spaces like Playz, a platform specialising in short-form digital content aimed at younger audiences, demonstrates a shift towards new forms of connectivity with digital audiences (Doménech-Beltrán, 2024). Playz's original productions, which include contemporary fiction and entertainment



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programmes, are intended to serve as a link between the tradition of public service television and youth cultural dynamics (Eguzkitza, Casado & Guimerá, 2023).

Simultaneously, the reorganisation of RTVE's internal structures, with the creation of specialised departments for digital news content and audiovisual expansion, points to a modernisation of production processes and improved articulation of multiplatform content (Baltés, 2023). This strategic orientation follows a logic of capacity expansion and methodological adaptation aimed at responding to increasingly segmented and competitive media consumption, particularly in relation to digital-native actors and global streaming services (Navarro-Robles & Vázquez-Barrio, 2020).

Programming strategies and aesthetic renewal initiatives, such as the launch of seasons under the slogan "Imparables", which emphasise plurality, entertainment, and the renewal of faces and narratives, seek to reconfigure the brand imaginary of TVE, appealing both to traditional audiences and to younger segments that often perceive public media as institutions anchored in outdated paradigms (RTVE 1, 2025). This intent for change represents a strategic response to the evident erosion of linear television audiences among young people: in Spain, viewers under 25 have significantly reduced their consumption of traditional television in favour of digital platforms and niche audiovisual services (Barlovento, 2023).

In any case, the need for brand rejuvenation at TVE is not limited to a technical or distribution-channel response. It also entails reflection on brand identity and its ability to redefine its symbolic purpose within a media field where forms of interaction, belonging, and cultural affiliation among young audiences are mediated by interactive digital communication experiences and transmedia narratives (Lähteenmäki, 2021). In this respect, TVE's proposal is embedded in a strategic duality characteristic of major public audiovisual entities: on the one hand, preserving the essence of public service, and on the other, transitioning towards a creative and dynamic discourse that engages with the dominant cultural codes of emerging audiences (Pianese & Vesperi, 2025). Analysing this strategic dialectic between tradition and modernity, between linear television and digital innovation, constitutes the core paradigm of current studies on the repositioning of major historical brands within the television sector.

OBJECTIVES

Based on the described context and the need to understand how public media brands adapt to new audiovisual consumption environments, this study aims to systematically analyse the strategies developed by TVE in recent years. Within this framework, the objectives of this article are outlined below, focusing on examining the brand rejuvenation process from a communicative and digital perspective.

(GO) The general objective is to analyse TVE's brand rejuvenation strategy in recent years, identifying the main actions that contribute to the renewal of brand identity in a context of media disruption.

To address the general objective in a solid and well-argued manner, three specific objectives are proposed:

(SO1) To examine changes implemented in TVE's content and programming schedule, identifying how these modifications aim to attract and retain younger audience segments.

(SO1) To evaluate the role of TVE's digital platforms, such as RTVE Play and Playz, in strategies for connecting with emerging audiences, considering formats, interactivity, and social media presence.

(SO3) To analyse users' perception of the TVE brand, especially among young audiences, in order to identify the impact of rejuvenation actions on brand positioning, image, and cultural relevance.

METHODOLOGY

Achieving the proposed objectives requires recourse to empirical evidence available in official and specialised secondary sources. Accordingly, a methodology based on documentary and data analysis was designed (Morgan, 2022), enabling the observation of trends, patterns, and effects of strategic actions implemented by RTVE in recent years.

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach (Acosta, 2023), predominantly qualitative, supported by interpretative analysis of official documents, media consumption reports, press releases, and publicly available digital audience data. This design is common in research on public media and digital transformation of media brands, as it allows researchers to move beyond purely quantifiable facts and identify strategic meaning within brand-building processes (Silverman, 2016; Kelley et al., 2022). The analysis is structured as a single case study of TVE, considering both programming content and digital platform performance.

Secondary data sources include official RTVE reports, press releases, and statistics, particularly those related to the use of the RTVE Play digital platform, historical digital audience records published by the public broadcaster and specialised entities, social media consumption data and aggregated metrics, as well as academic and sector-specific literature on public media, digital branding, and audience transformation.

Following the review, information was organised through a structured framework. Sources were classified into three major areas of strategic analysis for data collection and interpretation:

Table 1. Areas of analysis for data collection in consulted sources.

Areas of analysis	Data collection elements
Programming strategies and content related to young audiences	Identification of programmes, formats, and sections with impact on emerging audiences
Digital expansion and OTT platform penetration	Analysis of digital consumption metrics on RTVE Play and their strategic



	significance
Multiplatform interaction and social participation	Growth of social media audiences and aggregated views as indicators of brand engagement

Source: Author's own elaboration

Methodological rigour and reliability were ensured through critical interpretation and triangulation (Osorio-González & Castro-Ricalde, 2021; Meydan & Akkaş, 2024). Secondary quantitative data were cross-checked across different sources to strengthen the interpretative validity of findings related to branding and strategic communication within the digital environment (Ranfagni & Rosati, 2023).

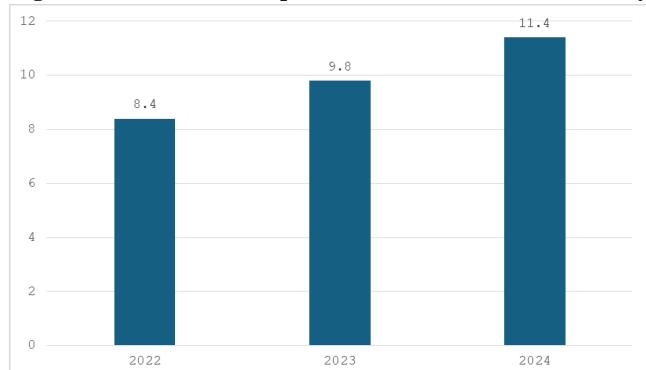
RESULTS

The process of collecting, classifying, and interpreting quantitative data results in an argumentative block in which three major qualitative strategic axes are identified:

- Digital audience growth and consolidation of RTVE Play.

Data on RTVE Play (RTVE 2, 2025) show a sustained growth trend in the number of unique users, views, and consumption time, indicators that allow for assessing the impact of the brand's digital strategy. According to RTVE reports, RTVE Play closed 2024 with an average of 11.4 million monthly unique users, representing an increase of 1.6 million compared to 2023 and three million compared to 2022, evidencing the platform's consolidation as Spain's leading free streaming service.

Figure 1. Evolution of unique users (in millions) of RTVE Play.



Source: Prepared by the author (RTVE Play data)

This growth is not limited to user numbers but also to consumption intensity. During 2024, more than 577.5 million total views were recorded, a 38% increase compared to 2023. Aggregated video and audio consumption time reached 276 million hours, representing a 43.2% year-on-year increase.

Beyond annual data, monthly records show that RTVE Play maintained strong figures throughout 2025. For example, in May 2025 the platform exceeded 11 million unique visitors, marking a

new historic milestone in digital audience levels and a 15% increase compared to the previous year, as well as continuity in digital consumption leadership beyond isolated events or exceptional moments (RTVE 3, 2025).

The quantitative profile of this growth indicates that RTVE's digital audiences are now competitive within an audiovisual consumption environment dominated by commercial OTT platforms (Barlovento, 2025). The transition from traditional audiences to digital consumption is not merely a trend but a consolidated reality for the Spanish public broadcaster, reflected in the systematic increase of key metrics. These figures suggest that the digital expansion strategy provides TVE with a robust core relationship with audiences who prioritise on-demand and multiplatform formats—an essential factor for attracting and retaining young and hybrid audiences (Álvarez, 2024; Ripoll-Pérez, 2025).

- Content driving consumption.

Content on RTVE Play has played a central role in audience growth. In 2024, the consolidation of cinema as one of the main on-demand audience attractors was a key factor in the platform's performance, with a monthly average of over 964,000 unique visitors and a 25.6% year-on-year increase. Daily fiction series such as *La Promesa* have also been consistently popular, gathering around 730,000 average monthly viewers, indicating a high level of audience loyalty to content that bridges traditional television and digital platforms (RTVE 4, 2024).

Similarly, the launch of new formats such as *La Revuelta*, which premiered in September 2024, became one of the most viewed contents on the platform by the end of the year, reaching an average of 960,000 monthly viewers (RTVE 5, 2024).

More recently, during 2025, available data show that *La Promesa* remains the most-watched content of the season on RTVE Play, with 781,400 monthly users, followed by *La Revuelta* with 743,000. This suggests that these formats possess an attraction power that transcends linear television and translates into stable digital consumption habits (RTVE 6, 2025).

The diversification of original content is not limited to fiction. Growth in cinema, original documentaries, and entertainment demonstrates that the strategy to renew the programming offer has broad scope, encompassing diverse tastes and audience segments. For instance, six platform-exclusive documentaries ranked among the most viewed of 2024 (RTVE 7, 2025), with *La última noche de Sonia Martínez* standing out as the most viewed documentary, exceeding 177,400 unique visitors (RTVE 2, 2025).

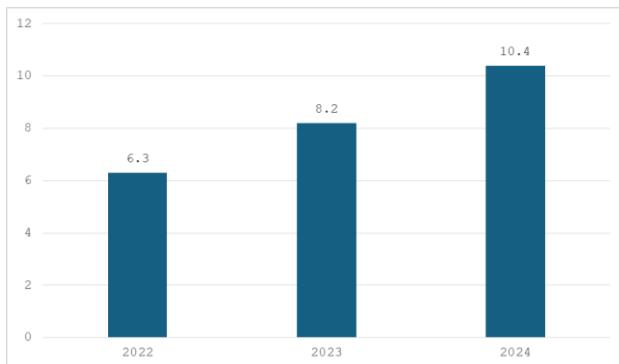
- Multiplatform engagement and social reach.

The growth of RTVE Play does not occur in isolation but within the framework of a solid multiplatform strategy that includes social media presence, news content, and live events (Videla-Rodríguez, García-Torre & Formoso-Barro, 2025). During the 2024–2025 season, RTVE Play recorded an average of 10.4 million monthly unique visitors, representing a 15.2% increase compared to the



previous season, reinforcing the trend of continuous digital growth (RTVE 1, 2025).

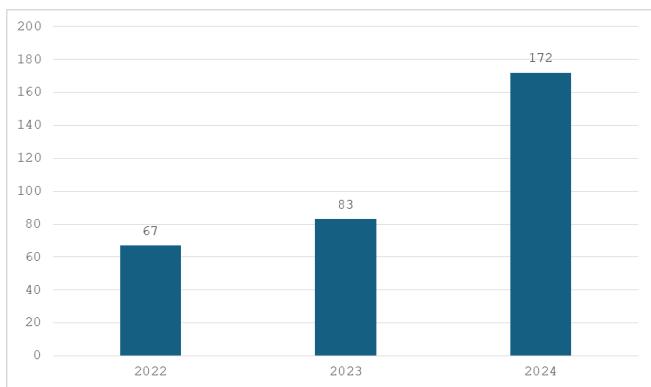
Figure 2. Monthly unique visitors to RTVE Play.



Source: Prepared by the author (RTVE Play data)

This digital expansion is combined with a historic record on social media, where RTVE profiles accumulated 11.656 billion views, 172% more than in 2023 (RTVE 5, 2024). Programmes with the greatest social impact, such as *La Revuelta*, along with news and sports formats, have contributed to consolidating the brand's presence on key youth interaction platforms, including Instagram, TikTok, and X (RTVE 8, 2025).

Figure 3. Percentage growth in views of RTVE profiles on social media.



Source: Prepared by the author (RTVE data)

The increase in social media views is essential for understanding how TVE has expanded its reach beyond traditional audiovisual consumption (Real-Rodríguez, Príncipe-Hermoso & Agudiez-Calvo, 2024), transforming the brand experience into a more dynamic interaction with audiences.

Multiplatform content behaviour is also reflected in news and sports. Digital content on RTVE.es exceeded 18.3 million monthly unique visitors, with significant growth in live sports broadcasts and news consumption (Servimedia, 2025). This trend suggests that the digital strategy responds not only to entertainment but to a broader spectrum of content and audience interests.

- Implications of quantitative results.

The quantitative results allow for identifying several strategically relevant lines for the TVE brand. First, there is a clear consolidation of digital consumption. The sustained increase in users and views on RTVE Play confirms that audiences are progressively shifting towards digital formats, a reality previously identified in studies such as Prieto-Arosa (2022) and González-Fernández (2025).

Second, diversification of the brand's offer is evident. The presence of multiple content types, all leading in consumption (cinema, series, documentaries, sports), indicates a comprehensive programming strategy that caters to different audience profiles (Bonet & Costa-Gálvez, 2022), far beyond conventional entertainment content.

Finally, the carefully designed construction of social engagement stands out. Record-breaking social media views indicate that TVE has achieved a significant social presence that acts as a brand reinforcer within the digital ecosystem, especially among younger age groups, the primary users and consumers of these digital communication tools (López-Golán, Rodríguez-Castro & Campos-Freire, 2019).

DISCUSSION

The study results show that TVE's brand rejuvenation strategy is closely linked to its transition towards digital audiovisual consumption environments, particularly through the consolidation of RTVE Play as a central non-linear content distribution platform. The sustained increase in unique users, views, and consumption hours, with more than 11.4 million monthly users in 2024 and continued growth in 2025, not only highlights the quantitative impact of these actions but can also be interpreted as an indicator of the relative success of the digital strategy in connecting with young and hybrid audiences that prioritise streaming over traditional linear television.

This orientation aligns with what the literature defines as the platformization of public service media (Higueras-Ruiz et al., 2025). This process involves public broadcasters developing video-on-demand (VOD) portals and other digital tools to expand reach and remain competitive in an environment dominated by global platforms (e.g., Netflix, YouTube) that attract young demographic segments and control significant shares of audiovisual attention (Bonini-Baldini, Túñez-López & Barrientos-Báez, 2021; Dragomir & Túñez-López, 2024). This shift contrasts with more traditional PSM models focused exclusively on linear broadcasting and aligns with comparative findings that emphasise the need to reinvent public service media for a fragmented digital era (Goyanes, Costa-Sánchez & Démeter, 2021).

From a content perspective, the data show that RTVE Play has successfully positioned diverse formats (cinema, daily fiction such as *La Promesa*, documentaries, and entertainment) as key audience attractors. This is consistent with studies on digital transformation in public media, which indicate that content catalogues and curation are among the most strategically relevant dimensions when public broadcasters adapt to new OTT consumption practices



(Pardo-Larrosa & Martínez-Cano, 2020). Digital presence alone is insufficient; content selection and adaptability are crucial for brand relevance in multiplatform environments (Lordache & Raats, 2023). RTVE's emphasis on diversified content strengthens a programming offer capable of engaging both traditional audiences and younger, more diverse segments.

In terms of multiplatform engagement, increases in social media views and TVE's integrated presence in digital interaction environments have significant brand implications. Record figures exceeding 11.656 billion views suggest that the TVE brand has moved beyond traditional passive consumption and positioned itself within digital social conversation spaces where young audiences actively participate. This phenomenon is consistent with research highlighting social media not only as promotional channels but as environments for brand construction and participatory interaction (Saavedra-Llamas, Papí-Gálvez & Perlado-Lamo, 2020), which is associated with higher levels of recognition and emotional connection with the brand.

Academic literature also emphasises that digital transformation must be accompanied by cultural and organisational adaptation, not merely technological or quantitative change, to maintain the legitimacy of public service missions in digital contexts (Johnson et al., 2025). This is relevant when interpreting TVE's results, as digital expansion and metric growth do not automatically guarantee consolidation of public service meaning. The quantitative outcomes observed here (user growth, content diversification, social media impact) provide evidence of reach and consumption, but must be read alongside deeper qualitative analyses of brand values, narratives, and audience perceptions of TVE's digital identity.

Comparative research suggests that while some European public broadcasters have been successful in digital transitions, there are substantial differences in how these strategies affect public perceptions of quality, independence, and institutional integrity (Real-Rodríguez, Príncipe-Hermoso & Agudiez-Calvo, 2024). Studies on broadcasters in the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Greece indicate that although digital investments expand reach, organisational adaptation and clarity of public service commitment are critical factors influencing the impact of digitalisation on brand perception and social legitimacy (Karadimitriou & Papathanassopoulos, 2024). In the case of TVE, although quantitative audience and digital presence data are positive, future analyses could explore how these elements influence qualitative perceptions of trust, civic relevance, and cultural recognition, particularly among younger audiences.

An additional dimension emerging from the discussion is the tension between digital modernisation and preservation of traditional public service values. As content diversifies and the TVE brand adapts to OTT and social media formats, a theoretical and practical challenge arises: how to balance attracting younger audiences without losing the pillars underpinning public media missions, such as education, informational plurality, and cultural promotion. Previous research highlights that this tension is a

persistent debate within public media organisations, where digital relevance must be articulated alongside the sustainability of the brand's social purpose (Głowacki, Świtkowski & Johnson, 2025).

The findings contribute to ongoing theoretical discussions on the survival and legitimacy of public service media in the digital era. Quantitative success on OTT platforms may indicate adaptation to structural change, but not necessarily consolidation of the public mission. As Rauch, Rösch, and Kuchinke (2024) argue, digital transformation requires not only metric growth but also a redefinition of institutional mandates to ensure continued perceived value among diverse audience segments, implying balance among content, organisational structure, and brand value communication.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis allows for clear conclusions regarding TVE's brand rejuvenation strategy in recent years, integrating quantitative evidence of digital audiences and multiplatform metrics with qualitative findings on content and brand positioning.

(SO1) The study demonstrates that TVE has undertaken a significant renewal of its programming offer by incorporating content attractive to younger audiences, such as contemporary fiction (*La Promesa*, *La Revuelta*), documentaries, and on-demand cinema. These changes reflect a deliberate effort to diversify programming, bringing the brand closer to demographic segments that consume television and video on demand, and consolidating brand relevance in a competitive environment. This trajectory confirms that programming has been a key lever for attracting and retaining new audiences.

(SO2) Data show that TVE's digital platforms have significantly expanded the reach and intensity of content consumption. RTVE Play has surpassed 11 million monthly unique users, recording millions of views and hours consumed, while Playz has functioned as a specific space for innovative content and short-form formats aimed at younger audiences. These decisions highlight the effectiveness of the digital strategy in connecting with emerging audiences and adapting the brand to contemporary audiovisual consumption habits.

(SO3) The consolidation of digital presence and multiplatform engagement suggests that TVE has strengthened brand perception as innovative, accessible, and relevant across different audience segments, particularly younger ones. Record-breaking social media views and interaction with digital content indicate that the brand has transcended linear television, positioning itself within spaces where audiences build participatory content experiences. Although this analysis is based on quantitative metrics and secondary evidence, it allows for inferring that the rejuvenation strategy has positively affected brand positioning and social resonance.

(GO) Overall, it can be concluded that TVE's brand rejuvenation strategy has been successful in integrating digital innovation, content diversification, and multiplatform engagement to consolidate relevance in a context of media transformation and audience fragmentation. The brand has adapted to contemporary consumption habits—especially among younger audiences—while



maintaining its public service mission. The combination of digital user growth, popularity of new formats, and active social media participation reflects a balance between technological modernisation and brand identity consolidation, positioning TVE as a benchmark for digital transition among European public broadcasters.

Brand renewal at TVE requires not only technological investment but also a strategic focus on content selection, format diversification, and active presence in digital social interaction environments. Therefore, this study may serve as a reference for other public media seeking to modernise their brands and increase connection with younger audiences in highly competitive digital consumption contexts, as well as for future research on the management and communication of major public communication brands.

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