Google services for journalists and media: Recommendations for Google Discover and Google News

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Abstract

This chapter explores the role of Google News and Google Discover as key platforms for enhancing the visibility of digital media. Through a practical approach, it analyzes their functionalities, implications, and differences, providing specific recommendations for journalists and editors aiming to optimize content on these services. Google News functions as a news aggregator focused on recency and credibility, while Google Discover offers personalized content recommendations based on user behaviour. Best practice guidelines are proposed for both platforms, aiming to improve digital presence and face algorithmic challenges without compromising journalistic quality.

Keywords

Google News; Google Discover; Digital journalism; SEO; Web visibility; Algorithms; Media; editorial strategies.

1. Introduction

The necessary adaptation of the journalistic sector to advances on the Internet has led, over the years, to significant transformations in the productive routines of news media (Salaverría & García-Avilés, 2008), especially regarding how news is disseminated through visibility in search engines (Iglesias-García & Codina, 2016) and content aggregation platforms (Lopezosa et al., 2019).

In this context, companies like Google —with specific services such as Google Discover and Google News— have become essential tools for media outlets to increase their visibility, broaden their reach, and consequently improve their monetization potential (Lopezosa et al., 2022; Cordeiro et al., 2024).

Google News is a content aggregation platform that collects and organizes news content from a wide variety of media sources, making it easier for readers to access current and reliable information (Guallar, 2015). Therefore, appearing on Google News represents not only an increase in readership for media organizations but also an improvement in their credibility (Lopezosa et al., 2024).

Google Discover, on the other hand, is a content recommendation platform that has become one of the main sources of traffic for many digital media outlets, especially on mobile devices (Lopezosa et al., 2022) and, since mid-2025, on desktop versions in some countries (González, 2025). Its ability to provide personalized suggestions and modify the feed in real time without requiring active search input from users influences editorial strategies, as it enables media outlets to reach new audiences (Lopezosa et al., 2023).

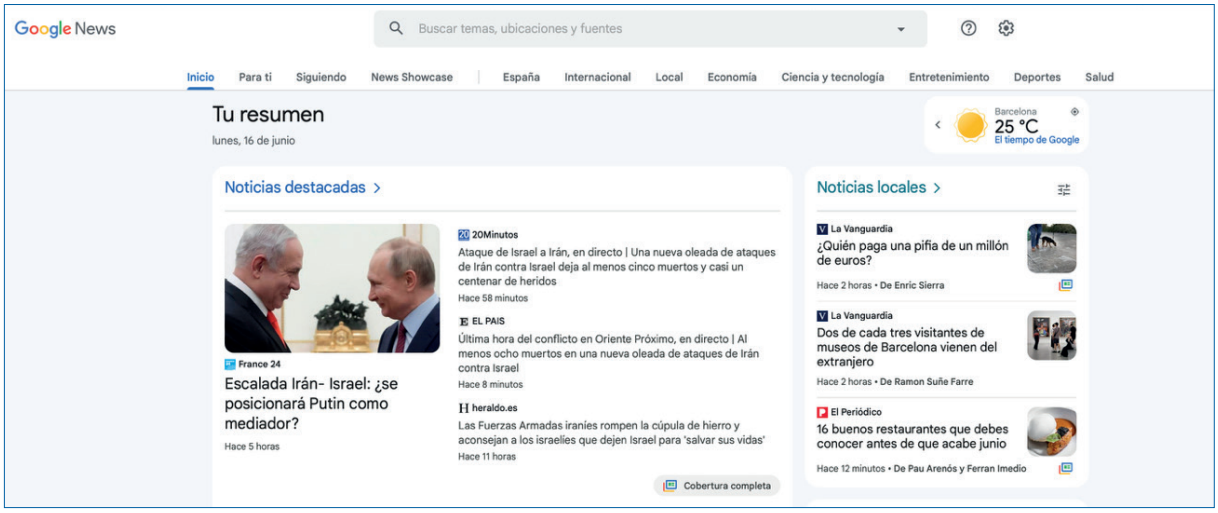
This chapter aims to analyze both Google services from a practical perspective, focusing on how content should be optimized so that media organizations can improve their presence on these two platforms.

2. What is Google News: How it works and what it means for the media

Google News is a content aggregator that collects headlines daily from hundreds of news sources and ranks and structures them based on each user's profile (reader). It is a free service and therefore does not include advertising (Lopezosa et al., 2024).

Image 1

Google News Front Page (06/16/2025).



In this way, Google News acts as a distributor of content from a wide range of information sources, which are characterized by being selected and accredited digital media outlets. Therefore, the main goal of Google News is to provide users with a broad and up-to-date overview of the most relevant events at the local, national, and international levels.

It is important to note that Google News does not produce its own content and, therefore, is not a journalistic newsroom. It primarily uses automated algorithms to crawl and group articles under the same topic and from different sources with the aim of (1) offering multiple perspectives on the same news story, (2) detecting trends that may influence agenda setting, and (3) ranking them by relevance, timeliness, and source credibility (Support Google, 2025a).

The result is a kind of personalized digital newspaper front page. In fact, users can customize their experience in various ways, as they can specifically choose a wide range of topics, sources, locations, and interests (Support Google, 2025b). Additionally, Google adapts the content based on the user's search history and preferences, although it always prioritizes sources with a strong reputation which comply with its quality guidelines (Support Google, 2025a; 2025b).

Appearing on Google News can represent both an opportunity and a significant challenge for media outlets. On the one hand, it provides tremendous global visibility, which translates into a greater share of readers (Cordeiro, 2024); on the other hand, it forces media organizations to adapt to algorithmic logics that may favour large media conglomerates over smaller outlets —potentially endangering media diversity if not properly regulated or managed (Cordeiro, 2024).

As previously mentioned, appearing in Google News can serve as a mark of quality for a news outlet and can significantly boost its reach and site traffic. However, competition for

inclusion is intense and driven by algorithmic criteria (Support Google, 2025c). Under these circumstances, media organizations are compelled to optimize their content by following recommended best practices, which will be discussed throughout this chapter.

3. What is Google Discover: How it works and what it means for the media

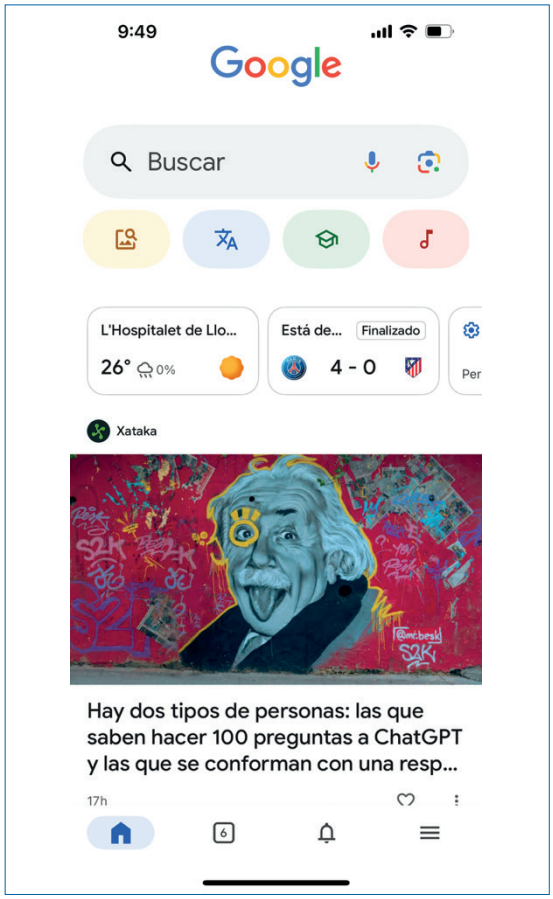
Google Discover is a service by Google that recommends content such as news (Absi-Flores & León-Ferreyros, 2024), articles, videos, or advertisements directly on the user's mobile phone, without the need for an active search (Lopezosa et al., 2022; Google Developers, 2020).

Unlike the traditional search engine, where the user types a query, Discover presents a personalized feed that appears automatically on Android devices, within the Google app and in the browser (Support Google, 2025d). Since mid-2025, the service has also begun to be available in desktop versions in some countries (González, 2025).

The content that appears in Google Discover is selected by algorithms, specifically using a machine learning technique called reinforcement learning, which optimizes recommendations in real time based on each user's behaviour (Strzelecki & Rizun, 2023): for example, what news the user has read before, how much time they spend on it, their activity across websites and apps, or their geographic location (Support Google, 2025d; Lopezosa et al., 2022). Thanks to this functionality, Discover is considered a tool for algorithmic curation (Lopezosa et al., 2022).

Although Google provides guidelines to prioritize useful, reliable, and user-focused content (Google Developers, 2025a), both industry analyses (Del-Castillo, 2024; Polo, 2023) and academic studies (Lopezosa et al., 2023) have noted a significant presence of sensationalist headlines and clickbait strategies in the feed, as aggressive adaptive tactics to optimize click-through rates (CTR). In response, Google has recently implemented updates and penalties aimed at reducing misleading and low-quality content (González, 2024), particularly following the core updates in March (Nelson, 2024) and August 2024 (Mueller, 2024).

Image 2.
Google Discover Front Page (06/16/2025).



3.1. How It works

Google Discover is a tool that automatically displays a selection of personalized content to each user, without requiring them to perform a keyword search. Instead of typing what they

want to find (as is done with the Google search engine), users encounter a feed of articles, news, and other formats that Google ranks based on thematic affinity, according to their recent browsing history, searches, or location (Support Google, 2025d) and algorithmic evaluation (Strzelecki & Rizun, 2023; Infobae, 2019).

User interaction with Discover is mostly passive, although at the time of writing, users can indicate whether they like a piece of content, want to see less of similar content, are not interested in a particular topic, do not want more content from a certain source, or even report and send feedback to Google about a specific result. This reinforces a one-way dynamic: it is Google that decides, based on its systems, what to show, and the user consumes content without actively participating in the process, as is the case on social media.

This feature forces journalists to adapt their content to the logic of engagement and contextual relevance rather than to a specific search engine positioning strategy (Lopezosa et al., 2022).

From the perspective of media outlets and professionals who manage their websites (editors, journalists, or webmasters), Discover represents a potentially valuable source of traffic. In many cases, it accounts for a significant portion of the visits received by a digital media outlet (Lopezosa et al., 2023).

However, achieving visibility on this channel is not easy: the system does not allow for registration or requests for inclusion, and the criteria that determine which content is displayed are not publicly known. Nevertheless, there are certain recommended practices that can help improve the chances of appearing: creating original content, using high-quality featured images, signing articles with real names, and ensuring what Google calls E-E-A-T: experience, expertise, authoritativeness, and trustworthiness (Google Developers, 2025b).

3.2. What It means for the media

Google Discover has direct implications for news media for several reasons. Firstly, it is a highly personalized source of web traffic, which can attract a large number of quality readers. Secondly, it can represent a growing share of organic traffic for media outlets that already have good positioning on Google.

Unlike search engine optimization, Discover means that media outlets do not compete for keywords, but rather for the user's interest through relevant and visually appealing content. Furthermore, strategies are prioritized that ensure content includes strong images, attractive and clear headlines, verified information, and the journalist's or author's expertise on the topic — rather than classic SEO strategies. That is, the ability to keep users engaged is more important than the newsworthiness of the topic.

Although there is no guaranteed way to appear in the feed, applying certain best practices — such as those discussed later — can improve visibility, especially those related to images, headlines, and the technical structure of the content (Lopezosa et al., 2023; Google Developers, 2025a).

These strategies to compete for attention in the feed (such as the use of striking headlines or images) can also affect content quality, although Google has implemented recent updates to reduce misleading and low-quality content. Other challenges also remain, such as traffic instability —since algorithm changes can cause a sudden drop in audience— and the difficulty of editorial planning, as it is hard to know exactly which factors the system prioritizes.

4. Recommendations for journalists and media outlets

Before offering a series of tips to journalists and editors on how to position news content in Google News and Google Discover, it is worth taking a moment to summarize the main features of both services to highlight their differences and similarities.

Table 1

Features of Google News and Google Discover

Characteristics	Google News	Google Discover
Main Focus	Current news and coverage of relevant events at the local, national, and global levels.	Personalized content based on user interests and behaviour, not limited to news.
Personalization	Personalization through selection of topics, sources, and locations; includes sections like "For You."	Automatic personalization based on search history, browsing activity, location, and interaction.
Type of Content	News from recognized media outlets, articles, videos, and full event coverage.	News, articles, blogs, videos, products, ads, or entertainment in a news-like format.
Feed Update	Periodic updates with the most relevant and recent news.	Dynamic, real-time feed that changes according to user behaviour and interests.
User Interaction	Follow/unfollow topics or sources, mark articles as "like" or "dislike."	Adjust preferences with options like "like," "show more/less," follow/unfollow topics (in some countries), and hide sources.
Coverage and Depth	Offers "Full Coverage" to display multiple perspectives on the same topic.	No "Full Coverage"; content is more varied and not grouped by topic.
Access and Availability	Mobile app (Android/iOS), web (news.google.com), integration with other Google products.	Google app, Chrome on mobile, google.com on mobile, home screens of some devices, and from 2025, on desktop in some countries.
Recommendation Algorithm	Based on selected interests and explicit user preferences.	Based on artificial intelligence and machine learning, analyzing multiple behavioural signals.
Purpose	Keep users informed about global and local current events.	Suggest relevant and engaging content without prior search, based on algorithmic prediction.

We now present a series of practical recommendations to improve visibility on Google News and Google Discover.

4.1. Ten best practices for optimizing the presence of digital media in Google News

1. Submit your news website to Google News via the Google Publisher Center. Before doing so, ensure that all technical and editorial requirements outlined in the guidelines are met.
2. Ensure transparency of the media outlet by publishing information about the journalists, editorial policies, and contact details.
3. Publish original content and avoid duplicate material.
4. Update the website frequently, maintaining a consistent publishing schedule for news and topic coverage.
5. Use consistent tags and categories to facilitate algorithmic classification by Google.

6. Comply with Google News content policies, especially regarding sensationalist headlines, misinformation, and offensive language.
7. Optimize the technical performance of the website, including fast load times and responsive design for mobile devices.
8. Include structured data using the schema.org standard to help Google interpret the content more effectively.
9. Optimize the robots.txt file to avoid crawl blocks that may prevent Google bots from indexing the site.
10. Adopt a clear editorial strategy that combines current news coverage with analytical depth, enabling content to appear in multiple Google News sections such as "International," "Local," "Economy," "Science & Technology," "Entertainment," etc.

4.2. Ten best practices for optimizing news content in Google Discover

1. Publish news-style content, focused on either real-time trends or evergreen topics, that adds value and has viral potential.
2. Write engaging and accurate headlines that enhance visibility in a competitive environment without violating Google's policies.
3. Include large, high-quality, original images (at least 1200px wide) that are relevant to the content and properly credited.
4. Optimize author profiles and sign articles with real names to meet E-E-A-T criteria (Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, and Trustworthiness).
5. Apply SEO best practices, use structured data, ensure responsive design for mobile, and maintain fast page load speeds.
6. Publish frequently and enrich content with multiple formats including videos, tables, infographics, and lists.
7. Measure and analyze performance using Search Console. Use key metrics (impressions, clicks, CTR) to refine strategies and understand when and how Discover traffic is generated. Use tools like Google Trends or Discover Snoop to monitor trending topics outside the media outlet.
8. Drive traffic through social media, homepage features, hot topics, push notifications (WhatsApp, Telegram, etc.), and email newsletters.
9. Focus on thematic specialization and build authority, especially in YMYL (Your Money or Your Life) areas like health, finance, or science.
10. Comply with Google Discover's editorial policies: avoid penalized practices such as AI-generated content without human oversight, plagiarism, misleading headlines, lack of editorial transparency, or fake author profiles.

5. Conclusions

Nowadays, Discover and News are two essential pillars for improving the web visibility of online media. Both Google services have transformed both the way users access information and how digital media can distribute their content on a large scale.

Throughout this chapter, we have seen that Google News offers a structured and reliable channel for disseminating current news, allowing media outlets to position their brand and journalistic rigor before a global audience interested in accurate and relevant information. In turn, Google Discover has revolutionized news consumption: first, by incorporating an algorithmic logic that anticipates the reader's interest when deciding what to recommend, and second, by significantly boosting the potential audience of digital press and influencing newsrooms —where the tool's opaque operation and the difficulty of controlling visibility remain major challenges.

This work has sought to highlight the value of both platforms as tools to connect media outlets with broad and segmented audiences and, as a result, to drive readership growth and open new opportunities for monetization.

While the strategic use of Discover and News is crucial for media to consolidate their digital presence, we do not wish to conclude without acknowledging the challenge of applying these strategies with a critical eye toward the tension between algorithmic visibility demands and journalistic quality standards.

In this context, the challenge lies in applying these strategies to optimize the digital presence of media while keeping the reader at the centre —and without abandoning journalism's social commitments.

Therefore, it is up to journalists and editors to ethically adapt to constant algorithm changes, always safeguarding the integrity and core principles of journalism. This is the only way in which digital media will be able to rely on these two Google services without compromising their essence.

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