

The appropriation of the social website's tools for traditional online media (non-digital natives)¹

Summary

The popularization of new technologies favored a substantial change in the relationship that readers/users usually kept with mass media. The appearance of so-called social media and the appearance of new tools and technological applications developed under the protection of the web 2.0, entails the opening from the media to the citizen participation. So that, in recent times, concepts like citizen journalism or participatory journalism are essential to understand the journalistic activity of the twenty-first century.

In this work, we are going to use a methodology consisting of applying the technique of content analysis on the nine most important Galician online media non-digital natives (*El Correo Gallego, La Voz de Galicia, Faro de Vigo, Galicia Diario, El Ideal Gallego, A Nosa Terra, El Progreso, La Región* and *Xornal.com*).

For this study were selected, in a first phase, seven days to analyze during two weeks in November 2008 and first December 2009. Specifically, we captured and studied the news published on the front page of the nine newspapers selected in November 24th, 26th, 28th, 30th and December 2nd, 4th and 6th. In a second phase, we chose four days to analyze also distributed between two weeks. Specifically, we captured and studied the news published in March 24th, 26th, 28th and 30th 2010.

Looking for an all-inclusive perspective, we studied and analyzed the front page news twice a day, on morning schedule (10 a.m.) and on afternoon schedule (16 p.m.). This double enquiry provides the study with a higher degree of concretion and allow us to establish comparisons to make easier the analysis of the news updates throughout the study period. After than this content analysis and taking into account its results, we complete the research with in-depth interviews and discussion groups with the directors of chosen media.

Immersed in the discussion about new possible Journalism models and after doing a route for different approaches and postures, we make an analysis from Journalism as professional mediation with citizen participation and, therefore, in the framework of journalistic currents that talk about participative Journalism.

Keywords: Citizen Journalism, Social Website, Online Media, Share, Web 2.0.

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1. Introduction

In the context of the Information Society, of the unstoppable push of ICTs and of the media and technological convergence, media were seen affected radically in its contents and productive processes. Processes of convergence have coming in with force in the international media stage and, now, we attended an exciting phase for the journalistic sector, plenty of challenges, especially affected by the unstoppable explosion of the so-called Citizen Journalism², also known as Journalism 2.0/3.0³.

One of the main axis of the research project named “Tendencias na converxencia dos medios de comunicación en Galicia: 2007-2010”⁴ is the analysis of the traditional models of editorial management used till now for Galician digital media and to evaluate the effects and consequences that entails the arrival of digital technology and the change an all-inclusive management model, combined, multiplatform and participative. Closely linked to this intention, we find the examination of the effects produced⁵ in the stage of the technological convergence.

² The end “journalism citizen” has its origin in the United States. In this respect results fundamental Nicholas Negroponte Being's book [Digital] (1995), in which is possible to detect a prophetic vision of the future digitalization and customization of traditional methods. However it, Dan Gillmor was who signed the birth certificate of the citizen journalism, and created also the nomenclature of “Journalism 3,0” in 2001, adapting the computer nomenclature. From this while, was set up in the United States a fruitful one vetoes academician, investigator and professional around the journalism citizen in which emphasize outstanding figures as Jay Rosen and Leonard Witt. In the same time, in Spain, emphasize contributions to this David Domingo's current, Nuria Almirón or Lluís Codina, among others.

³ Some authors of the Spanish American field employ every day the denomination 3,0 such as a synonym of journalism citizen, for the generalized employment that this does of the blogs and of tools. It was Juan Varela who popularized the end “journalism 3,0” expert as one new way of practicing the journalism, of way conversational, interpersonal and participatory and vindicating as never earlier the interaction and the share of the audience. There are other denominations for this journalism caste, as civic, grassroots or open-source, between other labels that several authors employ when to advert to this type of share. In addition, they have proliferated in recent years meetings in the academic field, congresses and symposiums on the website 2,0 and the website 3,0, [created] for Koldo Meso (with the International Congress of [Cyberjournalism] and Website 2,0) or Jesús Flores Vivar (and its International Congress of Journalism in wool [Network]), among others. In all cases, authors advert to a journalism in which there is a very positive management of the [intarectividade] that they allow new technologies to the journalism.

⁴ “Tendencias na converxencia dos medios de comunicación en Galicia: 2007-2010” , with reference (PGIDIT07PXI 212149PR), granted for the Consellería de Innovación e Industria to the research group Novos Medios (www.novosmedios, org).

⁵ Changes that if they are producing in the stage of the convergency are part of the research project “Evolución de los cibermedios españoles en el marco de la convergencia” – with reference CSO2009-13713-C05-01, that is afoot under the coordination of Xosé López and of the one which make good

To establish the degree of technologies use and participative tools emerged under the protection of technologies convergence, we study the webs of Galician main digital general information media. Through a content analysis, we can establish in which step of the “staircase” of the convergence are them. Definitely, we are going to determine if the revolution led by civic or participatory journalism, the subversion of information's conventional order (unidirectional and in the hands of big groups of communication), has already arrived to main Galician digital media or, on the contrary, they continue doubting between betting on the social website or taking refuge in the precepts and stereotyped formulas of traditional journalism.

1.1 Objectives

The main objective of our investigation consists of replying the following question: which is the degree of development of the social website in principal non-digital natives Galician online media?

To answer this question it will be necessary make another conjecture: do the Galician online media promote the employment of participative and interactive tools provide by the social web, also named website 2.0/3.0?

Both questions pursue, finally, the aim of knowing in which point of the evolution process of online journalistic information are the Galician cyber media editions. By the way, we expect to determine if the Galician digital journals assume and promote social web postulates like participation and interaction, favoring a relationship equally between users and Journalists, or if, in the other side, they cling to the traditional conception of the journalistic activity.

2. The online media: definition and characteristics

In the latest fifteen years, Internet has turn into a very important thing for people, so for its development as for the expression of the person through the tools emerged inside the network. Additionally, the communication and information world has seen as the arrival of the ICTS (Information and Communication Technologies) and their application and the settlement of Internet like a work tool in Journalists daily routines marked the evolution of the media and, particularly, in the case of the online media.

“La telaraña cibernética no sólo se ha convertido en un gigantesco hipermercado de la información, donde confluyen medios tradicionales e innovadoras propuestas comunicativas, sino que aparece como el fenómeno de mayor impacto social de los últimos años (Álvarez, 2000:31).”

use of data of the first part – state of question, information architecture and current trends - for this communication.

But, which is the definition of online media? Which are its characteristics? There are many contributions in this regard of many authors (Deuze, 2001; Palaces, 2002; García and Pou, 2003; López et al., 2005; Díaz Noci, 2008). In this case, for gathering many of these characteristics –even all–, we decant for the one which conceives the online media as a contents transmitter with intention of mediation between facts and public, uses basically criterion and journalistic techniques, uses multimedia language, is interactive and hypertextual, is updated and is published on the Internet (Cfr. Díaz Noci and Salaverría, 2003; Salaverría, 2005).

The hypertextuality, the multimediality, the interactivity and the frequency of updating define the online media as a media emerged by and for the telematic support:

a) The hypertextuality should fit the structure of the contents of the online media and to the cognitive level – technical and cultural knowledge – from its purported user. Without breaking the possibility of an information comprehensive reading (García de Torres and Pou Américo, 2003: 75), it has to satisfy the demands of hierarchical content of the internet user guiding with subtlety its navigation and going into the facts in depth as much as they demand.

b) The multimediality has to adapt to the nature of the online media contents and to the technical term – technological and technical knowledge resources – of its purported user. The multimediality applies the suitable language and format to every information and avoids the involuntary duplicated narration (García de Torres and Pou Américo, 2003: 73).

c) The frequency of update has to adapt to the actual need of online media contents renewal and to the requirements of immediacy of its purported user. The optimum update frequency combines promptness, continuity and informative depth (García de Torres and Pou Américo, 2003: 71), expands and restrained improvement – never correcting them - and not renunciation to the journalistic message sedimentation (García de Torres and Pou Américo, 2003: 70).

d) The interactivity should adapt to the online media feedback need of contents and to the sociocultural and proactive level of its purported user. The interactivity allows the internet user to customize the contents search (Álvarez Marcos, 2003: 245) and it confers to the user replies its fair relevance in the set-up of the informative story.

In this work, we analyse this latest feature, the interactivity of the media through the study of the social website's tools in Galician online media. The users, in this new context, express their interests, their tastes and its opinion through the network. Nowadays, the vast majority of account citizens have a digital identity set up through social networks and also through its share in contexts as the online media. It is in the hand of digital media the possibility doing an added value of this share, feeding themselves with its users' contributions and doing them a brand of self identity making good use of information flows which arrive through citizen participation ways.

2.1 The so-called citizen journalism

The technological convergence supposed a notable revolution in the society of the twenty-first century and media had been also affected on their contents and on a structural level. Oldest models of news production were not the only altered, but they opened media doors to a new contents elaborated by readers (for examples and implications of this incontrovertible fact, see Domingo et al., 2008; Hermida and Thurman, 2008; Thurman, 2008). This non-stop tendency to accept readers contributions during the media discourse construction, can be named generically citizen journalism (Outing, 2005; Deuze, 2008).

Already from its birth, the so-called “citizen journalism” attracted in a increasing way the attention of academic circles (Carpenter, 2008; Deuze, Bruns and Neuberger, 2007; Domingo and et al., 2008; Kovacic and Erjavec, 2008). Studies, up to now, are centred mainly in the participative nature (Deuze et al., 2007; Domingo et al., 2008) and in the user-centered design (Hermida and Thurman, 2008) of this phenomenon, outlined in Rosen’s articulation (2008): “When the people formerly known as the audience employ the press tolls they have in their possession to inform one another, that’s citizen journalism”.

Although there is a certain consensus about matching the terms citizen journalism and participatory journalism, there is who, as Axel Bruns, proposes a distinction between them. The participatory journalism is more deeply related, in accordance with the author, with the gatewatching – or selection of content for certain audiences - and such as an Internet transformed gradually this process in a collective holiday, formed completely under the responsibility of the Journalist. However, the citizen journalism, for Bruns:

[...] aims to more accurately reflect a wider range of public views on specific issues through changes in the research and reporting approaches of journalists. The movement sees specially newspapers and their Websites as instrumental in developing a new form of ‘civic commons’ where solutions to existing problems are found through constructive debates that are orchestrated and led by editors and journalists on their pages (Bruns, 2005: 35).

For Shayne Bowman and Chris Willis, authors of the study *We Media: How audiences are shaping the future of news and information*, the participatory end journalism defines the act of a citizen or citizen' group, with an active function in the process of collected, news analysis and diffusion and information.

For civic journalism, the action of taking up again is understood contract between the community, discovering the one which readers want and opening spaces for talk of public interest topics. Deep down underlie the idea of that people is who collects the information and to broadcasts to other people (Cit. in Fernandes, 2003).

Juan Varela⁶ talks about the journalism 3,0 as epitome and logical consequence of the introduction of new technologies in the journalistic activity. The journalism 3,0 is linked to the non-conformist spirit and border with the political and social activism that characterizes the North American new journalism in the sixties. The journalism 3,0 collects some characteristics of great overturns of the last century against the traditional conception of the information and, above all, of the position of the author, the subjectivity and its employment, and the doubt about the objectivity dogma.

For Varela, the age of the journalism 3.0 is the age of participatory journalism. In his opinion, the citizen journalism or participatory journalism would be the version 3,0 of the digital journalism:

- The journalism 1.0 transfers traditional contents from analogical media to digital media.
- The journalism 2.0 is the creation of content of and for the Network.
- The journalism 3.0 socializes that content and the media too (Varela, 2005).

The objective of the civic journalism and of the journalism 3.0 is the action, the problem solving leaned on the social criterion. Not search the democratic contemplation and reflection, but instead the political action.

The tendency of the so-called citizen journalism won exponentially space on media in recent years as a social network of work thanks to the tools developed (v. Gillmor, 2004); the evolution of the technologies favored the appearance of communication tools that make possible that any person is able to be a low cost journalist with universal impact. Bowman & Willis (2003) contribute a careful definition of the concept that still works with the way in which the journalism is knowledgeable nowadays:

[Citizen Journalism is] the act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information. The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging and relevant information that a democracy requires. Participatory journalism is a bottom-up, emergent phenomenon in which there is little or no editorial oversight or formal journalistic workflow dictating the decisions of a staff (Bowman & Willis, 2003: 36).

In 1995, Nicholas Negroponte predicted in its book *Being digital*, that in the future online news would give to the readers the ability of choosing just topics and sources that interest to them. And it seems that this future has already arrived. Readers not only determine the

⁶ Juan Varela is an acquaintance cyberjournalism Spanish, blogger, adviser of several projects of cybermedia, consultant and person that it participates actively in the debates on the social website and the journalism.

news agenda, but instead that even direct the informative practice. In the book *The Elements of Journalism*, Bill Kovach and Tim Rosenstiel explain that more and more the news are produced and conditioned by the readers-users. In fact, the citizen journalism is anyone that makes possible the active involvement of social actors that they intervene in all the processing of the public useful information. Therefore, its essential characteristics are forming public opinion through the creation of public thinkers and promoting the citizen participation.

The participatory journalism or the so-called citizen one take unspoken in their same definition a tension for the journalism of the twenty-first century: the economic logic of building participative platforms of free access to attract big users communities, versus the professional logic of maintaining the traditional authority on the set-up of the informative flow. For Dan Gillmor, journalist, blogger and considered prophet of the journalism 3.0, traditional ways of producing information, thanks to social environments and instruments of publication of online information, were disrupted forever: the audience holds the power.

News are arising from normal people that it has something that to say and that to show. No more are just spread by official media that usually decided as it will be the first one [sketch] in history. Now, the first draft in history it writes the former audience (Gillmor, 2004).

The participatory journalism is not a fad. Traditional methods have necessarily leaved aside the fear to return the word to those who really belong: to the citizens. The traditional authority of the media is restituted to the users, to the public. Social media are defined for the “convergence of people in social networks, the use of new media and the syndication or links between ideas, documents and other opinion” contents (Varela, 2005: 22). Social media use technological tools for communication, edition, publication and interaction cooperative in Internet to provide and promote the share of citizens in the creation of contents for the network. Social media allow the existence of conversations among members of the cyberspace, organized in virtual communities. Howard Rheingold, the inventor of the concept, defines them as: “Virtual communities are social groups that emerge from the Network when enough people participate in public discussions during a certain time with the necessary feelings to form networks of personal relationships in the cyberspace” (Cit. in Varela, 2005: 22).

According to the data of the general outlook of the current journalism, that confirms the data of the research made in Galicia⁷, so traditional methods that are on the Internet – non-digital natives – as digital natives are evolving face to more collaborative and participative formulas. There is a tendency to involve more the users in the construction of the information demanding their opinion in a rhetorical way and like a strategic ritual,

⁷ “Tendencias na converxencia dos medios de comunicación en Galicia: 2007-2010” , with reference (PGIDIT07PXI 212149PR), granted for the Consellería de Innovación e Industria. Remember that for this work also use data of the project “Evolución de los cibermedios españoles en el marco de la convergencia” – with reference CSO2009-13713-C05-01, that is afoot under the coordination of Xosé López and granted by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación.

sometimes linked to marketing operations to achieve bigger audiences. Definitely, there are many initiatives directed to promote bigger citizen participation in current digital journalism and in journalist products, with very different models but, anyway, we are speaking about an actual journalism trend, at least in our environment – where are centered our research – and that it seems to match up with the general trend, if we trust in many researches done recently⁸.

3. Methodology

Our methodology in this work lies in applying the technique of the content analysis in 9 online media (non-digital natives) more relevant of Galicia (*El Correo Gallego*, *La Voz de Galicia*, *Faro de Vigo*, *Galicia Diario*, *El Ideal Gallego*, *A Nosa Terra*, *El Progreso*, *La Región* and *Xornal.com*).

For this study we selected, in a first phase, seven analysis days throughout two weeks' between last November 2008 days and first December 2008 ones. Specifically, we captured and studied the front page of our selected online media on November 24th, 26th, 28th and 30th, and on December 2nd, 4th and 6th. In a second phase, we chose other four days to analyze: March 24th, 26th, 28th and 30th (2010). Looking for an all-inclusive perspective, we studied and analyzed the front page news twice a day, on morning schedule (10 a.m.) and on afternoon schedule (16 p.m.). This double enquiry provides the study with a higher degree of concretion and allow us to establish comparisons to make easier the analysis of the news updates throughout the study period. After than this content analysis and taking into account its results, we complete the research with in-depth interviews and discussion groups with the directors of chosen media.

For this paper, we use basically the data extracted from fifth section of the analysis table employed in the research “Tendencies in Galician mass media: 2007-2010” from which we feed this paper and which is named: “Behaviour (hypertextuality and interactivity). We present the whole analysis table⁹ to see it complete and not only the data extracted from the fields used to analyze the social media tools use in main Galician digital media.

4. Results: employment of social media tools in Galician digital media

Social media are the media in which information and contents are created by the users thanks to the employment of new technologies that allow than any person can edit, publish and change opinions in Internet. The term “social media” is opposite to the traditional one “mass media”, symbolizing the change in the communicative paradigm experimented last years. Social media are the natural participatory journalism environment and they refer, fundamentally, to activities that integrate the technology and mobile communications with the social participation and interaction.

⁸ As the European partnership COST-A20, “The Impact of the Internet on the mass media in Europe” or the North American “Project for Excellence in Journalism” of the Pew Research Center in the United States of America.

⁹ You can consult the complete note at the end of the text, under the epigraph “Annexe I”.

Social environments can acquire many shapes and it would be so hard – or even impossible – make a representative list of these technologies, bearing in mind that every day appears new shapes and applications. Actually, social media represent advanced shapes of the first interactivity tools like chats, commentaries or forums.

It is important don't forget that all the characteristics of an online media (immediacy, hipertextuality, multimedia profile and interactivity) have their importance. It's obvious that the interactivity is the main concept of digital age (Negroponte, (1995), and of citizen journalism.

Interactivity means a change in one-to-all communication for traditional media toward a new communicative flux emerged with the two-ways communication model that converts the audiences in active consumers (Pavlik, 2001). The interactivity potential to make easier a conversation between media and their audiences is, so that, unquestionable.

These tools stand as definitive for new digital media, for their nature, for their characteristics, for their contents and for they useful tools. The citizen journalism nourished of on line tools to obtain documentation, to discuss images and video, to create charts and maps, to develop websites, to manage collective projects, to publish news, etc. In addition, in the current conjuncture within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), utensils and applications of the social website charge a special relevance. Thus, we talk about the concept of Teaching 2.0. with which if it designates to set of techniques employees for teaching. During the last few years traditional concepts are being revised in the field of teaching, following Alain Touraine's postulates, Daniel Bell or Manuel Castells. Following from this, the most employed 2.0 website services are blogs, social networks, wikis and, lately, the geo-tagging and the mobile technology.

Interactive resources grew exponentially in Galician online media in recent years. They happened of enjoying a merely testimonial presence to enjoy a certain space in the most part of Galician digital media. Interactive elements more employed in the 9 online media analyzed in this work are the assessment of the news (38%), social networks (35%) and comments (27%). Finally, elements like surveys, messages mobile phones, forums, chats and binnacles appear in a few ones occasions.

Although it would be true that the number of interactive elements in Galician cybermedia –non-digital natives- is higher than a few years ago, the truth is that in some of them (like in *La Región*) has a merely testimonial presence. In fact, we don't find any interactive element. Only, *La Voz de Galicia* and *El Correo Gallego* have important numbers related with elements, tools or applications that promote the interactivity.

Finally, we appreciate like the assessments of the news; the social networks occupy a preponderant place in the field of the interactive elements in online media. Nonetheless, the number of interactive elements discoveries in Galician digital media is much reduced, so that the presence of social website tools doesn't result significant, except in the case of *La Voz de Galicia*.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In this moment, the journalism lives a metamorphosis that opens to it new spaces and places it in front of new challenges. The phase of changes and transformations that characterizes the field of technologically mediated communication in the twenty-first century modified substantially the journalistic stage not only in relation to movements and currents, but instead to the own debates about the function that should fulfill the journalism in the complex existing society, that it presents significant differences with that one of last century. The element that remains is the basic one, the essence of the journalism -“the pure and hard” journalism-, is the need of citizens of having information in order to be able to get around in the society.

The citizen journalism, regardless of if the denomination is approximately lucky one or not, does not fit doubt that allowed the appearance of informative new projects and it promoted the employment of tools that can drive to a more participatory journalism. Although the journalism is basically professional mediation and it maintains clear differences with the publicity and the publicity, the new tools also can be used to elaborate quality information. This is an aspect that forms the journalism essence: the truthfulness and the quality of all the elements – textual and formal - that integrate the informational message.

The debate, undoubtedly, is open and it stimulates interesting proposals and journalistic projects that seek to show the validity of its formulations. Currently, the vast majority of these projects add the tools of the social website. Certainly, every journalistic project employs these tools with different aims and within the framework of very different initiatives, but in all cases these tools can be useful for the responsible exercise of our profession.

With reference to the incorporation or not, by principal Galician online media, of tools and applications of the social website, we conclude that the online publications of Galicia continue grasped to traditional practices and guidelines of information processing. This is, they waste the potential possibilities that Internet offers, moreover to present deficiencies and structural shortcomings that hinder the hypertextual resources on the internet.

We identify three generalized tendencies in Galician online media non-digital natives that we study. On one hand, there is a high degree of translation of the information of the newspaper in role to the network, wasting a big part of the possibilities that offers Internet. On the other hand, in the nine online media analyzed we detect a generalized tendency to don't update the news (in the 73% of the analyzed units the update degree is low). *LavozdeGalicia.es* and *elcorreogallego.es* are the publications that reach an adequate level of updating. Lastly, it is necessary to emphasize the incorporation of the interactive elements to the front pages of the main Galician online media, having special importance the ones which are related to social networks and surveys.

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